

Editorial

Regan A. R. Gurung
University of Wisconsin-Green Bay

R. Eric Landrum
Boise State University

Psychology is well positioned, if not optimally situated, to contribute to the study of teaching and learning. Psychological science's diverse methodologies provide the perfect tools to capture the complexity of learning, and psychological theories already feature in much of the scholarship of teaching of learning. We are excited to welcome you to a new additional venue for research on teaching and learning in this first issue of *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology (STLP)*. Our mission is to leverage psychological science to provide resources that integrate research, theory, and practice to benefit high school, community college, college, and university educators and their students. *STLP* provides a valuable resource in spreading the word about an academic, scholarly approach to understanding teaching and learning.

The focus on the theoretical underpinnings of how we learn, the intentional, systematic, modifications of pedagogy, and assessments of resulting changes in learning, are collectively defined as the *scholarship of teaching and learning* (SoTL; Gurung & Landrum, 2014). SoTL is a valid, effective practice with benefits to students, instructors, and institutions (Hutchings, Huber, & Ciccone, 2011). The field of psychology appears to recognize SoTL better than higher education as a whole (Gurung, Kerns, Ansborg, Alexander, & Johnson, 2008; Huber & Hutchings, 2005), although there is still a long way to go. We trust that having a dedicated American Psychological Association (APA) journal about SoTL will go a long way in making SoTL a valid pursuit to a wider audience. We hope to feature best practices on conducting SoTL and showcase novel designs and analyses to advance such work. Many recent developments situate this new launch. For example, the International Society for Scholarship on Teaching and Learning (ISSoTL) has also launched a new journal, *Teaching and Learning Inquiry*, and just celebrated its 10th anniversary. Within psychology, the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (Division Two of the American Psychological Association) has conducted writing workshops on SoTL and has also instituted new SoTL research grants.

As we move into the third decade since Boyer reconsidered scholarship (1990), there are a number of key directions SoTL practitioners need to go (Gurung & Schwartz, 2010). Foremost of these is the need for better and more integrated theoretical work. *STLP* can be the hub for this research. Hutchings (2007) noted that “the role of theory in the scholarship of teaching and learning as the elephant in the room” (p. 1). We need to work harder to take basic research in relevant areas and apply it to teaching and learning. For example, cognitive psychologists and social psychologists are nicely taking theoretically driven lab

Regan A. R. Gurung, Department of Human Development and Psychology, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay; R. Eric Landrum, Department of Psychology, Boise State University.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Regan A. R. Gurung, Department of Human Development and Psychology, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, MAC C324, 2420 Nicolet Drive, Green Bay, WI 54311. E-mail: gurungr@uwgb.edu

work and are applying it to the classroom (Bjork & Bjork, 2011; Gurung & Burns, 2011), though such work to date has primarily been published as book chapters. The volume of work currently conducted in the classroom and the potential for psychology to make even greater contributions led to the launch of *STLP*.

Going beyond this call for theory is the need to situate all the myriad studies of pedagogical research in a common context. We hope future contributors to *STLP* will help create a unified picture of how students learn best. Whereas tests of individual class activities and techniques are important, it is now time for cohesive models. What are the different factors that influence learning? How do the results of a smaller scale study contribute to the broader context of learning? Bernstein et al. (2009) and Chew et al. (2010) provided comprehensive pictures of what is known about the processes surrounding teaching and learning and provide general models that can guide future pedagogical research. To our knowledge, neither of these models (or work testing the models) has been published in the existing SoTL outlets in psychology. We hope such theoretical work finds its way into early issues of *STLP* to stimulate additional work.

The third, and perhaps most critical issue concerns “the legitimacy of the literatures and methods that shape teachers’ questions about learning and the kinds of evidence they seek in order to answer them” (Hutchings et al., 2011, p. 8). SoTL practitioners are not always aware of (or do not always use) adequately rigorous research designs or analyses. SoTL does not have a clear-cut definition of excellence at all, and sometimes, SoTL does not even have a clear definition of SoTL (Boshier, 2009). Wilson-Doenges and Gurung (2013) outlined SoTL benchmarks of rigor to shape, guide, and motivate this burgeoning field, and identified a continuum of SoTL to demarcate aspirational benchmarks that also serve as guidelines for research design. Whereas qualitative and quantitative data and methods all have a place in SoTL, the benchmarks provide clear cut standards of design and analysis. Similar to psychological science’s methodology for research in general, SoTL should also aim for similar standards that are theory-based and intentionally designed using the best models for methodological and statistical rigor. Likewise, rigorous writing is essential for *STLP* as well.

STLP provides a venue for articles highlighting SoTL research spanning a wide educational spectrum. In addition to traditional empirical reports of class-based innovations and interventions, we also feature three additional article types explicitly written to be pragmatic and evidence-based to advance our cumulative understanding of teaching and learning. Teacher-ready theoretical reviews showcase contemporary theories and teacher-ready research reviews draw attention to empirical research, that is, evidence-based instructional practices. Both types of articles are designed to stimulate readers to consider systematic intentional changes to improve teaching and learning outcomes and serve as heuristics for pedagogical researchers. Cross-fertilization updates are intentionally designed to provide the connective tissue between subdisciplines within psychology as well as across disciplines to seek wider perspectives about what we can garner from colleagues in and out of psychology.

We conclude our editorial with big picture views from SoTL pioneers. To commemorate the launch of *STLP*, we reached out to leaders in the field of SoTL. Although the word *psychology* appears in the name of our journal, obviously the findings from psychology researchers can be widely applied to other disciplines. Concurrently, this is also why we believe that the opinions of SoTL experts should help shape our new journal. We invited them to share their wisdom as part of our launch and to write a short contribution that answers any of the following questions: What are the contributions do you see needed in SoTL? What are the

big, unanswered questions that the SoTL field needs to answer? What are the current SoTL priority areas? We are grateful to the contributors who took valuable time to complete this task. We hope their comments inspire our readers as to the future directions that we should collectively explore.

**Lee S. Shulman, Emeritus Professor of Education, Stanford University;
President Emeritus, The Carnegie Foundation for the
Advancement of Teaching**

When I was appointed president of the Carnegie Foundation in 1996, I inherited a considerable legacy that stretched back nearly a century. The foundation had been a pioneer in the development of multiple-choice testing and had been one of the parents of the Educational Testing Service. Indeed, the foundation's gift to that new agency was the Graduate Record Examination. As someone deeply involved in the study and improvement of teaching at all levels, a most important part of that legacy was the work of my predecessor, Ernest Boyer, to elevate the scholarship of teaching to a level of respect, reward and recognition in the culture of higher education parallel to that accorded to the scholarships of discovery and integration. Boyer's (1990) "Scholarship Reconsidered" was a powerful statement of that perspective. And yet, as a psychologist, I felt something significant was missing in his conception of the scholarship of teaching; the indispensable connection between teaching and learning. We psychologists had been investigating, measuring, and attempting to influence learning since the beginnings of our discipline and profession. Although most of my colleagues at the foundation were not themselves psychologists (we were an interdisciplinary community that included anthropologists, philosophers, humanists, lawyers and sociologists as well), we all recognized that any robust scholarship of teaching must be built around the systematic documentation of the connections between teaching and learning. Hence, the acronym SoTL was invented to enrich and often replace the idea of a scholarship of teaching.

The other major change was the idea that a scholarship of teaching and learning involves the empirical study of those connections and not only a transparently visible process of inquiry, deliberation and design in the creation of programs of teaching. Again, it was a distinctly psychological move. The claim that one's teaching is worthy of recognition as an academic accomplishment requires that evidence be presented regarding how teaching and learning are connected. Some criticized this move because they argued that we were "reducing" the scholarship of teaching to just another version of the traditional scholarship of discovery. However, our view was that all scholars in the academy and indeed many outside those institutions ought to view themselves as engaged in discovery as well as instruction. We were enriching the concept of teaching by emphasizing the necessary connection between acts of teaching and the professional and moral obligation to document the consequences of our efforts on our clients, in this case, our students.

I am delighted to attend the birth of this new APA journal that signifies our recognition that a scholarship of teaching and learning is central to our definition of the role that psychologists can and must play in institutions of learning to exemplify, in their own instructional work, the imperatives of critical examination of our work with students. From William James' (1890) *Principles of Psychology* to Jerome Bruner's (1977) *Process of Education*, leaders of psychology have recognized that the quality of the educational process is an intrinsically psychological concern. In this sense, we serve as role models for our colleagues

across the disciplines and professions as well as satisfying the imperatives of our own teaching.

At Carnegie, we used to say that a scholarship of teaching and learning entailed three actions: Make it public (that is, study what you do, its consequences, and make your work available to your colleagues), critique it (submit it to the critical peer review of your colleagues), and pass it on (publish it more widely). This new journal promises to fulfill that mission. The pioneers who have given birth to this new journal, Regan Gurung and Eric Landrum, deserve our gratitude. Teaching deserves to be community property. Its scholarship will now be accessible to a larger community of scholars and practitioners. This is psychological work. Let's get on with it.

Barbara Walvoord, Professor Emerita at the University of Notre Dame

SoTL is the most powerful education reform movement because, instead of urging faculty to adopt strategies like writing across the curriculum or problem-based learning, it urges faculty to bring a researcher's inquiring mind to their own classrooms and find out for themselves what is going on in their classrooms and whether writing across the curriculum or problem-based learning or any other approach will meet the needs of their own students. These other movements are answers urged upon faculty without attention to the question. SoTL suggests how to begin with the questions about learning in one's own classroom. The greatest question, and the greatest priority, is to keep SoTL from appearing to be just another reform movement, just another answer, just another gospel urged by true believers, just another overwhelming expectation added to an already full load.

Mary Taylor Huber, Senior Scholar Emerita, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

The scholarship of teaching and learning has its linguistic origins in *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, an influential 1990 report by Ernest Boyer that argued for a "broader, more capacious" vision of scholarship, "one that brings legitimacy to the full scope of academic work" (p. 16). Since then, SoTL has developed along a number of lines and come to bridge a gap between the learning sciences and what Lee Shulman has called "the wisdom of practice." SoTL practitioners look to the learning sciences, as well as to their own disciplines, for theoretical and methodological inspiration, and to the classroom for questions to ask and problems to resolve. The continuing challenge is to take better advantage of SoTL's betwixt and between position to help classroom innovation and inquiry become the new norm in college teaching and to bring the results of this situated scholarship back into the learning sciences and our own fields. Congratulations to APA and the editors on the publication of this inaugural issue!

Linda Suskie, Assessment & Accreditation Consultant, Philadelphia, PA

We are fortunate to be living in an age of significant research on strategies that help college students learn and succeed. The challenge now is to apply that research to the teaching of psychology and other human and social sciences. What teaching strategies are most successful in engaging students actively in the learning of psychology? What strategies best help students learn psychology in online and blended environments? How can we best help those who are not

majors see the relevance of psychological concepts, principles, and research to their lives? How can we use the learning experience itself to help students understand human behavior and psychological concepts? What strategies best help doctoral students prepare to become effective teaching faculty themselves? Psychological researchers can also contribute by continuing to study how faculty—and institutions of higher education—can motivate students to succeed.

**Pat Hutchings, Senior Scholar, National Institute for Learning
Outcomes Assessment**

A current and ongoing priority for the scholarship of teaching and learning pertains to its boundaries and intersections with other communities and initiatives in teaching and learning (Hutchings, Huber, & Ciccone, 2011). While celebrating and building on the distinctive features and strengths of SoTL, we are now well positioned to connect more intentionally with other communities to find common cause. These include the world of professional development (directors of teaching centers), the assessment movement, discipline-based educational research, and communities that form around particular pedagogies and approaches. The “fit” in some of these cases will not always be easy, but all of these groups and practices share some goals and assumptions. The more these can be explored and tapped into, the more likely that our respective and collective efforts will lead to real improvements in learning and teaching.

**Maryellen Weimer, Professor Emeritus, Teaching and Learning,
Penn State; Editor, the *Teaching Professor* Newsletter and Blog**

The definitions of SoTL need to be broadened with greater endorsement for different forms of scholarship. Increasingly SoTL, as it appears in discipline-based periodicals, preferences research, mostly quantitative analyses of instructional approaches. The rigor of pedagogical scholarship is important, but making all the work empirical is not the only or best way to reach high standards. Personal narratives, critical essays, even artifacts of teaching like assignments and syllabi, can be intellectually rigorous, contribute to the pedagogical knowledge base, and stand a better chance of being read than does research. Also needed is more cross-disciplinary fertilization. The disciplines explore many of the same pedagogical issues but without knowledge of how other fields tackled them and with what results. Some instructional issues are unique to the discipline, but most are not and so far SoTL has not helped us realize how much we have to learn from and with those in other fields.

Anthony Ciccone, Emeritus Professor of French; President-Elect, ISSOTL

Current SoTL priorities fall into three categories: *doing*, *using*, and *valuing* SoTL work. Doing SoTL work: interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary work using broadly different methodologies; studying student learning issues that really matter and that are transformational; using frameworks that help us understand that transformation (e.g., threshold concepts); collaborating with students, within initiatives, on similar questions. Using SoTL work: to describe program-level learning in all its complexity (vs. summative assessment); to guide institutional-level initiatives by keeping learning at the forefront; to enhance a culture of speaking the language of learning. Valuing SoTL: within faculty development, to value the individual as a researcher and as a source of knowledge (vs. a teacher with deficits or problems); within tenure

and promotion processes, as a way to justify a broader notion of research and a better way to understand teaching excellence. Overall, in each of these areas, the priority of SoTL work should be to help move higher education beyond doing things better to doing better things.

We hope that this editorial has set the stage for great advancements to happen. SoTL work is clearly within the realm of psychology, and many talented researchers pursue SoTL as part of their daily research agenda. The big picture, as offered by our SoTL guest experts, provides a broad landscape upon which the future lies. We sincerely hope that *STLP* becomes a leading contributor to the global conversation about the scholarship of teaching and learning in psychology and beyond.

References

- Bernstein, D., Addison, W., Altman, C., Hollister, D., Meera, K., Prieto, L. R., . . . Shore, C. (2009). Toward a scientist-educator model of teaching psychology. In D. Halpern (Ed.), *Undergraduate education in psychology: A blueprint for the future of the discipline* (pp. 29–46). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Bjork, E. L., & Bjork, R. (2011). Making things harder on yourself, but in a good way: Creating desirable difficulties to enhance learning. In M. A. Gernsbacher, R. W. Pew, L. M. Hough, & J. R. Pomerantz (Eds.), *Psychology and the real world: Essays illustrating fundamental contributions to society* (pp. 56–64). New York: Worth.
- Boshier, R. (2009). Why is the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning such a hard sell? *Higher Education Research & Development*, 28, 1–15. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07294360802444321>
- Boyer, E. L. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bruner, J. (1977). *The process of education: A landmark in educational theory*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Chew, S. L., Bartlett, R. M., Dobbins, J. E., Hammer, E. Y., Kite, M. E., Loop, T. F., . . . Rose, K. C. (2010). A contextual approach to teaching: Bridging methods, goals and outcomes. In D. Halpern (Ed.), *Undergraduate education in psychology: A blueprint for the future of the discipline* (pp. 95–112). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/12063-006>
- Gurung, R. A. R., & Burns, K. (2011). The social psychology of teaching and learning. In E. Y. Hammer & D. Mashek (Eds.), *Social Psychology & Teaching* (pp. 1–31). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Gurung, R. A. R., Kerns, N., Ansburg, P., Alexander, P., & Johnson, D. (2008). The scholarship of teaching and learning in psychology: A national perspective. *Teaching of Psychology*, 35, 249–261. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00986280802374203>
- Gurung, R. A. R., & Landrum, R. E. (2014). Editorial. *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 1 (Suppl 1), 1–2.
- Gurung, R. A. R., & Schwartz, B. M. (2010). Riding the third wave of SoTL. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 4(2), Article 5. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/ij-sotl>
- Huber, M. T., & Hutchings, P. (2005). *The advancement of learning: Building the teaching commons*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Hutchings, P. (2007). Theory: The elephant in the scholarship of teaching and learning room. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 1, Article 1. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/ij-sotl>
- Hutchings, P., Huber, M. T., & Ciccone, A. (2011). *The scholarship of teaching and learning reconsidered: Institutional impact*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- James, W. (1890/1950). *Principles of psychology*. New York: Dover.
- Wilson-Doenges, G., & Gurung, R. A. R. (2013). Benchmarks for scholarly investigations of teaching and learning. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 65, 63–70. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/ajpy.12011>