



# The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: A Note on Methodology

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The Warming Up the Chill project illustrates scholarship of teaching and learning methods. The scholarship of teaching and learning is an approach to understanding teaching and learning that is gaining depth and momentum in higher education. The initiative invites investigation into ways by which individual teachers or groups of teachers in a discipline frame teaching and learning. To gain deeper understanding, faculty closely examine teaching and learning through interviews, videotaped observations, reading, and in-depth case studies like the six featured in this book. One scholarship of teaching and learning goal is to better understand how students learn the elements of a discipline. Just as important, the scholarship of teaching and learning illuminates key junctures in a discipline that trip up some students.

Scholarship of teaching and learning inquiry methods include both qualitative and quantitative components, but the most important factor is making teaching public. Lee Shulman, current president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, compares teaching to dry ice, which evaporates without a trace when exposed to oxygen. To prevent a similar evaporation of teaching, the scholarship of teaching and learning initiative aims to investigate, document, and disseminate knowledge about teaching and learning. These goals go far beyond efforts to emphasize effective approaches or to improve teaching.

At the University of Wyoming, the scholarship of teaching and learning is formally supported through the inVISIBLEcollege program in the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning. About to begin its fourth year, the program invites cohorts of administrators, faculty, lecturers, and graduate student teaching assistants to make a one-year commitment. During that year, the members of the cohort meet to discuss books and articles and develop classroom-based inquiry projects supported by stipends. The projects are presented at the Ellbogen Center's campus-wide colloquium in May. Some of the projects have been published or presented at national disciplinary meetings. The first inVISIBLEcollege cohort in 2000 developed a definition that guides the program's scholarship of teaching and learning efforts:

*Scholarship implies peer critique, reflection, and dissemination. The scholarship of teaching enhances student learning through ongoing, systematic inquiry.*

The Warming Up the Chill project, which includes a book, CD, and website, is a substantial part of the scholarship of teaching and learning initiative at UW.

## Student Nominations and Formal Recognition: Phase 1

The project began in fall 2001 with student nominations. We were interested in learning from students the names of classroom teachers who value diversity as defined by age, disability, ethnicity, gender, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic background. On the nomination form, we asked students to describe the organization of the class, the kinds of discussion the teacher held, office visits, assignments in the class, lectures, or readings. We asked for details about ways the teacher is skillful in teaching students from a variety of backgrounds and with different ways of knowing and learning.

We advertised the nomination process through conventional print and electronic channels with advertisements in the student newspaper and announcements on the student listserv; we also met with numerous student groups. Audrey and Jane arranged to attend and talk about the project at regular meetings of the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de

Aztlan (MEChA), the Minority Engineering Program/Society of Professional Hispanic Engineers, the Association of Black Student Leaders (ABSL), the Asian American Pacific Islander Student Association, the Keepers of the Fire (KOF), the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Alliance (LGBTQA), the Women's Center, International Student Life, the United Multicultural Council, and the Associated Students of the University of Wyoming (ASUW). We also contacted academic support offices to meet with formally recognized student groups in each of the seven UW colleges. We invited nominations from students enrolled in distance learning courses through the Outreach School, such as interactive compressed video, audio-conference, and online courses. If we couldn't attend a meeting of the group, we emailed or telephoned the faculty or staff sponsor so students would be alerted.

Altogether, we received fifty-two nominations, some of them carefully detailed and formal and others short email transmissions. Approximately 13 percent of the nominators sought anonymity. The seven anonymous nominations reminded us that our campus is chilly in ways most teaching personnel do not anticipate. In one such letter, a UW student self-identified as transgendered wrote that the teacher clarified in an email to the student that "he had no experience with my situation. But he was willing to help me in any way he could." The student explained that on a university-sponsored trip away from Laramie, the teacher made special accommodations for the student to share a room with trustworthy friends. The teacher "has been more than willing to cultivate an environment of acceptance for me."

A public reception in December 2001 honored the fifty-two nominees and their deans and department heads. It also served to introduce the second phase of the project. Each nominee received a congratulatory letter from us that included an application to participate in the case-study phase of the project. This form, along with all of the other documents from the project, can be found on the CD-ROM that accompanies this book.

## Developing the Case-Study Profiles: Phase 2

Eleven nominees completed applications for the case-study phase of *Warming Up the Chill*. By applying, they agreed to participate in a

series of individual and small-group interviews. They also agreed to participate in public events sponsored by the Ellbogen Center. A selection panel including a member of the Ellbogen Center's Advisory Council and a student worked with Jane and Audrey to select the case-study participants. The panel considered gender, academic discipline, and academic rank. Although the final group of six represents a variety of disciplines and university services, a range of ages, and an equal representation by gender, the six were selected primarily because the set of application materials, including the student nomination, convinced the panel that each had a valuable perspective to share, wanted to learn more about himself or herself, and was committed to better serving a diverse student population.

Once selection was completed, the group of six met with Jane, Audrey, and Laurie to discuss the methodology of the case studies: videotaped interview sessions with Laurie that would then be converted into written narratives. At this point, each of the six participants signed an informed consent explaining risks and benefits of the project. Then, in a second meeting guided by Laurie, the six case-study participants selected the themes and questions that would guide the interviews. Laurie conducted individual interviews with the six participants through spring semester 2002. During this period, Laurie collected examples of syllabi, course materials, and other artifacts important to the participant's teaching. You will find these materials on the CD-ROM.

The common set of issues identified by the six participants provided the organizing structure for the narratives that Laurie constructed from the interviews. When the drafts of the cases were completed, each participant corrected factual errors, suggested deletions, and provided additions. This process is called a member check and goes beyond surface-level corrections to a deeper analysis of the interview data. During the interviewing and writing process, the nine of us participated in several public events describing the project. Questions from the audience and continued conversation prompted by the cases enabled a deepening of our theory development, included in the book's introduction. Jane edited final copies and met with each author for one final discussion.

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## Recommended Reading

To learn more about the origins of the scholarship of teaching and learning, see Ernest Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, published by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in 1990. Two books edited by Pat Hutchings, vice president at the Carnegie Foundation, provide examples of inquiry projects and consider issues raised by the initiative: *Opening Lines: Approaches to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* (2000) and *Ethics of Inquiry: Issues in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* (2002). The American Association for Higher Education has recently published *Disciplinary Styles in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: Exploring Common Ground* (2002), edited by Mary Taylor Huber and Sherwyn P. Morreale. Two useful websites include the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL), <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/CASTL>, and the American Association for Higher Education, <http://www.aahe.org>. The Warming Up the Chill project website is available at the Ellbogen Center's web pages, <http://www.uwyo.edu/ctl>.

