Gathering: Stories of scholarship of teaching and learning at McMaster University

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, we gathered and synthesized deeply personal stories from established scholars at McMaster University and beyond on conducting scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). In the spirit of learning from one another's individual experiences and motivations, we utilized collaborative autoethnography to connect the individual to the collective and knit together testimonials representing all six faculties. Specifically, we highlight how the concept of "gathering" can be accessed in several different ways to illustrate (a) how conversations drive curiosity and innovation, (b) how individuals from diverse backgrounds and expertise come together to collaborate and create new and

emergent knowledge, and (c) how instructors can support one another to experiment, play, and take risks in a safe environment. We shine a light on how McMaster's newly released teaching and learning strategy, "Partnered in Teaching and Learning: McMaster's Teaching and Learning Strategy 2021–2026," recognizes and promotes several principles and practices that SoTL practitioners at McMaster have been quietly undertaking for some time. Finally, these stories highlight recommendations and paths forward that will get us closer to our goal of achieving teaching excellence.

KEYWORDS

scholarship of teaching and learning, collaborative autoethnography, teaching commons, narrative

As articulated in other chapters of this anthology, McMaster University has a well-known history of educational innovation and teaching and learning scholarship. In the last 20 years, interest and participation in such work on McMaster's campus has become increasingly common (Vajoczki et al., 2011). This increasing interest in conducting inquiry into teaching and learning aligned directly with the *Forward With Integrity* vision set out by then-President, Patrick Dean (2011). As part of this vision, the transformation of the Centre for Leadership in Learning (CLL) into the McMaster Institute for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching & Learning (and now known as the MacPherson Institute) underscored the institutional commitment to the scholarship of teaching and learning (Marquis, 2013). Most recently, McMaster (2021) launched its first ever teaching and learning strategy (2021–2026) that lays out a plan to grow and lead teaching and learning excellence into the future.

To mark the 50th anniversary of the MacPherson Institute's contributions to teaching and learning at McMaster University, we describe the personal motivations, epistemic curiosity, and socio-emotional bonds among scholars that bring shape and presence to how innovations in teaching and learning occur. As a group of SoTL scholars who either currently work at McMaster or who have conducted SoTL research in the past, we joined together as co-authors to talk about our scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) stories in celebrating McMaster's long history and commitment to evidence-based teaching and learning. Telling each other our stories is the glue that forms the bonds of community—we conceptualized the idea as a gathering place of sorts.

We see gathering places as dynamic spaces where individual connections and conversational moments occur and influence the trajectory of our work in meaningful ways, akin to a "teaching commons" (Huber & Hutchings, 2006). We derive the term *gathering place* from the description of the teaching commons by Huber and Hutchings (2006) as a place where educators from every discipline can come together to transcend the siloes of disciplinary departments and convey the joining of diverse minds to reflect and innovate collectively. With this piece, we hope to mirror the purpose and function of the MacPherson Institute in

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facilitating the gathering of individuals across different backgrounds and disciplines. We envision sharing stories of teaching in collaborative spaces as enabling ideas, questions, and synergy where focused curiosity can emerge.

First, a note on definitions: research in teaching and learning, often labelled as the scholarship of teaching and learning, or SoTL, can take many forms and explore many diverse avenues. Over the years, different understandings of SoTL have been advanced (e.g., Boshier, 2009; Hutchings & Shulman, 1999; Kreber, 2001; Potter & Kustra, 2011; Prosser, 2008; Shulman, 2011; Woodhouse, 2010). As a result, SoTL is challenging to define. While there may be legitimate arguments about precisely which academic works and milestones form the basis for SoTL as a field, most would include the publication of *Scholarship Reconsidered* (Boyer, 1990), which first began to draw disciplinary scholars into scholarly inquiry about teaching and learning in higher education. In this regard, many scholars have identified key criteria and aims of SoTL. For instance, Felten's (2013) "Principles of Good Practice in SoTL" suggests that SoTL is (a) inquiry into student learning, (b) situated in context, (c) methodologically sound, (d) conducted in partnership with students, and (e) appropriately public. One strategy for defining SoTL is distinguishing it from the related concept of scholarly teaching (Dewar, 2008; Fenton & Szala-Meneok, 2011; Richlin, 2001; Vajoczki et al., 2011). According to this perspective, while scholarly teachers engage with the teaching and learning literature and integrate findings into their own teaching practices, scholars of teaching and learning go further—framing research questions, systematically gathering and exploring evidence, reflecting on and refining new ideas, and developing the results for public presentation and peer review (Cambridge, 2001; Christensen Hughes, 2005).

We recognize that a lack of coherence in the conceptualization of the scholarship of teaching and learning can be challenging to new researchers (Miller-Young & Yeo, 2015). Yet, this diversity can also be fostered to function as a means to accommodate newcomers to the field (Fanghanel et al., 2015). Therefore, we agree with Mary Huber's (2004) view of SoTL as being a broad and inclusive canopy under which a wide range of work can thrive. Along these lines, several scholars in our study noted that the point of doing this work is not to choose theoretical or pedagogical camps, but rather to bring the energy and intellect of more people from various communities and traditions to bear on important educational issues. In this way, SoTL is seen as interdisciplinary work that strengthens student learning experiences and classroom practices that can be shared, critiqued, and extended.

Our study involved cooperatively building a "conversational narrative" (Ochs et al., 2009) with faculty members who are engaged in SoTL research. Using this approach strengthened our interrogation on what research on teaching and learning means—it created a unique synergy that we believe individual researchers could not have achieved alone. As co-researchers, we discovered the method enabled more equitable contributions in the research process and provided a solid structure to "witnessing" (Lapadat, 2017) one another's stories by flattening the power dynamics of the team.

METHODOLOGY

We drew upon principles of collaborative autoethnography (CAE) to collectively analyze and interpret self-stories to gain meaningful understandings of the sociocultural phenomenon reflected in individual experiences (Chang et al., 2016). CAE is the practice of doing autoethnography with others, which can be done at various levels of participation, from full collaboration to various levels of partial collaboration (see Chang et al., 2016). In this way, the CAE approach enriches the research process as co-researchers attempt to look more deeply at the self-other interactions that reveal multiple layers of consciousness, allowing them to connect the personal to the cultural to generate richer stories, uncover assumptions, and elaborate on taken-for-granted events.

Via purposeful sampling, we invited 10 educational scholars representing all six McMaster faculties and two external scholars to participate as collaborators and co-authors in this study. Faculty participants had all participated in SoTL research, represented a variety of career stages, and comprised teaching stream and tenure track professors. The individuals external to McMaster were included to capitalize on their unique perspective and involvement in developing SoTL in the early days of CLL. At the time, they were collaborators involved in developing SoTL at their home institutions as well. Following ethics clearance from the McMaster University Research Ethics Board, a qualitative research design was employed. Collaborators participated in one 45–60-minute individual semi-structured interview and one 2-hour focus group session (divided further into breakout rooms of five to six participants for the last half of the session), which were audio-recorded and transcribed. Two of the co-authors conducted the interviews and analyzed the data, taking the perspective of investigator rather than participant, which was facilitated by their respective faculty-adjacent roles (JS as a graduate student and NEF most recently as associate director at the MacPherson Institute; we will be using initials as a short form for authors' names throughout the chapter).

The individual interviews prepared collaborators for the focus group conversations by exploring collaborators' disciplinary backgrounds, motivations for conducting SoTL research, and the factors that influence their practice of SoTL. The collaborators read through their transcripts to review and identify the main themes that emerged for them and contributed to the development of preliminary themes. The focus group session explored more deeply the preliminary themes of interdisciplinary work and community, and was designed to engage collaborators in analyzing each other's data via conversation to gain a meaningful collective understanding of the themes. Each collaborator contributed to the review of the focus group discussion by corroborating, refuting, or expanding on the transcript and provided feedback on consecutive versions of the manuscript.

We pause briefly here to acknowledge some limitations of our approach, which is not meant to be exhaustive, representative, or conclusive, with data collection and analysis occurring in an abbreviated period of time (around 8 months). We hope instead to convey a narrative glimpse of our preliminary conversations and personal stories of exploring SoTL as a starting point for future investigations.

FINDINGS

The results of these conversations are organized according to three emergent questions:

1. How do our conversations knit together communities that drive SoTL work?
2. How do we use interdisciplinary practices to enrich and gain perspective on our SoTL work?
3. How can we create a context for instructor learning that encourages experimentation and risk-taking?

How do our conversations knit together communities that drive SoTL work?

Many participants expressed relief at finding a group of colleagues with whom they can talk about pedagogical challenges and interests that cross or go beyond subject matter. Regardless of where this happens, either via formalized reading groups or casual chats struck up in communal kitchens, conversation was perceived as the medium via which a teaching commons is established. Conversations were seen to provide fertile ground for new ideas, inspiration, and collaboration. If the gathering places are the setting for community, conversations were seen as the building blocks. Collaborators shared the following reflections:

> I think those formalized opportunities to get support and consultation and [engage in] discussion on a topic can be huge, because this creates an opportunity for people to carve out time and space and have feedback and connection to other people. (BM)

> The thing that I heard over and over again in those individual conversations [with faculty] was, "I want somebody I can talk to." . . . That they feel isolated, that they find it difficult to get feedback on their work, because maybe there's one [SoTL] workshop a year. But I don't think it's about putting in more workshops, I think it's about providing them more opportunities to have conversations. (NS)

> You want to listen to their challenges, and you want to listen to how they address their challenges, and you tell [them] your challenges. Let them give you solutions. So, I think these kinds of discussions at conferences were amazing. That's why I overcame a lot of those challenges in [problem-based learning] and, similarly also, in active learning. (DC)

In addition to recounting how conversations provide helpful contexts, support, and advice for SoTL scholars, participant comments suggested several distinct benefits of conversation: in generating fresh new ideas; creating a collegial, open atmosphere; and as a way of learning about the world through other perspectives.

> I have always felt all my life that when I think about who has an influence on me, it's not always the people who are the most established in the field. Oftentimes, it's the people

> who are just entering the field who have a knack of posing a question that is perceived and framed in a different way. (NS)
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> I connected with [folks in the early days of the Centre for Leadership in Learning] because I thought they had a very open, almost conversational approach. And they also had . . . a very practical working at it, [i.e.,] the different kinds of contexts and models that people used [in teaching]. I just thought, okay, so a lot of this is communication. A lot of this is building community, and that was kind of an interesting fit. (PS)

While conversations were highly valued in and of themselves, they were also understood by participants to transcend the disciplinary and institutional milieu by tapping into deep emotional experiences. Conversations allowed them to genuinely connect with like-minded others and see them as people, rather than recognizing them by their titles or designations. Additionally, intentional conversations with students illuminated the teaching and learning challenges they were experiencing. These conversations also drove the feedback loops that led to the implementation of productive and data-driven changes in the classroom. Participants made the following comments on the importance of genuine interactions:

> In 2001, I went to my first [Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education] conference. . . . I spent most of my first conference hanging around with the Mac teaching centre people and having a drink after the conference day was over with them. And that led to everybody coming to my place for a barbecue. It felt like I joined a little family that had welcomed me in even though I wasn't at the [McMaster teaching] centre. . . . And what I also recall about that early conference was I got to meet the people that I knew were the big names in teaching and learning in Canada, and they were friendly, they were having conversations. There was just no distance at all. (NS)
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> There's nothing more fundamental in my mind than relationships. . . . For me, the piece is the connection, the people in relationships. And that's part of what I bring to my work [with faculty. It's] about being with the people and helping the people that I'm working with, the people in front of me. (KM)
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> In my mind, the basic unit of educational pedagogical research really is observation. Not a number. Interacting with students every day is an opportunity to learn something new. . . . You actually go, and you sit down with people, and you say, "Can you tell me about your experience doing X? What are the things that happened?" And you want them to be as specific as possible. You want them to talk about what happened. Where it happened. What they were thinking. What they were feeling. You're looking for raw data about the experience, so that you can judge it for yourself, as a designer, and make sense of it. (RF)

> The way I see SoTL, it's a cycle. It's a cycle in which you do something, you have challenges and then you go to the community, you talk to the students, ask them about direct challenges. [In] the community, you find some other challenges, try to identify the challenges, apply [solutions] in the classroom. Not everything works. Cycle, cycle, it's constantly a cycle and that's what I've done. So again, simple answer: if you don't apply it in the classroom, it's useless. (DC)

Overall, conversations highlighted the social aspect of the teaching commons in facilitating collaboration, learning about the world from others, and connecting meaningfully with both colleagues and students.

How do we use interdisciplinary practices to enrich and gain perspective on our SoTL work?

Disciplinary ties are critical, yet our co-authors' stories reveal the special role of interdisciplinary networks for the collegial care and intellectual feeding of those engaged in SoTL work. Indeed, many participants described feeling as if they were moving out of their most familiar scholarly worlds when looking more closely at their own teaching and their students' learning. It was often described as taking up a new line of work at an angle orthogonal to what they had done before, which was daunting and sometimes threatening, as they remark below:

> I think that's been one of the larger changes is trying to understand research and knowledge differently and more broadly and less, very specifically, quantitative. Recognizing that that is one way of looking at the world and it's only one way, and it's not any better or any worse than any other way. (KM)

> There can be value to learning new things and taking different approaches and connecting with people across campus. . . . But it also doesn't have to be like you're throwing out everything you've done before you did SoTL work to try to learn something entirely new. Both acknowledging the value of interdisciplinary connections and the ways in which that can enrich and enhance work, but also trying to think about acknowledging and supporting people to do work that's connected to their own existing approaches. (BM)

With this goal, participants sought to let go of historical disciplinary narratives and expand perspectives into the interdisciplinary space where "essential knowledge" can become a relative term. Most talked about the value of the opportunities to gain interdisciplinary perspectives via access to each other's work. Collaboration was seen as a process of abstraction, of seeing underlying patterns and deeper ideas that extend across the arts and sciences. The overlaps observed among different disciplines then shine a light on the deeper knowledge underlying them:

> What really I found fascinating was people from so many different disciplines trying to get at the same, what would I call it? The secret sauce . . . ? The good teachers, whether they're in chemistry or in geography or in studio arts, there are characteristics and motivations and approaches that work across those media. (PS)

> That's what I learned to accept, that there isn't going to be one point of view. And there, perhaps, shouldn't be one point of view. Having diversity and inclusivity of views is actually extremely important for education and, frankly, for teaching of practices of any sort, or meta skills. (RF)

> What I was surprised to learn was that outside of the humanities, there are a lot of people with shared interests and shared experiences. That I can talk to engineers, I can talk to anyone across campus, and we're going to have some similarities, and differences, obviously. But that those can be really fruitful, too. (CG)

Many participants talked about needing a radical open-mindedness that is required for true interdisciplinary practice and integrative work to occur, an elastic mindset that can reach into the corners of other disciplines and adapt to different ways of knowing. Making one's teaching more effective emphasizes creativity and thinking outside the box with the goal of modelling flexible and innovative thinking, which several participants came to realize:

> One of the major things that has changed for me is trying to expand my understanding of what ways of knowing are. And I use that phrase very purposefully. I think initially, it was trying to have a better understanding of what research was. (KM)

> I don't understand why people think they have to be specialists. They actually just have to be specialists in thinking of good questions that are soluble. (BW)

> I think the other advantage of that kind of [interdisciplinary] environment, which is collaborative, is that you see so many more new opportunities that you wouldn't otherwise see, sitting in your own little disciplinary world. There are two aspects to this—one, a willingness to give up things, and two, a willingness to see the benefits—the new things that could be done, ways to move forward with new things. That was the exciting part of our interdisciplinary work. Putting in a new framework and making it in a new setting really helped. (CE)

In the context of SoTL work, an interdisciplinary approach highlights the diversity of the teaching commons, where one can transcend disciplinary conventions and integrate disparate perspectives to answer one's questions about teaching.

How can we create a context for instructor learning that encourages experimentation and risk-taking?

Many co-authors talked about creating a context for their own learning and meaningful inquiry. They noted how essential it is as a SoTL practitioner to feel safe, to experiment, and to play without penalty. For some, overcoming teaching challenges underscored the value and commitment of having institutional and departmental leadership support, peer support from colleagues, and permission to model a nuanced approach to teaching and learning, showing that there's more to success than being perfect. It was observed that:

> One of the most important things is you have to be allowed to fail, totally. We'll never get far ahead unless you can take that risk of failing. And failing shouldn't be a penalty because you learn so much from the failures, far more than from the successes. . . . Good instructors have to feel safe being vulnerable. And I always did, I always felt the institution was going to protect me. And I never felt personally at risk, I felt that I was able to take risks because with failure, okay, we'll try again. (CE)

> It's not having a short-term lens but a long-term lens. We need to be regularly asking ourselves who we are as teachers, as educators, as researchers. We need to be boosting self-awareness around what we are role-modeling to our students since they are our young leaders for the future. Are we truly walking the talk on the notion of risk-taking? (TM)

One participant agreed that modeling vulnerability is integral to forge trusting and genuine connections with students:

> Obviously, as you teach more, you get more confident. But I'm also more confident in taking risks and trying things and being willing to fail. I noticed with my students there's more trust and there's a better connection when I can be more vulnerable in that way, too. That's been a big shift in terms of my thinking and how I approach it. I don't have to have all the answers, and I don't need all the armour on to be the Super Prof. (CG)

Bringing these ideas together, one participant noted that the increasing complexity of the world places more of an emphasis on teaching "meta-skills" to students (RF). As such, they felt it would be helpful if we could take advantage of the relative safety and insularity of the institution to help students (and peers in teaching) practice being courageous, adaptable, and free-thinking.

> As someone who's held more careers than I can count, I would say that workplace readiness is not about a skill set for a specific job. It's about the adaptability and being able to re-learn and keeping up with what's happening in the workplace and so on. I

> mean, if I had learned really, really well how to teach using a chalkboard, it wouldn't serve me very well at the moment. (NS)
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> It's often difficult to play within the guidelines provided by institutions while at the same time remain authentic to your true self. But it's important to experiment with both. An ability to take a risk. Quite frankly, for me having been in the academic setting for a significant time, I can now mentor the younger ones. As such, I often say: "Try it, it'll be great and don't fixate on always doing things right—rather, focus on doing the right things according to your internal compass. Take that risk and remember that what's most important is your integrity." (TM)

These comments on experimentation and risk-taking highlight a final core feature of the teaching commons in the context of SoTL: creating a safe space to try things out that may not always work and being empowered to be authentic and adaptable.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

These stories offer ample and enthusiastic testimony of the power of SoTL to transform our classrooms, revitalize our teaching, and improve students' learning experiences (Huber & Hutchings, 2006). These conversations often take place on the edges of campus life, and in ad hoc ways that are not sustained or built upon. Yet, these stories underscore the impacts of modelling instructor vulnerability and openness, establishing more and better occasions to gather collectively, and partnering and working collaboratively to explore diverse perspectives (Huber & Hutchings, 2006).

The growing interest in conducting inquiry into teaching and learning among faculty is consistent with the vision set out in McMaster's (2021) first teaching and learning strategy, *Partnered in Teaching and Learning*. A re-imagining or transformation is afoot that reinforces the importance of further embedding the scholarship of teaching and learning into institutional practices. We must continue to develop a research-informed culture where our classrooms and courses are not only inclusive but also conducive to taking pedagogical risks and experimenting with innovative teaching.

The practices embedded in the stories presented here reflect the institutional commitment to advancing this teaching and learning strategy: encouraging "innovative, experimental and playful mindsets", reviewing teaching evaluations to include "self-reflection, peer observations and student voices" (McMaster University, 2021, Inclusive and Scholarly Teaching section) and to "enable, support, recognize and reward interdisciplinary teaching and learning" (McMaster University, 2021, Partnered and Interdisciplinary Learning section). The history of innovation and excellence in teaching and learning is deep and rich at McMaster, and we hope that these narratives supplement this history with thoughtful and personal reflections on what SoTL means to individual scholars.

While these stories acknowledge how essential the value of institutional supports are to foster and increase the capacity for SoTL work, we note that there is more work to be done. To

this end, building shared cross-campus supports and institutional structures which encourage scholarly teaching practices and recognize teaching leadership will help us build a vibrant teaching and learning community (see Poole, Taylor, & Thompson 2007). Some suggestions to this end include giving credit for SoTL work, embedding SoTL in institutional funding priorities, and fostering creativity through policy and culture, as the following participant comments show:

> Giving credit for work done in SoTL will be important . . . for creating more capacity into doing more SoTL research. If you do SoTL research only for you [but have] all the 1,000 duties you have and committees you have to attend, I'm not saying you'll ignore it but [you] will put it in a lower level of your priority and it will stay constantly there. (DC)

> Funding is really important in some ways for people doing this work. And not only because it practically opens up material resources and supports, but also because . . . having even small grants or funds for this work allows it to [fit] into the currency or the language of the institution. (BM)

> Policy and attitude. There will always be hierarchies and pecking orders and that's just the way the food chain works. But that food chain attitude often squashes creativity and honesty about making necessary changes. We need to encourage change in institutional structures that are no longer fostering leadership in teaching and learning. (TM)

Students, instructors, and staff are already learning and developing sustained, constructive dialogue on how to achieve outstanding learning experiences. Moving forward, we need to create and sustain more gathering places for conversations across the disciplines that foster risk-taking and experimentation. Looking back, our collaborators expressed gratitude for the support they received from university leadership, mentors, and the MacPherson Institute for providing inspiration, space, and opportunities to come together:

> I think the biggest supports are having colleagues, like-minded colleagues. We're a team, and I think pulling together that team and having that team work so well as it does, that's important . . . even those encouraging words are important. Knowing that the person, maybe your Chair is saying, "Yes, go ahead and do it," that is so important. (CE)

> With the help of my mentors and those who supported me, I learned to be more courageous, take an increased number of healthy risks, and demonstrate bravery in decision-making. (TM)

> The MacPherson Institute was a godsend for me. I think it came at the right time and the right place, and that I was probably open enough to it in terms of my confidence

> level and my interests and wanting to pursue this further. It was those things I found there that I wasn't finding in my faculty or my department: a community of like-minded people with shared interests. (CG)

In this chapter, through the experiences of a small number of educational scholars, we have gained insights into how gathering places of many shapes and forms have allowed SoTL work to develop, evolve, and blossom at McMaster. We hope this work has shown that not only can SoTL lead to concrete pedagogical advances on the ground, but its practice also reveals deeper insights into the value of learning, the power of collaboration, and the many ways of knowing.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Philip Savage*, associate professor in the Department of Communication Studies and Media Arts, presents and writes in the area of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, and has published a large number of articles and conducted research projects on a range of teaching and learning subjects, including most recently investigations of undergraduate communication studies' experiential learning, supported by research grants from SSHRC and McMaster University's MacPherson Institute.*

The following contributor notes comprise adapted co-author responses to the prompt, "Why do you do SoTL work?" during the focus group session.

Dan Centea, Engineering: *With a formal education in engineering and a 10-year career in industry and disciplinary research, I wasn't interested in SoTL before my academic career. Then I discovered problem-based learning, a course delivery approach that started my research in teaching and learning. As a research fellow at McMaster's MacPherson Institute (2014–2016), I conducted multidisciplinary work with a focus on SoTL. Now, I have published more than 40 peer-reviewed papers related to teaching and learning and SoTL (although I distinguish them as separate, but related, fields).*

Carolyn Eyles, Earth, Environment and Society: *When we started working in SoTL 25 to 30 years ago, it was to help make the student learning experience more productive, more valuable, more relevant, and more rewarding. We needed to learn from students to identify ways to enhance the quality and value of their experiences and build them into the curriculum. Our SoTL*

work now involves undergraduate students directly, who then gain first-hand experience of the research process, develop their inquiry skills, and experience the thrill of exploration and discovery.

Nancy Fenton, Health Sciences/Educational Development: *My background in education is rooted in health care, where I worked for several years and explored questions related to the intersection between patient care, program development, and clinical education. This context was foundational to my early experiences of developing a research program in SoTL for the Centre for Leadership in Learning. These early days in SoTL centred on building relationships, developing partnerships, supporting faculty and students, and perhaps equally important, understanding the cultural contexts of teaching and learning, and the institutional capacity for SoTL research.*

Robert Fleisig, Engineering: *SoTL helps me make sense of the teaching challenges that are not oriented around content. I use different pedagogies than most of my colleagues who mainly teach content-oriented courses. Because I teach mindsets, skills, and ways of thinking, I need ways to understand this kind of learning, which is more about the journey than getting the right answer. SoTL to me is the analysis and synthesis to make sense of what I don't understand.*

C. Annette Grisé, English and Cultural Studies: *I think the idea of community and connections has been a key piece for me in finding this place where all my diverse interests were suddenly able to converge into a field. The other piece was seeing beyond my department, as it can be very insular in one's own little department or program. This move was important for professional growth and idea development, but also to feel support and that there were people out there interested in the same things, studying them and thinking them through.*

Teal McAteer, Business: *My SoTL work has allowed me to be me. I have never been the traditional academic, but SoTL continues to provide that large sandbox to play in and explore concepts and methods that make me a better teacher. My research on transformative learning has drawn on student voices to help carve out more practical academic program and course objectives, as well as more meaningful evaluation methods. My SoTL work has permitted growth by listening to the student!*

Ken Meadows, Educational Development: *As an educational developer, I do SoTL work for the relationships, for the community of faculty, staff, and students that engage in this work. When I engage with others on SoTL, I am generally connecting with people who are truly passionate about student learning, and it does not get much better than that! And it has been community that has brought me over the years to the people at the MacPherson Institute, with whom I have come to learn and share my experiences.*

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Nicola Simmons, Educational Studies: *I always spent time reflecting on my teaching and was already collecting data when SoTL came along. It just felt like the perfect fit and still does. I was a big convert and started SoTL Canada because of it. SoTL Ontario began around my dining table at a time when SoTL experts in teaching centres were feeling rather isolated. McMaster was at that table. Like so much in SoTL, it's been about building community and collaborating on projects—and I love supporting the network!*

Jee Su Suh, Neuroscience/Educational Development: *As a STEM PhD student, getting into SoTL satisfied a curiosity on what it means to learn and teach well. In addition to the wealth of literature in this area, there is just as much, if not more, insight to be unearthed from the motivations, visions, and supports that good teachers leverage to educate their students. In exploring the personal stories of our co-authorship team, I hoped to get at the fundamental and timeless ideas that my generation of educators can draw from and be inspired by in our rapidly changing world.*

Bruce Wainman, Anatomy: *My whole SoTL experience is not like most people's because I never, ever planned to do any SoTL. Somehow, I went from doing an MSc in medical science and a PhD in the study of lakes to running an anatomy lab. I was pretty sure I didn't know too much about anatomy education but then we started to gather data and luckily, I had mentors who made sure that the data made sense. And I thought, wow, this is awesome. I don't know anatomy, but I know something about teaching. It's mostly, let's try to do something that's better for students.*

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