

WABASH COLLEGE  
SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING CONFERENCE PROPOSAL

Submitted by:  
Kathleen M. Perkins  
Columbia College Chicago  
[kperkins@colum.edu](mailto:kperkins@colum.edu)

USING SOTL AS AN IN-DEPTH TOOL  
IN A DEPARTMENT ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

Assessment in the Performing Arts often begins and ends with juried critiques of portfolios or performances. While these can speak to final products, they hardly ever give insight into the creative or the learning processes that produced the objects or phenomena being critiqued. Using strategically targeted SOTL projects, however, can afford faculty the deeper understanding of student learning needed to impact development of pedagogy and curricula. Organizing and managing such an assessment strategy can be challenging but offers additional benefits especially in faculty development. This proposal outlines the recent innovations in an assessment program for a large theater department, innovations that utilize data from both the evaluations of individual students and SOTL inquiries into specific learning outcomes.

Although the faculty in my department has some past experience conducting team SOTL projects examining particular aspects of our students' learning, we are now using SOTL inquiry as a sophisticated assessment tool. It gives depth and weight to the broad outline of student progress gained from our supporting web-based system of individual student evaluations. These evaluations are based in course-specific prompts measuring both progress and skills levels of each student in each performance-based class each semester. In a department with over eight hundred majors, this process results in an abundance of data which gives a good general picture of learning in the department and even of areas of concern, but doesn't provide the kind of detail necessary to implement thoughtful change. Exploring the issue as a SOTL inquiry can illuminate the necessary nuances. We launched the web site and two SOTL inquiries this past semester and have some preliminary outcomes to consider.

This proposal is for an informal presentation and discussion of the organizational particulars of this assessment program. Although based on a broad knowledge of SOTL and assessment literature and practice, the emphasis of this presentation is on a practical example of SOTL in assessment. Feedback on issues such as framing apt assessment questions, sampling size, project management and methodologies, faculty participation and development, the use of results, and the application of this assessment design to other disciplines would be particularly welcome.