# Narrative

I have taught in higher education for 11 years across two institutions. In that time, I have taught 15 different undergraduate courses, ranging from first semester orientation courses to senior capstone courses, and over 3,000 students in classes as small as two and as large as 180. I have learned much from this experience, from the humility to recognize that we can all improve as teachers to the wisdom to know that on-going reflection on our teaching is an essential part of our professional development and growth. My experiences, and what I have learned from them, have led me to a philosophy of education that is firmly grounded in both developmental and educational theory and is continuously evolving to incorporate best practices from the SoTL literature. Indeed, it is this philosophy that drives my own SoTL research.

For example, Perry's (1970) research on the Stages of Intellectual Development suggests that most entering college students are at the Late Multiplicity stage, characterized by the belief that most problems have solutions that are not yet known or never can be known. This gives rise to the relativistic attitude that everything everyone says is "just their opinion" and that all opinions are equally good because no one knows the "real" answer. This is the most critical time in intellectual development, because students who are not challenged to move beyond this way of thinking or taught how to evaluate solutions in context and relative to supporting evidence become frustrated with and alienated from the learning process.

Building on Perry's (1970) work, I designed a SoTL project to investigate the relative effectiveness of two different methods of teaching students higher-level critical thinking and reasoning skills in a research methods course (Maurer & Rouse-Arnett, 2006). In this case, the underlying *question* of which method was more effective at teaching critical thinking skills was connected to the *goal* of increasing students' critical thinking skills. The *theories* involved included not only Perry (1970), but also Bloom's Taxonomy (1956), Anderson & Krathwohl's (2001) redesign of Bloom's Taxonomy, and Huitt's (2005) critique of both taxonomies. Essentially, Bloom (1956) argued that higher levels of his taxonomy required more "critical thinking" than lower levels, with synthesis occupying the second highest level and evaluation occupying the highest level. Anderson & Krathwohl (2001) concurred with that formulation, but argued that the placement of synthesis and evaluation should be switched. Huitt (2004) argued that synthesis and evaluation were actually both at the "highest" level, but that each tapped a different kind of equally difficult critical thinking. To reconcile these conflicting perspectives on the best way to teach critical thinking skills, and to help my students learn how to evaluate situations relative to supporting evidence, I designed a SoTL investigation that would compare synthesis and evaluation methods.

The *methods* for this investigation involved two sections of a research methods course. In one section, students were required to conduct a small original research project and write a research paper (i.e., synthesis). In the other section, students were required to write critiques of three published research articles (i.e., evaluation). Students in both sections completed a six-item version of Lawson's (1999) Psychological Critical Thinking Exam at the start and the end of the course. Results indicated a significant difference between the two sections at posttest, with the evaluation section scoring over 100% better than the synthesis section.

Posttest Group Difference
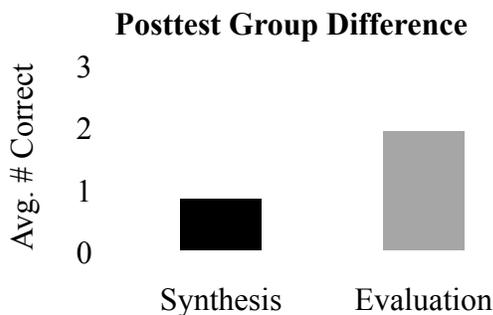
These results suggest that teaching students evaluation skills will result in greater learning gains in critical thinking than teaching synthesis skills. This is no small finding, as it suggests the traditional "research paper" model, which has been used for decades to teach critical thinking in the social sciences, may not be the most effective way.

That project also illustrates a common theme in much of my SoTL research: questioning previously unquestioned assumptions about students, faculty, and "best practices." I have never been one to believe that just because a teaching method is well-established that it means that method is effective, or that just because a method is effective, no better or more effective method could exist. It is no less important to push the frontiers of knowledge in SoTL than it is in disciplinary research; unexamined assumptions and unquestioned methods lead to intellectual and pedagogical stagnation.

Another example of this theme can be seen in my work on course evaluations (Maurer, 2006). Research on teacher/course evaluations is one of the most prolific areas of SoTL: over 2,500 pieces of scholarship have been written on the topic. This is hardly surprising as course evaluations have become increasingly important in faculty evaluations (Academic Job Forum, 2005), and it has been well documented that numerous extraneous factors—from instructor gender to type of course—can bias those evaluations (Marsh & Dunkin, 1992). Among the most replicated and controversial biasing factors is the student's expected grade in the course, with students who expect lower grades giving lower average ratings to instructors (Salmons, 1993). However, the reason behind the connection between expected grades and instructor evaluations had never been seriously explored. Rather, it was merely assumed that students who were doing poorly in a course would attempt to "seek revenge" on faculty members by rating them poorly.

To answer the *question* about the source of the connection between expected grades and instructor evaluations, with the *goal* of gaining a better understanding of student motivations in evaluating instructors, I designed a SoTL project to explicitly test two competing *theoretical* explanations for the observed connection between grades and evaluations. Specifically, I compared the revenge explanation posited by many faculty members with a cognitive dissonance explanation (Ginexi, 2003). Cognitive dissonance theory holds that rather than attempting to "seek revenge" when they receive low grades, students' motivations are far more self-serving. That is, when students expect to receive a high grade but instead receive a low grade, they are confronted with a discrepancy that they must explain. They can either attribute the discrepancy to internal causes (e.g., failure to study, believing one is "stupid") or external causes (e.g., the instructor was unfair). Because an internal attribution would be threatening to the ego or self-esteem, students attempt to protect their self-image by locating the responsibility for the discrepancy externally and blaming the instructor. If cognitive dissonance theory were the explanation for the connection between grades and evaluations, students would be no more likely

to rate an instructor poorly for a low grade if course evaluations were important to faculty employment than if they were unrelated to faculty employment.

The *methods* for this investigation involved 17 courses I taught over a two-year period. Each course was assigned to one of three conditions: Revenge, Neutral, and Control. Students in the Revenge condition were explicitly told when course evaluations were administered that the results would be used by administrators in decisions to retain, dismiss, promote, or tenure me (i.e., given an opportunity to "take revenge"). Students in the Neutral condition were told only to take the evaluations seriously. Students in the Control condition were told the results would never be seen by university administrators and would have no impact on decisions to retain, dismiss, promote, or tenure me (i.e., denied any opportunity to "take revenge"). Results failed to reveal any significant differences in evaluation scores between the conditions, controlling for students' self-reported expected grades. That is, students who were given an explicit opportunity to "take revenge" on an instructor for a low grade were no more likely to rate the instructor poorly than students who were explicitly denied any opportunity to "take revenge."

Course Evaluation Score by Group
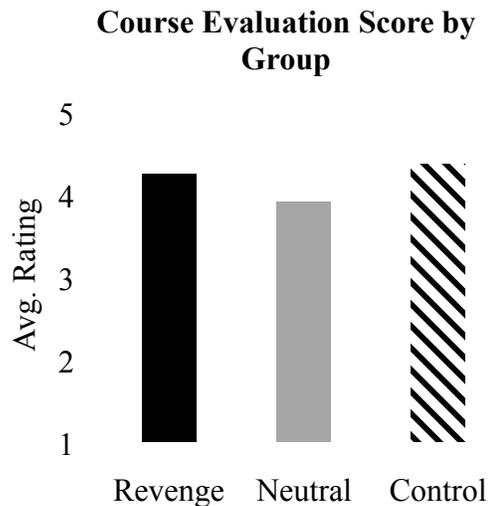
These results roundly defeated the revenge explanation. Rather, the most parsimonious interpretation of the observed relationship between expected grades and instructor evaluations is simple cognitive dissonance. Contrary to many faculty claims, students do not appear motivated to "punish" their professors for low grades, even when given the opportunity to do so.

A final example of this theme of examining unquestioned assumptions can be found in my work exploring post-exam attendance (Maurer et al., 2009). Although many prior SoTL investigations have examined student attendance generally, none have focused on student attendance for the class period after an exam. Anecdotal evidence suggests that student absenteeism can be disproportionately high on those days compared to others (much_metta, 2008). Further, the class period after an exam is often significantly different from other class periods in an instructional unit, with many faculty using that time to either review the results of exams or lay the foundation for the new unit. Thus, student absenteeism on those days can have disproportionately negative effects on their learning.

However, the reasons behind high levels of student absenteeism on those days have never been examined. Rather, it has merely been assumed that the same reasons students are absent on any other day also hold for post-exam absences. This assumption fails to adequately explain why absenteeism is so much higher on those days. Thus, this investigation began with the *question*, "What is behind the high levels of student absenteeism for the class period following an exam?" The *goal* of this research was to gain a better understanding of students' motivations to

determine if faculty could develop more effective strategies for encouraging student attendance. The primary *theory* used in this investigation was Commodification Theory (Hassel & Lourey, 2005), which argues that students view a college education as a commodity they have paid for and if they have paid for a class, it is entirely up to them if they want (or need) to attend or not. More specifically, it posits that as long as students believe they can get the grade they want without attending class, they believe they shouldn't have to attend class if they don't want to. Thus, Commodification Theory says student attendance hinges on extrinsic motivation and predicts that students with high levels of extrinsic motivation to attend class (e.g., in-class quizzes, penalties for absences, etc.) will be more likely to actually attend class.

The *methods* of this investigation involved surveying students university-wide about their own post-exam attendance, their peers' post-exam attendance, and their beliefs about the consequences of absenteeism during the class period post-exam. The results revealed that whereas the Commodification Theory may be an effective explanation for general patterns of student attendance, it is completely inconsistent with student attendance patterns on the day after an exam. Specifically, no difference in attendance was reported regardless of the post-exam day curriculum or the course attendance policy. That is, absenteeism was the same in classes that reviewed student mistakes on the exam as it was in classes that started a new unit, and it was the same in classes with penalties for absences as it was in classes where attendance wasn't taken. Thus, it did not appear that faculty could extrinsically motivate students to attend. Rather, the qualitative analyses suggested that student motivation for absenteeism that period was internal, with students stating their reason for absence was because they were "too tired" or "needed a break" [from learning], regardless of the consequences. These results have far-reaching consequences for higher education as they fundamentally question the assumption that faculty have both the power and ability to influence student attendance through extrinsic motivators. If student attendance is a product of intrinsic motivation, we need to reexamine both our methods for encouraging student attendance and our expectations for faculty to realistically do so.

In summary, my SoTL research has focused on student learning, behaviors, and motivations in individual courses, across my courses, and across the entire university. My projects were deliberately selected to question previously unquestioned assumptions about "best practices" in teaching and learning and to challenge many deeply held, but anecdotal, beliefs about students and faculty. In the next section, I discuss in further depth my broad approach to SoTL and the impact of my SoTL work on my students, others' students, and other faculty.

Impact of Projects on Teaching & Learning

I cast a wide net with my SoTL projects, designing many of them to have broad appeal beyond my classroom into the classrooms of others both within and outside my discipline. This wider orientation to conducting SoTL is deliberate: my primary goal is generative in nature. That is, I wish to disseminate my SoTL work to as many people as possible, influencing the maximum number of other teachers and scholars and encouraging them to take a SoTL-based approach to their own teaching. My discipline, Family Science, is very small compared to many others. If I were to focus exclusively on SoTL applications within my discipline, the ultimate impact of that work would be quite limited. However, my discipline also has an established interdisciplinary orientation, seeing multiple connections with many other disciplines and both borrowing from and giving back to those disciplines in a symbiotic fashion. By focusing my work on SoTL projects that overlap with other disciplines, I maximize the potential of any one project to influence teaching and learning in multiple disciplines. My broad orientation to SoTL projects can be seen in my choice of topics, my extensive collaboration with other faculty, and my dissemination of my research to diverse audiences.
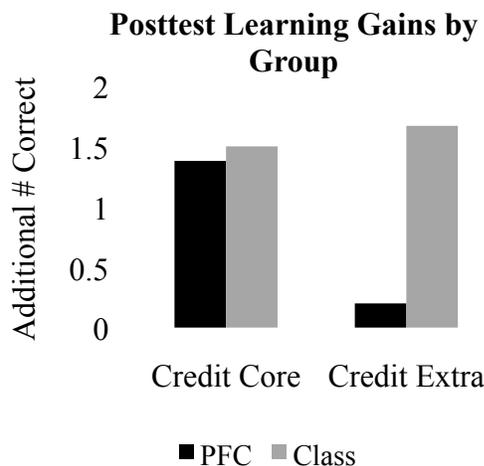
Choice of Topics
In my seven years at Georgia Southern University, I have undertaken approximately two SoTL projects per year. Of those projects, all but one have focused on applications that extend beyond the Family Science classroom. For example, every fall I teach two sections of Georgia Southern's required first-year orientation course: FYE 1220. In Fall 2009, I began a SoTL project to investigate the impact of differential incentives on student reading compliance. In other words, can faculty extrinsically motivate students to complete assigned readings on time by increasing the point value of daily reading quizzes? Students in both of my FYE 1220 sections were assigned to complete daily readings for the course. Every day, there was a quiz over the readings at the start of class. However, in one section, the quizzes were only worth one point each; in the other section, they were worth 10 points each. All other aspects of the course were identical. Theoretically, the students in the 10-point section should have had higher extrinsic motivation to do the readings on time, since the quizzes were worth more in their section of the course. The results were intriguing.

Group Differences in Graded Work

Group Differences in Reading Compliance
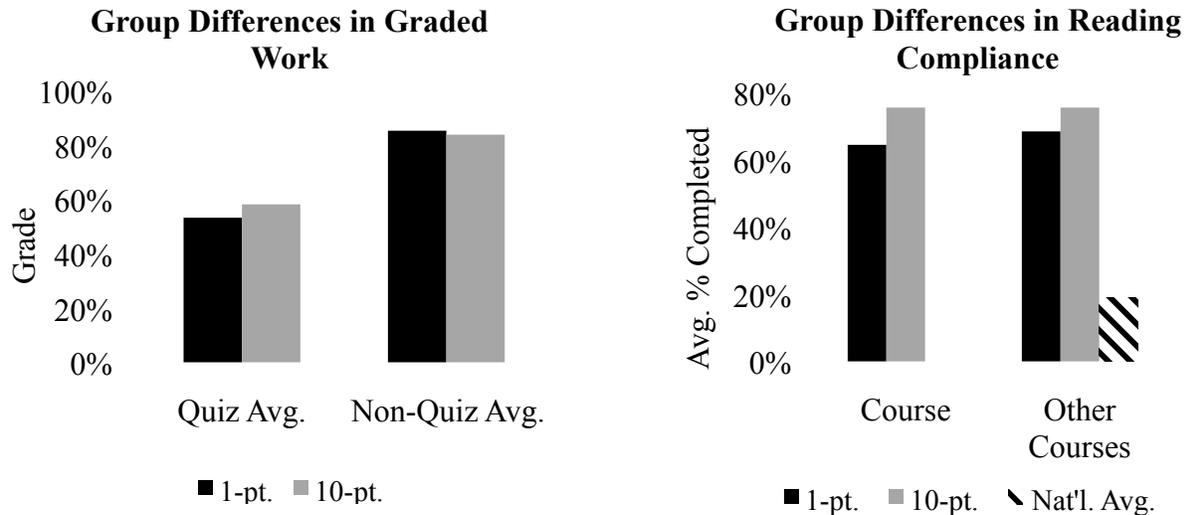
Although the 10-point section showed higher average scores on the daily quizzes, and higher self-reported levels of reading compliance for both this course and their other courses, those differences were not statistically significant. (However, the small sample size in both sections did limit power, so it is possible that with larger replications a significant difference may emerge.) Still, the two sections averaged between 65-75% daily reading compliance, which is a substantial increase over the national average of less than 20% reported in the SoTL literature (Burchfield & Sappington, 2000). These results suggest that the mere presence of a daily quiz, rather than its point value, significantly motivated students to do the assigned readings. This is further supported by the fact that there was no difference between the sections in their grades on any other class component (i.e., "non-quiz avg."). To further clarify this possibility, in Fall 2010 I will be replicating this experiment with one section receiving a daily ungraded quiz (i.e., a simple compliance check) and one section receiving no quiz at all. The results of that data wave should be able to help confirm the initial conclusion.

As noted above, this project is an example of how my SoTL work extends beyond the Family Science classroom. There is nothing about the topic of reading compliance that is limited specifically to Family Science, nor anything about the methodology of this project that is limited to Family Science. Simple reading compliance quizzes could be administered in virtually any discipline and this project provides the necessary empirical foundation to justify replication in any other discipline.

A second example of how my SoTL work extends beyond the Family Science classroom can be seen in a two-year investigation I have just completed that explored the effectiveness of using a Peer Financial Counseling program to teach basic financial literacy skills similar to those I teach in my Family Economic Environment course. Here, the knowledge and skill sets being taught did originate within a Family Science classroom, but the focus of the project was to explore alternative modes of delivery that could reach a wider pool of students in a shorter amount of time than a traditional semester-long course. In the traditional

Posttest Learning Gains by Group

course, students learn about dozens of Family Economic issues from a college professor over the course of a full semester. In contrast, Peer Financial Counseling [PFC] sessions focus narrowly on only one issue (e.g., budgeting, credit), are taught by other undergraduate students who have mastered the material, and last less than one hour. Clearly, the traditional course covers far more material and in far greater depth, but for the purposes of teaching just basic financial literacy skills, it is possible the PFC sessions may be a more cost-effective alternative. The results of my investigation confirm that possibility.

Students in the traditional Family Economic Environment course and students completing the PFC session on credit were both given a pretest/posttest assessment of their knowledge of basic principles of credit. Five of the questions concerned material covered in both the traditional course and the PFC session ("Credit Core") with an additional five questions about related material that was only covered in the traditional course, but not the PFC session ("Credit Extra"). The average increase in knowledge from pretest to posttest on the Credit Core questions was over 20% for students in both groups. In contrast, only students in the traditional course showed any increase in knowledge at posttest on the Credit Extra questions (over 30%), as would be expected given that they were the only students exposed to that material. Additionally, students in both groups were asked five questions about planned future behaviors with respect to the use of credit on a three point scale (1=less likely, 3=more likely) and the average score for both groups was 2.9/3.0, indicating no difference between the groups in their planned future behaviors.

Planned Behaviors

Increased Likelihood of Behavior

Credit Behavior

■ PFC ■ Class
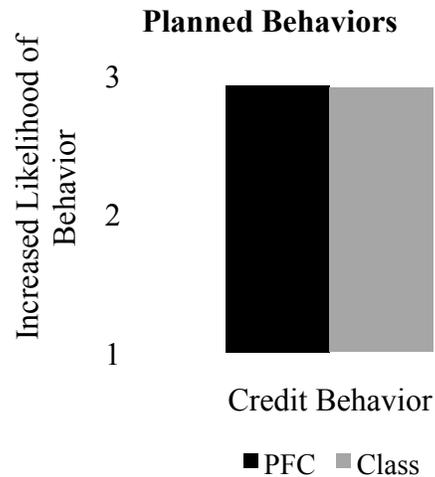
This project demonstrates that many Family Science skills and concepts need not be limited to the Family Science classroom, but can be taught in a limited fashion outside the classroom in other venues, maximizing the dissemination of important life skills across a broad spectrum of university students. This is reflective of my approach to SoTL: rather than focusing narrowly on how to better teach the concepts in my classroom, I focus broadly on how to reach more students outside my classroom and how to better ensure that the maximum number of students possible benefit from this research.

Collaboration with Other Faculty
The majority of my SoTL projects have also involved at least one collaborator, and in some cases as many as six from six different disciplines. Again, this is not coincidental, but deliberate. My goals in conducting SoTL research are not limited to improving teaching and student learning, but include a generative aspect—involving other teacher-scholars in SoTL, facilitating connections between them, and encouraging and inspiring them to continue conducting SoTL on their own and in collaboration with others after our collaborations are over. Such interdisciplinary collaborations have the added benefit of adding a richness and diversity of perspectives to any joint project. For example, the Faculty Learning Community on SoTL,

which I chair, this year conducted a research project investigating student and faculty perceptions of group work. Members of this group came from the fields of nutrition, health, nursing, accountancy, and foreign languages. Each member of the group used some form of group work in their classes, but all for different pedagogical reasons to achieve different learning objectives. In some cases, group work was used to simulate "real world" experiences. In others, it was used to require students to teach specific skills to their peers, skills they would need to teach to others in professional settings in their field. By uncovering these differences early in the process, it allowed us to focus our project on exploring not just what students and faculty thought about group work, but also how they used it since we noted a broad range of uses even among our members. Our results were quite surprising. When faculty and students were asked a broad, open-ended question about why they used group work in their own classes (or why their professors used group work in their classes), the most frequent response given by students (33%) was that faculty use group work to provide students with opportunities to learn to work together in "real life" situations. In contrast, the most frequent response given by faculty (18%) was that group work allows for learning from one's peers, consistent with Vygotskian theory (Vygotsky, 1978).

Reasons for Using Group Work
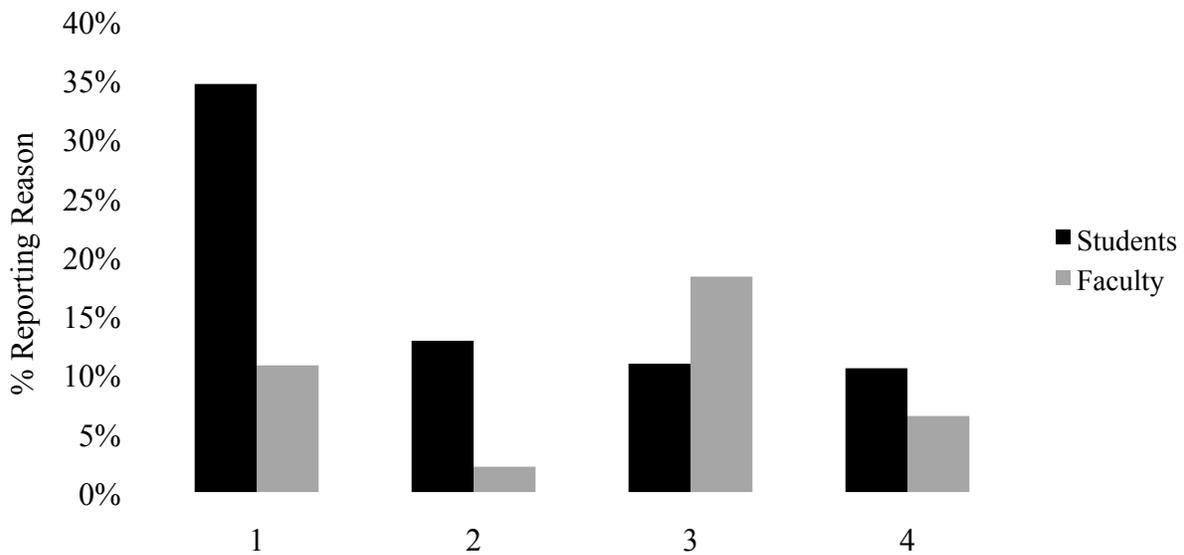
Note. 1=Learn to work in groups/"real life" situations; 2=Less work for professor; 3=Allows for peer learning; 4=More student interaction/sharing ideas.

What is most interesting here is not that faculty did not use group work to teach students how to learn to work in groups or that students did not perceive faculty to use group work to facilitate peer learning; they clearly did. Rather, it is that the reasons faculty used group work, and the reasons students *perceived* faculty to use group work, were significantly out of synch. This suggests a breakdown in communication in the teaching-learning process with faculty being less explicit than they need to be with students about *why* they are using the pedagogical approaches they are. Fortunately, results like these suggest an extremely simple and easy solution for

faculty: be more explicit with students about why you teach the way you do. By correcting these misperceptions, faculty can facilitate greater student "buy in" to the learning activities and stand a greater chance of achieving their learning objectives.

This project is also illustrative of my "maximum dissemination" approach to SoTL. By focusing on a topic common to many disciplines and identifying a teaching-learning issue that can be easily addressed with minimum time and effort, there is potential for a relatively large and immediate impact on the classroom environment across multiple departments in the university. This potential is further enhanced through the involvement of multiple collaborators from different disciplines, each of whom will be sharing these results with their own departmental colleagues.

<u>Dissemination to Other Scholars</u>
My broad orientation to SoTL research can also be seen in my approach to disseminating my work. Whenever possible, I try to present and publish my work in interdisciplinary and international venues to maximize the potential impact of the work on teaching and learning in multiple disciplines. For example, in the last two years alone, I have published five SoTL projects. Four of them were published in interdisciplinary outlets and three of them were published in outlets with an explicit international focus and readership. Two of the three SoTL articles I have in preparation are similarly focused at both interdisciplinary and international audiences. Additionally, over that same time period I delivered six presentations to audiences that were both interdisciplinary and international.

My expertise in the area of SoTL has also afforded me the opportunity to be a part of two panel presentations, one plenary (Maurer, Kurtz, Gunn, Lauridsen, & Steele, 2010) and one keynote (Regassa, Gilpin, Frost, & Maurer, 2010), where I have had the privilege of sharing with other scholars the current state of SoTL research and opportunities for future growth and development. Further, I have had multiple opportunities to present "starter session" workshops to introduce other scholars and faculty developers to SoTL, both internally at Georgia Southern (Maurer, 2009; Maurer, 2008; Maurer, 2007; Frost, Gatch, Maurer, Sturges, & Longfield, 2010), and regionally through the University System of Georgia's Faculty Development Series (Regassa, Gilpin, Frost, Maurer, & Longfield, 2010).

Additionally, I serve as a reviewer for both the International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning and the SoTL Commons international conference, ensuring methodological rigor in disseminated SoTL work and helping other SoTL scholars to refine that work. This past year, in collaboration with Georgia Southern's Center for Excellence in Teaching, my Faculty Learning Community on SoTL co-sponsored the first annual SoTL Expo at Georgia Southern. The SoTL Expo provided a peer-reviewed forum for Georgia Southern faculty to showcase their recent SoTL work to the entire campus community. In reviewing submissions for the SoTL Expo, and in helping to make it a reality, I was able to call further attention to the outstanding SoTL work others are currently doing on campus.

It is these opportunities that have enabled me to be meaningfully generative with my SoTL research, teaching others how to conduct their own SoTL projects to answer their own SoTL questions, giving them feedback on the research process, and shaping the development of the SoTL field. It is my goal in so doing to inspire as many people as possible to both take from and give back to the SoTL literature so that SoTL can realize its full potential to have a truly transformative impact on 21st Century higher education.

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Gunn, C., Kurtz, G., Lauridsen, K.M., **Maurer, T.W.**, & Steele, G. (2010). *Evolution and engagement in SoTL: Today, tomorrow, and internationally.*

Maurer, T.W., Sturges, D., Shankar, P., Allen, D., & Akbarova, S. (2010). *A faculty learning community on the scholarship of teaching & learning: A case study.*

PEER-REVIEWED PRESENTATIONS

Maurer, T.W. (2010, March). *Incentive-based reading compliance*. Paper presented at the annual SoTL Commons: A Conference for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, Statesboro, GA.

Maurer, T.W. (2010, March). *"Value-added" financial education*. Paper presented at the annual SoTL Commons: A Conference for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, Statesboro, GA.

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Sturges, D., & **Maurer, T.W.** (2009, April). Active learning for allied health majors: A case study of role play effectiveness. Paper presented at the Research and Practice Conference "Transcending Boundaries: a Future for Best Practices", Statesboro, GA.

Sturges, D., & **Maurer, T.W.** (2009, April). Understanding protein synthesis: The efficacy of role play in large undergraduate human anatomy and physiology classes. Paper presented at the HAPS Regional Conference, Macon, GA.

Maurer, T.W., Frost, L., Sturges, D., Charles, S., Allen, D., Cawthorn, M., & Brewton, C.C. (2009, March). *Faculty and student perceptions of influences on post-exam attendance.* Paper presented at the annual SoTL Commons: A Conference for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, Statesboro, GA.

Maurer, T.W., Lee, S., Sturges, D., Averette, D., & Allen, D. (2009, March). *Perceptions of disruptive classroom behavior.* Paper presented at the annual SoTL Commons: A Conference for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, Statesboro, GA.

Sturges, D., **Maurer. T.W.,** & Cole, O. (2009, March). *Understanding protein synthesis: A role play approach.* Paper presented at the annual SoTL Commons: A Conference for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, Statesboro, GA.

Maurer, T.W., Lickteig, M., McCollum, S., & Town, C. (2007, November). Fostering interdisciplinary connections for SoTL. Paper presented at the annual SoTL Commons: A Conference for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, Statesboro, GA.

Maurer, T. W. (2006, April). Creating an interdisciplinary, social action-oriented, student-faculty collaborative research group. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Conference on Undergraduate Research, Asheville, NC.

Maurer, T. W., & Rouse-Arnett, M. (2005, October). Encouraging students to critically read and write about published research. Poster session presented at the annual Best Practices in Teaching Psychology Conference, Atlanta, GA.

Maurer, T. W. (2004, October). Teaching undergraduates how to critique research articles. Poster session presented at the annual Best Practices in Teaching Psychology Conference, Atlanta, GA.

INVITED PRESENTATIONS

Maurer, T.W., Kurtz, G., Gunn, C., Lauridsen, K., & Steele, G. (2010, March). International Panel: SoTL Today, SoTL Tomorrow, SoTL Internationally. Plenary session presented at the annual SoTL Commons: A Conference for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, Statesboro, GA.

Regassa, L., Gilpin, L., Frost, L., & **Maurer, T.W.** (2010, February). The scholarship of teaching & learning: What, why, how, and who? Panel Keynote Address presented at the annual Eastern Educational Research Association conference, Savannah, GA.

Workshops:

Regassa, L., Gilpin, L., Frost, L., **Maurer, T.W.**, & Longfield, J. (2010, March). The scholarship of teaching & learning: What, why, how, and who? Workshop presented at the University System of Georgia's Office of Information and Instructional Technology, Athens, GA.

Maurer, T.W. (2009, 2008, 2007, August). Research on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at GSU. Workshop presented at the Georgia Southern University annual New Faculty Forum, Statesboro, GA.

Seminars:

Maurer, T.W., & Reksulak, M. (2009, September). Class management and disruptive behaviors. Seminar presented through the Georgia Southern University Center for Excellence in Teaching, Statesboro, GA.

Maurer, T.W., McCollum, S., Lickteig, M., & Town, C. (2007, April). SoTL roundtable on the scholarship of teaching & learning. Roundtable discussion presented through the Georgia Southern University Center for Excellence in Teaching, Statesboro, GA.

GRANTS FUNDING SOTL RESEARCH

GSU Student Faculty Collaborative Research Grant, $2,796.28, Fall 2005
GSU Faculty Development Grant, Summer Award, $3,000, Spring 2004
GSU Faculty Development Grant, Development of Instruction Award, $580.16, Fall 2003

STUDENT SOTL RESEARCH SUPERVISED

Publications:

Battle, Q. (2008). What are the underlying causes of the observed differences in educational attainment on the basis of gender and ethnicity? *McNair Scholars Journal.*

Presentations:

Cole, O. (2009, April). *Understanding protein synthesis: A role play approach.* Paper presented at the annual Georgia Southern University Phi Kappa Phi Research Symposium, Statesboro, GA. Co-advised with Sturges, D.

Setari, A. (2009, April). *Child and Family Development students' response to gendered play behaviors.* Paper presented at the annual Georgia Southern University Phi Kappa Phi Research Symposium, Statesboro, GA.

Battle, Q. (2008, July). *What are the underlying causes of the observed differences in educational attainment on the basis of gender and ethnicity?* Paper presented at the annual Penn State McNair Scholars Summer Research Conference, State College, PA.

Battle, Q. (2008, July). *What are the underlying causes of the observed differences in educational attainment on the basis of gender and ethnicity?* Paper presented at the

annual Georgia Southern University Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Program Research Symposium, Statesboro, GA.

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Dr. Linda Noble
Associate Vice Chancellor for Faculty Affairs
University System of Georgia
270 Washington Street, SW
Atlanta, GA 30334-1450

April 27, 2010

Dear Dr. Noble and the Awards Committee:

As a past recipient of the 2007 Regents' Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Award I am delighted to offer this letter of support for my colleague, Dr. Trent Maurer with whom I have been working on SoTL projects and dissemination since the Fall of 2007 where we met as members of a GSU faculty learning community dedicated to SoTL. Dr. Maurer has been the facilitator for the SoTL faculty learning community for several years, collaborating with all faculty interested. He continually promotes SoTL with great enthusiasm. Since meeting in the faculty learning community, we have both become even more involved promoting SoTL at GSU, in the University System, and through the Southeast Region.

Dr. Maurer's scholarship is the area of family social sciences. He has published quite a long list of papers during his tenure at Georgia Southern. Because Trent views research as collaborative, he has authored papers and presentations in several diverse areas. It is this effort that I feel completely embodies SoTL. He has identified holes in the literature through his own scholarly teaching and has chosen to fill in the gaps through his own scholarly contributions.

I am co-author with Dr. Maurer on a paper involving student and faculty perceptions of post-exam attendance. Trent lead this charge through the faculty learning community by organizing all the co-authors on tasks that fit their strengths. I worked with him on the quantitative data analysis. I was impressed with his approach to statistical analysis and evaluation. Together we were able to draw several publishable conclusions. He organized the original draft, asked for input, and re-organized the article for final submission. It is impressive how deeply he considered the content of the paper and any possible points of contention for reviewers. This sort of consideration made the paper an iron-clad success.

Dr. Maurer is a teaching scholar and is continually improving his teaching through evidence-based approaches. As recently as this year he has begun incorporating guided-inquiry instruction into his Family Economics course, an effort that is commendable considering that there are no inquiry-based materials available. I had the opportunity to observe his class and have been impressed with the amount of effort that he has put in *and* the amount of effort he is able to get out of the students during class by engaging them in the activities he has developed. This area of instruction in the social sciences is an area

where a SoTL scholar like Trent could have a great impact on teaching social sciences in higher education.

In summary, Dr. Trent Maurer is one of Georgia Southern's most prolific SoTL scholars. He is a strong promoter of SoTL at many levels. He practices teaching *and* scholarship every day when he enters the classroom, offering not only the best to the students in his classes but future students in the social sciences through his research. I offer my full support for his nomination.

Sincerely,

Laura Frost, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Chemistry

May 11, 2010

Dr. Linda Noble
Associate Vice Chancellor for Faculty Affairs
University System of Georgia
270 Washington Street, SW
Atlanta, GA 30334-1450

Dear Dr. Noble:

I write in support of the application of Dr. Trent Maurer for the FY 2011 Regents' Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Award. From my perspective as a former professor and current faculty developer, Dr. Maurer has made a personal and professional decision to engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning based upon his awareness that there are various forms of valid, beneficial scholarship and that teaching in higher education is serious intellectual work that calls for an inquiry-led, evidence-based approach in order to achieve optimal outcomes for students' learning.

Dr. Maurer is an actively strong voice for SoTL and has participated in SoTL in many ways and is extremely open and willing to explain, encourage, support, do, and foster SoTL:

- Facilitator of the Faculty Learning Community for SoTL during the first four years of its existence (2006-2010).

- At the 2009 and 2010 SoTL Commons Conferences, a presenter of sessions that were accepted through a blind review process; also a panelist at the open plenary session at the 2010 SoTL Commons Conference, and a reviewer for the 2007 conference

- Presented sessions on SoTL at the annual New Faculty Forums at Georgia Southern

- Presented numerous posters at the inaugural SoTL Expo in March 2010 at Georgia Southern

- Member of the SoTL Leadership Team that helps guide the "SoTL at Georgia Southern" initiative, previously having taken a leadership role in fostering that university-wide initiative

- Co-authored an essay that has been accepted for publication in the July 2010 issue of *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning* (IJ-SoTL).

- Member of the very international Editorial Review Board of IJ-SoTL

- Part of a team of Georgia Southern faculty who have provided presentations on SoTL: USG faculty development workshop, Athens, GA, March 2010; opening keynote session, conference of the Eastern Educational Research Association in Savannah, February 2010

With SoTL continuing to grow as an international momentum for the improvement of student learning in higher education, and with all the focus placed on SoTL in recent years at Georgia Southern, Dr. Maurer's pedagogical research and promotion of SoTL among colleagues, places him in a leadership position for fostering SoTL within and beyond his own discipline, on our campus and well beyond. Thus, Dr. Maurer's steady, enthusiastic commitment to SoTL is an indicator of his professorial professionalism by making his work public, open for review, and building the SoTL body of knowledge for the benefit of faculty anywhere and their students. With faculty like Dr. Maurer, SoTL will flourish.

Thank you.

Alan Altany, Ph.D.
Director

May 19, 2010

Dr. Linda Noble
Assistant Vice Chancellor for Faculty Affairs
Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia
270 Washington Street, SW
Atlanta, GA 30334-1450

Dear Dr. Noble,

I am honored to nominate Dr. Trent Maurer, Associate Professor of Family Science, for the
FY 2011 Regents' Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Award. I simply cannot imagine a more
worthy candidate. Throughout his tenure, Dr. Maurer has actively pursued the scholarship of teaching and
learning, demonstrating that not only is he a devoted and reflective practitioner of his pedagogy, but he
also reflects deliberatively on the SoTL projects he pursues, who he involves in his research, and where
he disseminates his work to achieve the broadest possible impact within the larger SoTL community.

Given the relatively small size of his discipline, Dr. Maurer intentionally reaches out beyond disciplinary
boundaries, connecting with faculty from other disciplines and "both borrowing from and giving back to
those disciplines in a symbiotic fashion." For example, he recently led an effort to study student and
faculty perceptions of group work done during class time. Disciplines represented included nutrition,
health, nursing, accounting, foreign languages, and family studies. Despite using group work in different
ways, results indicated that students perceived the purpose of group work as learning to apply theoretical
knowledge to "real world" situations while the faculty members' goals were to have students learn from
each other during group work activities. These findings indicate that teachers need to be more
forthcoming with students in explaining the rationale behind group work. Dr. Maurer believes that
collaborating with other faculty across disciplines not only improves teaching and student learning, but
also involves other teachers-scholars and encourages and facilitates their SoTL research. In his own
words, "such interdisciplinary collaborations have the added benefit of adding a richness and diversity of
perspectives to any joint project."

Similarly, his selection of topics is designed specifically to have broader appeal in order to impact SoTL
scholarship beyond his own disciplinary boundaries (e.g., "can faculty extrinsically motivate students to
complete assigned reading on time by increasing the point value of daily readings for the course?" and a
two-year study on the "effectiveness of using a Peer Financial Counseling program to teach basic
financial literacy skills"). In disseminating his results, he targets national and international venues. Within
the last two years, he has published four of five SoTL projects in journals with an "explicit international
focus and readership." At Georgia Southern, he has led the Faculty Learning Community for SoTL since
its inception in 2006, sits on the SoTL Leadership Team, and co-sponsored the first annual SoTL Expo
(2010).

In closing, Georgia Southern is very fortunate to count Dr. Maurer among our faculty, and I am proud to
nominate him for the FY 2011 Regent's Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Award.

Sincerely,

Gary Means
Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs