

Michael Brogan | m.brogan@uws.edu.au
University of Western Sydney
Sydney, Australia

Teaching Fellowships: Developing 'Personal' Touchstones within Broader Institutional Strategies for the Dissemination and Application of the SoTL

Institutional programs for educating and developing academic staff in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) take a number of forms: from the development of teaching philosophies (both personal and institutional), through campaigns to raise awareness of certain key components of teaching and learning, the strategic use of experts such as educational developers and teaching fellows in school fora, to funding projects aimed at particular topics or issues. In this presentation I argue that while the 'top-down' model of university-wide educational campaigns and specific projects have an important role in raising academic staff consciousness about the SoTL, the most effective strategy - the one that has the most power to gain recognition within the broader academic culture and thus cause real change to teaching activity in more academic staff - is based upon individual contacts between staff at all levels and a mentor/developer or advisor who can place the SoTL in a personal context.

To establish my thesis I will explain my role as a teaching fellow within the University of Western Sydney, the impact, both positive and 'negative', that large-scale projects and campaigns have upon academic staff at the teaching coalface and contrast that with the feedback I am collecting as a result of taking a one-on-one approach to SoTL staff development within one multi-discipline College within the University.

In so doing I will be arguing that a more personalised approach to integrating SoTL into academic cultures provides greater opportunity for its recognition and use by those cultures. This is consistent with the conference theme - that changing teaching approaches should be based upon scholarship and be evidence-based. This presentation also makes clear that academic staff at all levels of SoTL sophistication are life-long learners and, whether engaged in larger staff fora on teaching development, or not, all academic staff want to understand and learn how to better practice the craft of teaching in more student-centred times.

The specific objectives of my presentation will be to compare and contrast the standard institutional-level SoTL development processes (the 'top-down' model) with the engagement activities of individualised, personal SoTL service. I will do this by first illustrating exemplars of top-down of SoTL development, and their potential pitfalls, and then engaging the attendees in a problem-based scenario (incorporating a survey and SoTL prompting materials) as utilised with select UWS academic staff. The specific outcomes for attendees will be an understanding of the distinctions (pros and cons) in the use of broad SoTL exposure and development programs as against individualised and personally focussed SoTL-oriented connections.