



University  
of Glasgow

# Fostering the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning through collaboration

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## The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)

Two projects:

- Glasgow's Faculty Learning Community
- International SoTL partnerships

Models of collaborative Higher Education

Fostering SoTL through collaboration

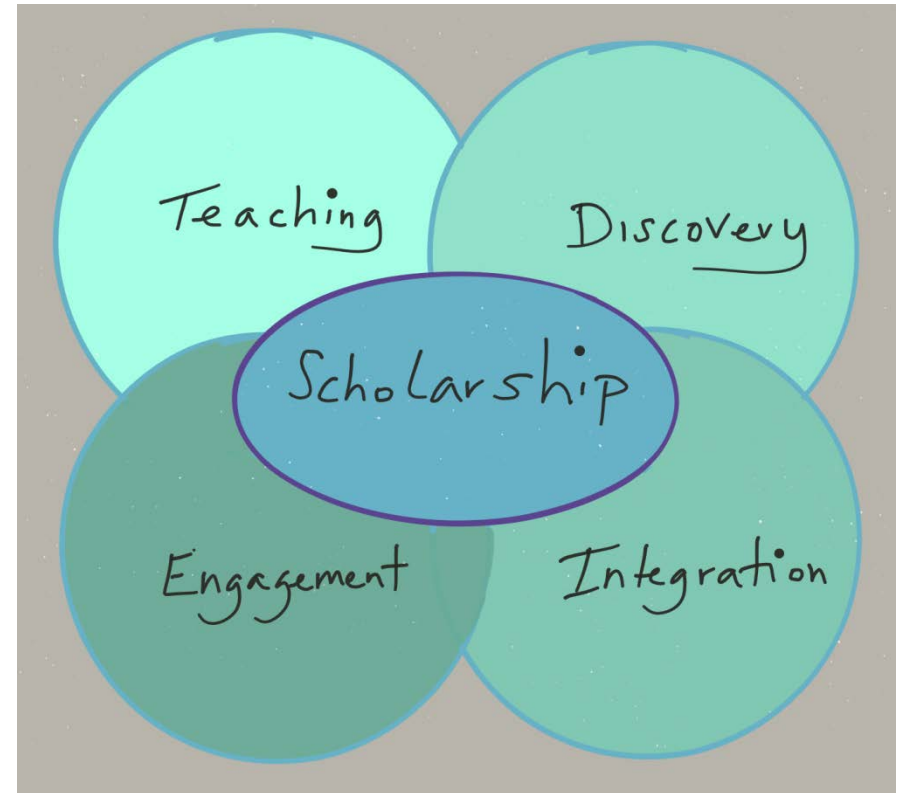
## Defining collaboration:

*Collaboration transcends and includes cooperation in its reliance upon procedural compliance and is distinguished from the 'shared pursuit' of cooperation by the inclusion of **collective creation**.*

*Elliot (2008) cited in Walsh and Kahn (2009)*



- Scholarship of Discovery – research
- Scholarship of Application – service to the community/consultancy work
- Scholarship of Integration – makes links between disciplines/interdisciplinarity
- Scholarship of Teaching



## Scholarship of Teaching

- Aims to study and improve student learning
- Aims to improve knowledge about teaching and to share that information

***And that's pretty much all that Boyer said about the Scholarship of Teaching***

**Scholarship of Teaching has evolved into the Scholarship of Teaching *and Learning (SoTL)***

## Lack of a clear definition:

- A movement
- A revolution
- A tool, model, framework, vehicle, form of professional development, a range of practices
- Often conflated with pedagogical research
- A process (associated with actions, outcomes and outputs?)

**In addition to problems around defining SoTL, there are a host of other issues/criticisms including:** it favours teaching over learning, it ignores existing fields e.g. adult education, life long learning etc., there are different disciplinary approaches, etc.

- **How best to develop and support SoTL**
- **Lack of rigour**

See for example, Boshier and Huang (2008), Boshier (2009), Fanghanel et al. (2015)

## **Developing practice:**

Collaboration has the potential to bring together a range of experiences, skills and perspectives from which collaborators might learn

## **Increasing rigour:**

Most SoTL happens at the (very) local level – single or team of scholars investigating classroom practices

Collaboration in SoTL has the potential to increase rigour, generalisability and applicability through:

- Multi-site (classroom/institutional) investigations
- Cross-disciplinary investigations



Glasgow was not the first university to introduce teaching-focused/only contracts but...

*“At the outset it was clear that ‘teaching only’ appointments were unacceptable. Given the research intensive nature of the University, the view from within the institution was that ‘teaching only’ appointments would imply that these staff would not be exposed to research, far less engaged in any kind of scholarly activity and that this would lead to a significant diminution of the learning experience of students.”*

*“After considerable debate ... a way forward was identified. Concepts of ‘research – informed’ teaching and ‘scholarship’ activities were introduced as alternatives to ‘research – led’ and ‘research’. The new position of University Teacher was created for those engaged in the former.”*

- Same contractual conditions as lecturers
- Promotion to professorial level
- Duties include teaching, admin and **scholarship** (rather than research)

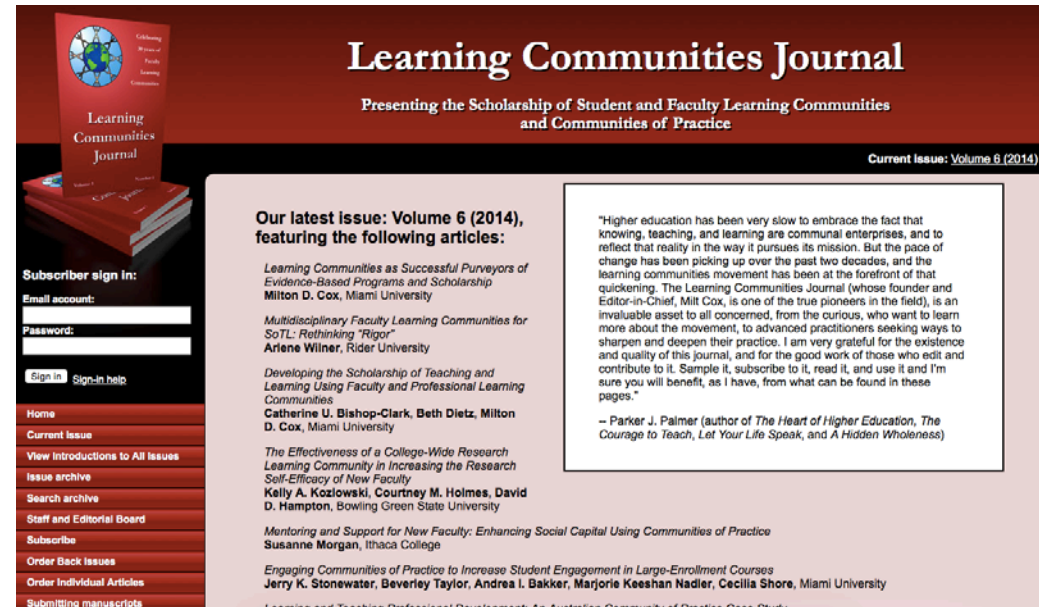
**Scholarship was defined as:** *‘maintaining and developing knowledge within an individual's specialism, and academic professional discipline, as necessary to fulfill an effective research-informed teaching role’*

I was an early UT appointment in the Learning and Teaching Centre confused about scholarship – SoTL ‘made sense’ as did my attempts to support its development at UoG

Originated at Miami University, Ohio in late 70s

Range of topics but many focus on SoTL

Brain child of Milton Cox



## Learning Communities Journal

Presenting the Scholarship of Student and Faculty Learning Communities and Communities of Practice

Current Issue: Volume 6 (2014)

**Our latest issue: Volume 6 (2014), featuring the following articles:**

- Learning Communities as Successful Purveyors of Evidence-Based Programs and Scholarship*  
**Milton D. Cox**, Miami University
- Multidisciplinary Faculty Learning Communities for SoTL: Rethinking "Rigor"*  
**Ariene Wilner**, Rider University
- Developing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Using Faculty and Professional Learning Communities*  
**Catherine U. Bishop-Clark, Beth Dietz, Milton D. Cox**, Miami University
- The Effectiveness of a College-Wide Research Learning Community in Increasing the Research Self-Efficacy of New Faculty*  
**Kelly A. Kozlowski, Courtney M. Holmes, David D. Hampton**, Bowling Green State University
- Mentoring and Support for New Faculty: Enhancing Social Capital Using Communities of Practice*  
**Susanne Morgan**, Ithaca College
- Engaging Communities of Practice to Increase Student Engagement in Large-Enrollment Courses*  
**Jerry K. Stonewater, Beverley Taylor, Andrea I. Bakker, Marjorie Keeshan Nadler, Cecilia Shore**, Miami University
- Learning and Teaching Professional Development: An Australian Community of Practice Case Study*

"Higher education has been very slow to embrace the fact that knowing, teaching, and learning are communal enterprises, and to reflect that reality in the way it pursues its mission. But the pace of change has been picking up over the past two decades, and the learning communities movement has been at the forefront of that quickening. The Learning Communities Journal (whose founder and Editor-in-Chief, Milt Cox, is one of the true pioneers in the field), is an invaluable asset to all concerned, from the curious, who want to learn more about the movement, to advanced practitioners seeking ways to sharpen and deepen their practice. I am very grateful for the existence and quality of this journal, and for the good work of those who edit and contribute to it. Sample it, subscribe to it, read it, and use it and I'm sure you will benefit, as I have, from what can be found in these pages."

— Parker J. Palmer (author of *The Heart of Higher Education*, *The Courage to Teach*, *Let Your Life Speak*, and *A Hidden Wholeness*)

- Are made up of cross-disciplinary academic and/or professional staff
- Have 6-15 members
- Are collaborative, negotiated, time-limited (normally year-long)
- Have a schedule of frequent (fortnightly) meetings
- Are cohort or topic-based
- Are grounded in the social elements of community building
- Are supported by a facilitator

Funded by Learning and Teaching Development fund (£6000)  
to support UTs

Set up and run following the Miami model:

- Cross-disciplinary (biology, chemistry, education, business, dentistry, psychology, medicine)
- 12 members
- Topic-based (SoTL)
- Supported by a facilitator (me)
- Year-long - Started in January, retreat in February closing retreat at end of year
- Regular meetings/activities throughout the year



- Retreat to enable LC to form and begin discussions of SoTL
- Monthly meetings on a range of negotiated topics –with food!
- Some meetings member-facilitated
- Mini-groups to support individual projects
- Collaborative evaluative investigation planned from outset



- Collaborative and negotiated research methodology to investigate participants' experiences of membership of the LC
- Data gathered through participants' written reflections and focus group interviews
- Data analysed using a general inductive approach
- 3 categories of themes emerged: common concerns, community, and empowerment



## **Confusion about SoTL/UT role**

*The whole scholarship idea was a bit cloudy in my head really anyway, so I thought it would be a good idea just to come and learn about that and work at it, to seriously engage with it, to see what it really meant.*

## **Desire for community**

*I am aware of the value – even necessity – of having a community of like-minded individuals with whom to exchange ideas, refine one’s thinking, and obtain practical advice.*



## Finding a safe space

*There are issues that you perhaps wouldn't speak about in your own department but you would speak to someone [in the LC] ... knowing it would be confidential*

## Finding support

*To be able to present stuff that I thought was scholarship but was not really sure about and [to] receive feedback ... was great.*

## Feeling valued

*You know, it's just what I do. It's just what I teach. It's just my class. It's just the lab that I've done. It's just the piece of work that I've developed. ... And suddenly you were thinking, well actually maybe I should be writing about this and maybe I should be telling other people about it.*

## Redefining the issue

*I certainly have a slightly clearer notion of what scholarship is, it is still quite fuzzy and grey, but ... I think coming to the Learning Community and finding out that it's fuzzy and grey for everybody else ... is better [group laughs] ... A shared fuzziness.*

## Moving forward

*As a group or a cohort we have a voice.*

The LC was effective in:

- Allowing members to share concerns about SoTL and being a UT
- Developing their SoTL expertise
- All members have gone on to publish and/or be promoted and/or move to better positions
- Some members have become local experts

Many individual and collaborative outputs – publications and presentations plus:

Early peer-reviewed LC article - Bell et al. (2006)

Collaboratively authored article evaluating the LC - MacKenzie et al. (2010)

**The LC did foster collaboration around SoTL. Why?**

Despite the positive outcomes, I was unable to secure funding for a 2<sup>nd</sup> LC but the work led to:

- Funded collaboration with two LC members to develop beSoTLed – web-based resource to support SoTL - <http://tinyurl.com/oyf4qw3>
- Invitation to facilitate a different model at GU – First year course coordinators' network
- Invitation to collaborate with a colleague, Renee Meyers from University of Wisconsin

- Potential partners invited to participate - asked to complete a questionnaire asking them: to self-assess their SoTL experience; their SoTL interests; and their disciplines
- 15 pairs (1 University of Wisconsin/1 University of Glasgow)
- Pairs matched (as best we could) based on SoTL interests and disciplines
- Each pair introduced by email and encouraged to make contact
- Throughout 2010 - email reminders and 'prompt questions' sent to spark conversations ~ every 6 weeks

Participants asked to copy their email texts to a data collection email address

- Number of email communications logged
- Text of conversations qualitatively analysed

Evaluation survey completed end of the year

## Range of engagement with the process

- 13 partnerships communicated; 2 did not ... at all
- 10 sent between 2 and 8 emails
- 3 sent between 13 and 35 emails over the whole year



Analysis of email text revealed that the most prolonged conversations took place between partners who:

**Laid the foundations** for partnership by: *sharing personal information; demonstrating warmth and empathy; and being clear about their expectations* of the partnership

**Built a working relationship** by: *demonstrating curiosity* about the other's work; and finding *common interests and beliefs* through the process

**Took things forward** by: *offering support; and searching for concrete goals* that they could work towards together

19/30 participants completed the survey:

- 70% respondents had discussed their own SoTL projects with their partners
- Only 25% respondents had discussed the possibility of a collaborative endeavour/project
- None had initiated a collaborative endeavour/project

- 70% participants would likely engage in a similar project in future

**BUT**

- Issues around disciplinary range of UoW and UoG
- While email prompts were useful they were not sufficient to build relationships
- Goals of the project were not made clear from the outset
- Structures not in place to reward/encourage collaboration

**The SoTL partners project did not foster collaboration. Why not?**

Kezar (2005) proposed that collaboration is a temporal process consisting of three stages:

This model can help explain why the SoTL partners project did not result in collaboration

Essentially, even the most engaged partners did not get beyond the building commitment stage

What is missing includes: the sense of priority, mission and rewards

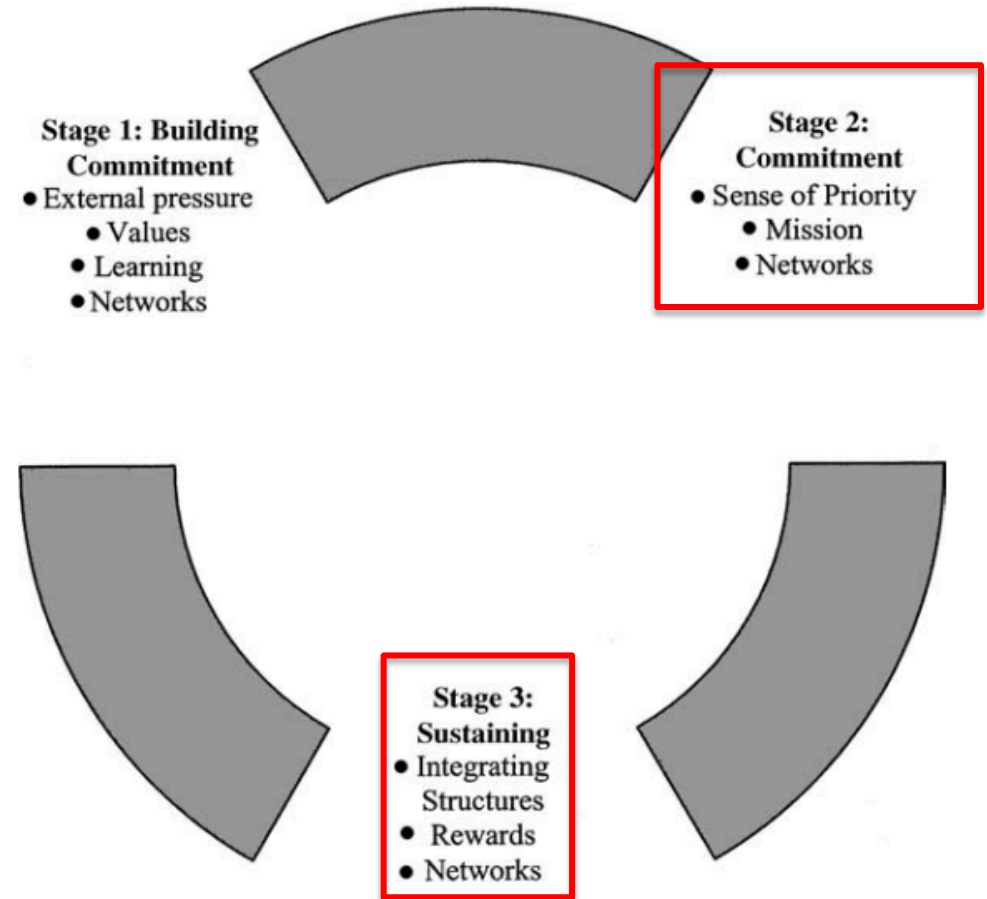


FIG. 1. Stage model collaboration in higher education.

Kezar (2005) proposed that collaboration is a temporal process consisting of three stages:

It also goes some way to explaining why the Learning Community did lead to collaboration

University Teachers perceived external pressure/priority for them to individually engage with SoTL. And one could argue that the LC was an integrating structure and involvement in a collaborative article as a reward.

However ...

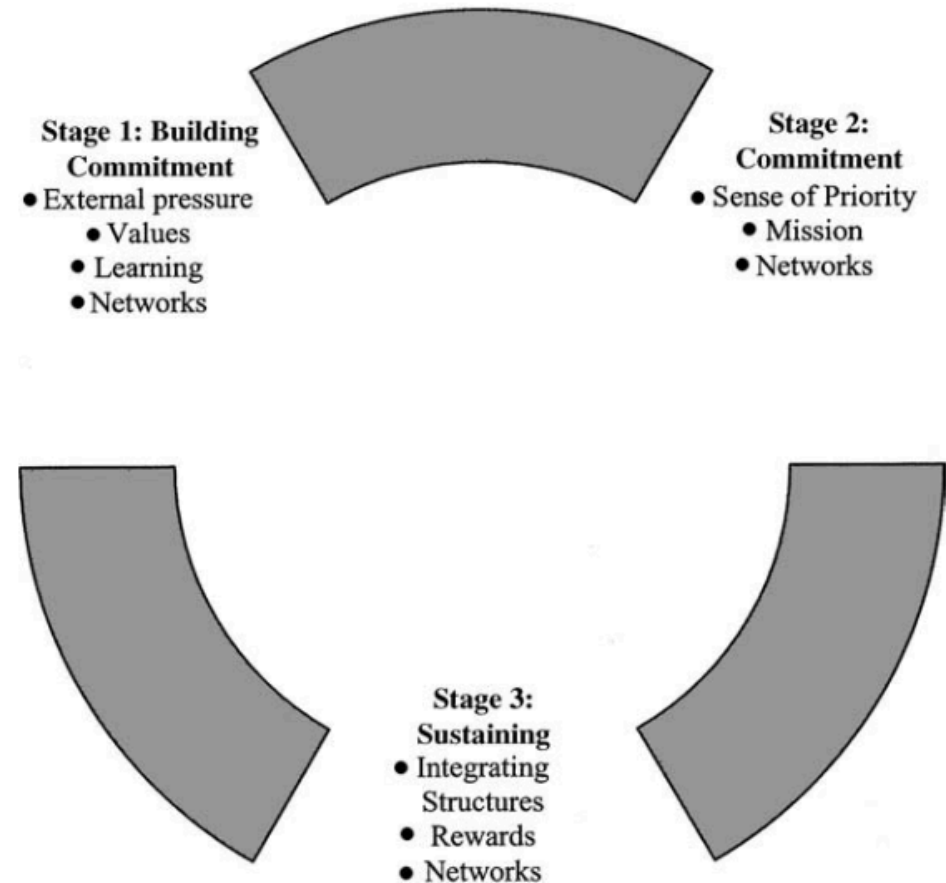


FIG. 1. Stage model collaboration in higher education.

- Kezar's model does not foreground the social elements of collaboration
- Faculty Learning Communities have social engagement at their core

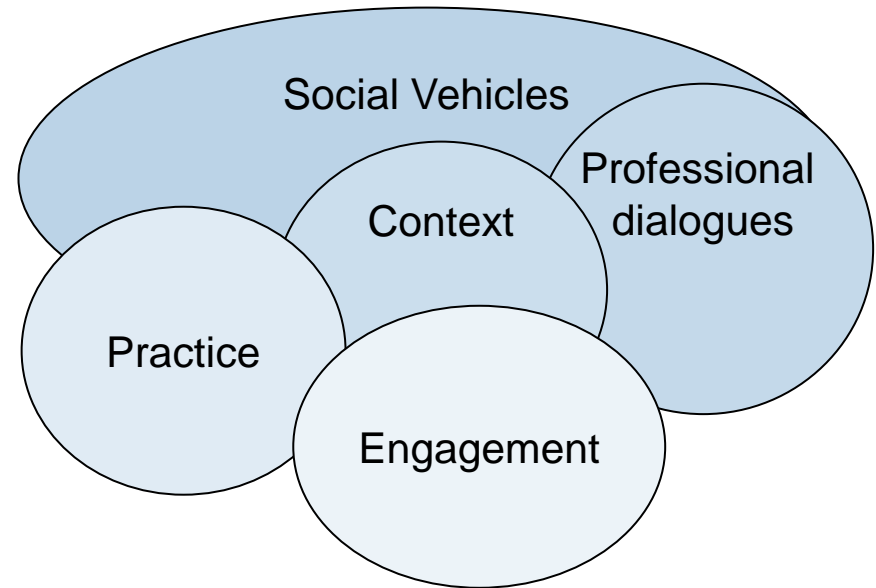
*FLCs concentrate less on efficiency and more on the social aspects of building community; off-campus retreats and conferences include times for fun, and some gatherings during the year include family and guests*

Cox (2004, p9)

- Similarly, Walsh and Kahn's (2009) model of collaborative working in HE argues that social elements are essential for effective collaboration.

Walsh and Kahn argue that for **engagement** with collaborative working to occur, **social vehicles** are essential along with opportunities for **professional dialogues**, a shared understanding of **context** and shared or common **practices** are essential.

All of the above were key aspects of the Glasgow FLC



Adapted from Walsh and Kahn (2009)

## Faculty Learning Communities:

- Suitable vehicle for supporting and developing the SoTL capacity of individuals and institutions
- Bring together all of the components deemed necessary for collaboration identified by Walsh and Kahn as well as acknowledging the temporal nature of collaboration as outlined by Kezar
- Have potential to address many other institutional priorities by building institutional knowledge and capacity including local expertise
- But they require institutional investment in terms of retreats, catering, facilitator



**Making less structured approaches (working groups, networks (including virtual ones) etc.) more effective by considering:**

The temporal aspects of collaboration building (**Kezar** model).

- Consider providing opportunities for building and sustaining the commitment necessary
- Ensure the drivers for collaboration are made clear – shared values, sense of priority and rewards

**Making less structured approaches (working groups, networks (including virtual ones) etc.) more effective by considering:**

The social aspects of collaboration building (**Walsh and Kahn** model)

- Provide opportunities for social interaction and professional dialogues between potential collaborators
- Ensure there is sufficient common ground between potential collaborators in terms of their practice and their context



Questions?

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