Tenure-Seeking Faculty Perceptions of SoTL

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Abstract

There is no dearth of literature on the SoTL's relationship with the tenure and promotion process. In 2006, Shapiro noted that "a fundamental shift in promotion and tenure criteria is needed for colleges and universities – and research universities in particular – to become learner-centered" (p. 41). Despite the call, nonetheless, Shapiro's "fundamental shift" was not realized. In a 2011 study, Secret et al. ascertained a "disconnect between the perceptions of tenured and non-tenured faculty on what qualifies as SoTL and the place of scholarly works within promotion and tenure" (p. 1). Furthermore, in 2016, Marcketti and Feeman conducted a study on SoTL evidence in promotion and tenure vitas at a research university, and they concluded that while the percentage of faculty with examples of SoTL in peer-reviewed publications and publications was significant (48%), additional cultural change was necessary for broadening integration of SotTL in faculty work. Since 2016, changes in institutional and disciplinary perceptions of SoTL have changed slightly, evinced in Gansemer-Topf et al.'s 2022 study, which claims "although SoTL efforts continue to gain acceptance within the higher education milieu, institutional and disciplinary realities may be powerful determiners of SoTL participation" (p. 1).

Accordingly, this presentation situates itself in existing SoTL literature by providing reflections and perspectives of tenure-seeking faculty members' experiences with how SoTL has facilitated their goals of tenure and promotion at a research institution. Considerations are given to aligning SoTL with research agendas, disciplinary perceptions of SoTL, and, by extension, evaluations of SoTL in pre-tenure reviews. In doing so, the presenters seek to begin formulating a framework that new tenure-track faculty can leverage to translate SoTL into success in the tenure and promotion process. Ultimately, by facilitating a think-pair-share session, the presentation seeks to equip attendees with the knowledge and resources to advocate for SoTL in the tenure and promotion process.

References

Gansemer-Topf, A. M., Marcketti, S., Hengesteg, P., & Freeman, S. A. (2022). A Decade in the Making: Examining the Evidence of SoTL through Promotion and Tenure Artifacts. Teaching & Learning Inquiry, 10. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1367806.pdf

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Shapiro, H. N. (2006). Promotion & tenure & the scholarship of teaching & learning. Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 38(2), 38-43. https://doi.org/10.3200/CHNG.38.2.38-43

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Introduction & Contexts: SoTL and the Tenure Track

What's been done?

Changing attitudes?

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SoTL Reflections from Tenured Faculty

Reflections from *Trent Maurer*

1. Tenure & Promotion to Associate ('08-09)
2. Promotion to Full ('14-15)
3. Post-Tenure Review ('19-20, '24-25)

Reflections from *Diana Botnaru*

1. Tenure & Promotion to Associate ('09-10)
2. Promotion to Full ('15-16)
3. Post-Tenure Review ('20-21, '25-26)

- legitimacy of SoTL - not "real" research
- overall support issues - ex: IRB
- lack of support for SoTL in P&T decisions - not codified in policies
- discipline specific barriers - arts & humanities and engineering

SoTL Reflections from Tenure-Track Faculty

Reflections from *Wilhelmina Randtke*

- Associate Professor, hired with 3 years credit towards tenure. Submitted Tenure packet last summer, and will be awarded tenure effective July 2025.
- Assessed on: service, scholarship, teaching (librarianship; in my case, configuring research tools), supporting student success, and professional development.
- In my technology oriented role, two aspects dominate: **pressure to display technology innovation**, and cost pressure to address technological obsolescence. Bringing focus back to learning outcomes and impact on learning requires intentionality.

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Reflections from Alesia Moldavan

- Submitted Tenure and Promotion to Associate- It's official... awarded!
  - Previously a high school math teacher and elementary STEM instructor, which inspires constant reflection in innovative instructional practices to best meet students' needs

- Tensions:
  - Being strategic with teaching and research (bridging the two)

- Successes:
  - Seeking a sphere of influence (people to support my purpose) within the university (e.g., SoTL Faculty Learning Community) and beyond (e.g., professional networks, advocacy groups)

Reflections from Bailey Nafziger

- Just submitted my 3rd year review!
  - Previously a 2nd-8th grade teacher so continuously reflecting to improve my instruction is comfortable.

- Obstacles:
  - Persistence within the publishing process

- Successes:
  - Finding collaborators and a support system within my department (Elementary and Special Education) and the college (e.g., SoTL Faculty Learning Community)

Reflections from Kevin Reagan

- Still seeking tenure - go up next year.
- University System of Georgia's five areas of evaluation: student success, professional development, research, service, and teaching (librarianship)
- Connections with library and information studies literature
- Challenges

Where to from here?

- **Aligning SoTL with bylaws**

- **Advocacy and awareness**

- **Connections with strategic pillars**

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Thank You!

Questions?