Transcript: Roundtable on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Political Science

Editor's Note

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, under the leadership of Lee Schulman, launched a program to develop the "Scholarship of Teaching and Learning" (STL) within the academic disciplines. The program included a targeted effort to foster discussions within disciplinary associations about whether the STL was useful to their work as scholars, teachers and academic leaders and if so, how to adapt STL in keeping with the particular discipline's perspectives and methods of inquiry. APSA is among the many social sciences, sciences and humanities associations to receive a small grant from the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL), directed by Pat Hutchings, to initiate an examination about the purpose, utility, and interest of political scientists in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. This *PS* symposium to foster professional deliberation on STL was encouraged by Grant Reeher, Syracuse University, past chair of the Organized Section on Undergraduate Education.

The symposium begins with an edited transcript of the roundtable, "The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Political Science," held during the 2001 APSA Annual Meeting. Next, Susan E. Clarke, University of Colorado, Boulder and Carnegie Scholar in 2000, synthesizes the objectives of STL—one of which specifies that STL be discipline-based—in her introduction to Jenny R. Kehl's data essay. In her essay, Jenny Kehl provides an initial exploration of what can be classified as STL work in political science. Finally, the annotated bibliography of STL literature prepared by Pat Hutchings, Chris Bjork, and Marcia Babb provides references for political science faculty new to this discussion. Responses and suggestions from readers about other STL work and analyses of STL are welcome and may be directed to APSA's Education and Professional Development Office <teaching@apsanet.org>. APSA's webpages on teaching and professional development <www.apsanet.org/teaching> feature resources for political science faculty to learn about the scholarship of teaching and learning and to find links to programs, including those mentioned in this article.

Sheilah Mann,
APSA Director of Education
and Professional Development

Susan E. Clarke,
University of Colorado, Boulder
Carnegie Scholar, 2000

My name is Susan Clarke, University of Colorado, Boulder. The panelists that have gathered together today are people actually working on the front lines in terms of the scholarship of teaching and learning. Pat Hutchings from the Carnegie Institution [will focus] on Carnegie but also developing scholarship of teaching and learning. Scott Keeter at George Mason University has worked as well with Carnegie among other GMU faculty in developing an online journal on their campus focused on publishing, a key criteria here on scholarship of teaching and learning. Yvette Alex-Assensoh, who is just back from Croatia on a Fulbright will address critical analysis introducing race and ethnicity into teaching and the classroom experience of doing that. Frank Boyd at Illinois Wesleyan University is going to talk about intellectual issues as well as some measurement issues in terms of experience and comparing best teachers to the rest of the faculty. I think he'll have some good news on that. Grant Reeher of Syracuse has also done some work on taking a look at the larger picture and looking at teaching.

Sheilah Mann, APSA Director of Education and Professional Development, organized this panel and raised the question of why the scholarship of teaching and learning does not have the professional recognition and standing in political science that's accorded in cohort disciplines like history and sociology. In fact there is a lot of good work on scholarship of teaching and learning in the discipline—in pockets and in bits and pieces—but that's not properly labeled or understood and not necessarily recognized.

So the question she has asked is does political science recognize that there is—and, probably equally important, that there *should* be—a scholarship of teaching and learning or are we fated to a division between the scholarship of research over here and the scholarship of teaching and learning over here? Those are some of the broader questions we're hoping to address.

Pat Hutchings,
Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

I am glad to be here from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, located in Menlo Park just down the way. I am going to do three things. I am going to talk mostly about the rationale for this work as Carnegie has come to understand it in working with good folks like Susan. A little bit about the disciplinary context for the work and, very briefly, give you a sense of where I think this work might go, some possible trajectories.

So first on the rationale and problem front. The problem behind the scholarship of teaching and learning, or at least the problem I am interested in, is not that teaching is terrible. Of course there's room for improvement, but the problem is that teaching as a profession has no way to improve itself. Teaching as a profession has no way to improve itself.

This problem begins in graduate education, maybe earlier. Admittedly and happily this is starting to change with initiatives like Preparing Future Faculty. The Carnegie Foundation itself has a new program to rethink the doctorate around a broader conception of scholarship. But in general, as you well know, graduate education prepares you to be a political scientist, not a teacher of political science.

Graduate programs at our research universities turn out newly minted PhDs who have little systematic foundation for thinking about their work as teachers. At best, and this does matter, we give them a few tricks of the trade. Mostly we send the message that while research is something we do by building on the work of others, and indeed contributing to the work of others, teaching is something we each learn pretty much on our own and by the seat of our pants. And even that learning is pretty optional.

This message is then reinforced when those newly minted PhDs come to our campuses as faculty—and I would contend that this is true even on campuses that think of themselves as teaching institutions—where they find that professional development around teaching and learning is, as I said, optional, ad hoc, even remedial. If I'm lucky, I am on a campus where there is

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an organized center for teaching that offers workshops and various kinds of support, but in most settings there is no shared institutional or professional expectation about faculty development as teachers. If we want to go to the brown bag lunch to talk about teaching, it's our business. And there's much to be said for that. There is also the problem.

What the scholarship of teaching and learning is about is an approach to teaching that deliberately tries to take advantage of practices we associate with other forms of scholarly work and how that work advances. And I'll highlight just three components of this.

First, the scholarship of teaching and learning means thinking of the problems we face as teachers, the problems we see in trying to foster deep learning in our students, not as things we need to conceal or remediate but as occasions for inquiry. As Randy Bass, one of the Carnegie scholars we've been working with, points out in a wonderful piece called "The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: What's the Problem," the difference between teaching and research and their relative and different status can be seen in the way each thinks about problems. When it comes to your research, you want to have a problem. It's the catalyst, the occasion for inquiry. It's the thing that drives your work. When it comes to teaching, asking someone, well, what's your problem will probably be understood to be an insult or an invasive kind of comment at the very least. You want problems in research. In teaching if you have them, you probably want to fix them, maybe to hide them.

The move, as Randy Bass says, behind the scholarship of teaching and learning movement is to change the status of problems in teaching from remediation to occasions for inquiry. So that's the first component. Thinking about teaching problems as occasions for inquiry.

Following from that, number two, it means investigating those problems and questions in ways that inform not only our own practice, not just learning something we can apply in our own classroom on Monday morning but investigating those problems and questions in ways that can contribute to the thought and practice of colleagues. We take that ambition for granted in other forms of scholarly work but almost no one has it when it comes to teaching and learning.

And third, it means going public with this work. Scholarship, of course, implies publicness. If I know something wonderful but tell no one, we wouldn't talk about that as scholarship. The scholarship of teaching and learning is a move toward publicness, allowing the work to be critiqued and built upon.

In short, the idea is to move from a situation in which teaching is a practice faculty learn by the seat of their pants to a situation in which teaching is more like other scholarly work where we stand, as Newton famously said, "on the shoulders of giants."

So where does all of this fit into the discipline? My colleague at the Carnegie Foundation, Mary Huber, an anthropologist, has been asking this question and working with others about it for a couple of years now and is about to come out with a volume called *Disciplinary Styles in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.* She says—this is more or less a quote—"Each discipline has its own intellectual history, its own agreements and disputes about subject matter and methods that influence what is taught, to whom, where, how and why, and the scholarship of teaching and learning must connect to these essential features of the discipline."

That is the power and the rightness of this work I'm calling the scholarship of teaching and learning [that] stems in large part from the fact that it doesn't try to turn regular—pardon the expression—faculty into educational researchers. It starts with questions and methods that come out of and are valued by the discipline. You will hear examples here in a little bit, so I won't give you any myself.

At the same time, it's clear that sometimes the favored methods and disciplines of the field—which are themselves contested and may have different status—may not be a very good match for exploring the questions we most care about, a circumstance that may cause faculty to feel that this work is not for them or that to do it would mean adopting methods and approaches in which they have no expertise, making them at best amateurs. Something most of us don't want to be as scholars.

Additionally, some of the most interesting and pressing issues about our students learning live in the trading zones, if you will, between fields. So while the scholarship of teaching and learning takes a good deal of its strength from its groundedness in the disciplines, it's also true that it entails and benefits from border crossings and thoughtfulness about borrowing and translating across fields; and as such, the scholarship of teaching and learning lives in a rather odd though interesting gray area.

Four possible scenarios for the future come right out of that. One, this work dies without a trace [laughter]. Two, it becomes a specialty, a subspecialty of the discipline in political science as it already is in some fields like chemistry and math where there are active communities doing math education, chemical education and so forth. This does have some advantages. If this work is not for everyone, if it's a specialty, it garners the goods that come with scarcity. Prestige, high standards, respected mechanisms for sharing the work, journals and so forth, grants and so on and so forth.

A different scenario is that the scholarship of teaching and learning might evolve as women's studies has done. That is faculty who are perhaps alone or at least lonely in their interest in this work in their own department find each other across departments, come together in some sort of intellectual center or scholarly center to do work with like-minded colleagues from various fields building a field in the process that eventually infuses their home disciplines. Most of us doing whatever work on whatever topic now ask ourselves, is there a gender dimension to this? Imagine the parallel in the scholarship of teaching and learning, a sort of pedagogical dimension.

Last one, the scholarship of teaching and learning might in the long run evolve a very different conception of teaching excellence in which we would aspire not only to teach our own classes effectively or at least not to provoke complaints from our students and their parents, but to contribute to thought and practice beyond our own classrooms, a world in which habits of reflection and inquiry and exchange, those central features of this work, would be widespread among many faculty.

Scott Keeter,
George Mason University

I want to make two broad points about this and then put in a plug for a couple of things that are going on at my university that may be of interest to some of you.

The first point is one that comes from my observations of teaching in the Virginia public higher education system for the past 15 years and that is that Virginia has been on the vanguard of growing political pressure on public institutions of higher education to be more accountable. But it is not a situation that we face only in Virginia. Many of you who are in public education in other states are also seeing this as well.

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The observation that I want to make is that this growing political pressure for accountability brings with it a very good opportunity for the scholarship of teaching and learning, but it also carries a very serious hazard as well.

I don't need to rehearse the history of this very much, but simply to say that Virginia, like many states, has adopted competency testing at the secondary level. We have a set of requirements called the Standards of Learning, abbreviated SOL. Students have to pass these in order to get out of high school, and the high schools themselves have to have a certain percentage of students passing them in order not to be decertified.

But there is a lot of talk now about the extension of this process of measuring effectiveness of teaching and bringing accountability to the colleges as well. More generally, we are seeing legislatures asking whether we are "spending the taxpayers money wisely," "could we do what we're doing more cheaply," and so forth.

In this climate, one response from higher education could be that we are taking the scholarship of teaching and learning seriously, that we're valuing it, that we're rewarding it. So there is a good side to this for those of us who believe that relevance in our teaching is a good idea: the pressure for accountability is a nudge-not one that we necessarily like-but one that possibly gets us to the same place.

The problem, though, is that the particular flavor of assessment at the heart of many of these political movements around the country is very problematic. It's largely fact based. At its core I would argue that it is even anti-intellectual. It promotes a consumerist mentality by students. There is a healthy debate about how best to measure effectiveness. But if you're doing it within this fact-based paradigm, it's very problematic for the kind of teaching that many us on the panel here have talked about in their work and that I think many of us share.

Political science and the study of politics is somewhat unique: while the facts are very important—and I have written a book about people learning facts—we also want our students to be able to appreciate the conflicts that are inherent in politics and to think in an "out of the box" way about how to make choices in a democratic society. Unfortunately we don't measure our effectiveness at accomplishing that very well. It isn't the kind of thing that's going to fit well with legislators' expectations of how you judge the competency of students as they graduate from college.

A second but related broader point derives from my own work on political knowledge and my more recent work on political and civic engagement among young people, I've been struck over and over by the fact that motivation is critical to learning. This is a truism and not something that's a shock to anybody. But in political science we can pour knowledge into our students' heads but instrumental motivation is really not adequate for students to learn much more than the facts that they need in order to pass the tests that we give them. We know from lots of research that politics is not a subject that most students really like.

Many of our majors do like politics. But much of our teaching is in the general education area and this is a fabulous opportunity for us. We have most of the students in the academy coming before us at least for one class or perhaps two. This is an opportunity for us to not only teach them the subject matter but also to motivate them for a lifelong learning about politics and responsible citizenship in our democracy.

But we need more research on how to motivate students to become interested and engaged in politics. This is very integral to at least one part of what the scholarship of teaching and learning could be about. How do you motivate students?

And this takes me back I think to one of the motivations for this panel: the discipline of political science has not simply been apathetic about this question, but has actively resisted our efforts to build into the discipline serious thought and debate about our role as motivators to students to be engaged in politics. I don't know the answer about how that can change, but it is very much at the root of the problem.

A couple of final comments about George Mason University, where I've been department chair for three years, and at Virginia Commonwealth University before that. From the perspective of the department chair, I hear a lot being said now about the value of scholarship of teaching and learning as a potential adjunct or compliment to other kinds of traditional scholarship in the tenure and promotion process. We currently have a provost who is saying this very explicitly to people but he's not seeing it coming through the pipeline yet. New faculty members are not hearing this during their graduate school experience and their socialization to academic life. Carnegie is very much engaged in trying to change that. But change is coming very slowly.

GMU has, with Carnegie's support, put together an online journal of teaching and scholarship about teaching that I think is very good and would [re]commend to all of you. It's called *Inventio*, and if you simply put *Inventio* into Google, the URL will pop up. But one of the noteworthy things about *Inventio* is that the essays in it tend to be written by some of the most accomplished research faculty at George Mason University, the best scholars, the people who are most respected for the scholarship within their disciplines, and not just by excellent teachers. I think that's a very good thing and I think there's a lot that you can find and learn in looking at that particular publication.

Grant Reeher,
Syracuse University

I'm glad Pat mentioned the word *amateurs*. I'm also glad she mentioned the word in a somewhat derogatory fashion when it came to research, because if I were to give a title to these ten minutes, I would say this is "In Praise of Amateurs" [laughter].

I want to suggest some concerns that emanate from the following four questions. First, is the scholarship of teaching and learning any different from scholarship per se? Second, should it be? As a side note—and I don't want to complicate this too much—if the answer to that question is no, that may be more of a comment on scholarship than anything else.

Third, what might be necessary for the scholarship of teaching and learning to become "mainstreamed"? Finally, what is the degree to which the issues involved here map onto those that have already animated and divided the political science discipline when it comes to research more generally?

Let me start with some personal information in order to illustrate where I am going with this. In my own research I tend toward the qualitative interpretation of data. I largely do interpretative narrative work that is based on extended field observations and extended interviews that I conduct myself. My work explicitly engages normative concerns. It has explicit normative purposes. It makes explicit normative claims.

I also chair the Undergraduate Education section for APSA, and through that I have had a lot of exposure to the efforts that have been bubbling up in support of the scholarship of teaching and learning, and have had a lot of discussions about it. And I have observed myself, with colleagues—now remember the kind of work I do—all too easily falling into a tendency to look for and

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to reach for a particular kind of work to trumpet, in order to get the discipline to take notice of this scholarship and to legitimate it. That kind of work is the modal form of political science research: hypothesis formulation, quantitative measurements of proxies for concepts that relate to that hypothesis, followed by statistical analyses of those measurements (note I said modal, not dominant). And I think that's our assumption about what is needed for the scholarship of teaching and learning to "make it" in the discipline.

Now, obviously there's much discussion of this vis a vis political science research. I don't want to go through all that. Again, that discussion has animated, divided, exhausted, even bored the discipline.

I think one conclusion that does come out of this discussion, though, is that there are tradeoffs. My concern today is this: Are the tradeoffs different for the scholarship of teaching and learning, and would replicating the discipline's history have particularly pernicious effects for that scholarship? Let me just offer a few ruminations on this concern.

I will start with the people who are most likely to be doing this research. I am going to give you a stereotype but, as with a lot of stereotypes, there are elements of truth to it. Those academics who are most interested in the scholarship of teaching and learning, or those who are most likely to have something important to say to the rest of us about it, are also most likely to be either: 1) the least enchanted with this modal way of understanding the world; and/or 2) have a different approach when it comes to their own pedagogy—more civic, more normative; and/or 3) inhabit institutions that have an entirely different set of demands and resources that would make it less amenable for them to engage in this modal approach; and/or 4) if they are part of that modal research tradition and they are at a traditional research-focused institution, when they turn to the scholarship of teaching and learning it may be explicitly to get *away* from that modal approach—to do something different, to put some variety in their life.

So right off the bat we've got some supply problems here.

I have some deeper concerns, though. The modal approach in political science has been associated with the development of professionalism, and I would argue that good teaching is necessarily an amateur activity. I would also argue that the best teachers—who are the ones who must be communicating to the rest of us what they do as teachers—are also amateurs in some important respects. Now, *amateur* does sound like a put-down, especially in our American culture, but that's far from what I mean here. I mean someone who does something for the love of it, not for the money or the status that comes from it, and who is explicitly engaged in a normative pursuit. In other words, they're responding to a calling.

The fact that we're all here literally attests to our success as professionals. After all, we have the stature and the standing and the respect as professional academics to be able to be sent to a common place to meet, to be charged for the privilege of doing so [laughter], and then to take that bill and give it to somebody else, in most cases. So we have that.

But professionalism and the drive toward professionalism have been marked by aspects that suggest some particular tensions for the scholarship of teaching and learning and those who are most concerned about it.[1]

The professionalism in political science was fueled largely by a need to establish itself, to gain legitimacy, and most importantly to get funding in the early and mid-part of the 20th century. There was a political economy that set in in response to that, and that political economy has, I think, been replicated now within the discipline.

This drive toward professionalism has been accompanied by a shift from a strong sense of our work's social importance and our commitment to the normative goals that it must have—and those normative goals can vary but the important thing is we can articulate them—to some kind of notion of an activity that requires specialized expert knowledge, and that by its very rightness is going to contribute to the public good.

It has been accompanied by a tendency to separate the self from the activity that's performed; that is, an emphasis on maintaining a personal distance. In particular there is a concern to distance ourselves emotionally from our enterprises. Now, quantitative methods don't cause this tendency, but they certainly exaggerate the effects of it.

It has been accompanied by a loss of the sense of the original purpose of the pursuit, and our sense of personal responsibility for what we say and what we do, both in the classroom and in print. Just consider, as an overview way to make this point, the current state of relations between citizens and the academy in political science. It can't get much worse than it is.

Now, I don't want the scholarship of teaching and learning to be less competent and less rigorous, but I do want it to be critically reflective regarding what needs to be communicated about teaching and what is the best way to communicate it. I want it to remain animated by a normative purpose rather than by the desire to establish for itself some measure of professional status. What would be better, of course, would be to secure that status, for that purpose. Even better perhaps would be to go out and demand that status for that purpose, and actually win it.

I want the scholarship of teaching and learning to be speculative. I want it to be imaginative, to be playful and, most importantly, willing to be wrong. Professionals are scared to death of being wrong, and I see that as one of our biggest problems.

I think those are the qualities of the teachers who have the most to teach us about teaching, and I think that's the *way* in which they must speak to us. And I think in doing so, if they do it well, they will be well within the definitions of the scholarship of teaching and learning that Carnegie has set forward.

Now, on a good day—I guess like a Saturday in San Francisco—I might concede that the tradeoffs that I've been talking about regarding professionalism might be worth making for political science research, narrowly defined. I'm far less likely to concede that those tradeoffs are worth making when it comes to the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Yvette Alex-Assensoh,
Indiana University

The Carnegie Foundation's efforts to legitimize teaching in the context of scholarly work are much needed and long overdue. After all, teaching comprises a significant aspect of our jobs as academics. However, unlike our scientific research about political issues, which is largely carried out within a community of scholars and amply rewarded on the basis of merit, our teaching efforts have often become isolated acts which are considered separate and outside the walls of serious scholarship.

Yet the 21st century represents dramatic and very meaningful changes in the nature as well as the substance of our educational systems especially at the college and university levels. Consequently scholars are forced to research as well as engage in rigorous and documented inquiries about various aspects of teaching and learning.

In this context, the Carnegie Foundation's initiative of scholarship on teaching and learning is necessary and therefore should be overwhelmingly welcomed by all and sundry, especially those of us who value teaching highly.

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My targeted or specific contribution to today's discussion will focus on two issues. First and foremost is touching on the need to legitimize the notion of scholarship of teaching in the discipline of political science. In the context of legitimization, the political science discipline, its constituent departments and associated faculty must validate the notion that research on teaching is serious scholarly work.

An aspect of my own research which addresses the teaching of controversial issues was published in the December of 2000 issue of PS. Titled "Moving Beyond Controversy and Toward Active Learning," the article used the literature on active learning as a yardstick to measure and where plausible evaluate how students process controversial subject matters about race, ethnicity and gender in politics.

In subsequent email messages, commentary and telephone calls, many suggested that the published essay was well received by academics from a variety of fields in the social science discipline. As many of them underscored, the piece helped them to address some of the issues that posed invariable problems in their own classrooms that bordered on controversial subject matter. Yet, many political science departments do not necessarily evaluate this work in the realm of research but merely as a form of service to the discipline.

The time has come for teaching related activities if couched in the research mode to be deemed as serious research, as serious work. Of course, the general perception that the PS article did not constitute research did not in any measure hinder my continuing efforts to engage in research on teaching, and that's why I'm working as we speak on an article about my experiences on the Fulbright in Croatia and how those teaching experiences will animate and reflect upon my teaching experiences here in the states. However, that article still was not assessed similarly as my recent article in the JOP that was considered serious research by many colleagues.

The condescending manner in which scholars view teaching, including their efforts to divorce it from all trappings of serious research does present some challenges for members of an institution's junior faculty who are trying to establish themselves as serious scholars in the profession. After all, as you and I know very well, the bulk of active teaching is done by junior faculty members while senior scholars do teach but often . . . [receive] sponsored research awards and other more prestigious ventures and prestigious classes.

Regardless of how skeptics and cynics view teaching, members of our junior faculty should be encouraged to consider research on teaching as important aspects of their scholarship and also that our departments and institutional leadership will count the products of such teaching related research as important and productive work toward promotion and tenure in the academy.

The second issue that deserves immediate attention is the extent to which the scholarship on teaching and learning addresses the dramatic ethnic and racial diversity that exists in colleges and universities today among academics and students alike. Toward that end the SOTL initiative must realize the necessity of moving from mere recognition of diversity to a genuine level of incorporating diverse perspectives, methodologies and ideas that truly represent the needs of all scholars and teachers.

Simply put, it means that we need to do a lot more, including the following:

Number one, redefine teaching effectiveness coupled with the true notion of what a professor should look like or how a professor should teach.

Two, understand that students bring racial and ethnic stereotypes into the classroom that impact or influence their evaluation of teachers as well as their work and their ability to learn.

Three, understand that traditional notions of learning and teaching may actually be hindered unknowingly by varied biases in the classroom.

Most certainly all of the foregoing issues are important if the Carnegie Foundation's efforts to render teaching as a valid area of scholarly inquiry are to be realized for the common good of all in our academic society.

Frank Boyd,
Illinois Wesleyan University

Of all the people speaking today, I am certainly the newest person to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) and have only recently begun to think systematically about these issues. My interest in this area, like many political scientists, came from a research question of sorts that led me to thinking more broadly about teaching. So, I would like to spend a few minutes talking about that research and then add a few remarks about some of the issues that have been raised by the others today.

As Professor Clarke mentioned earlier, I teach at Illinois Wesleyan University, a small liberal arts institution with a highly selective student body. Like most institutions of our size and type, there has been an increased focus on the scholarly activity over the last decade or so, along with a continued emphasis on excellence in teaching. The Department of Political Science is one of the larger departments on campus in terms of the number of students we service and the number of majors in our discipline. We have been blessed with some very capable faculty—in three of the last five years, members of our department have been elected by the student body as professor of the year.

The success of our department has served to spur my interest in the SOTL, in part because the awards earned by our department have triggered some editorializing by our colleagues, not only from the social sciences but from the other disciplines. A number of explanations have been offered for our success, but according to some of my colleagues it seems that the effectiveness of the political science faculty is likely a function of two factors. First, there were the usual suggestions of grade inflation—suggestions, of course, that might have been easily dispelled by comparing aggregate grades across departments. But the second, and most popular, explanation is that our status as political scientists positioned us to somehow manipulate the electoral process [laughter] to favor our candidates.

Hence, my initial motivations for studying teaching excellence are not completely pure. Still, I have become interested in our ability to identify an excellent teacher and, further, the extent to which excellent teachers share certain pedagogical strategies or approaches. Those questions led me on a long and very interesting road to the area that Dr. Hutchings earlier referred to as "the trading zones:" the institutional research literature, the assessment literature, and eventually to the more general higher education literature. If any of you dare venture into that netherworld, here's a statistic of interest. One article claimed that in 1985 there were 1,500 articles on teaching excellence. Since more than 15 years have passed, I suspect that the number has at least doubled.

The problem, of course—and several of my colleagues have mentioned this—is how one might define excellent teaching. And even more critically, how might one measure it? There are several prevalent approaches. One of the most common ways of measuring teaching performance is with student evaluations, but there are real and imagined problems with student evaluations and our ability to relate them to teaching excellence. A second less

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common method employed by some institutions is the use of peer evaluations. However, getting access to those data is almost impossible, especially if you're trying to do a systematic, multi-institutional study. Finally, there is the self assessment of teaching excellence. I don't think I need go into the measurement problems of that [laughter]. It is the rare faculty member who doesn't believe in her ability to teach. One interesting finding of my research is that more than 80 percent of political scientists think that they care more about teaching than any of their other colleagues.

All of these problems in identifying excellence in teaching led me to our own professional journal, *PS: Political Science & Politics*. Many of you have probably noticed in December of each year *PS* publishes a list of campus-wide teaching award winners in our discipline from all over the country. I surveyed the award winners between 1995 and 1999, asking them questions about their demographics, attitudes, and behavior. Many of the questions were drawn directly from a faculty survey administered by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute.

My findings aren't directly germane to parts of our discussion here, but if I can indulge in a short digression to promote my upcoming piece in PS [laughter], I'll just cite a few of the highlights.

First, I would like to say something about the demographics of APSA's excellent teachers. Demographics of teaching award winners mirror closely the demographics of our profession. Now what that means, of course, is that the award winners are overwhelmingly white and male, but they are also very similar to our profession as a whole.

In terms of pedagogy, I found that excellent teachers employ a variety of pedagogical approaches—it was actually difficult to identify any patterns. The one clear exception is that excellent teachers tend to assign in a number of different forms, including research projects, take home essays, in-class writing, etc.

Another finding that is particularly interesting relates to the way the teaching awards are conferred. Simply put, the selection mechanism for the teaching award has no relationship to the pedagogy of faculty. That is, faculty who received their award by a student election do not teach differently than those who were chosen by a faculty committee or, perhaps, by a faculty administrative committee. Presently, I am extending this research by taking my small subset of APSA members and comparing them to the larger set of political scientists in the HERI data set. I can say something about my preliminary findings later during the discussion if you like.

Before closing, I would like to return to an issue that has been mentioned by each of us today: the importance of institutional support. Support from our departments, our institutions, and the discipline at large will be crucial for ensuring that the SOTL becomes a recognized area of inquiry. Even at my institution, which emphasizes the importance of teaching excellence, there are faculty colleagues who are skeptical about this line of research. In fact, one of the faculty members of the political science department expressed concern to a mutual colleague in asking, "What's Frank doing with this teaching thing?" Our faculty development committee, who has been incredibly generous in supporting my research in political economy, rejected a proposal for this study because they felt that it wasn't central to the discipline.

On the other hand, I have been fortunate in receiving institutional support from those who mattered the most. My chair, Professor Tari Renner, has been supportive from the very beginning in understanding that the substance of this research is an important part of the discipline and that the methods employed are the "modal approach," to use Professor Reeher's phrase from earlier. In addition, the IWU Provost, Janet McNew, has also consistently encouraged this research.

I suspect, or at least I hope, that this is the kind of support that can be increasingly found at other institutions. When I see the number of you who have turned out today it is easy to be optimistic about this kind of research in the future and remain hopeful that we'll get an increased level of dialogue about these issues in the future.

Note

1. For a more elaborate treatment of many of the following ideas as they relate to traditional academic research in political science, see Grant Reeher, "Citizens and Professionals in the Political Science Polity," *Perspectives on Political Science.* Fall 1995, vol. 24, no. 4.

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