

Developing Our Community

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In recent years, interest in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning has grown significantly. We at **JoSoTL** are proud that we have been able to help further the sense of scholarly community provided by journals in this field. Journals offer a means to “make public” the activities of our colleagues as we pursue our common topic. Articles published in **JoSoTL** provide points of discussion, and “progress reports,” as we work to understand the art and science of teaching and learning.

As a web-based journal, **JoSoTL** also enhances aspects of the scholarly community. We can provide our publication without charging subscriptions (thanks to the kind support of Indiana University South Bend, and the University Center for Excellence in Teaching – UCET). We receive submissions and comments from authors and readers located around the world. Monetary barriers caused by subscription rates (and submission fees at some journals) can affect the reach of publications adversely, and we are thankful that we have been able to avoid these barriers to developing our community.

Regardless of the advancements in electronic communication, there remain occasions where meeting “face-to-face” is advantageous. One field that I study is the use of technology in business decision-making – Management Information Systems. Researchers in that field acknowledge that there are times when decision-makers still prefer to be in the same room, physically

together, to discuss factors in specific decision situations.

Educators also recognize the value of convening for teaching and learning. For instance, many schools of business offer certain degree programs through “distance education” systems. There are a number of schools offering graduate degree programs using these technologies. However, in almost every case, students are still required to travel to the home campus for at least one week of “face-to-face” work with their colleagues and instructors. There is an implicit understanding that it remains important for us to “get to know” each other in this familiar format before we attempt to collaborate using other communications platforms.

So too, I believe, we as scholars need to come together to advance our work. That is why we attend professional meetings. Here at IUSB, UCET annually sponsors the Midwest Conference on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. The fourth annual conference is scheduled for April 11, 2003, and Barbara Cambridge of AAHE will be the keynote speaker (for more information, see <http://www.iusb.edu/~ucet>, and click the “Scholarship of Teaching” link).

We at **JoSoTL** recognize the synergies we can develop through better partnership with the SoTL Conference here on our own campus. Many of the people involved in **JoSoTL** are also active in

the SoTL Conference. Both of these projects have reached a certain level of maturity, and it is time to explore ways to advance our common cause: supporting our shared community of scholars. In future issues of **JoSoTL**, you will see more information about the conference. We will consider how we might help make public work presented at the conference. And we will encourage you, our readers, to become involved in the conference.

How to most effectively bring these two modes of community support (web-based journal and professional conference) is certainly open to interpretation. Web technology is still a very young medium, and no one has perfected a sound means for its optimal application. Here at **JoSoTL**, we strive to improve all aspects of our journal: both the editorial process and the delivery of the journal through our web site. Please offer your suggestions for improvement via email to gkern@iusb.edu, or jostl@iusb.edu. We welcome and appreciate all of your comments. Together, we can help to form a stimulating, vibrant community of scholars as we pursue our common interests in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.