Episode 19: Dr. Peter Felten

# KL: Katie Linder PF: Peter Felten KL: You’re listening to *Research in Action*: episode nineteen.

# [intro music]

# Segment 1:

# KL: Welcome to *Research in Action*, a weekly podcast where you can hear about topics and issues related to research in higher education from experts across a range of disciplines. I’m your host, Dr. Katie Linder, director of research at Oregon State University Ecampus.

# On this episode, I am joined by Dr. Peter Felten, assistant provost for teaching and learning, executive director of the Center for Engaged Learning, and professor of history.  His recent publications include the co-authored books Transforming Students: Fulfilling the Promise of Higher Education (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014) and Engaging Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching (Jossey-Bass, 2014). From 2010-2011, he served as president of the POD Network, and in 2015-2016 he is president-elect of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. He also is a co-editor of the International Journal for Academic Development.

Thanks so much for joining me, Peter.

**PF:** Thanks for having me Katie.

**KL**: I should tell our audience that, Peter, you and I actually know each other, we’ve worked together for quite some time now as part of the editorial team for the International Journal for Academic Development. Where you are a co-editor and I am your associate editor for the North American component of that journal. So, so excited to have you on our podcast and to share a little bit of your experience. One of the areas of your work that I love talking with you about is your publications and your experience with the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Which is something that I have been kind of interested in for quite some time but I know that a lot of people don’t necessarily know what it is. So, why don’t we start there. What is the scholarship of teaching and learning?

**PF**: Well Katie, it depends who you talk to, how you get a definition of the Scholarship for Teaching and Learning. There is formal definitions and most people take the term, the Scholarship of Teaching to a book published by Ernest Boyer from the Carnegie Foundation for the advancement of teaching. The book is called Scholarship Reconsidered in 1990 and what Boyer said at the time, is that in the U.S. and around the world, how academics understood scholarship had become more and more narrow after world war II. And this kind of definition of scholarship had narrowed to be simply what Boyer called scholarship of discovery, which you might imagine as bench science or something like this, narrow original disciplinary research. Boyer says that’s very important but that’s not the only way academics are scholars and Boyer said to really recognize the full range of faculty work, you need to recognize that there’s not just scholarship of discovery, there’s also what he called scholarship application, which is about applying what scholars learn in one context to real world problems. He identified a third kind of scholarship, he called scholarship of integration; which is about bringing together different disciplines, or bringing together, bringing scholarly work into public discourse and things like this. And then a fourth kind of scholarship was the scholarship of teaching, which he said was using the scholarly tools that we have to investigate teaching and learning in higher education. Since Boyer’s definition, many different people have proposed different ways of approaching or different ways of framing scholarship of teaching and learning. My favorite one comes from a book also by the Carnegie foundation for the advancement of teaching, a 2011 book by Hutchings, Hubor, and Ciccone called the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Reconsidered. And what they say there is, scholarship of teaching and learning is really a broad set of practices that engage teachers in higher education and looking closely and critically at student learning for the purpose of improving their own courses. Their definition is, it’s a scholarly inquiry into student learning, so that I can improve as a teacher, so that my students will learn more. So that’s a basic, that’s my favorite definition of scholarship of teaching and learning.

**KL**: This is, I think that, one of the things that’s kind of interesting about scholarship of teaching and learning and we can definitely make sure we’ll link to that book in the show notes for people who want to follow up; I hear a lot of people distinguishing between what some might call scholarly teaching and then this scholarship of teaching and learning. And that there are some people who will engage in the literature and attempt to find best practices in the research literature, to apply in their teaching and that would be considered scholarly teaching. But then there is this scholarship of teaching and learning, which what I have heard, kind of in a range of definitions, means really talking back to the literature and contributing back to the literature on the scholarship of teaching and learning. And that may be through conference papers or through publications. Do you distinguish between those two things or is it a broader categorization for you?

**PF**: Katie, this is a complicated debate lots of people get into. I changed my opinion in the last couple of years and I use to think there was a very important and meaningful distinction between scholarly teaching and scholarship of teaching and learning, and I no longer do that. And why is something persuaded by some smart colleague that there’s a problem with the phrase scholarly teaching. The way I see the problem is this, if scholarly teaching is defined as drawing on what’s known about teaching and learning so I can teach effectively; that’s not scholarly teaching, that’s actually what I’m obligated to do as a professional, that’s just teaching.

**KL**: That’s a very good point, yes.

**PF**: And so, if there are people out there on a faculty who are not drawing on what we know about teaching and learning, to inform their teaching, they should be blunt not being ethical and responsible professionals. And so, I would prefer the distinguish between teaching and the scholarship of teaching and learning, which fits into your frame, right. As a good teacher, as an ethical and professional teacher in higher education, of course I draw on the literature and I draw on what my colleagues know and I draw on what I see, and what I learn from my own students to inform my teaching. If I’m going to be involved in the scholarship of teaching and learning, I’m doing that, and then contributing to and speaking to the literature.

**KL**: One of the things I think that’s kind of interesting is, and especially because you’ve brought up Boyer’s model, which we can also link to some information about that into his book, in the show notes, is I think there’s some question about what is the relationship between scholarship of teaching and learning, or SOTAL, which is kind of a short-hand that gets used for it S-O-T-A-L; The relationship between SOTAL and the broader research literature and I think that there are still some arguments from people that would say the scholarship of teaching and learning is a lessor form of research in some ways. And that institutions are still kind of grappling with, where does something like SOTAL fall, in terms of promotion and tenure. I’m wondering if you can share some of your thoughts about, why SOTAL or what kind of, why is SOTAL an important contribution to the research literature or maybe what kind of contribution is in making to that broader body of research?

**PF**: So Katie, your question reminds me of a challenge I was faced with, with a colleague Keith Trigwell, who’s at the University of Sydney in Australia. In 2013, Keith and I were asked to keynote the conference for the international society of the Scholarship of Teaching and learning and to offer international perspectives on the question you raised about the quality of scholarship of teaching and learning, and should we think of scholarship of teaching and learning as a high quality form of scholarly activity. I’m not going to speak for Keith here, but what I’ll say is, my talk there turned into an argument, that turned into an article, in a journal called teaching and learning inquiry, which is the journal of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. And the argument I make there starts like this, it says, there’s lots of different ways of doing SOTAL, of doing the scholarship of teaching and learning, and some of them are high quality and some of them are less quality. I don’t think that’s distinct to SOTAL. I mean historians by training, there’s better historical research and less good historical research. SOTAL isn’t distinct because there’s variation in quality but there’s a real challenge in SOTAL. In historical research, there’s a quite well-defined, quite well established long lasting scholarly field where over a hundred plus years, we’ve developed norms of doing research and practices of doing research. SOTAL is much newer than that, so it’s more of adolescence than an adult in this way and SOTAL is also disciplinary very diverse because faculty from all sorts of disciplinary backgrounds practice SOTAL. I think there’s a costs, maybe even a danger of defining SOTAL research in such a narrow way that only certain faculty can do it, based on their disciplinary background. And so, taking that argument, what I said in 2013 and what I’ve argued in this article is that rather than having a simple definition of SOTAL that would exclude or include, or saying SOTAL is anything anybody wants it to be, which means there’s maybe no standards in all of quality. It might be helpful if we had principles of what good SOTAL is.

**KL**: I think that’s such a great foundation, to kind of shift us into thinking about what we are going to talk about in segment 2, which is how can you involve students in SOTAL; which has been a large part of your work Peter. So, we are going to take a brief break and We’ll be back in a moment.

# Segment 2:

**KL**: So peter you mentioned in the first segment, this fourth principle of effective SOTAL and it includes kind of working with students and involving students in the SOTAL projects. And I know this is something that you’ve written about, you’ve engaged in yourself, and would love to just talk with you more about it. First, I’m wondering if we can start by, why you think it’s important to engage students in SOTAL.

**PF**: Okay, just as a baseline, of course any research that involves human should follow the basic tendency of human subjects research, insuring that the students in this case aren’t harmed and that the participants understand their rights and what’s happening. But much more than that, I think there’s at least two reasons to think about involving students as partners in the scholarship of teaching and learning. One is, partnering with students for faculty, it changes the nature of the inquiry process. Students may ask, or prompt us to ask different questions than we would already. They may see things differently in the evidence of student learning that we’re investigating. They may have ideas about how to present or how to make meaning from this, in ways that we wouldn’t. And a second reason is that, I think partnering with students can change the kinds of outcomes that emerge from research that we do in scholarship of teaching and learning. When SOTAL is faculty research and we are speaking to a faculty audience, that can be powerful. That can affect how we teach and eventually it affects how we students learn but when students are involved too, the audience sometimes then becomes other students. And so students start thinking about, how do they speak to their peers? How do we speak to their peers? How do we shape how students understand what’s happening in our classes or outside our classes? How do they think about themselves as learners? It broadens the audience and changes what’s possible with communicating our results.

**KL**: Absolutely, it also seems like depending on the kind of depth of the role that the student takes on when they are engaging in SOTAL research, that it can be a really powerful mentoring opportunity for them as well.

**PF**: It’s a great mentoring opportunity and it’s an interesting way for students to learn something about faculty life and faculty work. So especially, I think for students who might interested in being teachers, or being faculty, working at a university or a college, it can be a great opportunity into a different way of seeing what happens on campus. I know from a number of projects we’ve done on my campus at Elon University, we’ve interviewed students who participate in this kind of work and one of the things they just routinely say, virtually every single student we interview says, is they end up with far more empathy for a faculty than they had before, because they recognize how hard it is to do the kinds of things we are trying to do, of getting a diverse and differently motivated set of humans, to try to learn complicated things.

**KL**: That’s very interesting; I love that, that increase in empathies. That’s such an interesting outcome that we might not think would come from something like this. I wondered if we can talk a little bit about, you had mention kind of, some of the contributions that students can make to SOTAL projects, but kind of just, there may be people who are listening to this and wondering like logistically, how does this work exactly; You know, if you designed the project and at what stage does a student become engaged in this kind of project. If we are thinking about them as a kind of partner, are they there for the design stage, is it for data collection. Can you talk a little bit more about that and a little bit more about the logistics of their involvement?

**PF**: Sure, well Katie I think ideally, students are involved through the entire research process. From participating in the framing of the inquiry questions, thinking about research methods, all the way through communicating results. That can be really challenging. Partly because students often, especially undergraduates, you know sort of transitory time on our campuses and so we may not have enough time to go all the way through an inquiry process with an undergraduate, and also because students bring different kinds of expertise or different interests into these kinds of projects. I think it’s helpful to think about what students are particularly well positioned to do in our research and let me suggest a couple things that can be particularly helpful for them. One, is I think students like any other partner in our research, they can prompt experience scholars to articulate our assumptions, to question our practices, to wonder about things that we just take as given. In my own work, I know students will sometimes, I will think, you know here’s the question that I need to investigate, to really understand a particular aspect of student learning in one of my history courses. And as I start talking with a couple of students who I might want to partner with in this research, they will ask me questions that make me wonder if I’m investigating the right thing. To give you a specific example of this, some philosophy colleagues of mine in Elong, were really interested in why it was so hard for first year philosophy students to write papers that really started to reason like philosophers do. And the philosophers who are having these conversations, were convinced that the problem was students didn’t know how to take notes like philosophers. They could read a philosophical text or be in a discussion but then they couldn’t process that in some way that would be useful for them, in their writing later. And as a they talk to students, the students said “No, I think we’re okay with taking notes. We don’t know how to read like philosophers do. We don’t know what you do as you’re reading.” And that lead to a really fruitful research project. One thing students can do and I think this is not, students aren’t the only people who can do this, if you are partnering with anyone in your research, they can get you to question your assumptions and what not, but because students often don’t bring the same level of expertise or the same disciplinary language that faculty do, or other scholars do; sometimes we have to unpack somethings and that can be really helpful. A second thing students can do that can be very helpful in SOTAL, is they can provide lenses in to learning that may be different than the ones that those of us with deeper long disciplinary expertise bring. There are often near peers to the folks who are being studied, to the learnings that’s being studied. They may see students struggle, they may see student’s successes, they may see student learning in ways differently than I do, because I’ve had a PhD for twenty years now, and I just think like a historian, and I don’t even question that anymore. So student, sort of more novice lenses, or different lenses, or maybe not quite so disciplinary of lenses can be helpful into looking to add student learning. And then one more thing that I found more important in my own SOTAL work and in work I see other scholars doing, is that students might be able to a listed or access different things than faculty can. For instance, if I’m doing a research project, or I’m partnering with students to do a research project were we’re interviewing students, we are doing think out loud with students about their own learning in a particular context. I’ve got plenty of evidence, anecdotal, but evidence from my own experience that students speak to their peers differently than they do to me. I’m an older guy, I’m scary because I’m a PhD and I’m a professor, and they’ll talk to their peers differently. And so sometimes having students as partners to do interviews, to observe small groups working, to look at student worker, to talk to students about their work; just leads to something different than when I ask those same questions.

**KL**: All of these things you’ve outline are incredibly powerful contributions that students can make, and as you pointed out, a lot of these contributions are very similar to what we look for in other kinds of collaboration that we do. But maybe we are just not thinking of students in that potential role, I think that that makes a lot of sense and I appreciate, kind of you outlining those different kinds of things. You have mentioned one example of engaging students in SOTAL, I’m wondering if you want to offer an additional example or two of what you’ve seen.

**PF**: Sure, Katie let me give you an example from my own campus that I think, is to me, one of the best arguments for why you might want to partner with students in an inquiry. This project that I’m going to talk about comes out of our core curriculum, and at Elon, the core curriculum involves not just courses but also prompts requires students to do certain experiential learning activities, to do undergraduate research mentored outside the classroom, or to do an internship, or something like this, right. And what we saw as we looked at student participation in various kinds of, outside of the classroom experiential learning, is that different students engaged in different levels of those things. Our first generation students, our male students, for example were less likely to do undergraduate research than their peers where. And you know, we have theories of why that was but we really didn’t understand student motivations for this very well; especially when we looked at the disciplinary profile of these students and so you might have students who are studying, let’s say in the natural sciences, and first gen college students were less likely to do undergraduate research in the natural sciences than their peers. That didn’t quite make sense to us and so, some colleagues did what faculty do, we send a survey to a whole lot of students and ask them, why aren’t you participating in certain kinds of experiential learning activities. And it’s, in retrospect, it’s not a surprise that students who don’t participate in certain experiential learning activities, don’t respond to surveys either. We had quite a lot of students who engage in a lot of experiential learning, responding to surveys about why their peers don’t and so we weren’t particularly satisfied with the evidence we were getting from the surveys. And so a colleague, Jeffry Kocher who’s a biologist, started working with a first generation college student here, who he knew quite well. She was a sophomore at the time and together they developed an interview protocol that the student carried out. What they did is they identified all other first generation college students who were seniors at the university, and this student, her name is Desirae Porter, she’s now an alum, interviewed about seventy students in one-on-one interviews; asking them about their experiences at the university, about their motivations for why they chose to do certain things, and about why they didn’t do other things. And what those interviews revealed is something that I don’t think we necessarily would’ve seen from a survey of these students, or it would have seem from even interviews connected by other faculty. A number of these things, quite a number of these students told Desirae stories of not seeing themselves as researchers when they came to the university, they didn’t know what a researcher was, and not understanding what undergraduate research was. So never even considering it as a possibility for themselves no matter how many times they heard about it. And they said, only about the time they were a junior and senior, and they started seeing their peers doing this and recognizing the benefits of it for their peers, did they start saying, well how do I do this? Why do I do this? But by that time often it was too late. And so, what this helped to see is, it wasn’t a question or motivation, it was a question of understanding what undergraduate research is, why you would do it, and why someone who doesn’t see themselves as a future faculty member might find it valuable. And so now, one of the things that’s happened as a result of this research, besides Desirae and her faculty mentor having some lovely publications and high quality journals, is our undergraduate research office now goes into first year courses and talks with students, how students talk with first year students about undergraduate research and the value of doing it, and that you don’t have to be an honor student, you don’t have to be a future faculty member to do this kind of work. And we are starting to now bend the needle on participates in undergraduate research at the university. And that was possible, I think, because we had first generation students talking to other first generation students.

**KL**: What an important, kind of practical outcome of that research and I think that that’s one of the things that can be really powerful about SOTAL work more generally is, those practical applications that can come out of it. After a brief break, we are going to come back and talk about decoding the disciplines, back at a moment.

# Segment 3:

**KL**: Peter I know that one of the current projects that you’re working on and moving to publication is a project with some students that helped you to engage in the inquiry. And the kind of form that you took with this was decoding the disciplines and I’m wondering if you can talk a little bit more about, what that means for people who might not be familiar.

**PF**: Sure, Katie this is a project that I did with three students who were seniors at Elon University. They are now recent graduates and two colleagues who are deeply experienced in decoding disciplines from other institutions. Decoding the disciplines is a process for trying to study and understand student learning and teaching that comes out of Indiana University.

And it’s a fairly complicated process but the part of what we were, I don’t want to say it’s a complicated process, so you’re going to edit that part out.

Decoding the disciplines comes out of Indiana University and the really excellent inside in decoding is that there are common bottlenecks to student learning in a course. And if faculty focus on what those bottlenecks are and unpack them, and really try to understand them, they can change their teaching and then enhance student learning in really helpful ways. The decoding process has two steps that we use for our research. The first was trying to define a bottleneck in student learning. A bottleneck is a common space where students really struggle to learn and where it’s difficult for students to make progress in a course or in a discipline if they don’t get through the bottleneck. And so what decoding does is it helps you figure out what a bottleneck is. In our case, it was writing a literature review in political science and then decoding has developed a really interesting and helpful interview protocol that asks faculty in a discipline, to explain how they as a disciplinary scholar work through this bottleneck. In the case we had here on our campus, because of the disciplines of the students involved, we decided to investigate how students learn to write lit reviews in political science. And we know from the scholarship on political science and how students learn in political science, that literature review is a common dialect for students, right. We took that as a given and we said, “So, how do faculty do lit reviews as disciplinary scholars?” And what was new in our inquiry then was to say, how do students do lit reviews in political science? And what we did is we had our student researchers interview faculty about their own practices of doing a literature review and a student researcher also interviewed fourth year political science majors, who are just about to graduate in the field and ask them how they do lit reviews. And we interview second year undergraduates who’s taken a research methods course in political science, where they learn about doing a literature review. And the interview protocol was essentially the same for all three, were it asked each person being interviewed to describe the process they use in the most recent lit review they had conducted. Now for the faculty, that was often a lit review they did for a research project that they were doing a scholarly project. For the students, the seniors were describing a lit review that had conducted in a senior capstone seminar in the discipline and the sophomores typically describe a lit review they’ve written in a research methods course in the discipline.

**KL**: As part of this project and I know it’s something you’re still writing up; I’m wondering if there are some kind of initial findings that were kind of, maybe surprising or particularly interesting for you?

**PF**: Yeah, what was most surprising and most exciting for us, was a gap between the way the faculty described their own lit process of doing a literature review and the way students described doing the literature review, but the gap was not quite what I’d expected. When we asked faculty, now when the student, the student interviewers, researchers, asked faculty to describe their process of doing literature review; what the faculty did is they had quite a bit of variation in how they do lit reviews in their own scholarship but they all talked about a process. They used words like, iterative, or creative, one of them described it as a radio process; where you start with a question, you go to the literature, and then the literature forms, your question into your question bank change over time, and as you go back and forth from your question, and your synthesis to the literature, things evolve, right. So faculty described a process like that, no matter whether they were qualitative or quantitative researchers in political science. They had that sort of iterative radio process. As one said, I don’t have a map for literature reviews, none of this stuff is linear, I have a practice for doing it. What was interesting is when the student interviewers then asked faculty to talk about how they teach students the literature review. On the faculty we are all pretty reflective and pretty thoughtful about how they teach the lit review and what they said is something that seems like good pedagogy. What they said is, they break down this complicated and iterative process into discrete steps and they have students work step-by-step through the literature review process. And as I was listening to this, as my faculty colleagues were listening to these interviews, we were shaking our heads in positive ways, saying that makes lots of sense, it’s a complicated process, of course you’d break it down. What was most interesting and surprising to us is when the student interviewers interviewed their peers, especially the fourth year students, the seniors who are fairly experienced in the discipline, you know not PhD’s but somewhat experienced. Those students, almost to a student said that they thought they were doing the literature review process wrong because they knew it was supposed to be a step by step clear process. But as they did it, they found themselves iteratively going back and forth from the literature to their question and changing their question, and taking new questions back to the literature. And so, several of them said, “I knew I’m doing this wrong or I was never really taught how to do this because of the gap between the way I do things and the way I was taught to do things.”

**KL**: That’s so interesting.

**PF**: This process raises this really hard question, that you know, that our research is just a small sort of pilot study but it raises a number of questions. But one of them is about, how does good teaching maybe make it harder for students to learn actual disciplinary practices?

**KL**: You know, one of the things that that you raised earlier was thinking about, when students interview other students; can there be more impactful data that comes out of that just because of the student’s kind of being on the same level. I’m wondering if that also applies to these students interviewing faculty and if you had any sense that the faculty, maybe weren’t engaging with students in terms of the data collection, in a way that they might engage with another faculty member that they viewed as their equal.

**PF**: Yeah Katie, that’s one of the things that we learned from this study and again it was a small pile up study, so I don’t want to draw too many conclusions about anything. But we decided as part of our research design, that the student researchers would interview everybody and the research practice was the same for all of the interviewee’s; students or faculty. So, they were in a room with a white board and they asked the person being interviewed to outline their literature review process on the white board as they talked about it. And what happened is, the conversations with, so the student interviewers, interviewing their peers, those conversations went quite smoothly, or quite casual and informal. The student interviewer said, especially the seniors, the fourth year students tended to disclose their lack of understanding or their uncertainty, or what they saw as gap between what they are supposed to do, what they actually did. They disclose that quite comfortably. What the student interviewers noticed is that the faculty members standing in a white board, in front of a couple students, turned into faculty and so they gave mini lectures. The students noted, the student researchers noted the faculty members tended to talk for five, six, seven minutes without getting interrupted even when the interviewers were trying to interrupt them. Whereas the undergraduates would talk for two or three minutes without being interrupted, and some of the faculty at least seemed uncomfortable sort of disclosing uncertainty or disclosing ambiguities. And so, if we were to do this research again or next time we do something like this, we may have faculty interview faculty, and students interview students, to see if there’s this sort of peer effect and maybe we get different results from some of the interviews by having peers interview peers.

**KL**: That’s very interesting and it really speaks to what you were saying before about some of the power dynamics, and the complexities of doing this work, and the real challenges of doing this work.

**PF**: Right, right, yeah and maybe who knows what would happen if I had done some of the interviews with faculty or if I had done some of them with students. But I do think that it’s wise to be attending to how power is going to play out in a process and maybe we could have been more explicit too, in our prompts around the interviews and what not, instead of just having the students do the interview of everyone; maybe we could of explained more to the interview subjects, why we were having students do this and maybe that would have change some dynamics somewhat.

**KL**: Well peter I love this example and when it is out in the world and can be shared, we will definitely link to this in the show notes. Always a pleasure to talk with you Peter, thank you so much for coming on the show and sharing your expertise about SOTAL and engaging students in that work.

**PF**: Thanks so much Katie.

**KL**: And thanks to our listeners for joining us for this week’s episode of research in action. I’m Katie Linder and we’ll be back next week with a new episode.

Show notes with information regarding topics discussed in each episode, as well as the transcript for each episode, can be found at the *Research in Action* website at [ecampus.oregonstate.edu/podcast](http://www.ecampus.oregonstate.edu/podcast).

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# Bonus Clip #1:

**KL**: In this first bonus clip for episode 19 of the Research in Action podcasts, Doctor Peter Felten describes five principles of good scholarships of teaching and learning. Take a listen.

**PF**: And so in this talk and in this article, I argued that there’s five principles of good SOTAL. The first one is that it’s an inquiry focused on student learning. If it’s not about student learning, it’s not SOTAL. Second one is that good SOTAL is grounded in context and its grounded in context in at least two ways. One way is it’s grounded in the scholarly literature that’s relevant. So, if I’m investigating the question about student motivation, I should know something about what scholars has said about motivation but good SOTAL is also grounded in my own distinct context of where I teach and what I teach. I’m a historian teaching at a university with fifty-five-hundred undergraduates with a strong focus on quality teaching. Katie you are at a much larger research university. So what it means to teach in those two different contexts, the kinds of students we have, the kinds of classes we have; my classes are typically twenty students. A historian at Oregon State might have a class of two-hundred students. So the kinds of research we can do are grounded in that particular context. So a good SOTAL should be connected to its context. A third principle I’d argue is that good SOTAL is methodologically sound. That doesn’t mean methodologically narrow, but that the research methods I use to do my inquiries in student learning are done well and done in ways that honor the scholarly traditions behind them. Whether I’m doing close reading or I’m doing a statistical analysis, or a survey. A fourth principle is that, good SOTAL is always conducted in partnership with students, it’s not done to them, it’s done with them. There can just mean, can mean as, what that can mean is, making sure students understand and ethically accept what’s happening with them. It can also be involving them in the inquiry process. And then a fifth principle of good practice is that good SOTAL is always public and it’s appropriately public. Some kinds of SOTAL inquiry deserve international audience and some are reaching for that kind of influence. Many SOTAL practices, many SOTAL inquiries are narrow in investigations of student learning in particular context. So they might be relevant only for faculty who teach in that same context, or faculty who teach at that same institution, or teach in that same discipline. Good SOTAL isn’t necessarily better if it’s published in an international journal, that’s good, but good SOTAL can also happen in an institutional context, right. The argument there is that you can judge something about quality by looking at those five principles and seeing how SOTAL inquiries align with those.

**KL**: You just heard a bonus clip from episode 19 of the research in action podcasts with Doctor Peter Felten describing five principles of good Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Thanks for listening.

# Bonus Clip #2:

**KL**: In this second bonus clip for episode nineteen of the Research in Action podcasts, Doctor Peter Felten discusses some of challenges of partnering with students on Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Take a listen.

Peter in that example you’ve really pointed out the benefits and the real applications of SOTAL projects and how they can really be beneficial to students in very applied ways. But I’m sure there are also challenges to this kind of work. Can you speak to that a little bit?

**PF**: Yeah Katie, there’s a number of challenges that I think are important for folks to think about as they consider partnering with students, even though I think the rewards are high, the challenges are pretty high too; partly is just the customs and habits we have in higher education, where students often are intimidated. And part of challenge is the customs and habits we have in higher education, this separation between faculty and between end students. Faculty don’t have habits necessarily of listening carefully and working side-by-side with students towards a shared goal and students often, are intimidated by faculty. And there’s power differentials on campus. You know, we grade, they need us for things, they need us for recommendations and what not. Power and habits of schooling can be real challenges; there’s challenges around expertise. Students who I partner with don’t have PhDs in history, aren’t experienced SOTAL scholars. So helping them and helping me together, craft inquiries that draw on the kinds of expertise students do have of being students today, and of being novice learners in a discipline. Things like that, those are important; so, getting around challenges for an expertise. We are not asking students to do things that are experting, or they are not asking me to give up in any of expertise. There’s practical challenges around time and rewards. In many contexts, SOTAL work can be rewarding for faculty. It helps us teach better, might get us publications that might be valued where we work and what not; that’s often not the case for students. So, what is the reward and why would they sink the time into this. And then a last one, which I think we don’t think enough about is challenges around equity. SOTAL partnership, faculty student partnerships often are faculty working with honor students, you know and the most high achieving students, and that makes lots of sense. And that’s a very good thing to do. But if you really want to understand why students, who aren’t successful in your classes, aren’t being successful, you might actually need to partner with students who aren’t being successful in the class, and that’s a challenge. It’s easy to partner with honor students and high-achieving students. So thinking about the goals of your inquiry and the goals of your work, so that you can identify the right students who can best help you do the inquiries you want.

**KL**: Well and it seems like finding those right students is going to be very contextual, very much based on the project, based on what you think at least from the beginning the inquiry might be, although that might change given the student feedback. You have to kind of look at each project, a new, with fresh eyes to think about who might be the right partner.

**PF**: I think that’s a great point Katie and just, this is going to sound pie in the sky, but I’ve found that students are really capable when they get engaged in this work. And so sometimes I or I’ve seen colleagues sort of hesitate to say, you know, I don’t know if these students are capable and I’ve seen time after time as students get engaged in projects like this, they surprise us in what they are capable of and how much they can help us learn about teaching and learning.

**KL**: You’ve just heard a bonus clip from episode nineteen, of the Research in Action Podcasts with Doctor Peter Felten discussing some of the challenges of partnering with students on Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Thanks for listening.

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