The Use of Mentored Inquiry Communities to Foster the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL): Outcomes of the American Occupational Therapy Association SoTL Program (2007-2017)

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Scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) is recognized in Boyer's model, along with discovery, integration, and application, as one of four essential scholarships and is the systematic study of teaching and learning. As such, in 2007, the American Occupational Therapy Foundation (AOTF), and later the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), supported the development of a SoTL mentorship program in an effort to foster SoTL within the discipline of occupational therapy. This mixed-methods study describes AOTA SoTL Program outcomes across ten years, 2007-2017, gathered via survey of past program mentee (n = 50) and mentor (n = 12) participants. Results suggest that mentored inquiry communities are a useful approach to fostering SoTL collaborations. In the future, the AOTA SoTL Program and similar disciplinary-specific SoTL programs should consider additional strategies for supporting mentee participants to completion with their projects.

BACKGROUND

Educational leaders in the discipline of occupational therapy, recognizing the need to foster scholarly inquiry examining pedagogy and instructional methods, founded a scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) mentorship program in 2007. While occupational therapy education programs are all required to cover content specified by accreditation standards, the philosophical and pedagogical approach to curriculum varies greatly across programs. Further, faculty in occupational therapy programs use a range of instructional methods to meet learning outcomes—leading to questions about best practices, effectiveness, and other outcomes. The intent of this SoTL mentorship program for educators in occupational therapy was twofold: 1) prepare occupational therapy educators to engage in SoTL as a meaningful and important aspect of academic work; 2) generate discipline-specific scholarly inquiry and evidence to enhance occupational therapy education. As such, the purpose of this study was to evaluate the alignment of this SoTL mentorship program's outcomes with its stated mission.

Defining the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

The SoTL first emerged over 30 years ago (Shulman, 1987) as a structured framework to examine teaching effectiveness. Building upon Boyer's (1990) model and assertion that scholarship should be integrated into faculty members' academic profiles, the contemporary SoTL framework supports a systematic approach to examining pedagogical approaches in the context of discipline-specific content and teaching resulting in the dissemination of these outcomes (Henderson, 2009). SoTL is defined as:

…the systematic study of teaching and learning, using established or validated criteria of scholarship, to understand how teaching (beliefs, behaviours, attitudes, and values) can maximize learning, and/or develop a more accurate understanding of learning, resulting in products that are publicly shared for critique and use by an appropriate community. (Potter & Kustra, 2011, p. 2)

Mentored Communities of Inquiry

Because faculty in post-secondary education, regardless of the type of institution, are expected to demonstrate contributions related to teaching and scholarship, the SoTL framework can be a beneficial approach for many, including occupational therapy faculty. Furthermore, the value of a disciplinary focus to SoTL work has the potential to enhance the capacity for faculty to conduct SoTL research while informing pedagogical approaches within the discipline. A community of inquiry model with a disciplinary focus has been a successful approach to supporting development and productivity in a specific area (Healy, 2000; Jedele, 2010; Slapcoff & Harris, 2014; Steiner, 2016), and evidence specifically supports the use of mentoring communities for SoTL development (Hubball & Clarke, 2010; Hubball et al., 2010). This model requires three components: 1) a teaching presence to support understanding of the concept; 2) a cognitive presence to support exploration; and, 3) a social presence to facilitate group cohesion, exploration through a cognitive process, and the benefit and support of a social presence. SoTL research may also be viewed as a responsibility by some because it requires faculty to develop expertise in teaching and to be more effective in their teaching methods by assessing learning outcomes (Tierney, 2020; Tierney et al., 2020).

Research related to other group approaches to SoTL inquiry such as faculty learning communities or communities of practice have also demonstrated positive findings regarding how a group approach can enhance the process of scholarly work. For example, many educators may not have any training in conducting SoTL research even if they have extensive research experience in other aspects of their discipline. But a community of scholars brings together those with a variety of skills while providing a network of colleagues for support and encouragement. Using this approach, ideas and discussions can mutually benefit the individual as well as the group (Tierney, et al., 2020). Furthermore, participants in SoTL-focused community models have reported the collaboration kept them engaged and motivated in their SoTL work, regardless if they were novice or experienced educators (Tierney et al., 2020).

American Occupational Therapy Association Education Research Agenda

The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) (2018) published an education research agenda that identified six priorities to guide efforts: 1) theory building, 2) pedagogy, 3) instructional methods, 4) learner characteristics and competencies, 5) socialization to the profession, and 6) faculty development and resources. Three of these priorities in particular—pedagogy, instructional methods, and learner characteristics and competencies—have the potential to serve as a guideline when conceptualizing SoTL inquiry. This document serves as an important disciplinary approach to outlining areas that will enhance research related to occupational therapy education (AOTA, 2018). A focus on creating disciplinary education knowledge that is supported by professional associations allows educators to address common tensions or challenges in disciplinary-specific education, while asserting pedagogical scholarship is empirical and parallels discovery research (Pope-Ruark, 2012; Slapcoff & Harris, 2014).

Background of the Institute

Based on the evidence of the effectiveness of mentored communities of inquiry, this approach was used to develop and implement a national initiative for SoTL inquiry in occupational therapy education. In 2007, the American Occupational Therapy Foundation (AOTF) supported the establishment of a SoTL program to equip OT faculty to contribute to the research agenda in OT education through classroom-based projects. The goal was to establish mentored communities of inquiry in which participants develop, implement, and disseminate SoTL work. In 2013, due to restructuring of occupational therapy professional organizations, continued support of the SoTL program shifted from AOTF to AOTA. In its current form, the AOTA SoTL Mentoring Institute and Program (abbreviated as "AOTA SoTL Program" going forward) consists of two main components: 1) a six-hour institute lead by the AOTA SoTL Program Leadership Team in which participants learn the steps of designing, implementing, and disseminating a SoTL study, and 2) mentored communities of inquiry, formed during the institute, by matching participants with similar interests with a mentor. Following the institute, participants work in their inquiry community to design and implement a SoTL project, either individually or in collaboration with peers within their inquiry community.

The AOTA SoTL Program mission is to develop a cadre of scholarly educators promoting evidence-based practice through the SoTL and implementation of best educational practices. Additionally, the AOTA SoTL Program aims to enhance partic-

ipants' research skills increasing their capacity to promote the AOTA Research Agenda for OT education. As such, the following research questions guided the design of this study: What were participants' and mentors' experiences in participating in the AOTA SoTL Institute and Mentoring Program (2007-2017)? What were the outcomes of the AOTA SoTL Institute and Mentoring Program (2007-2017)?

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive, mixed methods design to explore impacts of the AOTA SoTL Program between 2007-2017.

Participants

Participants were occupational therapy educators and/or practitioners who had participated in the AOTA SoTL Program between 2007-2017 as a mentee, mentor, or both. Emails were verified for 127 past mentees and 20 past mentors of the AOTA SoTL Program.

Procedures

Following an Institutional Review Board approval from the University of Central Arkansas, participants were invited via email to participate in an optional, anonymous Qualtrics survey (one for mentors and one for mentees) between February 4 to April 15, 2019.

Survey Questions

Both mentor and mentee surveys included closed-ended demographic questions, such as job title, academic rank, type of institution, number of years in the AOTA SoTL Program, and experience with SoTL and education-based research prior to the AOTA SoTL Program. In addition, the mentee survey requested information about the number of complete versus incomplete SoTL studies, and both mentors and mentees were asked about the topics of studies and types of professional gains from participation in the AOTA SoTL Program. Both surveys asked about mentor and mentee perceptions of communication and support during and following the AOTA SoTL Program. Both surveys also ended with open-ended questions related to the benefits of participation and areas for program improvement, including recommended resources for future mentees and mentors.

Data Analysis

Closed-ended questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics with SPSS Statistics (Version 27.0). Open-ended questions were analyzed using thematic analysis as outlined by Percy, Kostere, and Kostere (2015). The second and third study authors independently familiarized themselves with the data, coded and clustered data, reviewed patterns, and identified themes. The themes were then vetted by the entire author team in order to establish agreement on final thematic results. These themes were then further validated through member checking with a small group of AOTA SoTL Program mentees and mentors.

RESULTS

Mentee response rate was 39% (n = 50/127 deliverable emails) with 70% survey completion per respondent. Mentor response rate was 60% (n = 12/20 deliverable emails) with 100% survey completion per respondent.

Mentee Demographics

At the time of survey completion, most mentee respondents were faculty (94%) from a non-research intensive but comprehensive university (68%), research-intensive university (18%), two-year institution or community college (8%), or other institution (6%). Mentees held a rank of full professor (34%), associate professor (36%), assistant professor (18%), instructor (4%), or other (8%) with years of teaching experience ranging from 0.5 to 35 years (M = 17.4, SD = 7.79). Over half of mentees reported personal SoTL experience prior to enlisting as a mentee in the AOTA SoTL Program, and one third of mentee respondents reported participating in more than one AOTA SoTL Program cohort (Table 1)

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Mentor Demographics

At the time of survey completion, most mentor respondents were faculty from either a research-intensive university (45%) or non-research-intensive but comprehensive university with graduate degrees (50%). Mentors held a rank of full professor (42%), associate professor (42%), or assistant professor (17%) with years of teaching experience ranging from 9-30 years (M = 17.8, SD = 7.28). All mentors reported personal SoTL experience prior to enlisting as a mentor for the AOTA SoTL Program, including studies on flipped learning, self-regulated learning, interprofessional education, online education, writing modalities, and coaching techniques; projects were disseminated at national and international conferences. Over two thirds of mentor respondents (67%) have participated in more than one AOTA SoTL Program cohort (Table 1).

Table 1. Mentee and Mentor Demographics at the Time of Survey Completion				
	Mentee		**Mentor**	
Mean Years of Teaching Experience	17.4 (0.5-35 years, *SD* 7.79)		17.8 (9-30 years, *SD* 7.28)	
Rank	Full Professor	17/50 (34%)	Full Professor	5/12 (42%)
	Associate Professor	18/50 (36%)	Associate Professor	5/12 (42%)
	Assistant Professor	9/50 (18%)	Assistant Professor	2/12 (17%)
	Instructor	2/50 (4%)		
	Other	4/50 (8%)		
Role	Faculty	43/50 (86%)	Faculty	11/12 (92%)
	AFWC	3/50 (6%)	AFWC	1/12 (8%)
	Other	4/50 (8%)		
Institution Type	Research Intensive	9 (18%)	Research Intensive	5/12 (42%)
	Non-Research Intensive	34 (68%)	Non-Research Intensive	6/12 (50%)
	Community College	4 (8%)	Other	1/12 (8%)
	Other	3 (6%)		
SoTL Experience Prior to AOTA SoTL Program	Yes No	29 (58%) 21 (42%)	Yes	12/12 (100%)
Number of Times as a Participant	One year More than one year	32/50 (64%) 18/50 (36%)	One year More than one year	4/12 (33%) 8/12 (67%)

Table 2. Topics of SoTL Studies (Reported by Mentees and Mentors)	
Teaching philosophies	
Faculty preparation for teaching	Metacognition
Academic admissions	Comprehension
Fieldwork education and educator preparation	Student professional behaviors and roles
Curricular innovations	Student attitudes towards research
Flipped classrooms	Critical reading skills for research
Hybrid and online learning	Use of evidence-based practice
Problem-based learning	Impact of teaching clinicians about EBP
Service-learning	
Interprofessional case-based learning	Scaffolded learning
	Board game use
OT and OTA collaboration	Clickers
Clinical decision making	Use of simulation
Ethical decision making	Social networking in treatment planning
Development of higher order thinking	
	Neuro lab strategies
Multitasking in an educational environment	Leadership development
	Competency in assistive technology
Epistemic/ontological cognition of OT students	Breast cancer

Table 3. Factors That Led to Successful SoTL Study Completion (Reported by Mentors)
Internal motivation
Frequent communication
Persistent encouragement, support, and accountability
Clear plan, goals, purpose at the start
Cross-institutional collaboration
Interest at individual's institution

Table 4. Barriers to Completing a SoTL Study (Reported by Mentees and Mentors)
Lack of time
Work-related commitments and priorities
Conflicting schedules
Lack of full group participation (dropouts)
Personal issues, such as change in employment
Poorly scoped project
Mentee still new to teaching
Funding

Mentee-Reported Productivity Outcomes

As a result of participation in the AOTA SoTL Program, mentees reported initiating 51 mentored SoTL projects and completing 37 mentored SoTL projects with 14 projects still in progress. Mentees also reported moving on to complete 58 non-mentored SoTL projects after participating in the AOTA SoTL Program. Nearly one-third of mentees collaborated directly with individuals that they met at the AOTA SoTL Program (n = 14/44, 32%) and/or up to five co-investigators from outside of the AOTA SoTL Program (n = 12/44, 27%), including a university librarian, athletic trainer, dental hygienist, respiratory therapist, radiologic technician, speech language pathologist, psychologist, and museum manager. Topics of the SoTL studies varied considerably (Table 2).

More than one-third of mentees (37%) reported that they made connections with peers in their inquiry community that led to scholarly presentations and papers beyond the scope and timeline of the AOTA SoTL Program. Most common professional gains reported by mentees included engaging in a SoTL study (18%), being accepted for a presentation at a peer-reviewed venue (16%), and obtaining realistic timelines and goals for a SoTL study (15%).

Mentor-Reported Productivity Outcomes

As a result of participation in the AOTA SoTL Program, mentors reported mentoring thirty-one SoTL projects collectively with a mode of two per mentor on a variety of topics (Table 2). Mentors reported that eight of the thirty-one projects required mentorship beyond the first year (26%). Twenty-five percent of mentors reported being a co-principal investigator on the SoTL projects that they mentored. Mentors reported several factors that led to successful completion and/or lack of completion of a SoTL study (Tables 3 and 4).

Most mentors (75%) agreed that they made connections with members of their inquiry community that led to scholarly presentations and papers beyond the scope and timeline of the AOTA SoTL Program. Most common professional gains reported by mentors included incorporating the SoTL mentorship in an application for promotion and tenure (24%), submitting a manuscript (17%), and being accepted for a presentation at a peer-reviewed venue (14%).

Mentee Perceptions of Communication and Support

Approximately two-thirds of mentees reported that their mentor provided excellent guidance during the AOTA SoTL Program institute (63%) and following the institute (60%). Approximately two-thirds of mentees reported that their mentor initiated contact after the institute to offer support (66%) and that they remained engaged with their AOTA SoTL Program inquiry community following the institute (60%). Mentees reported that useful avenues for staying connected to their inquiry community included an AOTA-supported conference call (16%), non-AOTA-supported conference call (27%), video meeting (24%), and other routes such as email or meeting at conferences (33%).

Mentor Perceptions of Communication and Support

The majority of mentors agreed that the AOTA SoTL Program leadership team adequately prepared them for their role as mentor prior to the institute (84%), and all mentors agreed that the leadership team provided excellent guidance during the insti-

tute (100%). However, only 59% of mentors agreed that the AOTA SoTL Program leadership team provided support and excellent guidance following the institute.

Over half of mentors reported that the SoTL Program Leadership Team reached out to them to offer support and check on progress (67%). Regular communication from the AOTA SoTL Program leadership team is preferred via email (67%) or phone (25%) with suggested frequency of every 1-3 months. Mentors reported that useful avenues for staying connected to their AOTA SoTL Program inquiry community included an AOTA-supported conference call (17%), non-AOTA-supported conference call (33%), video meeting (28%), and other routes such as email or meeting at conferences (22%).

Mentee Perceptions of the AOTA SoTL Program

The following four themes were identified from the open-ended survey questions to the mentees:

1. organization led to increased SoTL knowledge and confidence;
2. valued mentorship;
3. inspiration; and
4. potential barriers to success.

Overall, mentees enjoyed becoming acquainted with colleagues in academia and dialoguing about ways to objectively evaluate teaching and learning. Mentees also appreciated the organization of the AOTA SoTL Program Institute and commented on the commitment of leaders and mentors to their success. They perceived an increase in their knowledge of SoTL and appreciated the resources provided. Eighty-six percent of mentees responded that they understood the scope of SoTL and had a basic understanding of what was involved in conducting a SoTL project at the end of their first AOTA SoTL Program Institute.

Organization led to increased knowledge and confidence in SoTL

The first theme "organization led to increased knowledge and confidence in SoTL" was supported by many comments from mentees. They perceived that the institute was well planned, organized and included a nice balance of content and interactive sessions. One mentee responded, "I liked the grouping of the participants into inquiry communities. I thought this was thoughtful and planned well given the ideas we produced. There were also a lot of helpful links in the presentation." Other mentees shared similar responses:

> I felt like content covered was great. I'm really glad that the SoTL "experts" helped with the grouping process because I had a topic that seemed to stand alone, but I think I landed in the right group. I liked how we alternated between "lecture" and either individual or group "work time" as well.

> Being provided new information and the immediate opportunity to apply it was invaluable to my learning. All leaders/mentors were clearly invested in participants' learning and provided an ideal amount of support. The method used to group participants was creative and allowed topic selection in a way that felt natural and productive.

Valued Mentorship

Mentees' value of mentorship and of being connected with an inquiry community is reflected in the following statements, "I am new to true research, but I am happy to be a part of this. I am also happy for the group support and mentorship that I have available." Another participant stated the program "provided great opportunity to connect with academia that I didn't expect."

Inspiration

Mentees revealed that they were inspired by the content and process of participating in the institute. Their inspiration also resulted from engaging in conversations within their AOTA SoTL Program mentored communities of inquiry. One mentee reflected, "The whole institute was fantastic. I'm very excited to begin this journey." And another commented, "I really enjoyed this and feel like the process of SoTL will help me with developing further research ideas and topics in the future."

Barriers/Needs Moving Forward

The final theme "barriers/needs moving forward" was related to mentees' concerns about successfully completing their planned SoTL project. The most frequently cited concerns identified by mentees related to time, funding, access to resources, and the need for mentorship. These needs are reflected in this mentee's response:

> At this time, I feel like I have adequate resources from the SoTL program. I am most worried about staying on top of my SoTL project in addition to the teaching and other responsibilities I have at my institution. I don't think any resources from the SoTL community can necessarily help with this, but I need to find a better organizational system on a personal level.

Whereas one mentee shared more specifics about the need for research support, "My biggest concern is guidance around IRB but I think I can get this from within my department. Other resources would be some assessment materials, though I am still deciding which ones to use."

Mentor Perceptions of the AOTA SoTL Program

The following three themes were identified from the open-ended questions to the mentors:
1. enthusiasm of the leadership team for a valuable area of scholarship in our profession;
2. well-planned, organized and structured institute; and
3. enhancements needed before and after the institute.

Enthusiasm of the Leadership Team

The theme of leadership 'enthusiasm' and 'value' of the institute was supported through the following statements: "I appreciate the leadership's guidance, enthusiasm, willingness to recruit outside experts and persist even through times of diminished AOTA/ F support and ability to stretch resources well-beyond what would be expected." Another mentor commented, "the SoTL [institute] is a wonderful institute to encourage research, partnerships and mentoring." And a different mentor reflected, "Please continue! For new and experienced instructors, SoTL is necessary to ensure best practices are being revised and examined." The value of the AOTA SoTL Program was also asserted in the statement, "This addresses a very valuable area of scholarship in our profession."

Well-planned, Organized, and Structured Institute

Mentors appreciated the "well-planned, organized and structured institute." One mentor responded, "I thought the event at conference was well-structured. I thought the interactive activities were useful. Articles were helpful." Another mentor wrote, "Appreciate the modified Delphi to narrow and group interests." Similarly, another mentor stated, "The grouping process based on the post-it notes from attendees [mentees] worked well as it led to two mentees in my group collaborating on their project which strengthened their data."

Enhancements Needed Before and After Institute

Mentors reported a need to "explain the commitment" and roles before the institute and offer "more consistent follow up" and support for accountability following the institute. Mentors highlighted the need to inform SoTL Program institute mentee participants of their upcoming "commitment better so they fully know the expectations" of mentees following the institute. One mentor further suggested we should "emphasize finishing doctoral studies might not be the time to begin a new SoTL project."

In addition to preparing mentees for their commitment, mentors requested guidance on their role in increasing mentee accountability after the institute. One mentor requested support for "suggestions on how mentors can help and hold participants accountable" in light of all of mentors and mentees other "demands of academia." Similarly, another mentor stated the need for "some form of structure in place that supports mentors and participants [mentees] to the finish line" and another summed it up this way, "The institute itself was excellent. The difficult part was keeping groups together and on-task afterwards."

Additional support received from the leadership team for dissemination opportunities was recognized by a mentor who appreciated "intermittent emails notifying of upcoming calls for papers" and another who asserted that there is a need for "more support for dissemination (a number of electronic posters that AOTA would post on weblink or allot for conference)."

DISCUSSION

Results of our data collection and analysis indicate a broad array of implications for disciplinary-specific SoTL mentorship programs beyond the AOTA SoTL Program. While the strengths and areas for growth were focused on the elements of the foundational institute and mentor-mentee interactions throughout both the AOTA SoTL Program institute and mentored inquiry communities, there also emerged a wider range of possibilities and potential barriers regarding the sustainability of a SoTL mentorship program such as the AOTA SoTL Program. In the ensuing discussion, we first summarize themes that emerged from the data and then briefly address possible opportunities and continued challenges that lay ahead for disciplinary-specific SoTL mentorship programs.

Summary of Themes

The study findings suggest lessons learned that inform future disciplinary-specific SoTL mentorship program approaches that best support both mentees and mentors. As highlighted in Table 3, mentors identified a variety of factors that supported positive SoTL project outcomes, whereas both mentors and mentees indicated a variety of barriers to the SoTL project process (Table 4). These factors suggest the importance of clear communica-

tion, consistent support, and cross-institutional collaborations for successful project completion. While the implemented AOTA SoTL Program institute included tips for successful group collaboration, mentees desired more explicit guidance for staying connected with their inquiry communities suggesting the importance of an increased focus on communication, collaboration, and project management skills. Mentees also reported challenges with having the time to dedicate to their SoTL project and that other responsibilities interfered with the completion of their project. When recruiting future mentees for the program, mentees should be given clear expectations about the time commitment and potential scope of projects prior to enrolling in the program. Also related to the theme of barriers to project completion, mentees requested more information to support completion and dissemination of their work, such as funding sources, journals for publication, and presentation venues. This suggests that future disciplinary-specific SoTL programs should enhance access to resources that may support completion and dissemination of SoTL work.

Mentors also shared feedback that informs lessons learned and changes in future AOTA SoTL programming. While mentors had an average of almost 18 years of teaching experience and 100% of mentors had experience with SoTL inquiry, their comments indicated the need for deliberate preparation for the role of mentor and ongoing support throughout their mentor-mentee relationship over the duration of the AOTA SoTL Program institute and mentored inquiry communities. Future discipline-specific SoTL programs should consider methods for providing consistent, sustained support to mentors, particularly since in this study approximately a quarter of all mentee projects required mentorship for more than a year.

Mentees and mentors had a few common suggestions that inform lessons learned and future program changes. They suggested that improvements could be made with the matching of mentees and mentors. Surveying both mentees and mentors pre-program participation may be a useful way of gathering details about participant interests and creating a more intentional approach to mentee-mentor matching. Finally, given that occupational therapy educators transition to academia from practice at different points in their careers, similar to other allied health educators, future SoTL programs may want to consider how best to engage educators who are at various points in their career trajectory in SoTL.

Opportunities

Inquiry Communities
Inquiry communities are an evolving method of professional growth and serve as a form of mentorship (Healy, 2000; Jedele, 2010; Steiner, 2016), particularly when communities are intentionally constructed. Findings of this study inform the use of inquiry communities as a means of mentoring discipline-specific SoTL projects. Both mentees and mentors of the examined AOTA SoTL Program described the value of intentionally forming inquiry communities around a shared topic of interest within occupational therapy education. While university faculty can engage in interdisciplinary SoTL inquiry about pedagogical approaches and instructional methods that are relevant across disciplines (i.e. team-based learning), the formation of discipline-specific SoTL inquiry communities creates the opportunity to explore questions related to the ontology, epistemology, axiology, and signature pedagogies of a discipline.

Long-term Growth Potential
Responses from both mentors and mentees indicated clear enthusiasm for SoTL work broadly conceived and strong support for continuing and expanding aspects of the program. Simultaneously, challenges such as lack of time and resources to support SoTL work can be reframed as spaces for innovation and growth. Opportunities for expansion of the AOTA SoTL Program—and similar discipline-specific programs, include connecting multiple same-topic inquiry communities, adding an interprofessional education (IPE) focus, and including students in the SoTL process.

Tracking topics explored by individual inquiry communities offers a basis for creating 'landscapes of practice' (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2014), a network of inquiry communities studying the same or similar topics. Landscapes of practice enrich and build capacity for SoTL by broadening inquiry beyond locally-situated contexts. Incorporating an interprofessional focus through adding scholars from different disciplines to inquiry communities is another avenue for growth. Partnerships with institutional Centers for Teaching and Learning could yield interdisciplinary inquiry communities and thus expand networks for SoTL collaboration. Finally, including students as part of inquiry communities frames SoTL as a mentorship path and student development process (Eady et al., 2021). Involvement in SoTL projects prepares students to assume roles as faculty (Schram, et al., 2012), builds writing, thinking, and critical reasoning skills, helps them to more deeply understand how they learn, and serves as an opportunity for diverse learners to engage in scholarly work (Felten, et al., 2013).

Online/Virtual Environments
The Covid-19 pandemic changed educational communities and scholarly work in substantial ways (Cruz & Grodziak, 2021). Perhaps the most striking change was the sudden pivot to virtual meetings and instruction. As the pandemic starts to wane, there will undoubtedly be a push to return to face-to-face interaction; however, the probability is high that elements of virtual work and learning environments are here to stay. Similarly, virtual and online technologies such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams offer opportunities to support SoTL in various ways. Virtual institutes and conferences, asynchronous training modules, and Zoom meetings to connect mentors and mentee groups are all examples of how technology can support connection and collaboration (Sipes et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2014).

Challenges

Evaluation
Evaluation is a necessary element of improving and sustaining any project or program, but can be overlooked or minimized if the focus is on content and process. Evaluation also supplies evidence of effectiveness and/or impact that supports continued funding or sponsorship. In this paper, we have detailed some preliminary findings that support disciplinary-specific SoTL endeavors such as the AOTA SoTL Program; however, there is still a continuing need for data collection and robust program evaluation methods must be developed in order to sustain the program long-term. SoTL program developers and leaders will need to consider many options for evaluation, including the Kirkpatrick and CIPP (Context-Input-Process-Product) training models. In addition, development of a logic model for the program would be valu-

able in identifying environmental and personal factors which may impact future directions. That said, in-depth program evaluation is a time-consuming process, and in a culture of continuous quality improvement, assessing and tweaking never stops. This reality will present a significant and ongoing challenge for a program voluntarily led by fulltime academic faculty.

Maintaining Mentors
Mentors are the very essence of the AOTA SoTL Program and were noted by mentees to be the most significant factor in the design, ongoing collaboration, and dissemination of their inquiry community projects. Mentors also convey knowledge and an enthusiasm for SoTL that keep inquiry communities engaged and motivated. Given the critical role they play, locating and maintaining mentors is likely the highest priority for the program if it is to continue and grow. However, preparation for clinical practice is the focus of occupational therapy curriculum and instruction, and the number of faculty with the experience and expertise in SoTL, while growing, remains low. In addition, faculty with a background in SoTL are typically charged with many other competing priorities, and volunteering additional time to guide mentee groups can be a big ask. Therefore, leaders of SoTL initiatives such as the AOTA SoTL Program must develop creative ways to simultaneously grow SoTL within their discipline, and recruit and retain mentors. Creating a pipeline where mentees are provided ongoing support and additional training specific to the mentor skill set is one way to build capacity.

Lack of focus on SoTL in Higher Education
Although not specifically mentioned in survey responses, the 'under the radar' profile of SoTL within the academic culture of higher education is the foundation of issues such as lack of dedicated time and collaborators for SoTL work, and a dearth of both funding and dissemination venues. Scholarship focused on education continues to be undervalued and underfunded in higher education (Kern et al., 2015). The infrastructure to support SoTL, including protected time for research, award and recognition systems, dissemination events, promotional tracks recognizing SoTL as added value, tenure opportunities for non-clinical/basic sciences faculty, and dedicated funding sources, tends to be minimal or even non-existent. While it is certainly possible to engage in SoTL without supportive infrastructure, motivation to do so will always be a lower priority in the complex and demanding culture of academia. This challenge will need to be met through both advocacy for institutional reform as well as innovation in creating spaces for SoTL to be conducted, disseminated, and recognized.

LIMITATIONS
This study has several limitations beyond those expected of descriptive survey methodology. The survey included mentor and mentee respondents from across the ten years of the AOTA SoTL Program evolution. As such, respondents experienced different mentorship approaches, depending on the timing of when they participated in the program, rather than one consistent approach. Further, given the post-survey only methods, this study lacks pre-program data for comparison. Since 58% of mentees had SoTL experience prior to the program, the lack of any pre-program data limits our ability to assess the impact of the program on certain outcomes. We were also unable to match mentor and mentee respondents, further limiting analysis of any relationship between certain program experiences and outcomes. Finally, while the survey asked respondents to indicate their current academic rank at the time of survey completion, in retrospect it would have been useful to also collect information about rank at the time of participation in the SoTL program.

CONCLUSION
At a time when faculty shortages in occupational therapy, and other allied health professions, are a significant concern, it is important to provide faculty with opportunities to collaborate and share evidence-based pedagogical knowledge. Mentored inquiry communities provide an effective and valued mechanism for SoTL collaboration. However, sustained mentorship and support are needed for both mentors and mentees in order to increase the rate of project completion.

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