

*By Dr. Gintaras Duda*

One of the drawbacks to the university structure of departments and schools is that we often don't know what our colleagues as close as down the hall are working on. Despite popular perceptions, a good number of faculty on campus are active in SoTL and are publishing regularly within that field. Many times this activity is within discipline-specific journals, which makes the work even more invisible to colleagues on campus in other departments and/or programs.

To help disseminate some of the good work being done in SoTL on campus, this newsletter will highlight one faculty member per issue. The highlighted individuals will be scholars who are doing interesting and innovative work within SoTL, that also have wider applicability outside their individual fields. In this way we hope to 1) give some well-deserved recognition to SoTL faculty on campus and 2) encourage collaboration across department and disciplinary lines by raising awareness of the rich and varied projects being researched on campus.

The highlighted scholar for this newsletter is Dr. Naser Alsharif from the school of Pharmacy and Health Professions. Dr. Alsharif's main research area is toxicology, however, for the past sixteen years he has been pursuing a systematic study of his teaching and has published many SoTL articles focusing on technology in the classroom and the divide between campus and distance students. In his own words,

“The shift in my scholarly activities to emphasize SoTL has been an exciting and rewarding experience. As much as I enjoy my basic science research and being in the laboratory, the ability to use a lot of the skills I gained from my basic science research to tackle key questions in the classroom to improve on student learning, to investigate if a technology I am using is helpful for student learning, to identify best practices in the use of a particular technology and to address critical issues in distance education have provided me with many opportunities to challenge myself, collaborate with many colleagues and students, improve on how I teach, provide colleagues with practical ways to address key issues in their classroom, and offer my knowledge and expertise locally, nationally, and internationally. In addition, I have recognized that each of us in academia have to seek opportunities to excel in what we do and that the pursuit of original discovery is not limited to our main expertise gained in graduate school or clinical residencies. We always have to fine tune it and channel it into related and new areas based on interest or necessity. Finally, the rewards for the above have been beyond any of my expectations. While it is certainly rewarding to be acknowledged for expertise in a particular research area, taking time to expand into other areas -- especially those of interest — can be accomplished by any faculty member who is motivated, committed, and resourceful. Doing so can bring personal gratification, better awareness of possibilities for a wider range of scholarly activities, diverse research

projects that energize research activities within an institution and address the need for scholarly work in new areas within schools/ universities, rewarding collaboration opportunities with faculty members across the campus, and local, national, and international recognition for oneself and one's institution.”

Excerpt from American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education 2010; 74 (6) Article 112.

The full article can be found here: <http://www.ajpe.org/view.asp?art=aj7406112&pdf=yes>