

Wisconsin Teaching Fellows SoTL Research



Wednesday, April 27, 2016
12:00 – 12:50 p.m.
Poplar Room, Student Center

Rachel Headley: Wisconsin Teaching Fellow
Math Anxiety and Geoscience Students

Math anxiety involves moderate to extreme fear, anxiety, and occasionally physical pain associated with anticipating or performing mathematical tasks. High levels of math phobia have been tied to students taking lower levels of math and choosing less quantitatively-challenging courses. However, as many scientific fields and jobs become more data-driven, math skills become more of an essential part of a scientist's tool kit. At UW-Parkside, math anxiety has been assessed using a standardized math anxiety rating survey embedded into a more general anxiety survey. Course grades and demographic information have also been collected, as higher math anxiety has been correlated with particular demographic groups. Interviews helped to determine the basis and background of their possible anxieties. While sample sizes have been very small, the outcome of this study is to determine if interventions should be used in most geoscience courses.

Natalia Taft: Wisconsin Teaching Fellow
Combatting Stereotype Threat in First-Generation Students in Introductory Biology

The goal of this project is to test whether a brief writing exercise involving values affirmation could help combat stereotype threat in first-generation college students in a large undergraduate biology course. Stereotype threat can be defined as distress associated with the prospect of confirming a negative stereotype about a group to which one belongs. Stereotype threat has been shown to be associated with the achievement gaps of several minority groups. The values-affirmation intervention I used is a brief (10-15 minute) exercise in which students write about personally important values, such as family and friends, material that is unrelated to the subject matter of the course. I introduced this intervention and a control activity in two sections with two separate instructors of this course in the fall of 2015. Preliminary data on how this writing intervention affected student performance in BIOS 102: Organismal Biology at UW Parkside will be presented.

This event is sponsored by the Teaching & Learning Center. The SoTL projects were developed through the OPID Wisconsin Teaching Fellows & Scholars program.

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