Which Students? Student Groupings for Context-Responsive SoTL

Instead of studying a generic "student," consider focusing a SoTL project on one of these groups. Section 1 defines groups by who students are; sections 2–9 define them by how students experience the institution.

1. Student Demographics*

- Student level
  - undergraduate
  - graduate
- Student demographics
  - rural/domestic/international
  - religion
  - underrepresented groups
    - sexual orientation
    - gender
    - ethnicity/geographic background
    - physical disability
    - neurodiversity
    - socio-economic status
  - non-traditional students
    - age
    - first generation
    - different first language
    - veterans
    - prisoners

2. Pathway & Entry Status (How students arrive)**

- First-time-in-college students
- First-generation college students
- Transfer students (2→4 year, lateral transfers)
- Dual-enrollment alumni
- Early-college high school graduates
- Returning adult learners
- Students re-enrolling after stop-out
- Readmitted students after academic dismissal
- Gap-year entrants
- Military-connected students

3. Academic Preparation & Placement (How students are positioned at entry to higher education)

- Students placed into developmental coursework
- Students in co-requisite support models
- Conditionally admitted students
- Students entering without calculus/chemistry/foreign language sequences
- Students with uneven high school preparation
- Students from non-traditional feeder schools
- Test-optional admits
- Students with portfolio-based admission

4. Enrollment Intensity & Course Load (How time is structured around learning)

- Part-time students
- Students carrying overloads
- Students enrolled in evening/weekend programs
- Commuter students
- Students balancing full-time work
- Students in accelerated programs
- Students in modular/8-week courses
- Summer-term-heavy students

5. Program & Major Trajectories (How students move through curricula)

- Pre-major students
- Students denied entry to capped programs
- Major-switchers
- Late deciders
- Double majors
- Interdisciplinary majors
- Students in "fallback" majors
- Students repeating gateway courses
- Students on probation in selective programs

6. Learning Infrastructure & Access Patterns (How students interact with institutional systems)

- Students who rarely use tutoring centers
- Students who overuse academic support
- Students who avoid office hours
- Students relying on informal peer networks
- Students navigating multiple platforms
- Students without consistent device access
- Students using campus Wi-Fi only
- Students dependent on loaner tech

7. Classroom Participation Profiles (How students engage in learning environments)

- Low-visibility students
- High-performing but silent students
- Discussion-dominant students
- Reluctant presenters
- Students who avoid group work
- Students who over-function in teams
- Students who disengage after feedback

Chick, Nancy L., and Jennifer C. Friberg-Fort. 2026. "Studying and Supporting Understudied Students When Words Are Dangerous." Workshop presented at the SoTL Commons Conference, Savannah, GA, February 2026.

8. Language, Communication, and Academic Discourse (How students navigate disciplinary language)

- Multilingual writers
- Students educated in other national systems
- Students new to academic English
- Students unfamiliar with genre conventions
- Students transitioning from oral to written traditions
- Students new to research writing
- Students in writing-intensive majors for first time

9. Credentialing & Professional Pathways (How students experience high-stakes transitions)

- Pre-clinical students
- Pre-licensure students
- Certification-track students
- Students preparing for entrance exams
- Internship-dependent students
- Practicum-based students
- Portfolio-based graduates
- Students navigating application cycles

* Source for Section 1 Student Demographics: page 10 of Miller-Young, Janice, Jeffrey W. Paul, Renato B. Rodrigues, and Jillian Seniuk Cicek. 2025. "A Systems-Inspired Taxonomy of SoTL Research: Increasing the Accessibility and Visibility of this Heterogeneous Field." *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 13: 1–23. https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.13.55

** Sections 2-9 ideated with ChatGPT 5.2.