Analyzing the Evidence: What It Reveals about Student Learning

You've now gathered some evidence of student learning, ideally a variety. Now comes the analysis of this evidence. How does it help you answer your research question?   Think carefully about the kinds of answers your research question seeks, such as

- frequency (how many students who did x, number of instances of y in the data or high grades or "strongly agree" responses, number of attempts at z, etc)
- change in numbers (increase in high grades, number of students retained, decrease in affirmative responses to a survey question, etc.)

- description (what moments of learning or the lack thereof look like, emerging patterns of behavior, responses in a survey)
- interpretation (what the student text means, often grouped in themes; analysis of quality)

You may also draw on a variety of resources for analyzing your data.

First, consider your own expertise. What mode(s) of analysis are at the heart of your training? Remember, SoTL is conducted by disciplinary experts, so draw on your expertise when relevant.

Next, even if you're working on an individual project, colleagues with complementary analytical expertise can be brought in for this stage of the project.[1]

Finally, there may be pre-existing tools available to support your work. While you may develop your own, there may already be ready-to-use and potentially more credible resources out there. Possibilities include validated measurement instruments (e.g., surveys, assessments), carefully designed and pretested rubrics (e.g., AAC&U VALUE Rubrics), previous scholars' identified patterns or coding schemes (e.g., published as the mode of analysis or a typology of findings in a previous study), among others. Use your lit review to identify any existing resources.

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[1] Always make sure you formally acknowledge their contributions when you go public with your work in any way.