

PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING LEARNING IN THE LABORATORY. Susana S. Lopez, Todd A. Gatlin, Santiago Sandi-Urena, Department of Chemistry, University of South Florida, 4202 E. Fowler Ave CHE205, Tampa, FL 33620.

Despite having been described as a powerful tool for investigating the academic chemistry laboratory, phenomenology has been seldom used for this purpose. Understanding the meaning of the laboratory experience as lived by the participants may facilitate access to a realm of information otherwise overlooked. This approach informs not only about gains and benefits but more importantly about processes that promote learning in the laboratory. In this work, we present findings from phenomenological studies describing participants' experiences in a general chemistry laboratory course. These studies are part of a larger research program designed to use the same methodology across multiple learning environments. It is our premise that this approach will contribute towards identifying the factors that promote learning in the lab, which may then inform the design and implementation of lab experiences.