

POD Quick Review

Pod premises and goals

The pod grew out of three basic premises:

1. The plethora of choices available to current college students makes it harder for them to find time to create a shared community (cf. Rebecca Nathan 2004)
2. The ability to synthesize curricular, co-curricular and non-academic aspects of life is developing later for college students and is a key component in their ability to become self-motivated and self-aware learners (cf. Patricia King 2008)
3. Metacognition (learning how to learn), when explicitly taught to students, increases their ability to handle college material and to self-assess their abilities (cf. Wirth 2009)

Our goals for the pod were to create an environment that

1. Gave students a group of potential student-student connections larger than an FIYS class but smaller than the whole first year class.
2. Emphasized Lake Forest College as a community of learners, regardless of institutional role or disciplinary interest.
3. Enabled a conversation about learning and life that could both augment and transcend classes.
4. Produced a shared curricular experience between multiple classes that would not disrupt the content in any class.
5. Created support connections among and between the teaching faculty and other campus professionals
6. Respected the time of all parties involved and did not become burdensome to anyone.

Pod Personnel, Fall 2009

Holly Swyers (coordinator)

Elizabeth Fischer, Alexander Mawyer, Rachel Ragland (teaching faculty)

Joe Kinsella, Chris Waugh, Jenn Lindsay, Teryn Robinson, Caron Sutton (support professionals)

Quick guide for pod assembly & coordination

- 1) In the early-mid fall, three faculty members agree to work together and decide on a shared frame. Metacognition works very well because it is useful in every discipline and can be incorporated without sacrificing content. We suggest that the three classes span at least two divisions to maximize benefit to both faculty and students. We also note that this could be done with 2 or 4 classes, but think 3 is optimal.
- 2) Once faculty self-identify in a pod, they are assigned a coordinator. We suggest that in the short term, LTC is the place where coordinators are assigned and pod applications are processed (a little like teaching triangles). Once coordinators and pods are paired up, then organization duties fall to the coordinator. Please note we suggest that the coordinator NOT be drawn from the teaching faculty.
- 3) If the pod is to include a residential component, the coordinator should liaise with res life in late fall/early spring.
- 4) In spring and summer, faculty and coordinator find at least 2-3 support professionals to work with the pod. Our suggestion is that someone from athletics, res life, and

students affairs are on board. We also benefitted from having a learning support specialist and a public safety officer in our pod.

5) Also over spring and summer, coordinators and faculty should meet to figure out when the pod will get together, how that coordinates with what is happening in class, and how to encourage students to participate. See below for the kinds of things that might be considered.

6) During the semester, the pod meets 5-6 times. Teaching faculty would participate in the 3-4 of the meetings; support professionals and coordinator would take primary responsibility for these meetings. RAs could be used very effectively to augment pod programming in the residence halls (arranging movie nights, cheering sections for games, concert attendance, etc). This will be particularly effective in pods that are grouped in one or two residence halls.

August

- Chicago Day (everyone did their own trip then met in Millennium Park, where we ate lunch and remixed the groups to tell each other about what we did. Each class was accompanied by a non-teaching pod member, each lunch group was about 8 students).
- Get to know you session for non-teaching pod professionals + students (right before classes start or during first week)

September

- How to get the most out of ACE/Interact done with non-teaching pod professionals + students (we did this right before the second ACE session, which was the third weekend of classes).

October

- Warning grade/check in faculty plus non-teaching pod professionals and students (we brought in students who had recovered from warning grades and ones who had bombed classes where they didn't get warning grades to talk about their experience. We also had great success having students read letters they had written to themselves at the start of the semester and talking about how they were doing and what help they needed).

November (or late October)

- All pod members - guest speaker on the theme of the pod (we liked having the author of our shared reading come in; it was a good academic experience for the students. We did this over lunch).

December

- Podposium - all pod members. If there are multiple pods, it would be worth having this be an all day event for the community. It works as a nice capstone and goal for students, and it gives them valuable experience in sharing their work with an audience. Plus it makes a nice training ground for the spring symposium.

7) Optional, but worth doing: during the semester, faculty and pod professionals put in an appearance in all pod classes. For teaching faculty, this could be done under the auspices of a teaching triangle or just be used as an opportunity to see what's going on in other classes.