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Winter 2015

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### What's at the Core?

As you will read elsewhere in this installment of the newsletter, you, the membership, have elected five new representatives to serve three-year terms on the POD Core Committee, our organization's "Board of Directors." Any election of representatives chosen to engage in leadership on one's behalf is newsworthy and the recent choice of a new slate of colleagues—Victoria Bhavasar (California State University Pomona), Allison Boye (Texas Tech University), Jake Glover (IDEA Center), Carol Hurney (James Madison University), and Roben Torosyan (Bridgewater State University)—is

no exception. Together, they bring over 50 years' worth of experience in the organization. They come from the sciences and the humanities, from different types of higher education institutions and from a nonprofit organization committed to improved learning through research, assessment, and professional development. They have track records of presentation, publication, and service to the organization and beyond. In short, again this year, we can celebrate the willingness of talented and experienced colleagues to step up to the plate.

In my November Presidential Address, I highlighted that POD has been primarily a volunteer-run organization since its inception. We still have only one paid employee, our Executive Director Hoag Holmgren. While our founders were uncertain in the mid-1970s that enough qualified people would be willing to step forward to contribute their time and talent to leading and sustaining the fledgling organization, almost four decades of commitment from hundreds and hundreds of members has established an undeniable track record of service. This reliable generosity is worth recognizing and celebrating. So, thanks to these new organizational leaders, and thanks to all of you who serve in other ways, large and small.

In the address, I also referenced what we, on Core, sometimes hear is a common perception: that "Core is mysterious." To dispel at least some of the mystery, I want to take the opportunity to pull back the curtain and reveal some of what these new members can expect as they embark on their terms of service. The Core Committee is made up of 15 elected members who rotate on and off in groups of five every three years. This model ensures that the organization's leadership experiences both necessary continuity and essential refreshing on a regular basis. In addition to the 15 regularly elected members, Core is also made up of the Executive Committee, a group that includes the current President, the Past President, the President-Elect, the Executive Director, and, because fiscal oversight is an essential

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responsibility, the Chair of the Finance Committee (one of the elected Core members). The entire board meets biannually for a day-and-a-half, once in March and once just prior to the annual conference, to engage in business, oversight, visioning, and leadership. Between face-to-face meetings, the Executive Committee carries forward the work of the organization and consults the rest of the Core Committee electronically on key matters where voting or approval is required. In addition, each member elected to the Core Committee is encouraged to lead a standing or an ad hoc Committee at some point during his or her term, to provide mentoring for new Core members, and to ensure the work of the organization is done according to our stated mission and values.

Much about the work of Core—both in terms of nuts and bolts and in terms of organizational mission and values—may be found online in the Governance Manual. Other aspects of the work are less codified in a public way, though newcomers can expect to read guidelines and suggestions for the kind of collaborative and consensus-based deliberations and decision-making that goes on as we review the good work of standing committees; entertain proposals for new topical interest groups; review, debate, and approve requests for budget resources; consider potential partnerships with other organizations or corporate entities; imagine the potential leadership roles POD might play in a variety of national or international contexts; and engage in soul-searching and self-reflection about the distance between our aspirations or ideals and our realities. Though Core members from the 1970s or 1980s would likely find the committee more formal than it was in the early years, when voting took place through the now infamous “POD nod,” I believe they would recognize the spirit that continues to guide this work of servant leaders: mutual respect, a commitment to collaboration and to seeking consensus, an aspiration to practice what we preach in terms of process, and a sense of fun, mixed in with hard work.

So, how might you get involved, should leadership in the organization appeal to you? First, I would encourage you to explore and participate in as many different aspects of the organization as possible, according to your interests and your talents. Join a committee; serve at the registration desk at the conference; attend the annual Membership Meeting and ask questions; participate in online conversations; offer to read and review conference proposals; sign up to be a Conference buddy; get to know people, many different people from different parts of the organization, over meals, in sessions, during karaoke. Second, I would encourage you to talk with people who have been or are currently serving on Core. Ask them what the experience is like, how they found their way into leadership, what the current most important issues are for POD, what they like most about being on the board, how they feel they can contribute to the organization, what they believe being part of the board means for their own personal and professional development. In my experience, the Core Committee consists of a generous and approachable group of people, and we are always eager to encourage and mentor newcomers. Finally, think about what you might offer and run your statement by some seasoned members for their thoughts. And, if you come to the point where you run for Core, be aware that many of those elected have run more than once before they get the chance to participate. Be persistent. In my experience, being a member of Core is a lot of work, but it’s also a tremendously rewarding professional activity.

-- *Leslie Ortquist-Ahrens*

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The best way to help celebrate POD's 40th annual conference (November 4-8, 2015, San Francisco) is to attend! Our theme this year is Back to the Future: Critical Reflection, Effective Practice. Stay tuned for important details about the Call for Proposals, registration, excursions, and the first-ever POD time capsule, which will be sealed at the conference and remain sealed for 40 years.

The conference will be held at the beautiful [Hyatt Regency San Francisco Airport](#) hotel, 20 minutes from downtown San Francisco and just minutes from San Francisco Airport (SFO).

The hotel offers stunning views of the Bay, the mountains, and has a 10-story lobby atrium. We were able to lock in at the low POD group rate of \$149 per night for a single or double room. The conference team believes San Francisco will be a great city to host POD's 40th anniversary. We hope you do too!

If you're feeling equally creative and scholastic, consider submitting an article for *To Improve the Academy's* Creative Scholarship Feature, Volume 35-2. The deadline is June 30, 2015. Submit your manuscript [here](#). Send questions to guest editors Martin Springborg and Cassandra Horii at [podoffice@podnetwork.org](mailto:podoffice@podnetwork.org).

Hoag Holmgren  
Executive Director

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Emily Gravett

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and an excellent Anchor Session.

This year the conference introduced POD Unconference (POD-U), which provided an opportunity for attendees to share ideas in a flexible and spontaneous manner. POD-U included sessions familiar to regular conference attendees (Birds of a Feather, the Resource Fair, and Poster Sessions), as well as two new types of sessions, Lightning Talks and SpeedGeeking, both of which were very well attended.

Additional highlights from the conference include:

- Leslie Ortquist-Ahrens's Presidential Address "Thriving in the 21st Century" built upon Kathryn Plank's 2013 address that had asked what POD stood for; provided an overview of POD's history and made the case that we have become a mature organization that should focus on continued thriving; and concluded with the recognition that there are exciting and time-sensitive opportunities for POD to become involved both nationally with a range of STEM initiatives and internationally, as calls for expertise in educational development proliferate.
- An engaging plenary by Cathy Davidson
- Great attendance at the social functions of the conference, including the receptions and as always a raucous time at karaoke

Images from the 2014 conference are available on [Flickr](#), with special thanks to photographer Jake Jacobson.

Join us for the 40th POD Conference November 4th – 8th 2015 in San Francisco!

Plans are just beginning as the new conference team decides on the theme. More information and the call for proposals will be available on the POD website soon.

David Sacks & Bill Watson, 2015 Conference Co-Chairs

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Carl Moore & Carolyn Oxenford,  
2015 Program Co-Chairs



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**Emily Gravett**

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## Conference Awards (Winter 2015)



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### INSIDE THIS ISSUE: Call for Spirit of POD Award

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Do you know a POD member who has an established history of serving the organization above and beyond routine ways, contributing to faculty development, and exercising active leadership in POD? Then consider nominating them for the Spirit of POD Award. Nominees should also embody a generosity of spirit, kindness, compassion, and civility in keeping with the mission of POD. Don't wait for the Fall! Nominations can be submitted anytime via the online nomination process found at:

(<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1BkRd3TqxlEn6qJAde2HcAg9tAOBQ8lFF5Yqa8pnCat0/viewform>). Nominate a deserving member today!

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--Matthew L. Ouellett

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### 2014 Robert J. Menges Award for Outstanding Research in Educational Development

Each year, POD members with accepted research-based conference sessions can apply for the Robert J. Menges Award for Outstanding Research in Educational

Development. This award honors the life and work of our colleague Bob Menges, and recognizes high-quality original research – whether quantitative or qualitative – that leads to systematic investigation and evidence-based conclusions that can enrich our understanding of the educational development field.

At this year's conference, three sessions were honored:

#### ***You Don't Know Faculty: Characteristics of Faculty Survey Nonresponse***

Kiernan Mathews, Harvard University

Colleges and universities rely heavily on surveys to gather data to support important institutional decisions. But what about the nonrespondents? This quantitative study examined the characteristics of faculty who do not

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respond to surveys. Using a database of 27,000 records gathered for the Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey done by the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE), the researcher found that nonrespondents were more often than respondents: male, non-white, non-U.S. citizens, scientists and engineers, tenured, employed two years longer, and in their current rank for three years or longer. They were also more often from large, urban, public, doctoral universities with lower graduation rates. The study suggests that administrators should not rely exclusively on surveys before making critical decisions.



***Leveraging Institutional Data to Demonstrate Our Impact***

Deborah Meizlish, Mary Wright, Joe Howard, and Matthew Kaplan, University of Michigan

This multi-method study utilized existing institutional data to evaluate the impact of a year-long, new-faculty program in relation to a naturally occurring control group. Data spanned a six-year range – pre and post the new program launch. The researchers found that participants in the year-long program demonstrated statistically better results than non-participants, feeling better prepared to teach, engaging in more educational development activities after their first year, and receiving higher student ratings. By using existing data, the study provided a resource-efficient approach, and it contributed to limited, but growing, research on effective ways of assessing the impact of our programs which we can use to advocate for their value.

***Evaluating the Impact of a Large-Scale, Research-Based Course Transformation Program***

Chantal Levesque-Bristol, K. Andrew R. Richards, Kiki Zissimopoulos, Brooke Robertshaw, and David Nelson, Purdue University

This quantitative study used data from 102 courses redesigned to promote student-centered learning. Using self-determination theory and pre- and post-semester data, the researchers tested for multiple relationships in three types of redesigns: supplemental use of learning technologies, flipped classroom, or fully online. Overall, they found that student perceptions of competence increased when the learning climate was perceived to be more student-centered. As well, course grades were significantly higher in the flipped and supplemental designs, but not in the online model. The researchers also determined that the influence of the learning climate on course grades was fully mediated by student perceptions of the course environment. Results suggest that student success and educational development initiatives need to attend to students' perceptions and basic psychological needs.

Proposals for this prestigious award are reviewed according to the following criteria: strength and clarity of research question and research approach; the connections made to theoretical frameworks, relevant research, and the educational development field; the alignment in the research design, analysis, findings, and conclusions; and the contributions to the field and POD's mission.



Many thanks to the 2014 Menges selection subcommittee members: Virginia Lee, Kathryn Plank, Catherine Wehlburg, Bonnie Mullinix, and Michael Palmer. Thanks as well to the many POD conference attendees who applied for this award.

If you plan to submit a research-based POD conference session proposal in 2015, please consider applying for this award. More details can be found on the [POD website](#) or by contacting subcommittee chair Donna Ellis ([donnae@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:donnae@uwaterloo.ca)).

--Donna Ellis

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## POD Grants Committee

In June 2014, the POD Grants Committee announced a call for research grant proposals. From a very competitive pool of proposals, the following three projects were selected for funding:

### ***Validating a Comprehensive Faculty Development Evaluation Model***

Principal Investigator: Sue Hines, Saint Mary's University of MN

In response to the growing interest and need in the field to move towards more rigorous and systematic methods for evaluating faculty development, the researcher developed a 4-phase evaluation model based on the evaluation literature and findings from studies investigating faculty development evaluation practices across the nation. The purpose of this project is to complete the field-testing of the model for validation and refinement. Often times, published evaluation models are theoretical without being put into practice to authenticate its usefulness and practicality. Given the variability of faculty development units and the need for a practical, customizable, and feasible comprehensive evaluation model, field-testing the model in various institutional settings is essential. The ultimate goal of this work is to submit a manuscript for publication to share the model and examples from the field-testing institutions.

### ***How Active is Your Class? Modifying, Implementing, and Evaluating an Observation Protocol***

Principal Investigator: Regina F. Frey, Washington University in St. Louis

Co-Principal Investigator (co-PI): Beth A. Fisher, Washington University in St. Louis

Research Team Members: Denise A. Leonard and Erin D. Solomon

Amidst calls for broad adoption of active learning in undergraduate STEM education, there is a need to support faculty by observing and documenting the extent to which they are implementing active-learning techniques. Faculty developers therefore need multiple, flexible, validated, and structured classroom-observation protocols, which they may use in combination with more evaluative observation methods. The goal of our project is to develop, implement, and evaluate a modified tool—the Observation Protocol for Active Learning (OPAL)—that may be used to document teaching methods of various kinds, including interactive lecture, clicker questions, interactive demonstrations, interactive-engagement, and “flipped-classroom” methods. When combined with “traditional,” evaluative observations of teaching, OPAL promises to be a powerful documentation tool that can lead to increased adoption of active learning by helping faculty to visualize 1) the amount of active learning they are incorporating and 2) how the spacing of these activities affects student engagement in their courses.

### ***Critical Thinking in Active Learning Classrooms: When Course Design and Space Collide***

Principal Investigator: Connie Schroeder, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Centers juggle diverse mission dimensions, including instructional, curricular, career, research, organizational, leadership, and career development. Additionally, Centers are merging with new units, including learning management system, assessment, and student tutoring. In era of accountability, Centers must validate their effectiveness with diminishing resources while scaling up their impact. Centers invest substantially in institutional initiatives that impact teaching and learning (Schroeder and Associates, 2010), but this work remains invisible and difficult to measure. The Center Mission Matrix juxtaposes the multiple Center mission dimensions noted above --organizational development in particular, with three levels of impact -individual, department/School or College, or institutional. After entering the Center's programs and activities across the Matrix, a finer-grained analysis and visual portrayal of the Center mission emerges. The Center is equipped with a visual conceptualization of the Center Mission for in internal decision making, budgeting, orienting, and strategic planning, and renders obvious the complexity of Center impact.

--Dennis Munk

### Graduate and Professional Student Development Travel Award

The Professional Organizational Development Network in Higher Education's Committee of Graduate and Professional Student Development (GPSD) offered a Reduced POD Conference Registration Fee Award for ten (10) advanced graduate students and postdocs across disciplines and professional schools to attend this year's annual conference. The ten awardees paid only \$50 toward conference registration/POD membership fees. (Several meals are included in this fee.) Each applicant was judged by two members of the Graduate and Professional Student Development Committee, based on demonstrated commitment to teaching and learning, and demonstrated relevance of the conference to future career plans. The committee also seeks to make awards to a diverse pool of PhD-granting institutions. Here is the list of this year's award winners:

- Jamiella Brooks, UC Davis, PhD, French
- Samantha Clifford, Northern Arizona - Flagstaff, Post-Doc, Anthropology
- Alexandra Coso, Georgia Tech, Post-Doc, Engineering
- Emad Mansour, Auburn, Post-Doc, Higher Ed
- Elizabeth Morse, Yale, PhD, Biology
- Michael Murphy, Ohio State, PhD, Comparative Studies
- Tracy Quan, UC Davis, PhD, Spanish & Portuguese
- Jayanthi Sriram, Missouri St. Louis, Post-Doc, Zoology
- Tyler Smith, Yale, PhD, Religious Studies
- Abigail Wood, Western Carolina, MA, English

--Kathryn Linder

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# Election Results (Winter 2015)



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Victoria Bhavsar, Cal Poly Pomona



Allison Boye, Texas Tech University

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Jake Glover, IDEA Education



Carol Hurney, James Madison University



Roben Torosyan, Bridgewater State University

Kevin Barry Elected POD's President Elect-Elect



Barry was elected by the Core Committee at its fall meeting. He will assume duties as president-elect after the March 2015 Core meeting. He is currently Director of the Kaneb Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of Notre Dame.

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# Committee Updates (Winter 2015)



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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE: Membership Committee

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The Membership Committee would like to thank all of those who participated in the second annual POD Conference Buddy Program. We had almost 100 participants, including over 30 experienced attendees who generously volunteered their time.

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While we are still reviewing all of the feedback from this year, it has been overwhelmingly positive. For example, participants said that "This is a wonderful way to get to know new PODders!" and "I was very happy with my buddy and the buddy program. I would love to be an experienced buddy, once I have gained more experience with POD."

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We are always brainstorming ways to continue to improve the program, so if you have any additional suggestions, please contact Emily Gravett ([egravett@trinity.edu](mailto:egravett@trinity.edu)) or Olena Zhadko ([ozhadko@nyit.edu](mailto:ozhadko@nyit.edu)), the program organizers.

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This year's Introduction to POD for 1st-Time Attendees at the Dallas conference was a major success! The Membership Committee would like express our gratitude to the many experienced POD conference attendees for volunteering their time to connect with new-comers, as well as to first-time attendees for your energy and engagement throughout the session. We trust you were able to establish deep connections with your colleagues, and we encourage you to stay connected in the following ways:

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- [POD Network website](#) for upcoming events and additional details about the organization and how to get involved;
- [WikiPODia](#) for conference presentation materials and other archived information;
- [Listserv](#) to help you stay connected to the buzz in educational development; and
- [POD publications](#) like *To Improve the Academy* (TIA) to learn about current scholarship and this newsletter, *POD Network News*.

Submitted by Michael Palmer, Chair, on behalf of the Membership Committee:

Emily Gravett  
Virginia Lee  
Carl Moore  
Greg Siering  
Olena Zhadko

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## Institute Announcements (Winter 2015)



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future success of those who are new to our field (usually defined as five years or less experience). Come spend four days with us and build your confidence, knowledge, expertise, and networks.

The INFD experience draws upon the expertise of the leading lights in the field, drawn from a diversity of institutions, who will serve as INFD faculty and mentors. For a full list of the 2015 INFD faculty, please visit our event website at [infd.wcu.edu](http://infd.wcu.edu).

For 2015, the INFD is being hosted by the Western North Carolina Educational Development Consortium, an active and vibrant group that consists of volunteers drawn from institutions of higher education across the western part of North Carolina. The two lead institutions are Western Carolina University and A-B Tech Community College.

Together, they have created an institute that features dynamic whole group sessions, interactive workshops, coaching circles, and master classes. The workshop sessions are being offered in several tracks, including Instructional Technology, eTeaching and Learning, Pedagogy, Building Blocks, and Professional Development.

The theme for the 2015 INFD is "at the table", with facets of getting to the table (organizational development), being at the table (evidence-based practice), around the table (collaboration), and turning the table (learning-centered pedagogy).

The Institute is being held from June 16-19 in the beautiful and vibrant city of Asheville, NC. The conference hotel affords easy access to the Biltmore Estate, local shopping, and celebrated restaurants. INFD participants may choose optional excursions to the world-renowned Biltmore Estate, the lively River Arts District (with studio tours), or shopping and dining expeditions to trendy downtown Asheville. Hotel registrants can extend their stay for two

### 2015 Institute for New Faculty Developers

**Registration now open!**

Every two years, the POD Network offers an Institute for New Faculty Developers (INFD). This multi-day event is intended to lay the groundwork for the continued and

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days before and after the institute at the conference rate, making the trip a destination for family and friends.

Early bird registrants receive a \$50 discount. To get more information and to register, please visit the event website at [inf.d.wcu.edu](http://inf.d.wcu.edu) or contact Laura Cruz ([lcruz@wcu.edu](mailto:lcruz@wcu.edu) or 828-227-2093).



**POD Organizational Development Institute • 2015 AAC&U Annual Meeting**  
Leading and Participating in Campus-Level Change: Risks, Rewards & Strategies

Marriott Marquis Washington, DC • Tuesday, January 20th 8:00am-4:00pm

The POD Organizational Development Institute is a pre-conference event held prior to the AAC&U Annual Meeting each year. Please consider joining us in Washington, D.C. on Tuesday, January 20th for this year's event. This institute will help attendees think through the ways in which their faculty development centers or campus committees are posed to participated in or lead new initiatives. It will also have relevance for faculty and administrators who do not have formal "centers" or who are currently in the process of developing a center. Participants will consider questions, concerns and opportunities about broad strategic initiatives as related to teaching and learning centers and educational development. More detailed information about the Organizational Development Institute can be found on the POD website at <http://podnetwork.org/event/2015-pod-aacu-odi/>. Questions may be directed to Martin Springborg ([martin.springborg@gmail.com](mailto:martin.springborg@gmail.com)) or Suzanne Tapp ([Suzanne.tapp@ttu.edu](mailto:Suzanne.tapp@ttu.edu)).

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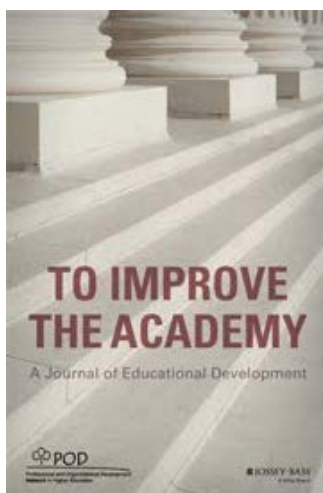
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## *To Improve the Academy: A Journal of Educational Development*

As most of you know, the POD Network has successfully transitioned its flagship journal *To Improve the Academy: A Journal of Educational Development*, to its new format as an electronic journal starting this fall. A large part of the rationale for the switch was to increase the impact of the work being published in TIA, and we are pleased to report that over 2,200 readers accessed the full text of the six articles in our first electronic issue, a promising sign that we are reaching that goal. You can read the full text of these articles, as well as those in volume 33 n. 2, online as a benefit of your membership in POD.

If you have not done so already, please take a moment to read our new TIA feature, invited essays. These are peer-reviewed essays that serve to advance our understanding of the scholarship of educational development. In our first issue, POD President-elect Deandra Little speaks eloquently about definitions, boundaries, and challenges inherent in this scholarship. In our second issue, previous POD President Michele DiPietro uses the Institute for New Faculty Developers as a lens for his analysis of the changing definitions, values, and demographics of the field. Each upcoming issue of TIA will feature one (or more) of these thought-provoking pieces.

There is more to look forward to with TIA. This Spring, we will be beginning our first virtual "meet the author" sessions, in which you can interact with notable TIA authors. Secondly, we have just announced the call for papers for our first theme on Creative Scholarship—deadline for submissions is June 2015. For this feature, we would like to encourage you to take advantage of our new on-line format which allows for a variety of delivery methods (e.g., video, webtext) and file formats (e.g., mP3); but also to consider related themes, such as the process by which scholarship or practice is developed, developing bridges between the creative arts and educational development, and exploring the pedagogy of creativity.

To access *To Improve the Academy*, please visit the POD Network page at <http://podnetwork.org/publications/to-improve-the-academy/>. Note: To have access to all of the TIA articles, you need to be logged in to the POD Network site.

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To submit your manuscript for consideration with *To Improve the Academy*, please visit <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/toimprovetheacademy>. We accept manuscripts 365 days per year, 24 hours a day.

TIA is always looking for thoughtful and qualified reviewers. If this could be you, please register your interest at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/toimprovetheacademy>.

**To Improve the Academy Editors**

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Gary Hawkins, **Associate Editor**, Warren Wilson College  
Abigail Wood, **Assistant Editor**, Western Carolina University

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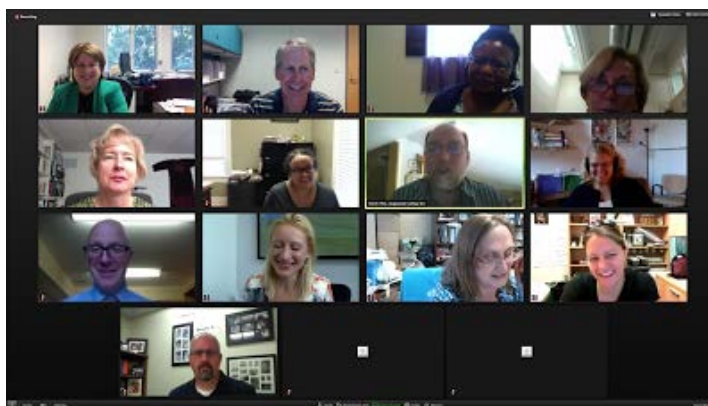
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## Special Column: Small Colleges (Winter 2015)


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**The POD Network  
Meets The Brady  
Bunch: Online  
Conversations  
Create  
Connections  
Among Small-  
College Colleagues**  
*Contributed by David  
Boose, Chair, POD Small  
Colleges Committee*

The central strength of the POD Network is that it is just that—a network. Drawing on the diverse talents and expertise of its members, POD builds relationships, and those relationships support us as individuals in our own professional work and growth. Nowhere is this more evident than at the annual conferences, where connections are made and renewed, and animated conversations in meeting rooms and common areas fill us with new ideas and new energy. But what happens during the other 51-1/2 weeks of the year? How do we maintain those connections and the support of this network of colleagues?

This problem is especially acute for those of us from smaller colleges and universities. Many of us divide our time between faculty development and the other teaching, scholarship, and service responsibilities of faculty, or perhaps have an administrative position with oversight over several other areas. Faculty development positions at smaller institutions are often rotating and short-term, and limited budgets mean that attending the annual conference may not be possible every year. And we are often “one-person shops,” so the energy and support we find at the conference can quickly dissipate once we are back at our home institutions.

Over the past year, the Small Colleges Committee of POD has turned to technology to help solve this problem. Through a series of monthly online conversations, the committee has made it possible for colleagues to share ideas and practices, laugh and groan together over our common experiences, and foster collaborations. These real-time video conferences allowed all of the participants to see and talk with one another simultaneously, despite being spread across four time zones, and in one instance, even when some of the participants were enjoying a “snow day” that had closed their campuses! The sessions have been so productive

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and valuable that we plan to continue them for the foreseeable future, and we recommend the approach to others who are looking for ways to maintain their connections to the POD network throughout the year.

Our online conversations were the brainchild of Gary Hawkins (Warren Wilson College), Michael Reder (Connecticut College), and Fran Glazer (New York Institute of Technology), and were hosted on Zoom, a cloud meeting application that supports a wide variety of interfaces ([www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us)). The initial meetings, starting in January 2014, made use of New York Institute of Technology’s Zoom account and Fran Glazer’s experience with the platform. By September, POD had acquired a Zoom account for the use of its committees, so the Small College Committee uses its access to host the meetings on that account. Zoom allows up to 25 meeting attendees to be visible simultaneously on screen, in tiled windows that quickly got dubbed the “Brady Bunch” view. Additional attendees can join by voice, and a chat thread allows conversations between individuals or with the entire group. The video, audio, and chat conversations can all be recorded and stored for later review or posting. We post full video and audio-only recordings of all sessions on the Small College Committee webpage on wikiPODia, along with notes summarizing the conversation threads.

Since January 2014, we have hosted eight monthly conversations (February – May, and September – December) on topics that included: increasing faculty participation in our programs, assessment strategies, working with the “cycles” of the academic year, and what motivates faculty toward change. The conversations have had between 9 and 21 participants, with an average of about 12 colleagues joining each month. Over the year, over 40 POD colleagues have participated in at least one of the conversations, and half of them have participated in two or more. The meetings are loosely hosted—a convener will open the conversation with a question, and may guide or encourage the discussion a bit as necessary, but we are happy to follow the threads and ideas participants find useful and interesting. The atmosphere is casual, friendly, and supportive, with members offering insights from their own experience, asking questions, and sharing resources freely.

Responses to the conversations have been overwhelmingly positive. “I feel we have created a genuine learning community,” wrote Victoria Wallace, from Massachusetts General Hospital Institute of Health Professions. “[B]ecause many of us are the only teaching and learning resource on campus, these meetings have been extremely beneficial, providing collegial/peer support we would not otherwise have.” This mutual mentoring aspect of the conversations is a key part of their value for many of the participants. Susan Weaver from the University of the Cumberlands wrote, “It is so nice to know that others are in similar situations. Being a part of a group of other peers is uplifting; it instills a sense of professional standards. Even when I cannot participate in the meetings, it feels like there is a structure to offer support, and excellent ideas.”

But the sessions aren’t just about creating community, as valuable as that is. They also result in practical ideas that participants can implement. As Gary Hawkins put it, “Our topics are focused enough; leaders arrive with a good starting point; and everyone contributes so that we leave with concrete take-aways that will help us accomplish our goals tomorrow.” Our first online conversation in January was dedicated to brainstorming collaborative proposal ideas for the annual conference in November. The discussion among the nine participants resulted in three proposals, two of which were accepted. During the October conversation, “Mentoring Programs—Models and Best Practices,” participants shared copies of materials they use to guide both mentors and protégés, and Linda Beane-Katner (St. Norbert College) shared a link to an article she had recently published on the topic in the journal *Mentoring and Tutoring*. A

dean who has not been able to participate directly in any of the conversations commented on the value of the notes and links that come from them, saying she is using them to help “develop” the faculty development leadership on her campus.

Relationships happen when people come together around a shared purpose, and the web of relationships that makes up the POD Network is what supports us all in our work. With the help of technology, the Small College Committee has been able to extend the conversations and connections we enjoy at the annual conference, and continue them throughout the year with colleagues across the country. It has been a vital and vitalizing experience, and we think it can be a model for collaboration and cooperation among other groups within the organization.

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# POD Essays on Teaching Excellence (Winter 2015)



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*We continue to feature a selected POD Essay on Teaching Excellence in each issue of the POD Network News.*

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## Making Sure That Peer Review of Teaching Works for You

*Nancy Van Note Chism, Indiana University School of Education, Indianapolis*

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*Peer review of teaching: A hastily arranged visit to the classroom of a faculty member in desperate need of quick testimony on teaching effectiveness, resulting in a bland letter stating that the class is interesting and students seem engaged.*

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Given this prevailing practice in peer review of teaching, no wonder most faculty members fail to see its inherent usefulness. To many, this limited view and practice have rendered it a necessary evil, only to be used under duress. This essay seeks to expand both definition and practice. Let's begin with another definition:

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*Peer review of teaching: Collegial efforts to understand and describe teaching performance for the purposes of making improvements and/or fair decisions.*

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Who's against "improvement"? What's not to like about "fair"? Viewed in this light, peer review presents more attractive possibilities.

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## The Formative-Summative Distinction

On the formative side, when the main interest is in improvement, peer review of teaching can describe any interchange between colleagues that is focused on the quality or impact of teaching assumptions and actions of either or both. Summative peer review of teaching includes processes leading to decisions on hiring, merit pay, teaching awards, promotion and tenure, or post-tenure review. Peer review of teaching happens routinely in the daily lives of faculty members. When academics claim that they don't have peer review of teaching at their campus, they are likely saying that they don't have intentionally-developed processes of peer review.

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## Intentional Peer Review of Teaching

As with other forms of development and evaluation, good process demands careful thought about criteria, evidence, and standards. A truly intentional system of peer review of teaching articulates processes that address the goals of the system, provide resources and preparation for both reviewers and those being reviewed, and include regular monitoring and revision. These ideal systems are rarely in place. How can a faculty member work with peer review of teaching under varying conditions? The remainder of this essay addresses this question.

## Making Formative Peer Review Work for You

Feedback is essential to learning. We tell this to our students all the time. And we believe it often,... except in our own cases. There are lots of reasons for our reluctance to invite a peer review: we may feel that the time commitment needed to provide a peer review would be a burden on a colleague; we may feel uncomfortable since our teaching seems so personal; we may doubt whether our colleagues know much more about teaching than we do, or feel that they will someday have to make or contribute to a personnel decision about us and will remember our struggles rather than our accomplishments.

Situating teaching issues as “learning puzzles” is one helpful way to think differently about the benefits of peer review. How about a good conversation about why group work never seems to work for your students or why your tests don’t produce the demonstrations of learning that you were hoping to see? Pursuing these opportunities is the logical route to improved satisfaction and better learning for your students. And it is formative peer review. How can you do this?

1. Be the initiator. Don't wait for a mentor to be assigned or an invitation to participate in a group. You should control your growth.
  - a. Seek out colleagues who seem receptive and insightful and strike up the conversation.
  - b. Survey the organized teaching exchange vehicles on your campus for goodness of fit to the things you care about in teaching. If there aren't any, consider starting one.
2. Think carefully about whether working with an individual or peer exchange group would work best for you. Also think beyond your unit or even campus in seeking a review partner or group—the digital world has opened new possibilities.
3. A good formative exchange involves a quest for deepening understanding by both parties. Be prepared to be both reviewer and one being reviewed. This may help address the discomfort as well.
4. Approach the review with good information. Help your colleagues to know the context by pulling together materials that will inform them about your instructional design and student learning.
5. Avoid using classroom visitation as the main mode of exchange. Course materials, exams, student work, or access to your class website can provide colleagues with much richer information. Mine the interchange for constructive ideas. Try to avoid being defensive or placing blame. Focus your thoughts forward.
6. Keep a journal or notes. Cultivate reflective strategies and record your thoughts.
7. View the time commitment as an opportunity rather than a chore. Getting your mind around this is essential.

## Making Summative Review Work for You

While many of the same strategies for formative review also apply to summative review, we often don't control the context or procedures or the latter, and the role of judgment, comparison, and action loom larger. You may be faced with a situation that is less than ideal—a peer review system that is rushed, without guidelines, secretive, or not aligned with your own concept of teaching effectiveness or that of your campus. Or, you may be fortunately positioned in a unit with a thoughtful plan. In either case, you can take steps to increase the benefits you derive from the process. What are these?

1. Know the system. If your institution or academic unit has an established peer review system, read the documentation carefully.

a. Do you agree with criteria for effective performance? If not, discuss your reservations with your reviewer, explaining why you feel certain criteria are not consistent with your philosophy or applicable to your context. If no criteria are listed as part of the documentation, offer your list to the reviewer as a focus for the review. Sample criteria are listed in the sourcebook I prepared on peer review (Chism, 2006).

b. Look at the procedures. If there are worrisome procedures, such as an exclusive focus on classroom observation, or a random selection procedure for choosing a "typical" class, ask that the review be supplemented with some other procedures, such as review of materials. You might do this by simply offering extra documentation as "context materials" for the observation.

c. If the system excludes your voice from the procedure, try to insert it by inviting the reviewer to discuss findings informally with you before they are documented. Advocate for this as a chance to provide missing information and background information on your assumptions and conditions.

d. If there is no system, read about effective summative peer review and try to provide your reviewer with information on good approaches. (Again, see the sourcebook for literature references, examples, and templates.)

2. Know your reviewer.

a. Make efforts to talk with the reviewer beforehand. This should be couched as a chance to understand procedures rather than bias the review. If you know from past experience or from an introductory conversation that the reviewer's views are incompatible with your own or that his or her knowledge of teaching and learning is shallow, you might try to seek a substitution. If this isn't advisable or possible, use the introductory conversation to try to focus the review on the stated criteria (the system's or your own).

b. If you have choice of reviewer, try to recommend someone whom you feel is most knowledgeable about teaching and learning, sensitive to context and nuance, and growth-oriented in their own practice. If the system permits you to choose reviewers outside your unit or institution, your pool is even broader.

3. Provide good information. As with formative reviews, assemble key (not all!) materials that will help the reviewer understand not only your activities, but the thinking behind them. A short reflective statement with a few examples of how you implement your ideas in practice can influence the entire review. Make sure that your sample materials are organized, annotated with descriptions of the context, and packaged conveniently. Get these to the reviewer as quickly as possible so there is ample time for review.

4. If you are dissatisfied with a review, either during or afterward, use your system's procedures to voice your concerns. If no procedures are described, talk with your chair or the person responsible for peer reviews. You may be able to file a written reaction or provide supplementary information that addresses the inadequacies.

Used wisely, peer review of teaching provides an important supplement to other forms of

evaluative information. It can be all the better if you make sure it works for you.

Reference

Chism, N. V. N. (2006). Peer review of teaching: A sourcebook (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

*Nancy Van Note Chism (Ph.D., The Ohio State University) is Professor of Higher Education and Student Affairs at the Indiana University School of Education, Indianapolis.*

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#### Comments



*POD Network News* is published by the Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network in Higher Education. Current members receive calls for content and notification of publication. Member contributions are encouraged and should be sent directly to the editor.

In 2014, Emily O. Gravett became the editor of *POD Network News*. She is also a member of the POD Small Colleges Committee and serves as Retention Chair to the POD Membership Committee. Emily joined the Collaborative for Learning and Teaching at Trinity University as Assistant Director of Programs in 2013, after working as a graduate student in the University of Virginia's Teaching Resource Center for two years. While her focus at the Collaborative is on programming, such as creating and facilitating pedagogical workshops, she also works individually with faculty to support evidence-based course and assignment design. Her interests include student engagement, writing instruction, discussion-leading, and formative assessment, and she still teaches disciplinary courses, such as Religion and Film. She holds a B.A. in English and Religion from Colgate University and a M.A. and Ph.D. in Religious Studies from the University of Virginia.

Please direct any questions, comments, or ideas to [egravett@trinity.edu](mailto:egravett@trinity.edu). She greatly appreciates your feedback!

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