

University of California San Diego
School of Biological Sciences
Winter 2025 Seminar Series
*The Science of Teaching: Evidence-Based
Approaches in Biology Education*



"Building Connections: The Impact of Learning Pods on Cooperative Learning and Community Building in Large Undergraduate STEM Courses"



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Friday, March 7, 2025

10:00-11:00am

2130 Bonner Hall

Meeting ID: 976 8136 5813

Light refreshments will be provided

Abstract: Many effective active learning classrooms rely on cooperative learning between small groups of peers. Cooperative learning environments have been shown to significantly boost student participation and deepen understanding, leading to improved learning outcomes. In this seminar, I will discuss the implementation of Learning Pods in large undergraduate STEM courses to foster cooperative learning and community building. Learning Pods consist of small, fixed groups of students that remain stable throughout the course. Learning Pods collaborate on various learning activities, including (but not limited to) in-class exercises, out-of-class assignments, and group exams. I will first present practical strategies for creating and deploying Learning Pods in large lecture settings. I will then share classroom social network data that illustrates student interactions in active learning environments, comparing those with and without Learning Pods. This analysis will highlight how structuring cooperative learning environments in different ways can influence student engagement and performance. The seminar will conclude with an interactive discussion, encouraging participants to reflect on how they can apply these insights to enhance student interaction and engagement in their own courses.

Hosted by: Melinda Owens (mtowens@ucsd.edu)