UNC Peer Support Core
Peers for Progress
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

CAROLINA
PEER SUPPORT
COLLABORATIVE

Affinity Support Pods

Background: Colleagues who identify as BIPOC or LGBTQ+ and others vulnerable to varied injustices have endured a barrage of threatening events for many, many years and especially in this past one. Unfortunately, they may well continue even as, or perhaps stimulated by efforts to alter systemic racism and injustice in our country.

What about an Affinity Support Pod? To gather support, several groups on campus have developed Affinity Pods based on shared identity and which might be helpful as a space for community mutual support in response to, preparation for, and coping with collective trauma. In particular, these may be especially useful for groups of individuals within a unit (or department, school) with a shared marginalized identity (i.e. BIPOC, LGBTQ+, international background, first-generation, et al.). The Pod's purpose can include processing emotions, learning resilience strategies, and/or organizing for collective action in accordance to the needs of its members. See the "Addressing Needs for Support During Diverse Trauma and Distress" resource on our website for more suggestions.

How to start a Pod:

1. **Identify your Pod members.**
2. **Choose your platform for asynchronous and/or synchronous communication.**
   a. Your chosen platform can be anything as long as people are engaged
   b. You may find it useful to leverage an existing platform (i.e. the lab GroupMe or add a channel to the student organization Slack) or start on a new platform with appropriate capabilities for your Pod
3. **Gather contact information for your Pod members and link it to your chosen platform.**
4. **Begin Pod.**
   a. You may choose to convene your pod only asynchronously   or a combination of synchronous and asynchronous – either is fine as long as people feel connected
   b. If needed, introduce yourself to the group and encourage others to do the same; clarify the purpose of the Pod
   c. Send out messages with resources as relevant to your Pod; try to keep useful resources in an easily accessible shared location
   d. Keep in communication with your Pod and facilitate dialogue
   e. If you would like to learn more about peer support skills or attend a peer support-related training, contact us at UNCPSCore@unc.edu
5. **Connect your Pod**
   Please connect your pod to the Pod leader network so if the need arises to share resources or reach out to Pod representatives, we are aware of who to contact. You can do this on our website.

Role of Managers and Administrators

Supervisors, leaders of student groups, course instructors, deans, department chairs and division heads, and other leaders can be helpful by supporting Pods including with logistic or similar resources (including time), or by creating opportunities for people to come together to have an opportunity to share feelings and perhaps talk about things they can do to address their concerns.