

# PEER-LED TEAM LEARNING DISSEMINATION

## BREAKING GROUND AT HAPS

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In Arizona, you can ask anyone to describe the weather and they'll tell you "It's a dry heat." From the 25th to the 31st of May 2002 the *Human Anatomy and Physiology Society* (HAPS) held its 16th annual conference in Phoenix, Arizona. However, it was Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL) workshops that created more of the heat by "blazing new trails." HAPS members are educators in the field of Anatomy and Physiology and their annual meetings promote the exchange of new happenings in the field (technology, reference materials, educational tools, research) among members and meeting participants.

Joseph Griswold (Co-PI of the PLTL National Dissemination project, 1995-2005) and Daniel Lemons, both Biology professors at the City College of New York (CCNY), and CCNY biology peer leaders Michael Tubon and I were in attendance. On the first day of the conference that Michael and I attended, conference participants were invited to breakfast and a new technology/educational materials exhibition. After that the educators attended meetings and we, the peer leaders, took the opportunity to work off some jet lag by exploring our new surroundings in Phoenix. Although it was Memorial Day and not much was happening, the new environment was a sight to see for us Easterners.

Later that afternoon we reconvened with our professors and were briefed on the workshop we were to help present over the next two days. As a bonus we were each given a brand-new Human Anatomy and Physiology textbook, courtesy of McGraw Hill Publishers, and we "hit the books." As the evening approached we got a little dressed up and ventured down to the HAPS banquet. We mingled with the attendees and we even met the current President of HAPS, Bill Perrotti. That is where Michael and I learned that we were the first students to attend a conference in HAPS history: we were breaking new ground! We also met prospective attendees of our up-coming workshops and gave them some details about our experiences using PLTL, but we didn't give everything away because "you always have to keep them wanting more." The temperature was 100°: we knew that the time for our first workshop was fast approaching. We boarded a bus going to Phoenix College where our workshops were to be held and got to talking with more attendees as we kept on spreading news about the PLTL program. Once we were at the college we were treated to a continental breakfast and we continued our preparations. At lunch we met up with our professors once more to address our last minute concerns. Finally, the clock struck four and we entered our designated workshop room, both of us a little nervous. However, once we heard the words "it's time to experience PLTL for yourself," we snapped back into action just like we were back home at City College.

Two groups were formed from the participants, ending up in groups of nine, which is fairly close to our PLTL standards. We performed an icebreaker to get everyone acquainted with each other and to

remove some of the tension caused by the heat. As we saw everyone was comfortable (and smiling), Michael and I handed out the workshop material to our groups and got down to work (see Workshop Exercise, page 7). As we approached each section we would suggest what we felt would be the best way to proceed. The participants made excellent transitions from the role of educator to student, perhaps a difficult task. We found that the experience was greeted with laughter, exclamations of realizations, and camaraderie among the participants, who might have been complete strangers until that day. Bill Perrotti even made an appearance and thought it went well.

After the second day's workshop, which went just as smoothly, Joseph Griswold, Michael and I relaxed by taking in much of what Phoenix has to offer (Phoenix Zoo, Scottsdale Fashion Square Mall, Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West) because "when you work hard you get to play just as hard." Our stay in the great city of Phoenix was coming to a close. The next day we bid farewell to our professors and boarded the plane back to New York. Even though our trip seemed so short, the new ground that we broke to plant the seeds of PLTL in a new field of Biology will grow for much longer: we've already received requests for more information.

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