

PEER-LED TEAM LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION

STUDENTS POWER PLTL IN PUERTO RICO

**JACK KAMPMEIER, MARIA DEL C. SANCHEZ-CAMACHO, AND
ROSITA BAEZ-GALIB**

Students from two campuses of the University of Puerto Rico met with PLTL Co-PI's Pratibha Varma-Nelson and Jack Kampmeier on May 2, and were trained to lead the "pennies" Workshop on chemical kinetics and equilibrium (see *Kinetics exercise*). Fatin Abdallah, Zamara Aldarondo, Xiomara Aldarondo, Jennifer Rodríguez, María del Carmen Sánchez, Maricelly Colón, and Glorimar Vicente (Cayey campus); and Katherine Vega, Salimar Malavé, and Omar Mercado (Arecibo campus) then guided teams of faculty, learning specialists and graduate students to hands-on understanding of the problem and the educational and personal dynamics of the workshop. The faculty, learning specialists and graduate students in the disciplines of chemistry, physics, and biology came from the Cayey, Arecibo, and Rio Piedras campuses of the University of Puerto Rico, as well as from the Universidad Metropolitain in San Juan. They attended one of two all-day presentations of the Workshop Model by Varma-Nelson and Kampmeier, held at Cayey and Arecibo.

Several of the students are leaders in the CHEM-2-CHEM program, designed and implemented by Professor Rosita Baez at Cayey, but others were new to the model. As usual, the students won the day through their facilitation of the "pennies" workshop, communicating the power of the peer-led Workshop in ways that could not have been accomplished by Varma-Nelson and Kampmeier.

Professor Baez was the perfect host who arranged the two Workshop presentations, as well as visits to the radio telescope at Arecibo, and a performance of *Madama Butterfly* in San Juan. The visit even coincided with a student demonstration regarding Vieques! It was a stimulating trip: we hope that it will be productive as well and facilitate the development of PLTL Workshop opportunities in Puerto Rico.

J. A. Kampmeier
Department of Chemistry
University of Rochester

The peer-led team learning Workshop is a technique that facilitates the study of chemistry. I had the opportunity to take part in the workshop presentation. First we were the students and then we switched to be the leaders of a faculty members' group. It was a great experience.

The workshop helped us understand abstract chemistry concepts in an easier way. The group participated very actively, letting everybody share their knowledge and experience. Definitely, the workshop is an excellent way to help make more difficult concepts easier to understand. I feel that

professors, tutors and mentoring groups should use this method to bring a great learning opportunity to every student.

*Maria del C. Sánchez - Camacho
University of Puerto Rico, Cayey*

Since 1997 we have developed a peer-led team learning model at the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey. Our project, called *Chem-2-Chem*, consists of learning communities composed of general chemistry students led by their upperclass peers. Goals include helping students in their academic performance and in their personal and social development. Excellent results have been obtained by providing this model for the active participation of our students in small groups. We have been in contact with members of the Workshop Chemistry Project leadership since 1999 and look forward to working together with them in the future. We appreciate their visit to our University, where they made an outstanding presentation.

*Rosita Báez-Galib
Director, Chem-2-Chem Project
University of Puerto Rico at Cayey*

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