

PEER-LED TEAM LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION

THE NEXT STEP TOWARDS INSTITUTIONALIZING PLTL: THE PLTL SOCIETY

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Like any historical revolution, the sustainability of the Peer-Led Team Learning Program is a big issue. But what starts such a tremendous mission? The organization and congregation of energetic Peer Leaders along with the support of faculty affiliates can just about accomplish anything; The Peer-Led Team Learning Society is one example.

On February 7, 2009 at the City College of New York, seventeen Peer Leaders, three faculty members, a learning specialist, and guests held a meeting of Peer-Leaders-Yes-We-Can! Many ideas and suggestions were brought up on what Peer Leaders could do to support and sustain the PLTL program, including activities designed to raise visibility of PLTL on campus, improve funding, and provide benefits to Peer Leaders. The participants were assigned to ad-hoc committees and were asked to generate lists of ideas that would eventually lead to changes and stronger institutionalization of the program. Out of that meeting and many more subsequent ones, came the idea of creating a PLTL club.

Establishing the foundations of the Society

The first step was to agree on a name for the club during a meeting held by the Peer Leaders. The Peer-Led Team Learning Society was voted to be the best and most official-sounding title. The name of the club also establishes how non-selective the membership is as it helps to extend our arms to other people who are not Peer Leaders yet would be able to benefit from participation in club activities.

The second step was agreeing and voting among the eligible candidates for the officer positions of the Society. The group agreed on picking candidates that have been to several of the PLTL meetings and have a



(l. to r.) Diannan Mithu, Fatima Mirza, and Jorge Swett,
Peer Leaders at the City College of New York, CUNY

great drive and enthusiasm for the program. A major criterion was to be able to select experienced leaders who have contributed a lot to the program and in making the program look attractive to others.

The first set of officers who were selected were Cindy Morsi, a Chemical Engineering major, for President, Fatima Mirza, a Biology/Pre-Med major, for Vice President, Diannan Mithu, a Chemistry major, for Secretary and Jorge Swett, a Chemistry major, for Treasurer. A Faculty Moderator, a professor who agrees with our goals and is enthusiastic about the program also needed to be picked for the club. Professor Glen Kowach,

Department of Chemistry, and A.E. Dreyfuss, Learning Specialist and PLTL Project Manager, were chosen for the position since they are both strong advocates for improving post-secondary education and for strengthening the Peer-Led Team Learning Program.

The third step was to obtain all of the paperwork and documents from the Office of Student Life and Development and the funding forms from the Auxiliary Enterprise Corporation, which supplies funding for campus clubs. Once all of the forms were sent in, it was up to the club officers to start promoting the Society at the College Club Fair.

About the Society

The purpose of the club is to serve as a Peer Leader and Student networking station that seeks to promote the PLTL program through fundraising and hosting interactive events, gain allies and support on campus, and create a centralized data bank for workshop materials. The centralized data bank would be a means of keeping evaluative data and statistics that are both qualitative and quantitative.

The goals we hope to accomplish are to institutionalize Peer-Led Team Learning beyond General Chemistry I and II, increase funding and grant proposals, expand into other STEM courses and obtain status as a featured organization on campus. Along with seeking to expand and sustain the program, we also hope to create a certification program for Peer Leaders, provide pathways for research opportunities, as well as early registration, higher salaries, and credits towards their majors.

What's been accomplished so far at City College

The Society's first event was to participate in a City College event called *Harlemween* in October, 2009. *Harlemween* is a community effort to host a Halloween Party/Event for children of the Harlem neighborhood.

The Society organized Halloween Chemistry Demos and activities for the children.



Jorge Swett guiding students at "Harlemween"



Cindy Morsi (r.) demonstrates a reaction

The second event was the Finals Week Study Jam which was a five-day-long event in December 2009, in the PLTL Chemistry Workshop room, which stayed open to provide free coffee and snacks to students studying for finals. The third event will be the PLTL Ice Skating event at Bryant Park in January, 2010.

With these events, the Society has begun to reach out to other departments on the City College campus and build a reputation for itself and the PLTL Program that people never bothered to look at before. Events like

these and many more are essential to fostering the growth of PLTL and in sustaining the program. The club for next semester hopes to do more outreach and community service within the New York City to spread the PLTL name and support student learning in STEM courses. A major goal we have facing the club is the creation of a PLTL movie that will help promote the program and raise funding to achieve self-sustainability on campus.

A Society at your campus

A Peer-Led Team Learning Society at your campus has the ability to reform and support the PLTL Program. It functions as a backbone that creates organization, teamwork, and sustainability for the program. The funding that the club gains from campus support (Student Affairs) can be used to initiate visibility projects, and to give back to the over-enthusiastic Peer Leaders who have contributed so much to the student body and campus. The success of a Society is in part dependent on the executive committee members selected to take on such an immense task of taking the Peer-Led Team Learning Program to the next level whether it is expansion of the program or maintaining a foothold of the program in a current department.



(l. to r.) Jorge Swett, Cindy Morsi, and Cassidy Alexandre presenting at the Annual PLTL Conference at the City College of New York, July, 2009.

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