

# PEER-LED TEAM LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION

## A CASE STUDY: UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

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The PLTL model has become institutionalized at the University of Miami (UM) in an eight-stage process. Each stage is listed below. It should be noted that although these stages are necessary for institutionalization, they might not be sufficient.

Stage 1. After exposure to the PLTL model, a faculty member in the Biology Department began to assemble materials for workshops. Parenthetically, the faculty member is chair of the department. This exposure was through his role as chair of the National Visiting Committee that evaluated the PLTL model (Workshop Chemistry Project). The point here is that it takes one or two enthusiastic individuals to get the ball rolling at an institution. It took approximately one year from the time of first exposure to begin assembling workshop materials.

Stage 2. Workshops began as an optional activity in the introductory biology course. Stage two took one year.

Stage 3. As a result of student demand and gentle persuasion, other faculty teaching the introductory biology course began to offer optional workshops. Peer leaders were given biology course credit in lieu of stipends. Stage three took one year.

Stage 4. A 75-minute recitation section in the timetable was converted into a workshop time slot for all introductory biology sections. This stage is ongoing.

Stage 5. Workshop material development continued with faculty sharing their modules. Each faculty member adapted material to fit his/her course. This stage is ongoing.

Stage 6. Preliminary data on student performance from workshop sections compared to pre-workshop data were used as the basis for extramural funding from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute to pay peer leaders \$500 stipends. Due to funding limitations, during their first year peer leaders are considered apprentices and are given course credit. During the second year, they are paid a stipend. Faculty teaching the course do the leader training on the weekend before the workshops begin. This orientation session takes three hours. During the semester faculty meet with the peer leaders once a week for an hour. This stage is ongoing.

Stage 7. Grant was funded, which was used as leverage with the Provost in a proposal for an institutional innovative teaching grant. The aim of the proposal was to disseminate the PLTL model to introductory chemistry and physics courses. Data from the biology courses were used as evidence that the PLTL model will improve student performance. Stage seven occurred approximately four years after first exposure.

Stage 8. Grant was funded to support peer leaders in chemistry and physics courses. This stage occurred six months after submission of proposal noted in Stage 7. The next stage is to sustain the PLTL model. A presentation of the model will be given to the Advancement Office. This office will solicit alumni for contributions for a PLTL endowment. The goal is to raise two million dollars from the private sector.

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