

# The Peer Leader

Vol. 3; July 2019

## President's Message



### **Marcelo Sztainberg**

I have the honor and privilege to start serving as President of the Peer-Led Team Learning International Society at the end of our Eighth Annual Conference held at IUPUI on June 8, 2019. For those of you who did not get a chance to attend the Conference this year, you missed an event full of networking, professional development opportunities and the chance of being a witness to a historical event (see below).

A few quick takes from the conference:

- Forty (40) institutions were represented at the event! Current practitioners, new adopters, and institutions thinking about how to start and support PLTL programs were in attendance.
- The ratio between Peer Leaders and Faculty members was almost 1-1. Students had the opportunity to relate to professors on a personal basis. Really few conferences afford them that chance.

- We had more than twenty (20) participants who are staff members in leadership and support positions of PLTL initiatives. Institutions are dedicating resources to support this practice so critical for student engagement, retention and success.
- We had one K-12 teacher in attendance! PLTL does not have to be restricted to undergraduate education. We should all look more to establish partnerships with local schools and help disseminate this practice at the K-12 level.

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*The conference was a great success.*

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On a personal note, I got the opportunity to lead a special panel with several of the people who were, and continue to be, at the forefront of PLTL development. The panel included, in alphabetical order, Mark Cracolice, A.E. Dreyfuss, Leo Gafney, Michael Gaines, and Pratibha Varma-Nelson (our host). Our panelists shared personal stories about their college experience, how they got involved in PLTL and gave advice to people working or trying to establish a PLTL program. We rarely get to attend a panel with the “founding members” of a discipline or a practice. This was a historical moment for our conference attendees and we were all very grateful to our panelists for their willingness to participate and their dedication to the success of many students, peer leaders, and practitioners.

The conference was a great success. Big kudos to our conference planning committee, our local hosts at IUPUI and our acting Conference Chair, Jose Luis Alberte-Dueñas. Now we are all moving onto the next one, at the University of Texas El Paso (UTEP).

In the meantime, we are looking forward to a year full of activities at the Board and committee level. We are always welcoming new members to our committees so if you are interested email us to [info@pltlis.org](mailto:info@pltlis.org)

I hope you all continue to enjoy this wonderful summer!



From left to right: Leo Gafney, Mark Cracolice, Pratibha Varma-Nelson, AE Dreyfuss, & Mike Gaines

## Profile: Peer Leader Representative, Board of Directors



**Renee Suarez** is the 2019-2020 Student Peer Leader Representative, newly elected to the PLTLIS Board of Directors. She recently graduated from Florida International University (FIU) in Miami, Florida with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. She has also passed the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) and received her Registered Nurse license. While at FIU, she was a peer leader in the Introduction to Microbiology and Foundation of Physiology courses. She eventually became the Group Discussion Leader (GDL) for both subjects and helped train peer leaders. She also became a Research Assistant Peer Leader (RAPL) and joined the team studying the transfer of learning and metacognition on Peer Leaders.

Renee has joined the Board to help represent and advocate for Peer Leaders. She hopes to help integrate more Peer Leaders' ideas and suggestions into the upcoming agenda. She also hopes to aid Board members in their projects to support the progress of PLTL and PLTLIS on different endeavors and campuses.

## Profile: Peer Leader Alumnus



### **Ricky Santana**

I used to be a peer leader in mathematics and it was such a seamless transition to becoming a high school teacher. I was a peer leader for two years, leading workshops in Precalculus and College Algebra & Trigonometry at New York City College of Technology, CUNY. For a future teacher, this was the best experience (outside of student teaching) to receive. Being given formalized training on proper questioning during a workshop, group dynamics and learning how to lead a group...that's what being a teacher is all about! While taking courses at City Tech and combining that with the Peer Led Team Learning (PLTL) program, my views on being a teacher changed for the better. I began to have an open mind on wanting to give students more hands-on experiences, while also placing a huge emphasis on guided questions through worksheets and class lessons. Now in my 3rd year at New Visions School for Advanced Math and Science III in Brooklyn, New York, I incorporate the theory of "Growth" Mindset that I learned about in my first year as a Peer Leader, as well as constantly using the Jigsaw technique and forming and re-forming groups based on which students could serve as appropriate "Leaders" are all ways to help my students learn.

Don't confuse what I say though, Peer-Led Team Learning is not "just" for future teachers. Although this generation of students relies heavily on iPhones and Galaxy devices to navigate their days, they need new learning strategies and forms of instruction that can keep them just as engaged.

PLTL assists in teaching Peer Leaders and learners how to problem-solve, how to manage tasks, how to create advanced solutions to difficult problems. PLTL is a movement and will continue to gain traction through institution and faculty buy-in.

## San Jose City College Honors Student Peer Leaders and Tutor-Employees with an Annual Award Ceremony to Mark the Inaugural Certificate of Specialization for Peer Leader Training

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On May 10, 2019, San Jose City College's Metas Center honored our AY 2018-2019 cohorts of nineteen Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL) & fourteen Supplemental Instruction (SI) Peer Leaders, with an annual Spring celebration that also included seventy tutors from the Tutoring & Reading and Writing Centers. This event included the inaugural awards of six Peer Leaders who were bestowed with the Certificate of Specialization for Peer Leader training. San Jose City College's certificated training program is restricted to PLTL & SI Peer Leaders and focuses on their professional development with emphasis on small-group leadership and facilitation skills. To earn this certificate Peer Leaders (PLs) are required to enroll in three 0.5 unit courses, taken over three semesters, while concurrently facilitating two or more weekly 90-minute PLTL or SI workshops. These three cross-linked courses, focused on education and learning skills, include "Leadership," "Pedagogies/Best Practices," and "Learning Strategies" in small-group Peer-Assisted Learning workshops. The three courses can be taken in any order. PLs gain experience in adult education, academic support services and applying student success strategies and leadership skills in a workshop setting. Both PLTL and SI Peer Leaders are also required to complete weekly workshop planning sheets. Additionally, PLTL PLs concurrently enroll in a 0.5 unit directed studies course where they meet weekly with their Lead Faculty PLTL Practitioner (LFPP). Responsibilities of LFPPs include: (a) mentoring and assisting PLs align workshop activities with lecture course material and (b) serving as liaisons and communicating regularly with faculty who teach PLTL-designated courses. All students enrolled in the three courses are eligible to conduct an honors project and earn honors credit.

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This annual Spring celebration, held in SJCC's Cesar Chavez Learning Resource Center, marked the Inaugural PL training certificate ceremony. This event honored all one hundred thirteen student employees, hired by SJCC's Metas, Tutor, and Reading and Writing Centers (RWC), who help their peers become more successful learners and serve as role models. The celebration and award ceremony began with a luncheon, followed by welcoming remarks by both Dr. Susan Hines, Dean of Library, Learning Resources and Distance Education, and Dr. Elizabeth Gonzalez, Metas Director. Dr. Madeline Adamczeski, faculty PLTL program coordinator and Angela Gullerud, Metas program coordinator,

conferred PL training certificates and certificates of appreciation on the PLTL and SI PLs, respectively. Claudia Amador conferred certificates of appreciation to Metas' student assistants. Seventy tutors were also honored with (a) CRLA's International Tutor Training Program Certification, conferred by Ms. Evelyn Rojas of the reading and writing center and/or (b) certificates of appreciation, conferred by Mr. Peiman Gheibi of the tutor center. Ms. Laurie Adachi, Executive Director & Institutional Advancement Officer, who was also included in the celebration, invited student employees to join the Alumni Association and provided pens embossed with our school emblem. This campus event was generously supported by the Office of the President, Roland Montemayor; Vice Chancellor Administrative Services, Jorge Escobar; Vice President of Academic Affairs, Elizabeth Pratt; Dean of Language Arts, Dean of Library, Learning Resources & Distance Education, Susan Hines; Robert Gutierrez, Acting Dean of Math and Science Division; as well as SACNAS Chapter, Facilities team, CTSS, Business Services, and professional staff in the RWC, Tutor and Metas Centers.



Submitted by Madeline Adamczeski, Angela Gullerud, Susan Hines, Elizabeth Gonzalez, Claudia Amador, Evelyn Rojas, & Peiman Gheibi

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