

September 2019

The Peer Leader

Issue No. 4

President's Message



Marcelo Sztainberg

Fall is in! Even if the weather says otherwise, you can feel it probably on every campus. We are all full of energy after a very nice summer and ready to dive into a rewarding and productive semester. While you were away, we at PLTLIS continued to work on the success of our organization and the support for your PLTL programs.

If you are a former Peer Leader and miss the interactions and connections you enjoyed, you might be interested to learn that some of your peers have started working on an alumni network for Peer Leaders. The idea is to host informal meetings for networking in different regions. If you live in Texas, especially if near El Paso you will want to attend an alumni reception in the context of our next annual conference (stay tuned!)

Our next annual Conference will be at the University of Texas El Paso (UTEP) on Thursday to Saturday, June 4-6, 2020. Our conference committee is already working hard to make sure that we have a great event and we will be sharing our call for presentations soon. We are also working on new initiatives that will be part of pre- and post-conference options.

Here is a summary of what you will find in this issue of *The Peer Leader*:

- Submit a paper to the new PLTLIS-sponsored journal, *Advances in Peer-Led Learning!* The first issue will be online in early 2020. Among other topics, read about PLTL initiatives and their impact on student engagement, retention and graduation
- A new Director was appointed to the Board. Learn more about Gabriela Szteinberg in her profile
- Rubi Reyes is our featured Peer Leader alumna.

The first issue of the journal is planned for publication in early 2020.

Do you have a story to share for a future newsletter? Let us know. We are always welcoming new members to our committees so if you are interested email us at info@pltlis.org

I hope you all have a full semester of leading and learning.

Announcement!

PLTLIS Publishing New Journal: *Advances in Peer-Led Learning*

One of the most exciting events in the history of our young organization is happening! We have created an online journal, *Advances in Peer-Led Learning*, thanks to the efforts of many people, but special thanks for its creation and evolution go to Jose Alberte and the Research Committee of PLTLIS.

***Advances in Peer-Led Learning (APLL)* is an online journal publishing original, peer-reviewed articles on research, evaluation, and instructional practices related to peer-facilitated models of learning.** APLL encourages the inclusion of content from all academic disciplines and all levels of education. The goal of the journal is to encourage practitioners to engage their instructional practice the way a scientific researcher would. The target audience of this journal is anyone using or interested in peer-facilitated models of learning, like PLTL. Although in many ways originating from higher education, APLL is not limited to submissions from colleges and universities. Manuscripts may be submitted at any time. An Editorial Committee will review authors' manuscripts and authors will be provided with informative feedback.

We are now accepting manuscripts. The first issue of the journal is planned for publication in early 2020.

For guidelines and further information go to: <https://journal.pltlis.org/>.

To contact the editorial team with any question you may have, email us: journal@pltlis.org.



Editor-in-Chief: Dr. James Becvar, University of Texas at El Paso

Profile: New Board Member



Gabriela Szteinberg

Gabriela lived in Argentina and Bolivia before moving to the United States. She received a BA in Chemistry with a minor in Linguistics at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin, and a Ph.D. in Chemistry at Purdue University, in West Lafayette, Indiana, under the guidance of Dr. Gabriela Weaver. Her doctoral research focused on Chemical Education, specifically on the long-term effects of course-embedded undergraduate research through the CASPiE program (Center for Authentic Science Practice in Education). Her results showed impacts on student retention in STEM and overall benefits of participating in early research experiences. Gabriela was a postdoctoral researcher in Prof. Hannah Sevian's group at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, and helped with research on the development of students' chemical thinking and reasoning in the U.S. and Costa Rica as well as investigating students' abstraction thresholds throughout STEM curricula.

Gabriela Szteinberg

Gabriela is now at her dream job at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, as a Project Coordinator for the General Chemistry Supplemental Program, which includes PLTL! At Washington University, Gabriela places students into PLTL groups, and manages the day-to-day logistics of the program, along with the program director, Dr. Megan Daschbach. Gabriela also trains Peer Leaders through the annual Seminar of Academic Mentoring (SAM) course. The best part of the PLTL program, for Gabriela, is seeing students succeed in General Chemistry, as well as developing strong professional connections with the Peer Leaders that last beyond graduation.

Gabriela is very enthusiastic about joining the PLTLIS Board of Directors and looks forward to supporting the PLTLIS vision, mission, and goals. PLTLIS is essential to help promote and sustain PLTL programs around the world. Gabriela is looking forward to using her training in education research by serving on the Research Committee, and she looks forward to connecting with other PLTL practitioners.

Rubi Reyes



Profile: Peer Leader Alumna

Hola! My name is Rubi Reyes and I am an Alumna from San Jose City College, in San Jose, California. The educational and career choices I have made can be attributed to my experiences as an undocumented first-generation low-income student in predominantly white institutions and the struggle to obtain the appropriate academic support. Due to my experiences and observations of inequity in higher education, I developed a need to counsel and mentor my peers to ensure they had access to an equitable education. I was first able to fulfil this need when I became a Physics Peer Leader in the Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL) program developed by the METAS Program at San Jose City College (SJCC) (<http://www.sjcc.edu/academics/academic-programs/metas>). The METAS program allowed me to participate in the PLTL International Society Conference for three years where my teams and I presented our research.

As a Physics Peer Leader, the most common statement I heard from my students was that “Physics is hard.” I shared resources and opportunities with my students to help them be successful. I decided to develop weekly worksheets to give to them in each workshop. I realized that each workshop group had a different dynamic with an array of learning styles, and I needed to provide them with the tools to keep them engaged. My holistic approach to engaging my students and helping them like Physics involved making my students think critically and deeply about the concepts they were learning in the classroom and applying them to real life examples.

As a Physics Peer Leader, the most common statement I heard from my students was that “Physics is hard.”

I obtained an Associate in Arts degree in Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis from San Jose City College in May 2015, and graduated with my Bachelor’s of Science in Molecular Biology, Cell and Developmental Biology from the University of California Santa Cruz in June 2018. There, as a STEM Counselor, I continued to hear “Physics is hard.” Those worksheets that I had developed for workshops continued to be helpful, and as a result, I was approached by my former Physics instructor and members of the PLTLIS Board who visited SJCC in early 2015, to co-write a Physics manual for PLTL workshops that could be distributed to other institutions with PLTL programs. [*Editor’s Note: More information on the Workbook will be available in the next issue of The Peer Leader.*]

In the short time I worked in Higher Education I realized that academia lacks significant representation of people like me and that there are various institutional barriers that affect a student’s success. I am continuing my education in a Clinical Laboratory Scientist Program as well as working in a position in Biotech. As I move from an educational setting into a professional setting, my leadership and interpersonal skills have helped me understand the importance of minority representation in higher education. I have committed myself to supporting underrepresented students majoring in STEM at the community college and university levels. I am able to continue my work towards educational equity by being an active member of the HIS Advisory Committee at San Jose City College, working collaboratively with the PLTL Faculty and Metas Program Staff, and have been invited back as a guest speaker at the PLTL orientation.

Ninth Annual PLTLIS Conference, June 4-6, 2020, in El Paso, Texas

Save the Dates!

Pre-Conference Workshop, June 3, 2020

Hosted by the PLTL Program at the University of Texas, El Paso

Milka Montes, Conference Committee Chair

Jim Becvar, Local Host Committee Chair