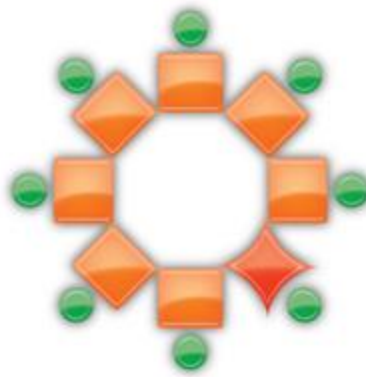


# May 2021 – Conference Edition



## PEER-LED TEAM LEARNING INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

### The Peer Leader

Issue No. 12 Contact: [info@pltlis.org](mailto:info@pltlis.org)

- **Keynote Workshop II – June 4, 2021**
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### Message from the President-Elect

Dear PLTLIS Community,

Welcome to our Ninth Annual, and first ever virtual Conference of the Peer-Led Team Learning International Society. While we regret that the COVID Pandemic has kept us from holding the conference at the beautiful campus of the University of Texas at El Paso, we are excited about crossing the boundaries and holding an innovative virtual conference. This year's conference theme is "Crossing Boundaries, Building Networks."

The Conference Committee, headed by Jim Becvar and me as co-chairs, has put together interactive plenary sessions over the course of three days. Special note of the "Twenty Years of PLTL" at campuses such as University of Texas at El Paso, Florida International University, San Jose City College, and University of Houston Downtown, and others\* make note that after more than two decades of PLTL practice, numerous Peer Leaders have graduated and are now Alumni with successful careers. On Saturday, June 5th, the Alumni Panel will highlight the life-changing experiences of peer leading,

featuring our panelists Leslie Cervantes, an immigration attorney; Chinedu Chukuigwe, a software engineering consultant; Melissa Greenlee, software engineer; AT Turchaninova, a graduate student exploring the evolution of the universe; Nicole Vargas, a Biology teacher; Yiming Yu, an applied mathematician; and David Zarate, a biologist in pursuit of medical school.

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*Alumni Panel will highlight the life-changing experiences of peer leading*

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The Conference will stimulate practitioners, faculty, staff and students to discuss innovative and significant contributions to the practice of Peer-Led Team Learning. This will be a great opportunity for those interested in PLTL to obtain the tools necessary for success including workshops, oral presentations, and networking. The virtual conference represents an opportunity for PLTLIS to build and strengthen networks and to inspire educators to adopt the model.

I extend my gratitude to the Executive Committee and Conference Committee members, for dedicating countless hours and effort to create an innovative, informative, and inspiring conference that we hope you find enjoyable and beneficial.

I am looking forward to seeing you at the conference and thank you for taking part in this year's virtual PLTLIS conference.

Milka Montes

Co-Chair, Conference Planning Committee

University of Texas Permian Basin

[WWW.PLTLLIS.ORG](http://WWW.PLTLLIS.ORG)

\* The University of Rochester has one of the longest-running programs: 26 years – For more see *The Peer Leader #11* online; Washington University in St. Louis also has had a long-standing PLTL program – see *The Peer Leader #10* online. Many other programs, including the University of West Georgia, University of Portland (Oregon), University of Maine, Orono, University of New Hampshire, Florida Atlantic University, share the distinction of longevity. This is not a complete list! Is your program not among these? Add your program to this list by emailing to [info@pltllis.org](mailto:info@pltllis.org) and join the list of practitioners on the Contacts page at [www.pltllis.org](http://www.pltllis.org).

## ***Keynote Workshop II – Friday, June 4, 2021 at 9th Annual Conference Online***

### ***Shaping the Future of PLTL With Story***

Becoming a leader begins with understanding your own story and drawing from your unique experiences to inspire hope and transformation. For a society, these stories weave together to become “our story,” making visible and obvious the impact your shared values and practices of learning, teaching, caring, and engaging can bring. In this workshop, you will surface personal moments of

discovery and empowerment you have experienced as a learner, faculty, staff, peer leader, or colleague. Participants will be coached through a series of individual and group activities to expand on these stories and craft collective stories that will help others understand, engage, and shape the future of PLTL programs and PLTLIS.

## Presenter



**Marymoore Patterson** is an innovation strategist, design researcher, ethnographer, and storyteller, and with 25 years of experience in keeping high tech human. She is a big fan of emerging technology, human-centered design, and solving problems that matter. She believes that innovation is essentially about telling new stories, and that the best innovations and stories create hope and transformation. She also believes that everyone has a powerful story to tell and that everyone's story matters.

Marymoore holds an MA and MBA, and is working on an MS. She has spent a lot of her life in China and Japan (and speaks and translates from both languages). In her spare moments, she hangs with her husband and three daughters, practices creative writing, and writes and plays with her folk-rock trio, Hitchhiking Honeymoon.

## ***Keynote Panel – Saturday, June 5, 2021***

### ***The Influence of the Experience of Peer Leading***

The Alumni Panel will focus on highlighting the life-changing experiences that peer leading brought to the panelists.

## Panelists



*1 - Milka Montes*

**Milka Montes, Moderator**, is an Associate Professor and Chair of Chemistry at the University of Texas Permian Basin (UTPB). Milka served as a Peer Leader in Chemistry at her *alma mater* The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) in the early 2000's while getting her bachelor's degree in Chemistry. She has used the skills learned as a Peer Leader throughout her career, and now serves in several committees at her institution including faculty senate. She is the President-elect of PLTLIS.



*2 - Chinedu Chukuigwe*

**Chinedu Chukuigwe** was a Peer Leader in Chemistry at the City College of New York, City University of New York, while studying biomedical engineering. He is currently a software engineering consultant helping teams at companies like Airbnb and Squire Technologies build innovative products.



*3 - Leslie Cervantes*

**Leslie Cervantes** graduated from University of Texas at El Paso with a B.S. in Biology and was a Peer Leader in Chemistry. She went on to attend New England Law School and is currently employed as an immigration attorney at Cervantes Law in Boston, Massachusetts.



*4 - Melissa Greenlee*

**Melissa Greenlee** graduated with dual degrees in Applied Mathematics and Computer Science from the University of Houston - Downtown in May 2014 and has since worked for Microsoft's Azure Machine Learning platform as a software engineer at the New England Research and Development (NERD) Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



*5 - A. Turchaninova (AT)*

**A. Turchaninova (AT)** is a third-year graduate student in physics at the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill, studying the evolution of the universe in its very first second. AT served as a peer leader in mathematics and computer science at the University of Houston-Downtown and now uses their peer-leading experience as a teaching assistant for intro physics courses at UNC.



*6 - Nicole Vargas*

**Nicole Vargas** was a Peer Leader for several years at Florida International University; she was also a research assistant and the chair of outreach for the PLTL program. She recently graduated with her Master's degree in Adult Education and Human Resource Development and works as a high school Biology teacher for a charter school near Miami, Florida.



*7 - Yiming Yu*

**Yiming Yu** is an applied mathematician and a research scientist II at Georgia Tech Research Institute. He was a Peer Leader for three years at New York City College of Technology, City University of New York.



*8 - David Zarate*

**David Zarate** is a 37-year-old graduate of Grand Canyon University with a BS in Biology in pursuit of a medical school degree. He was a Peer Leader at San Jose City College (SJCC) which instilled in him the tools necessary to make headway in higher education.

## ***Keynote Workshop I – Thursday, June 3, 2021 at 9th Annual Conference Online***

***Projects with Purpose:***

***Telling Stories About Why You Do What You Do***

***Presenters***



*9 - Jonathan Adler*

**Jonathan Adler    Gillian Epstein**



*10 - Gillian Epstein*

***Pre-Conference Workshop: Introduction to Peer-Led Team Learning***

***Wednesday, June 2nd, 2021***

**For more information and updated agenda: <https://pltlis.org/2021-conference/>**

**EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION RATES EXTENDED**

**<https://pltlis.org/registration-form/>**

**[Crossing Boundaries, Building Networks](#)**

**FROM ANYWHERE TOGETHER!**

The Peer-Led Team Learning International Society's Ninth Annual Conference provides a forum for practitioners and researchers, including faculty, learning specialists/developers, administrators, Peer Leaders, teachers, and others, using various forms of peer-led learning.

***Enthusiastic, Creative and Energetic Peer Leader Representative Needed for the PLTLIS Board***

**Nomination deadline has been extended to June 3**

PLTL practitioners believe that trained peer leaders and creative materials are very important components of successful PLTL Programs. Many also note that the contributions of Peer Leaders are key ingredients to making the programs successful.

The PLTLIS Board of Directors invites Peer Leaders to serve for a two-year term (2021-2023) to represent the viewpoint and concerns of Peer Leaders. The election will be held during the Annual Conference and the two-year term begins at the June 5th Board meeting. If you would like to nominate yourself or another Peer Leader who can represent Peer Leaders well and inject fresh viewpoints, please *e-mail your nomination or questions* to Mitsue Nakamura at [nakamuram@uhd.edu](mailto:nakamuram@uhd.edu) by June 3, 2021.

Responsibilities of Peer Leader Representatives include:

1. Attend and participate in the meetings of the Board of Directors
2. Attend to selected committee assignments, preferably:
  - Develop activity in the Society's social media platforms
  - Take a lead role in Alumni Relations activities

## What is WHOVA? The Virtual Conference Platform

The COVID-19 Pandemic has undoubtedly changed many aspects of our lives and the Peer-Led Team Learning International Society's Annual Conference is no different. The 2021 Conference is completely virtual, which is new territory for both organizers and attendees. However, the Conference Committee is dedicated to bringing you the best experience possible.

The Conference will be conducted using the WHOVA Platform. Understandably, there is a lot to take in to make full use of the platform. What is a **Zoom Room**? What are **breakout rooms**? Where can I **find the agenda**? Am I in the right session? Where can I network? Thanks to WHOVA, you won't need to worry about these issues because they will all be condensed in one simple layout. Presentations, Networking, Direct Messaging, are all possible by using the WHOVA platform. As an attendee, all you need for this conference is access to the WHOVA web page or application (depending on your device), access to Zoom, and lots of enthusiasm for the World of Peer Leading!

Conference registrants will be sent an invitation to link to the WHOVA platform prior to the conference, with the subject line: *Access to WHOVA and PLTLIS Conference*.

## What happens after I'm done presenting?

DO NOT LEAVE! There is a lot of content for you to enjoy. There are many presentations, keynote workshops and panels, opportunities for networking, and even contests happening during the conference for you to enjoy. If your thirst for knowledge of Peer-Led Team Learning isn't quite satiated, attend other presentations to learn more about what Peer Leaders and practitioners are doing!

If you're feeling "Zoom Fatigue," come over to the **Conference Networking Session** to talk to others about their interests. Just attended a presentation that you enjoyed? Reach out using the **Direct Messaging** feature to set up a meeting without ever having to leave WHOVA! There is plenty to do during this conference so take advantage!

## Peer Leaders' Experiences

### Meet the 2021 WHOVA Techs!

The Peer Leaders featured below stepped in as a team, taking on the responsibility for designing and setting up the WHOVA Platform that conference participants will be using. Everything WHOVA-related that you will experience is handled by at least one of them. If you still have problems, comments, or concerns during the conference, you can reach one of them by going to the **community tab** and using the **"Ask-The-Organizers-Anything"** thread. One of them will be watching the thread closely in the case of any questions that appear mid conference! They will also be floating around the (virtual) conference so see if you can spot them all during the conference and greet them!

### Jonathan Tijo

#### Major: Biology with a Biomedical Concentration



11 - Jonathan Tijo

I was still a senior in high school when I first entered the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). I was all alone in this strange new environment full of smart people who already knew what to do and how to act. I was completely lost and I didn't know where to go or what to expect. All I knew is that I had one class that day: a First Semester General Chemistry Workshop. There, I met my own Peer Leader for the first time. Little did I know that she would become a source of information and inspiration as to what my enrollment at UTEP could do for me. She was kind and knowledgeable and helped me in ways that were



more than just chemistry. She helped me with study tips, public speaking skills, and even test-taking strategies. Soon enough, she became more than just my Peer Leader, she became my mentor.

Now that I am a General Chemistry Peer Leader myself, I get to see just how much we impact our students. And I want my students to see me in the same way I saw my own Peer Leader. By forming this type of bond with your students, you can really see your students grow and change as they progress through the semester. You see the timid students start coming out of their shell and see those who hated chemistry start having their personal “aha” moments. I want my students to leave my workshop having learned something about chemistry and about themselves because I leave my workshops having learned something more about chemistry and about myself. As a Peer Leader, I have seen both sides of this program. It helped me as a student and continues to shape who I am as a Peer Leader today.

Jacob Najera

Major: Biochemistry



*12 - Jacob Najera*

I started as a peer leader during the Spring 2020 semester at the University of Texas at El Paso. This is my third semester being a part of this amazing program and the development it made on my professional skills and social skills is something I will not forget. I am usually a reserved individual who was not used to expressing ideas I may have had or expressing myself to a group. I first started in this organization nervous as I did not know what to expect, but soon I began to talk with other amazing peer

leaders who helped me on my journey. Before I knew it, they made me join the Workbook Revisions Team to develop and improve the workbook used in General Chemistry workshops because they thought my ideas on changes were great. The next semester I continued to help work on the development of the workbook while also becoming a New Member Coordinator. With this position I was given more responsibilities as I had to train the new peer leaders on what to do, giving me more experience being a leader. At the end of my second semester peer leading, I applied to become the Head Peer Leader which I became at the start of my third semester, and continued as the Head Peer Leader for General Chemistry Second Semester for the Spring 2021 semester. Through this experience I have met some of the brightest and most helpful undergraduates at the university; even those who have graduated still communicate and help me to this day. I would not be the person I am today without this organization helping me develop through the responsibilities I have obtained.

Kaleigh Love

Major: Biology with a Biomedical Concentration



13 - Kaleigh Love

As a non-traditional student, in the middle of a career change, the thought of taking a Chemistry course was absolutely terrifying. I joined the first lecture for General Chemistry I and all of my fears became justified, I didn't know anything! I felt lost until my first Peer-Led Workshop meeting. My Peer-Led Workshop experience saved my dreams of transitioning from a High School English Teacher to a Doctor and helped me develop, not just an understanding of Chemistry, but a deep appreciation for the topic and for the support that comes through the Peer-Led Team. At the end of the semester, I immediately applied to become a Peer Leader. I want students who are feeling the same fears I felt to know that they have a guide and advocate who wants to help them succeed, learn, and find their confidence. Peer Leading has given me a community of passionate learners and leaders. I couldn't be more thankful for my experience as a student and now my experience as a leader.

Sofia Delgado

Major: Biochemistry



*14 - Sofia Delgado*

I am a junior Biochemistry major at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). I have been a First Semester General Chemistry Peer Leader for two semesters and have been a part of the Workbook Revisions Committee for that long as well. When I'm not busy trying to facilitate the learning of First Semester General Chemistry students, you can find me reading or decorating my bullet journal, which I use to organize myself and my busy schedule. This semester, I decided to take a part on the team who will be helping to ensure this year's PLTLIS conference takes place virtually. I'm excited to learn more about managing such an informative event and even more excited to exchange ideas with all those in attendance.