

The Peer Leader



PEER-LED TEAM LEARNING
INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

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The Peer Leader

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Message from the President

Dear PLTLIS Community,

This is graduation season for many of our campuses and many of our peer leaders are moving on to new challenges and interesting paths – this is the topic of the Keynote Workshop on Saturday, June 5th for the Ninth Annual Conference, entitled “Crossing Boundaries, Building Networks.” More details about the three Keynote Workshops will be posted on the website, and the first of the series, on June 3rd, is featured below. The deadline for submissions of abstracts is imminent. We encourage you to submit your abstract for oral presentations and/or videos featuring the great things happening at your campus. While this year's event will be held virtually we will have an excellent program reflecting the diversity of disciplines and the richness of Peer-Led Team Learning. I'm looking forward to seeing you at the conference.

Warm regards,

Marcelo

Marcelo Sztainberg

Northeastern Illinois University

President, Board of Directors

WWW.PLTLLS.ORG

Editor's Note: In the Peer Leader #10's profile of the PLTL program at Washington University in St. Louis, mention of Dr. Thomas Bakupog, one of the General Chemistry PLTL directors, was inadvertently omitted. For more information, please see: <https://chemistry.wustl.edu/people/thomas-bakupog>

Keynote Workshop - June 3, 2021 at 9th Annual Conference Online

Projects with Purpose: Telling Stories About Why You Do What You Do

Whether interviewing for a job, planning your professional trajectory, or trying to make sense of daily life, understanding and sharing stories about why you do what you do is essential. This workshop offers creative, scaffolded ways for participants to access and distill why they care about their work. Participants will leave with an integrated story about their personal stakes in an individual or team project, as well as with prompts and tools to help colleagues, peers, and students do the same.

Presenters



Jonathan Adler is a Professor of Psychology at Olin College of Engineering and a Visiting Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School. He is also the Chief Academic Officer of Health Story Collaborative, a non-profit organization aimed at elevating the role of personal stories in health care. Dr. Adler's research focuses on identity development, with an emphasis on the role narrating challenging experiences has on mental health. His research has been published in leading scholarly journals and has been covered in many outlets including The New York Times, CNN, and The Today Show.



Gillian Epstein is the Writing Initiatives Specialist at Olin College of Engineering where she coaches and cultivates writing and storytelling across both the curriculum and the community. Dr. Epstein's academic research focused on unreliable narrators in American realist literature, and this work has taken on a whole new life as inspiration for helping others experiment with multiple ways of telling and exploring their own stories. Her work invites participants into the lifelong project of narrating who they are and what they care about, with a focus on amplifying diverse voices and building insight, empathy and connection.

It's Not Too Late to Submit a Video of Your PLTL Program

For many PLTL programs, 2021 marks anniversaries – is your program celebrating its 20th? 15th? 10th? Creating a video is a way of marking the continuing success of your program and a way to share your practice with others who are considering implementing Peer-Led Team Learning.

More information is available at <https://pltlis.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Call-for-Video.pdf>

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.

EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION RATES EXTENDED

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

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

Wednesday, June 2nd, 2021

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

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 a Peer Leader to serve for a one-year term to represent the viewpoint and concerns of Peer Leaders. The election will be held during the Annual Conference and the one-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 by May 31, 2021.

Overview of the PLTL Program at the University of Rochester, Rochester, New York

The University of Rochester adopted peer-led team learning in 1995 under Vicki Roth, the Assistant Dean and Executive Director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning until 2018, and Jack Kampmeier, former Professor of Chemistry, as a way to improve learning outcomes in a single course, Organic Chemistry I. Now in its 26th academic year, the PLTL Workshop Program has expanded into nine departments and serves approximately 35% of the undergraduate student population each year.

Currently, PLTL Workshops are components of courses in Biology, Business, Chemistry, Computer Science, Electrical & Computer Engineering, Linguistics, Math, Optics, and Philosophy. Every semester, about 300 PLTL Workshops are held each week in up to 20 different courses, serving roughly 2000 unique and 2700 non-unique students (as many students have PLTL Workshops in multiple courses). To hold PLTL Workshops on this campus-wide scale, CETL staff train almost 200 near-peer leaders each semester. PLTL Workshop leaders are responsible for facilitating and troubleshooting hands-on practice for a group of their near peers each week as a complement to the course lectures and as a replacement for traditional lecture-based recitation sections. PLTL Workshop Leaders are trained through a semester-long, credit-bearing course to not only affirm students' content knowledge, but also manage a dynamic classroom environment in which discussion and problem solving are paramount. We find that PLTL Workshop attendance consistently correlates with multiple measures of student success, including exam points and final grades.

Peer Leaders' Experiences

University of Rochester, Rochester, New York



1 - Raza Ahmed

I am a senior, pursuing a B.S. degree in Biochemistry, with the ultimate goal of becoming a doctor. I have been a PLTL Workshop leader for organic chemistry for two years. I transferred into the University of Rochester after completing one year of college elsewhere, and organic chemistry Workshop was the first PLTL Workshop experience I ever had. At my previous university I only had recitations with a faculty or graduate student leader where I was left to solve the problems on my own. Peer-led Workshop was a new concept to me, and it helped me immensely when transitioning to a new university. I met students in a collaborative environment and made friends that I still talk to today.

After being a PLTL Workshop leader for two years, I have seen how crucial my competence in teaching is to my students' success. The days I use teaching techniques taught to me by the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning are the Workshops that run the smoothest and have the biggest impact on students. As a student myself, I see more of my learning and myself come out in the Workshop model than a basic recitation model. The most important part of the PLTL Workshop experience is the environment we set up for our students. I cannot imagine how hard it would have been for myself and for my students to think about the difficult organic chemistry problems we give them in a hostile and quiet environment, and the environment we are able to create due to the PLTL model is key in the academic success seen by myself and my students in a class as hard as organic chemistry.



2 - Noelle Peluso

I am a senior, majoring in chemistry, at the University of Rochester. Before becoming a peer leader, I had experienced both a supportive and collaborative peer-led Workshop and an isolating, quiet Workshop, which made me aware of what a difference actively facilitated collaboration made. Over the past three years as a peer leader, I have been able to help my students navigate challenging chemistry classes, both academically and emotionally. I love chemistry, and while my organic chemistry students often do not share my view, I can help them understand why chemistry is important. I love applying the pedagogical techniques I have covered in PLTL classes with my students and seeing how I am able to better fit their needs for a facilitator. Being a peer leader has showed me how much I can learn and let me become a better listener. After three years, I am so excited that many of my students have become peer leaders and are dedicated to sharing an enthusiasm for chemistry and providing a supportive environment for future students to learn. It's the best legacy I can have as a graduating senior.



3 - Anna Zimmerman

Hello! I'm a senior computer science major and psychology minor at the University of Rochester, also pursuing a Citation for Achievement in College Leadership. After graduation I will be working full-time as a software engineer at Nike. I have been a PLTL workshop leader for the introductory computer science courses for the past two years. As a first-year student I participated in one semester of PLTL workshops in computer science and that small group learning environment helped me feel more confident. It was a structured, but casual way to interact and work with my classmates, which I greatly appreciated. After this experience as a student in PLTL, my passion for teaching only grew, and I knew that I wanted to use my knowledge and experience to help others succeed. That's why I applied to be a PLTL leader.

Having been a PLTL workshop leader for four semesters, I further realized the importance of PLTL and I am incredibly grateful for the experience. Not only have I found it personally fulfilling to facilitate learning and the development of key problem-solving skills, but in my PLTL workshops I'm able to create a welcoming, inclusive, and judgement-free environment where students can feel more comfortable, which I've learned is especially key for minority student retention and success in STEM. Through the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning I was also able to complete two independent study courses researching PLTL practices and their impact. I've learned a lot about myself from the weekly leader meetings and leading workshops, and enhanced several valuable skills including teamwork, communication, and leadership. Being a PLTL workshop leader has been highly rewarding, and my favorite experiences have been student "aha" moments of understanding and watching them improve over the semester through group work, discussion, and critical thinking.