

The Peer Leader



PEER-LED TEAM LEARNING
INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

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Issue No. 15 Contact: info@pltlis.org

- ***Advances in Peer-Led Learning: Inaugural Issue!***
- **Discussion Forum on pltlis.org**
- **New: Social Media**
- **Profiles: University of South Florida**

[Message from the President](#)

Dear PLTLIS Community,

The end of the year is upon us! 2021 has been a year of adjustment as we continue to recover from the pandemic. Here at PLTLIS we have been busy bolstering our efforts to provide tools for high impact practices for our practitioners. New and current members of the Board of Directors are working intensely to improve our practices and provide you with enhanced resources.

In this issue of *The Peer Leader*, we are excited to announce the launch of our journal, *Advances in Peer-Led Learning* (APLL), to mark the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Peer-Led Team Learning International Society. The first issue offers a variety of manuscript types including research articles, essays, vignettes, and curriculum design, among others.

The abstract submissions for the upcoming 2022 annual Conference, “Navigating the Confluence of Academic Disciplines, Leader Training, and Student Learning through the Changing Landscape of PLTL” in St. Louis, Missouri will open soon! Keep an eye on our website for the deadline.

As always, we are delighted to provide activities and resources for you. Please visit our website at www.pltlis.org to interact with your fellow PLTLIS members. New members are always welcomed on our committees, thus if you are interested in participating at a higher level within our Society, email us to info@ptlis.org

Happy Holidays!

Milka Montes

President, Board of Directors

WWW.PLT LIS.ORG

Advances in Peer-Led Learning

Inaugural Issue Online: journal.pltlis.org

The Editorial team advances the Inaugural issue of this new adventure in peer-led facilitation of learning. Quantitative and qualitative research methods are featured in several papers, as well as innovations in presenting research and storytelling. Published when “normal” is unknown, APLL’s authors grapple with the necessary accommodations to online learning. The Journal speaks to the wealth of viewpoints, experiences, and strategies provided by instructors, learning specialists, Peer Leaders, and alumni to support learning in this unusual time. APLL provides for the flexibility of ways to portray program implementation, responses to pandemic problems, and significantly includes wisdom from Peer Leaders themselves.

Continue the Discussion!

Intrigued, challenged, want to comment about peer-facilitated learning? Read and respond to the contributions to the literature on learning through further discussion of ideas and strategies via the Forum on the pltlis website. Look for the **FORUMS** tab.

ptlis.org

Connect on Social Media!

PLTLIS is proud to connect past and present Peer Leaders through its Alumni Association. We hope to highlight the achievements of Peer Leader alumni while also helping current Peer Leaders exchange experiences and strategies with each other. We are now on Instagram and Facebook. For more information, and to catch the first few posts, follow us!

Instagram: @pl_tl_is

Facebook: Peer-Led Team Learning Society

Campus Profile

Scott Lewis



1 - Scott Lewis

PLTL in Chemistry at the University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida

Associate Professor, Department of Chemistry, University of South Florida

The Chemistry department at the University of South Florida (USF) has continuously used PLTL pedagogy for the past twenty years. To support this continued engagement, PLTL has been enacted by over a dozen faculty members and it has been adapted to meet evolving institutional logistics and resources. Currently PLTL is in place in first and second semester General Chemistry and first-semester Organic Chemistry where class sizes are regularly over 175 students. As a result, in each academic year over four thousand students engage in peer-led sessions and over a hundred Peer Leaders are trained and gain valuable leadership experiences. In first-semester General Chemistry, students meet with Peer Leaders once per week in dedicated rooms, in addition to two lecture classes per week. In second-semester General Chemistry and first-semester Organic Chemistry one lecture class per week is replaced with a PLTL session and Peer Leaders work with students within the large lecture hall. With the shift to online-only instruction, PLTL has carried through utilizing online break-out rooms and discussion boards to continue the peer-led interactions.

Peer Leaders enroll in a course that includes Peer Leader training and the experiential learning via work with students.

One hallmark of the continued operation of PLTL is strong institutional commitment. Peer Leaders enroll in a course that includes Peer Leader training and the experiential learning via work with students. The course represents an upper-level elective for biomedical science majors. Having Peer Leaders enroll in a course serves two purposes: 1) it formally recognizes the value of the skills that are covered in the training and experiential sessions, and 2) it conveys to the Peer Leaders the semester-long commitment they are making. Academic advisors on campus advertise the course and help with recruiting potential Peer Leaders. The department also recognizes outstanding Peer Leaders in the annual undergraduate

awards ceremony. Combined, this support facilitates enacting PLTL at this large scale and explains the sustained practice on our campus, facilitating the rewarding experience of regularly seeing meaningful interactions among students and with Peer Leaders.

Sherrisse Bryant



Instructor, General Chemistry, University of South Florida (USF)

As an instructor at USF, I have enacted PLTL in my first and second semester General Chemistry courses. Enacting PLTL has given me the opportunity to observe how students apply their knowledge to a set of questions with varying levels of difficulty outside of a test setting. Witnessing the students engaging in active learning has been a very impactful experience for me. I get a chance to see how students explain concepts to each other and how they process what was learned during the lecture portion of the course. I have also experienced the benefits of having peers of the students in the room as Peer Leaders. As an instructor who teaches large enrollment courses (over 200 students), I cannot always answer each student's question, so having Peer Leaders present is valuable. Students get a chance to ask their Peer Leaders questions as the session progresses and the Peer Leaders are trained to ask students thought-provoking, guiding questions about the content. Additionally, when I observe students struggling with concepts during peer-led sessions, I gain insights about how to address their questions in future lectures.

I see how excited Peer Leaders are to work with General Chemistry students.

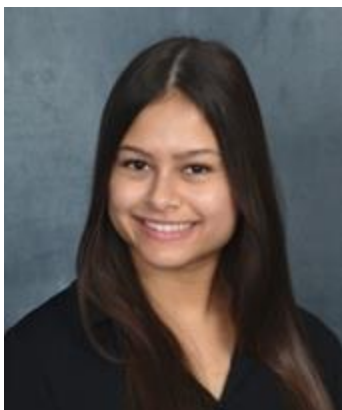
I have also had the opportunity to experience the impacts of PLTL from a different angle. As the instructor for the Peer Leading in Chemistry course, I train Peer Leaders on how to properly lead a group of students during peer-led sessions. I see how excited Peer Leaders are to work with General Chemistry students. Peer Leaders typically share testimonials about their good experiences in peer-led sessions during previous semesters, which led them to become Peer Leaders. It has been beneficial to me to discover some of the challenges Peer Leaders face and help them solve those problems. Assisting Peer Leaders with overcoming common challenges positively impacts the students enrolled in General Chemistry courses.

Allison De Ocampo

Peer Leader, General Chemistry, University of South Florida (USF)

During the Spring semester 2021, I peer-led for Chemistry 1. Peer leading was a very rewarding experience for me. I was taken out of my comfort zone through online meetings due to COVID where you couldn't see anyone you were talking to. When I started chemistry courses at the beginning of college, I was very stressed due to the rigorous content. Remembering that perspective allowed me to address topics that had confused me when I first started learning Chemistry, so I offered tips and tricks to conceptualize the information better. It was fulfilling to help alleviate some of that frustration for Chemistry 1 students.

As a Peer Leader, I operated a weekly session to go over practice problems and review. My peer leading class was hosted on Fridays which was also the day exams would fall on. Being the last person students saw right before their exam was a lot of pressure, but I enjoyed giving them pep talks and reminding them that they weren't alone. Overall, my peer leading experience was awesome.



Maria Delgado

Peer Leader, General Chemistry, University of South Florida (USF)

Peer leading was an experience that is hard to put into words, but quite honestly, was one of the best experiences I've ever had. My journey started when I was a student in General Chemistry 1. I sat in my peer leading section, admiring the Peer Leader. He was so great and so kind. I remember telling myself: "One day I am going to be a Peer Leader just like him." I worked very hard to be successful in Chemistry classes so that I would be ready to, one day, be just like him! Finally, I applied and got accepted! I felt so proud, excited yet nervous.

Peer leading wasn't about teaching the material to the students, but rather facilitating the learning experience while also making it enjoyable. I made sure to consider that some students had trouble asking questions due to fear or shyness. That is why my goal was to create a safe space where all students felt comfortable asking any question. It was so important to break the wall and create a pleasant experience for everyone.

While seeing the students grow and learn more, I was able to learn so much about myself. I realized how much I enjoyed helping other students. This is especially true for students who are pursuing careers in medicine just like me. We were able to not only learn together, but also relate to each other on a personal level.

It was truly such a rewarding experience!

For more information on USF's PLTL program: <https://www.usf.edu/arts-sciences/departments/chemistry/undergrad/peer--leading.aspx>

