

# April 2022



PEER-LED TEAM LEARNING  
INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

## The Peer Leader

Issue No. 18 Contact: [info@pltlis.org](mailto:info@pltlis.org)

- **Deadlines! Deadlines! April 22! May 1! May 11**
- **Conference Presentation: Leader Training by Video**
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## Message from the President

Dear PLTLIS Community,

Academic semesters are nearing times of final examinations and final projects on some campuses, and past midterms on others. Looking past those brings into focus the upcoming deadlines for the PLTLIS Annual Conference: this Friday, April 22nd, abstracts from you are awaited: oral presentations, workshops, videos. For those attending in person, there is a week more to reserve your room at *Le Meridien Clayton* (see below). And the “early bird” rates for conference registrations, both in-person and virtual, end on May 11th, so sign up now! The Annual Conference will be held from Wednesday, June 1 to Saturday, June 4, 2022, in person at Washington University in St. Louis, and virtually, anywhere.

To celebrate Ten Years of the Peer-Led Team Learning International Society, we welcome your contributions: How has your program evolved in the past ten or more years? Send photos or other contributions to [info@pltlis.org](mailto:info@pltlis.org) or to June Gaston, Conference Committee co-chair, at [jgaston@bmcc.cuny.edu](mailto:jgaston@bmcc.cuny.edu).

Joining the exciting roster of keynote presentations by Barbara Oakley and David Arendale (see descriptions at <https://pltlis.org/tenth-annual-conference/>) is a third presentation by a team from the

University of Rochester who will share their work on using videos for peer leader training (see below). For those not yet familiar with the Peer-Led Team Learning model, an introductory workshop will be held on June 1st. For more information, see <https://pltlis.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Pre-Conference-Workshop-24February2022.pdf>. The Annual Conference will be held from Wednesday, June 1 to Saturday, June 4, 2022, in person at Washington University in St. Louis, and virtually, anywhere.

In this issue, read about the PLTL program and some of the Peer Leaders at the University of Montana, where PLTL has been part of the General Chemistry sequence since 1998. And share this newsletter with your colleagues: faculty, staff, peer leaders, administrators, and your neighbors! If you would like to share about your program, email us at [info@pltlis.org](mailto:info@pltlis.org).

See you in Saint Louis!

Milka Montes

President, Board of Directors

[WWW.PLT LIS.ORG](http://WWW.PLT LIS.ORG)

## ***10th Annual Conference - June 1-4, 2022***

***Ending this week! Submission Deadline:***

***April 22, 2022***

**Call for Presentations, Workshops, Posters, Videos, and Showcases**

***Hosted by Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri***

***In Person and Virtual***

Abstracts from all areas of practice of peer-led learning are welcomed. Submissions are encouraged to be interactive.

- All submissions will be peer-reviewed
- Submissions must be original contributions

For suggested themes for topics and to submit an abstract,

go to: <https://pltlis.org/call-for-papers/>

Questions? Contact Marcelo Sztainberg, [m-sztainberg@neiu.edu](mailto:m-sztainberg@neiu.edu) or

June Gastón, [jgaston@bmcc.cuny.edu](mailto:jgaston@bmcc.cuny.edu), Co-chairs, PLTLIS Conference Committee

***Attending in person?***

***Reserve Your Room(s) at Le Meridien Clayton Deadline: May 1, 2022***

For information, go to: <https://pltlis.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Lodging-04-01-2022.pdf>

**The block of rooms reserved for conference attendees will be released after May 1st.**

## Special Session – Workshop

*Saturday, June 4, 2022 at PLTLIS 10th Annual Conference*

### ***A Novel Video-based Training Resource to Explore Challenges to Student Participation in PLTL Workshops***

Peer-led Team Learning has been widely used in undergraduate STEM education for over two decades; however, a closer examination of the experiences of students in peer-led sessions reveals that social comparison concerns, lack of sense of belonging and other factors can act as barriers to student participation in groupwork, which in turn can limit a successful implementation of the PLTL model. At the University of Rochester, we are developing a video-based resource based on interactive theatre to help peer leaders recognize and mitigate barriers to student participation that can occur in PLTL Workshops. The student participation issues included in this resource have been identified in partnership with peer leaders and instructors at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) and Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT).

In this Workshop, participants will:

- discuss common barriers to student participation in PLTL Workshops;
- watch a simulated PLTL Workshop scene that illustrates student participation issues;
- share reactions to the scene with other participants;
- explore the student characters' perspectives on the issues presented in the scene through a series of pre-recorded interviews;
- discuss assumptions about student participation in the scene;
- reflect on applicability to their context.

We will also briefly discuss future plans, including development of a second training module, testing of the training modules at UTEP and RIT, and the eventual broad dissemination of the training resources to the PLTL community.

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Contributors: Maria Cecilia Barone, Joe Dinnocenzo, Robin Frye, Karen Gilbert, Nicholas Hammond, Rachel Remmel and Kyle Trenshaw

## Contributors



*1 - M. Cecilia Barone*

**M. Cecilia Barone** is Assistant Director for the PLTL Workshop program at the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at the University of Rochester (UR). She teaches several sessions of the peer leader training course at UR and works closely with faculty to implement PLTL in a variety of disciplines including chemistry, optics, chemical engineering, and computer science. Her research interests include identifying challenges to participation and collaboration in PLTL and using theatre-based approaches to improve leader training and the PLTL experience. Cecilia received her Ph.D. in Biochemistry from the University “La Sapienza” in Rome, Italy.



*2 - Joseph Dinnocenzo*

**Joseph Dinnocenzo** is a Professor of Chemistry at the University of Rochester (UR). He has used PLTL for over 20 years when teaching organic chemistry lecture courses. In the past 10 years Prof. Dinnocenzo has pioneered the use of PLTL in first- and second-semester organic laboratory courses at UR. In the past few years, Dinnocenzo has collaborated with Dr. M. Cecilia Barone and the staff in the UR Center

for Excellence in Teaching and Learning to use interactive theatre as part of PLTL leader training to help reveal subtle issues that can negatively affect student participation in PLTL workshops and to identifies inclusive strategies for group leadership.



3 - Robin Frye

**Robin Frye** is a Lecturer and Assistant Director for PLTL Workshops and Academic Coaching at the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at the University of Rochester. She has taught peer leaders in a wide variety of courses including computer science, business and philosophy. Cultivating diverse and inclusive PLTL learning environments is an area of interest for her research and practice in peer-leader education. She received her Ph.D. from Clark University in Developmental Psychology.

## Keynote Address at Queen Mary University London

### *Focuses on PLTL at FIU*

Jose Luis Alberte-Dueñas, Director, and Alberto Cruz, Associate Director of the Peer-Led Team Learning program at Florida International University, in Miami, Florida, gave a keynote address on the evolution of the PLTL program from 2002 to 2022 for audience members attending the Queen Mary Festival of Education. Thanks to the generosity of the conference organizing team at QMUL, the video is now available on the PLTLIS homepage: [www.pltlis.org](http://www.pltlis.org)

## Campus Profile

***PLTL in General Chemistry at the University of Montana, Missoula, Montana***



### **Mark Cracolice Professor, Chemistry, University of Montana**

Peer-Led Team Learning in General Chemistry was initiated at the University of Montana in Spring 1998, in the form of a pilot study, after first learning about what was then called Workshop Chemistry at a BCCE (Biennial Conference on Chemistry Education) meeting and an article in *The Chemical Educator*. We were awarded a National Science Foundation award to adopt and adapt PLTL later that semester, in collaboration with faculty at American University (Washington, D.C.), Clark Atlanta University (Atlanta, Georgia), and the University of Kentucky (Lexington, Kentucky). We have continued to use PLTL as a part of our curriculum for the past 24 years. Two hundred to 400 students per year have benefited from this approach.

The success of our program is due to the commitment of our Peer Leaders, who volunteer no less than eight hours per week to in-service to their university community. This includes three hours of leading in our active-learning lectures, two hours in a workshop setting, one hour of training, one hour of developing and writing weekly leader logs, and one or more hours of planning, preparation, and content review. Academic credit is awarded to Leaders via enrollment in a training course and an experiential development course.

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Leader training occurs via pre-term training (6 hours), in-term training (1 hour per week), and leader logs and faculty responses. Training is facilitated by the faculty course instructor and the Leader Coordinator. Pre-term training covers logistics, operational fundamentals, ethics, mentorship, and fundamentals of cognitive science. In-term training typically includes (a) listening to and addressing Leader concerns, (b) active-learning lecture and workshop content review and pedagogical strategies, and (c) discussion of a topic related to cognitive science, mentoring, or leadership.

Our PLTL materials are self-developed and continually revised. Students use a hardcopy workbook that contains problems to be solved in lecture collaboratively with other students and a Leader (averaging about 15 minutes per lecture) and problems for weekly two-hour workshops.

Both Leaders and students benefit from the PLTL program. As examples, Leaders have a multi-decade 100% success rate of admission to Montana's pharmacy school, above-average success in medical school admission, and many former Leaders report successful careers in industry and academia. Students consistently score above average on American Chemical Society Examination Institute exams and leave the course sequence with academic and interpersonal skills not otherwise developed in large-enrollment lower-division college science courses.

Tyler Grina (center) Leader Coordinator and former Peer Leader, University of Montana



4 - Tyler Grina (center)

As a student in General Chemistry, I noticed the profound impact my Peer Leaders had on my success. Both of my Peer Leaders were amazing, energetic mentors who had succeeded in the course when they were students. It was through their support and constant cheerful outlook that an otherwise rigorous class transformed into an enjoyable and invigorating challenge. Having the ability to engage with the Peer Leaders throughout lecture and our weekly workshops helped me develop habits that contributed to my success in all my courses and not solely General Chemistry.

The following year I became a Peer Leader myself, eager for the chance to give back to a program that had made such an impression on me. Contributing as a Peer Leader was extremely fulfilling. I loved being able to work with the students, pass on wisdom from my Peer Leaders, and help students develop skills and habits to conquer difficult courses. Working with the students and other Peer Leaders allowed me to develop deep relationships and find many great friends. The appreciation my students displayed for me directly mirrored my appreciation of my Peer Leaders and speaks to the caring and supportive culture built by the program.

After being a Peer Leader for three semesters, I stepped into the role of Peer Leader Coordinator. This was a large transition, characterized by lessened interaction with the students, but a heightened interaction with the Peer Leaders. This role, although different than working directly with the students, has also been extremely gratifying. With each semester comes new challenges to overcome and puzzles to solve, all in pursuit of constantly improving the course. My most rewarding experience has been witnessing students I had mentored and developed relationships with, later become Peer Leaders themselves. Watching them make an impact in their own students' academic and personal lives is extremely heartwarming. Our weekly meetings regularly display each Peer Leader's care for the program and students, and these aspects showcase why the program is so valuable and effective. It is my constant exposure to these quality individuals that make the Coordinator position so worthwhile.

Abbe Feilzer Peer Leader, University of Montana



5 - Abbe Feilzer

Becoming a Peer Leader for the General Chemistry I and II courses at the University of Montana was one of the best decisions I have ever made. It has not only helped me to become a more confident student, but I also get to help instill this confidence in others. When I was first a student in General Chemistry, I remember admiring my Peer Leaders. They helped me so much throughout the course, in personal and academic areas, and I could tell that they really wanted to see me succeed. I knew that I wanted to become a Peer Leader if I could potentially have the same impact on just one student.

Peer leading isn't about knowing all the answers and understanding every concept perfectly. Peer leading is about helping people to become better learners and ultimately better students. I have been able to pass on the tips that I used to succeed in Chemistry to a new group of students and hopefully helped them succeed as well. Peer leading is also about being a resource to students who are too shy or scared to ask questions in a big lecture hall. I have been able to form a connection with these students and now they are able to get the help they need without the embarrassment they might have felt. Overall, being a Peer Leader has been a very fulfilling experience and one that I am so thankful to have had the opportunity.



## Bill Evans Peer Leader, University of Montana



6 - Bill Evans (left)

Throughout my sophomore year at the University of Montana, I have been a Peer Leader for Professor Cracolice. I have peer-led for First- and Second-Semester General Chemistry during the Autumn 2021 and Spring 2022 semesters. When I first began taking general chemistry, I was unsure if I would become a Peer Leader. As I succeeded in the class and saw how much of a role Peer Leaders played with helping the students in the course grow and thrive, I knew I wanted to have that same impact on students. After being accepted through the application process at the end of my freshman year, I was eager for the next school year to begin.

Becoming a Peer Leader has given me the opportunity to be a part of the learning experience of many students. With that, I have aimed to help students learn the material in an inviting setting. Frequently using ice breakers has worked well with breaking down students' resistance to share with one another during our weekly workshops. Overall, the peer leading experience has shaped me into a better student, mentor, and leader. Running a weekly workshop, learning to ask leading questions, and helping students in the course has raised my confidence and sharpened my chemistry knowledge. The feeling I get when a student does well is pure happiness. Peer Leading has connected me with many good-hearted people who share common interests and aspirations as me. Being a part of this program has been a beneficial experience.

## Connect on Social Media!

PLTLIS is proud to connect past and present Peer Leaders and all who are interested in Peer-Led Team Learning. We are currently focusing attention on the 10th Annual Conference, so *follow* and *like* us on Instagram and Facebook:

**Instagram:** @pl\_tl\_is

**Facebook:** Peer-Led Team Learning Society

## Contribute to the Peer Leader!

Do you want to share news with the PLTL community? Send news items, story suggestions, and updates from your campus Peer-Led Team Learning program to [info@pltlis.org](mailto:info@pltlis.org).