

May 2022- Conference Edition



PEER-LED TEAM LEARNING INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

The Peer Leader

Issue No. 20 Contact: info@pltlis.org

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Message from the President

Dear PLTLIS Community,

Navigating the Confluence of Academic Disciplines, Leader Training, and Student Learning through the Changing Landscape of PLTL

The theme of this year's Annual Conference brings to mind the many ways that the communities of practitioners of Peer-Led Team Learning have created confluence in students' learning despite the challenges of changed times and methods of delivery. St. Louis is famous as the "gateway to the West," represented by the Arch on the banks of the Mississippi River. The river of learning and the flow of knowledge need navigation: coming together to create and share the dynamic nature of learning and practice is the reason this year's conference theme is appropriate.

The Annual Conference is almost here! Wednesday, June 1 to Saturday, June 4, 2022, in person at Washington University in St. Louis, and virtually, from anywhere.

Over 30 workshops and oral presentations include the exciting roster of featured presentations by Barbara Oakley, David Arendale, and Athena Sherman that will converge many ways of thinking about learning.

On Saturday afternoon, June 4th, I invite you to attend the Board meeting of the Society, which is open.

In this issue, read about the PLTL program and some of the Peer Leaders at the University of West Georgia, where PLTL started in chemistry for allied health professionals and over 20 years is used in Chemistry courses and in other STEM disciplines.

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.

10th Annual Conference - June 1-4, 2022

See you in Saint Louis!

Milka Montes

President, Board of Directors

WWW.PLT LIS.ORG

10th Annual Conference - June 1-4, 2022

<https://pltlis.org/tenth-annual-conference/>

Wednesday – Saturday, June 1-4, 2022 – In-person and Virtual!

Navigating the Confluence of Academic Disciplines, Leader Training, and

Student Learning through the Changing Landscape of PLTL

Hosted by Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri

In Person and Virtual

“EARLY BIRD” REGISTRATION DEADLINE EXTENDED!

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

Questions? Contact June Gastón, jgaston@bmcc.cuny.edu, Co-chair, PLTLIS Conference Committee

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

Nomination deadline is Thursday, June 2

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 (2022-2023) 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 4th 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 noon CDT, on Thursday, June 2, 2022. A meeting of Peer Leaders will be held in person and livestreamed to virtual conference participants.

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 Conference Platform

The hybrid Conference will be presented via the WHOVA Platform. Understandably, there is much information to examine in order to fully utilize the platform. Since this year's conference will be in person and online, participants will access schedules, event descriptions, and other features through Whova.

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 available on one platform. Presentations, Networking, Direct Messaging, are all possible by using the WHOVA interface. 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*. Use the information to set up and access the WHOVA web and/or mobile apps. You will also need access to ZOOM if you are attending virtually, and add lots of enthusiasm for the World of Peer Leading! If you are presenting (in person or virtually) a member of the Conference Tech Team will be helping you to ensure that anyone attending can enjoy your presentation.

What happens after I'm done presenting?

Attend presentations of your choice. Some presentations are in-person or remote only, while others are *livestreamed*, offered in-person and virtually at the same time. There is a variety of content for you to enjoy. There are many presentations, keynote workshops and talks, opportunities for networking, and even contests happening during the conference. To satisfy your thirst for knowledge of Peer-Led Team Learning, attend other presentations to learn more about what Peer Leaders and practitioners are doing!

Come to the **Conference Networking Sessions** 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!

Campus Profile

***PLTL at the University of West Georgia,
Carrollton, Georgia***



Dusty Otwell

**Chemistry Workshop
& Laboratory Coordinator**

Dr. Lucille Garmon

**Founding Workshop
Coordinator at UWG**

A PLTL-type model was introduced at the State University of West Georgia in the fall of 1998 by Dr. Lucille Garmon. It was used in only one section of the first semester of the chemistry course for allied health majors, with seven leaders conducting eleven weekly workshops for 90 students. In the Fall of 2000, the workshops expanded to all sections (except the honors section) of introductory chemistry. Again, participation was optional. Each instructor in the introductory chemistry sections had agreed to allow the workshop to count for 10% of the course grade for those students choosing to participate. On the first day of class the workshop option was explained to students and those interested signed up for times that fit their schedules.

The results of participation during the Fall of 2000 correlated so dramatically with course grade that a departmental decision was made to have workshops be mandatory for all sections of introductory chemistry (first and second semester general chemistry and first and second semester nursing chemistry). Fall semesters 2001-2005 had, on average, 30 leaders guiding 40 workshops which served a total of 350 students enrolled in six sections of general or allied health chemistry, each taught by a different instructor. Workshops are also part of the sections of these courses that are taught in spring and summer semesters.

All new leaders are enrolled in a leadership course.

All new leaders are enrolled in a leadership course. The training program is a well-planned, thought-out series of lectures and activities designed to prepare new leaders to handle a large diverse group and facilitate the growth of group cooperation. Each of the various portions of the training program can be loosely classified as belonging to one of four categories: presentations, discussion activities, practice workshops, and, most loosely of all, general “housekeeping.” The result of the leader training is to allow the leader to build a cohesive unit while developing the student’s confidence in the subject matter and encouraging a friendly, comfortable, supportive atmosphere. New leaders also participate in a class where they are required to reflect and write on selected topics and the previous week’s workshop as part of their ongoing training.

UWG Chemistry has a special term for more experienced peer leaders who want to take on additional responsibilities in our program – “super leaders.” They assist in tasks related to the recruitment, selection, and training of new leaders, conduct leaders’ meetings on a weekly basis, mentor and observe all leaders and offer constructive feedback. This is in addition to leading one or more workshops and their own class load. UWG PLTL could not possibly survive without the help of these extraordinary student employees.

In 2012, Dr. Garmon created the Chemistry Workshop Leader Scholarship. In addition to the scholarship, the chemistry program also awards medallions to chemistry workshop “rookie of the year” and “employee of the year” in the annual awards ceremony. Three years after creating the workshop leadership scholarship (in October of 2015), the founder of the Peer-Led Team Learning Chemistry Program at the University of West Georgia, Dr. Lucille Garmon, passed away following a battle with cancer. She was 79. Her assistant, Ms. Dusty Otwell, took over in the Coordinator position.



Over the years UWG PLTL Chemistry has expanded the workshops into Thermodynamics Chemistry (2007) and to the Principles of Organic Chemistry course (2019), a comprehensive one - semester course that emphasizes those aspects of organic chemistry that are relevant to the study of biology. Workshops have been modified from 120 minutes to 90 minutes and, due to budgetary constraints, have been increased from 6-8 students to a maximum of 20 students. Recently, as a result of COVID, the chemistry program has adapted to online workshops as well as in-person.

Over the years, workshops have spread to other disciplines at UWG. In Fall of 2016, workshop was piloted in Principles of Biology I and is now mandatory. In Fall of 2010, workshop was piloted in Physics I. In 2014, all workshops became mandatory for Introductory Physics I and II, and Principles of Physics I and II. Workshops have also expanded to Mathematics - Precalculus, Calculus I, II, and III. It is clear that when others see the results of PLTL in chemistry, they want to be a part of student success in their discipline.



Ayanna Aiyetoro



Peer Leader, General and Nursing Chemistry, University of West Georgia (UWG)

When I think back to my earliest experiences with chemistry, these memories are reminiscent of the numerous incoming students I have seen since I became a peer leader. In my high school chemistry courses, I didn't truly understand the material. I wasn't failing by any means, but I often found myself going through the motions. I would mimic what my educators did without truly understanding the background behind each mathematical step or why it was important not to skip one. Upon entering UWG, one of the first courses I took as an incoming biology major was General Chemistry I. As a first-year student, I initially began to approach the class similarly to how I did in high school, and I quickly found that this approach would be my downfall in the course. So once a week, I began to attend the 90-minute workshop session dedicated to facilitating collaboration, discussion, and understanding of the material presented in class. After my consistency outside the classroom and in the workshop, I found myself excelling among my peers as I saw a substantial improvement in my grades and understanding. It was here that I truly caught the importance of the success of the Peer-Led Team Learning Program.

Moreover, being a workshop leader has its perks, especially as a Pre-Medical student.

As a student who finally understood the taboo surrounding chemistry, I was presented with the opportunity to share my knowledge with others in Spring 2019, and I've led for seven semesters now. Everyone processes information differently, and sometimes having the lecture isn't enough; that is where the workshop program comes in. As a peer leader, I didn't have to teach or serve as an encyclopedia for students. Instead, I created a comfortable community where students could identify, discuss, and overcome their academic challenges. As a student, I had the opportunity to lead various workshops in both first and second semester General and Nursing Chemistry. Aside from everyday workshop techniques like Silent Scribing, small groups, and Passing the Marker, we've also played a

number of games, like Musical Chairs, Trashketball, Chem-pong, Jeopardy, and Family Feud: Chem Edition, that promotes participation among students in the workshop program. Furthermore, in these instances, I've had the opportunity to see the excitement on the faces of countless students as they finally made it click. Moreover, being a workshop leader has its perks, especially as a Pre-Medical student. Serving as a workshop leader allowed me to focus on breaking down and understanding the more difficult science-related topics that appear on the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT). Additionally, being a workshop leader has unlocked a new passion for teaching, likely something I will pursue upon graduating. Not only have I seen workshops improve my educational involvement, but it greatly improved my professional skills as well. I currently serve the UWG Peer Leading program as a Super Leader. This has given me the opportunity to mentor and observe new and veteran leaders as well as assist and present in new leader training. With the skills I have acquired through the PLTL Chemistry Workshop Program I have the confidence to succeed.

Malia Pope



Peer Leader, General Chemistry, University of West Georgia (UWG)

My experience in peer leading began in the Spring of 2021 through the UWG Peer-Led Team Learning Workshop Program. Initially, I started this position to gain a refresher on the material from General Chemistry I (as I was taking General Chemistry II), and because I genuinely enjoyed the content; however, it turned out to be so much more than only deepening my knowledge in the course material. This experience has enriched my ability to think critically, lead others, communicate effectively and confidently, facilitate learning, and so many other things that I never would have been able to improve on to this degree without my experience as a peer leader. One of my favorite things to see is when someone finally understands a difficult concept—especially knowing that I helped them achieve this or believe that they could achieve this.

Currently, I am a super leader in General Chemistry II; I have been leading workshops for three semesters. As a peer leader through the workshop program, I hold workshops every week and work to help facilitate a productive, welcoming environment with a group of students. Through this, I've found that some students have different learning styles and confidence levels, and I have learned to adapt to these differences to accommodate for all levels of understanding and comprehension. Most students, I have found, just enjoy having someone reveal the excitement and fun behind learning complex subjects, like chemistry. We frequently incorporate games into our workshop sessions—such as Electron

Configuration Battleship, Sink or Swim, and Chem-pong to induce a fun environment. The inclusiveness of workshops also helps to remind students that they are not alone, which is something that can be hard to remember during times of stress and overwhelming thoughts (which is common among college students). Overall, my peer leading experience has been extremely rewarding. I plan to continue my education in graduate school and eventually become a psychologist. The skills and qualities that I have gained from leading workshops—such as communicating efficiently with others and cultivating productive and helpful environments—will aid my success in both of these future endeavors.

Luz Ramirez-Pacheco



Peer Leader, General Chemistry, University of West Georgia (UWG)

Chemistry has been a subject that I have been passionate about and have excelled in ever since high school. I started with high school chemistry, which would have been equivalent to general chemistry I, and moved to AP chemistry the following year. In both years, I was assigned to be a tutor by my teacher for classmates who had difficulty understanding certain concepts. That ignited a fire within me to continue helping others because of the fulfillment I gained from knowing that I helped aid their understanding. So, when I found out there was a Peer-Led Team Learning workshop for chemistry at UWG to help other students, I was interested right away. I applied, was interviewed, and became a peer leader in the Fall of 2019, and I have led workshops for six semesters. Before officially stepping into the role of peer-leader, we had to complete training on general activities we must do in the session. I became a Super Leader after my second semester of being a regular peer-leader. Once I became a super leader, I was enlisted to help with new leader training. This included presenting during training, mentoring all leaders, and observing and offering feedback to all leaders.

In the workshop training, we were taught that each meeting is not a lecture, question and answer session, or tutorial. We, as leaders, are only there to guide the students on how they should start the problems. We ask specific probing questions about each problem we are working on so that it can help students go step by step on how to solve the problems. Using these techniques in the workshop has helped me better myself in explaining how they should go on about answering the problems. I especially enjoy it when students can understand concepts and math problems. I achieve these by using techniques such as Silent Scribe, Round-robin, small groups, competitions, and passing the marker. We

also utilize games such as “sink or swim,” Trashketball, and Jeopardy to demonstrate the chemistry concepts in a fun and engaging way.

Working as a peer leader has helped me to grow and learn more about myself. I was able to get out of my comfort zone, work efficiently with other students, and have more confidence in my abilities. These qualities will help me when I apply and am accepted into medical school because it shows I will be able to work with others and I am able to communicate with my peers. Becoming a doctor has always been my dream career, so knowing these are some qualities that a doctor needs, I feel confident I will excel in Medical School.



Editor’s Note: Dr. Lucy Garmon was a founding member of the Peer-Led Team Learning International Society, along with Ms. Dusty Otwell. Dr. Garmon wrote several papers that provide guidance to other practitioners of PLTL, including:

Why Attendance is Mandatory in Workshops: Comparison of Course Grades of Workshop Attendees vs. Non-attendees with Similar GPA and SAT Scores

<https://pltlis.org/wp-content/uploads/2012%20Proceedings/PDFs/Garmon-2012.pdf>

Why Attendance is Mandatory in Workshops: Comparison of Course Grades of Workshop Attendees vs. Non-attendees with Similar GPA and SAT Scores

Part II: Results for Second-Semester Students

https://pltlis.org/wp-content/uploads/Conference_Proceedings/2013_Proceedings/Garmon-2013.pdf

What We’ve Learned; What We’re Still Trying to Figure Out

<https://pltlis.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/SPLTLP-Garmon-What-We-Have-Learned.pdf>

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.