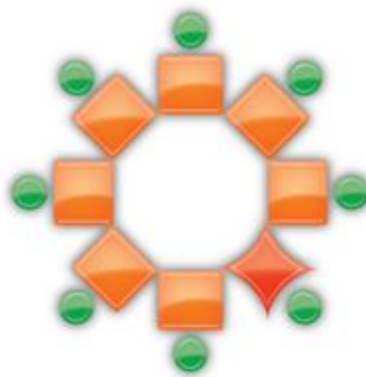


May 2022



PEER-LED TEAM LEARNING INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

The Peer Leader

Issue No. 19 Contact: info@pltlis.org

- **Deadline! May 11: “Early Bird” Registration**
- **Deadline extended: Book hotel rooms by May 6th!**
- **Conference Presentation: Alumni Spotlight**
- **Why You Should Attend This Year’s Conference**
- **Profiles: University of the Virgin Islands**

Message from the President

Dear PLTLIS Community,

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. Why should you attend? And who should attend? If you haven’t yet found a reason, see the list below to help you “*Navigate the Changing Landscape of PLTL!*” The “early bird” rates for conference registrations, both in-person and virtual, end on May 11th, so sign up now!

Joining the exciting roster of keynote presentations by Barbara Oakley, David Arendale, and presenters from the University of Rochester (see descriptions at <https://pltlis.org/tenth-annual-conference/>) is a special presentation spotlighting an “alum,” a former Peer Leader from San Jose City College who is now a professor of nursing at Emory University (see below).

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

10th Annual Conference - June 1-4, 2022

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>

In this issue, read about the PLTL program and some of the Peer Leaders at the University of the Virgin Islands, where PLTL supports students' introduction to mathematics.

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.

See you in Saint Louis!

Milka Montes

President, Board of Directors

WWW.PLT LIS.ORG

***Registration for "Early Birds" Deadline:
May 11, 2022***

10th Annual Conference - June 1-4, 2022

Hosted by Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri

In Person and Virtual

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

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

Deadline extended! Book hotel rooms by May 6th!

<https://pltlis.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Lodging-04-28-2022.pdf>

Friday, June 3, 2022, at PLTLIS 10th Annual Conference

PLTL: Facilitating Individual, Community, and

[Alumni Spotlight: Athena Sherman](#)

Friday, June 3, 2022, at PLTLIS 10th Annual Conference

PLTL: Facilitating Individual, Community, and Societal Change

Purposeful peer facilitation is one of the key ingredients to a successful PLTL session. Learning to create space, nourish the aptitude of peers, and celebrate individual and group accomplishments is no small feat. Moreover, the success of interdisciplinary teams is often determined by their style of collaborative leadership. Join our valued alum as they describe the profound effect of purposeful peer facilitation on individual, community, and societal change.



1 - Athena Sherman

Athena DF Sherman, PhD, PHN, RN, CNE (xe/they/she; First Gen) is an Assistant Professor at Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing at Emory University. Throughout their educational journey, Dr. Sherman spent many years as a PLTL leader at San Jose City College and later brought the PLTL model to San Jose State University where they ran the Tutoring Center through the Educational Opportunity Program. Currently Dr. Sherman's endeavors center around research and curricular change at Emory University. Sherman's research focuses on examining how complex systems of racism, cisgenderism, and heterosexism influence health and health equity for racial, ethnic, sexual, and gender minoritized populations. Moreover, Sherman seeks to lift the voices of LGBTQI+ violence survivors and co-create a foundation of research to improve LGBTQI+ healthcare delivery, focused on the impacts of stigma on psychological distress among transgender and gender diverse people. Additionally, their educational research focuses on improving the inclusion of LGBTQI+ health content in nursing curricula locally and nationally. Sherman has a growing family and splits their time between a tenure track faculty appointment in Atlanta, Georgia, and a clinical practice in end-of-life care throughout the San Francisco Bay Area.

<https://www.nursing.emory.edu/faculty-staff/athena-sherman>

Happy PRIDE 2022!

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

WHY YOU SHOULD ATTEND

By attending this conference, either in-person or virtually, you will gain knowledge, skills, and interact with practitioners of Peer-Led Team Learning and student-directed facilitation of learning through:

- Dissemination of research-based high-impact practices
- Understanding and implementation of relational practices that support inclusion and belonging
- Methods of facilitation and preparation of Peer Leaders and faculty
- Methods of support for programs across disciplines/ departments/ campuses
- Examination and means of addressing hindrances to adoption of peer-led programs
- Development of ideas for implementation
- Paths to support institutional strategic plans through implementation

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

- Peer Leaders, Faculty, Administrators and program Alumni
- College, University Professors of STEM, non-STEM, Education, Business and other disciplines
- Administrators, Deans, Curriculum Directors
- Directors and staff of Teaching & Learning Centers; Academic Success/Support Centers
- Curriculum and Staff Developers, Learning Specialists
- 7th-12th Grade Teachers, Administrators
- Teachers of STEM disciplines
- Superintendents, Principals, School Heads
- Students interested in leadership and peer mentorship

[Campus Profile](#)

PLTL at the University of the Virgin Islands



2 - Nadia Monroe Mills, Ph.D.

Nadia Monroe Mills, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Mathematics, College of Science and Mathematics, University of the Virgin Islands

Coordinator, Peer-Led Team Learning Program in Mathematics

Co-Director, STEM Institute

The University of the Virgin Islands (UVI), founded in 1962, is the only Historically Black College and University (HBCU) located outside of the US mainland. It has two campuses, located on the Islands of St. Thomas and St. Croix, with approximately 2000 students enrolled across both campuses and online. The United States Virgin Islands, an organized, unincorporated island territory of the United States, is situated at the Eastern end of the Greater Antilles east of Puerto Rico in the Northern Caribbean Sea.

At UVI, Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL) has been institutionalized into the foundation mathematics courses since the Fall semester of 2013. It has increased pass rates from below 50% to almost 80% in some semesters. The foundation mathematics courses are Introduction to Algebra Concepts and Skills, Parts One and Two (MAT 023 and MAT 024). Sessions are usually made up of six to eight students and a trained Peer Leader in a weekly 50-minute workshop scheduled on either Tuesdays or Thursdays.

The Peer Leaders have a training session at the beginning of the semester to discuss the format of PLTL, discuss expectations, learn effective facilitation techniques, ask questions and schedule a time for further weekly training. This training session lasts about three and a half hours.

We have highlighted four of our Peer Leaders below, two who have graduated and are enrolled in a graduate program, and two who are currently Peer Leaders.

In March 2020, UVI decided to take the learning platform online to curb the increasing cases of the Novel Coronavirus. This meant that many academic programs had to adopt a virtual model, which included PLTL. Adobe Connect was the first online platform used to facilitate Cyber Peer-Led Team Learning (cPLTL), as this program was used in the literature. Training sessions were scheduled with the leaders across both campuses to help with this transition. Once the leaders were exposed to and were familiarized with the program, cPLTL was well on its way.

However, when the sessions resumed virtually, there were several issues experienced with the program by both the leaders and students. While a consistent program across all workshop sections was preferred, Adobe Connect proved too problematic for continued use, and the decision was made to branch off into the use of Zoom, Blackboard Collaborate, and Microsoft Teams. Starting in Fall 2020, we worked with UVI's IT Department to move all cPLTL workshops to Microsoft Teams.

UVI's Peer Leaders are students who are dedicated, inspirational and represent majors from various schools and colleges. Many of our leaders have gone into the workforce, enrolled in graduate school or continue to our partnering schools for our dual degree program in engineering. We have highlighted four of our Peer Leaders below, two who have graduated and are enrolled in a graduate program, and two who are currently Peer Leaders.

J'Nique Ronan Spencer



3 - J'Nique Ronan Spencer

Master of Public Health, New York University, May 2022

I became a PLTL leader in my sophomore year at the University of the Virgin Islands and served in that capacity for three years. My first-time experience came from being a mentee, and I was so grateful for the benefits that the program provided to students like myself who had challenges in specific subject areas. I became a Peer Leader because I was passionate about helping my peers, and I am a firm believer that learning is a two-way street.

My most meaningful experience was building rewarding relationships with my peers. I would use my tactic of helping my peers to feel comfortable in the setting so they could be more receptive and inclined to participate. As a result, this fostered a great environment for collaboration, and I felt immense joy seeing everyone take the initiative to help other classmates understand the material. Being a Peer Leader has given me the opportunity to be more confident in my academic studies, specifically in the subject area of mathematics. I always thought that mathematics was the subject area that I was least interested in merely because I found it difficult at times. This experience has also given me a great skill of communicating with others despite their age group or interests, which is a very important tool for navigating in the professional setting as well as in life.

I would encourage anyone who has a passion for helping others and sharing their talents to become a part of the PLTL program. If you can help your peers advance to the next level by mentoring them in subject areas of need, do so! We all are adults and have our individual responsibilities. Still, it is so heartwarming to know that even at the collegiate level, there are people who care about your achievement and want to see you excel!

Shantae Lewis



4 - Shantae Lewis

Biology, University of the Virgin Islands, 2020

I graduated from the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) in May 2020, from the College of Science and Mathematics with my Bachelor of Sciences in Biology. I became a Peer Leader during my senior year at UVI. I volunteered both semesters and taught two or three sessions a week. I became a Peer Leader because I wanted to help mentor our future generations. I have always loved mentoring. In fact, I volunteered as a TA when I was in high school, as well as my freshman year at UVI for Upward Bound. Once the opportunity presented itself for me to become a tutor in PLTL I jumped at the chance to help.

I enjoyed all the moments I spent getting to know and mentor my students. They were all unique individuals who were funny, respectful, and eager to participate and learn. It made teaching them a joy. My most meaningful experience will always be my students asking me to be their Peer Leader again the following semester because they enjoyed our sessions and were able to learn comfortably. It made me feel like I was really making a difference. Being a Peer Leader cemented my feelings about wanting to become a mentor which is a large reason why I am pursuing a Ph.D.

I loved my experience as a Peer Leader, it gave me the opportunity to grow as a mentor and a presenter. If I could, I would do it all over again just to watch my students grow and become more comfortable with their math.

Serena Shillingford



5 - Serena Shillingford

Biology, Sophomore, University of the Virgin Islands

I became a Peer Leader in the fall semester of 2021 and have served for almost a year! I first considered being a Peer Leader when my classmate at the time sent me a flyer and said, "You're good at math." I was filled with doubt at that moment; I never deemed myself a good math student, so there was no way I had what it takes to be a Peer Leader. But, following some thought, I decided that I had much to gain from PLTL, especially being an international student and science major.

So far, PLTL has been a superb learning experience. I started seeing dramatic improvement in my mathematical skills, which helped me be a better student, Peer Leader, and tutor. Within the past year, I've enhanced my ability to comprehend and describe concepts – many thanks to PLTL. Interacting with the students and other Peer Leaders has been helpful for me in learning how to manage my anxiety in social settings. The highlight of PLTL for me has been forming connections with the students. It is quite an exciting time to pinpoint the exact moment you realize that you have completely stepped into your comfort zone with the students and vice versa.

PLTL's online aspect, termed cyber PLTL (cPLTL), posed some challenges for both leaders and students. PLTL is all about interaction in the classroom which was a troublesome goal to meet when you're restricted to a screen. Additionally, the anticipated technical difficulties were demanding for all parties. These challenges, however, only furthered growth and taught resiliency.

Overall, being a Peer Leader has been a rewarding experience; it allowed me tremendous growth in only a few months and left my students with newfound confidence when tackling math problems. I am eager to see what more PLTL has for me in the upcoming years.

Keanu Jacobs



6 - Keanu Jacobs

Communications, Junior, University of the Virgin Islands

I became a Peer Leader in Fall 2021 and have been a Peer Leader for two semesters and look forward to continuing until I graduate. It all started when I looked up opportunities UVI has, and I said to myself I would like to try this Peer Leader opportunity. In the next few days, I got an interview to review my qualification, and I successfully passed. I had a Peer Leader my first year at UVI and told myself I would love to be a leader someday and have sessions with students.

I became a leader to help strengthen my verbal communication skills and to interact with and help students. Being a Peer Leader contributes to my growth as a student, and as an individual. It helps me maintain a positive attitude, build relationships with peers, gain leadership skills, make a difference in student life, and ensure students understand material together in different learning styles. My most meaningful experience as a Peer Leader is being compassionate toward students. It allows me to better care for students, have patience and be respectful while trying to understand struggles the students face, and find solutions, by seeking ways to engage and motivate students to perform better. I also thoroughly enjoy attending training sessions to boost my math skills and facilitation techniques.

One major advantage of cPLTL is connecting with students regardless of location. There are many online tools and helpful websites. The disadvantages are the lack of physical and social interaction in the classroom setting and students not turning in assignments or not attending sessions. Also, students tend to be quieter in the virtual sessions.

Overall, my experience as a Peer Leader has helped shape me into who I am today. I look forward to gaining more skills and building relationships. As Peer Leaders, we lead! It's more than a job; it's a connection, a commitment. It feels good to see students succeed knowing that I played a role in helping and supporting them.

Giving your time can make a difference in students' lives. I am grateful for the opportunity of being a Peer Leader at UVI.



[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.