Message from the President

Dear PLTLIS Community,

Our society’s mission is to foster student learning through peer-led teams by supporting practitioners and institutions.

We have several activities and resources that help us fulfill this mission, and we welcome you in this effort! How can you get involved? Join us as a reviewer for the journal, Advances in Peer-Led Learning, send us news for the next newsletter, consider what presentation you would like to make at the 2023 conference: we will meet at the University of Houston Downtown from Wednesday, May 31 to Saturday, June 3, 2023. More news to come!
Visit our website at www.pltlis.org, email us at newsletter@pltlis.org with news and info@pltlis.org with inquiries.

Have a great Fall Semester!

Milka Montes
President, Board of Directors

WWW.PLTIS.ORG

Save the Dates! PLTLIS 2023 Conference

The 11th PLTLIS conference will be hosted by the University of Houston Downtown, in Houston, Texas, from Wednesday, May 31 to Saturday, June 3, 2023. More information will be forthcoming in the next newsletter and on the website.

Become a Reviewer for the Next Issue of APLL!

Contribute to the scholarship on peer-led learning! Advances in Peer-Led Learning (APLL), the journal of the Peer-Led Team Learning International Society is a peer-reviewed journal, and we are in need of reviewers for submissions for Issue #2. If you are willing to review one paper during November, please contact the Editorial Team at journal@pltlis.org. For more information on the PLTLIS journal, visit journal.pltlis.org.

Submit an Abstract to an Upcoming Conference!

Consider submitting abstracts to two conferences with upcoming deadlines:

- The 2023 ACS Conference is accepting abstracts through October 17th. This conference will be held in Indianapolis, Indiana and will also have a hybrid option from March 26-30. For more information, visit www.acs.org.

- The Texas Academy of Science is accepting abstracts through December 5th for their 126th annual meeting, to be held at Angelo State University in San Angelo, Texas. For more information, visit www.texasacademyofscience.org.

Do you know of other upcoming conferences? Is there a meeting you would like to share with fellow practitioners? Send an email with information to newsletter@pltlis.org and we will help get the word out!
“Facilitation Guide:”

How helpful is that? Reviews from University of Texas Arlington

Facilitating Team-Based Learning: A Peer Leader’s Guide to Leading Learning Activities, available in English and Spanish, is a great tool for both new and experienced Peer Leaders and other facilitators of peer-led learning. This useful workbook was recently reviewed by Peer Leaders at the University of Texas Arlington (UTA). Read their enthusiastic reviews below.

Order copies for the Peer Leaders on your campus! Go to www.shop.pltlis.org for this and other workbooks in Chemistry, Physics, and Algebra to help facilitate your PLTL sessions.
"I have found the PLTLIS Facilitator Manual a treasure trove of knowledge being handed down from Leader to Leader. It contains a lot of practical advice which comes from previous leaders who have already experienced firsthand many of the situations we as leaders will face in the future."

“The PLTLIS Facilitator Manual provides detailed and easy-to-follow descriptions of how to be an effective leader by incorporating methods such as having students collaborate with others, testing their knowledge, and advancing their understanding in the most optimal manner possible. With its diverse and interesting ideas and tips, it’s an invaluable tool for new and experienced leaders to follow."
Tiana Montas

**UTA PLTL Mentor, 2022**

“The PLTLIS Facilitator Manual ensures effective collaboration in any course guided by a leader. The manual provides a collection of strategies and methods pertaining to student engagement and productivity, thus allowing the leader’s workload to be more manageable, improving participation from the students, and increasing the student’s problem-solving and creativity.”

Kylee Warton

**UTA PLTL Mentor, 2022**

“The PLTLIS Facilitator Manual is a guide to help you be the best possible leader for your students. It highlights and gives examples on how to shine in each aspect of your session. PLTL is truly about the engagement and personality of its leaders; this guide will teach you how to incorporate group collaboration, successful learning techniques, relationship building, and one of the most important aspects – fun, into every session.”
Justine Balconi-Lamica

UTA PLTL Mentor, 2022

“The PLTLIS Facilitator Manual provides effective methods towards creating a successful collaborative environment in your PLTL sessions. The manual promotes using strategies that enrich collaborative behavior, such as boosting creativity, understanding of the material, and building school relations.”

Sylvine Ineza

UTA PLTL Mentor, 2022

"The PLTLIS Facilitator Manual is a great resource to equip, develop and help leaders strategize better, especially given that it was developed by experienced educators and leaders themselves. I personally found it very practical and helpful in planning out and leading my sessions in a more fun and beneficial way for my students and me.”

PLTL at California State University, Sacramento

Sacramento, California
The Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) program at Sacramento State University (one of the 23 California State University campuses) was established in 2012 with one section supporting introductory chemistry, and now serves 17 STEM courses with high DFW rates, employing 60-70 peer Facilitators annually. Utilizing the Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL) model, PAL Facilitators do not teach, tutor, or even confirm answers; they do ask scaffolding questions, cultivate a welcoming and supportive STEM community, and ensure that all group members participate in problem-solving. Each PAL section is an optional credit-bearing course which supplements the targeted parent STEM course.

Sacramento State is primarily an undergraduate institution, enrolling more than 31,000 undergraduate students. It is officially recognized as an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI) and a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and was ranked the second most diverse regional university in the West (U.S. News & World Report, 2021). Approximately 32% of STEM students are first in their family to attend college.

The program marketing is that PAL is for everyone; it is not remediation, nor does it target “struggling” students. All PAL Facilitators hold office hours and review sessions (open to anyone, whether or not they are in PAL) and attend lectures for the parent course.

The program employs an innovative leadership structure. Supervisory Facilitators, who are experienced Facilitators who show exceptional professionalism and leadership potential, conduct all classroom observations, manage the logistics of office hours and early semester section juggling, and host social events and parties (PALidays). Moreover, each course possesses a Lead Facilitator in charge of student recruitment, communication with course faculty, and leading the weekly run-through of the upcoming worksheets.

All Facilitators take Honors Seminar in Peer Learning, a 2-unit, upper division course which includes professional development focused on cultural competency and workplace skills, as well as ongoing pedagogical trainings. Importantly, the seminar also offers Facilitators an opportunity to conduct education research practice (which does not require IRB oversight). Interdisciplinary teams use backward design to plan these projects, starting with what they really want PAL students to be able to
do or understand. Project methodologies and backgrounds are developed in fall; in spring, the designed
interventions are implemented, data are collected and analyzed, and findings are presented in a poster
session open to the campus community. Many of these projects have led to structural changes within
the program, conference presentations, and even scholarly publications.

Strong data keep the program relevant to campus administration. Advanced statistical analysis from
more than 25,000 students over seven years demonstrates that those opting into PAL earn (on average)
a 23% “bump” in their course grade. Since PAL is an optional program, this analysis used propensity
score matching to compare students with comparable academic and social backgrounds, ensuring
that the grade boost is actually due to the students’ participation in PAL (Shanbrom, et al., accepted for
publication, *Journal of College Science Teaching*).

More details about the program, including data analysis, may be found at [www.csus.edu/pal](http://www.csus.edu/pal).

Kaison Lum

*PAL Facilitator, Civil Engineering major*

I am in my second semester as a PAL facilitator for Calculus 2. I absolutely love this job for lots of
reasons. It is very fulfilling for me to help other students, not just as a facilitator, but also as a fellow
student. Sometimes if students warm up to me enough, they ask me personal questions and I love giving
advice because I remember how scary it can be joining such a huge campus. I am establishing
relationships with STEM faculty and students who I wouldn’t have known otherwise and am gaining tons
of skills through the PAL program from super informative meetings on how to lead and be the best
facilitators possible. Being a PAL facilitator has also made me aware of job opportunities and events on
campus that I would’ve never known about without PAL. Being a PAL facilitator also benefits my own
academics. PAL showed me how to optimize my study habits and allowed me to interact with professors
who truly care about their students. I feel very taken care of in PAL and this has created a safe space for
me to open up.

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*I am in my second semester as a PAL facilitator for Calculus 2.*
My most meaningful experience as a facilitator has been having a section where everybody enjoyed their work so much, they end up accidentally staying too long. I let them know they were free to leave the room, but they all helped me clean up and we all walked out together talking about the theory of integration.

After graduation I am going to be traveling the world. Ever since I was a young kid, I always wanted to travel but never had the opportunity. This was one reason why I chose the versatile field of Civil Engineering as a major. My goal as a civil engineer is to incorporate the different kinds of cultures into my builds and structures and find my own style and trademark of building. I'd also like to eventually become a professor after having a career in my field to help bring more people into the wonderful field of civil engineering.

Polly Demyanchuk

PAL Facilitator, Biological Sciences major

I became a PAL Facilitator for Statistics I in the Fall of 2020, which was certainly a challenging semester for everyone. We were isolated and had to stay at home, and most of us did not have any sense of community. I believe that the PAL community allowed me to get a sense of normalcy and belonging and enabled me to share it with my students.

I took a PAL class myself, and I loved the class and my facilitator, and the atmosphere that he created in the workshop. I applied to be a facilitator with the mindset that, just like my facilitator, I could make a difference and be helpful to someone. My first semester as a Statistics facilitator, I saw that because of the Zoom format it was difficult for my students to connect with other peers. In the PAL seminar, we really focused on working together collaboratively, and we discussed different study techniques that I applied with my students. I was able to connect with my students, which really helped everyone feel like they could make mistakes, not be afraid to ask questions, and take their time to think about the problem. I think it was one of the happiest moments for me, when my students were telling me that they found a sense of community in my PAL course during a time of isolation. Throughout all my PAL sections, I saw the difference that PAL was making in my students’ lives as well as in their understanding
of the material. I enjoyed every single moment I spent working on worksheets and scaffolding with my students. I also loved helping them feel more confident and encouraged.

After graduation, I hope to enter a Cardiovascular Perfusion program and am currently managing a student-run clinic and working as a research technician in the Neurobiology of Learning and Memory laboratory.

Danielle Gomez

**PAL Facilitator, pre-Nursing major**

I’ve been a PAL Facilitator for two semesters in Anatomy and Physiology courses. The facilitator I had for a PAL class had helped me in so many ways, and I wanted to be able to help other students like that. I also applied through the recommendation of my facilitator. This made me feel confident because I thought she saw something in me that would allow me to help other people out. Once I was accepted, I was so excited to be able to guide students, meet new people, and learn more to be able to grow as a person and student. I also realized that I did not want to just help students academically, but I wanted to get to know who they were as people and help them out in other ways such as through emotional support.

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*The facilitator I had for a PAL class had helped me in so many ways, and I wanted to be able to help other students like that.*

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I really enjoy the flexibility of the job that allows me to still have time to study for my own courses. The community that we all build with one another by having trust and respect while also having fun is a great feeling at the end of the day. There have been several instances when I have felt overwhelmed with school, but I know that I can turn to PAL to be there to help with anything. Lastly, I enjoy the skills that I have improved while being a PAL facilitator through different activities we do and by interacting
with people with different types of personalities. I have been able to improve my leadership and
communication skills because I use them so frequently during the workshop sessions.

My most meaningful moment as a facilitator has been seeing previous students, catching up with them,
and hearing that I made an impact at some point in their life. I hope to impact more students along the
way and have them know they have a support system through PAL and myself. After earning my Nursing
degree, I’d like to travel and explore as many places as I can. I’d love to work in a hospital or clinical
setting working with children.

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 excited to announce that we are now expanding this connection on two new social
media platforms: Twitter and LinkedIn. What is happening at your campus? What opportunities do you
know about where peer leading would be a valuable attribute? Follow, like, and link with us on
Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn:

Instagram: @pl_tli_is
Twitter: @LedPeer
Facebook: Peer-Led Team Learning Society
LinkedIn: Peer-Led Team Learning International Society

Have You Ordered Your PLTLIS Water Bottle?
The 17-ounce stainless-steel water bottles carry the PLTLIS and APPL Journal logos and feature copper
plating insulation, allowing for your hot beverages to stay hot and your cold beverages to stay cold for
longer. A perfect feature to keep your fall beverage hot!

You can purchase your own, available through the PLTLIS website. Go to shop.pltlis.org and order yours!

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 newsletter@pltlis.org.