PEER-LED TEAM LEARNING
INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

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The Peer Leader
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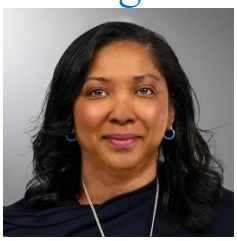
Contact: newsletter@pltlis.org

- Deadline Extended! Submit an Abstract by April 8th
- Registration is Open: Conference is Hybrid Format
- Thinking of Graduate School? Consider the University of Rochester
- Keynote Panel of Administrators: Saturday, June 1
- Profiles: PLTL in Biology at The Ohio State University

Message from the President



Dear members of the PLTLIS community,

I hope this message finds you in good health and high spirits. Here are some updates for our PLTLIS community.

The Conference Committee has extended the abstract submission deadline for this year's upcoming conference May 29 – June 1, 2024, in Rochester New York, hosted by the University of Rochester. The conference contains a diverse program featuring keynote speakers, panel discussions (one of which is featured in this newsletter), and interactive workshops that will delve

into the latest trends, innovations, and challenges in education. There will be something for everyone – faculty, staff, peer leaders and PLTL alumni.

I encourage each of you to ***actively*** participate, whether as presenters, panelists, or engaged attendees. Our collective knowledge and expertise are what make our community truly exceptional, and this conference is an excellent opportunity to further strengthen our bonds and contribute to the advancement of peer-led learning and PLTL. Submit abstracts by **April 8th;** plan your attendance: in person or virtually! You can also share this flyer: https://pltlis.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Outreach-flyer-Jan-23-2024_v2.pdf

For those planning to attend this year's conference in person, you can now find lodging information on the conference website (link below). Be sure to secure the group rate and book your lodging by Tuesday, April 30th. There is lots to see and do in Rochester during your visit, including requesting information about pursuing graduate school studies at the University of Rochester. The Rochester attractions brochure ("Once You're Here") will help guide the rest of your visit.

Continuing our series of profiles of PLTL Programs, meet some of those involved at Ohio State University's Biology program. Has your PLTL program been featured? Are there news items you would like to share? Let us know!

On behalf of the PLTLIS Board, I want to express my deepest gratitude for your continued support and dedication. Your contributions help make the PLTLIS mission a reality.

Warm regards,

Kimshi Hickman, Ed.D.
PLTLIS President, Board of Directors
WWW.PLTLIS.ORG

Submit an Abstract!

Call for Presentations for 12th Annual Conference

Extension of Submission Deadline: Monday, April 8, 2024

The Peer-Led Team Learning International Society's Twelfth Annual Conference provides a forum for practitioners and researchers, including faculty, learning specialists/developers, administrators, Peer Leaders, teachers, and others, using various forms of peer-led learning. The Conference will be a hybrid event, in-person and virtual.

- Abstracts from all areas of practice of peer-led learning are welcomed, whether in-person or virtual
- Submissions for oral presentations and workshops are encouraged to be interactive
- All submissions will be peer-reviewed
- Submissions must be original contributions

- Suggested areas for topics:
    - Emotional support and sense of belonging
    - Emotional intelligence in practice
    - Sustainability of campus programs
    - Critical thinking and metacognition
    - Workplace skills development
    - Faculty development
    - Preparation for peer-led sessions; content and pedagogy

Oral Presentations: 30 minutes (20 minutes presentation; 10 minutes Q&A)
Workshops: Can be scheduled for 60 to 120 minutes
Posters: Presented at the Reception on Friday evening, May 31

For more information, go to: https://pltlis.org/call-for-papers-twelfth-annual. If you have questions, please contact M. Cecilia Barone, mbarone@ur.rochester.edu, Chair, Conference Committee.

2024 Conference Theme:

PLTL IS: Inclusive, Engaging, and Meaningful Learning

Registration is Open!

https://pltlis.org/registration-form-twelfth/

Register by May 10th for the "Early Bird" Rates!

Attending in Person: Lodging Information

To secure the Conference rate, you must book your hotel by **Tuesday, April 30, 2024**. Go to: https://pltlis.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/2024-Conference-Lodging-Information-Jan-19-2024.pdf

For more about the Twelfth Annual Conference, including travel directions, go to https://pltlis.org/twelfth-annual-pltlis-conference/

Consider Graduate Degree Programs at the University of Rochester

The University of Rochester is a wonderful place for graduate studies! With 24 Ph.D. programs and 18 Master's programs, there is almost certainly space for Peer Leaders to find their grad school interests. UR's Office of Graduate Education and Postdoctoral Affairs (GEPA) is considering having departmental representation at the 12th Annual Conference, but would like to gauge interest from attendees. If you plan on coming to Rochester for the conference and would like to meet faculty from a particular department, please email *info@pltlis.org* and let us know so that UR GEPA can best engage in the time.

Keynote Panel: Saturday, June 1

An Administrative Perspective On Institutional PLTL Value

A panel of administrators will discuss the value (and challenges) of the PLTL model at their institutions (e.g., faculty support, student learning, retention, persistence, ROI, etc.) and how they message that value to Chairs, faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders. Funding issues and requirements, assessment needs, and pain points from the 'upper admin' perspective will be explored: What are the campus culture effects? How are the six critical components of PLTL sustained from an upper administration perspective? What incentives should there be for faculty to be involved in using this model? Come join us for insights on the large-scale impacts of PLTL at our institutions.

Panelists include Stephanie Marshall, Queen Mary University in London; Jeff Runner, University of Rochester; and Jennifer Smith, Washington University in St. Louis.

Stephanie Marshall, Ph.D. is Vice-Principal for Education, Queen Mary University of London, U.K., in 2018, where she leads on Queen Mary's 2030 Strategy: "Opening the Doors of Opportunity". She encouraged colleagues at QMUL to develop PLTL as a component of the "Active Curriculum for Excellence" pedagogy at Queen Mary. Stephanie has a global reputation for developing and promoting academic leadership and learning. Most notably, Stephanie has been closely involved with PLTLIS since its inception, serving as a keynote speaker at the inaugural conference at New York City College of Technology (CUNY) at Brooklyn, New York, in May 2012.

Jeffrey Runner, Ph.D. is Dean of the College and Vice Provost and University Dean for Undergraduate Education since 2021. Jeff has been teaching at the University of Rochester, Rochester, New York, since 1994 and has been a champion of using the PLTL model in course instruction, having brought PLTL Workshops to the Department of Linguistics in 2012. He is currently responsible for 14 offices and centers that focus on areas including academics, research, undergraduate support and advising, and diversity. Jeff's research focuses on syntax—the study of the sentence structure in the world's languages. In 2006, he received the Goergen Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching.

JENNIFER SMITH, PH.D. is the Vice Provost for Educational Initiatives and Professor of Earth and Planetary Sciences at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. Her administrative duties include enhancing equity in undergraduates' academic opportunities, experiences and outcomes; deepening student research experiences; assessing educational programs; and fostering innovation in educational programs and practices. In her previous role as the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences (2012-2021), Dr. Smith strongly encouraged students to participate in PLTL, supported the team of PLTL instructors and led the effort to provide workshop sessions as a one-credit course for undergraduate students. Under her leadership, the college also strengthened other programs focused on student success, including enhancing support structures for first-generation and low-income students.

Plan Now to Bring a Team to the PLTLIS Twelfth Annual Conference!

We are looking forward to welcoming experienced and novice practitioners at this year's PLTLIS conference.

In-Person or Virtual: Hybrid Format

Hosted by the University of Rochester, Rochester, New York

Wednesday – Saturday, May 29-June 1, 2024

PLTL IS: Inclusive, Engaging, and Meaningful Learning

So Much to Do! So Much to See in Rochester!

Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony, International Museum of Photography and Film, the Erie Canal, and so much more! An inviting brochure designed by the Conference Committee can guide you to the many facets of this fascinating city in upstate New York: https://pltlis.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Roc-attractions-brochure-final-1.pdf

Campus Profile

PLTL at the Ohio State University

PLTL Workshops in Biology

Erin O'Brien, Ph.D.
PLTL Coordinator
Center for Life Sciences (CLSE), Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio

The biology PLTL program is run through the Center for Life Sciences (CLSE) at Ohio State University, in Columbus, Ohio. The CLSE was established in 2006 to meet the challenges of teaching biology. CLSE's mission, expertise, and values support both the academic and the science and technology plans of the College of Arts and Sciences. The CLSE draws on the skills of the faculty and staff to design and deliver effective undergraduate biology education programs aligned with the recommendations in the NSF/AAAS report, *Vision and Change in Undergraduate Biology Education* (2010). One part of the CLSE's initiative to support the Vision and Change recommendations was to provide students with the opportunity of small-group, peer-to-peer learning through PLTL. In 2014, Sara Faust helped the CLSE create a PLTL program for the introductory biology courses. Sara stepped down from her position as PLTL Coordinator in May 2022 and was replaced by Dr. Erin O'Brien.

From 2014 to 2022, students who enrolled in specific sections of Biology 1113 (**Biology 1**) or Biology 1114 (**Biology 2**) were required to enroll in a co-requisite PLTL course (Biology 1131 or Biology 1141, respectively). The PLTL course was a 1-credit S/U (pass/fail; satisfactory/unsatisfactory) course that consisted of two-hour workshop sessions per week. Starting in Autumn 2022, the CLSE transformed the PLTL sections of introductory biology to be 5-credit "all included" versions that consisted of lecture, laboratory, and PLTL workshops. The biology sections with PLTL enroll between 40-60 students per semester and are typically much smaller than sections without PLTL (enrolling between 200-600 students per semester).

Currently, Dr. O'Brien is working to increase enrollment capacity of the PLTL sections by increasing student awareness of the PLTL course options, gaining additional workspace for workshops, and delegating responsibility to Head Leaders to help train less experienced peer leaders.

Our PLTL workshops consist of 3-7 students working together with a peer leader to complete packets of questions related to lecture topics from their introductory biology course. The main focus of the workshop is for students to develop metacognitive problem-solving skills, gain confidence in their biological knowledge, and use each other's strengths to improve their understanding of biology. In addition to the time spent in workshops, PLTL students are asked to complete pre-workshop assignments to introduce them to the workshop topics, and post-workshop assignments which help them continue to practice metacognition by reflecting on their learning in the workshop. Peer leaders are students who have completed the introductory biology course, earned at least a B, and exhibit personality traits conducive to being a peer mentor.

Each semester, we have approximately 20 peer leaders; 10 per course. Two of the senior leaders per course are Head Leaders, who help to mentor and train the other peer leaders by leading the weekly peer leader meetings. All peer leaders are expected to complete a series of training activities. Specifically, all peer leaders are required to earn at least 10 points towards professional development activities per semester. The activities include a wide variety of assignments such as (1) planning and discussing their responses to different workshop scenarios, (2) attending and reflecting on leadership workshops offered through the university, (3) observing another peer leader and writing a reflection, (4) participating in PLTL-related pedagogical research, (4) developing a presentation for professional conferences, (5) work with Dr. O'Brien to create new workshop ideas, or (6) design a new training activity. Head Leaders are held to the same professional development expectations. They are also responsible for reviewing and providing feedback on the training activities submitted by the peer leaders. The professional development options for peer leaders are not only meant to help them become great peer leaders, but also to help them develop skills that will be useful in their future careers.

Karmah Khoury

Biology 1 Head Peer Leader

I am a 4th year pre-med student majoring in Psychology and minoring in Arabic at the Ohio State University. I am a Head Peer Leader for Biology 1113 (**Biology 1**) and this is my 4th semester as a peer leader. I became a peer leader after being a PLTL student for Biology 1114 (**Biology 2**) and found that my educational experience was more enriching, complex, and fulfilling when being in the PLTL "classroom." I was able to build and strengthen my critical thinking skills,

metacognition, and problem-solving abilities during my semester as a PLTL student. Because of this, I wanted to help provide the same experience for other students, so I applied to become a peer leader the following semester.

As a pre-med student, having obtained this unique skill set from PLTL has greatly assisted me in my MCAT-taking skills, helped when preparing for medical scenario questions during medical school interviews, and eased some of the issues that I faced in my research lab. It is safe to say that PLTL is not solely an asset for the class you may be enrolled in, but for other major parts of our lives. For this, I have come to be extremely grateful for the opportunities that PLTL has created for me and I am especially appreciative of the connections I have made with others. Whether it be my students or other peer leaders, I have formed bonds with everyone that I have met through PLTL. Moreover, since PLTL promotes meaningful discussions, it has been easy to create friendships from our common value of conversation. I am thankful to have observed my growth through PLTL, beginning as a student and now as a Head Leader, and will keep advancing through our work with professional development, training, and maintaining the overall quality of the PLTL experience.

Simon Yacoub

Biology 1 Head Peer Leader

I am a peer leader for Biology 1113 (**Biology 1**) and became a peer leader in Spring 2023. I am currently in my third semester as a peer leader and was promoted to Head Leader. I wanted to become a peer leader because I had such a positive experience as a PLTL student in that it helped me appreciate the application of biological concepts we learned in class to real-life examples. As a former PLTL student, I really enjoyed the relationships I built in my workshop group. It was also a fun part of my day to catch up with my fellow classmates and work on the biology workshop together. I enjoyed how PLTL wasn't like a traditional learning environment with a central teacher, but it allowed me the freedom to make my own mistakes, have peers share their stances, and ultimately, help me reformulate my own opinions.

As a peer leader, I can help other students achieve a similar appreciation. Also, being a PLTL leader has helped me learn new facilitation techniques that I can use outside of class. For example, I've learned valuable skills like managing discussions, creating a comfortable inclusive learning environment, and promoting student-centered learning. Outside of workshops, peer leading has helped me relearn important biology concepts that especially served me well when I

took the MCAT for medical school admission. Most of all, peer leading has made me realize that I desire teaching to be a part of my future career whether that be as a physician showing residents procedures or as a lecturer for a medical school class.

On top of leading workshops, I have had the valuable experiences of leading meetings with fellow peer leaders in preparation for workshops, modifying training/professional development materials for new peer leaders, and helping to observe and guide new peer leaders in becoming better facilitators. Overall, peer leading has been an invaluable part of my undergraduate years and has taught me lessons in being a good leader and helped me develop a passion for teaching.

Madeline French

Biology 2 Head Peer Leader

The past two years of being a peer leader for Biology 1114 (**Biology 2**) have been immensely fulfilling for me. This position has allowed me to help guide and support students through their academic journey. As a peer leader, I have occupied a unique niche in the educational process. I am able to help students more fully understand biological concepts by guiding their discussion and helping to expand their metacognitive thinking. Being a peer figure who makes students feel comfortable while helping them learn is an invaluable resource. All of these aspects originally drew me to this position and have cemented my love for it.

For the past year I have also been in the role of Head Leader. In this position, I am able to support and mentor other peer leaders. This has been extremely fulfilling for me because it has allowed me to strengthen my connection with others. I have been able to lean on my fellow peer leaders for support and provide support for them as well. This has been useful not just in PLTL but has also given me support while going through the journey of applying to veterinary school.

This process has not only let me help others but has increased my own understanding of the subject and has increased my problem-solving skills. It has helped me throughout my academic career as I have pursued a career in veterinary medicine. Being able to break problems down and apply core PLTL beliefs has assisted me during interviews and exams. Ultimately, I was able to get where I am today because of my experience as a peer leader.

Ethan Leach

Biology 2 Peer Leader

I have been a peer leader for Biology 1114 (**Biology 2**) at The Ohio State University for two semesters (Autumn 2023 and Spring 2024). I began my journey in PLTL as a student in Biology 2 during the spring of my freshman year. Initially, the idea of horizontal education was foreign to me and my experience with "flipped classrooms" was far short of helpful; however, the practice of peer-led workshops seemed promising as it was a safe space to expand my thinking with fellow students. As the semester progressed, I felt that I was applying my knowledge and not simply "learning facts" for the sake of a good grade. The workshops were a productive recitation where I could explore my questions with other students, and I was given tools to answers to my own questions, rather than being told the answers. I recognized that this was beneficial in my learning process, and I wanted to be able to share this joy with other students, by becoming a peer leader the following semester. As a result, my learning has expanded far more than I ever expected it to.

Peer leading has helped me learn how to communicate my thoughts to a diverse group with various cognitive methods, while not ending, but rather opening and furthering discussion. I have learned how to push students to develop their thoughts efficiently through metacognitive-group-thinking, and to evaluate evidence to find objective truth and not to rely on mere assumptions. I have enjoyed furthering my cognitive strategies in a group setting, such as weekly meetings with fellow peer leaders.

Additionally, I am a part of a presentation group in which I am working with three other peer leaders and the PLTL coordinator to develop a workshop presentation for the upcoming PLTLIS conference. I hope to further showcase this concept of education through our presentation to innovate the education system for the betterment of context comprehension.

Participate on a Committee!

Are you interested in helping to spread the work of Peer-Led Team Learning? The success of the Peer-Led Team Learning International Society is dependent on the continued support of practitioners like yourself. Whether you've known about PLTL for only one or more than twenty years, the PLTLIS Board of Directors invites you to join a committee and impact the growth of PLTLIS. If you would like to be involved write to info@pltlis.org

Connect on Social Media!

PLTLIS is proud to connect past and present Peer Leaders and all who are interested in Peer-Led Team Learning. 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, Facebook and LinkedIn:

Instagram: @pl_tl_is

Facebook: Peer-Led Team Learning Society

LinkedIn: Peer-Led Team Learning International 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 newsletter@pltlis.org.