



PEER-LED TEAM LEARNING

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

The Peer Leader

April 2024

Issue No. 33

Contact: newsletter@pltlis.org¹

- **Third Issue of APLL Published**
- **Register Now: Early Bird Rates End on May 10th**
- **Attend *Intro to PLTL* Pre-Conference Workshop**
- **Panel of Faculty: Friday, May 31, 2024**
- **Needed: Authors for Orgo/OChem II Workbook**
- **Profile: Miami Dade College, Kendall Campus**

Message from the President



¹<mailto:newsletter@pltlis.org>

Dear members of the PLTLIS community,

Happy Spring! The third issue of the PLTLIS journal, *Advances in Peer-Led Learning* is now online and highlights the intrinsic ability of stories to share discovery and learning. This idea also is promoted by this year's Conference theme, that *PLTL is: Inclusive, Engaging, and Meaningful Learning*, to be held May 29 – June 1, 2024, in Rochester New York, hosted by the University of Rochester. For those new to PLTL, the Introduction to PLTL Workshop will be held on Wednesday, May 29th from 1-5pm EDT. The conference contains a diverse program featuring keynote speakers, two panel discussions (including one with faculty who use PLTL in Business, Optics, Computer Science, and Organic Chemistry, 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.

Whether in person or online, this conference is an opportunity to **actively** participate, in an interdisciplinary forum, unusual in the academic world. That is Peer-Led Team Learning and why it is worth our time and effort. 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.

...Stories are intrinsic to share discovery and learning.

For those planning to attend this year's conference in person, book your lodging now! Information is on the conference website (link below) and secure the group rate. Register by May 10th for the "Early Bird" rates. There is lots to see and do in Rochester during your visit, including requesting information about pursuing graduate school at the University of Rochester. See below for a link to highlights to visit in Rochester.

On behalf of the PLTLIS Board, I want to express my deepest gratitude for your continued support and dedication. I am eager to witness the contributions each of you will make to our mission.

Warm regards,

Kimshi Hickman, Ed.D.

PLTLIS President, Board of Directors

WWW.PLTLLIS.ORG²

Third Issue of APLL Published!

Advances in Peer-Led Learning, the journal of the PLTL International Society, is online:

<https://journal.pltlis.org/>

²<http://www.pltlis.org/>

As James Becvar writes in the Editor's Notes:

...Stories are intrinsic to share discovery and learning. In this issue, you will encounter ways to tell your story about peer-led learning (as advised by Marymoore Patterson), about the possibilities presented by peer leading to uplift the mid-capable tier of younger learners (Bonner et al.), supporting peer leaders in facilitating learning in the UK (Christian et al.) or in Houston (McKee), detailing how peer learning can be applied in a new arena, e.g., the health field (Sherman et al). Other stories included in this issue reflect on journeys as story arcs leading to personal growth (Torres), or consideration of the bridge provided by the peer leader between students and instructor (Dreyfuss).

The deadline for Issue #4 is July 31st. For submission guidelines, go to <https://journal.pltlis.org/>. And ready to send in a paper? Email your submission to journal@ptlis.org³

2024 Conference Theme:

***PLTL IS: Inclusive, Engaging, and Meaningful Learning
In-Person or Virtual: Hybrid Format***

Hosted by the University of Rochester, Rochester, New York

Wednesday – Saturday, May 29-June 1, 2024

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.

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

<https://ptlis.org/registration-form-twelfth/>

Attending in Person: Lodging Conference Rates Deadlines

Lodging information and travel directions have been posted on the conference website. To secure the Conference rate, book your hotel by **Tuesday, April 30, 2024**. **If you have concerns, call the hotel and mention that you are booking room(s) for the PLTLIS Conference. The phone number(s) and further information are available at: <https://ptlis.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/2024-Conference-Lodging-Information-Jan-19-2024.pdf>.**

For more about the Twelfth Annual Conference, go to <https://ptlis.org/twelfth-annual-ptlis-conference/>

New to Peer-Led Team Learning? Sign up for the Pre-Conference Workshop on Wednesday, May 29th!

For more information: <https://ptlis.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Pre-Conference-Intro-Workshop-2024-Jan-19-2024.pdf>

³<mailto:journal@ptlis.org>

Friday Keynote Panel: PLTL in the Disciplines

The panelists will explore the application of Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL) within their respective disciplines, detailing adaptations made to accommodate the unique requirements of their course and programs. The initial 45 minutes will feature a structured Q&A session, addressing pre-determined questions. For the remaining 30 minutes, panelists will engage in individual or small group discussions during a tabling segment of the event. This informal portion will allow interested participants to interact directly with panelists, delving deeper into the specifics of implementing the PLTL model in their courses and disciplines.

Panelists include Julie Bentley (Optics), Benjamin Hafensteiner (Organic Chemistry), Ravi Mantena (Business), and Adam Purtee (Computer Science).



2 - JULIE BENTLEY, PH.D

JULIE BENTLEY, PH.D. is a Professor at The Institute of Optics, University of Rochester, and has been teaching undergraduate and graduate level courses in geometrical optics, optical design, and product design for more than 25 years. Her expertise is in the optical design and tolerancing of precision optical assemblies. Prior to teaching full time, she managed a commercial technology team at Corning Tropol. She is also currently the president of an optical design consulting business, Bentley Optical Design, where she designs lens systems for a wide variety of applications, including medical devices, visible and infrared military optics, AR/VR systems, and other consumer optics. She has used PLTL in an Optics course for more than a decade. She received her B.S., M.S., and PhD in Optics from The Institute of Optics at the University of Rochester.



3 - BENJAMIN HAFENSTEINER, PH.D

BENJAMIN HAFENSTEINER, PH.D. is an Associate Professor of Instruction in the Chemistry Department at the University of Rochester where he regularly teaches Organic Chemistry and General Chemistry using the PLTL Workshop model. He received his Ph.D. from the Scripps Research Institute in 2008. His research interests include Chemical Education, Total synthesis of natural products, organic synthesis and cascade reactions. Dr. Hafensteiner attended the University of Rochester as an undergraduate and was himself a PLTL Workshop leader for Organic Chemistry under the tutelage of Professor Jack Kampmeier.



4 - RAVI MANTENA, PH.D

RAVI MANTENA, PH.D. is a Clinical Professor at the Simon Business School at the University of Rochester where he serves as the Faculty Director for the MBA programs. In this role, he oversees Simon's Full-time, Professional, and Executive MBA programs. He teaches various analytics and digital strategy courses in these programs. His research interests are in the economics of digital and information-rich products. Professor Mantena has been using the PLTL Workshop model in his Business Modeling course with full-time MBAs since 2009.



5 - ADAM PURTEE, PH.D

ADAM PURTEE, PH.D. earned his doctorate in Computer Science at the University of Rochester in 2018. He began his work as a college instructor at the Rochester Institute of Technology where he developed a passion for teaching and working with students. He is currently an Associate Professor of Instruction and teaches Introduction to Computer Science, Computer Networks, Machine Learning and AI. Adam has been using the PLTL Workshop model in his first year Introduction to Computer Science course for majors since starting at the University of Rochester in the fall of 2018.

Consider Graduate Degree Programs at the University of Rochester!

If you are attending the Conference in person you may want to meet faculty from a particular department to find out if you are considering pursuing graduate studies. If so, email info@pltlis.org⁴ to let us know so that UR's Office of Graduate Education and Postdoctoral Affairs (GEPA) can arrange a meeting with you. 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 you to find your grad school interests.

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>

Needed: Authors for PLTLIS Workbook in Second Semester Organic Chemistry

With the guidance of Ana Fraiman, Professor Emerita, Northeastern Illinois University, work is underway on a Workbook authored by Peer Leaders from the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). Do you love Organic Chemistry? Would you like to contribute to this workbook? Contact Sofia Delgado at newsletter@pltlis.org to join this effort!

⁴<mailto:info@pltlis.org>

CAMPUS PROFILE: MIAMI DADE COLLEGE, KENDALL CAMPUS, MIAMI, FLORIDA



Established in 1960, Miami Dade College (MDC) boasts the largest undergraduate enrollment among campus-based postsecondary institutions in the U.S. Moreover, it confers more degrees to Hispanic and African American students than any other college nationwide. While MDC celebrates numerous achievements accumulated over the years, it remains steadfast in its commitment to a singular goal: ensuring accessible education for all and bringing success to an ever-striving community.

The implementation of the Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL) program in the summer semester of 2021 on the Kendall campus in the Health Sciences began with a Title V grant, the *Student and Teacher Integrated Center for Health Sciences* (<https://www.mdc.edu/stiches/>). *STICHES* has opened opportunities for students interested in a career path towards health science. Through robust team collaboration serving as the cornerstone of the program, actively involved students quickly cultivated enduring skills in long-term thinking, effective communication, and a nurturing environment conducive to student success. For students utilizing its resources, the practice of PLTL has not only boosted passing rates and reduced withdrawal rates, but also has provided them with a secure space to flourish, enhance their skills, and take ownership of their education. PLTL doesn't just enhance academic outcomes—it fosters an environment where students can truly flourish, creating a transformative space for learning and growth.

PLTL is indispensable at our campus, providing crucial academic support and fostering a collaborative environment for student success.

PLTL is indispensable at our campus, providing crucial academic support and fostering a collaborative environment for student success. Its peer-led tutoring approach empowers students to excel academically, bridging the gap between instruction and independent study. By promoting collaboration and community, PLTL equips students with essential skills for lifelong learning and achievement. Its continued expansion and enhancement are essential to our commitment to academic excellence and student success.

STICHES and its PLTL component have had a noticeable impact. Here is a four-year summary of our journey. See more at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bd_X48Oh11WDXd5ZZI9VMSiXol-3SUGP/view?usp=drive_link

Before the first year of the lockdown, students struggled with Chemistry for Health Sciences (CHM1033) and passing rates reflected that. During Spring semester of 2021, before PLTL, out of the 223 who completed their courses, only 34.1% of them passed.

The program began modestly in the summer of 2021 with just eight students completing PLTL. Courses were still online and PLTL was held on (Microsoft) Teams with a document camera. CHM1033 pass rates bottomed out at 25.2%.

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YEAR 2 (2022): Initially hindered by limited support and online promotion during remote learning in 2020-2021, the program gained momentum with the return to in-person classes. Face-to-face promotion, improved passing rates, and faculty endorsement increased student participation. Individual sessions stressed the importance of success in Health Sciences for future academic pursuits. The passing rate for students in Fall 2021 increased to 36.8%, then saw a significant increase to 46.7% in Spring 2022. Summer 2022 pass rates more than doubled from Summer 2021 (54.4%, 25.2%)

0 YEAR 3 (2023): By its third year, the PLTL program has become an essential resource for students, evolving from humble beginnings to a vital pillar of academic support. Through its innovative approach, PLTL consistently empowers students to excel in challenging coursework, fostering a collaborative environment where success is celebrated.

YEAR 4 (2024): In its fourth year, the PLTL program has significantly enhanced its impact and effectiveness, building on past successes. Preliminary findings indicate marked improvements compared to the previous year. Increased involvement of school faculty has facilitated greater student engagement and guidance, providing tutors with expanded learning opportunities.

*Overall pass rate average for CHM1033 through current semester is 53.6%; average for students who participated in PLTL is 72.54%

PLTL Fellows at Miami Dade College, Kendall Campus

ADRIAN DIAZ, PLTL FELLOW



6 - Adrian Diaz

PLTL and facilitating meant so much to me as a student and continues to hold its value even now as a Peer Leader. I was first introduced to PLTL as a student taking Chemistry, an essential class for the career track that I chose to pursue. It provided me with the perfect environment to not only grasp academic concepts but to make connections with others in a supportive environment where my success was prioritized by my Peer Leaders. The format between active learning and camaraderie with my fellow classmates really made the experience enjoyable and enabled me to pass the class with ease. As the semester ended, I was given a chance to become a Peer Leader for the program that helped me pass the class. I decided to accept and became a Peer Leader the very next semester.

This was a full circle moment for me. I was filled with a sense of gratification to see my students do well and excel. To facilitate, creating not only a supportive, but an encouraging environment was a big priority for me. Using unique styles of facilitation and challenging my students until the light bulb turns on is what it's all about. I have been on both ends of the stick and each experience has provided me with something to take away.

KAITLYN LISCHNER, PLTL FELLOW



As a first-year student in college, my greatest fear wasn't choosing the right major or making friends; it was passing my Chemistry class. I panicked at the thought of taking this course and decided I would be lucky to pass with the minimum. That was until I joined PLTL, and all my fears ceased. I now had hope. Attending PLTL every week provided me with an experience like no other. The learning environment made me feel comfortable to learn, make mistakes, and ask all the questions I wanted.

Beyond that, I developed friendships and built connections with my Peer Leaders. They offered interactive ways to help us learn the content in an exciting manner, including using Kahoot, tips and tricks, and flashcard games. Their efforts to make my learning experience enjoyable, effective, and memorable were the reason I conquered my greatest fear.

Nearing the end of the 2022 fall semester, I passed CHM1033 with an A and became a PLTL Fellow in spring of 2023. I wanted to act as the beacon of light that gave me hope when I was a student. Becoming a Peer Leader helped me flourish as a person, giving me confidence to help others. My experience allows me to relate to other struggling students and guide them to success. Beyond serving as a facilitator to aid learning, I serve as a mentor, leader, and friend. Throughout the sixteen-week semester, I develop connections as well as friendships with the students. I truly enjoy meeting new students and working with their various learning styles. Additionally, the ability to guide them allows me to serve as a mentor. It fills me with gratification when students ask for my advice with class schedules or nursing school applications based on my experience. For instance, former students have reached out to us as Peer Leaders for guidance on the nursing entrance exam, known as the TEAS. It shows that they have gathered so much more from PLTL beyond chemistry. PLTL is the keystone component in a student's journey to success.

DIONNYS CARMENATE SUAREZ, PLTL FELLOW



8 - Dionnys Carmenate Suarez

As a Nursing major, one of the classes that I needed to take in the fall 2023 was Chemistry. I heard about a program offered at the Kendall campus with the main purpose to help students with their chemistry courses; it also counted as extra credit. I did not hesitate to sign up for it and to see how much I could learn. Before I knew it, I became a PLTL student. Every Monday afternoon, after I finished my Chemistry

class, I looked forward to my sessions so I could fully understand the material. Those sessions became a big relief for me.

When I completed my class, I was offered a position to join PLTL as a Fellow for the Spring 2024 term and even though I was anxious about being part of this great project, I accepted it. Being part of PLTL, I can truly say, was the best experience I have had at Miami Dade College. Being someone who the students could rely on in offering a safe space where they feel free to ask as many questions as they may have is priceless. Our teamwork could not be better. My colleagues, fellow Peer Leaders, are always willing to help me, and they have welcomed me since the very first meeting.

My first semester as a Peer Leader has been remarkable in my life and I am looking forward to helping the students and playing a small part in their academic success.

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.org⁵.

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⁵<mailto:newsletter@pltlis.org>