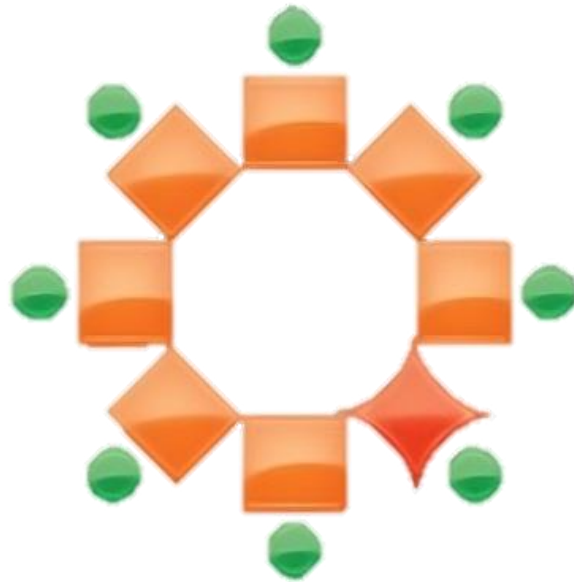


# The Peer Leader December 2024



PEER-LED TEAM LEARNING  
INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

**Issue No. 38** Contact: [newsletter@pltlis.org](mailto:newsletter@pltlis.org)

- Abstract Submissions Open for 2025 Annual Conference
- UTA Academic Success Center Partners with Engineering
- Career Impact: What I Learned as a Peer Leader
- What's Happening? Chemistry Circus!
- Marking Passages: Jeanne Narum, Morton Z. Hoffman
- Join PLTLIS LinkedIn

## Message from the PLTLIS President



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*2024 Conference Group Photo at the University of Rochester*

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Dear members of the PLTLIS community,

As we near the end of the calendar year, it's natural, and almost inevitable, to reflect back over that year. 2024 has been a big year for PLTLIS. Not for the first time, the highlight of our year was the annual conference, and once again we thank all of those at the University of Rochester who made this a conference that was as successful and memorable as it was enjoyable.

Every year, the bar is raised, and we're already looking forward to an equally successful conference Wednesday, May 28, through Saturday, May 31, 2025, to be hosted at California State University Dominguez Hills, Carson, California (south of Los Angeles). (Further details available on the PLTLIS website at <https://pltlis.org/2025-annual-pltlis-conference/>.)

Earlier this year, I was passed the baton as PLTLIS president from Kimshi Hickman (formerly of the University of Texas at Arlington). I'd like to reiterate my thanks to Kimshi for her professionalism and years of service, working with and through the Board of Directors to provide our Society with such a solid base from which PLTLIS will grow and develop through 2025. I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank publicly the many Directors (listed at <https://pltlis.org/board-of-directors/>) and members of the Administrative, Conference, Finance, Outreach, Publications, Research, and Website committees (or their various sub-committees) who have worked so hard through 2024 to lay the ground for even greater success in 2025.

We are currently compiling our first impact report, looking back over all that the Society has achieved to promote and support PLTL since its incorporation in 2012. This is a humbling experience, charting the distance travelled by the Society in just over a decade, and we're very much looking forward to sharing that report with you in 2025.



Finally, I close this last message of 2024 by sending you every best wish for the festive season, whether you're celebrating Christmas, Hanukkah, the Winter/Hibernal Solstice, or simply just taking time away from work for some much-needed rest and relaxation. I hope that you stay

safe and well and get to enjoy the festive period, and that the New Year brings you health, happiness and success in whatever 2025 holds for you!

Tony

***Prof. Tony Michael***

PLTLIS President, Board of Directors

[www.pltlis.org](http://www.pltlis.org)

## 2025 PLTLIS Conference

### Abstract Submissions Now Open!

*Opportunities and Challenges in the Age of Technology-Enhanced Education*

<https://ptlis.org/call-for-papers-thirteen-annual/>

**Deadline:** Friday, March 7, 2025



**Hosted by California State University Dominguez Hills**

Carson, California (Los Angeles)

***In-Person or Virtual: Hybrid Format***

**Wednesday – Saturday, May 28-May 31, 2025**

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

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

## UTA Academic Success Center Partners with Engineering

### NSF HSI Grant Aims to Improve Retention and Graduation Rates

In Fall 2023 at the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA), a lunch event between the Academic Success Center's (ACS) Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL) Program and the College of Engineering led to a partnership with two PLTL Faculty Liaisons for Engineering courses: Dr. Haiying Huang for *Engineering Statics (MAE 1312)* and Dr. Donna French for *Introduction to Computers and Programming (CSE 1310)*. This collaboration grew when Dr. Huang proposed incorporating in-class PLTL modules into her National Science Foundation (NSF) Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) grant proposal, *Foster Engineering Identity through Collaborative Learning in Math and Basic (CLIMB) Engineering*. The PLTL model was further integrated into two additional courses, *First Year Seminar – Student Success (MAE 1131)* and *Problems in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering (MAE 1140)*, expanding the PLTL program's reach.

Spring 2024 data from MAE 1312 and CSE 1310 demonstrated the success of the PLTL sessions:

- **MAE 1312** participants earned grades 0.51 points higher than non-participants (2.44 vs. 1.93).
- **CSE 1310** participants earned grades 0.55 points higher than non-participants (2.78 vs. 2.23).

The success of this initiative secured continued support for the PLTL program through Fall 2024. Additionally, Dr. Huang was awarded the NSF grant to implement the CLIMB program, which will include \$10,000 in funding for the Academic Success Center over three years to support training and program development starting in Spring 2025.

This partnership represents a broader effort to secure additional funding and expand the PLTL program through combined efforts from campus partners and the ASC.

For more information: *Monica Franco, PLTL Program Manager, Academic Success Center: [monica.franco@uta.edu](mailto:monica.franco@uta.edu); Dr. Haiying Huang, Professor, Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, College of Engineering; and Catherine Unite, Director, Academic Success Center, University of Texas at Arlington: [unitec@uta.edu](mailto:unitec@uta.edu).*

## Career Impact: What I Learned as a Peer Leader



1 - Rezwon Bhuiyan

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*Peer Leader, Mathematics, 2014 to 2016, New York City College of Technology, City University of New York*

*Courses: Fundamental of Mathematics, Intermediate Algebra & Trigonometry, Pre-calculus, Calculus I, Calculus II*

Systems Engineer, Radiation Analyst

Aitech Defense Systems, Inc.

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Sometimes, opportunities come unexpectedly. You're unsure of the outcome, but you take a leap of faith and embrace them. Over time, what started as uncertainty transforms into something meaningful – a significant part of your life. You grow, and everything you learn from this opportunity starts to shape every aspect of your life. Now, you find yourself wanting to share this experience with the next generation, hoping they too can gain the same growth and insight that you did. By now, you might have guessed – this is my story of how the Peer Leading experience shaped my career.

It all began in January 2014 when I was introduced to the Peer Leading experience by one of my beloved professors, Dr. Janet Liou-Mark, at New York City College of Technology, City University of New York. With the guidance and support of Dr. AE Dreyfuss and other Peer Leaders, I gained the knowledge and skills necessary to become a Peer Leader myself. Fast forward to 2024, and I am now an Electrical Engineer, working on building, testing, analyzing, and developing satellite

systems for critical space missions. The peer leading experience played a pivotal role in shaping me into the responsible and skillful engineer I needed to be in this field.

One of the most important skills I gained from peer leading was the ability to work collaboratively. In engineering, teamwork is essential for success. Every project I work on involves close collaboration with other engineers and teammates to accomplish tasks. Similarly, during each peer leading session, we achieved our goals through collective effort. This foundation of collaboration has been invaluable throughout my career.

Leadership is another core element of peer leading. During each session, I took on the role of a leader, guiding my group through pre-planned worksheets to be completed within a set timeframe. My responsibility was to ensure the process ran smoothly, act as a facilitator, and provide individualized support to each student based on their needs. This often meant adapting my approach to suit different students and their unique challenges. I believe this experience instilled in me the confidence and ability to take initiative in my work today. I don't hesitate to step up as a leader when the situation calls for it, and I credit these foundational leadership experiences of peer leading for shaping that mindset.

There are so many other valuable skills I gained through the peer leading experience – skills that continue to serve me in my career. These include thinking outside the box, conducting effective research, managing time efficiently, paying close attention to detail, and solving complex problems. Each of these skills was a direct outcome of the challenges and opportunities I encountered as a Peer Leader. Whether it was finding creative ways to explain a concept, staying organized under tight deadlines, or approaching problems with a solution-oriented mindset, these experiences collectively shaped my personal and professional growth.

Looking back, the peer leading experience was more than just a chapter in my academic journey. It was the foundation for the professional and personal growth that brought me to where I am today. It taught me to lead with confidence, collaborate with purpose, and approach every challenge with creativity and determination. These lessons continue to guide me as an engineer, a teammate, and a leader. My hope is that by sharing my story, I can inspire the new generation to embrace opportunities like peer leading, take that leap of faith, and discover the profound impact it can have on their own lives.



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Editor's Note: See Rezwon's paper from the 2015 PTLIS Conference Proceedings as a Peer Leader in Mathematics: <https://ptlis.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/2015-Bhuiyan.pdf>

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## What's Happening? Chemistry Circus!

Outreach by Peer Leaders from University of Texas at El Paso  
*Chemistry Circus at East Point Elementary*









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*The day's schedule was busy!*

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🕒 Time	🎓 Grade Level	👥 Number of Students
8:15-9:00am	4th Grade	88
9:00-9:45am	3rd Grade	98
9:45-10:15am	5th Grade	90
10:15-11:00am	2nd Grade	86
11:00am-12:15pm	Lunch Break	-
12:15-1:00pm	1st Grade	95
1:00-1:45pm	Kindergarten	55
1:45-2:30pm	Pre-K	66

Fifteen Peer Leaders had a ball delivering a Chemistry Circus presentation to more than 570 elementary students, Pre-K to fifth grade at East Point Elementary, in El Paso, Texas, on November 18, 2024. Dr. Jim Becvar started the Circus for his own children in their elementary school days in about 1986 and has since passed the torch to several groups at the University of Texas at El Paso: the American Chemical Society Student Affiliates, and most recently to the Peer Leaders in General Chemistry. The Circus is designed to get students of all ages interested in science.

The Explorations Teams from *General Chemistry 1* were Asher Min, Giovanna Rivera, Alyssa Ortiz, Matthew Guerra, Isabella Romero, Carlos Jose Vazquez, Frida Porrás, Fabiola Hinojos, Eduardo Carrera, and Luisa Alvidrez; and from *General Chemistry 2* were Michael Martinez, Donna Pliego, Noah Delatorre, Anthony Aragon, and Carlos Chihuahua.

## Marking Passages: Jeanne Narum, Morton Z. Hoffman

*Jeanne Lois (Kunau) Narum: A Visionary Leader in STEM Education*



**Jeanne Lois (Kunau) Narum**, a “force of nature” who established Project Kaleidoscope (PKAL), died on October 23, 2024, in Washington, D.C. Born on December 22, 1935, in Clinton, Iowa, Jeanne graduated from St. Olaf College (Northfield, Minnesota) in 1957 with a Bachelor of Music degree. In spring of her senior year, she met philosophy professor William (Bill) H.K. Narum during a student production of “Carnival of the Animals”—she at the organ, he narrating and they married that September. Music and community shaped Jeanne’s early career where she spent 25 years as organist and choir director at St. John’s Lutheran Church. With the couple’s three sons, they spent sabbaticals in England, the Philippines, and Hawaii. In 1971-72, Jeanne and Bill led the St. Olaf Global Semester, guiding 31 students through 10 countries over five months.

In 1974, she moved into her career in college development, first at St. Olaf, then Dickinson College, and finally as Vice President for Development at Augsburg College. In 1988, she moved to Washington D.C. to lead the Independent Colleges Office, helping colleges secure funding and strengthen their programs.

In 1989, Jeanne Narum established Project Kaleidoscope (PKAL), a national initiative funded by the National Science Foundation (among other major foundations). Under her direction, PKAL built a network of national leaders focused on transforming undergraduate STEM education. It was one of the avenues for the dissemination of Peer-Led Team Learning.

Before retiring from PKAL, Jeanne Narum was a featured speaker on November 14, 2009, for the closing of the national conference, *Expanding Peer Led Team Learning (PLTL) in the Sciences and Mathematics: Strategies for Successful Implementation*, sponsored by Morehouse College, in Atlanta, Georgia (see Jann Adams’ paper: <https://pltlis.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Implementation-Starting-a-PLTL-Program-ISPLTL-Adams-Morehouse-GA.pdf>). Jeanne’s talk discussed leadership, starting with a parable, “A Frog

*Journey”: A Cherokee Tradition* (<https://pltlis.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/SPLTLP-Narum-FrogJourney.pdf>). She continued with advice for all leaders, sharing what she had learned in her years with PKAL, with *The Gift of Action for Those Who Would Follow* (<https://pltlis.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/SPLTLP-Narum-Gift-of-Action-to-Those-Who-Would-Follow.pdf>).

After transitioning PKAL to new leadership in 2010, she created the Learning Spaces Collaboratory (LSC), which continued her work of bringing architects, educators, and learners together to think creatively about the design for effective science learning environments. Her contributions to science education and facility development were recognized with eight honorary doctorates.

For more information on Jeanne Narum:

[https://www.southernminn.com/northfield\\_news/obituaries/jeanne-l-narum/article\\_1c8e5a3a-024c-5cae-904c-f45668f1d790.html](https://www.southernminn.com/northfield_news/obituaries/jeanne-l-narum/article_1c8e5a3a-024c-5cae-904c-f45668f1d790.html)

For more information on PKAL: <https://www.aacu.org/initiatives/project-kaleidoscope>

Project Kaleidoscope is AAC&U’s center of STEM higher education reform dedicated to empowering STEM faculty, including those from underrepresented groups, to graduate more students in STEM fields who are competitively trained and liberally educated.

### *Morton Z. Hoffman: A Pioneer in Chemistry and Peer-Led Learning*



**Morton Z. Hoffman**, a beloved professor, esteemed researcher, and devoted family man, died on September 24, 2024. Mort was born on April 22, 1935, and raised in the Bronx, New York, where he developed a deep love for the city’s cultural activities and museums. As a teenager, he spent countless hours at the New York Public Library, indulging his passion for nonfiction humor. He played punchball in the streets, tennis in local parks, and was an avid baseball fan (watching, not playing!).

Mort's academic journey began at the Bronx High School of Science, where his aptitude for math and science flourished. He earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Hunter College of the City of New York, followed by an M.S. and Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Michigan. He furthered his research as a postdoctoral research associate in photochemistry at Sheffield University in England.

In 1961, Mort joined the faculty of Boston University as a Professor of Chemistry, embarking on a remarkable 44-year career. He taught a wide range of courses to thousands of students, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Mort's research in solar energy conversion and the effects of ionizing radiation garnered him over 200 published articles and numerous book chapters in chemical literature. He received many research grants, collaborated with colleagues globally and developed deep friendships with many in the scientific community.

Mort's dedication to teaching and his innovative approaches to chemistry education earned him numerous honors and awards throughout his career. He was named a Fellow of the American Chemical Society, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry. He received the Metcalf Cup and Prize for Excellence in Teaching from BU, the Outstanding Professional Achievement Award from the Alumni Association of Hunter College, the Volunteer Service Award from the American Chemical Society, and the Distinguished Contribution to Chemistry Education Award from IUPAC.

In the early 2000s, Mort introduced PLTL in his chemistry courses and contributed a brief report, *From Boston University: Yes to Workshops!* Read more: <https://pltlis.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Implementation-Various-Campuses-Hoffman-Boston-University-MA.pdf>.

Mort lived in Sharon, Massachusetts with Sandy, with whom he was married for over 56 years, and they raised two daughters, Linda (Mike Fernando) and Julie (Larry Gracer), and he doted on four grandchildren.

## Join PLTLIS LinkedIn

### *Alumni and Current Peer Leaders: Connect on LinkedIn!*

Connect to the PLTLIS Alumni Group LinkedIn page, designed specifically for former peer leaders. This platform aims to foster a sense of community and maintain professional connections among former peer leaders. Alumni can share career updates, exchange professional advice, and post job opportunities, thus enhancing their network. It will also serve as a valuable resource for current students, allowing them to connect with experienced professionals for mentorship and guidance.

Contribute to the page by providing information to connect with other Peer Leaders. Updates on PLTLIS initiatives and events, engaging content and discussions will be posted regularly to keep our community active and informed.

Join us today and stay connected with your PLTLIS family!

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*LinkedIn: [Peer-Led Team Learning International Society](#)*

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## **Contribute to The Peer Leader!**

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](mailto:newsletter@pltlis.org).