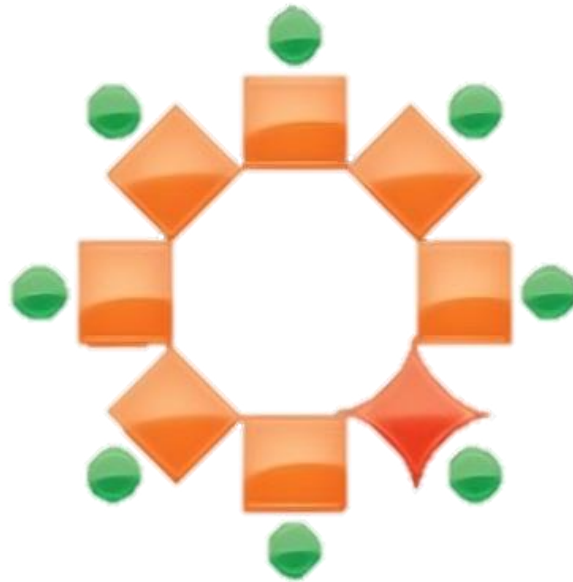


The Peer Leader February 2025



PEER-LED TEAM LEARNING
INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

Issue No. 39 Contact: newsletter@pltlis.org

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- Keynote Speaker: Joanna Wolfe on Working in Teams
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Message from the PLTLIS President

Dear members of the PLTLIS community,

In this first message of 2025, I hope that you had a chance to rest and recharge over the festive period and that the (not so) New Year is off to a great start for you. With several states still

gripped by temperatures between 10 and 30 degrees Fahrenheit, and with wildfires still burning in and around Los Angeles, I hope that everyone is staying safe and well.

2025 is set to be another big year for our Society. As mentioned in the last newsletter of 2024, in a few months' time, we'll be publishing the Society's first Impact Report. While we aim to produce annual reports for PLTLIS from next year onward, in the Impact Report for 2024, we have looked back over all that the Society has achieved over the last twelve years. We are aiming to launch this inaugural report in May, immediately prior to this year's annual conference.

For this year's annual conference, we very much look forward to welcoming you all to California State University Dominguez Hills (CSUDH) from Wednesday, May 28 through Saturday, May 31, 2025. As elaborated later in this newsletter, when we meet at CSUDH, we will be discussing how PLTL might rise to the challenges of, and make the most of new opportunities created by, an age of technology-enabled teaching and learning.



As I write this first President's message of 2025, the first new moon of this year is fast approaching (Tuesday January 28), so I close by wishing you all a Happy Lunar New Year. As we enter the next Year of the Snake, it's worth noting that, in Chinese mythology, the snake symbolizes good luck, majesty, and rebirth, the latter reflecting the ability of snakes to shed their skin as they grow. In the Chinese zodiac, the snake also represents the pursuit of love and happiness, wealth, wisdom, and longevity. I hope that 2025 brings you good fortune and success, and that, reflecting the attribute of longevity, this year sees PLTLIS take further steps to secure a long and prosperous future that benefits everyone with a shared enthusiasm for, and commitment to, PLTL.

Tony

Prof. Tony Michael

PLTLIS President, Board of Directors

www.pltlis.org

Call for Panelists: Intersection of AI & PLTL

Dear PLTLIS Community,

We are excited to announce a special **AI Panel** focused on the rapidly evolving intersection of **Artificial Intelligence and Peer-Led Team Learning**—and we need your help identifying the ideal participants! We're seeking **Peer Leader Alumni** who have unique perspectives on how AI is shaping education, enhancing learning experiences, and impacting the future of teaching and mentorship.

Who We're Looking For

- **Peer Leader Alumni** from any discipline or graduation year
- Individuals with **experience, knowledge, or a keen interest** in AI's role in education
- Alumni who can share **firsthand insights** on how peer-led strategies adapt in the era of cutting-edge technology

Why Participate

- **Contribute Expertise:** Help shape conversations around AI's potential in learning communities
- **Inspire Innovation:** Share your stories and best practices with current peer leaders, educators, and administrators
- **Network & Collaborate:** Connect with fellow professionals and AI enthusiasts who are passionate about transformative learning.

How to Nominate

1. **Self-Nominations** are welcome!
2. **Nominate Fellow Alumni:** If you know someone who would enrich the panel, please put their name forward.
3. Submit nominations by **March 7, 2025** via **Email to Conference Committee Co-Chair: Milka Montes, Montes_m@utpb.edu** In your nomination, please include:
 - Full Name and Contact Information
 - Year(s) of Peer Leadership Experience, campus, discipline

- Brief statement (150–200 words) on your/the nominee’s background with AI or interest in leveraging AI in education or professional setting

THANK YOU!

Milka Montes and Mohsen Beheshti

Co-Chairs, 2025 Conference Committee

2025 Conference Keynote Presentation: Thursday, May 29

Harnessing Collective Intelligence and Managing Conflict on Your Team

Good teams are those that cultivate collective intelligence—the ability to coordinate and leverage the unique strengths, skills, and perspectives of their members—to achieve a complex goal. Achieving high collective intelligence requires team members to build on each member’s contributions. It also depends on individuals who can address disagreements and obstacles productively, turning challenges into opportunities for growth. This interactive presentation will describe planning strategies that Peer Leaders and others can use to lay the groundwork for collective intelligence. Next, the presentation will model how to productively respond to team challenges, turning these into opportunities that can further improve the team. Participants will have an opportunity to reflect on their conflict styles and practice productively responding to a range of obstacles.



1 - Joanna Wolfe

Joanna Wolfe is Teaching Professor of English and Affiliated Faculty in Mechanical Engineering at Carnegie Mellon University, where she designs communication and professional development courses for undergraduate and graduate students. The first edition of her textbook, *Team Writing: A Guide to Working in Groups*, has sold over 28,000 copies. A second edition of [Team Writing](#), coauthored with Christopher Lam, was published along with [Equity & Communication](#) in 2025 as part of the new *Bedford series in Technical and Professional Communication*. Dr. Wolfe is author of over 40 peer-reviewed publications. Her research on

teamwork and collaboration has received funding from the National Science Foundation and received awards from the American Society of Engineering Education, the National Council for Teachers of English and the IEEE Professional Communication Society.

Workshop Facilitated by Joanna Wolfe: Team Meetings

Running Team Meetings That Cultivate Psychological Safety

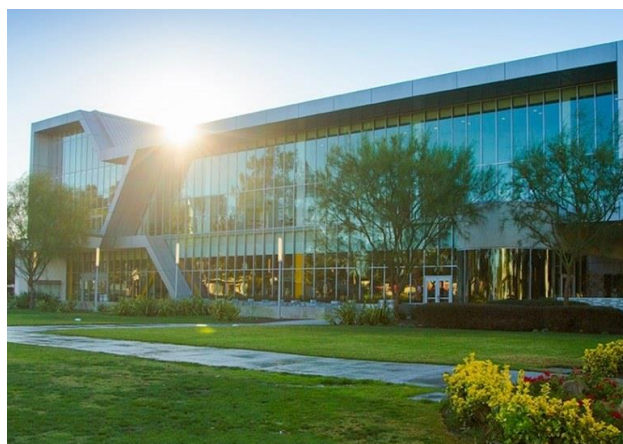
Psychological safety is the belief that individuals can openly share ideas, ask questions, and admit mistakes without fear of negative repercussions. Teams with high psychological safety consistently demonstrate greater morale, collaboration, and productivity.

In this session, we will explore strategies for leaders to foster psychological safety within their teams. Participants will engage in role-playing activities to practice active listening and learn techniques for analyzing mistakes in ways that avoid defensiveness. Additionally, we will discuss methods for measuring psychological safety and review practical tools for structuring conversations that encourage open and honest communication.

2025 PLTLIS Conference

Opportunities and Challenges in the Age of Technology-Enhanced Education

The theme for the 2025 PLTLIS Conference will explore the transformative impact of technology on peer-led learning and education. What is the intersection of technology and human-centered educational practices? How can peer-led sessions foster engagement, camaraderie and learning when technology is so seductive? How can technology affect higher education practices when retention and student involvement are under duress?



PLTLIS Annual Conference 2025

 **California State University Dominguez Hills**

Carson, California (Los Angeles)

 **Dates:**

Wednesday – Saturday, May 28–31, 2025

In-Person or Virtual (Hybrid Format)

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

We are looking forward to welcoming experienced and novice practitioners in Los Angeles!

Important Links:

 [Register Now](#)

 [Hotels Near Campus](#)

 [Submit Abstracts for Presentations, Workshops, Posters](#)

Deadline: *Friday, March 7, 2025*

Career Impact: Teaching Mathematics Collaboratively

What Collaborative Learning Allows Me to Do in My Classroom



Karmen Yu

Assistant Teaching Professor, Department of Mathematics

Montclair State University, Montclair, New Jersey

Peer Leader, Mathematics, 2010-2013, New York City College of Technology, CUNY

One aspect that I am always mindful of in teaching is to give students a welcoming and safe space to voice their ideas and explore different mathematical concepts. I begin each lesson with activities in small groups to offer students time to consider and discuss different mathematical ideas before we have a whole-class discussion. As students are actively engaged, I circulate the room and visit each group to facilitate their collaborative problem-solving discussions. Whiteboards on the walls in the classroom invite students to do their work together. Working on a visible whiteboard space helps students easily write their ideas and revise their work instead of feeling like they are "permanently committed" to the work they are writing down on paper.

The combination of utilizing groupwork and setting up whiteboard space for each group allows me to see students' ideas and progress easily (e.g., what each group did or did not do yet, if and how their ideas are similar or different from one another). If students in a group get stuck, they can also check on other groups' work and ideas to inspire them. When it is time for a whole-class discussion to consolidate our problem-solving efforts, I can easily reference each group's work and invite groups to share and elaborate on their ideas and approaches. By visually and verbally gaining these helpful insights regarding each group's problem-solving effort, I am able to orchestrate a discussion by building on one group's ideas with the others. As I reference different groups' work, all students can see the work displayed. This allows me to facilitate students' understanding and for my students and me to work together to make sense, develop conceptual understandings, and make meaningful connections between different mathematical concepts.

During class time, I consistently have taken time to pause and invite students to ask any question. I quickly learned that I rarely receive questions. Some students have shared with me during office hours that they felt intimidated to ask questions in class. To encourage students to share their questions with me during class, I hand out check-in slips to each student at the beginning of each class period where they can write down questions they have. I collect these anonymous check-in slips during the middle and end of each lesson, read the questions, and address them. Even if students think all their questions are addressed and don't have anything to write on the check-in slips, I invite them to write down one main takeaway that stood out to them from the lesson. At the end of each instructional day, I review each check-in slip to note questions I have not addressed or any potential misunderstandings and misconceptions students wrote as their main takeaway. I then address these questions or misconceptions at the beginning of the next class session. I also share these check-in slips with our graduate assistants to help them better understand students' learning progress and better anchor our weekly recitation sessions.

Instead of having my students hear only my voice, ideas, and knowledge, collaborative learning allows me to give space for my students' voices and ideas to come through and for them to connect new mathematical concepts with their prior knowledge. The goal for us teachers to teach is to help our students learn. In order for us to help students learn, their voices, ideas, and thoughts matter - both to them *and* to us.

Career Impact: What I Learned as a Peer Leader



Jeremy Sanchez

Technical Account Manager, Playtech

Peer Leader in Mathematics, 2014 - 2017, New York City College of Technology, CUNY

Being a Peer Leader was one of the most valuable experiences of my career. It allowed me to develop essential skills, such as time management, as I was responsible for meeting deadlines set by both the professors for whom I facilitated workshops and the students in workshop sessions. The role provided me with the opportunity to gain insight into diverse cultures, both in a professional and personal context. I interacted with students from various backgrounds and learned how to communicate effectively in different ways to support their success in their courses.

My story begins even before I became a Peer Leader at City Tech. I first learned about the role of a teaching assistant in 2013 when I was in 11th grade at East Bronx Academy for the Future, Bronx, New York. The school offered a program called Teaching Assistant Scholars (TAS), in which high school students led 20-30 minute workshops alongside their teachers in subjects such as Math, Science, and Technology. I was selected as a Physics Teaching Assistant Scholar and participated in the program for two years, up to my graduation. Through the TAS program, we learned how to facilitate workshops, understand different learning styles, budget our time, prepare resumes, and develop other collegiate preparatory skills.

At first, I was puzzled by why I was chosen to be a TAS, especially considering that I was part of the "wrong crowd," not very academically inclined, and often quite stubborn. However, Mr. Brown, my physics teacher and TAS leader, saw something in me that I didn't yet see in myself. He mentored me throughout high school, guiding me to become a better student and, more importantly, a better person.

In 2014, after graduating high school, I learned about a program led by Dr. Janet Liou-Mark and Dr. AE Dreyfuss called the TAS College Pipeline Program. In this program, TAS participants from my high school and other participating schools visited New York City College of Technology ("City Tech") for a month to experience what college courses were like. It was here that I met two of my closest friends and mentors to this day—Ricky Santana and Rezwon Bhuiyan. Along with Dr. Dreyfuss and Dr. Liou-Mark, they played a pivotal role in transforming me from a rambunctious kid from the Bronx into a successful young man. They helped me realize that there was more to life than the narrow mindset I had grown up with.

At City Tech, I studied Computer Systems Technology with a concentration in Network Engineering. As a Peer Leader, and with the support of Dr. Liou-Mark and Dr. Dreyfuss, I was able to expand my perspective and take advantage of numerous opportunities, including scholarships. I was awarded the NOYCE scholarship for \$5,000 and participated in the REU research program, receiving \$12,000. Through these experiences, I learned the value of perseverance, the importance of asking for help when needed, and the power of being open to new experiences.

One of the most rewarding aspects of being a Peer Leader was the opportunity to build lasting friendships. To this day, some of my closest friends are the people I met through these programs. Additionally, coming from a Latin background, I initially faced challenges in advocating for myself respectfully with senior individuals. However, the Peer Leader experience helped me develop strong leadership and interpersonal skills, which I continue to apply in my professional life. Most importantly, the connections I made exposed me to a network of professionals and opportunities that significantly advanced my career.

I highly recommend becoming a Peer Leader and taking full advantage of the networking opportunities it offers. This experience not only shapes your academic journey but also paves the way for personal and professional growth that will benefit you long after you leave the program.

Short Takes

- **TIP:** During Peer Leader Orientation at the beginning of every semester, each new Peer Leader signs up for “The Peer Leader” newsletter on the homepage of PLTLIS with their personal email (to keep in touch after graduation): Go to www.pltlis.org and sign up!
- **ADD YOUR COMMENTS:** How Do You Use AI? Send your experiences to newsletter@ptlis.org.
- **SHARE NEWS FROM YOUR CAMPUS!** Send news items, story suggestions, and updates from your campus Peer-Led Team Learning program to newsletter@ptlis.org