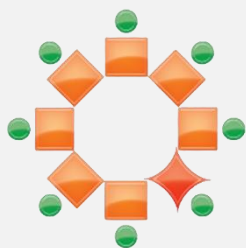


IMPACT REPORT

2012-2024

**Supporting the Peer-Led
Team Learning (PLTL)
Network**



PLTLIS

Table of Contents

Welcome and Introduction	3
Vision, Mission and Strategic Goals	6
Building the PLTL Network	7
Perspectives on PLTLIS: Student Participant in PLTL.....	8
Conferences.....	9
Perspectives on PLTLIS: Senior Peer Leader	13
Publications	13
Perspectives on PLTLIS: Faculty.....	17
Research	18
Perspectives on PLTLIS: Learning Center Director	19
Website	21
Perspectives on PLTLIS: Administrator	22
Appendix 1 – Organization	23
Appendix 2 – Board of Directors	24



Note: Click "**Table of Contents**" at the bottom left of any page to navigate between sections.

Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to this, the first Impact Report for the Peer-Led Team Learning International Society (PLTLIS).

This report summarizes the **considerable impact** that the Society has had in supporting the development and expansion of Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL) across the USA and around the world over the 12 years since incorporation of PLTLIS in 2012.

What is Peer-Led Team Learning?

PLTL is a transformative, student-centered, collaborative learning model that enriches the experience of all who participate, developing the learners of today into the leaders of tomorrow.

The PLTL model was developed in the mid-1990s with support from the National Science Foundation (NSF). After the model's initial development in chemistry, this student-centered approach to collaborative learning was disseminated to other disciplines, notably in the sciences, mathematics, and computer science. Pioneers then began incorporating PLTL in a range of courses in engineering, linguistics, literature, philosophy and psychology.

There is no end of possibilities for how PLTL can be incorporated in courses, yet almost nowhere can anyone say, "Oh, PLTL? That's in all our courses." It takes a long time for any educational approach to become embedded in how an institution operates.

What distinguishes PLTL from other models of active engagement and curricular intervention are the Peer Leaders. In each workshop group, the Peer Leader is a student who has successfully passed the course and has been prepared / trained to facilitate collaborative learning of the course materials by a group of students.

PLTL is an innovative, student-centered approach to learning. Questioning tradition means changing the traditional structure of a knowledgeable instructor talking and students listening. That traditional, didactic model has been around since at least the 14th Century when that was the way knowledge was passed on, when books were rare and everyone had to listen. With the advent of the internet and search engines, information is everywhere, and anyone can simply look up facts and formulas.

The key to learning lies in:

- Understanding those facts and formulas, and putting them into context
- Applying those formulas and considering what else can be done with those facts, and
- Synthesizing new knowledge which is understood and shared

That is where our conversation comes in: first we have to be aware of, and recognize the limits to, tradition before those traditions can be questioned and new, more effective approaches developed.

Peer Leaders are the untapped resource of education to boost students' learning. Research has shown the impact of PLTL both on the performance of those who participate in peer-led sessions, but also on the Peer Leaders. In contrast, research on how to sustain and institutionalize PLTL is almost non-existent. Developing the infrastructure for institutionalizing practices that benefit students and Peer Leaders, as well as instructors, staff, and administrators, is an important challenge that the Society strives to meet. Understanding the Society's role as the facilitation link among new and experienced practitioners calls for a collaborative, relational leadership that deserves support. In this, all those involved in PLTL are peers.

Having initially been developed for college / university education, the approach of collaborative peer learning has been successfully applied in other contexts, both for formal and informal education¹.

PLTL relies on six critical components first defined by Leo Gafney, the evaluator of the initial NSF-funded projects². The six critical components, which distinguish PLTL from other forms of peer learning, are defined in the accompanying text box.

The Peer leaders are in the front lines helping students, and we all are in the position of the quest on how best to support a changing view of learning as a shared enterprise. Elements of PLTL can inspire successive generations of educators – where we can each help lead our peers, generating a vision of learning where engagement and caring are the mainstay of a student's education.

The Six Critical Components of PLTL

(1) The Peer-Led Workshop is integral to the course.

(2) Instructors (faculty & teachers) are involved in the selection of materials, preparation and supervision of Peer Leaders, and they review the progress of Workshops.

(3) Peer Leaders are selected, prepared and supervised to be skilled in group work as facilitators.

(4) Workshop materials are appropriately challenging, directly related to course methods of assessment, designed for small group work.

(5) The Workshops are scheduled and held regularly (ideally) once a week for two hours with groups of six to eight students in space suitable for small-group activities.

(6) The PLTL program is supported by the department and the institution with funds, course status and other support so that the method has the opportunity to be adopted across courses and disciplines.

Students participating in PLTL often identify more with their Peer Leader than with other instructors. That the Peer Leader is almost indistinguishable from other members of the PLTL workshop group is depicted in the PLTLIS logo shown on the cover of this Impact Report. (*This Society's logo was designed by Damien Blanco, himself a Peer Leader at Florida International University, Miami, FL USA.*)

What is the PLTLIS?

PLTLIS is a world-wide community of practice, founded by practitioners of PLTL who defined the vision, mission and goals for the Society.

PLTLIS was legally incorporated (in Texas) in 2012. As illustrated in Appendix 1, the work of the PLTLIS is overseen by a Board of Directors and six committees: the Administrative, Conference, Finance, Publications, Research and Website committees. Having been elected as PLTLIS President in 2024, it is my very great honor to chair the Society's Board, as well as the Administrative and Finance committees.

Reflecting the Society's international scope and ambitions, I am the first PLTLIS president to be elected from outside the USA. In this role, I recognize and acknowledge that everything that the Society has achieved since 2012 has only been made possible by the committed service of a series of PLTLIS Presidents and Directors. The current list of Directors is provided in Appendix 2, but here I acknowledge and thank the Society's past presidents:

2023 – 2024	Kimshi Hickman, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, Texas, USA
2021 – 2023	Milka Montes, University of Texas Permian Basin, Odessa, Texas, USA
2019 – 2021	Marcelo Sztainberg, Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, Illinois, USA

¹ Sherman, A.D.F., Balthazar, M., Kim, S., Carroll, L., Casseus, K., and Febres-Cordero, S. (2023). Peer Facilitation: Accelerating Individual, Community, and Societal Change. *Advances in Peer-Led Learning*, 3, 18-33

² Gafney, L. and Varma-Nelson, P. (2008). *Peer-Led Team Learning: Evaluation, dissemination, and institutionalization of a college level initiative*. Springer, US

2017 – 2019	James Becvar, University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso, Texas, USA
2016 – 2017	Kimshi Hickman, University of Texas at Dallas, Richardson, Texas, USA
2014 – 2016	Thomas Pitzer, Florida International University, Miami, Florida, USA
2012 – 2014	AE Dreyfuss, New York City College of Technology, CUNY, New York, New York, USA

As a conservative estimate, each of the Directors and committee members devote around 130 hours per annum of their own time to PLTLIS business. Over the last 12 years, these colleagues and friends will have spent a cumulative total of more than 26,000 hours serving the vision and mission of PLTLIS. Were this volunteering to have been salaried at appropriate levels for each Director / committee member, we conservatively estimate that colleagues have donated in excess of \$1.6 million of their time to the service of PLTLIS since the Society's incorporation in 2012. In addition, several Directors have made substantial cash donations of their own funds to achieve the vision and mission of the Society.

I close this welcome address by **thanking you** for your interest in PLTLIS, and for making time to read this Impact Report. If you feel inspired to support the work of our Society, please email us via info@pltlis.org. Alternatively, you can find details of sponsorship packages or other ways in which you might be able to support the Society's vision and mission on our website at <https://pltlis.org/>.

Everyone involved in PLTLIS believes deeply in the power of PLTL to change the lives of learners. In my view as the current President, it is this fervent belief in the transformative power of PLTL, shared not just by the Directors and committee members, but by all PLTL practitioners, that has allowed the Society to have the impact outlined in this report over the first 12 years of PLTLIS. We are all excited to see what more we can achieve over the next decade!

With sincerest thanks and warmest best wishes,



Professor Tony Michael
President, PLTLIS
May 2025



Vision, Mission and Strategic Goals

Vision

The vision of the Society is that Peer-Led Team Learning is integral to educational and learning practice.

Mission

The mission of the Society is to foster learning through peer-led teams by supporting practitioners and institutions.

Strategic Goals (SG):

To achieve the mission, the Society will transform formal and informal education by:

- SG1. Maintaining and enhancing an international organization
- SG2. Disseminating resources, practices, and research
- SG3. Preparing practitioners and peer leaders
- SG4. Supporting the implementation of PLTL programs across disciplines and institutions
- SG5. Facilitating the incorporation of PLTL implementation in institutional strategic plans.

Progress mapping against the Society's mission and strategic goals is measured using the following Key Performance Indicators (KPI's):

KPI	Indicator / Measure	SG1	SG2	SG3	SG4	SG5
KPI1	Number of affiliated / member organizations					
KPI2	Number of conference attendees					
KPI3	Unique visitors to the PLTLIS website					
KPI4	Financial viability of the Society (i.e. operational balance plus investments)					
KPI5	Publication of an annual Impact Report					
KPI6	Number of PLTL practitioners, peer leaders and PLTL participants in affiliated / member organizations					
KPI7	Number of active PLTL programs					
KPI8	Number of institutional strategic plans that reference PLTL					

Building the PLTL Network

In accordance with the vision and mission, the primary purpose of the Society is to facilitate the growth and development of the international PLTL network as a “community of practice,” supporting individual practitioners and institutions in States and countries to establish and enhance their PLTL programs. This requires adaptation of the PLTL model for specific contexts and helping to establish PLTL programs that are sustainable (beyond the enthusiasm of individual instructors). The current financial pressures on higher education around the world pose a challenge to practitioners in demonstrating the value and effectiveness of PLTL when administrators have to focus on efficiencies in education.

Since 2012, the international reach of PLTLIS has grown year-on-year. On the PLTLIS website, we currently list contacts from 43 universities in Canada, Jamaica, the United Kingdom, and 18 states across the USA. In addition, PLTL practitioners from other universities have also interacted with and benefitted from PLTLIS activities. We continue to reach out to practitioners of PLTL and related forms of peer learning around the world to further grow and strengthen our professional network.

Over the last decade or so, the Society has achieved this growth through a combination of:

- Conferences
- Publications (workbooks, newsletters, and the Society’s journal)
- Research
- Website

This Impact Report summarizes these PLTLIS activities incorporating a series of vignettes on the impact of PLTLIS, written by a student, a senior peer leader, a member of faculty and a senior administrator. Each contributor speaks to the substantial impact that PLTLIS brings to the practice and development of PLTL from their very different perspectives.

The Society works with institutions with active PLTL programs to reinforce the identity and brands both of PLTL and of PLTLIS. One example is the PLTLIS branded hoodies, designed by colleagues at Queen Mary University of London and given each year to the latest cohort of Peer Leaders as a token of gratitude. The back of these hoodies serves as an advertisement to help recruit the next cohort of Peer Leaders: the hoodie invites other students to “Ask me about becoming a Peer Leader”.



Perspectives on PLTLIS: Student Participant in PLTL

Francisco Xavier Baca (Biological Sciences with Medical Concentration major), Graduate
University of Texas at El Paso, USA



Towards the end of the pandemic, when classes were online, I took the first semester of General Chemistry for science and engineering majors. This class was different: it consisted of a lecture and a “workshop,” and it stuck out in comparison to all the previous classes I had taken. PLTL workshop is integrated into the lecture and is worth 20% of the lecture grade. The workshop made chemistry easier. This was the third time I was a college student, and previously I hadn’t made friends because of my disconnect and disinterest in college. This time, my typical classmates were younger than me. My high school friends and I had not stayed in contact and we all went our ways as adults. Everybody I had known the first two times in college had graduated. So, on this third attempt, I tried to do college by myself, studying by myself, eating by myself. As you can imagine that path gets lonely and hard. It was an awful time for me, except for my PLTL chemistry experience. It helped me start to make friends.

At the point that classes transitioned to in-person, I was registered for second semester General Chemistry. Just like first semester, this course also came with a PLTL workshop. When I enrolled, I came with the attitude that this course would be as easy as the first one. Was I wrong, this class proved to be extremely challenging. However, what made it tolerable was that I was able to interact with people in person and arrange for study sessions with my colleagues. Because of its smaller size, creating a study session with people within the workshop was easier than with lecture classmates. Granted, in a core chemistry course at a large university there are about 300+ students, so there are plenty of people to ask. Or so you would think... Truthfully, it was a bit intimidating for me since most of the freshmen I was around knew each other from high school and I was older. I felt I was an outsider, the old guy going back to college.

Objectively, workshops create a designated space where students and one Peer Leader come together to discuss course material. This time, the PLTL workshops were more comforting and friendly. My Peer Leader created an inviting, sociable, and tension-free environment that made asking for help from her or other students easy. I got to learn that there were other students with the same “dumb” questions as me. That was a relief because I was happy to know that I wasn’t the only one who was confused. As the semester progressed, periodically my Peer Leader would change the structure of the workshop. She provided useful facilitation examples. Sometimes she would put the students in groups to work out problems and it was nice because we had the chance to interact, learn, and teach each other. Sometimes she had activities planned like chemistry-related games that made understanding concepts easier. Or sometimes she would have us present certain topics about the content we were learning by having us make a group presentation with a chemistry problem. Every workshop she led was different. I liked that because each time I was engaged. Despite the difficulty of the course, I had a good time taking the class because I had a workshop and people to talk to.

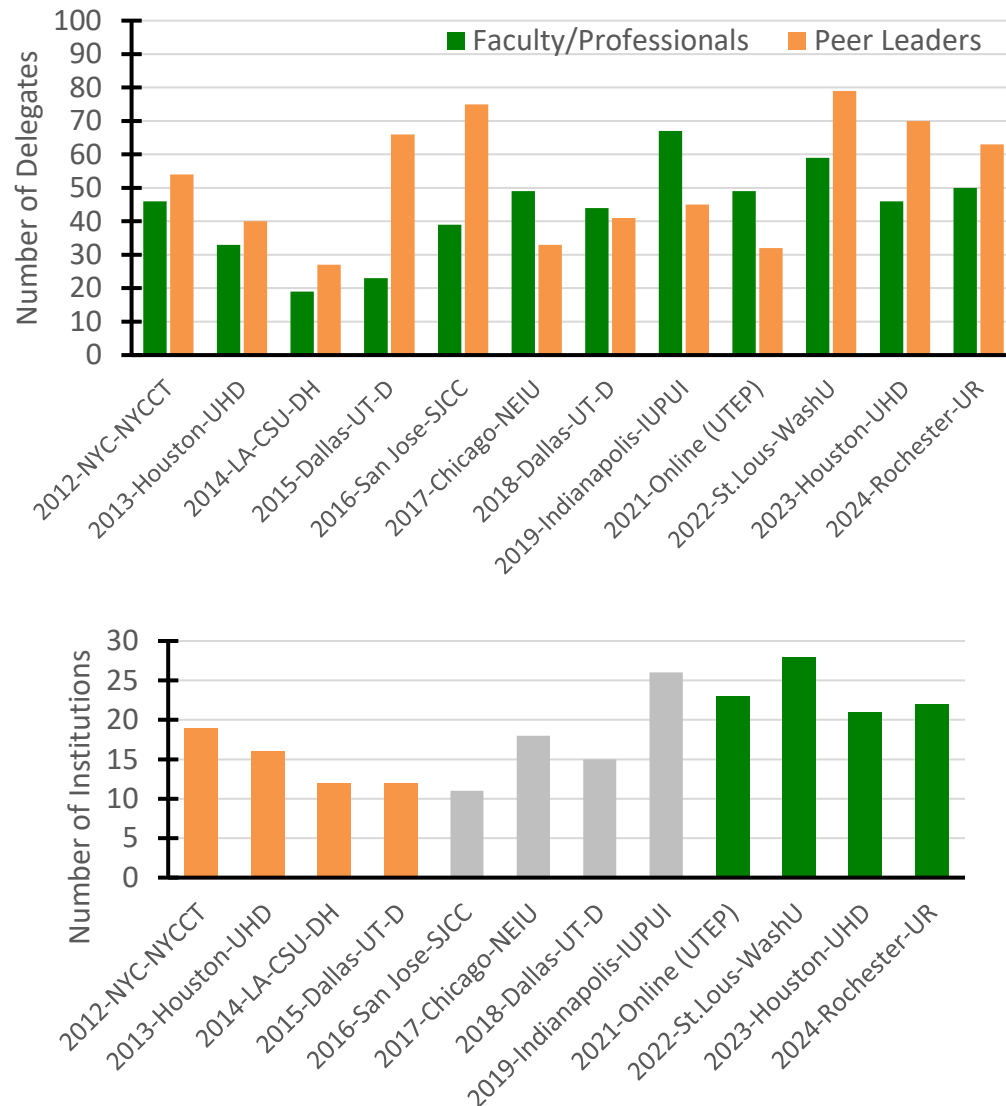
Conferences

A key event in delivering the vision and mission of PLTLIS is the Society's Annual Conference. The inaugural PLTLIS conference was hosted by the New York City College of Technology of the City University of New York (CUNY), in Brooklyn in 2012: the year PLTLIS was incorporated. With the exception of 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced the cancellation of the planned conference, the Society has hosted twelve annual conferences, scheduled during the last week in May. In recognizing financial pressures facing practitioners, since 2022, the Society's conferences have run in hybrid format, allowing online participants to engage with each other and with the in-person attendees.

Year	Dates	Location	Theme
2024	May 29 – June 1	University of Rochester (UR), Rochester, NY USA (hybrid)	PLTL IS: Inclusive, Engaging, and Meaningful Learning
2023	May 31 – June 3	University of Houston-Downtown (UHD), Houston, TX USA (hybrid)	Strengthening Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion through Sustainable PLTL Programs
2022	June 1 – June 4	Washington University in St Louis (WUSL), St Louis, MO USA (hybrid)	Navigating the Confluence of Academic Disciplines, Leader Training, and Student Learning through the Changing Landscape of PLTL
2021	June 3 – June 5	University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), El Paso, TX USA (<i>Online only</i>)	Crossing Boundaries, Building Networks
2020	-	No conference – COVID19	-
2019	June 6 – June 8	Indiana University Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI), Indianapolis, IN USA	Weaving Together Best Practices
2018	May 31 – June 2	University of Texas at Dallas (UTD), Richardson, TX USA	Transforming Education: Research and Best Practices with PLTL Implementations
2017	June 1 – June 3	Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago (NEIU), Chicago, IL USA	Integrating Research and Practice: PLTL in Action
2016	June 2 – June 4	San Jose City College (SJCC), San Jose, CA USA	Innovations in Leading and Learning
2015	May 28 – May 30	University of Texas at Dallas (UTD), Richardson, TX USA	Crossing Borders, Building Bridges, and Transforming Education
2014	May 29 – May 31	California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH), Carson, CA USA	Peer Leaders as Agents of Change
2013	May 31 – June 1	University of Houston-Downtown (UHD), Houston, TX USA	Time to Question Tradition!
2012	May 17 – May 19	New York City College of Technology ("City Tech"), CUNY, Brooklyn, NY USA	Inaugural Conference

At any given conference, the numbers of participants and institutions represented rise or fall reflecting circumstances beyond the direct control of the Society. Mounting financial pressures on universities and

colleges make attendance at international conferences increasingly challenging and many societies across a diverse range of disciplines have reported drops in attendance at their annual meetings. In the current climate, holding attendee numbers steady over the last decade would be regarded as a success. In fact, if we compare the number of attendees and institutions represented at the four most recent annual conference of PLTLIS (2021-2024) to the first four conferences held after PLTLIS incorporation (2012-2015), we have seen the number of participants has increased from a four-year average of 77 to 112 delegates, and the number of different institutions represented at our annual conference has increased from an average of 15 to 24 per annum (increases of +45% and +59%, respectively). This growth in numbers reflects the positive impact of PLTLIS on the PLTL community, as well as the importance of engaging conference participants both in-person and virtually.

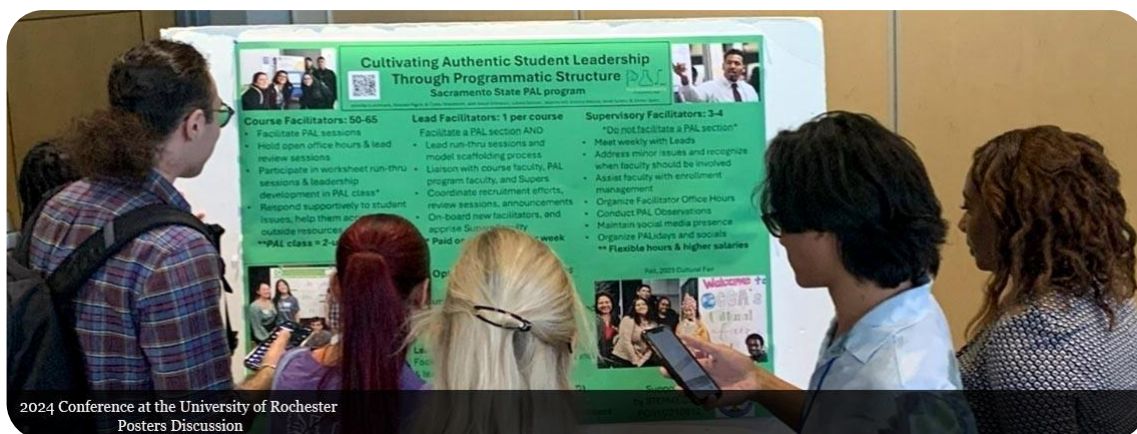


For all but three of the conferences reviewed in this report, the number of peer leaders attending the annual conference has equaled, if not exceeded, the numbers of faculty / professionals.

The annual conference lasts for three days and is preceded by a one-day workshop which, to date, has provided an introduction to Peer-Led Team Learning to support those new to the practice of PLTL.



The 12th Annual Conference, hosted at the University of Rochester, New York, in May 2024, focused on how PLTL can contribute to ensuring that all students are included and engaged in meaningful learning.



For the 13th annual conference, in 2025, the Society is returning to California State University at Dominguez Hills where the conference will focus on "Challenges and Opportunities in the Age of Technology-Enhanced Education". The conference will open with a keynote address by Professor Joanna Wolfe, Carnegie Mellon University, on "Harnessing Collective Intelligence and Managing Conflict on Your Team" and will include a Panel Session on the challenges and opportunities for peer learning with the advent of artificial intelligence, moderated by Professor Ann Gates, University of Texas El Paso and Computing Alliance for Hispanic-Serving Institutions (CAHSI).



2016 - Conference Group Photo - San Jose City College, California

Over the last decade, members of the PLTLIS Board of Directors have also spoken to the benefits and impact of PLTL at other conferences. These have included:

- "Great Minds" conference in 2024 (Mohsen Beheshti and Mitsue Nakamura)
- Computing Alliance of Hispanic Serving Institutions (CAHSI) (Mohsen Beheshti, Mitsue Nakamura, Ongard Sirisaengtaksin and Marcelo Sztainberg)
- International Conference Learning Center Association (ICLCA) (Kimshi Hickman and Cathy Unite)

In 2023, Ana Fraiman, Kimshi Hickman (then President) and James Becvar presented an online workshop for the American Association for the Advancement of Science – Improving Undergraduate STEM Education (AAAS-IUSE) initiative. Specifically, Ana, Kimshi and Jim spoke on "Peer-Led Team Learning – How Enlisting the Aid of Student Leaders Increases Student Success". Their presentation can be viewed on YouTube by following this [link](#).



2018 - Group from Florida International University (FIU) - University of Texas at Dallas

Perspectives on PLTLIS: Senior Peer Leader

Sydney Botham (Biology Major), PLTL Program Coordinator, Introductory Biology
University of Northern British Columbia, Canada



Becoming a Peer Leader was so much more than a job for me. It opened my eyes to opportunities I never knew were available and helped set me on my career path.

When I was a first-year student at UNBC, I joined PLTL as a way to make friends within my program, and to gain a better understanding of course material. PLTL was such a positive experience for me that I knew if I was ever given the chance, I wanted to create that same environment for other students. I was first asked to become a Peer Leader in January 2020 during my second year of study at UNBC. Though it did seem daunting at first, I was blown away by the support and resources available to me within UNBC's PLTL Program. Before even

beginning, I was trained in many facilitation and communication strategies that would not only aid me in this job but help me in other aspects of my life too. For me, PLTL became the best part of my week. During times of stress, I always looked forward to meeting and connecting with my students. This experience is what ignited my love of teaching and set me on a path to make it my future career.

During my three years as a Peer Leader, I have been responsible for a group of 10-15 students and would facilitate an hour and a half of activities relating to course material each week. I strive to make activities as fun and inclusive as possible to help students engage in a more active and collaborative style of learning. This job is unlike any other as it has allowed me the opportunity to connect with other students as a peer and foster an atmosphere of psychological safety where students can feel confident taking risks and growing. The most rewarding part of PLTL is seeing the students form meaningful connections with peers and becoming more confident in themselves. This confidence stems not only from their understanding of the course material, but also from the transferable skills such as public speaking and group collaboration that extend far beyond the scope of first year biology.

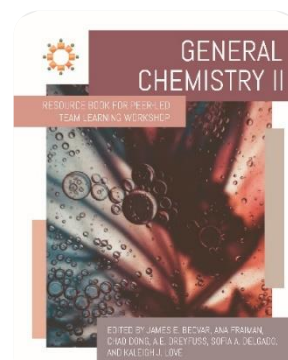
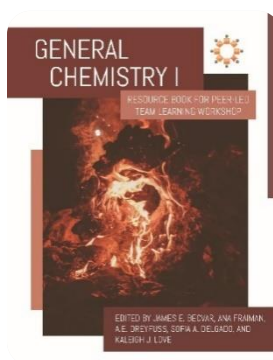
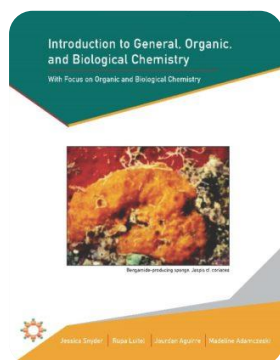
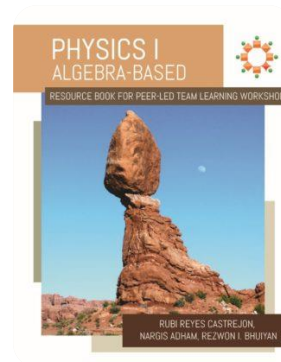
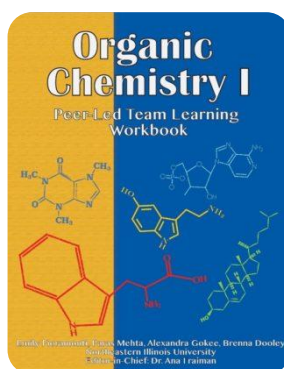
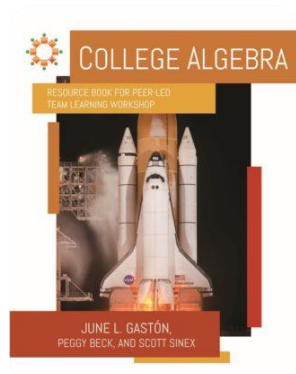
This year, I had the unique opportunity to grow further in my Peer Leader role. Dr. Saphida Migabo and Dr. Roy Rea, who normally run UNBC's PLTL Program, were going on sabbatical and approached me about assuming the role of Program Coordinator. I knew this was my opportunity to further give back to the program that had given so much to me and agreed without hesitation. My time in this role has given me a whole new appreciation for the PLTL Program. Not only have I continued to be a Peer Leader, but I have also gotten the opportunity to further my leadership skills by fostering the development of other peer leaders, facilitating training sessions, and supporting students in their academic journeys. Words cannot describe how grateful I am to be part of such an incredible program that has not only changed the lives of students at UNBC but has also changed mine.

Publications

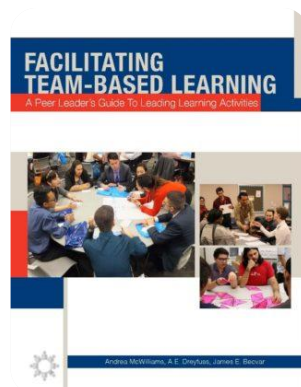
Over the past twelve years, the Society has developed a series of publications, each designed to build and support the international PLTL community.

Workbooks

Practitioners - instructors in various disciplines - collaborating with Peer Leaders, have developed a series of workbooks, published by PLTLIS Press. Since 2017, these resources have been used to support PLTL programs across a range of STEM topics.



Because Peer Leaders need preparation on leading groups, a facilitation guide was published by the Society in 2019, and to expand the Society's reach, this guide has also been translated and made available into Spanish. Each of the above workbooks and the facilitation is available to purchase (with discounts for bulk orders) from the PLTLIS website (at <https://shop.pltlis.org/>).



Newsletter

In 2018, the Society launched a newsletter to report on developments in the practice of PLTL and to promote the activities of the Society, including the annual conferences. The newsletter was originally published as the “PLTLIS newsletter” and six issues were published under this title.

In May 2019, the name of the newsletter was changed to “The Peer Leader” promoting the crucial role that characterizes the PLTL model. Over the past five years, 38 issues of The Peer Leader have been published online to facilitate communication across the PLTL community.

Year	Number of Issues of <i>The Peer Leader</i>	Month of Publication
2024	8	Feb, Mar, Apr, May, July, Oct, Nov and Dec
2023	5	Mar, Apr, May, July and Dec
2022	10	Feb, Mar, Apr, May (x2), June, July, Sept, Oct and Dec
2021	7	Mar, Apr, May (x2), July, Sept and Dec
2020	4	Feb, Apr, June and July
2019	4	May (x2), July and Sept

To maximize accessibility and engagement, the newsletter is published using Microsoft Sway and is distributed to the PLTLIS mailing list via email. It is then archived as a PDF on the PLTLIS website.

The Peer Leader newsletter serves to develop the PLTL community of practice by including:

- Information on upcoming events
- Job postings for positions where experience in a PLTL program is valuable
- Announcements of grants received
- Impact series (e.g. addressing career development planning for peer leaders, and the challenges and opportunities afforded by generative AI)
- Discussions: the size of groups comparing SI/PASS/PAL programs and PLTL
- Campus programs: brief description and individual profiles - peer leaders, staff and faculty
- Memorials for key contributors to PLTL and learning

Together with the PLTLIS website (<https://pltlis.org>), “The Peer Leader” newsletter plays a key role in promoting the Society and its activities to students, staff and faculty beyond PLTLIS.

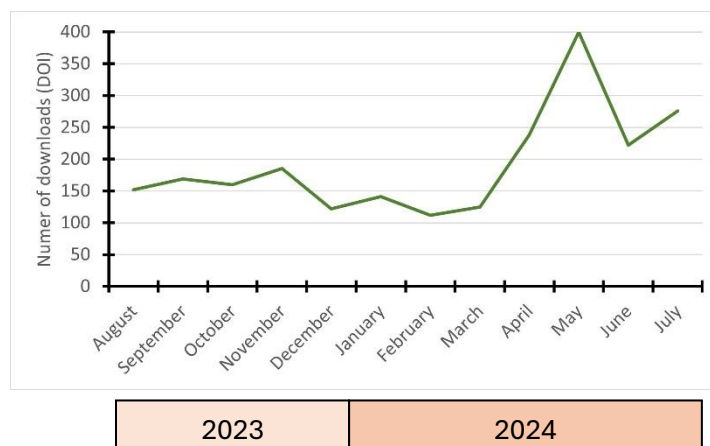
Journal – Advances in Peer-Led Learning (APLL)

In 2021, the Society launched an online, open access journal – *Advances in Peer-Led Learning*. The Editor-in-Chief is Dr James Becvar of the University of Texas at El Paso.

The PLTLIS journal publishes original, peer-reviewed papers on research, evaluation, instructional practices, and other topics related to peer-facilitated models of learning. *APLL* encourages the inclusion of content from all academic disciplines at all levels of education.

The goal of the Society’s journal is to communicate research and innovations in peer-facilitated models of learning, such as PLTL. The Editorial Committee (which includes AE Dreyfuss and Hector Leal as Associate Editors, and Marilyn Anirak and Nataly Amaya serving as Assistant Editors) oversees a transparent and streamlined process to ensure a fair and informative peer-review process.

The first issue of *APLL* commemorated the ten-year anniversary of the inaugural PLTLIS conference and the founding of the Society. Following the Editor-in-Chief’s welcome, the first issue in 2021 contained 13 papers. Each subsequent issue (in 2022, 2023 and 2024) has published eight or nine papers.



As the journal becomes established, the average number of downloads of *APLL* papers is increasing. In the 12 months from 01 August 2023 to 31 July 2024, the average number of successful downloads ('resolutions') was 192 per calendar month, ranging from 112 in February to a peak of 400 in August 2024. This open access journal provides a platform for the expansion of the intellectual and experiential discussion of peer-led learning, promoting voices of leadership and new paths of practice.

Perspectives on PLTLIS: Faculty

Novelette Sadler-McKnight (PhD), Department of Chemistry,
The University of the West Indies, Mona, Kingston, Jamaica



As a faculty member at a Caribbean university and a Board Member of PLTLIS, I have witnessed the transformative impact of peer-led learning on student achievement, confidence, and community both at my institution and across the international landscape.

In 2008, I became the first at my university to implement a PLTL programme. This was introduced as a targeted intervention to improve outcomes in first-year chemistry courses, where many students traditionally struggled. The results were remarkable. Students in the programme demonstrated significant gains in academic performance and critical thinking, and, perhaps most importantly, a renewed relationship with the subject. Chemistry became less intimidating and more engaging. Passive learners became active participants, finding their voices in collaborative group settings. Peer leaders, in turn, deepened their understanding of the material while building leadership, confidence, and communication skills.

This success laid the foundation for a broader cultural shift in how we approach teaching and learning in the sciences. It confirmed that when students are empowered as co-creators of knowledge, the benefits go beyond better grades; they include self-efficacy, deeper conceptual understanding, and a strong sense of academic belonging.

PLTLIS has been instrumental in expanding and sustaining this work. The Society is unique in that all Board Members and participants are active PLTL practitioners, creating a rich feedback loop between theory and practice. Through PLTLIS, I have engaged with educators from around the world, sharing strategies, adapting the model across diverse contexts, and advancing a shared mission of equity, access, and excellence in STEM education.

For institutions like mine, where resources may be limited but the commitment to student success is deep, PLTLIS offers a scalable, evidence-based approach to teaching and learning. It also supports ongoing faculty and student development through international conferences, collaborative initiatives, and access to best practices grounded in research.

PLTLIS is more than a professional society, it is a global community reimagining what teaching can look like when students are placed at the centre. It proves that when students lead, they learn; and when faculty nurture that leadership, everyone grows. I am honoured to serve on the Board of PLTLIS and to be part of this transformative movement in science education, one peer-led team at a time.

Research

The PLTLIS Research Committee has had three principal functions, these being to:

- Support and encourage the conduct and publication of research into the impact of PLTL programs (both for student participants and for peer leaders), comparing PLTL to other curricular models of peer learning; Collate details of PLTL programs ongoing at institutions that are affiliated with PLTLIS (taking a harmonized “case studies” approach);
- Coordinate cross-institutional and/or interdisciplinary applications for grant funding to undertake PLTL research projects.

To achieve these aspirations, the Research Committee can also act in a consultancy fashion, responding to specific inquiries, and using its expertise to guide practitioners on the design, conduct, analysis, and publication of both quantitative and qualitative research in the field of PLTL.

Practitioners of PLTL have routinely conducted and reported on research undertaken either within or across universities. This has included sharing best practices and promoting new avenues of research, such as discourse analysis, as well as the expansion in the practice of PLTL to countries such as Malaysia, Nigeria and Turkey.

Publications that reference PLTL are collated and made available on the PLTLIS website at <https://pltlis.org/publications/>.



2015 - Writing Workshop (Introduction to Workbooks) - University of Texas at Dallas
Included in this photograph are Ana Fraiman (front left), Jeff Saupe and Kimshi Hickman (middle rear), and Thomas Pitzer (center background)

Perspectives on PLTLIS: Learning Center Director

Catherine Unite, Director of the Academic Success Center, Academic Support Programs,
University of Texas at Arlington, USA



The University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) has institutionalized PLTL: a research-based academic support model that enhances student retention, engagement, and success in STEM courses. This achievement is the result of dedicated collaboration, innovative leadership, and the unwavering support of the PLTLIS.

Dr. Kimshi Hickman, a past President of PLTLIS, first introduced the PLTL model to UTA, bringing with her a wealth of experience from a highly successful program at the University of Texas at Dallas. Inspired by her vision, I had the opportunity to attend the PLTLIS Conference in 2019 at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). The conference was a turning point—offering deep insights into the pedagogy, best practices, and transformative impact of PLTL. Meeting the founders of PLTLIS reinforced my commitment and inspired me to build the program at UTA. The welcoming, collaborative spirit of the Society was undeniable, and I immediately felt a sense of belonging within this community of passionate and enthusiastic educators.

Since that pivotal moment, I have remained actively engaged with PLTLIS, attending subsequent conferences at Washington University in St. Louis (2022), the University of Rochester (2024), and virtually in 2023. In 2022, I was honored to be elected to the PLTLIS Board of Directors and nominated as Secretary. Through these leadership roles, I have cultivated valuable professional partnerships and friendships, furthering both my personal and institutional commitment to advancing peer learning.

My background in peer-supported learning serves as a strong foundation. As an International Certified Trainer at the International Office for Supplemental Instruction (SI) at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, I provided training for SI supervisors and leaders at local, national, and international levels. My international experience in peer education originated in South Africa, where I led the SI National Office for Southern Africa at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, consulting with higher education institutions across the country. I have also had the privilege of serving as the external international judge for the Australasian Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) Leader Awards for over a decade, collaborating with the former PASS National Centre at Manchester University in the UK and, more recently, the European Centre for SI-PASS. Additionally, in the United States, I have contributed as a past faculty member for the Institute on Peer Educators at the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience (FYE) and Students in Transition at the University of South Carolina. These experiences have provided a global perspective on peer learning models, reinforcing my belief in their transformative power.

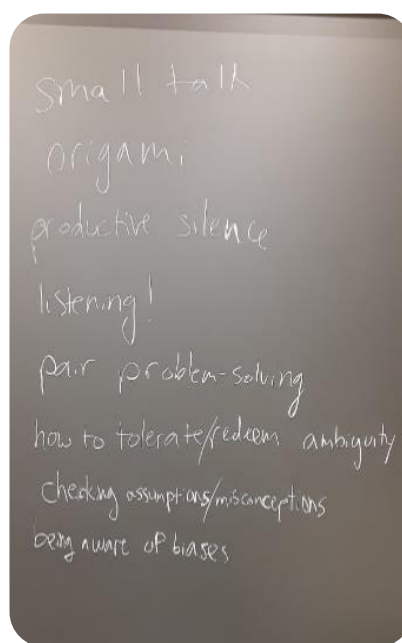
Recognizing PLTL's potential at UTA, we launched the program in the Fall of 2020 with two STEM courses. Today, it has expanded to 15 courses with 79 PLTL leaders, including 9 mentors. This growth has been met with overwhelming support from faculty, administration, and students, reinforcing PLTL's value as a high-impact practice that enhances student learning outcomes.

The success of PLTL at UTA is a testament to the strength of the PLTLIS community. The Society's dedication to fostering collaboration, providing professional development, and advancing research-backed methodologies sets it apart as a premier resource for educators. PLTLIS has not only enriched my professional journey but has also empowered UTA to build an impactful centralized peer-learning model.

For those seeking to implement or enhance PLTL at their institutions, I wholeheartedly recommend engagement with PLTLIS—an organization that embodies excellence, innovation, and a deep commitment to student success. More than that, PLTLIS is a family – a welcoming and supportive community that encourages growth, collaboration, and lifelong connections.



2016- Miami Dade College Signboard



**2022 - Workshop techniques -
Washington University at St. Louis,
Missouri**

Website

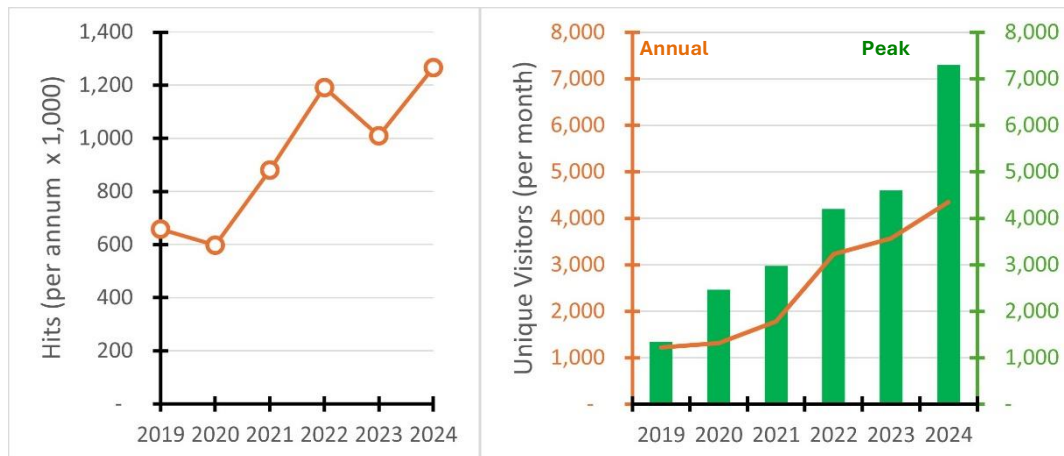
The Society's website, <https://pltlis.org/>, provides a rich repository of resources open to all. The decision not to restrict content aligns with the Society's vision, mission and strategic goals, wanting to ensure that PLTLIS activities, news and resources are disseminated and made freely available to the widest possible audience, including across countries.

The website, launched in 2012, includes links to:

- Information about the Society: history, vision, mission and goals, Board of Directors, and campus contacts
- Conference details: current and past conferences, programs from each year, and Conference Proceedings (2012-2015)
- The Society's journal, *Advances in Peer-Led Learning*
- Newsletters (current and past) and sign-up feature for the Mailing List
- Useful resources, including guidance documents on Starting a PLTL program, Leader training, Administration and Organization, Evaluation and Research, PLTL in Practice (videos), Workshop Materials, as well as a link to the PLTLIS YouTube channel
- A list of relevant Publications about PLTL not published by the Society
- The PLTLIS Shop where visitors can purchase workbooks and merchandise

The PLTLIS website provides an effective platform to keep members of the PLTL community informed and connected. Over the last 5 years (between 2019 and 2024), we have recorded:

- A near **doubling** in the number of website hits per annum (up from 657,572 in 2019 to 1,266,003 in 2024)
- **Over a tripling** in the numbers of annual visits (up from 24,194 to 90,008 per annum, respectively), pages viewed (up from 179,874 to 633,300) and the average number of unique visitors per calendar month (pcm) (up from 1,226 to 4,355 per calendar month)
- **More than a quadrupling** in the peak number of unique visitors in any given month (up from 1,345 in January 2019 to 7,301 in October 2024).



Perspectives on PLTLIS: Administrator

Professor Tony Michael, Deputy Vice-Principal Education,
Queen Mary University of London, UK



I first became aware of the Society in 2018 following a trip to Florida International University (FIU), Miami, to learn more about both the theory and practice of PLTL. Following that visit, I joined the PLTLIS Research Committee for two years (2019-2021), was elected to serve on the Board of Directors (from 2022) and, two years later, I was elected by the Board to serve as President of the Society. I think that this trajectory, moving within just five years from a committee position to becoming a Director to being the current PLTLIS President, reflects the nurturing and inclusive nature of the Society.

I have attended the last three PLTLIS annual conferences either in person (2022 and 2024, at Washington University in St Louis and University of Rochester, respectively) or remotely (2023 attending online from London). These conferences are one of the highlights of my academic year. They provide a fantastic opportunity to meet with colleagues and friends who are all passionate about the transformative power of PLTL as a student-centered, collaborative, active learning pedagogy. Without exception, I find each of the delegates attending these conferences to be so generous, both with their time and with their ideas. The willingness of conference attendees to share and compare experiences to support and benefit others is unparalleled, in my experience. I have gained so much, both professionally and personally, from attending these wonderful events.

I have been both a Faculty Dean for Education (in the Faculty of Science & Engineering) and, since 2019, a Deputy Vice-Principal for Education. Commenting on PLTLIS as a senior administrator, I particularly value the way in which the Society encourages and supports all of those involved in peer learning, from members of faculty and instructors through to peer leaders. I really appreciate the work of the Society in helping those in strategic leadership positions to develop PLTL as a student-centered practice, and to embed the pedagogy in their strategic plans to enhance both the quality of education and of the student experience. I am delighted to take this opportunity to note that the only negative feedback that has come back to me from students has been that they would like to see PLTL used more widely across their courses: a request that reflects the Society's own vision and mission.

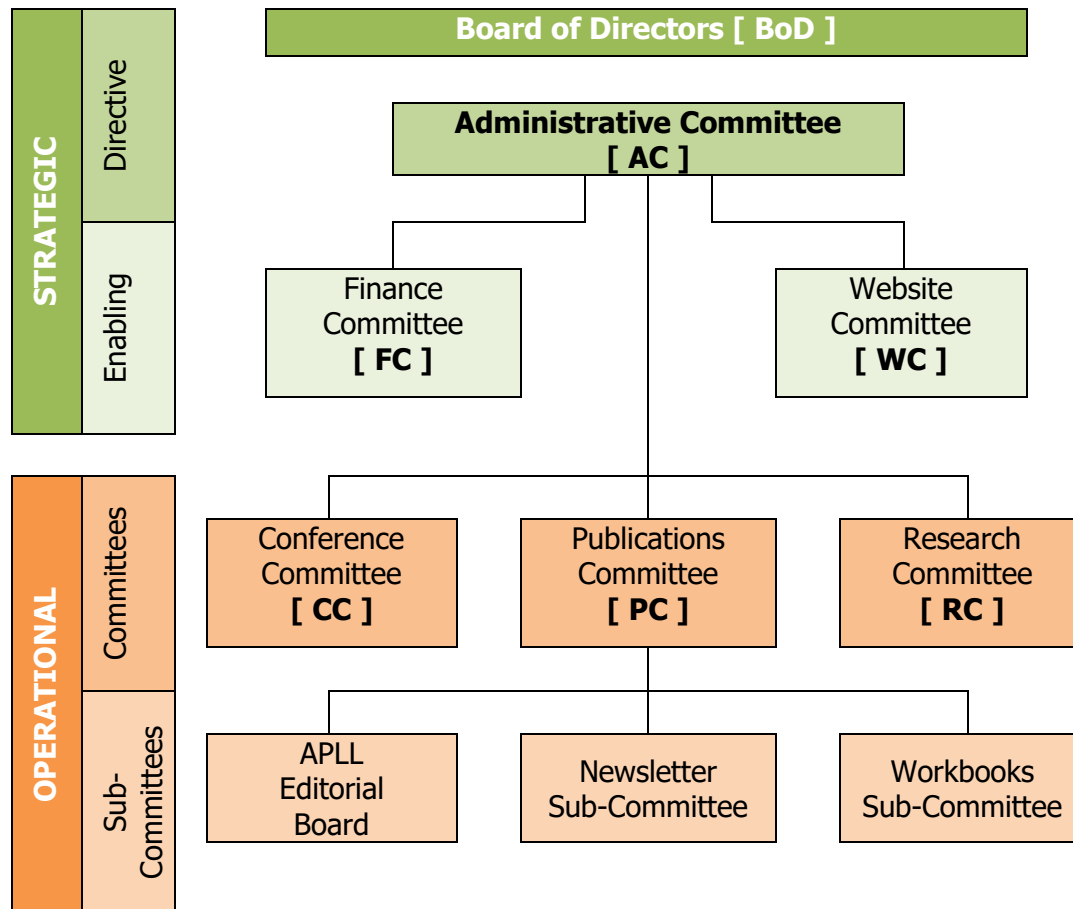
Over the course of my career, I have either belonged to or worked with several professional or learned societies. Without question, I have found PLTLIS to be the most passionate, focused society, with a tremendously clear sense of purpose, and an enthusiasm to help and support individuals and organizations. The annual conference feels less like an educational / scientific meeting and more like a family reunion! It's an honor and a joy to be part of that family, and I can't commend the Society highly enough to anyone who is either already using PLTL or considering using this pedagogy to help train and develop students or colleagues.



PEER-LED TEAM LEARNING

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

Appendix 1 – Organization



COMMITTEE CHAIRS

- Conference Committee: Milka Montes (UTPB, TX, USA) and Mohsen Beheshti (CSU-DH, CA, USA)
- Finance Committee: Tony Michael (QMUL, UK)
- Publications Committee: AE Dreyfuss (NYCCT, NY, USA)
- Research Committee: Sally Faulkner (QMUL, UK)
- Website Committee: Hector Leal (UTRGV, TX, USA)

Appendix 2 – Board of Directors

	Director	Institution	Title	Discipline	Officer / Committee(s)
	Madeline Adamczeski	San Jose City College, San Jose, California, USA	Professor and PLTL Program Coordinator	Chemistry & Oceanography	Conference
	Jose Alberte	Gulliver Preparatory School, Miami, Florida, USA	Upper School Science Faculty	Biology and STEM Curriculum and Instruction	Finance Research
	Marilyn Anirak	University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, Texas, USA	PLTL Program Coordinator	Biological Sciences	Assistant Editor, APLL Website
	M. Cecilia Barone	University of Rochester, Rochester, New York, USA	Assistant Director, PLTL Workshop Program, Learning Center	Biochemistry	Conference Research
	James Becvar	University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso, Texas, USA	Professor, PLTL Program Director	Chemistry and Biochemistry	Editor-in-Chief, APLL Past President Administrative Conference Finance Publications
	Mohsen Beheshti	California State University, Dominguez Hills, Carson, California, USA	Professor and Chair of Computer Science Department	Computer Science	Conference (Co-Chair) 2025
	Sofia Delgado	Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, USA	Doctoral Student	Biochemistry	Conference Outreach
	AE Dreyfuss	New York City College of Technology, City University of New York, New York, USA	Learning Developer	Adult Learning and Leadership	Associate Editor, APLL Past President Administrative Conference Finance Publications (Chair) Workbook Series Editor Website
	Ana Fraiman	Northeastern Illinois University Chicago, Illinois, USA	Professor Emerita	Organic Chemistry	Workbook Series Editor Research

	Director	Institution	Title	Discipline	Officer / Committee(s)
	Lisa Kuehne	Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis, Missouri, USA	Assistant Director, Educational Development, The Center for Teaching and Learning	Mathematics and Statistics	Conference
	Hector Leal	University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, Texas, USA	Program Manager, Peer Collaborative Programs, Learning Center	Science Education	Associate Editor, APLL Administrative Conference Publications Website (Chair)
	Allison McKee	University of Houston Downtown, Houston, Texas, USA	Doctoral Student, PLTL Training Coordinator	Chemistry	Conference
	Anthony (Tony) Michael	Queen Mary University of London, London, UK	Professor and Deputy Vice Principal for Education	Biology	President Administrative (Chair) Conference Finance (Chair)
	Milka Montes	University of Texas of the Permian Basin, Odessa, Texas, USA	Associate Professor, Chair Chemistry Department	Chemistry	Conference (Co-Chair) 2025 Past President
	Mitsue Nakamura	University of Houston Downtown, Houston, Texas, USA	Senior Lecturer, PLTL Faculty Coordinator	Mathematics	Treasurer Administrative Conference Finance Research
	Novelette Sadler-McKnight	The University of West Indies, Mona Campus, Kingston, Jamaica	Senior Lecturer (E&S) Biosciences	Chemistry	
	Catherine Unite	University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, Texas, USA	Director, Academic Success Center	Social Sciences and Peer Education	Secretary Administrative