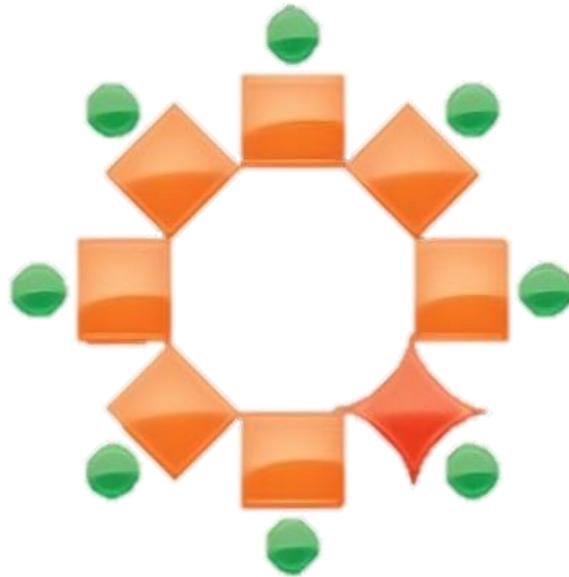# The Peer Leader December 2025

PEER-LED TEAM LEARNING
INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

Issue No. 44   Contact: info@pltlis.org

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Message from the PLTLIS President

Dear members of the PLTLIS community,

I send a belated Happy Thanksgiving to those of you who celebrated on November 27th (or on October 13th if you're reading this newsletter in Canada, Australia's Norfolk Island, Liberia or Saint Lucia). I hope that you had a wonderful holiday, spent with those you love, and an opportunity to express your thanks for all that brings you peace and joy. While we don't celebrate Thanksgiving in the UK, I would still like to take a moment to express my gratitude to those collaborators, colleagues and friends from both sides of the Atlantic who give so much time and energy to nurture and support the Peer-Led Team Learning International Society (PLTLIS). Specifically, I would like to take this time to thank publicly the 16 other Directors of the PLTLIS Board (you can find their names and affiliations at https://pltlis.org/board-of-directors/) and all of those who serve on committees. As a small, non-profit organization, PLTLIS can only address its vision and mission (which you can find at Vision, Mission & Goals – Peer-Led Team Learning International Society), through the contributions of those Directors and committee members. Thank you all!

For the last 12 months, we can celebrate successes, achievements, and lessons learned. In May, another great annual Conference (for which many thanks again to Mohsen Beheshti and his colleagues at California State University-Dominguez Hills), we also launched the inaugural Impact Report for PLTLIS, looking back over all that we've achieved in the 12 years since PLTLIS was first incorporated in 2012 (available to download from: PLTLIS-24-Years-Report.pdf). Those achievements have been considerable, and even greater success lies ahead for PLTLIS!

At the annual conference, reflecting the fact that this year's conference was hosted in the state of California, I spoke to the analogy of the giant sequoia, thought by many to be the largest living organism. The sequoia get to enjoy this status not by virtue of their vertical roots, but through their horizontal roots and connections. Each sequoia tree sends out lateral roots which travel under the surface of the ground until they contact and intertwine with horizontal roots of neighbouring trees.

Consequently, all of the giant sequoia in a forest are connected, and it is those connections which enable the trees to grow so tall and to withstand an array of natural forces from strong winds to gravity. This is the perfect analogy for the PLTLIS "community of practice." Our strength lies in our connections to each other, and these connections allow us to achieve more as a professional network than we ever would as individual practitioners of PLTL, whether we are a peer leader, a member of staff, a member of faculty, or an administrator. So make one of your New Year's resolutions be to be like a giant sequoia: Reach out and make new connections!

Sending every best wish to all readers of this newsletter, as always, And to close 2025 I send you every best wish for the festive season, whether you choose to celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, the Winter/Hibernal Solstice, or are simply just taking time away from work to rest and recharge. I hope that you have a wonderful festive period, and that the New Year brings you and those you care about health, happiness and success in equal measure!

Tony

Prof. Tony Michael

PLTLIS President, Board of Directors

www.pltlis.org

📢 Call for Presentations

PLTLIS 14th Annual Conference, May 27-30, 2026

Hybrid Format

Hosted by City Tech, CUNY, Brooklyn, New York

Plan Now to Attend: Come to New York City or Online!

Celebrating Active Learning: Shared Missions and Practices in Models of Student Engagement

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Calling practitioners of active learning curricular models to come to The Big Apple and share stories, pillars of practice, challenges, successes, wisdom.

These models include Cooperative Learning (CL), Problem-Based Learning (PBL), Supplemental Instruction (SI/PASS/PALS), Team-Based Learning (TBL), Emerging Scholars (ES, Workshop Mathematics, Math Excel), Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL), Process-Oriented Guided Inquiry Learning (POGIL), and Learning Assistants (LA), among others.

We invite you to submit proposals to explore practices, successes and limitations of any of these models through the following focus questions:

-How is the model's framework used and adapted at your campus?

-What is the training or preparation of facilitators and instructors?

-How is the model(s) assessed at your institution?

-How does your institution support the model(s)?

- How is AI incorporated in the model?

-What are long-term benefits of the model(s) as viewed by alumni?

-What are other highlights of the model(s) currently in use at your institution?

Submitting a proposal

The Peer-Led Team Learning International Society's 14th Annual Conference will provide a forum for practitioners and researchers, including instructors, teachers, learning specialists/developers, administrators, peer leaders and student facilitators, and others, to share practices in active learning curricular models.

- Talks and workshop presentations can take place in-person or virtually. However, all talks and workshops should be planned to engage both in person participants and virtual participants.

- All submissions will be peer-reviewed. The presentation abstract should clearly articulate how the presentation will address the focus questions(s) above for the benefit of the conference audience

Presentations will be in one of the following formats:

- Short talks: 20-minute presentation, 10 minutes Q&A. These can be in-person or virtual.

- Workshops: intended for interactive presentations, 60 minutes. These can be in-person or virtual.

- Posters (for in-person presenters) or "lightening talks" (5 minutes presentations for virtual presenters)

To submit a proposal, go to https://pltlis.org/annual-pltlis-conference/

Deadline for Submissions: *Monday, February 23, 2026*

🌐 APLS & Queen Mary Academy Fellow

Association for Peer Learning and Support (APLS) – International Forum and recent publications

Tony Michael, PLTLIS President, recently joined the Association for Peer Learning and Support (APLS) where he is helping to coordinate the London and South-East (UK) regional network and will shortly be launching a Special Interest Group focused on PLTL.

The 2026 International Forum for Peer Learning and Support, organised by APLS in collaboration with the European Centre for SI:PASS, is to be hosted at Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, Scotland, on Thursday May 21 and Friday May 22, 2026. For those who might like to attend this forum (and then come on to New York for the PLTLIS annual meeting), you can find further details at: [2026 International Forum for Peer Learning and Support | Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh](#)

Also, within the last three months, members of the APLS Steering Group have published two highly relevant articles through Advance HE (which is a UK charity that works with partners around the world to improve higher education for staff, students and society):

- Lucy Chilvers and Catherine McConnell (University of Brighton) recently published "The Peer-to-Peer Framework: Embedding Peer Learning and Support in Higher Education" (available to download at [Student-led peer learning and support | Advance HE](#))

- Carly Garratt (University of Central Lancashire), Carly Jones (University of Cardiff) and Catherine McConnell (University of Brighton) very recently published "Students as Co-Creators of Peer Learning and Support"). (*This isn't yet available to download from Advance HE, but you CAN preview this publication via our LinkedIn account -* [Peer-Led Team Learning International Society | LinkedIn](#). *Just search through our recent posts and re-posts*).

President appointed Queen Mary Academy Fellow

As he draws to the end of his second term as Deputy Vice-Principal for Education at Queen Mary University of London (QMUL), our President, Tony Michael, has been appointed as a fellow of the university's Queen Mary Academy. In his fellowship, Tony will focus not just on expanding PLTL at Queen Mary, but on all forms of active peer learning in use across the university, from SI PASS and PBL to TBL and PLTL. The goal is to help colleagues select and then embed the most appropriate form of peer-assisted or peer-led learning into different degree programs from medicine and dentistry, through humanities and social sciences, to science and engineering.

👥 Profiles: What's Happening with PLTL Programs?

General Chemistry PLTL at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri

-Megan Daschbach

This fall brought a new chapter to our Peer Leaders (PL) who recently matriculated. Last May, we had twenty-one General Chemistry PLs graduate from Washington University in St. Louis ("WashU"). Of that cohort, seven began graduate Ph.D. programs, three began medical school, and eleven began full time work, many of them in a gap year program for premedical students or in a research program. We are excited to see how their futures continue to take shape!

Here on campus, we have experienced a lot of transitions this semester and have been working to adjust and achieve our teaching missions.

One of our Academic Learning Programs Managers (ALPM), Dr. Matthew Kummer, transitioned from his role managing our General Chemistry PLTL program to lecturer for the General Chemistry laboratory course. We are so proud of the pedagogical knowledge he cultivated during his time as ALPM. We are excited to see how he evolves the laboratory course to better engage students and achieve the intended learning objectives of the lab component of our First-year Chemistry program.

We also welcomed a new ALPM, Dr. Dhanam Anbukumar, to assume Dr. Kummer's former role and manage the General Chemistry PLTL program. She has already brought much to this position and to this PLTL program and we look forward to all she accomplishes.

Unfortunately, we have had a lot to navigate this year as we lost administrative support when WashU eliminated over 300 jobs as changes to federal funding affected our operating budget. With PLTL programs that support approximately 1400 students across three different departments, this has brought many logistical challenges in these first few months of the term. However, just as we teach our students in our PLTL programs, we are stronger together. I am so proud of how our teams have communicated and supported each other during this time, working hard to ensure that students still have transformative and meaningful experiences in their PLTL sessions.

Speaking from my personal experience in General Chemistry I, one of two lecture sequences we offer, this has been a very rewarding semester in terms of student engagement. Students are participating in our support programs and sessions in much higher numbers than we experienced during and immediately after the pandemic. They appear to be adapting successfully as they adjust to the pacing and expectations of university level STEM courses and achieving academic success in this course.

Revitalizing PLTL in General Chemistry at The University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona, Jamaica

-Novelette Sadler-McKnight

PLTL team members with Coordinator Crystal Thompson and Faculty Advisor Dr. Novelette Sadler-McKnight.

After a five-year pause due primarily to funding challenges, the Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL) programme in introductory chemistry at The University of the West Indies has been successfully revitalized. This marks an important milestone in our commitment to active, student-centred learning.

When PLTL was last implemented, introductory chemistry was offered as two 6-credit courses over two semesters. Each of these has since been restructured into three 2-credit courses, creating a more modular system. While this offers greater flexibility, it has also introduced new challenges for PLTL, particularly in coordinating workshops across multiple courses and ensuring consistent student support.

This semester, 16 Peer Leaders were recruited and trained under the guidance of a newly appointed PLTL coordinator. Drawn from upper-level chemistry students, these leaders bring both content knowledge and relatability, helping newer students engage with challenging concepts in a collaborative and supportive environment.

Workshops have already begun, with over 140 students registered this semester. Sessions focus on core areas such as atomic structure, bonding, periodic trends, gases, and thermochemistry. Student feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Peer leaders are also gaining valuable leadership, communication, and teaching experience.

To ensure long-term sustainability, a new course, Peer-Led Team Learning Training and Facilitation, has been developed, with implementation planned for the 2026–27 academic year. This course will formalize the preparation of Peer Leaders, equipping them with facilitation and leadership skills while formally recognizing their contributions. Data gathered this year will be used to refine the course design.

Looking ahead, the Department aims to strengthen institutional support, expand PLTL into other science courses, and continue evaluating its impact on student learning outcomes.

The revival of PLTL is more than a restart, it is a renewal that underscores the resilience of peer-led learning and its transformative impact on chemistry education at The UWI.

The University of Rochester Celebrates 30 Years of PLTL!

-M. Cecilia Barone

This year marks the 30th anniversary of PLTL at the University of Rochester, in Rochester, New York. On September 21st, students, current and past Peer Leaders, faculty, administrators, Academic Excellence staff, parents, and alumni gathered to celebrate this milestone during Meliora Weekend, a yearly event showcasing the accomplishments of our University community during the University of Rochester Homecoming weekend.

The event's highlights included a formal recognition of our most dedicated PLTL program supporters and a lively panel discussion with former Peer Leaders Prof. Rose C. Kennedy, Archita Amudhan, Ali Alsaidi, Ashay Narayana, and Fariha Raisa. Our panelists discussed how being a Peer Leader shaped their experiences both during their time as students at the University of Rochester and in their post-graduation endeavors. Dr. Lynn Donahue, from our Career Center, further elaborated on the short-term and long-term benefits of PLTL by discussing the connection between PLTL and the development of career competencies.

Joining in the celebration was also Vicki Roth, who partnered with the late Prof. Jack Kampmeier (Chemistry Department) in pioneering the first PLTL implementation at the University of Rochester in 1995 and went on to support PLTL both as a learning specialist and as an administrator until her retirement in 2018. Toward the end of the event, Vicki shared how 30 years earlier, in that same room where we were now enjoying community and food, she and Jack stood in front of a group of sixty-five eager students for the very first PLTL "interest meeting." They were there to discuss what being a Peer Leader would entail and how leading a Workshop would be different from leading a recitation. Vicki also shared that, before those brave students showed up for the meeting, while waiting in that empty room, she and Jack had wondered: "Will this model work? Will students be receptive?"

Thirty years later, with the privilege of hindsight and the knowledge of many PLTL success stories on our campus, we find ourselves at the opposite end of the spectrum of that imagination continuum and wonder: "How could we have supported our students and our institutional mission without PLTL?" With PLTL currently implemented in over twenty courses,

nine departments, and two schools at our institution, the story continues. As it has been from the very start, the dedication and enthusiasm of our Peer Leaders carry us forward.
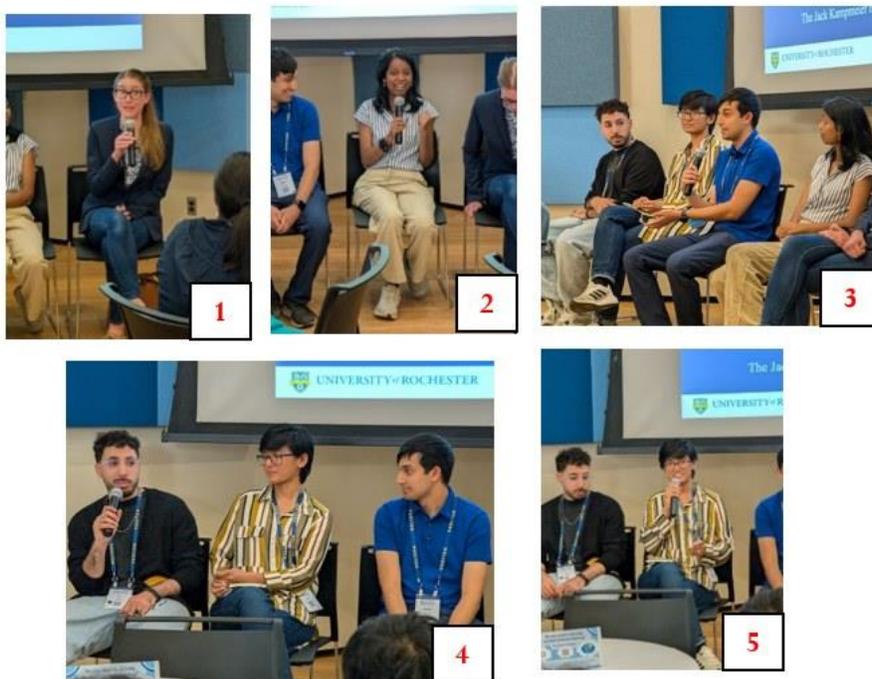
Former peer leaders discuss their experiences during the panel presentation at the University of Rochester Meliora Weekend on September 21st 2025.

Left to right, top to bottom: Prof. Rose Kennedy, Archita Amudhan, Ali Alsaidi, Ashay Narayana and Fariha Raisa

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Peer-Led Team Learning at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) Brownsville • Edinburg • Harlingen, Texas

- Hector Leal

The Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL) program at UTRGV continues to thrive, providing academic support for students enrolled in Introduction to Accounting, General Biology, Anatomy and Physiology, General Chemistry I, General Chemistry II, Chemistry for Engineers, Mechanics of Solids, Statics, Digital Systems, Computer Science II, College Algebra, Math for Business and Social Sciences, Elementary Statistics, Pre-Calculus and Calculus I for the Fall 2025.

This semester, the PLTL team has two hundred and six Peer Leaders, and five full-time staff who bring enthusiasm and dedication to the program. Together, they serve 9,654 students. The program receives strong institutional support through the Learning Center.

📚 Read! Research Papers About PLTL

An exploratory study: impact of peer-led team learning on epistemology, self-efficacy, and belonging in chemistry (2025)

Vidushi Adlakha, Vaishali Vijay Shinde, and Pratibha Varma-Nelson

Abstract: Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL) is a widely adopted active-learning strategy in undergraduate STEM education with known benefits for student achievement. While much of the existing literature focuses on academic outcomes of this pedagogy, the intent of this article is to highlight the underlying mechanisms that contribute to its impact (Chan J. Y. and Bauer C. F., (2015), *J. Res. Sci. Teach.*, 52(3), 319–346). Through semi-structured interviews with ten students from a general chemistry course, this qualitative study addresses that gap by investigating how PLTL supports both cognitive and affective dimensions of learning, particularly in relation to sense of belonging and self-efficacy. Through detailed analysis of student reflections, our findings reveal that key mechanisms such as peer explanation, collaborative learning, and the development of a sense of belonging work together to create a supportive and interactive learning environment. By highlighting the how and why of PLTL's impact, the study offers valuable insights for educators seeking to design peer-led instructional models as a site for epistemological and identity development in STEM.

Using speech technology for quantifying behavioral characteristics in peer-led team learning sessions (2017)

Harishchandra Dubey, Abhijeet Sangwan, and John H.L. Hansen

Highlights

- Established CRSS-PLTL corpus (Peer-Led Team Learning) and performed exploratory data analysis.

- Stacked Denoising Autoencoder-based bottleneck features + Informed HMM-based diarization system.

- Behavioral Speech Processing for extracting characteristics such as participation, dominance, curiosity (in terms of question inflection), emphasis, engagement.

- Stacked spectral features were used to train a Deep Neural Network for estimating the fundamental frequency.

- Fundamental frequency-based method for question inflection detection.

Abstract: Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL) is a learning methodology where a peer-leader co-ordinate a small-group of students to collaboratively solve technical problems. PLTL have been adopted for various science, engineering, technology and maths courses in several US universities. This paper proposed and evaluated a speech system for behavioral analysis of PLTL groups. It could help in identifying the best practices for PLTL. The CRSS-PLTL corpus was used for evaluation of developed algorithms. In this paper, we developed a robust speech activity detection (SAD) by fusing the outputs of a DNN-based pitch extractor and an unsupervised SAD based on voicing measures. Robust speaker diarization system consisted of bottleneck features (from stacked autoencoder) and informed HMM-based joint segmentation and clustering system. Behavioral characteristics such as participation, dominance, emphasis, curiosity and engagement were extracted by acoustic analyses of speech segments belonging to all students. We proposed a novel method for detecting question inflection and performed equal error rate analysis on PLTL corpus. In addition, a robust approach for detecting emphasized speech regions was also proposed. Further, we performed exploratory data analysis for understanding the distortion present in CRSS-PLTL corpus as it was collected in naturalistic scenario. The ground-truth Likert scale ratings were used for capturing the team dynamics in terms of student's responses to a variety of evaluation questions. Results suggested the applicability of proposed system for behavioral analysis of small-group conversations such as PLTL, work-place meetings *etc.*.

Dubey, H., Sangwan, A., & Hansen, J.H.L. (2017). Using speech technology for quantifying behavioral characteristics in peer-led team learning sessions. *Computer Speech & Language, 46,* 343-366. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.csl.2017.04.002
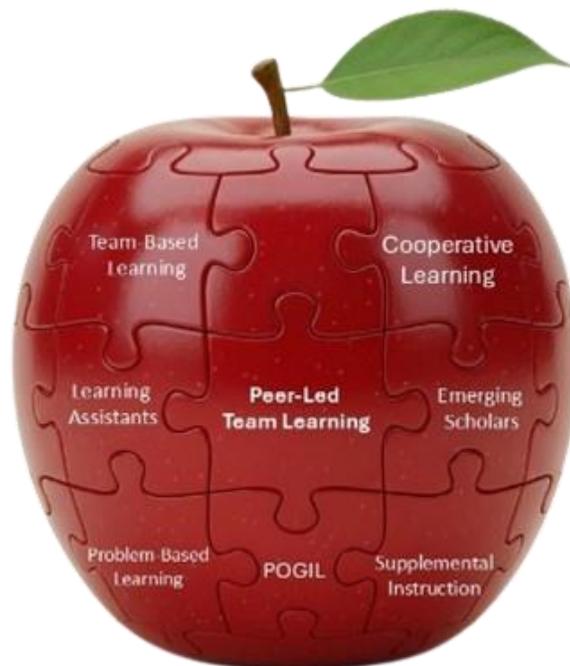
💡 Minding Your Qs (Or: Quick Tips)

PLTLIS publishes the on-line journal, *Advances in Peer-Led Learning* (APLL) at
https://journal.pltlis.org/ In the next issue, coming soon, the journal will introduce a serial
contribution entitled *Quick Tips: For Peer Leaders, By Peer Leaders.* QTs benefit PLs looking for
practical strategies to engage students by offering effective ways to spark collaboration and
increase participation. If you are a Peer Leader and have a strategy that is useful for learning
(for example, in PLTL Workshop), please submit it as a QT for APLL: journal@pltlis.org
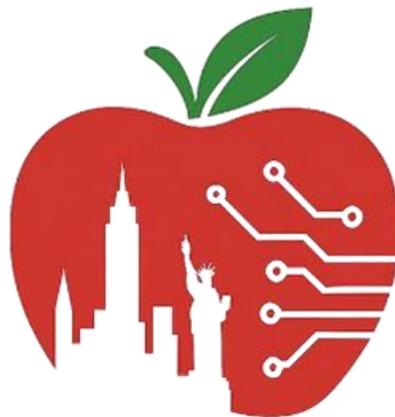

The Big Apple is Hosting the 14th Annual PLTLIS Conference

Wednesday – Saturday, May 27-30, 2026

Hybrid format!

For more information: https://pltlis.org/annual-pltlis-conference/

✨ Short Takes

- Are you on LinkedIn? Post to and share your PLTL news. Share your enthusiasm and spread the word about PLTL!

- SHARE this Quick Link to the PLTLIS Website:

Learning Today,
Leading Tomorrow!