

# How To Start A PLTL Program

# Critical Components

- Admin support
- Course instructor closely involved
- Appropriate physical environment
- Trained and closely supervised leaders
- Small groups (5-8 students); attendance required
- Appropriate materials

# Critical Components

- Admin support
  - \$\$ for team-leader salaries
  - “Credit” for program supervisor
- Instructor involvement
  - Reviews materials, suggests topics
  - Attends weekly meetings
- Appropriate physical environment
  - Not desks in rows!

# Critical Components

- Trained and closely supervised leaders
  - Pre-semester training
  - Weekly meetings
  - Journals
- Appropriate materials
  - Good fit with course material; relevant!
  - Engaging; appropriately challenging
  - Variety of styles
  - Suitable for groups

# Timeline

- Get institutional support
- Ensure compatible program leader, course instructor
- Do team-leader recruiting
- Do participant recruiting
- Do team-leader training (materials available)
- Do materials preparation (much available)

# Resources

- The two PLTL Workshop Project books
- Our website [pltlcs.org](http://pltlcs.org)
  - Under construction, up soon
  - Database of exercises
  - Info on setting up program, peer-leader training
  - Listserve
- pltl.org from Workshop Project

## Resources (cont)

- Us! We are happy to help out:
  - Steve Huss-Lederman: [huss@beloit.edu](mailto:huss@beloit.edu)
  - Susan Horwitz: [horwitz@cs.wisc.edu](mailto:horwitz@cs.wisc.edu)
  - Susan Rodger: [rodger@cs.duke.edu](mailto:rodger@cs.duke.edu)

# Peer Leader Selection and Training

- Important attributes
  - Excellent interpersonal skills: Interactive, communicative, supportive, positive, responsive, respectful of others
  - Ability to adapt
  - Responsible
  - Experience with PLTL
  - Very good knowledge of materials



## Where / How to Look

- Did well in PLTL course and other CS courses
- Peer leader recommendations
- Demographics you want to support
- Availability (initial training, weekly meetings, sessions)
- Personal invitations and/or application
- Interviews
- Formal commitment (Guidebook pp. 38-42)

## Peer-Leader Training (Guidebook pp 43-58)

- Expectations of a peer leader
- Peer leader goals and concerns
- Running peer-led sessions, esp. the first one
- Group Work
- Diverse student learning styles
- Sensitivity (race, gender): pp. 56-58 of Guidebook; Chaps 7-8 & pp. 106-114, 136-156 of Handbook

# Expectations Of Peer Leaders

- These will vary by institution but some common ones are
  - Time with students, for meetings, prep time
  - Effectively run sessions
  - Keeping student attendance
  - Journal
    - Invaluable to coordinator
  - Honest feedback of sessions and their feelings
  - For some programs
    - Help prepare activities
    - Additional programs (dinners, trips, ...)

## Peer Leader Concerns

- Everyone is different, so get them to let you know what they are worried about
  - Remember, you pick overachievers who tend to worry!
- Some common areas
  - I'm not ready for this nor am I special
  - How do I create the right environment
  - How do I deal with hard questions
  - How do I deal with problem students
  - How will I get prepared for sessions
  - How much time will this take

(p. 44 of handbook)

# Boundaries

- Peer leaders need to know the boundaries in working with other students
  - Limit outside contact
    - Dealing with being friends with group member
  - Dealing with student requesting lots of other help
    - Personal issues, class work, ...
- When to refer student to others
  - Problems for coordinator to deal with
    - Emotional, out of control behavior, ...

# Expectations of Students

- These were created by peer leaders (see handout)
  1. Come to session prepared
  2. Attend and be ready to participate by the beginning of the session and stay throughout
  3. Be an active and engaged participant
  4. Be patient with the process
  5. Be willing to ask questions
  6. Let your peer leader know what you like and dislike in the sessions
  7. Respect others
  8. Food allowed but use common sense
  9. We take a 5-10 minute break during sessions

# The First Session

- New peer leaders are generally very concerned about the first session
    - Make sure they totally understand each activity, its objectives, and possible difficulties for the students
    - Have them do the session
    - If possible, give them time to think about and return to ask more questions
  - It is very important to make the first session a success
    - Pick activities to capture participants interest
- (pp. 16-23 of Handbook)

## Diverse Student Learning Styles (Chap 4 & pp. 83-90 of Handbook)

- Engaging **all** students central to PLTL success
- Undergraduates rarely think about learning styles
- Peer-leader training should introduce this topic:
  - VARK: <http://www.vark-learn.com/english/page.asp?p=advice>
  - Saginaw Valley State University learning-style inventory: [http://www.loweradirondack.net/cgi-bin/robolab05/learning\\_style\\_1.cgi](http://www.loweradirondack.net/cgi-bin/robolab05/learning_style_1.cgi)
  - Keirseley Temperment Sorter-II:  
[http://www.advisorteam.com/temperament\\_sorter/register.asp](http://www.advisorteam.com/temperament_sorter/register.asp) (copyrighted but can take if register)



# Learn More about PLTL

- 1.5-day workshop at Duke University
- April 28-29
- NSF funds for travel
- Bring your students!

<http://www.cs.duke.edu/csed/pltl/>

## Concerns (from workshop)

- If pay per credit then either time or money