

Student Perspectives

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From PLTL April 2007 Workshop

The Student Perspective

- From Participants and Peer Leaders April 2007

Duke - Joanna Shih, Tiffany Chen

Beloit - Kendall Tallmadge

Georgia Tech - Dannon Baker, Brittany Duncan,
Beth York, Toni Walden

Loyola - Jackie Kenney, Caitlin Costaney

Madison - Erica Loppnow, Stephanie Arndt,

Jeff Hugo, David Hoffert, Daniel Strommen

Rutgers - Helen Nayfeld, Tom Schirripa

Advantages to Participants

- Partake of upperclassman wisdom
- Form a peer base - meet fellow students in their cohort
- Have fun learning problem solving skills
- Supplemental problems deepen their understanding of CS basic concepts
 - Solidify concepts learned in class
- Have extra programming practice
- See CS in a different light than before
- Enjoyment of interactive learning in a group

Advantages to Participants

- Learning to work together and using everyone's strengths to solve problems
- Learning to see concepts or situations from differing perspectives
- More comfort discussing ideas because of informality and small group size
- Staying engaged via hands-on activities

Advantages to Participants

- Form natural study groups
- Exercise some creative freedom on how to approach PLTL assignments.
- Finding out what one can do with a CS degree
- Having an extra CS resource for questions

Disadvantages to Participants

- Difficult to balance relevant vs. interesting material
- Widely varied CS backgrounds
 - Students may feel intimidated
 - Some advanced students may find group learning pace too slow
- Students may not find exercises interesting, especially at the beginning

Advantages to Peer Leaders

- Participating in curriculum development
- One-on-One teaching experience (as compared to classroom)
- Improved communication skills
- Getting to know the student participants
- Personal rewards of fostering student learning
- Reward of giving back to university community

Advantages to Peer Leaders

- Learning more about CS themselves
 - Challenged by facilitating solution of supplemental problems
- Networking among peer leaders
- Improved leadership skills
- Ability to try out educator role to see if it suits
- It's fun!

Advantages to Peer Leaders

- Develop Skills
 - Writing new exercises
 - Learn to explain new concepts in many ways
 - Adapt to different personalities and learning styles in a positive way
 - Working effectively in a group
- Best feeling is helping someone else become knowledgeable and passionate about CS
- Gaining insight in to how different people learn
- Realizing that I like teaching

Disadvantages to Peer Leaders

- Takes time to learn how to peer-lead properly (learning curve)
- Can get tedious presenting the same material in a following semester
- Can be intimidating at times
 - Can feel you need to know all the answers to any question posed
- Takes time that is not available for other activities