

Peer Leader Selection and Training

Susan Rodger
January 9, 2009

Adapted from PLTL April 07 Workshop

Peer Leader Selection

- 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

- 1-day training via spring workshop
 - Get together with other schools doing PLTL
 - Experienced leaders help train new ones
- One or two half days just before semester starts
 - Review responsibilities and concerns
 - Have new leaders do some practice sessions (maybe with “role playing”)
- Weekly 2-hour meetings
 - Discuss problems, concerns, approaches
 - Go over this week’s exercises

Peer-Leader Training

- 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

(Guidebook pp 43-58)

The First Session

- New peer leaders generally very concerned about the first session
 - Need comfort with activities
 - Have them do the session
 - Time for reflection valuable
- Important to make first session a success
 - Pick activities to capture participants' interest

(pp. 16-23 of Handbook)

Expectations Of Peer Leaders

- Let's brainstorm on what you expect

| Things Done | Things Not Done |
|-------------|-----------------|
| ▪ ? | ▪ ? |

Expectations Of Peer Leaders

- Let's brainstorm on what you expect (from Apr.07)

Things Done

- Attend regular class
- Help with concepts
- Contact with faculty
- Create exercises
- Feedback to faculty?
- Student knowledge level (individual?)
- Know who work for

Things Not Done

- Not solve assignments
- No grading
- No academic recommendations
- No teaching?
- No lecturing
- No personal snitching
- Reporting cheating?

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, ...)

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, ...

Let's Break Up Into Groups

- How people work in groups
- Dealing with difficult participants
- Peer leader concerns
 - Running out of material or not finishing
 - Embarrassing self
 - Not knowing if doing right/wrong
 - Not being liked
 - Fear of public speaking
 - Knowing role: student/leader/....
 - Problems cannot deal with
 - Personal safety
 - Talking too much or not enough

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)

Expectations Of Students

- Let's brainstorm on what to expect

Expectations of Students

- These were created by peer leaders (Apr 07)
 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

Thoughts, Questions, Other?