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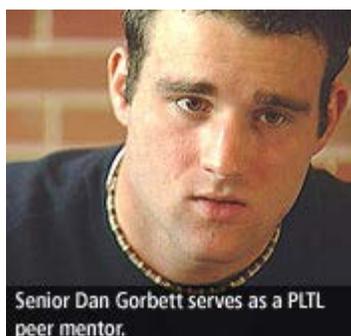
Now in its fourth year, Spotlight on Learning, a University-wide showcase of the best learning-centered teaching practices implemented in the classroom, continues to bridge the gap between scholarship and instruction and to foster collegiality across disciplines. Spotlight on Learning 2005 is April 8 in Baker University Center.

Peer-Led Team Learning brings active environment to chemistry students

By *Bethany Miller*
March 4, 2004

Some say chemistry is a lonely discipline because interaction only occurs between the student and a book, says Jared Butcher, associate professor in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at Ohio University. But Butcher and Assistant Professor Lauren McMills are helping to change that.

McMills, Butcher and other faculty of the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry have incorporated the Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL) Model into the general chemistry and organic chemistry sequences. Outside of the courses, these learning communities encourage active learning, sometimes lost in lecture classes, and help students to develop their own knowledge and understandings of chemistry.



Senior Dan Gorbett serves as a PLTL peer mentor.

"The students work through the problems themselves, talk the language of chemistry and communicate with other students to show they understand the concepts," McMills says.

The Peer-Led Team Learning Model is a one-credit, pass/fail, attendance-based supplement to chemistry classes and requires students to meet with a peer mentor (an undergraduate who has had the class, done well and gone through facilitating training) along with a group of six to eight students once a week for the duration of the course.

"The mentor does not introduce new material or lecture," Butcher says. "They don't give answers; they may not know the answers. The mentor's job is to facilitate and help the students find the answers."

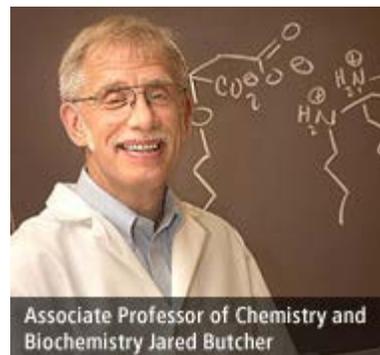
So far, the PLTL has had many positive outcomes. Students enjoy the learning communities, and the success rate, determined by a C- or better in a class, is better among PLTL students. The retention rate also appears to be higher with a nine percent increase in the chemistry 151 class since implemented, says McMills.

"Attitudes toward the classes, exams and grading are all much better," Butcher says.

The learning communities grew from small trial classes in the summer of 2000 to currently 31 PLTL groups this quarter in two general chemistry classes and one organic chemistry

Related Video Clip

- [View an "Ohio Extra" story about the PLTL Model](#)



class. The program began after McMills attended a conference where she participated in a PLTL as a student. She and Butcher, who also was interested in collaborative and cooperative learning, then joined in bringing the learning communities to the University.

For more information on the Peer-Led Team Learning Model (Workshop Model), visit www.pltl.org.



Bethany Miller is a student writer with University Communications and Marketing.

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