Abstract - Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL) is an innovative active-learning curriculum intervention for improving student success, retention, and leading to more timely graduation in the engineering and science disciplines. ‘Plus Two’ PLTL has been successfully integrated into six courses in three disciplines at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). ‘Plus Two’ substitutes two hours of Workshop: small-group, active, collaborative learning guided by an undergraduate STEM student (Peer Leader) for one hour of large section lecture per week. Since fall 2000, the C-or-better passing rate in first semester general chemistry here has improved from the historic average near 53% to the current rate above 70%, translating into an additional 160 students successfully progressing each year into their engineering, science, and mathematics majors. Over the past six years the authors have trained many groups of students to become successful peer leaders at their respective institutions. The three-hour workshop proposed is designed for faculty members who want to learn how to train students to adopt the active learning strategies and pedagogical skills to be successful leaders in PLTL Workshops. Participants will become practitioners by ‘learning by doing’ in this session.

Index Terms - Peer-Led team learning, Training peer leaders

TRAINING OF PEER LEADERS

Substantial, constant, and consistent training of peer leaders and participating faculty is essential to the success of Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL) [1] – [3]. Integration of the small group, active, collaborative PLTL Workshop innovation within key discipline-specific coursework requires extensive training and oversight of undergraduate peer leaders.

TRAINING FACULTY TRAINERS

Facilitators in this Workshop will emulate the styles used at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) and The City College of New York (CCNY) in taking participants through several training activities. Participants will receive copies of materials and workbooks [4] they can use on their own campuses to conduct training of peer leaders. Peer leaders on the two campuses learn team-based pedagogical techniques; they practice how to engage students; they become familiar with different learning styles; they model Socratic questioning and constructivist learning; they gain strategies for team formation, and they continually lead students in the report-out of team-processed work product. In all training activities, the facilitators model the behavior they want the peer leaders to use with their students in a course. Peer leaders practice learning how to ask the “why” and “how” questions they will ask their students in the context of problem solving, concept building, or hands-on activities.

Three kinds of training currently take place at UTEP: 1) three-day pre-semester sessions consisting of generic and discipline specific training, 2) weekly ”preview” sessions specific to the course, and 3) occasional Saturday retreats. At CCNY, training for new leaders begins with a one-day pre-semester orientation and continues in ten weekly classes (one-credit course). New and experienced peer leaders also participate in a weekly “prep” session to review course content, and practice modeling what techniques to use. This Workshop on training the trainers will give examples and an overview of these kinds of training. Participants will then engage in activities taken from the training agenda.

REFERENCES

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