



Inspire

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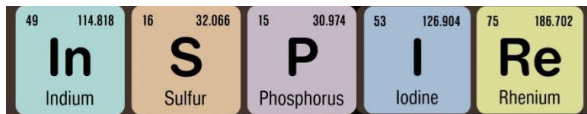
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Enduring one of the hardest semesters that I've had so far, I'm not sure if I would have been able to make it without being part of the peer leading team. Without the privilege to lead and be buoyed by my students, I wouldn't have survived because workshop is once again my safe and happy place. I felt this way when as a first semester freshman, I took General Chemistry I and found workshop was my safe place. At that time, I enjoyed workshop as a student and now I'm enjoying it as a Peer Leader. Peer leadership has become one of my best college experiences. Yes, it's been challenging, and I was super scared at first. Yet life is precisely about taking risks, and as Stephen King says "The scariest moment is always just before you start. After that, things can only get better." And things did get more than better!

My peer leadership experience helps me to learn and grow in many ways. Though I have a shy personality (and there's nothing wrong with that), I'm now more confident when expressing my ideas to others. I still get a bit anxious when speaking English (since it's not my first language), but that's another area in which I see improvements. In workshop, connections with other students like me gives me a sense of belonging.

In one of our weekly meetings Dr. Becvar said something that really stays in my mind: "Workshop is more than chemistry; it is a space in which your students will build relationships." I couldn't agree more. During the semester, I could see how my students made friends with each other and how they even organized their own study group sessions. How wonderful! Peer Leaders should never forget that we're sharing space and time with not just students but human beings. Although it might sound obvious, I'm saying this because sometimes I've felt treated in some classes more as another number in a list of 300 other IDs rather than as a student; I didn't want my students to feel the same way. The focused workshop groups allow each of us to truly care and connect with them. Our students have lives (I know - it was shocking to me too when I discovered this). Their lives are hard sometimes; yes, we're there to help them succeed and guide them through Chemistry topics but also to create a safe environment where they feel listened to and respected.

From the beginning of this semester, I observed an introverted workshop student. Something seemed wrong so I wanted to make sure she had the confidence to talk to me if she found it necessary. Some disaster in her life left her struggling and having a very difficult time. Her concentration fell off because of her challenges. The only thing that I could do was seriously offer my available help and empathy. At the end of the semester, she gave me a thank you letter. It was beautiful and heartwarming and gave me great personal satisfaction. One never knows how much our students are experiencing, so it is wise to be kind and let them know they can count on us at any time. That's our role too!

Honestly, the Peer Leader experience is incredible. Truly connecting with each of my students, I feel like I learned more from them than they learned from me. I'm grateful to belong to the peer leading team, working and having good relationships with the other Peer Leaders as well. I know I am not perfect but to be honest, I don't want to be perfect. Because perfect is not real, I would rather accept my mistakes and keep learning and improving from them! Thank goodness for having the chance to continue doing it!