Lessons Learned from Taking Postsecondary Peer Assisted Learning Programs Online in 2020: Raw Survey Data

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Introduction

In early May 2020, invitations to complete a brief survey on postsecondary peer assisted learning (PAL) programs and their operation online in response to Covid-19 were posted to several national and international email listservs. Directors from 45 programs completed the survey. Since the survey was anonymous, it is impossible to know the institutional type and their locations. It is a reasonable guess that most respondents were from the U.S. with others from Australasia, Europe, and North America.

As promised, the survey results are presented as they were received without data analysis. It is with deep gratitude to the program directors for taking time from the busiest time in the academic term in the middle of this pandemic to share valuable information with our world community of PAL professionals. Their comments were candid and honest about the things that went well and those that did not. Considering that the move to online was accomplished without warning, no time for preparation, and under incredible stress, I marvel at what was done all things considered.

Previously, I shared a link online for an annotated bibliography of publications about taking PAL-type programs online. These are programs that offered online PAL in the past. I first remember reading about online study groups with publications from Australia dating back a couple of decades ago. I reproduce that link again here of the bibliography, https://z.umn.edu/palprovidedonline At the end of this raw survey report, I also provide some of the articles from that bibliography that provide more detailed information on how they took their programs online, lessons they learned, and web links so you can download and read them.

I provided these previous online PAL publications not for purposes of comparing with the experiences of this academic term, but rather completing the picture. Given enough time, resources, training, preparation and the rest, the results would have been even better. There are valuable lessons from the current reality and reports of the past.

I plan to make available later in May 2020 my best sense of the collective lessons from these articles and the raw survey responses. I will post that report to the same listservs that I posted the original survey invitation. It will be available through the following weblink: https://z.umn.edu/lessonslearnedonlinepal You are welcome to do the same with your understanding of the survey data. Feel free to use it in your own publications. I never claimed it was a research study, but rather a snapshot of what just happened. No doubt, there will be a flurry of publications that will emerge from this calamity on how programs were taken online and the lessons the programs directors learned.

I admire the creativity, tenacity, and energy of these PAL program directors to have done so with little to no time for the change. The same admiration extends to their cyber online study group leaders. When students most needed you, your student leaders, and your programs, you responded and met the need. Well done.

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1. What training was needed by participants and facilitators to maximize the online peer groups?

1. Tech trouble-shooting, prep necessary before participants logged in, determining participation
2. Most of the training involved the new online platform. In our case, ConferZoom within a Canvas shell. Our SI Leaders were all given the opportunity to complete a 4-6 hour self-paced training on Canvas and ConferZoom. Those who completed this first part were invited to an online training meeting in ConferZoom. They followed the same steps a student would to access the meeting. In the meeting, I demonstrated all the features and then asked each SI Leader to demonstrate how they would use the platform in their SI sessions.
3. technical training - we moved to Zoom and needed to familiarize everyone (tutors and learning consultants) with the platform before any students were present
4. We created a zoom training for all our tutors.
5. Technical support
6. reading of previously written articles
7. What information is needed for tutors
8. We provided our peer leaders with step-by-step instructions including screen captures to set-up their Zoom profile and schedule their Zoom session meetings. We also created a number of other tutorials and documents outlining the various tools and technology available to them as they facilitated sessions, such as breakout rooms, connecting to their iPhone or iPad as a shared screen, GoBoard, etc.
9. We did not have specific information for participants on how to utilize our services, but we did create some resources for them to use during online learning. We created a grid where they could input their class and support resource information as a way to track which course was using which video conference platform so students have all information in one place. We also started some Canvas workgroups that students could opt-in to for their course. These workgroups had pages for each peer leader with information about their sessions including an agenda for the upcoming session. Students also had access to tips and open education resources through this workgroup. We also recorded one leader's sessions for each course so that students with no/limited internet/computer access could return and view session information at their own schedule and pace.
10. Yes, but only had time for quick how-to tutorial videos about the online platforms
11. How to use the platform; How to gather attendance data & document; how to manage participants
12. We had no training. In retrospect, I would have found some zoom training and google hangouts training.
13. Knowledge of online software and online medium such as Zoom. Zoom had breakout groups feature to encourage groups and then the breakout groups can get together in a full group.
14. Our initial training of facilitators is framed around online delivery (we don’t offer on campus as yet) and uses the basis of the official PASS training and combined with training on how to use ZOOM functions, facilitation tricks, and they have to

develop and then deliver a practice session via zoom (from another room). Participants don't need additional training in our experience - they click the link to enter, and the facilitator explains how to do a particular activity much as they would in a class environment. The facilitators use a brief/ plain PowerPoint to show the activities for the session, but it's still monitored and designed to ensure that it doesn't look like they are teaching.

15. a training manual and online optional practice sessions
16. basic Zoom functionalities
17. Based on the data we collected, the following were the most popular answers regarding need for training: 1) online strategies for collaborative and active learning, 2) using whiteboard features for showing work (and Zoom knowledge in general), 3) strategies for engaging participants
18. technology
19. We developed a 3-hour mandatory training that applied to group tutoring, Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL), and recitations. There was not enough time to train the groups separately, so we had to build a training that would apply to everybody. We ran that training three different times to fit everybody's schedules, and we invited them to team up with their coworkers afterward and just log on, start up a session, and role-play for the sake of getting some practice using the Zoom environment. We asked them to record their practice sessions as proof that they did it, and we paid them an extra hour. This was optional but most people did it. After that, we required weekly Zoom staff meetings where we put people into breakout rooms to discuss what was working and what was not, and the groups reported back after we closed the breakout rooms. This was very helpful in enabling the staff to customize their knowledge and skills to each different program.
20. Ran through what Zoom could do in large groups, then leaders allocated to small groups in separate zooms (set up) to practice with each other - changing hosts and experimenting with the program.
21. how to use Zoom
22. Lots of training was necessary which included technological platforms for content delivery.
23. Use of Blackboard Collaborate - sharing files/screens/whiteboard; Accudemia - signing students (and themselves) in and out (different setup than normal); Students had to follow a set of instructions to be able to log in to Accudemia and schedule virtual appointments (posted on our webpage and also emailed to instructors to give to students)
24. Building of confidences among tutors, staff, and faculty that success was attainable through the online course/tutoring.
25. remote learning tools such as zoom, google meet, jamboard, white board apps
26. for participants: a quick-start guide (orientation to the platform, session etiquette, how to get the most out of online SI);
27. For facilitators: a more thorough orientation to the platform, accessibility training, how to facilitate collaboration online, marketing and promoting online SI, tracking attendance, privacy and confidentiality.

28. The facilitators needed training in using the technology (Zoom with breakout rooms) and managing the online environment. We started a learning commons, and the shift online was rough. Facilitators needed more training on assertiveness. Participants left video and audio muted, so they didn't collaborate.
29. Training in using Zoom, but with a pedagogical understanding. That is, leaders needed to be trained in the basics of the technology, but also trained in/supported through "translating" the kinds of activities they would run in a face to face session into something equivalent on the online delivery platform. I brought in the Learning Designers from each faculty to run these training sessions for the leaders, which worked very well. I also offered extra training in dealing with students in distress.
30. facilitators: how to use the online platform (logistics of starting the session, using the whiteboard, breakout groups, share screen features); because we were short on time we focused on operations and didn't spend much if any time training on group interaction in the online environment
31. most had to learn Zoom quickly
32. platform usage: google hangouts, blackboard collaborate, goboard
33. Initial remote meetings on platform of choice - total of 4 hours spent navigating interface. Ongoing 1 hour weekly meeting/trainings for rest of academic term.
34. The following training are extremely important to the effectiveness of the online sessions (SI sessions and individual tutoring sessions):
35. Training on the online platform to help peer leaders be familiar with all the features that they can use during the online session, then partner up to hold a few practice sessions to be comfortable on the online platform is also important.
36. Familiarization and utilization of video conference platforms.
37. How to use LMS Canvas conferencing tool, Big Blue Button, as a moderator, and as a participant. I think other training in communication and techniques will be needed in future. We did not have the luxury of time needed to develop well thought out processes. We will have this time as we prep for fall 20. One thing we will add to training is "tutor assertiveness" though I am not sure what that will look like yet.
38. We had been doing online SI as part of a pilot for all of fall 2019 and the first half of S2020--before covid 19 hit. We used what we had learned during our pilot to train our S2020 SI Leaders to provide SI sessions online. The SI Leader who piloted the F2019 Virtual SI project provided the training. We used BbLearn Collaborate Ultra as our platform. We used the SI model--with questioning strategies, student-to-student engagement strategies and assessment strategies in online sessions, the same way we do in person.
39. It was a lot of learning as we went. Used Webex and google hangouts as a resource.
40. trained student leaders on using Zoom
41. using zoom and break out rooms
42. Training in how to use Blackboard Collaborate Ultra as a video conferencing/learning tool
43. Training in what tools within Bb CU were useful - e.g. the Whiteboard, using different colored 'pens' for different students, using Google Docs forms for groups

within the breakout rooms to complete together, using the private messaging to give a student a word or term to use for Pictionary or taboo so other students could guess what it was, etc. etc.

44. Managing expectations - students are generally less chatty online, silences are more challenging and attendance is lower in most cases.
45. SI leaders had to participate in two trainings for how to use Blackboard Collaborate Ultra (BCU). How to set up their session and choose settings (I had to go in and change some because of SI leaders who didn't follow instructions), use chat, breakout rooms, share screen, etc.
46. Facilitators (SI Leaders) needed training on how to use the features of Zoom. For our department, this was done fairly informally in one of our weekly team meetings. We introduced some of the key Zoom features and gave all the SI Leaders on the team try to find them out. Finding their facilitation style on Zoom was done primarily through trial and error - every SI Leader, professor, course is different and would require a different transition to the online format, so we wanted to provide space for that process to unfold.
47. We provided "drop-in" Zoom training sessions for our student staff. No formal training was provided for participants.
48. Overall training on how to teach the SI leaders to use redirection of questions and checking for understanding in an online environment.
49. Our SI Team Leaders hosted training sessions for their respective team members, demonstrating the use of teleconferencing tools Google Meet and Zoom. All SILs were provided the recordings and PowerPoints used in that training and were then split into virtual break-out rooms with each team, so that each SIL could take turns presenting, screen-sharing, etc.
50. Instruction of the use of the platform, we use Black Board Ultra. Instruction on the use of the online scheduler. We use WCOnline. Tips on online practice that varies from face to face interaction.
51. Participants, none, but facilitators needed training on multiple systems just in case one system went down. They needed to know how to operate all features and troubleshoot.
52. Training on online platforms. Training on how to adapt activities to an online environment.

2. How were online sessions organized differently than traditional face-to-face sessions?

1. Students at home had a wide variety of tech available (and spotty internet sometimes) so we could not rely on as equitable participation
2. We found the more successful SI leaders resurveyed their students, they did not use the old face to face SI schedule. Sign-ins are automatically recorded by Canvas and Zoom, so those weren't necessary. SI leaders were told that whenever a new student came to the session he or she needed to spend a few minutes or move the student into a breakout room with another student to get him or her up to speed on the Zoom platform. Small group work or think pair share were easily achieved using the breakout rooms.

3. group tutoring (which is normally drop-in) was changed to appointment priority with limited spaces available per tutor (there's no limit in person) / all time periods were shortened - being on zoom can feel much longer and more draining
4. We decided to do all drop-in online instead of small group and study groups. We are moving to a small group model (online) in summer.
5. discussion based
6. discussion leader
7. Over the summer, we have shortened the length of our sessions from 80 minutes (traditional length for in-person) to 60 minutes.
8. Not much differently
9. More of a drop-in and out atmosphere, as opposed to committing for an entire session's duration
10. I believe that synchronously is the best because peer groups can see each other in real time and interact in breakout groups or chat and then in a discussion group later after the session.
11. Also, synchronous classes provided for similar activities as the face to face; asynchronously does not do that.
12. We haven’t done face to face sessions.
13. it was rushed, we kept the same time and tried to send out a link but it was harder
14. We moved from drop-in to appointment based to help manage traffic flow. Other than that, the sessions ran normally. We had students compliment us on the transition
15. Our regular 1.5 hour sessions twice a week were not preferred by students. Some changed to 1 hour meetings and others did 2 hours just once a week. We didn't have "office hours" previous to this, but everyone transitioned to 1 hour a week of drop in virtual office hour.
16. Could not use our typical walk-in method. Had to identify specific courses, then had open sessions for those courses
17. They still met synchronously, the groups all had the same members as before and the same leaders as before, and they were still expected to be hands-on. As much as possible the PLTL leaders tried to replicate the features and flow of an in-person session in their Zoom sessions. Getting the students to engage was harder online than it was in person, and we had a lot of issues with students having equipment that was not optimal for solving math problems in an online session (writing with a mouse instead of a stylus, for example). For that reason, the PLTL leaders fell back on showing students how to do problems more than we would ordinarily want them to.
18. Main thing is that we basically replaced all the sessions we had booked for face to face into online sessions. Some were poorly attended, but that would have been the same in face to face. Leaders had to set up zoom when we realized that we couldn't be hosts of Zoom meetings happening at the same time as each other.
19. We used breakout rooms in zoom. We had a student worker "manage the desk" and assign clients into the appropriate breakout rooms when they entered the drop-in tutor meeting.

20. Sessions were shortened, content was condensed sometimes.
21. They really weren't - we continued to offer drop-in tutoring online; we also added online appointment availability as well, but those weren't much different than an f2f session.
22. Distribution of time to incorporate finding the starting-place, connecting with the learner, understanding the online course difference at mid-point in the semester, delivering the information to supplement for the learners.
23. breaking into groups was not allows possible
24. 2 leaders instead of 1. Initially we asked leaders not to review content, but to check in with students re. wellness, strategies for finishing the semester in alternate formats, and social connection. For the new semester, we are still trying to figure out how to capture attendance. Leader placement in the room is irrelevant, but collaborative strategies and use of status updates (confused/happy/thumbs up/etc.) are important to so leaders can read the "room"
25. We reduced the amount of time from 80 to 60 minutes.
26. Many sessions are now run with a PPT to structure the movement from activity to activity. This was very rare in our face to face sessions.
27. organization was the same, links to online sessions were posted on our website; at the beginning some session time was spent familiarizing students with the features of our online platform
28. obviously no hands-on; it became more like an online tutorial session with Q&A
29. same hours just different delivery method (see above)
30. Time frame was more open (easier to be flexible in scheduling). Sessions were extended to 1 hour due to software limitations.
31. Online sessions required that students have access to reliable internet and/or the necessary tools in order to connect with a peer leader. Then the peer leaders have to assist students with the various features within the online platform such as upload a document, screen share, using the whiteboard (using the mouse or a stylus pen), the sound/microphone, etc. All of that was not part of the face-to-face session. Once the student gets acclimated to the online platform, then content assistance can happen.
32. Instead of regularly scheduled, large group sessions, SI leaders focused primarily on ad hoc one-on-ones or small group sessions as requested by students. Some leaders prepared narrated worksheets or PowerPoints and distributed these materials in lieu of sessions altogether.
33. They were not organized very differently. We kept the same days days/times as they had been for f2f, plus we added other time slots. Tutors were allowed to offer some off schedule appointments to meet student needs.
34. SI Leaders posted welcome, login and group guidelines in the main room and then posted a variety of different types of problems in various breakout rooms. Much like having different types of problems on different whiteboards for students to work on in face-to-face sessions. They still did an intro, a campus resource of the day and a study tip of the day as part of their intro before moving into pairs and small group work.

35. It was pretty much the same. We kept the sessions at the same time and created online training rooms for students to access, we linked these to the canvas pages and our center website, for easy access.
36. times and format stayed mostly the same, just using Zoom
37. Less actual SI, more tutoring. We published recordings of SI.
38. Attendance - students had to write down their student numbers/ids in a list
39. Group work - breakout rooms were used, students didn't necessarily use their mics but might do in the breakout rooms
40. Chat - relying heavily on students communicating through chat instead of speaking into mic
41. No face to face - most students do not want to turn on their cameras or mics, so PASS Leaders are often 'leading blind' with no visual cues
42. Some activities were the same - worksheets that students could work on together, diagrams that they could draw on/label together, concept checking questions used and redirecting used.
43. Beginning was time to get attendees' audio and video working. Good idea for first session after going online was to only have it as "how to use BCU" session and not so much content. Things like a practice test was given out a day or two before-hand, whereas for f2f sessions, attendees got it and worked on it during the session.
44. We tried our best to keep things consistent by utilizing Zoom's breakout rooms for group work. In some classes however, students didn't like the breakout rooms and would drop out of the session. In an in-person SI session, students could in theory walk out of the room but typically won't. Students were also less likely to respond to questions posed by the SI Leader; I think this is in part due to the feeling of anonymity that being online brings.
45. No substantive difference in organization.
46. There was less "board" work. I did encourage my leaders to use techniques that allowed students to give activities that students could give answers and leaders could type them in or add them to a document, but students were not able to do that. We also did not break students out into small groups to work together, although our sessions were typically small. Those things could probably be done with more advances training on the platforms that we use, but there was not time to train both the leaders and the students to do those things.
47. To record data, instead of our Peoplesoft data system (institution's CRM), we used WCOnline for students to make online appointments. Tutors working remotely did not have access to Peoplesoft on their personal devices. Then, we had to retroactively load the data into the Peoplesoft system. When we had walk-in tutoring, those sessions were recorded differently from 1 to 1 appointment-based sessions.
48. Very similar, not anything truly different.
49. Difficult for SILs to do any group work or other interactive activities

3. What online engagement and interaction activities were different than traditional face-to-face sessions?

1. anatomy typically is in a lab; we used draw-it-to-know-it to help facilitate that; there was a lot less individual work then turn to a partner situations because the tolerance for silence online was very low and students' proneness to distraction was high
2. The features in Zoom allow for most of the techniques used in SI if the SI leader is trained to use chat, non-verbal responses, shared screens, annotations, polls, and breakout rooms to achieve them.
3. group tutoring (formerly study hall) underwent the largest change - in person students are encourage to work together in small groups and the tutor can move around and check in with different groups - online the tutors were essentially working with one small group the whole time, all conversations are heard by everyone so if the tutor is helping someone everyone is listening, there's no option for a simultaneous side conversation
4. Zoom sessions. Some tutors were very creative and used tablets for whiteboard or physical white board.
5. Weekly meetings
6. discuss funny things
7. Some leaders created PowerPoint slideshows to help structure their sessions. They would share their screen and then break students into breakout groups to work through a problem or would generate a conversation among the entire group.
8. Screen share, file uploading
9. We didn't have a platform for two-way whiteboard use, which altered engagement activities.
10. The two most challenging aspects were (1) not being able to see everyone's face and broader body language and (2) not being able to easily write on each other's paper. We used the zoom white board and wrote on it with a mouse or touch pad. It was slow and clunky. Many students could not (or would not) show their faces. Gauging understanding or comfort-level was impossible.
11. Students' faces were all up on the screen, so their focus was actually better than in a classroom. There must be a "share screenshot" feature in the software used during the sessions. (One student was looking away; we caught him, and he shared a deer eating in his front lawn. We all enjoyed that!)
12. as above
13. online whiteboard in zoom
14. For Supplemental instruction, our leaders had to really enforce CLTs and making students answer questions to get participation. Most students wanted to simply turn their camera off and just wait for answers.
15. We were on spring break when the announcement was made on Thursday that classes would resume online on Monday, so we had no time for training/preparation for these prior to starting, so folks largely relied on what they already knew to get started, but many found resistance to participation and that sessions turned into more like Q&A sessions or individual tutoring (because of low attendance)
16. did not development new/different activities Tutors worked virtually by still face to face with students

17. The process of pairing students up to solve problems together was done by putting them into breakout rooms in Zoom. After pairs had finished solving problems and comparing methods, they would exit their breakout rooms and demonstrate the solution in the main Zoom session.
18. Leaders looked for some new tools that I wasn't aware of. It was all so quick we had them finding their own solutions. Whiteboard was used in Zoom and lots of google docs and co-contributing from students.
19. Very difficult to use Zoom for problem-solving sessions. We used screen share/annotation features. We would have liked to have had access to web cams for all of our tutors to be able to show work easily but this was not financially feasible.
20. We utilized telephones and laptops. Instructors used iPads and fashioned stylists to write out problems.
21. We had a really hard time even getting students to come to us for online tutoring; I still don't know if the information didn't get to them, or if they just were too overwhelmed/busy/disinterested to come to us. That was the most frustrating part; once we did get students in we had good success with helping them, and things went fairly well most of the time, but just getting them to come in was the hard part.
22. One activity that required a different approach was understanding the effects on students of the methods used for course information delivery: virtual lecture, required independent learning, problem solving without group-think opportunity.
23. board work became a challenge
24. Virtual white board; assigning students to breakout rooms; combination of synchronous and asynchronous tech. Leader can turn mics / cameras on and off or allow users to do it themselves.
25. I don't have enough direct knowledge to answer
26. leaders used Kahoots more
27. level of interaction - even though they were face to face via one of the platforms virtually, took longer to use whiteboards or explain content
28. Pivot to more problem-solving strategy sharing/collaborative worksheet scenarios.
29. The online interaction requires that students be more vocal with their needs while traditional face-to-face sessions enable tutors can tell from the body language/facial gestures. The online environment is beyond our control while the in-person session we are able to control the environment (such as minimize the distraction, creating an environment that is conducive to learning).
30. Tutors reached out to students more frequently via LMS mail, and by attending instructor led check ins. Our center did many more system-wide out reaches. We also schedule group time for students that we knew had their regular study buddies and their regular tutor. We reached out to faculty more than we would have done, asking them to mention, "Your tutors are here" on a regular basis.
31. SI Leaders felt like they were more easily "pulled" into talking and often struggled with the 80/20 rule because students wouldn't use their camera and usually had their mic muted--even when asked to turn it on. The common answer from students was "my mic doesn't work."

32. Kahoot, we encouraged students to turn on their camera and ask student to have their camera on for more participation. Encouraged check ins every 10 mins, we didn't get to use breakout session but we will in the fall. Encouraged them to use share screen so students could the content.
33. just slightly modified versions of the usual activities
34. Less wait time (traditional SI method) and pair share--students were so overwhelmed with the entire move online they didn't have patience (didn't blame them) for basically SI's filling in where science faculty had done a poor job of putting classes online
35. As above
36. Attendees used chat to answer questions. Used whiteboard to brainstorm ideas. Share screen allowed for many possibilities including bingo board, kahoot, showing parts of body for A&P, etc. Breakout rooms for discussion and then whole group reporting. Raise hand if you agree, know answer, or have question.
37. We relied a lot more on technology of course, utilizing Kahoot!, Jeopardy Labs, PollEverywhere, and Google Docs/Sheets/Slides for in-time collaboration much more than we typically would. Rather than providing small groups with a worksheet to complete problems as a team, the SI Leader would often share separate Google Drive documents with each small group so they could work on completing questions/problems together. The SI Leader could then monitor each document to see the groups' progress, where they needed help, and correct/incorrect answers.
38. Our student staff reported that it was much more challenging to encourage engagement and interaction in an online environment.
39. Unfortunately there was less redirection of questions. Some of that was because of the very small number of attendees, some of that was because of the difficultly with doing that online. I would like to hear from others how they trained their SI leaders to continue with that online.
40. Tutors used e-mail much more extensively to keep in touch with students. A mass e-mail was sent weekly to all student clients to remind them of services available and encourage them to keep moving forward. It couldn't compare with the Tutoring Center environment of welcome and periodic treats, but it was all we could do.
41. All of them. Getting students to interact was difficult, had to have things written out for students, manipulating the muting system, and calling people very directly rather than openly.
42. SILs reported a decrease in student engagement during sessions.

4. What are the essential design features of online meeting software? This question is not asking for endorsement of a particular meeting software system.

1. ability to put students in groups dynamically and see all groups, ability to mute/unmute their mics.whiteboard space that students can download/save as notes, ability to upload pictures/documents, screenshare capacity
2. These are listed in the presentation I shared in the last question.

3. screen sharing - this has been essential for collaboration / we have relied heavily on breakout rooms for both tutoring (allowing students to drop in to a main room without disrupting anything and being sent to the correct class) and workshops (allowing students to discuss and collaborate in small groups)
4. Chat
5. whiteboard
6. ability to invite others
7. sharing of screen
8. Breakout Rooms or something similar.
9. Screen sharing, whiteboard feature, tablet/stylus
10. Two way whiteboard; controls for tutor to manage participants (mute, end screenshare, etc.)
11. Chat, screen share, breakout groups, interactive PowerPoint program; technology help, ability to invite outside participants as speakers to the sessions, "conference" tab to meet one on one with a student
12. Ability for all to interact and yet still have controlled by the facilitator for security/ management of the "room". Ability to break into smaller groups, whiteboard that can have a picture uploaded and have participants annotate (particularly good for anatomy, etc.), ability to screen share, ability to have video and voice (low bandwidth too), and chat type function also helps if people having tech challenges, etc. Also cloud hosted option rather than needing to be downloaded (bandwidth)
13. chat, video, microphone, interactive whiteboard, poll or quiz function, breakout rooms
14. functional whiteboard
15. Whiteboard feature for working problems. Some people were able to rig their camera to operate as a document camera in Zoom.
16. easy to use good whiteboard feature accessible to all students easy screen sharing ability to "see" participants good video/audio quality
17. We used Zoom and TutorTrac. Group tutoring sessions were already managed through TutorTrac before we went online. Once we went online, we created PLTL and recitation sessions as basically large tutoring appointments in TutorTrac. We did this so we could take advantage of the feature in TutorTrac that allows you to enter the Zoom meeting URL for teach tutor into their tutor profile and have it show up in the student's main menu screen next to each appointment. Students would access their sessions by logging on to TutorTrac, accessing their list of upcoming appointment, and clicking the blue Zoom button next to the appointment, which both recorded their attendance and took them directly into the waiting room for their session.
18. Zoom has a waiting room for security (session leaders could compare the name of each person in the waiting room to the list of students they were expecting to see so they didn't accidentally let an unauthorized person into the session), breakout rooms, chat, audio, and the ability to write and annotate. Also, files could be shared directly in the session by posting them to the chat box. Rather than use the Zoom whiteboard, most of the leaders opened a new document in

OneNote and shared their screen, and afterward they could save it and distribute the notes.

19. We also liked it that Zoom could be set up to automatically record sessions so there was proof that the staff was actually working. For security and privacy reasons, we did not distribute recording links to students, but we did have the leaders forward their session links to a central location so we could verify that they were logged on and conducting their sessions as they should be.
20. Zoom is not great. It would be better in Webex I think (Wollongong) but we don't have it. You've got to be able to break up groups into rooms. Sharing screens. Sharing documents (our university blocked that, so the leaders are using google docs instead).
21. secure, ease, ability to screen share and annotation is very useful
22. Microsoft TEAMS and Moodle BBB (Big Blue Button)
23. File/screen/whiteboard sharing by ALL participants; the ability to split people off into small groups for one-on-one or small group tutoring is essential, and should be able to be done by the tutors, and not only the center's director.
24. Online meeting software suggests use of a protocol or step-by step feature which may become more important in the summer term with all courses online.
25. ability to close unwanted guests, group breakout, whiteboard, screen sharing
26. Whiteboard, breakout rooms, chat features, presentation mode, poll feature, and allowing the leader to designate students as presenters.
27. Breakout rooms, collaborative white board viewable by more than 2 participants, chat, screen-sharing
28. Virtual whiteboard/share screen/facilitator needs to be able to control video and audio mute, entry of participants etc.
29. breakout groups, shared whiteboard
30. recording of sessions, face to face feature, chat, shared screen, shared whiteboard, link to resources
31. Screen sharing, annotation, file sharing.
32. The online meeting platform has to be interactive and the online sessions have to be synchronous.
33. Video, audio, chat, screenshare, 'whiteboard', file share
34. Ease of use, no new accounts or downloads for students, low bandwidth, were essential during the spring 20 quick action response. We have students with no or sketchy internet access.
35. BbLearn Collaborate Ultra uses a "main room" with a whiteboard and "breakout rooms" also with whiteboards. Our SI Leaders posted things on paper on the whiteboard so that students could work over the paper without erasing the board. Mic, camera and screen sharing were routinely used--when students were comfortable doing so.
36. share your screen feature, chat box, recording attendance automatically, the white board feature although is not very used friendly on webex since it works like a word doc, this become difficult to use when solving complex equations, for example.
37. ease of use, ability to put people into groups and re-arrange groups, ability to share screens

38. breakout room, sharing screen, recording
39. Breakout rooms, cameras, microphone, and chat function, ability to draw on the whiteboard and share screens.
40. Breakout rooms, whiteboard, screen sharing for all participants, raise hand, whole group chat and private chat, timer (BCU had disabled their timer feature because of low bandwidth), being able to mute participants.
    - Whiteboard type feature for writing
    - Breakout rooms feature to put students into small groups
41. Ease of use, screen sharing, whiteboard.
42. You really need to be able to create break-out rooms and screenshare. If you also have access to a virtual whiteboard, that's optimal, but you can always use a shared Google Slides file for whiteboards.
43. Visual and audio presence for both sides of the meeting. Document share. Shared white board. Scientific and mathematical symbolism capacity. Ability of the software to utilize older operating systems.
44. Bare minimum, share screen, whiteboard, video, chat, and file share.
45. Big Blue Button through Canvas Conferences for SI --> breakout rooms; whiteboard; shared notes; chat
46. Zoom for tutoring --> whiteboard; students not allowed to be given pro accounts, so no group tutoring

5. How were expectation levels for online participants and facilitators different than traditional face-to-face sessions? For example, did you expect less or the same number of topics covered?

1. We expected the same amount of content covered, but to do this we had to extend times of sessions by 15 minutes in order to accommodate tech issues. Even if we got the facilitators trained, we had no way of forcing students to view tutorials before logging in. As participants changed over the weeks (coming and going), there was seemingly always one person who couldn't figure out the tech.
2. I expect less to be achieved online due to the nature of online communication. Just as less is achieved in an online meeting versus face to face.
3. in tutoring - given the limited spaces and time we expected students to attend with more questions and problems than to simply work with others and seek help when needed (more the norm for in-person study hall) / for learning consultations and workshops our expectations were largely unchanged
4. Expected the same
5. more flexible
6. same topics, just extra flexibility
7. We did not change these expectations specifically. However we did start using a more general observation protocol to provide feedback to leaders on their sessions as our in-person rubric did not translate well to online. Our main points we were looking for were: 1) leader's use of questioning techniques, 2) leader's use of available technology/resources while facilitating, 3) leader's connection and rapport with the participants.
8. I expected a bit less due to technical difficulties or the initial adjustment period

9. Topics covered were more random, often just questions about particular problems as opposed to concepts or approaches; much less attendance
10. We covered fewer topics -- but only because we lost a week of class -- not because we couldn't have covered it had we had the same number of class days.
11. For me they are no different because of the Zoom and Canvas technology and the technology help that the university gives. Students gave presentations online in real time.
12. Number of topics covered varies depending on the size of groups, just as it would in face to face.
13. It was a bit harder to engage, if students didn't have a mic or even if they did you couldn't get everyone to answer, in a room you can get someone to answer better, online they just don't have to respond
14. we expected the same
15. Because we didn't have a way of setting expectations regarding technology for SI Leaders, we expected less because some folks had to make do with what they had. Not everyone had cameras, microphones, or even reliable internet. We suspended formal observations and asked leaders to prioritize peer connections in whatever way they were able.
16. Did not have expectations. It was too sudden to build expectations
17. We didn't explicitly state to the leaders that it was okay to cover fewer topics in a session, but we did tell them to be patient with themselves and their students, and especially to be patient with students who didn't have the right type of equipment or who didn't feel comfortable keeping their webcams on. My impression from leader self-reports is that it took them a few weeks to get the hang of it, and after that, they were almost as productive in their online sessions as they were in their in-person sessions.
18. Less. Everything is slower and harder. Leaders who have previously got through a certain amount with the class have had to do less and set more homework instead.
19. less
20. Initially we just didn't know what to expect, but we were eager. We learned new techniques every day.
21. Defining expectations requires emphatic assertiveness of peer tutors and staff.
22. dependent on the SI Leader or tutors ability to adapt to changes
23. Only previous SI attendees were attending online sessions in the last 1/4 of winter term. We'll see about participation rates for summer and fall.
24. We anticipated energy levels would drop after an hour, so fewer topics covered would have been natural.
25. Yes, we expected fewer topics covered. The Learning Designers emphasized to PASS Leaders that sessions would probably be a fair bit slower than ftf, and also that perhaps since all the students were transitioning to online learning and it was a steep learning curve for many at a generally stressful time, that making/encouraging social connection and/or just helping students learn to use/get familiar with the technology was as important a peer learning activity as their coursework in the first couple of weeks.

26. I expected whatever they were willing to give. It was thrown at us too quickly to do much about it; since the Zoom sessions are only 40 minutes, they were not able to cover as much.
27. expectations were lower since we knew it would take longer to explain/discuss content
28. Slightly decreased. Emphasis on depth instead of breadth. 1-2 topics per session vs 2-4 when in-person.
29. It is expected that interruptions can happen in online sessions, while the in-person sessions can be in a controlled space in the tutoring center or space designated for tutoring.
30. I don't understand this question.
31. SI Leaders expected the same participation, but didn't get it. In our pilot, during F2019, we had close to the same attendance in Virtual SI as we did in person--and a great majority of students in the exit survey (85% or better) rated Virtual SI as being as effective or more effective than face to face SI. But during covid sessions online, we saw a huge drop in attendance as compared to our usual Virtual SI sessions. Students struggled to engage overall--both in class and in SI sessions.
32. less, since it was an abrupt transition, students needed the extra time to trouble shoot if there were technology problems
33. expected less participation/attendance but same types of activities and material covered, times and schedule didn't change so no reason not to cover the same amount of material
34. See above. fewer topics
35. Expected to cover more but actually covered less - lower numbers and less use of microphone and text chat instead meant activities and feedback takes much longer
36. I had told SI leaders to plan fewer activities because they would take more time (as per suggestion from UMKC trainers). SILs reported that it seems attendees miss and want the social aspect and don't all need content instruction as much as when classes were f2f. SILs reported that attendees are very nice and understanding when technology fails or things take a while online.
37. Prior to our switch to online, we served 3,993 unique students. After returning to Spring Break and switching to online sessions, we saw 1,970 students return to sessions and 744 brand new students. The expectations of the influx of new students were different - they did not feel connected to other classmates in the session as they had not built relationships and they did not understand the expectation of group collaboration and working through the material with your classmates to learn it. Many of our newcomers came for a "practice worksheet" with answers. They were viewing SI sessions as a quick fix to get clarity from that day's lecture, rather than a collaborative learning process.
38. With the rather rapid and forced move to online at the end of spring semester, everyone was really in "emergency mode" and just trying to finish the semester as best we could give the circumstances.
39. they were often able to do less topics, also less group work and interaction among students

40. We had very few expectations except for ourselves to do the best we could. It was unchartered water; we couldn't expect what lurked below. What was realized was fewer topics, significantly fewer students utilizing services.
41. Less topics because of the length of time it can take to deal with technical issues.

6. Any other general comments about the online peer learning experience.

1. The resilience and dedication of my facilitators was amazing!
2. Our student staff seemed to handle the transition well and offered feedback that the approach we took worked, but we saw substantially lower participation from students once we moved to a virtual environment (we also moved to option PDF grading for the semester)
3. We plan to continue offering some level of PAL support online in addition to our in-person services once university classes return to normal. We have heard from a few students that they did not utilize PAL until we made the switch to online services due to schedule/work/family restrictions.
4. While my classes maintained a sense of community when we moved online, we had built that community over a couple of months of in-person work first. I am concerned about how I would build community if I must do it online from the beginning.
5. I would like to have at least 4 face-to-face and the rest could be Zoom. It would give me flexibility.
6. To be honest, I think people make it out online to be harder than it is. Instead of approaching it as a "how do we / can we convert" it should be more along the lines of what are the EXTRA benefits of meeting up online? There are so many tools that can be added that you don't have available or as easily accessible - and it can be a much more engaging and inclusive experience for students. Socrative "space races" for example, online crosswords, interactive whiteboards (much like face-to-face without the embarrassment of what if I'm wrong), sharing of links, etc. It's much less intimidating too.
7. attendance was a lot less, students seem over everything being online, I think an online option for external students is a good idea but not everything
8. We saw a drastic drop in attendance for tutoring.
9. Though from a program perspective it was a very rough transition, students and campus partners have been quite effusive about their appreciation of the efforts SI Leaders made to stay connected and supportive.
10. Students did not avail themselves of the available tutoring. It was very disappointing.
11. I think the biggest struggle was fighting the urge just to fall back on reteaching the material because it would have been so much easier. Having the ACTLA guidelines for online tutoring gave us something "official" to point to demonstrate that yes, online sessions are still expected to be interactive with students taking an active role in their own learning.
12. Based on half a semester's experience, it's just not as good. More talking from the leader, less engagement from the students. Students still not turning on

cameras either due to shyness, reticence, laziness or bandwidth. Makes it so much harder. But it'll have to do for the time being.

13. We saw a significant drop in our usage numbers after the switch to remote tutoring.
14. Our five weeks online was a huge pilot that was successful. It was stressful for students and faculty, yet we succeeded and learned so many new things. As an administrator, I did a lot of coaching and I believe this was extremely important. I also resolved issues immediately. Internet issues, participation, motivation, and the stress of the pandemic were always present.
15. Peer learning is impacted by motivation of the learner/students. Peer learning is anticipated by the faculty. However, during this transition, peers and faculty are still learning to work together.
16. attendance was lower, too much screen time for students
17. Our assessment data is positive, with one student saying we switched to online better than their instructors had. Several said it was as good an experience as could be expected under the circumstances. We note that releasing PAL from physical meeting space opens up temporal meeting space so we can hold sessions in the morning or afternoons when classrooms are not available. Moving into the post-covid phase of life, we have high hopes that online peer learning will permit students to feel like they are having the same kind of experience as meeting face-to-face without the barriers of physical distancing, face coverings that block nonverbal communication, and concern about safety for facilitator or participant should some people refuse to practice safety measures.
18. It has been very interesting to me to have a couple of years now of 'thinking about' how we could offer PASS online, as a single coordinator of 80+ PASS courses and then to have had basically a week and a half to shift the program to online delivery. Despite the intensity of the stress across that period, there have been many great things to come out of it. We are known thinking that we will run parallel face to face and online sessions when we eventually return to campus. We have had a lowering of participation across the board, in line with the drop-off in other academic support services at our university, but we have also had higher participation in some specific courses (maths and some engineering courses) than ever before, which is something to think about.
19. The other thing i find interesting is that when I polled the PASS Leaders two weeks earlier, almost none of them thought they would want to run PASS online, and now they tend to have a similar feeling to mine - that we can and should offer this alongside face to face delivery going forward.
20. Learning curve but I think we got it down now! :)
21. Encouraging students to engage with online peer support has proven difficult.
22. Students largely disengaged from supplemental academic support resources. The peer-to-peer learning experience largely faltered due to lack of motivation, not for lack of effort on the part of the leader or adequate technology.
23. My area is SCI, mainly Micro, A and P I and II, intro to Physics and CHEM. Our usage fell off almost totally. Even tutors who had steady participation across fall 19, into spring 20 (A and P I and II) semester had zero participants once we went

to all online. I have seen this fall off mentioned on the listserv. It seems like SI groups fared better for keeping up participation, than other groups.

24. Having used Virtual SI during both a regular semester and during the Covid-19 outbreak, I can say that the engagement we saw during the Covid-19 outbreak as NOT AT ALL representative of what we saw in a normal Virtual SI session. Attendance was much, much lower during covid when the students' stress level and anxiety level were reportedly greatly increased while their motivation, energy level and ability to concentrate/focus were reportedly greatly reduced.
25. when we switched from face to face to online supplemental instruction, there was a noticeable decline in attendance in the sciences however attendance in accounting SI remained the same
26. many students dropped out of tutoring
27. Some students in our program have responded really well in big numbers (e.g. Medicine and some Health Sciences), other areas have dropped off (e.g. statistics and physics). In general, I think at our uni, students like coming to PASS because it's a very different experience to lectures, however, when EVERYTHING is online, they get 'Zoom Fatigue' and don't necessarily want to log on AGAIN to look at a screen again.
28. I'm at a community college, and SI attendance is low anyway, anywhere from 0-18 participants each session. After going online, some SILs never had any students come all six weeks. Some had none one session and then four the next. It was very frustrating and discouraging for them. They were able to post announcements in their class sections on Blackboard, but still for some classes, students didn't come, even for SILs whom I would consider to be charismatic and outgoing. Low student attendance was definitely the most disappointing. But also, for some, it's very low even on campus, even after I myself went into classes to promote SI.
29. We did a survey of our SI attendees and 62% preferred in-person sessions; 37% preferred online sessions, mostly for convenience.
30. We made the decision as a program not to record SI sessions for a plethora of reasons, but we had many requests from students to do so in the future. Unfortunately, this is not something we will do, but I figured it was worth noting here.
31. Thanks for putting this together! I'm eager to hear about others' responses.
32. Our learning center's professional and student staff were generally pleased with how well we made this transition given the circumstances.
33. Several students expressed that they were overwhelmed with having to learn online platforms. Reinforced were my long-held thoughts that as an institution, we overestimate our students' abilities with technology. Yes, they are great with phones and apps that provide them with what they need. But, their ability to navigate unfamiliar software with laptops or desktops is much more limited. Analogy: they can drive a car if everything is working properly, but if the car won't start, they have no clue about what to do.
34. Students were very willing to adapt. Participation in SI spiked first week online, then significantly decreased after lax grading policy was implemented.

Bibliography of Publications and Training Materials for Online Study Sessions

Free online training tutorials for online teaching and study groups:

Russell Stannard, award-winning classroom educator who has trained thousands how to use technology and is considered the "go-to" expert on Zoom software
Main website: https://www.teachertrainingvideos.com/
Zoom video collection: https://it.umn.edu/technology/zoom

YouTube training for online tutoring and small groups, select playlist for "*online tutor training*" and "*tutor training*": http://z.umn.edu/lacyoutube URL for the playlist is https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCF_7MV_5oazCOu8VyWOchGg?view_as=subscriber

Publications related to online peer study groups:

Annotated bibliography of publications reporting research studies and techniques for online study groups, https://z.umn.edu/palprovidedonline Some publications are focused on the research study and provide few clues how they actually work. The following citations are publications that provide more information how their programs operate online.

The following publications from the annotated bibliography described above provide detailed information how the programs operate online and are also available for download online.

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Beckmann, E. A., & Kilby, P. (2008). On-line, off-campus but in the flow: Learning from peers in developmental studies. *Australasian Journal of Peer Learning, 1*, 61-69. http://ro.uow.edu.au/ajpl/vol1/iss1/8

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