The Student Perspective
Participants and Peer Leaders

Duke - Joanna Shih, Tiffany Chen
Beloit - Kendall Tallmadge
Georgia Tech - Dannon Baker, Brittany Duncan,
                Beth York, Toni Walden
Loyola - Jackie Kenney, Caitlin Costaney
Madison - Erica Loppnow, Stephanie Arndt,
           Jeff Hugo, David Hoffert, Daniel Strommen
Rutgers - Helen Nayfeld, Tom Schirripa
Advantages to Participants

- Partake of *upperclassman wisdom*
- Form a peer base - meet fellow students in their cohort
- Have fun learning problem solving skills
- Supplemental problems deepen their understanding of CS basic concepts
  - Solidify concepts learned in class
- Have extra programming practice
- See CS in a different light than before
- Enjoyment of interactive learning in a group
Advantages to Participants

- Learning to work together and using everyone’s strengths to solve problems
- Learning to see concepts or situations from differing perspectives
- More comfort discussing ideas because of informality and small group size
- Staying engaged via hands-on activities
Advantages to Participants

• Form natural study groups
• Exercise some creative freedom on how to approach PLTL assignments.
• Finding out what one can do with a CS degree
• Having an extra CS resource for questions
Disadvantages to Participants

• Difficult to balance relevant vs. interesting material
• Widely varied CS backgrounds
  – Students may feel intimidated
  – Some advanced students may find group learning pace too slow
• Students may not find exercises interesting, especially at the beginning
Advantages to Peer Leaders

- Participating in curriculum development
- One-on-One teaching experience (as compared to classroom)
- Improved communication skills
- Getting to know the student participants
- Personal rewards of fostering student learning
- Reward of giving back to university community
Advantages to Peer Leaders

- Learning more about CS themselves
  - Challenged by facilitating solution of supplemental problems
- Networking among peer leaders
- Improved leadership skills
- Ability to try out educator role to see if it suits
- It’s fun!
Advantages to Peer Leaders

• Develop skills:
  - Writing new exercises
  - Learn to explain new concepts in many ways
  - Adapt to different personalities and learning styles in a positive way
  - Working effectively in a group

• Best feeling is helping someone else become knowledgeable and passionate about CS

• Gaining insight into how different people learn

• Realizing that I like teaching
Disadvantages to Peer Leaders

- Takes time to learn how to peer-lead properly (learning curve)
- Can get tedious presenting the same material in a following semester
- Can be intimidating at times
  - Can feel you need to know all the answers to any question posed
- Takes time that is not available for other activities