Team-Based Learning:
Revolutionizing the Workforce Through Fostering
Scholarly Transformation, Knowledge Building, and Leadership
in Pre-Professional Academia

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Introduction

Greetings to all whom it may concern! My name is Antolice Thomas and I am an aspiring physician, currently concluding the University of California San Diego Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program and preparing to apply to medical school. I have had the pleasure of experiencing the Team-Based Learning (TBL) methodology on the InteDashboard platform for an entire year as my professor, Steve Schneid, has incorporated his uniquely modified version of TBL as an integral component of each course he teaches throughout the year, totaling 20 units. His courses are designed to teach us a significant portion of fundamental concepts we will learn in the first year of medical school to demonstrate academic readiness, and foster a seamless transition to the inevitable advancement in academic rigor. In that regard, his coursework is extremely challenging and in theory, likely the most difficult of all the program's courses. However, I've found it to be the highlight of my experience in the program, both objectively in terms of my ability to effectively learn the material, as well as the subjective psychosocial aspects of my learning experience. These triumphs are due, in *very* large part, to how he progressively empowers his students through the use of TBL. From my experience and the confidence I've gained with respect to my ability to excel in my future academic and professional endeavors, it's evident to me that TBL's impact transcends beyond the pre-professional setting in which it is utilized. It will revolutionize various industries as it transforms each new generation of professionals entering the workforce.

Intuitively, one may reason that the magic of TBL lies within its inherent constructive development of students' teamwork skills, for the purpose of mutually and effectively enhancing each other's learning experience and assessment outcomes. While this is undoubtedly a true hallmark of the methodology that is not to be minimized, having now become very familiar with TBL myself, I confidently venture to say that the magic actually resides within the transformation it ignites at the level of the individual, which then summatively translates to creating an impactful team-based learning experience. Beyond "Team-Based Learning," for me, TBL has represented Transformation, Building, and Leadership: transformation of the very essence of my scholarly identity and how I approach my studies, building of my fundamental knowledge base, which will be the indispensable foundation of my career, and leadership through recognizing my individual responsibility to contribute to optimal team dynamics and learning outcomes. In each aspect, I've had the humbling and inspiring privilege of witnessing the evolution of my TBL group members, including myself, yielding the strong bond and academic success we have achieved as a unit this past year.

Scholarly Transformation

Academic excellence is a core personal and cultural value of mine, so I have generally always been a responsible student. Even so, I found that TBL has holistically revitalized my scholastic approach and refined the principles on which I have built my identity as an intellectual. It's done so in part by serving as a powerful source of accountability, motivating me to actively engage with course material in preparation for each TBL session. Knowing that my team trusts me to be well-prepared and contribute to our collective success instills a strong internal sense of

responsibility to complete the pre-work. This sense of duty is a vital intrinsic motivator that constantly pushes me to deepen my understanding and stay committed to the learning process, even when the intensity of my workload grows and I become weary. This preparation empowers me to fulfill my desire to make meaningful contributions to my team's discussions, thereby enhancing both our collective comprehension and our performance on the Team Readiness Assurance Test (TRAT), which counts towards our overall grade. In this way, TBL has transformed my previous approach to consuming course material, once characterized by an initial state of passive learning followed by a progressive increase in active engagement, to consistent active engagement from the time I am introduced to the material through final examination. It creates an environment where the academic growth of my team as a whole, is driven by mutual accountability and a shared pursuit of excellence.

The InteDashboard platform has played a unique role in catalyzing this transformation and fueling my long-term commitment to the learning process for the benefit of my team. My instructor's use of the 360 Evaluation feature has single-handedly reshaped my learning experience and subsequent outcomes by fostering a culture of intentional growth. Through structured self-reflection, it helps me clearly identify both my strengths and areas for improvement, not only in mastering course content but also in my effectiveness as a team member. Its transformative nature in my experience is rooted in its ability to turn insight into action. My instructor designs the evaluations in InteDashboard such that I am challenged to create targeted improvement plans grounded in SMART goals, ensuring my efforts are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound rather than the futile, all-encompassing endeavor to "just study more." In my experience, this cyclical process of introspection and strategizing for improvement after each TBL session has proven to yield increasingly stronger learning outcomes both at the individual and team levels. Furthermore, its benefits extend beyond academics by reinforcing habits of accountability, healthy communication, and productive collaboration that directly enhance team dynamics, nourish camaraderie, and prepare us to be valuable assets to the numerous teams we will be a part of in the workforce.

Knowledge Building

My professor strategically designs his courses such that TBL sessions are scheduled relatively soon, often a couple days after a new set of material has been launched. Given that the content is still fresh for us, he fully anticipates that we haven't gotten to completely digest it by the time we arrive for TBL. This is intentionally done to allow TBL to serve as a tinkerlab where we get to dynamically engage with the material, embrace our mistakes, and hone are abilities to apply the concepts in a low-stakes environment. In doing so, we incrementally build our mastery of the content as well as the breadth and depth of our knowledge base. His modified implementation of TBL in which the difficulty level of the questions is significantly increased, but the assessments are open-note and the Individual Readiness Assurance Test (IRAT) is not counted towards our grade, constitutes this optimized environment for exploration, risk-taking, and knowledge building. It emboldens me to fully lean into the learning process rather than stress about the grade, granting myself the freedom to make mistakes and use them as tools to begin fine-tuning my knowledge. Team discussions further enrich this process by exposing me to a

variety of perspectives and approaches to applying course concepts, allowing me to refine my thinking through dialogue and debate. Not only do I get to pinpoint and rectify the origin of my mistakes, but I also get to affirm and fortify my correct lines of thinking. As such, I have never felt more comfortable with making mistakes in any other setting in my entire academic career as I feel in TBL.

While this comfort is duly attributed to the collaborative low-stakes environment, it is also notably due to TBL's unique utility as a continuous improvement tool rather than an isolated learning experience, supported by the InteDashboard platform. During the IRAT, I have the capability of distributing a fixed number of points equivalent to the number of answer choices, across the answer choices as I see fit in order to demonstrate full confidence in one answer or uncertainty between multiple answers. Moreover, I am not shown the correct IRAT answers at any point, even after it has been submitted. This design allows me to memorialize the evolution of my thought processes so that I may bear witness to my own intellectual growth. Since a significant amount of time elapses between TBL sessions and exams, I typically don't remember the answers to the TBL questions. I seized this reality as an opportunity to gauge my improvement and assess my readiness for exams. As a standard final step in my study routine, I return to InteDashboard and redo the relevant IRATs—this time with no external resources, just the knowledge I've built along the way. Not only am I consistently amazed at how much easier the questions seem, but additionally, seeing my previous answers makes me extremely proud to see how far my understanding of the concepts has come. Hence why I call it "the magic of TBL," because there's something extraordinary to be observed in the ability to go from 40% IRAT scores to above 95% on exams—the heaviest lifting of which is done on the playground that is TBL.

Leadership

TBL has profoundly sharpened my leadership skills by heightening my cognizance of my individual role in ensuring that all of my group members feel seen, heard, and valued. It has reinforced within me that a hallmark of an effective leader is not just knowing when to speak, offering input or guiding discussions, but more importantly knowing when and how to listen with empathy and awareness. I've learned to recognize subtle cues that indicate a teammate may be struggling, whether academically or personally, and to respond with sensitivity and intention. This requires discerning how to honor their unique circumstances, respecting their boundaries while finding ways to uplift and engage them so they are not left behind in the learning process. Becoming more attuned to the needs of others and practicing this kind of responsive and inclusive leadership came naturally for me as a result of being the first in my group to struggle as I was led to vulnerably express a need for their support in the beginning of the program. I distinctly recall the first of many times I communicated with them about the series of unexpected hardships I encountered, and how they verbally and nonverbally reassured me that I could lean on them, respecting my silence, but occasionally gently asking what I thought about a particular question. I saw and felt each of my teammates embody these principles, consequently fostering a more cohesive and compassionate team dynamic that stood the test of time as each of us encountered our bad days throughout the duration of the

program. As future physicians, this will prove to be an imperative skill when we work in teams with nurses and patients' families. We will need to preserve a level of objectivity, pressing on towards the ultimate goal of achieving optimal health outcomes. Nonetheless, subjectively, we will also need to remain mindful and sensitive to the fact that we are still humans, therefore subjected to the ebbs and flows of life, yet still worthy of being seen, heard, and valued.

Conclusion

To no small degree, TBL has redefined my identity as a scholar and enhanced my trajectory as a future medical student and physician. I am a more efficient student and well-rounded human being because of TBL. This individualized, multi-faceted evolution has translated to the cohesive, high-functioning teamwork and lifelong bonds my TBL group has had the pleasure and privilege of crafting. TBL's ability to ignite such transformational change in pre-professional academia will revolutionize the workforce as it becomes saturated with an increasing proportion of professionals who experienced TBL during their education. Through scholarly transformation, knowledge building, and leadership, TBL continues to prove through students including, but not limited to myself, that it is far more than just team-based learning. It's a gateway to a new and improved era of lifelong, active learning and a revitalized progressive culture of professionalism in the workplace.