Supplemental Instruction Resources for Instructors

The voluntary format of Supplemental Instruction (SI) can greatly impact student attendance in mentoring sessions. Oftentimes, the students who do not seek the assistance are the one needing it the most. Gaining participation involves dedication on both the mentor and instructor’s part to encourage students to attend. This involves educating students on what the program is, why it is beneficial, and if possible, providing some form of incentive for attendance.

This packet of information was developed from the Bepko Learning Center staff after researching what SI programs across the country are doing to market their sessions and encourage attendance. The diversity in these options should provide instructors with many possible ways to adapt what others are doing to your own course. They are divided into three categories: Model Description, Incentives, and Extra Credit.

Also included in this packet are suggestions that we provide to the SI mentors to increase attendance. This is included in their Academic Mentor Manual and discussed during their training.
Model Description
A simple way to increase SI session attendance is to just educate the students on what the model is. Students may be unclear as to the purpose of the session, the role of the mentor, and the format of the model. A great way to provide this education is by adding it to the course syllabus. This shows that the SI session, though voluntary, is a component of the course and not an ancillary resource.

Each course is different; therefore, one description may not reach all students. Listed below are various ways that instructors can describe what SI is to their students. You may use one as it is, or find it helpful to combine parts of some into one description:

Long description
Supplemental Instruction (SI) is an academic support program of the Bepko Learning Center that has been dedicated to a student-to-student philosophy. The SI program has been proven to have a significant impact on student performance and retention, improving GPA from .50 to 1.50 points. The SI program targets academic courses with a DWF rate of 30% or higher and provides regularly scheduled, out of class, peer-facilitated sessions for those courses.

The mentors are selected based on several criteria. Mentors chosen have demonstrated outstanding performance in the course, are able to work well with students, and model the ideal student on campus. As models, mentors are expected to present exemplary behavior in the classroom and model class participation such as taking notes and encouraging student responses. To help facilitate this modeling behavior and help fine-tune their interaction skills with students, mentors participate in ongoing training throughout the semester. In addition to training, the directors and student coordinators are available as additional resources to assist with the daily duties of a mentor.

Students who attend SI sessions discover appropriate application of several study strategies such as: note-taking, graphic organization, questioning techniques, vocabulary acquisition, test preparation, and material review. They have the opportunity to become actively involved in the course material as mentors use text, supplementary readings, technology, and lecture notes as vehicles for instruction.

Short description - general
Supplemental Instruction (SI) is assigned to historically difficult academic courses. SI leaders are model students who were previously successful in the course. They attend class and hold two study sessions each week. Based on the text and class lectures, they develop study guides, worksheets, quizzes, practice tests, etc. to share with students. Discussion centers not only on explaining and understanding course content, but also on more effective study skills and strategies appropriate to the particular course. SI leaders may work with one to three students, groups of eight to ten, or larger audiences of 20 to 30 in a test review session. Students may attend as many SI sessions as they wish. Statistically, students who attend 6 or more SI sessions for a course earn one-half letter grade higher than students who do not attend, earning more A’s and B’s and receiving fewer D’s, and F’s.

B. Fobar. Northern Arizona University
Short description - personalized
A Supplemental Instruction (SI) component is provided for all students who want to improve their understanding of the material taught in this course. SI sessions are led by a student who is competent in the course material and has been trained to facilitate group sessions where students can meet to compare class notes, review and discuss important concepts, develop strategies for studying, and prepare for exams. Attendance at SI sessions is free and voluntary. Students may attend as many times as they choose. SI sessions normally begin the second week of class and continue throughout the semester. A session schedule will be announced in class. For information about the program, session schedule/updates, and possible study guides, visit: http://blc.uc.iupui.edu
Jane Doe (jdoe@iupui.edu) has been assigned to provide SI for students in this course. Jane is a sophomore finance major and has done very well in BUS X100 previously.

J. Morrow. Kent State University

Good tips from the instructor
Supplemental Instruction (SI) should not be considered an alternative to class attendance. HOWEVER, regular attendance of supplemental instruction has been shown to result in higher grades. Why? There are several reasons. First, the more you think about complex material, the better the understanding of that material you will have. Second, many students comment that learning biology is much like learning another language. Much of the terminology will be new to you and not intuitive. The more exposure you have to the terms we use, the easier exams will be. Third, the SI mentor is an undergraduate like you and the SI sessions also tend to have fewer people in them. These factors may make you may feel more comfortable asking questions during supplemental instruction. Asking questions is an important aspect of learning. Finally, the SI mentor often covers material in a different manner than I will. Since people learn in different ways, you may find this very useful.

K. Ball. Utah State University
Incentives
The Bepko Learning Center uses the term “incentive” to mean items that provide motivation for students to attend SI sessions outside of points towards their grade. The following are some incentives that SI programs have added to their course.

- Instructors are encouraged to offer students additional material that is only available in mentoring sessions. This material could include items such as:
  - Bonus review materials
  - Additional worksheets
  - Diagrams/Maps/Images
  - Test preparation questions
  - Additional practice problems

- Some instructors have found it beneficial to ask the student mentor to hold a mini-mentoring session during class in order to show the benefits and encourage attendance.

- One of the most successful ways to increase mentoring session attendance is to show the students the facts of mentoring. The Bepko Learning Center will provide you with statistical information on the benefits of regular attendance in mentoring sessions. On average, students who regularly attend mentoring receive a higher letter grade in the class. Students who participate in mentoring sessions also have a higher grade point average than non-participants on average. Please contact a member of the staff to receive course specific statistics and historical data for your course.

- Simply encourage active attendance and participation to mentoring sessions. Frequent announcements and encouragement from the instructor may increase attendance in the mentoring sessions.

American University
**Extra Credit**

If instructors have the flexibility in their course, we encouraged them to offer students extra credit incentives for attending and actively participating in mentoring sessions. The following list contains a few examples of how instructors have implemented this into the course syllabus. Student mentors are trained to facilitate interactive and collaborative sessions that are both informative and fun for the students. The use of extra credit to encourage students to attend is beneficial in getting the students in the door. Past experience shows once the students attend mentoring sessions, many of them see the benefits and attend regularly.

- Allow one or more extra credit points for every mentoring session that a student attends and participates in.
- Allow mentoring sessions to replace a quiz or homework assignment. For example, attendance and participation in 5 sessions (1 point each) will replace a missed quiz (5 points).
- Allow active attendance and participation in a minimum number of mentoring sessions to increase a student’s grade by half of a letter grade. For example, attend 10 or more sessions and your grade will increase from an A- to an A.

B. Fobar, Northern Arizona University
Metro State College of Denver
Suggestions for Mentors (taken from the Academic Mentor Manual)

SI mentors have a unique challenge of increasing and maintaining session attendance throughout the semester. As a mentor, you are expected to help students to the best of your ability. But if nobody is attending your sessions, one of your responsibilities is to actively try to increase your session attendance. We want to ensure that the maximum number of students can benefit from mentoring, and also that you are able to improve your mentoring skills in your sessions. Below are tips on how to increase attendance in your SI sessions.

- Get your instructor involved in marketing your sessions. Some instructors have polled the class about their attendance during lecture and have reminded students about the importance of the sessions after students receive their exam scores.

- Speak to your instructor to compile data comparing exam or overall course grades for SI participants vs. non-participants. You can present this data to the class before lecture. This is especially effective when a major exam is approaching.

- Send messages or post announcements on Oncourse reminding students of your session times and days. Make announcements often before lecture reminding students of your sessions.

- If there is a particularly complicated topic being covered in class, let students know that you will be focusing on that topic during the sessions.

- If you have a student who attends your sessions regularly, and is enthusiastic about the benefits of the sessions, you can ask that student to give a short testimonial at the beginning of lecture.

- Ask students in your session to spread the word to their classmates about sessions.

- Upload activities onto Oncourse (without the answers) sporadically and let students know you will be covering the answers in session. Make sure the activity covers a complex topic so that students will feel they need to attend the session to benefit rather than just completing the worksheet/handout on
their own.

- Surprisingly, bringing candy can increase and maintain attendance. Sometimes students need a little extra motivation to attend! Make your sessions fun (without detracting from activities) by playing music or funny YouTube clips as they arrive.

- If all else fails, poll the class about a better time to hold a mentoring session and if your schedule allows, change your session time accordingly. If you feel that a change in day or time is necessary inform a student coordinator or staff member immediately, as room availability is limited.