Supplemental Instruction (SI)

Overview

Supplemental Instruction (SI) is an academic support program developed by Deanna Martin, Ph.D., at the University of Missouri at Kansas City in 1973, utilizing peer-assisted study sessions to enhance student performance and retention. In 1992, Iowa State established an SI program targeting traditionally difficult entry-level courses—those with a high percentage of D or F grades and withdrawal rates. Since its implementation, students who have attended SI sessions have earned statistically significant higher final course grades and withdrawn from courses less frequently than non-participants.

SI offers regularly scheduled study sessions to assist students with course content and study skills. In addition, students have an opportunity to work together to compare notes, discuss readings, develop organizational tools, and predict exam questions. The SI sessions are directed by “SI Leaders,” undergraduate students who have previously taken the course and have demonstrated academic competency in the subject area.

Key Elements of Supplemental Instruction

- SI identifies traditionally difficult academic courses rather than high risk students; SI is not a remedial academic program
- SI provides an opportunity for students to learn how-to-learn while learning what-to-learn
- Participation in SI is voluntary, free-of-charge, and open to all students in the course
- SI leader attends all lectures for targeted course
- SI leader is trained in group facilitation methods, student learning theory, and study techniques
- SI program is supervised by a trained professional staff member from the Academic Success Center
- The program is only offered in classes in which the academic department supports SI
- SI sessions begin the 2nd week of classes after students have given input as to when sessions will be scheduled
- The SI leader facilitates and encourages the group to process the material, rather than acting as an authority figure who lectures to participants