

STARTING AND RUNNING A SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION (SI) PROGRAM

EAST LOS ANGELES COLLEGE CONTEXT

AB 705/1705: SI serves as concurrent support to maximize completion of transfer-level English, ESL, and Reading courses
SI Boost: Students who attended SI had higher success rates, higher retention rates, and higher mean grade points, and these differences persisted after controlling for high school GPA, age, disability status, gender, ethnicity, and course type.

What is SI

- A course-embedded academic support model for historically challenging gateway courses with high D/F/W rates.
- A near-peer SI leader is attached to one specific course section and supports all enrolled students from week 1 through finals in class and through outside- of- class group study sessions.
- Sessions are voluntary, recurring, and tied directly to the course content and skills students are working on in class that week, especially the concepts the instructor identifies as most challenging.

Who is an SI leader

- A model student who is a classroom support, a college resource, and a bridge between students and instructor.
- Earned a B or higher in the target course and maintains at least a 3.0 GPA.
- Can communicate clearly, lead groups, and build rapport with students.
- Attends every class, weekly instructor meetings, and regular trainings.
- Completes planning sheets, attendance tracking, and routine program communication.

SI works at ELAC

3- Semester Program Review	Key Data Findings
SI vs. Non-SI Attendee Retention Rate	89.4% vs. 73.0% (16.4 percentage points gap)
SI vs. Non-SI Attendee Success Rate	60.4% vs. 34.6% (25.8 percentage points gap)
Mean Grade Point Difference	Students who attended SI earned grades about 0.7 grade points higher than students who did not attend.
Odds of success - SI attendance	Students attending SI were about 2.7x more likely to pass.

Session planning

- Through instructor guidance, the leader plans a structured session around the week's most difficult course content, selects collaborative strategies, incorporates course resources, prepares materials, and study/ soft skills.

Session planning sheet sections

- **Opener (10 min):** warm-up to activate prior knowledge, build community, and/or promote soft skills.
- **Main Activity (30-40 min):** objective, collaborative learning technique, learning strategy, and course content.
- **Closer (10 min):** reflection, lingering questions/ confusion, and/or future planning.
- **Checking for Understanding:** intentional planned questions around areas where students will likely struggle.

Soft skills SI sessions build

- Collaborating with others
- Starting assignments with more confidence
- Breaking down challenging ideas step- by- step
- Asking for help and seeking support
- Becoming a more independent learner
- Using campus resources strategically

Sample strategies that work in SI sessions

Every strategy should maximize student talk time and minimize SI leader talk time.

Strategy	Overview
Collaborative annotation	students read and markup a text together using a comment key.
Think-pair-share	individual reflection, partner discussion, group share-out.
Peer feedback	students exchange drafts and apply specific content criteria
Find the mistakes	students identify and correct mistakes in sample writing.
Group thesis workshop	small groups draft and refine arguable thesis statements on a white board.
Concept maps	support students in seeing relationships among ideas and course concepts.

How to start an SI program

- Start with the gateway course that most needs support identified by high D/F/W rates.
- Identify a small cluster of willing instructors who already teach that course and who will collaborate consistently.
- Recruit leaders from model former students who know the course and instructors (ideally) and communicate well.
- Build the model around sections, schedules, training, and coordinator oversight from the start.

Budget and barriers

- **What the budget covers:** pre-semester and regular SI trainings, weekly instructor planning meetings, content review and session planning time, two group sessions per week, attendance/logistics, and coordinator oversight.
- **Administrative support:** frame SI as an AB 1705 equity intervention.
- **Funding:** explore Student Equity, SEAP, Basic Needs, and Title V.
- **Faculty buy-in:** lead with outcome and participation data.
- **Near-peer pipeline:** recruit with faculty help from prior high-performing students.
- **Coordinator workload:** build a dedicated role from the start.

Semester implementation timeline

Before the Semester	Week 1	Throughout the Semester	End of Semester
• Identify target gateway course(s) using D/F/W data.	• Introduce SI in class immediately.	• SI leader attends every class and stays current with content.	• Collect usage and success data.
• Secure and train willing faculty.	• Promote days, times, and locations visibly for students.	• Hold 2 study sessions each week and plan them in advance.	• Review what worked and what to improve with faculty, students, and leaders.
• Hire SI leaders from prior successful students. Add SI leaders to section's LMS.	• Begin weekly instructor-SI leader meetings.	• Coordinator facilitates regular trainings and conduct SI session observations.	• Identify schedule, staffing, or training changes for the next semester.
• Build weekly session schedules around class times and SI leaders' availability.	• Start sessions in week 1 to normalize attendance.	• Track attendance and review participation patterns.	• Retain strong leaders and build the next recruitment pipeline.
• Run pre-semester training and set up session rooms, payroll, and attendance tracking.	• Communicate with students what SI is and what to expect.	• Promote sessions often: class announcements, Canvas, reminders, and word of mouth.	• Use participation and success data to strengthen buy-in and funding requests.