Supplemental Instruction (SI)
Faculty Partners Guide – Fall 2020

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Supplemental Instruction (SI) Overview and History

Supplemental Instruction (SI) was first developed in 1973 by Dr. Deanna Martin at the University of Missouri at Kansas City. SI is an academic assistance program that provides weekly, peer-led group study sessions for students taking historically difficult, gateway, and bottleneck courses. SI sessions bring students together in a collaborative learning environment where they improve their understanding of course material, review and discuss important concepts, develop study strategies, and prepare for exams. In SI, students connect *what to learn* with *how to learn*. SI is provided for all students who want to improve their understanding of course material and improve their grades; SI is *not* a remedial program for struggling or failing students. Students who attend SI sessions on a consistent basis traditionally earn a half to full letter grade higher than those students who do not participate in SI.

Purpose and Goals of SI

- Help students become more independent learners.
- Reduce DFW (D, F, and Withdraw) rates in targeted historically difficult courses.
- Improve student grades in targeted historically difficult courses.
- Increase re-enrollment and persistence of participating students.
- Ultimately, improve the graduation rates of students at MSU Denver.

By encouraging regular attendance, SI aims to accomplish these goals through helping students:

- Understand *what to learn* and *how to learn*
- Develop transferable study skills
- Gain problem-solving experience through trial and error
- Develop analytical and critical thinking skills
- Become more actively involved in the course
- Engage in discussion and collaborative activities with peers
- Build connection to the MSU Denver campus community

Key Elements of SI

- The SI Program targets historically difficult courses at MSU Denver. SI is designed to support faculty teaching and is assigned to courses based on challenging content – and that have a high rate of D's, F's and withdrawals – not because of the way it is being taught or by whom it is being taught.
- SI Leaders are assigned to a specific faculty/section(s) and plan and lead at least two 50-60 minute online SI study sessions per week that integrate *what* to learn with *how* to learn.
- SI Sessions are voluntary, outside of class, and beneficial for ALL students (not just for students who are struggling). SI Sessions are open to all students in the course section and is *not* viewed as remedial.
- SI Leaders attend all class sessions for their designated section(s) as a model student, getting to know the students and staying up-to-date with all course material, expectations, and challenging content to students. *For online synchronous courses, SI Leaders will attend class as they normally would for an in-person section. For online asynchronous courses, SI Leaders will spend time reviewing the materials their SI faculty is using to deliver content and intentionally engage with students as they work through those materials.*
- SI Leaders are encouraged to collaborate with faculty to discuss the course and how to best support the students.
- SI Leaders attend training before the semester begins and ongoing weekly professional development to continue sharpening their professional and leadership skills, including topics such as strengthening student academic performance, session facilitation tips, using inclusive language, and strategies for marketing sessions to students.
- Students who regularly attend SI Sessions earn higher grades and have lower DFW rates (D's, F's and Withdrawals). Data has also demonstrated higher graduation rates for students who regularly participate in SI.

Differences between Supplemental Instruction & Other Academic Supports

MSU Denver offers multiple academic support programs that focus on student success through peer learning. The purpose and role of each leads to a different approach to serving students. There are clear benefits for each program, and students are encouraged to utilize as many programs as will best meet their needs! (Note: Teaching Assistants' roles and responsibilities typically vary by department, and from Undergraduate to Graduate TAs.)

SI Leaders SI@msudenver.edu	**Tutors** Tutoring@msudenver.edu	**Learning Assistants** LA@msudenver.edu	**Teaching Assistants** Varies by Department
SI Leaders are assigned to a specific course/faculty. They attend a designated class as a model student and provide support for other students during regularly scheduled group study sessions a week outside of class.	Tutors are assigned to specific courses, but not a specific section/faculty. They provide walk-in and scheduled one- on-one tutoring sessions during regularly-scheduled hours at designated Tutoring locations around campus.	Learning Assistants are assigned to a specific course/faculty. They provide support for students primarily during class, as well as office hours outside of class, based on class needs.	Teaching Assistants are assigned to a specific course/faculty. They may support faculty by creating course materials, administrative tasks, and by presenting new material or re-teaching during class.
SI Leaders plan SI sessions based on challenging course content, faculty collaboration, active learning strategies, and students' needs.	Tutors prepare general content for one-on one and small group tutoring sessions and adapt to students' needs.	Learning Assistants meet regularly with faculty to discuss upcoming activities and how they will be involved in the classroom.	Teaching Assistants may hold office hours outside of class to assist students with homework and provide additional assistance.
SI Leaders emphasize collaboration, discussion, student engagement, and ownership of learning – as well as how these skills can transfer to other courses. They are trained and supervised by the SI Program.	Tutors emphasize individual study skills, organizational skills, and student ownership of learning. They are trained and supervised by the Tutoring Center.	Learning Assistants emphasize class participation, discussion, collaboration, student engagement, questioning techniques, and ownership of learning. They are trained and supervised by the Learning Assistant Program.	Teaching Assistants are directly supervised by the faculty and their support for faculty and students varies by department. They are generally placed in upper-division courses and labs.
BONUS: All these support services are FREE and can be used simultaneously by students!			

Faculty Role

Faculty support is critical to the SI Program's success. Typically, the more students perceive that the faculty and SI Leader are a team, the more students participate in SI. Research indicates that students participate in voluntary and optional academic supports much more when they perceive that support – like SI – aligns to the faculty's expectations of how to be successful in the course.

However, we fully recognize the busy schedules of our amazing *faculty partners. We do not expect faculty to be involved any more than they are willing or able. SI is not intended to create additional work or time commitments for faculty!*

What Are the SI Faculty Requirements?

- Introducing SI to the Class: If the course is **online synchronous**, allow the SI Leader to make a 2-3 minute announcement during the first class so they can introduce Supplemental Instruction to the class, let students know who they are and what an SI Leader is, share SI Session information, and personally invite students to attend SI Sessions. If the course is **online asynchronous**, allow the student to make this introduction through Canvas in any format that feels appropriate (i.e. uploading an introduction video they prepare, including their photo with a written introduction, etc.).
- In-Class Announcements: Continue to allow the SI Leader to make brief 1-3 minute announcements throughout the semester to remind students about SI and encourage their attendance. For online synchronous courses, these announcements can take place during class. For **online asynchronous** courses, these announcements can be made through Canvas in any format that feels appropriate.
- Faculty Promotion: Allow the SI Leader to post SI Session information for students to see each class. You can also remind students about SI Sessions in your own whole class announcements, during individual conversations with students, and by sharing SI Session information on class materials (e.g. syllabus, handouts). For both online synchronous and asynchronous courses, it may be helpful to post SI Session information as an announcement on Canvas and/or other platforms you are regularly using for your class.
- Meet with your SI Leader: The relationship between SI Leader and faculty should be professional and collaborative. It is recommended that faculty meet with their SI Leader for at least 10-15 minutes per week to discuss course content, upcoming exams, the progress of SI Sessions and participants, helpful learning/study strategies, and any other additional questions or concerns that may arise.
- Promote SI Program: Help maintain the message that SI is an encouraged activity for all students and avoid the message that only students who struggle benefit from attending SI.
- SI Program Assessment and Evaluation: We may be in contact with you about assisting us to provide information for SI program evaluation: exam grades and/or grades after exams. (Note: FERPA allows institutions to collect these data; students' right to privacy regarding this information will be fully protected.) You can always email exam grades anytime to SI Program Staff to analyze and compare SI participants' grades to non-participants'.

Can I Offer Extra Credit and/or Find Out which Students Participate in SI Sessions?

We strongly prefer that students only receive extra academic credit for attending SI Sessions if it is *offered as one of multiple options* for receiving extra credit (more details listed below). The reason SI at MSU Denver (and at all SI Programs internationally) doesn't share the names of participating students during the semester is that we don't to create an unfair advantage between students who attend SI and those who don't – especially for the many students who wish to attend but are unable to do so because of their class, work, and/or personal schedules.

Offering Extra Credit for SI as One of Multiple Options:

- At the end of the semester, SI Program Staff can provide a list of student participants for faculty (email si@msudenver.edu to request this)
- Multiple options faculty have offered for extra credit include:
    - Participating in SI Sessions

- Attending faculty office hours
- Visiting the Tutoring Center
- Visiting the Writing Center
- Participating in academic skills workshops hosted by various programs on campus
- Attending presentations on campus related to the course

What Can I Do if I Know Students Who Would Make Great SI Leaders in the Future?

If you have current or former undergraduate students who would make great SI Leaders, please encourage them to apply when our applications are open – or email si@msudenver.edu to ask questions about the role! You can also always email si@msudenver.edu to make sure we have them on our list of students to email about applications. We have found that students are more likely to apply when a faculty member directly encourages them.

Our application window is typically mid-semester, the semester before. Application materials and instructions can be found on our website: www.msudenver.edu/supplementalinstruction.

How Do I Add My SI Leader to Canvas?

With the transition to Canvas, we've updated the steps to add an SI Leader to your course. You can view helpful instructions by clicking here. If you have difficulties, you can contact SI Program Staff or the MSU Denver IT department.

1. Log in to Canvas.
2. In Course Navigation, click the People link.
3. Click the Add People button.
4. To add a user, you can search for users with up to one of three options: email address, login ID, or SIS ID. To select a search option, click the button for your preferred search method.
5. In the Role drop-down menu, assign the user a role for the course based on available course roles. We suggest you select "Student" to give the SI Leader the same access as students in the class. You could select "Designer", which does not allow the user to view students' grades, but should allow them to post announcements.
6. In the Section drop-down menu, assign the user a section in the course. If you want to limit the user(s) to only interact with other users in their section, click the Can interact... checkbox.
7. Click the Next button.
8. Select Submit.

How Can I Encourage My Students to Take Advantage of SI?

Here are some ways faculty members have promoted SI to students and encouraged their participation in SI Sessions:

- Promote SI to all students in their class, not just those who are struggling, since students of all levels learn from each other by attending SI.
- Include information about SI on their course syllabi.
- Post announcements about SI on Canvas and other course platforms/materials.
- Add their SI Leader to Canvas and other course platforms, so they have another avenue to connect with students and access the course material students have access to.
- Send exam scores to SI Program Staff to share SI Participants' vs. Non-SI Participants' scores and announce the results to students to encourage them to attend sessions.
- Make announcements about SI Sessions in addition to and/or with the SI Leader when they make announcements and reminders of SI Sessions.
- Collaborate with the SI Leader to find creative ways to market the session to students in the class.

What Could I Add to My Syllabus?

We recommend SI faculty partners include a brief "blurb" on SI in their course syllabi to demonstrate your support of the SI Program and encourage students to attend SI Sessions. This is optional, as we know your syllabi may already be completed, but here are two examples of a description that can be modified or simply cut/pasted:

Basic syllabus statement:

Supplemental Instruction (SI) group study sessions are available for this course. SI provides free group study sessions at least twice a week, and students who regularly participate typically earn higher grades. *SI is beneficial and open to all students enrolled in this class, not just students who are struggling.* For information about the days, times, and locations for SI Sessions, refer to the SI website: www.msudenver.edu/supplementalinstruction

Longer syllabus statement:

Supplemental Instruction (SI) is Available to You for Free!

Supplemental Instruction (SI) group study sessions are available for this course for free, two times per week throughout the semester. These SI Sessions are planned and facilitated by your SI Leader, a student who has successfully completed this course in the past and is attending class/reviewing course materials and preparing SI Sessions based on the class content. SI Leaders plan sessions where students can improve their understanding of course material, review and discuss important concepts, develop study strategies, and prepare for exams.

SI is beneficial for everyone and open to all students enrolled in this class, not just students who are struggling. Students who participate regularly in SI Sessions typically earn higher final course grades and exam grades than students who do not participate. You do not need to prepare anything to attend an SI Session, but bring your class notes with you.

For information about the days, times, and online platforms for SI Sessions (for this course and all others supported by SI), refer to the SI website: www.msudenver.edu/supplementalinstruction

Can I Attend SI Sessions?

In general, faculty do not attend SI Sessions as this changes the dynamic of the session immediately. The tone tends to shift to match the instructor's typical classroom setting, and students often turn to instructors to ask questions, rather than working with the SI Leader. The SI Program was developed as an anonymous academic support for students since it is optional and voluntary. Additionally, keeping session participation anonymous helps prevent any advantage (or perceived advantage) students attending sessions may have over students who would like to attend but are unable due to their schedule. If you are curious about the content of SI Sessions, you can always ask your SI Leader and/or contact the SI Program Staff.

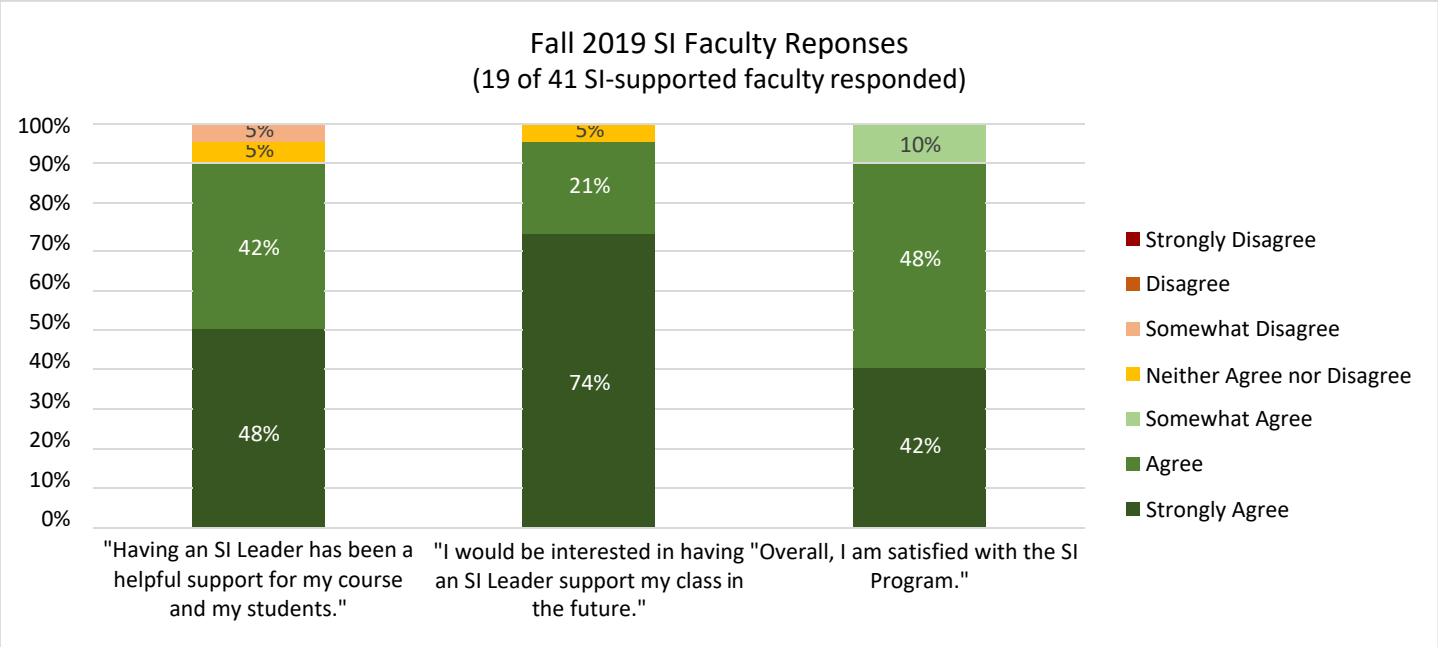
What Benefits Have Faculty Observed from SI?

Faculty have noticed a variety of benefits from having an SI Leader in their course. Common benefits include (all quotations are from the Fall 2019 SI Faculty Survey responses):

- "Students who attend SI sessions tend to be more motivated and more engaged in the course."
- "I just gave what historically has been the most pivotal exam of the semester and for the first time I had 1 perfect score and more A's and B's than previously."
- "Unprompted… students would speak very positively about the SI Sessions, even trying to recruit other students to attend. They shared that it helped highlight the most important course information, as well as guiding them

to take better notes and better study."

- "Students have a peer contact they can go to in addition to seeing the instructor… students have more opportunities for help."
- "It provides another avenue for students to engage in the material… in a very meaningful and challenging way."
- "The students in the class are comfortable talking to the SI Leader. It's nice having extra support for students who are struggling with the course."
- "When a class is large, it is so beneficial to the students to have someone else that can help answer students' questions."



SI Leader Role

SI Leaders serve as learning facilitators or "processors" of course material. Their role is not to re-teach, re-lecture, or give students the answers. They are trained to facilitate group sessions that enable students to improve their understanding of course material, review and discuss important concepts, develop study strategies, and prepare for exams. The professor first delivers course content and material; the SI Leader then helps students process that information.

SI Leaders bring structure and focus to the group study sessions and help keep students on task. They act as model students by exhibiting successful learning behavior and strategies. For online synchronous courses, they attend class punctually and regularly, and are attentive and taking notes while sitting in class (while also building relationships with students and inviting them to SI Sessions). For online asynchronous courses, they review course content and engage with students as they work through the same materials. SI Leaders participate in SI training before and throughout the semester to continue developing their skills in helping facilitate student learning.

What Should I Expect from the SI Leader?
The SI Leader will:

- Attend all class meetings/review all course content being delivered and act as a model student.
- Take notes during class or while reviewing course content (which are used to plan sessions, so their notes likely have a different perspective and content than others students' notes as they observe what is most difficult, where students struggle, etc.).
- Maintain a professional and positive attitude about all matters such as class standards, grades, and student questions and/or concerns (SI Leaders and faculty are a united team!).

- Discourage students from attending SI as a substitute for class meetings or engaging in course content.
- Keep the names of students attending SI Sessions anonymous, and will share the number of students participating in sessions as requested by faculty.
- If requested by faculty, share SI session materials with faculty.
- If requested by faculty, provide feedback on student understanding (and misunderstandings) in SI Sessions.
- If requested by faculty, participate in class discussions and activities (otherwise they are a quiet observer).

The SI Leader will not:

- Grade or review assignments, homework, exams, etc.
- Proctor exams.
- Re-teach or re-lecture during SI Sessions.
- Fill in as a substitute for the instructor if the instructor cannot attend class.
- Share the specific names of students participating in SI.

Do Students Work on Homework during SI Sessions?
SI is not for graded homework. It is also not a study hall. The goal of SI is to create independent learners. If students are engaging in analogous problems in SI and focus on furthering their understanding of the concepts, they are equipped to complete the homework by themselves after the SI Session. SI Leaders may create analogous problems for students to work through in SI and challenge them to verbalize and demonstrate what they are doing and WHY. SI helps students sharpen their tools to be successful in the course and prepare for exams.

Why Do the SI Leaders Attend All of the Classes?
It is important for SI Leaders to attend all classes/review all course materials and content for the section they are assigned, regardless of how long they have been an SI Leader and/or worked with the professor. SI Leaders attend class sessions for multiple reasons:

- To remain current on course content and material.
- So SI Leaders receive the course material the same way students are, and at the same time.
- To model appropriate student behavior (including taking notes).
- Maintain a positive, visible presence in class to promote their SI Sessions and build relationships with students.
- To help students clearly identify that the faculty member and SI Leader are a team, and that attending SI Sessions aligns with the professor's expectations for student success in the course.

Who Do I Contact if I Notice My SI Leader Is Not Attending Class and/or Is Not Modeling Appropriate Behavior?
SI Leaders should always inform their faculty of any absence from class and/or SI Session ahead of time. If you notice that your SI Leader is arriving late, leaving early, missing class, or demonstrating disruptive or inappropriate behavior, please contact the SI Coordinator as soon as possible (you can also always email si@msudenver.edu, which is shared by both).

Faculty-SI Leader Collaboration

The SI Program develops SI Leaders in professional skills such as communication and collaboration throughout each semester, recognizing that our SI Leaders have a wide range of professional backgrounds and experiences – and for some SI Leaders, building relationships with faculty may be their first experience truly developing a collaborative and professional relationship. As you get to know your SI Leader, your relationship with them will continue to develop their skills in teamwork, collaboration, communication, and professionalism (thank you in advance!). Please let SI Program Staff know if you have any concerns about your SI Leader related to this.

During our Kick-Off training before classes start and ongoing throughout the semester, we explicitly share some tips and

guidance for building collaborative relationships with faculty. The following section, "Tips for Meeting and Collaborating with Faculty" is in the SI Leader Handbook and serves as one of the resources for SI Leaders to further develop these skills as they build collaborative relationships with their faculty.

Tips for Meeting and Collaborating with Faculty

As you get to know each other more and clarify expectations for communicating and collaborating with each other, these might change. Until then, follow these tips.

- **BE CONSIDERATE** – You have a busy schedule, and so do faculty. Just because something will work for you or is your preference meeting-wise doesn't mean it will work as well for faculty or is also their top preference. Ask questions to help figure out what will work best for the two of you.

- **BE PROFESSIONAL** – You have the privilege of representing not only yourself, but also the SI Program and all student employees at MSU Denver – wow them with all of the reasons you are a leader on campus (and an SI Leader!). Be professional in person, in email, in all interactions. A few considerations include:
    - Check your spelling, grammar, etc. before sending any emails.
    - Avoid using any profanity or slang words (i.e. "gonna").
    - Be responsive to all emails and communication.

- **AGENDA** – Create an agenda for meeting ahead of time (so you don't appear unprepared and the meeting has purpose). This might include:
    - Certain topics that you often/always talk about.
    - New topics that are timely/relevant.
    - Specific questions you have about the course, faculty expectations, etc.
    - Asking faculty about upcoming content students constantly find challenging.
    - Sharing upcoming session plans/ideas.
    - Touching base about the # of students attending sessions (***not*** the names) and trends you observe.
    - Study strategies or learning techniques for the course and content.

- **PREVIEW AGENDA** – It is usually helpful to share an overview with faculty before the meeting, so they know what to expect and know its purpose.
    - This might be a bulleted list of general topics (such as the brief agenda examples above).
    - You can share specific questions you would like to discuss.

- **TWO-WAY CONVERSATION** – Collaboration is not one-sided, so make sure you are not just sharing things with your faculty and asking them questions – directly invite their questions of you and their ideas for your students.

- **ASK** – Don't just assume faculty do/don't want to be copied on your emails to students or to see your session plans. You'll never know for sure unless you ask ☺.

- **WHEN IN DOUBT, CONNECT TO SI PRO STAFF** – If you don't know something, you can always connect faculty to SI Pro Staff. Make sure to do a "warm hand-off" – send an email to si@msudenver.edu and cc your faculty.

The SI Team at MSU Denver

The key participants in the SI model at MSU Denver are: the SI Coordinator, SI Specialist, SI faculty liaisons, faculty partners (whose classes are supported by SI), SI Mentors, SI Leaders, and the student participants.

SI Coordinator
The SI Coordinator possesses a strong understanding of the UMKC SI model, and provides leadership in developing, implementing, and promoting an exemplary and comprehensive SI Program at MSU Denver. Collaborating with both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, the SI Coordinator works closely with administrators, faculty liaisons, and other campus programs across the campus to meet the needs of the greater campus community.

SI Specialist
The SI Specialist also possesses a strong understanding of the UMKC SI model, and provides valuable support to the SI Program by assisting with the recruitment, interviewing, training, development, oversight, and evaluation of SI Mentors and SI Leaders. The Specialist works closely with the Coordinator to sustain a quality program.

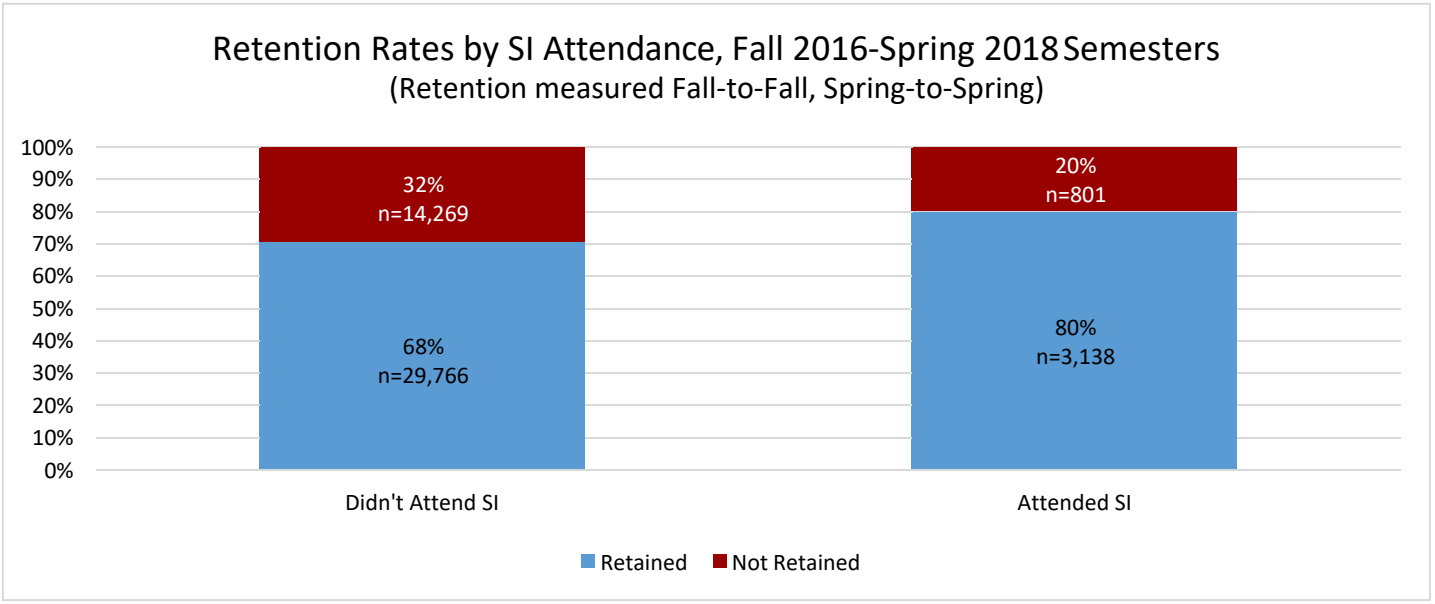
SI Faculty Liaisons
SI faculty liaisons are faculty who support and collaborate with the SI Program to help link a specific department to SI. Their leadership role is significant in assisting the SI Coordinator and Specialist with various components of hiring, training, and mentoring SI Leaders, as well as helping place SI Leaders with faculty in their departments.

Faculty Partners
Faculty partners are the professors who teach courses that are historically difficult for students at MSU Denver and typically have been identified as gateway or bottleneck courses; those courses that have a high percentage of Ds, Fs, and Withdrawals. These faculty support the SI Program by having their course section(s) linked to an SI Leader and help encourage students to attend SI Sessions.

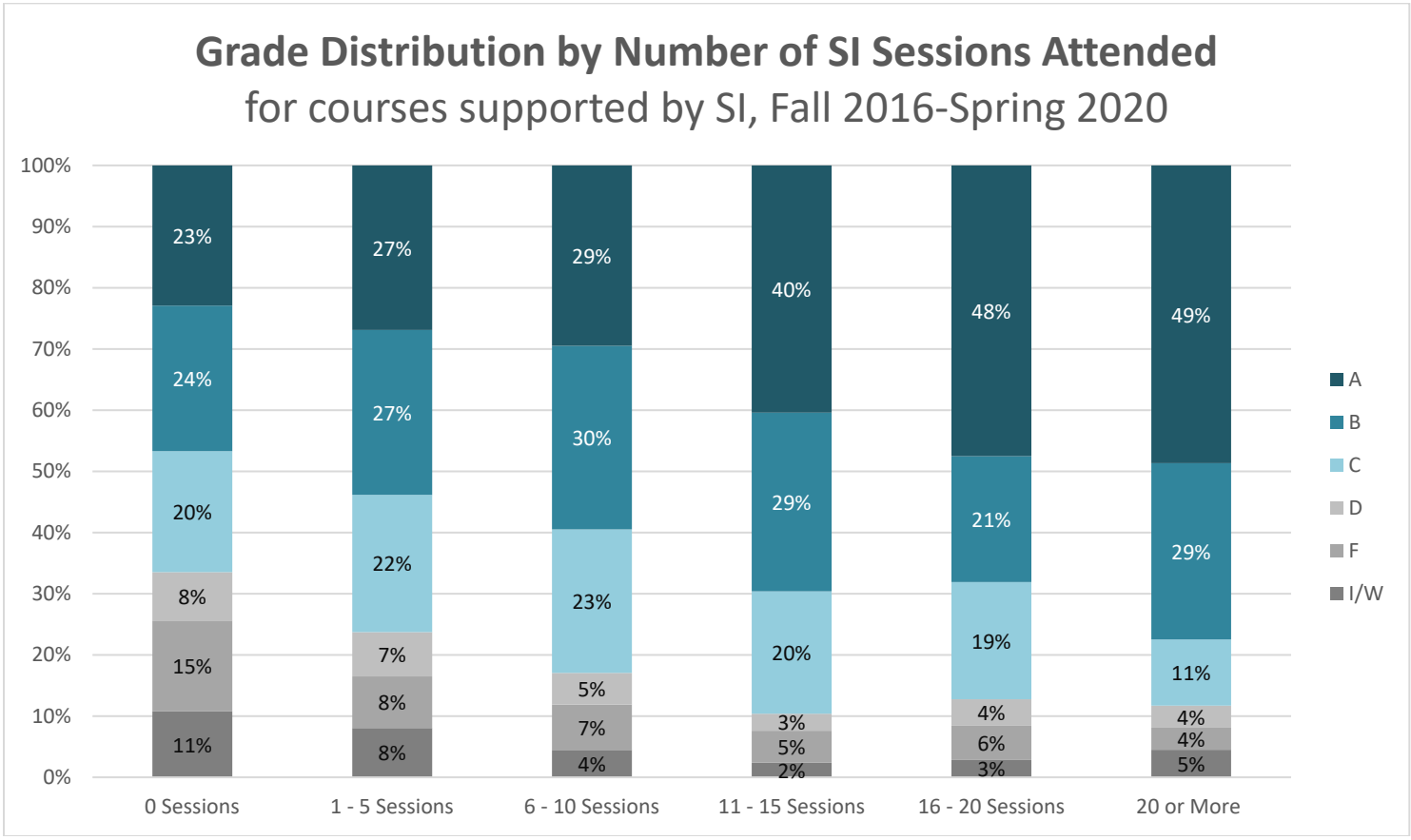
SI Mentors
SI Mentors are outstanding SI Leaders that have been selected to help contribute to the inner workings of the SI Program through mentoring, training, and developing SI Leaders.

SI Leaders
SI Leaders are exceptional students who have already mastered the course material. They are trained to plan and facilitate group study sessions for students to improve their understanding of course material, review and discuss important concepts, develop study strategies, and prepare for exams. They provide two or three 50-60 minute sessions each week, bringing together course readings and content together in a collaborative learning environment. Through the process of planning and leading SI Sessions, SI Leaders gain content knowledge as well as develop many transferable professional skills (i.e. communication, leadership, collaboration, time management, organization, problem solving).

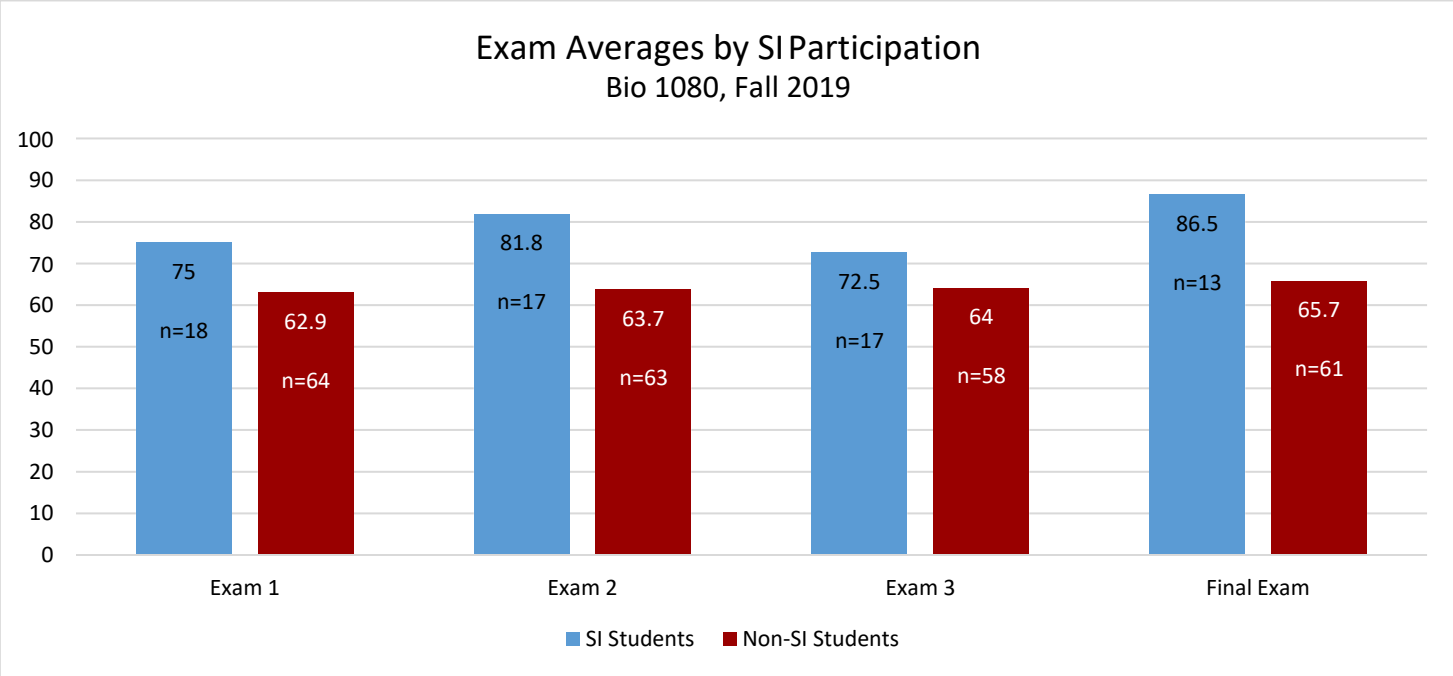
Supplemental Instruction Data



From "The HIPs Don't Lie: Tracking High Impact Practices at MSU Denver" (Petranovich, 2019)



From "Analysis of Courses with Supplemental Instruction: Fall 2016-Spring 2020" (Business Intelligence, 2019)



Exam averages for 2 sections of General Biology I