



What Students, Leaders, & Faculty are Saying About Peer Learning Programs

Student Participants

Students who engaged with Peer Learning Programs were asked what they would say to other students who are considering participating:

- “...go for it! It has been so helpful and has improved my engagement and progress in class.”
- “You have someone that knows exactly what you are learning in class and can help you if you have any misunderstanding.”
- “It breaks down the material taught in lectures and makes it more understandable.”
- “This is the best place to learn techniques on how to study!”
- “It is fun to help other students.”
- “Definitely take it, SI has helped me feel very confident and comfortable for my exams.”
- “...it's a great way to get involved with people in your class.”
- “Don't be afraid to join and ask questions.”



Peer Learning Facilitators

PLFs were asked to share personal discoveries they have made as a result of their role with Peer Learning Programs:

- “This role has taught me more about how to manage my time and work with others' schedules and personalities. I've also learned a bit more about my leadership style. I am enjoying... this role, and I look forward to growing as a leader and refining my skill set.”
- “I've realized that there's always more to learn, regardless of how well I do in a class on a subject. I think SI taught me that I should always stay curious and humble and work on improving myself.”
- “I have the potential to be a leader. I've learned that I can be of help to others, in more ways than I had thought possible, and I can always improve more.”
- “Overall, this experience as an SI Leader has been a valuable opportunity for personal and professional growth, teaching me to believe in myself and to confidently pursue my passions and goals.”
- “I've learned that I'm very passionate about helping others, and I've found that I really enjoy this role and might consider teaching as an additional career later down the road. I'm sad this was my first and last semester doing SI but I'm glad to have been a part of it!”
- “Throughout the semester, I have gained a newfound sense of confidence in myself and my abilities. ...I have also learned how to effectively engage with students and professors, allowing me to make meaningful connections and expand my knowledge and skills. This, I think I have been able to push myself beyond my perceived limitations, understanding that there is nothing that I cannot achieve if I set my mind to it.”

Faculty Partners

Faculty were asked to write letters of support based on their firsthand experience with Peer Learning Programs:

Jeremy A. Murray, Ph.D. (Professor, History Department – CSBS)

“The impact of SI and SI leaders on the enrolled students has been remarkable. ...Both grades in the class and the overall learning experience in the classes were enhanced considerably, and the peer-to-peer encounters with SI leaders allowed enrolled students to see what it takes to excel and turn around and help fellow students excel too.

In my own classes that included SI, and those of other faculty members, SI leaders and faculty members communicated regularly in person and via email about the course content, required projects and assignments, and more. SI leaders went out of their way to make sure that what they were presenting in their SI sessions was relevant and as helpful and supportive as possible of the mission of the course for which it was assigned. This kind of deep engagement and professionalism allowed me and my colleagues to make the most of SI sessions affiliated with our courses, and in turn, it allowed our SI leaders to understand what goes into planning a successful university-level course. This has been especially helpful for those of our SI leaders who are thinking of teaching history at the university level, and going into the field of academic history studies.

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work the SI student leaders and the professional SI coordinators here on the CSUSB campus. It is obvious that this program benefits our students enormously, and it is gratifying to watch the program take root here. I have no doubt that the program is becoming a familiar and welcome component in many courses that desperately need this kind of pedagogical support and this boost in student engagement.”

Sonia Perez-Gamboa, M.S (Lecturer, School of Computer Science and Engineering – CNS)

“Over the years, I have had different SI leaders, but all have shown great knowledge in the course, professionalism, and dedication to the SI program. SI leaders make sure to attend every single lecture and take notes, so that they are familiar with the course material and they can prepare proper exercises for the students. My SI leaders always make sure to meet with me at least once a week to further discuss course material. They use this time to ask me if there are any particular topics I want them to focus on during the SI sessions. I also use this time to get feedback from them to know if there is something in particular my students are struggling with. This helps me in modifying my lectures as needed to ensure that I am presenting material in a clear, well-paced manner.



I fully support the SI program not just because of my personal experience with the SI leaders, but also because of the positive experience it has been for my students who participate. With every term that I have had SI, I make it a point to encourage as many of my students to attend. Without even asking, I always get feedback from my students who thank me for recommending they attend, since they report back that they feel as though SI has helped solidify their understanding of material covered in class. If a student is having trouble with a specific topic, the SI session exercises allow them to have more practice and work with their peers to learn the topic in a slightly different manner, and sometimes this is all it takes for it to click for them. For students who already have a solid understanding of the course material, they've expressed that SI sessions allow them to explore more

difficult practice exercises, further enhancing their understanding. This has shown that SI sessions can be beneficial to all students, regardless of their level of understanding of the material. Of the students that I know that regularly attend SI sessions, these have been students that succeed in the course and get an A or a B."

Kate Liszka, Ph.D. (Associate Professor, History Department – CSBS)

"I have been fortunate to work with three different SI leaders while teaching... a large lecture, general education class of 150 students. Very often individual students can get lost in the numbers, and students whose strength is not history often get bogged down in understanding what they need to study. Supplemental Instructors have been an amazing asset to combat both problems. Often students who need extra support reach out to the SI before they would the professor. ...They have had a very influential role on the students.

The three outstanding SI leaders that I had the privilege to work with took the job very seriously. ...I always talked to the SI leaders before, during, and at the end of the course in order to make sure that we were both doing our coordinated best for the students. SI leaders have been invaluable in providing me with critical feedback as to how well the students understand the material and even make suggestions about how I can improve the course all together. They are an amazing group of students to have in the classroom. And I hope that I get to work with an SI leader every time I teach a large-lecture course. They make such a valuable difference."



Melissa Iyengar, M.S. (Lecturer, Biology Department – CNS)

"Due to the enrollment size of [my] courses, it is challenging to incorporate collaborative learning opportunities for students to practice, learn, and engage with lecture material, learn from peers, and ask questions. Supplemental Instruction allows students to learn critical concepts in small groups in a welcoming and friendly environment. It provides additional educational support to many students by teaching them how to identify and study critical concepts, take notes, and utilize different study strategies. At the beginning of the semester and through the LMS we utilize, Canvas, I also address these concepts. Still, I have found that students are more receptive to advice from a peer than an instructor.

From Fall 2020 to Spring 2022, over 75% of the students that participated in SI for Biology 2230 and 2240 were from underrepresented minorities (URM). The addition of supplemental instruction allows URM students to engage with crucial material, practice, and ask questions in small group settings without fear that it will negatively impact their grades. The SI program has helped many URM students succeed in the course, as DFWI percentages were 15-25% lower for the URM student that utilized the SI program.

Beyond assisting students in the course, the supplemental instruction program has allowed me to reflect on course content and how I present material through regular interaction with the SI leaders. ...The SI leaders share their learning plan for the material and how they presented a concept to students, and I also share small group learning techniques. These interactions allow SI leaders to collaborate with me on teaching techniques, communicate where students struggle, and how we can improve the course and student success rates."