Thank you for agreeing to have Supplemental Instruction (SI) support for your course this semester. This brief introduction to SI will help you understand the program, the expectations of the SI leader, and the important role that you, as a faculty member, play in the program’s success.

What is SI?

As noted in the *UM-Flint Strategic Plan* Strategic Priority #7, which deals with student retention and degree completion, “Responsible enrollment…means effective retention and degree completion: ensuring that students have an educational experience that makes them want to stay, and giving them the support they need to complete their degrees in a timely manner” (Strategic Plan, 15). This sentiment is echoed in Recommendation 2 of the recent *Student Success Center Steering Committee Report*, which states the role of the Student Success Center is to “foster development and implementation of High Impact Practices across the university that are proven to promote student success” (Student Success Report, 3).

Supplemental Instruction is a proven high impact practice that puts students at the center of our academic efforts. As Strategic Priority #5 of the *UM-Flint Strategic Plan* notes, “Student centeredness permeates all that we do as a university community….We have high expectations for our students and for ourselves; we work in partnership with each other and with our students to ensure that students’ out-of-class experience is as rich as their experience in the classroom.”

SI, which was developed in 1973 by Deanna Martin at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, is a significant “out-of-class experience” that helps students in courses in which they traditionally struggle. National statistics compiled by the U.S. Department of Education, as well as local figures from our own utilization of SI since 1996, show that students who attend three-or-more SI sessions over the course of a semester tend to earn higher grades than their non-SI counterparts.

SI consists of weekly review sessions offered on a non-mandatory basis. SI Leaders attend class with the students and offer one or two weekly review sessions that begin during the first or second week of class and continue throughout the semester. Unlike a recitation, SI is based on the collaborative learning model which places a premium on student engagement through active learning.

Rather than lecture, answer questions, or work on homework assignments, the SI Leader comes to each session prepared to discuss specific topics based on the classroom experience for that week. SI Leaders work to redirect questions back to the students and empower them to learn how to engage and master the material. Because faculty members
are an integral part of the SI program, SI Leaders are also required to meet 30-minutes per week with their instructor to discuss course material and SI session progress.

What is an SI Leader?

An SI Leader is a junior or senior-level student selected by a faculty member. Key to this choice is not only the student’s mastery of the discipline, but excellent communication and leadership skills and a strong work ethic. SI Leaders complete a multi-day training, as well as six continuing education workshops offered throughout the course of the semester, and are observed in session by the Tutorial Coordinator on at least two occasions. Throughout their training, SI Leaders are taught how to work effectively with content, as well as provide learning strategies designed to foster more productive study habits for this and future classes.

SI Leaders are paid an hourly rate for their time in class, in sessions, in trainings and in meetings with their SI faculty member. SI Leaders should attend all classes, take notes, and otherwise model appropriate student behavior. Critical to the SI Leader’s effectiveness is their ability to connect with the students in class and in sessions. Genuine concern for student success lies at the heart of the SI Leader’s actions and communication; students must trust that the SI Leader takes his or her work seriously and that the SI Leader is valued by the faculty.

Faculty members should look upon the SI Leader as a valuable class partner. During weekly 30-minute meetings with their SI Leader, faculty should discuss class and session progress, as well as the SI Leader’s ideas for collaborative and active learning strategies to be delivered during each session. Faculty and SI Leaders should also discuss upcoming tests, quizzes and assignments and determine how information pertaining to them can be presented most effectively within the sessions. SI Leaders are also expected to be aware of changes that may be taking place with the course syllabus or within the course itself.

Faculty also need to consider how the SI sessions can compliment the in-class experience, feeling free to revise classroom and teaching techniques to take advantage of the unique ability of SI support. In other words, the faculty should not think of SI as something that happens outside of the class (even though its sessions do take place out of class), but as an adjunct to the overall course experience.

Faculty Responsibilities

SI requires a strong partnership among the SI Leader, the SI Faculty, and the SI Coordinator. While much of the work is done by the SI Leader during the scheduled SI sessions, SI faculty have the following responsibilities:

1. Participate in one day of the two-day SI Leader training (please see Appendix 1 for the training agenda).
2. Work with the SI Coordinator prior to training to produce a 10-20 minute mock-lecture or lecture segment to be used in the SI Training.

3. Put the SI Leader’s name and contact information on the syllabus. You may also want to add the brief explanation of SI (such as the one that appears above).

4. Add your SI Leader to your Blackboard course companion so he or she may answer questions that arise within the virtual environment. This can be done via a dedicated forum in Discussion Board through which students can pose questions and issues directly to the SI Leader. If the course is fully online or mixed mode, SI can be done via Blackboard’s Collaborate feature.

5. During the first day of class, introduce your SI Leader and allow them to do a five to ten-minute presentation of themselves and the program. This includes allowing the SI Leader to distribute and collect a paper copy of the SI survey to all members of the class. This survey is basically used to determine the students’ availability and interest level in attending sessions. Starting in Winter 2014, times for SI sessions will be posted in the course schedule, but the survey will still be used to determine the student’s interest level.

6. Arrange for the SI Leader to get a copy of the syllabus, the course text book, and access to all other reading materials, Powerpoints and handouts.

7. Meet with the SI Leader one-half hour per week throughout the semester to keep them apprised of any changes in the course and to discuss the progress of the SI sessions, including test and homework performance and problem areas. Review materials the SI Leader plans to use in sessions, or, even better, co-develop materials with the SI Leader.

8. On the last day of class, distribute the post-SI survey that will be delivered directly to you by the Tutorial Coordinator. Make sure the students complete and return the survey in class that same day. Please send the completed surveys via campus mail to Michael Kassel in the Academic Advising and Career Center, 285 University Pavilion.

**Promoting SI**

SI Faculty play a key role in encouraging SI session attendance; if you value SI, chances are your students will, as well. Some of the following steps can greatly increase student attendance at the SI sessions:

1. Post times for SI session hours as soon as they are available both in the classroom and on any Blackboard companion. Starting in Winter 2014, times will be noted in the course schedule, but they should still be repeated in class.
2. Consider giving extra credit to students who attend the voluntary SI sessions.

3. Continue to remind students of the SI days, times and locations in the classroom and online throughout the semester.

4. Utilize the SI Leader to hand out papers in the class or otherwise call upon them on to keep the SI Leader visible to and trusted by the students.

5. Share positive news about SI, such as higher test scores among those students attending sessions, with the rest of the class.

SI Leader “Dos and Don’ts”

The SI model has been around for 40 years and it is important that SI Leaders remain true to it. According to the SI Model, there are several “dos and don’ts” in regards to their interaction with faculty and students:

1. SI Leaders are encouraged to assist in handing out papers and tests, meet with faculty during office hours, and share handouts that they plan to use during SI sessions.

2. SI Leaders are not allowed to fill in as guest lecturers, attempt to discuss material beyond the actual content of the course, nor are they allowed to grade papers or be involved in any way with the grading of the course. Any exceptions to this must be approved in advance by the Director of Academic Advising and Career Center.

3. SI Leaders are expected to attend all class sessions, take class notes, read all assigned materials, schedule SI sessions, complete homework, tests, and/or quizzes (when appropriate), meet with the faculty member one-half hour per week, and provide leadership by being a model student for their peers (in other words, they should be punctual, sit in the front of the classroom, be an engaged member of the class and remain attentive). If the SI Leader is not following one or more of these responsibilities, it is our expectation that the faculty member will let us know.

4. We have developed a robust tracking system for student attendance. SI Leaders must electronically sign each student into the SI session. Doing so will enable us to assess the program and provide you with detailed reports throughout the semester as well as at semester’s end.

Questions and Concerns

Please address any questions or concerns regarding SI to Mike Kassel or Aimi Moss at 810-762-3085 or email mkassel@umflint.edu or aimi@umflint.edu.
Your dedication to student success is valued and appreciated. We look forward to working with you.