

The committee's charge: "to coordinate with April Heaney and Jessica Willford from the LeaRN Program to (1) review current methods for promoting the Supplemental Instruction (SI) and Synergy programs amongst colleges and faculty, (2) investigate & recommend methods that will increase awareness of, and participation in, the programs, and (3) investigate and recommend possible funding options that will not only help sustain the program at its current level through projected cutbacks, but also facilitate for growth to fulfill a demonstrated need."

"Synergy is a first-year learning community similar to Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs), the Honors Program, and Engineering Power Groups. The Synergy Program serves students who are admitted with conditions to UW based on high school GPA, ACT scores, and prerequisite course fulfillment. The program currently includes 144-150 students each year (projecting 300 for AY 13-14) and features four courses in the first year: ENGL 1010, POLS 1000, UWYO 1450 (a reading and research-focused course), and COJO 1010.

According to University statistics, conditionally admitted students are at increased risk for failure or departure in their first year of college. Some conditionally-admitted students enter college underprepared for academic writing and reading, areas the program addresses through lower student-teacher ratios, increased conferencing, and supplemental instruction. While assumptions about at-risk students' fitness for college work spark debate across the nation, faculty in the Synergy program consistently report higher levels of critical thinking, sensitivity to marginalized perspectives, and intellectual risk-taking among Synergy students. Rather than planning for remediation (an approach that undermines many students' high intelligence and abilities), the program's courses strive to engage students in challenging coursework while addressing key habits including time management and goal-setting skills.

Since the program's inception, students participating in Synergy have earned on average 0.35 higher GPAs and 20% lower academic probation rates than students admitted with conditions during the four years before the program began. In addition, program features such as peer mentors, interdisciplinary approaches to courses, and pre-semester transition programming have bolstered similar features in other learning communities on campus. The program has received two major national awards for undergraduate teaching and curriculum design.

Supplemental Instruction (SI) targets historically difficult subjects or classes that may be enriched by out-of-class sessions. In other words, this subject contains content that students consider to be challenging. SI is designed to support faculty teaching and is assigned to a subject because of *what* is being taught, *not* because of the manner in which it is being taught.

SI is a series of out-of-class sessions led by a student who has successfully taken the course for which SI is offered. That student undergoes SI training prior to leading a group.

The SI leader functions as "model student" of the discipline rather than authority figure. SI leaders help students formulate and answer their own questions. This process helps students develop a more sophisticated approach to learning while maintaining the focus on content mastery.

SI is designed to organize and improve the ways in which students prepare for class outside of class.

Many instructors find that having supplemental instruction decreases their workload and makes the course more effective. Students can use the out of class sessions for questions on content and study skills, and the SI leader provides useful feedback to the instructor about student confusions, ideas for course enrichment, and course organization. Supplemental instruction leaders cannot perform the same duties as TAs—they do not lead class in the instructor's absence or comment on or grade students' coursework.

Supplemental instruction sessions are designed to promote greater student interaction and peer support. It is not solely intended for underprepared students, although underprepared students benefit greatly from the sessions.

Studies show that students who attend supplemental instruction sessions earn statistically significantly higher final course grades than those students who do not attend—even among students who have lower incoming SAT or ACT scores.” – LeaRn Website

After meetings, discussions and gathering of anecdotal data, the committee has determined that there are no significant issues or “problems” with either Supplemental Instruction or Synergy.

Synergy's only seeming problem is the perceptions regarding those who are involved with it and the projected increase in enrollment for AY 13-14. However LeaRn staff (April Heaney & Jessica Wilford) are confident that they are well prepared for the increased student numbers. It was determined by the committee (with the support of Heaney & Wilford) that perhaps reviewing the program again in the not too distant future would answer more questions – after there has been time to see it in operation post AY 13-14)

In regards to SI, again it has been determined by the committee that there is not issue with functionality. SI's biggest issues stem from awareness and perception. Current methods for promotion of the program mainly rely on word of mouth and/or visiting the LeaRn website. From April Heaney:

"Recently, new classes have been added in three ways:

1. A faculty member who has used SI teaches a different course, and requests SI
2. A student hears/experiences SI and expresses an interest in becoming an SI leader for a particular course
3. A current SI leader identifies another course that could benefit from SI"

Essentially if you're not looking for it, you don't know it exists or how it might help you. Since participation in the program is largely faculty driven the committee has decided that a direct appeal for increased participation in SI via letters containing testimonies from current SI participants (both faculty and students) to Deans, Directors and Department heads, as well as presentations at various college "heads meetings", is a good first step to increasing the awareness of the program, it's function and effectiveness. Said letter is currently in the process of being drafted.

It has also been recommended by the committee that, as far as increasing the funding for SI, these same letters and presentations might include an appeal to Deans, Directors and Department heads to consider splitting the cost of SI with LeaRn, as well as a request to same for additional recommendations/suggestions relating to on-going assessment of both the need and growth in SI and other possible methods for increasing the budget as required.

The committee recognizes that, given the current budgetary climate, such a request for cost splitting will likely encounter resistance but also given the current climate, identifying any other steady funding source proves to be difficult at best. It is the sincere hope of both the SIC and LeaRn that - as awareness and participation in SI grows, and its effectiveness is seen – additional financial support will follow.

Programs demonstrating SI success:

- Accounting
- Engineering
- Psychology
- Political Science
- Chemistry

| Course: CHEM 2420 Instructor: Bob Corcoran SI Leader: Mike Peters | | SI Group | | Non SI Group | | Total | |
|---|---------------------------------|----------|---------|--------------|---------|--------|---------|
| | Grade | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| | Total | 55 | 25% | 164 | 75% | 219 | - |
| | Combined A, B, & C | 54 | 98% | 132 | 80% | 186 | 85% |
| | Combined D, F, & W | 1 | 2% | 32 | 20% | 33 | 15% |
| | Mean size of SI sessions | 21.67 | | | | | |