Dear New SI Leader,

Congratulations on becoming an SI leader for the Spring 2013 semester! Less than four months ago, I was in your same position, excited to be a part of the Supplemental Instruction (SI) program, but unsure of what to expect. I want to leave you with a few pointers that I have discovered in my first semester as an SI leader that I hope will encourage you and help you to be the best SI leader you can be. Here is the best advice I can offer you:

1. **Don’t be too hard on yourself!** It will be a different experience for you to plan and lead an SI session, hold office hours, visit with the professor weekly, and attend all the lectures for a course that you’re not a student in. At first, I put a great deal of pressure on myself to be a perfect SI leader, and it is great to try your best! But go in knowing that you are learning as well and your participation as a leader will not only help students, but it will greatly influence you. So be welcome to learn what you have done best and what you can improve on.

2. **Be positive and encouraging.** The reason you are an SI leader for this course is because it is a challenge for students, and they will express their frustrations to you! Sometimes I felt like contributing to the negativity, but I found the best thing to do is to empathize with their frustration and offer encouragement that they are brilliant students that can pass with a good grade if they try hard. When things get tough for students, fuel their confidence in their abilities. Before exams, I tell students what my professor always tells us: “Remember how good you area at solving economics (or whatever subject) problems.”

3. **You don’t have to know all the answers!** After times where I had felt frustrated for not knowing how to solve every question that arose, I was comforted by Jessica Willford’s words: “As an SI leader, you are not a walking answer key.” It’s true; that’s not our job! However, I recommend getting answers from the professor to problems that you will likely help students on so that you can help them work through the problem.

4. **Integrate engaging activities and tips in your SI sessions.** SI can be a great time to review course material and help students with practice problems. Try to be creative by using activities that creatively achieve these purposes. Use some of the suggestions from other SI leaders, but don’t feel afraid to create your own or adapt them for your session. Also, don’t forget to offer tips and strategies to help them be better students (note taking tips, test taking tips, etc.) This will help students perform better in all of their classes.

5. **Group work is the key!** Never forget that the point of SI is for students to learn by working in groups. I have found it is tempting to try to run SI as you leading at the front asking questions to the whole group, and sometimes this has its place. But students learn best when they are working together with their peers while you take a step back and be there to facilitate and encourage.

6. **Be on time to class.** My biggest slip-up as an SI leader was being late to lecture at times. This was not the best way to be an example for other students. If this is a weakness for you, it could help to convince yourself you need to be at the location fifteen minutes earlier.

7. **Develop good relationships!** One of the best things I was able to do as an SI leader is just being a friend to students. You’re not their teacher; you’re another student. You can be encouraging to them by simply remembering their names and getting to know them.

There is so much more I could leave you with, but you will discover how YOU can be an effective SI leader through your own experiences. At times it will be fun, other times it may be tiring, but never underestimate the impact SI is having on these students and yourself!

Have a great semester as an SI leader,
Daniel DeCecco, December 6th, 2012