Dear future SI Leaders,

This semester has involved a lot of self-reflection for me, which has resulted in quite a bit of growth. This program has so many intricacies and little things that build it up to be the amazing thing that SI is. For me this semester, I finally learned what it means to go with the flow. SI is all about doing what your students need, and a lot of the time that means being flexible. I centered my sessions entirely around my students and saw them grow in ways I never imagined. But this wasn't the only thing I learned.

I also learned how to be creative with my activities. Not just because they would get bored, but because when students are having fun they do not even realize that they are learning. We used Pictionary to review vocabulary and they have never forgotten a word we reviewed. Then we did a role-play activity involving specific composers. Multiple students approached me and asked me how I had thought of it and told me that it was the most fun activity I had done all semester.

This role-play activity came to me through my reading for certification. I think that it is really important for us to continue our education and training as SI leaders. Sometimes it is easy to get stuck in the flow of SI and not challenge ourselves. I even found myself doing it this semester, but by pushing myself through the certification tasks I found myself becoming an even better SI Leader and giving even more to my students.

Another lesson I learned this semester was working through stress. Once I reframed my mindset, this job was not another stressful thing in my life but rather the best part of my week. This is a life lesson, learning to reframe things. I have always struggled with making myself more stressed out than necessary, and it became so much easier once I viewed SI as a fun activity. By making it fun for myself I also made it fun for my students.

That is another key point I want to pass on, making it fun. Students learn so much more when they are enjoying themselves. When we were laughing and having a great time, they were learning as well. It is like putting vegetables in a kid’s soup and not telling them. They ate it right up and loved every moment of it.

Finally, understand life lessons. We are there to help them learn the material better but on top of that we are there to help them learn to work together. That is a life skill that will be more valuable than the equation for the exam or the vocab term for the quiz. Learning to work with your peers is a skill that will benefit you for the rest of your life. This semester I focused on the life lessons, the life skills and handing those down to these students because I wish someone had done it for me.

SI has changed my life, and I will be sad when my last semester approaches because it has become a family to me. But I know that I have touched the lives of so many people and they have touched my life and that makes it all worth it. I know that this certification may seem tasking, but it is worth it because you push yourself to be a better SI Leader than you already are.

Thank you for your time,

Patricia Zimmerman
MUSC 1003