Introduction

The Supplemental Learning area, located next to Media Services in the Library in rooms 129 and 130, accommodates primarily the Supplemental Instruction (SI) program but also several STEM assistants who provide tutoring services in STEM-related subjects. Since STEM is facilitated by Cynthia Quintanilla, the statistical data generated by that program are beyond the scope of this report, which will focus exclusively on SI.

This semester marked the beginning of a brand new SI program on the BC and Delano campuses. This SI program subsumed the Extending the Classroom (ETC) project that had been in effect for the previous two semesters, targeting only courses in the English department. The outreach of SI was expanded to include pre-collegiate subject areas in Academic Development, English, ESL, and Math.

The goals of SI are to reduce attrition in historically challenging courses, in this case Basic Skills, and improve academic performance of participating students. What differentiates SI from traditional tutoring is the fact that SI leaders are assigned to a specific professor's class, attend each lecture, and then incorporate information presented in class with a focus in study skills during the group tutoring sessions. The sessions are regularly scheduled, hour-long discussions that are held in the Supplemental Learning area 2 times per week per course. SI leaders are students who have already passed the course in which they are tutoring with an A or B and carry the recommendation of their respective instructors.

Various pieces of data for this report were collected throughout the semester to provide a comprehensive picture of student participation and academic performance. Data on attendance was gathered through sign-in sheets initially and then later AccuSQL logins. Other information related to student and faculty perceptions of the program was derived from surveys, and the culminating set of data came in the form of final course grades.

Student Participation

Getting students to attend SI sessions was always a challenge due to the voluntary nature of the program. On the End-of-Term SI Survey, those who never attended SI were asked to mark the reason(s) why from a given list. Nearly half the respondents (48%) chose I wanted to but couldn’t; the session schedule conflicted with work or other classes. The next most popular answer was I intended to but couldn’t find the time (42%) with only 10% choosing either I didn’t feel it was necessary (8%) or I have been to similar kinds of study sessions for other courses and did not find them helpful (2%).

Despite a rather discouraging start with only a few straggling in for sessions, the number slowly but steadily grew until by the end of the semester, average session attendance hovered between 5-10 students, quite an accomplishment considering very humble beginnings!
Table 1 provides some general numbers regarding the degree to which students participated, the number of SI sessions offered, and the number of SI Leaders who facilitated sessions:

Table 1: General Data for Spring Semester 2014

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Student Participants</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation Rate</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of SI Sessions Offered (13 wks.)</td>
<td>429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of SI Leaders (Tutors)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 contains the numbers of participants, sessions offered, and leaders involved in SI for the Spring Semester 2014. Participation numbers are based on records from the Accuracy database, which contains the names of every student enrolled in an SI course, totaling 640 students, out of which 117 were listed as having attended an SI session at least once.

Within the group of students who came to SI sessions, further distinctions can be made based on frequency of attendance. Graph 1 reflects the difference in average final course GPA between students who attended SI sessions at different frequencies:

Graph 1

Based on the above bar graph, there is little difference in mean GPA between those who never attended SI (2.48) and those who came only 1-2 times (2.41), suggesting that...
1-2 visits does not make a significant impact on student grades. Such a result is also congruent with what one would expect intuitively.

Most encouraging, however, is the gradual increase in overall GPA with regular SI session attendance, which matches national and international data on the benefits of SI. Students who came 6 times or more experienced an average GPA for their course that was 6% higher than students who came 3-5 times and a significant 12% higher than their counterparts who only participated 1-2 times.

Graph 2 represents a side-by-side final grade comparison of the percentage of students from the SI group versus the non-SI group. In this case, the SI group is defined as students who came to SI at least once.

The two lines follow a similar pattern, but a strikingly high percentage of students (43%) in the SI group earned B’s in their courses compared to the non-SI students (30%). Though this graph does not reflect differences in frequency of attendance, it is interesting to note that only 75 students (33%) out of all the ones surveyed came to SI more than 3 times but were responsible for 66% of the B’s earned, suggesting that if more students were to attend regularly, the high number of B’s might be transformed into a more impressive count of A’s. Again, in a nutshell, SI truly works if students will avail themselves of the marvelous opportunity.
Student Comments on SI

The following are some of the most intriguing and relevant comments made by both students and faculty alike who participated in SI this past Spring semester. Student comments were taken directly from the End-of-Term Supplemental Instruction (SI) Survey given in all SI classes the week before finals. The statements are in response to an open-ended question for those who attended SI at least once, soliciting general comments and/or suggestions for improvement.

“Sam [Leader] is very willing to help with any needs we had with this class.”

“I think that for all the students that struggle, they should be pushed more to come to SI. I think that SI should be rigorously recommended to students struggling. And I will add Sam deserves a raise.”

“It’s great. I actually get help.”

“The SI sessions were amazing. Though I was only able to attend one due to my crazy schedule, it was very helpful. Sam is awesome for helping all the students and doing such a thing. He helped out a lot.”

“This helpful person was very helpful. He took the time and enjoyed helping others. I did appreciate the help.”

“I learned more at SI since it covered what we learned again. The sessions were fun and friendly with games that covered the material that was important. The instructor [Leader] asked many questions to keep the group motivated to learn. I had fun at the sessions and hope SI continues.”

“Belinda is a fantastic Leader with so much passion for her students’ learning. She gave 110%, and it showed. I learned a lot from her sessions. I don’t think it was fair to the students or Belinda, her not being able to finish out the year.” (This comment refers to a Leader that had to quit 2/3 through the semester because she dropped below 6 units.)

“Belinda was a big help to have a better understanding to not have fragments or run-ons.”

“I would like SI to be in all my classes.”

“I could not go to every time, but I went 3-5 times. He always helped my essay. I think it was good time for me. Thank you so much.”

“Nothing needs to change; she was awesome!!!”

“Supplemental Instruction with Kelsey Coffman [Leader] was very fun. It helped me a lot to do better on tests and improve my grades. I would not be where I am right now and not have the grades that I currently have if it wasn’t for her incredible help and effort to work with each and every individual student.”

“For one thing, I hope they keep it up and continue it. So students can continue to get help from the group sessions, which help a lot. I hope it is available next semester.”
“The sessions were very helpful in creating ideas for writing. Open discussion on our research paper topics helped raise questions against and for our arguments. This helped a lot in guiding my research.”

“The SI section is a good idea of helping students cope with the stress of the class and should be extended to other classes.”

“The SI really helps students be on track and helps them clear questions they have about the class.”

“Supplemental Instruction helped me dramatically with research paper assignments. Peer suggestions and support are very helpful.”

“These sessions were very helpful; I appreciated them very much! Thank you, Elizabeth [Leader]!”

“The SI sessions were very helpful. Our instructor [Leader] was able to answer questions that were not clear in class.”

“…I was able to complete assignments with more confidence.”

“Joy [Leader] did an amazing job. I’ve only went a few times, but in those few times she helped a lot. Keep Joy!”

“Keep Joy as an SI Coach! She is extremely helpful and makes sure all her students understand what they are learning…”

“The SI services were very helpful, and its services should be continued in order to provide the best support for success.”

“Good job! Joy saved my life when I had no clue what was going on.”

“Joy is very helpful and will take time to make sure she answers any question a student may have. She really knows her subject and knows how to explain it, too.”

**Faculty Comments on SI**

The following comments made by various faculty were gleaned from a question on their SI Instructor Application. The question they are answering asks why they view SI as an effective support system for their class(es). Only responses that refer back to SI experience from Spring semester are included here as data.

“…I’ve seen my coaches [Leaders] make a difference.”

“I used a SI coach this semester [Spring] and saw it being beneficial for my students. Students approached her during class with questions and felt very comfortable doing so. As the semester progressed, SI attendance increased. I don’t yet know how SI attendance will affect grades, but I think it will have a positive effect. Feedback about students from my coach was helpful, too, in determining what material needed to be addressed again.”
“Students in the...Basic Skills courses benefit from the added enrichment and collaborative learning environment of SI.”

“Our BC students often need to review assignments and concepts several times. SI offers this to our students. SI reinforces what we learn in class and offers collaborative learning opportunities for students to succeed.”

“It allows my students to have another outlet to discuss issues with the class. Also, it gives them more time in a structured, class-like setting where they can work on class activities.”

“With an SI Leader, students could practice writing and speaking with the new grammar rules and vocabulary they learn in class. Correcting fossilized speech patterns would improve students’ written papers.”

“My students need additional support for these condensed courses. Those who attend the SI sessions do much better in my classes. The extra two hours with the SI Leader gives the students a chance to catch up on things they didn’t understand in class, get clarification, and further instruction as needed (it’s usually needed!).”

“SI is a great way to provide additional support outside and inside the classroom to all students who need extra help understanding the coursework.”

Summary

Bakersfield College’s fledgling SI program was definitely successful this semester in its attempt to help students achieve higher marks in their courses. Though the obstacle of getting students to actually grace the threshold of the SI area is ever-present, all indications are that this very worthwhile program will continue to grow and blossom in the coming semesters. Promotion of the SI program will be ongoing every semester through daily session information posted on classroom boards, the regular visible presence of the SI Leaders in class acting as model students, flyers, commercials uploaded to YouTube, the instructors’ repeated verbal encouragement, not to mention the inspirational atmosphere in the SI area where students come for their sessions. Moreover, prior students as well as instructors who have benefitted will promote it by word of mouth.

The most powerful part of SI is its emphasis on learning through relationships and a sense of community. The close working relationship between the SI Supervisor and Leaders, the bond of trust that is formed between Leaders and students, the fact that each SI Leader already comes to the job with the SI instructor’s recommendation, all of these factors make each individual feel a connection to the greater whole. This is the sort of climate in which learning can thrive. The potential for SI to have a strong impact on students' lifelong learning is great, and it is exciting to be a part of this process!