

Iowa State University  
Dean of Students Office  
Supplemental Instruction-Academic Success Center

**Maximizing the Availability of Supplemental Instruction Sessions  
Spring, 2009**

Author: Craig Zywicki, Supplemental Instruction Program Coordinator

Contact: Craig Zywicki, [czywicki@iastate.edu](mailto:czywicki@iastate.edu)

# Maximizing the Availability of Supplemental Instruction Sessions Spring, 2009

## Abstract

Supplemental Instruction (SI) scheduling surveys are distributed during the first week of each semester. The immediate purpose for the scheduling survey is to determine the best days, times, and locations for the regularly scheduled SI sessions. Beginning with the spring 2009 semester, a new electronic scheduling program was used to maximize the availability of SI sessions. This report summarizes our ability to schedule SI sessions to reach the most students possible.

## Executive Summary

### Purpose

The SI scheduling process was changed beginning with the spring 2009 semester to accommodate a new web-based survey and scheduling process. The purpose of this assessment is to determine the successes and limitations of our SI scheduling process and prepare us to improve upon limitations.

### Definitions

A Student is an “SI Participant” for Course X if s/he participates in at least one SI session for Course X during the semester.

The “Targeted Enrollment” includes all students from the courses/sections our Leaders are realistically prepared to assist. For spring 2009, the targeted enrollment is 76.8% of the total enrollment of courses with SI. (For example, this excludes sections of courses where the Leader is not in attendance at lectures and the section content is different than the section being attended by the Leader.)

### Methodology

Students enrolled in courses where SI is offered are eligible to complete a scheduling survey during the first week of each semester. This survey questions students’ interest in SI and their availability to attend SI sessions. For the spring 2009 semester, the scheduling survey was administered in two formats with identical content. A paper-based format was distributed by SI Leaders in all sections of courses where the Leader could verbally promote SI to students. A link to the web-based version of the survey was e-mailed to students by the SI Program Coordinator in sections of courses where the SI Leader could not verbally promote the survey.

Through the fall 2008 semester, SI Leaders tallied by hand the results of the surveys to guess the best days/times/locations for the SI sessions. The Leaders’ tallies tended to result in SI sessions scheduled based on popular times, but the tallies could not tell us the actual number of different students available to attend at least one SI session per week. While the web-based survey was being designed, a complementary online program was developed that would allow us to tally the survey results based on both popularity and the greatest percentage of students with at least one SI session.

To determine our schedule for SI sessions, the new scheduling program allowed SI Leaders to:

- ◆ Compare students’ availability to their personal availability. (A Leader cannot facilitate an SI session conflicting with his/her academic schedule.)
- ◆ Sort the possible days/times for SI sessions based on the overall count of students who could attend at least one SI session.
- ◆ Sort the possible days/times for SI sessions based on popularity.
- ◆ Filter the results based on students’ level of interest in SI.
- ◆ Compare the best days/times for SI sessions to possible locations for sessions.

SI Leaders used the online program to determine the best days and times for SI sessions. Once these were determined, the online program showed us the count of students who could attend at least one SI session, and the maximum count of students who could have attended at least one SI session (regardless of SI Leaders' availability).

### Findings

4572 scheduling surveys were completed, which is a 46.8% rate of return based on the targeted student enrollment, and 38.3% of the overall course enrollment.

Through use of the new program, we are able to determine that we could theoretically accommodate up to 83% of the surveyed students in at least one SI session per course. Once we factored in the availability of the SI Leader, the final days/times for SI sessions selected by SI Leaders could reach 75% of the surveyed students with at least one of the SI sessions scheduled. (Note: 75% of the surveyed students is 35% of the actual targeted course enrollment.)

By the end of the semester, 33.3% of the targeted enrollment participated in SI. 44.4% of the targeted enrollees who also completed the scheduling survey participated in SI.

Finally, although the SI schedule was set based on maximizing the number of students who could attend at least one weekly SI session, the electronic scheduling process allowed us to count the total number of weekly sessions a student could have attended. The relationship between the weekly number of sessions available to attend and the total number of SI sessions attended was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. There is a small, positive correlation between the two variables ( $r=.095$ ,  $n=4105$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

### Discussion

Upon completing the scheduling process in January, it appeared to us that the new scheduling process would improve our chances to reach more students. At that time, I compared the spring 2009 survey responses to spring 2008 participation rates to predict the following:

- ◆ We should expect a minimum of 24.9% participation rate in SI.
- ◆ Best case scenario, based on the situation where all students complete the survey, we could reach a 44% participation rate.
- ◆ Realistically, we should be able to exceed a rate of 30% participation in SI based on reaching at least 50% participation in the SI survey.

To assess the improvement in our scheduling, consider the following:

	Spring 2008	Spring 2009
% of students completing the scheduling survey	40.0	46.8
% of surveyed students who participated in SI	37.9	44.4
% of students not completing a survey who participated in SI	16.2	17.5
% of all students enrolled who participated in SI	24.9	26.9

While we did not reach the 30% participation rate for all enrolled students, the scheduling survey program and process has improved our ability to reach more students. The reported correlation suggests that these students may also be attending a few more sessions per semester.

### Recommendations

The findings and discussion suggest the following:

- ◆ Use promotions and planning to make the scheduling survey available to every student. This specifically places more emphasis on making the web-based survey available to students who cannot complete the paper version survey in class.

- ◆ Consider the consequences of SI Leaders facilitating more SI sessions. For example, twice facilitating the content of an SI session to make that content available to more individuals.
- ◆ Communicate with students, faculty, and staff that SI cannot serve every student in a course. Hence, SI is one service among others (Tutoring, help Rooms, meeting with TAs/Instructors, Learning Community study groups, etc) that should be encouraged.
- ◆ Can SI realistically increase the targeted enrollment? This would require an increase in the number of SI Leaders for certain courses (ex: ECON 101), or changes in the academic department. We cannot control the latter, but additional funding to SI used to add more Leaders could help us reach additional students.