



SLA RESOURCE GUIDE

For Faculty

SLA Statement of Purpose:

SLA is designed to give Ferris State University students a high level of academic support, while reducing course withdrawal/failure rates and increasing pass rates of students in some of the most challenging and high risk-for-failure university courses.

What is SLA?

Structured Learning Assistance (SLA) is an academic support system available to all Ferris students. SLA is offered with a wide variety of highly challenging courses. The content of these



courses remains the same. However, SLA features additional weekly workshops in which students master course content and develop and apply specific learning strategies for the course. These workshops are led by trained facilitators, who clarify lecture points and assist students in understanding the expectations of the professor. The facilitator works in collaboration with the professor to develop materials and activities for the workshop, which may include worksheets, study guides, test preparation, discussions, collaborative learning, study skills, and games. The best part is that this assistance is free to our students!

How effective is SLA?

On average, SLA-supported sections have lower rates of failure and withdrawal than non-SLA sections of the same course. More than 72% of SLA students believe that they scored at least one-half to one full letter grade higher in the course as a result of SLA. After completing an SLA course, 78% of the students would recommend that others enroll in an SLA course.

What are the benefits of having an SLA workshop attached to my course?

SLA workshops help students develop the skills necessary to achieve success. Facilitators cultivate positive classroom behaviors. Students are more often prepared to actively participate, and you may notice improved quiz and test scores compared to non-SLA sections of your same course. You will receive additional student feedback through your facilitator.

What requirements are placed on students?

Students in SLA courses have a required attendance policy. All students are required to attend the workshops until their first assessment. If the student's grade is below the cut-off grade established by the professor (typically 80%), they are required to continue attending. Students who are above the cut-off grade may choose to attend voluntarily, but are no longer required to attend. By contract, students are allowed four unexcused absences from their SLA workshop. The fifth absence requires the instructor to assign a grade of W or F for the course.

What do students say about SLA?

"Taking the SLA class was very helpful in improving my grade and I would like to take more SLA classes."

"I really enjoy going to SLA. I am not required to attend but it helps me review what we learned in lecture and keeps it fresh."

What requirements are placed on faculty?

Faculty must agree to uphold SLA policies and maintain a class attendance policy that insures that SLA does not become a replacement for attending lecture. Faculty should introduce the facilitator to the students on the first day, and encourage the students to make use of the SLA workshops. Faculty members should set aside an hour each week to meet with the SLA Facilitator for discussion and planning purposes.

Do I have to have an SLA workshop attached to my course?

Professors participate voluntarily with the SLA program. While the time demands are minimal, your active support, within the classroom and in your meetings with the facilitator, strengthens SLA and student performance.

What is the process for developing an SLA course?

Before a course can become an SLA course, data needs to show that the course has a high D/F/W rate. In addition, the course needs to be one that would halt a student's progress through their chosen program, if they are unable to pass it. The professor must also explain why they feel that SLA is needed. To begin the process, fill out the "New SLA Proposal Form" (<http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/academics/sla/docs/SLA-Course-Proposal.pdf>) and return it to Karen Royster-James, SLA Supervisor, FLT 123.

How do I recommend a student to be an SLA Facilitator?

SLA Facilitators are typically students who have successfully taken the course. While excelling in the course content, they must also have great communication skills, patience, professionalism, a positive attitude and ability to motivate other students. If you have identified a student who meets the criteria listed, please e-mail Karen Royster-James with their contact information.

Need more information?

Website: www.ferris.edu/htmls/academics/sla

Contact: Karen Royster-James, SLA Supervisor

Office: FLT 123

Phone: 231-591-3543