

LASSI in Action

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This is the 11th year we have published the LASSI in Action, responding to requests for a means to share and exchange information about the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI) and its uses in a variety of educational settings. In this new format of LASSI in Action, we continue our practice of bringing you a variety of reports on the use of the LASSI. Following are several articles written by LASSI users.

**A STRATEGIC LEARNING COURSE
AT UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS, AUSTIN**
by Claire Ellen Weinstein

The strategic learning course under my direction at the University of Texas, Austin, is a 3-credit class for students who enter the University of Texas under special circumstances or who experience academic difficulty after entry. The course is based upon my Model of Strategic Learning which involves four major components:

- **Skills** to learn successfully such as using cognitive learning strategies, identifying important information for further study and preparing for tests.
- **Will** or wanting to use these skills and processes. This component includes goal setting and using, motivation and generating positive attitudes and beliefs about learning.
- **Self-Regulation** to take responsibility for managing one's own studying and learning. This component includes time management and dealing with procrastination, controlling stress and concentration.
- Knowledge of the **Academic Environment** in which studies are taking place. This component includes knowing about teachers' expectations and types of resources available to help reach academic goals.

Throughout the course, students are taught declarative and procedural knowledge about strategic and self-regulated learning with the objective of developing conditional knowledge to determine when and

under what conditions to apply a given skill or strategy. The course uses direct instruction, modeling, and guided practice with feedback. To help facilitate transfer, the content is always related back to the Model of Strategic Learning, a variety of tasks from many content areas are used, and students must apply what they are learning to other classes they are taking.

The course begins with every student taking the LASSI. This helps the students identify their individual learning strengths and weaknesses and also introduces the content that will be studied. LASSI results, combined with results from a reading comprehension measure, help instructors to individualize many assignments and determine priorities over the course of the semester. These measures are used only for diagnostic/prescriptive purposes and have no effect on course grades.

The topics covered in the course include, but are not limited to, the following areas: goals, attitudes, motivation, identifying important ideas, knowledge acquisition strategies, pre-, during-, and post-reading strategies, time management, procrastination, attention, concentration; note-taking and listening skills, development and use of study aids, comprehension monitoring, preparing for and taking tests, the relationship between understanding and long-term memory, and dealing with academic stress.

Much of the work expected of students outside of class is accomplished using the online instructional program, **Becoming a Strategic Learner, LASSI Instructional Modules**. These ten modules were specifically written to address student weaknesses in the areas where instructional interventions are most likely to bring about significant student improvement. Each module is associated with a scale on the LASSI and provides instruction, activities and feedback to the students. By using these online modules in place of a traditional text, the instructors can focus on individual needs. This frees up class time for guided practice and feedback on the

material in the modules — selected activities from the online modules are often completed in class individually or in groups. This allows instructors to integrate the content of the modules with their own class discussions. In addition, a variety of study skills for reading, listening and other academic tasks are also presented and practiced in class.

During the final week of the class, students complete the post-assessment measures, including the LASSI, and can see where their weaknesses have been strengthened or eliminated. Students also receive feedback about areas where further improvements might be gained through the university's learning skills center or other special help programs.

Students taking our course at the University of Texas at Austin have consistently demonstrated improvements in academic achievement and highly significant differences in retention to graduation compared to students not taking the course or statistically-matched control students.

JUST IN TIME: HELPING STUDENTS BECOME MORE STRATEGIC, SELF-REGULATED LEARNERS

by Tom Hadley, Ph.D. & Elaine Guerrazzi, Ph.D.
University of Cincinnati

One of the greatest challenges to combat high levels of first year attrition is delivering timely and targeted assistance to students when they would benefit most from those support services. The *Just in Time: Helping Students Become More Strategic, Self-Regulated Learners*, diagnoses student learning deficiencies and provides resources and academic support throughout the freshman year.

During 2002-03, a pilot phase of the project was implemented. A cross-section of the students com-

pleted the LASSI, and UC provided some additional interventions to enhance the students' transition to college. In 2003-04 the project will be expanded to include all freshmen and multiple intervention strategies which are outlined below.

Grounded in Weinstein's recommendations, a series of interventions are in place intended to help students become more effective learners. The *Just in Time* project is multi-dimensional, incorporating the online LASSI assessment, LASSI Self-guided Modules, locally developed programs and services, and a multi-tiered communication strategy with students. In addition, the LASSI data will be used in a university-wide research and assessment initiative focusing on student retention and academic success.

LASSI Administration: Online LASSI is administered during Orientation to all entering freshmen in attendance. Those not attending will have opportunities to complete the LASSI during Fall term. Student Orientation Leaders are trained to discuss the general implications of the scores as a part of the two-day orientation program. In addition, the LASSI scores are made available to faculty and advisors via the student information system and through a Blackboard community.

LASSI Modules: All students will have modules available for their use. In addition, faculty are encouraged to incorporate the modules in their course materials as assignments, extra credit, or supplemental work. Advisors and tutors will also use specific modules based on the individual student needs.

Locally-developed Programs and Services (for students): Some of the programs and services developed are:

- College based orientation programs and retreats are utilizing LASSI results as a topic area for small group sessions and activities.

- Student workshops have been developed by Tutoring Services related to many of the LASSI scales.

Locally-developed Programs and Services (for faculty/staff): Some of the programs and services developed are:

- A workshop which provides a general overview on interpretation of LASSI results. Breakout sessions suggest strategies for LASSI use by advisors, tutors, etc.
- A mini-session for college specific training sessions geared toward faculty teaching First Year Experience/College Success courses.
- Blackboard community with LASSI scores, related information, and associated published articles, etc.
- An intra-university listserv for users.

Communication Strategy with Students will incorporate email distribution of information specific to students' needs based on their scores and usage of the modules. The purpose is to get them better connected with the on-campus student support services.

Research and Assessment: UC is completing a pre/post-test analysis of the first year through the utilization of LASSI scores as one measure combined with non-obtrusive data pulled from the student information system (retention, cum GPA, hours toward graduation, etc.).

The *Just in Time* program has the potential of significantly affecting institutional retention goals in many ways. First, this is a very cost effective approach. The LASSI self-guided modules will be accessible to all faculty and students at any time throughout the academic term. Second, if the exercises are incorporated

into Blackboard, faculty, who use Blackboard, could monitor student usage and ultimately assess if this online approach has a positive impact on student success in their classes that is clearly linked to improved institutional retention. Third, the *Just In Time* program provides the seamless and transparent linkages, starting at summer orientation and extending into the academic year, including the instructor, student, and support services. Past research supports these collaborations as critical in any successful institutional retention plan. And finally, preliminary findings from the evaluation of the first year pilot phase of our project emphasized the importance of student involvement in multiple retention-oriented activities. The more comprehensive project described above will, by its very design, provide additional retention-oriented contacts at critical times in the academic term in many formats and modalities.

LASSI PROJECT, FALL 2000
STUDENT OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT
 by Jan Swinton and Jeff Moore
 Spokane Falls Community College

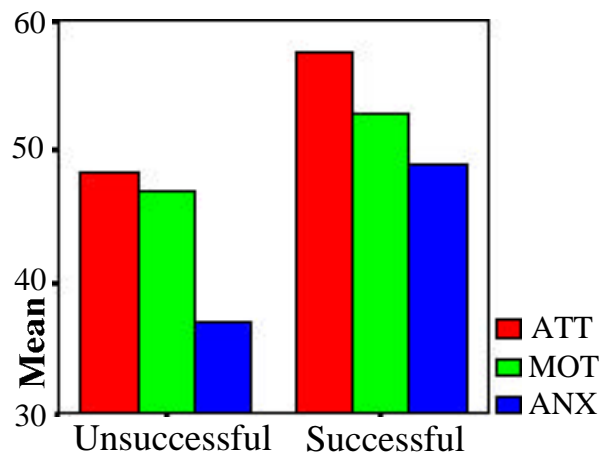
OVERVIEW

This study looks at reading intensive course(s) grade point average (GPA) vs. LASSI scores. The data was collected during the 1998-2000 school years. The reading intensive courses, taken **during** the quarter in which the LASSI was administered, are examined below. If the student took more than one reading intensive course, all reading intensive courses were averaged together. It was decided that academic success would be defined as a GPA of 2.0 or above in reading intensive courses taken during the quarter in which the LASSI was administered. Those with less than 2.0 are considered unsuccessful. When considered from this vantage point, a picture emerges in which the LASSI seems to be a predictor of GPA in reading intensive courses.

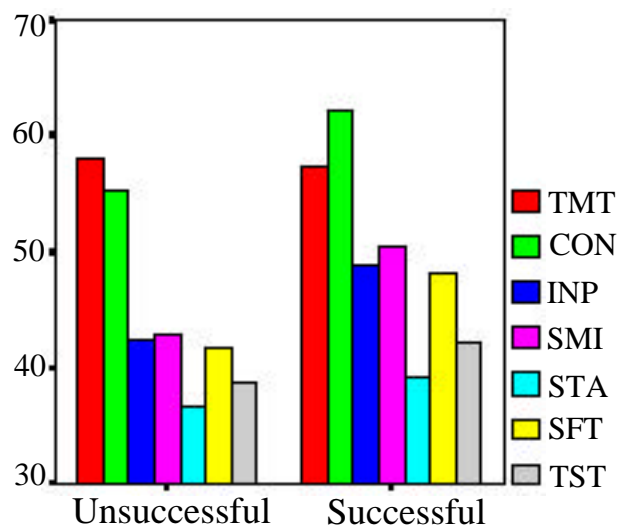
Students in Graphs One and Two below are divided into successful and unsuccessful groups based on academic success. The graphs are further broken down into scores for each of the ten LASSI categories.

Graph One contains the categories: Attitude, Motivation, and Anxiety, which are affective attributes that are difficult to change with classroom instruction. Graph Two contains the categories of Time Management, Concentration, Information Processing, Selecting Main Ideas, Study Aids, Self Testing, and Test Taking Strategies.

Graph One
Academic Success vs LASSI Scores



Graph Two
Academic Success vs LASSI Scores



As the graphs show, those who were academically successful scored higher in every category on the LASSI except Time Management (which showed a -.08 point difference). Also notable is the score spread: In general, scoring lower than 50 in a LASSI category indicates a concern. With the exception of Study Aids and Test Strategies, those who were successful in reading intensive classes scored above, or very close to, the 50 mark. In contrast, those who were unsuccessful scored lower than 50 in all categories except Time Management and Concentration. While it cannot be stated that there is a categorical difference between a score of 49 and a score of 51, breaking the spread of scores along this line does seem to verify the contention of the LASSI authors that students scoring below 50 are less likely to be academically successful without some intervention.

There are, however, exceptions to this contention. In this study there were three students at each end of the continuum who did not perform as predicted. The answer for why three students scored well on the LASSI and did so poorly in the classroom may be extracted from a series of studies conducted by Dr. Justin Kruger and Dr. David Dunning. Four studies were summarized and the results published in the *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* Vol 77(6), Dec 1999, 1121-1134, entitled *Unskilled and unaware of it: How difficulties in recognizing one's own incompetence lead to inflated self-assessments*.

Drs. Dunning and Kruger suggest that the abilities that allow students to do well in the classroom are abilities necessary to evaluate their performance. Since these students are unable to properly evaluate their own performance, their scores are not reflective of reality. In fact, remedial help for these students *should* lower their LASSI scores as the students learn how to evaluate their own performance. A similar study by Koriat, Asher, et al, entitled *Assessing our own competence: Heuristics and Illusions*, points toward the

same conclusion: students with poor cognitive abilities frequently overestimate their performance.

At the other end of the continuum, three students were academically successful (a GPA above 3.0 for all three) had scored extremely low on the LASSI. Since it can be assumed that students who are academically successful have the cognitive abilities to evaluate their own performance, perhaps this underestimation of ability stems from an emotional base. If this hypothesis is true, self-confidence may be interfering with a realistic assessment of the students' performance.

CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that for the overwhelming majority of students, the LASSI appears to be a good instrument of measurement with regards to success in reading intensive courses. In this particular group 94% of the students were adequately represented by their LASSI scores based on reading intensive GPA. Students who were academically successful scored, on average, above 50 in all categories of the LASSI. Students who were academically unsuccessful scored, on average, below 50 in all ten LASSI categories.

Although LASSI is an effective screening tool, it is important for instructors to be cognizant of the small group of students (approximately 6% in this sample) for whom the LASSI is not predictive of academic success. This group includes students who don't have the skills to accurately assess their own abilities through the LASSI's questions. These students may need remediation to begin to build accurate self-assessment abilities. One would expect that these students' scores would actually decline as they gained the skills necessary to assess their own abilities. Conversely, some students do well in the classroom, yet score poorly on the LASSI. It is assumed that these students have logical assessment skills since these are abilities necessary to do well in the classroom. Therefore, it can be inferred that their self misassessment is

based on low self-confidence or other unknown factors.

Academic Success (Successful) = 2.0 or above.
Unsuccessful = less than 2.0. This GPA is for all reading intensive courses taken during the quarter in which the LASSI was given.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

H&H Publishing continues to be professionally proud of its association with Claire Ellen Weinstein. Through LASSI and other products Weinstein has authored, this company is providing quality materials needed to implement the types of study strategy programs needed by many, maybe most, college students. The purpose of LASSI in Action is to spread the word of the successes we hear about every day in our conversations with users across the country — in some cases across the world.

Our services and products have widened and broadened as needs have grown and been identified. The new Web version of the LASSI is an excellent example of a new platform that increases the LASSI effectiveness. Users of the Web version experience some features they consider far superior to the self-scored/paper LASSI. With the Web version, each LASSI is scored accurately, all data is stored safely, campus data is available to the administrator, and orders can be filled within minutes rather than days or weeks. Users in Hong Kong, to state an extreme instance, begin taking the LASSI minutes after the Web order is received at a price that doesn't increase because of the great distance from H&H's headquarters.

LASSI has always been highly praised for diagnosing weaknesses, but for years we heard pleas from users for some instruction source that could be used to

strengthen those areas of need. With our new **Becoming a Strategic Learner** there is now available high quality instruction that directly addresses any weaknesses found by LASSI testing.

Another benefit that modern technology is bringing to LASSI users is a variety of means for paying for it. Bookstore purchases, online credit cards, and inclusion with books are some of the options that are now available. A call to H&H describing your needs may disclose other ways of shifting costs away from strained institutional budgets.

With any call to H&H, you will also experience the world's finest customer service team. Priscilla, Mike, and Beth give personal service (almost unique in today's publishing business) and also know how to solve the many problems associated with people interfacing technology. Try them. Our callers are always impressed with the personal help they receive.

Users of LASSI are encouraged to write about their programs. We want to tell the rest of the world about you and your work. With this new online version of LASSI in Action, we hope that frequent editions will be our new norm. We need your articles to make that possible.

Thanks. Let us hear from you. Submit your article by email to:

hhservice@hhpublishing.com