

# *LASSI in Action*

**SPRING 2007**

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This is the 13th 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 LASSI.

• **LETTER FROM THE EDITOR**

Publishing LASSI has been a wonderful professional experience for all of us involved with the assessment. Opportunities to serve students are coupled with contacts with those who deal directly with those students. Rarely does a day pass when we have no new LASSI story to share over our morning coffee.

Nevertheless, we know that the problems you encounter are difficult and, seemingly, becoming more challenging. We know that many of you are trying to be proactive rather than reactive to situations that are clearly going to be encountered. We are striving to make it easier to “get ahead” of these situations; we are convinced that every student assessed early in their college career has a better chance for college success. If you have ideas on how to approach this goal at your institution, we would be pleased to assist in that effort.

Recently we have made some excellent improvements in the information provided you at the administrative site for Web LASSI. If you haven't noticed the following upgrades are now available:

- We recently moved the Web LASSI to a more powerful server that has improved speed, reliability and security.
- The overall look of the Web LASSI has been updated and improved.
- We added the ability for instructors to download an Excel file of raw data. The file includes each student's name, ID, e-mail address, student key, test data/time, ten percentile scores, ten raw scores, and 80 item scores.

- Another feature allows instructors to print a report that lists how a student responded to all 80 items on either the pretest or posttest.
- Students will appreciate the ability to have a link of their LASSI results sent to their e-mail address. Students have the option to enter an e-mail address on the same page as they enter their name before taking the LASSI.
- Another new feature of the Web LASSI is the LASSI API (Application Programming Interface). The LASSI API was created to help your IT department integrate LASSI data with your school's data management system. For more information contact [hhservice@hhpublishing.com](mailto:hhservice@hhpublishing.com).
- All of the features listed above are available at no additional charge.

There has been some understandable confusion over "Web LASSI" versus "LASSI for Learning Online." These are separate assessments. Web LASSI is the web version of the assessment which is also available on paper. LASSI for Learning Online is an adaptation that deals directly with students involved in online learning. If you haven't seen both assessments, call and ask Priscilla or Mike for access to review. Besides your review you'll experience the best customer service in educational publishing. A real person will take care of your needs in a friendly, helpful, intelligent manner.

Also, we've seen a recent movement where students purchase the LASSI Instructional Modules through our web site or from their school bookstore. Web LASSI's can also be purchased through the bookstore via a "ticket" containing access information.

Enjoy the articles in this edition of LASSI in Action. Give us feedback we can share with others.

Bob Hackworth

## • ARTICLE 1

### WEB LASSI IN OUR STUDENT SUCCESS PROGRAM

by Annecy Baez, Ph.D.

The Counseling and Personal Development Center  
Lehman College/City University of New York

The LASSI was first used during the 2005-2006 academic year to assist students towards achieving their academic goal. It was part of our Student Success Program at the Counseling and Personal Development Center. The Student Success Program incorporates the following: a LASSI screening, study skills counseling and participation in our student success workshops.

Students learned about our study skills counseling through our newsletter, flyers, student success workshop, or faculty referral. Once a student was referred, they attended one to three study skills counseling sessions. The first session focused on administration and review of the LASSI results and the second and third session focused on developing a plan of action for improving areas that required remediation. Many of our students also completed the online LASSI modules (**Becoming a Strategic Learner**) or were referred to our study skills workshops and tutoring. If the student needed personal counseling to assist them in clarifying personal and academic concerns, then the student was referred to a personal counselor.

Students reported positive benefits from taking the LASSI and attending our study skills counseling sessions. The LASSI was easy to administer online, and provided quick results that could be immediately reviewed with the students. In addition, the students enjoyed the ability to use the online educational module as a supplement to the individual work they were doing in study skills counseling. Students were thankful for the services offered at the Counseling and Personal Development Center, they reported using many of the strategies learned and persisting towards the next semester because of this intervention. We will continue using the LASSI this coming academic year.

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• **ARTICLE 2**

**A LEARNING STRATEGIES AND SKILLS COURSE  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA**

by Richard L. Livingston, Ph.D.

The Center for Teaching and Learning  
The University of Alabama

The Center for Teaching and Learning at The University of Alabama, in collaboration with the university Career Center, and library staff implemented a learning strategies course during the spring semester of 2003. This course was modeled on a similar course developed at the University of Texas at Austin by Dr. Claire Ellen Weinstein. Dr. Weinstein has also developed the internationally popular Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI) that serves as a foundational component of the course. Students are required to critically evaluate their own learning in each of ten study skills areas covered in the course and develop new behavior patterns that are conducive to academic success.

The students purchase the Web-LASSI and Web Module packets from the university bookstore. Students take the LASSI study skills inventory twice during the course, once at the beginning and again at the end. Their scores on the pretest LASSI are then used to identify areas of weaknesses that the students are expected to work on through the course of the semester. The course is partially internet based. Instead of a textbook, students complete online modules (**Becoming a Strategic Learner**, also authored by Weinstein) corresponding to each of the ten areas assessed by the LASSI. These ten areas are Attitude, Motivation, Time Management, Anxiety, Concentration, Information Processing, Selecting the Main Idea, Study Aids, Self-testing, and Test Strategies. The learning modules, completed online, require the students to critically evaluate their own study behaviors and then set learning goals based on new strategies that they have

learned. Students are expected to become strategic learners by applying what they have learned and by developing new and more appropriate time management and study behaviors. Students are also required to complete a teaching project by researching a particular study skills area and present their findings to the class.

The learning strategies course requires that students examine their own behavior patterns and develop new behaviors that are conducive to academic success. Students are expected to attend and actively participate in every class. Out-of-class assignments, in the form of internet computer modules, are given weekly. Receiving a good grade in the course is dependent upon regular class attendance, active participation, completion of all assignments, and satisfactory grades on tests and assignments. In addition to study skills, students enrolled in the course also receive instruction in library skills and career exploration. The course is recommended for students who may have experienced difficulty in adjusting to the demands and study requirements of university-level academics. The course is particularly beneficial for freshmen who have been placed on Academic Warning or Suspension.

Follow-up research from the initial pilot course in 2003 showed the grade point averages (GPA's) of students completing the course increased, on average, from below a 2.0 to above a 2.0. Students' comments about the course were overwhelmingly positive. Because of this initial success, the course has been offered regularly since 2003. On-going research has shown that students successfully completing the course consistently improve their grade point averages. Research has also demonstrated that the GPA's of students successfully completing the course are significantly higher than the GPA's of students who withdraw from the course or who fail to attend. Retention and graduation rates of students completing the course have also been higher than those students who withdrew or failed to attend.

Student evaluations of the course are overwhelmingly positive. Following are a few of the end-of-course comments from students enrolled in 2005.

1. The information from the LASSI programs was very helpful.
2. This class has really helped me improve in my classes this semester.
3. This course has helped me learn a lot of new skills to use in my future courses.
4. I feel that in many ways this course has overall helped me as a person, in school, and in work.
5. The information was very helpful and easy to understand. The teacher was understanding and approachable.
6. It helps students improve study skills needed for college. It makes you realize how important these skills are.
7. This class helped me understand how important good study habits are, which allows for a less stressful environment.
8. This class gives good ideas to help you study. It showed me my weak points and what I needed to improve in.
9. The modules did help put my concerns into words.
10. The small class size is good for the subject.

• **ARTICLE 3**

**THE LASSI AT CITY UNIVERSITY  
OF HONG KONG: AN INFORMATION  
SYSTEMS APPROACH**

by Dr. Eva Wong and Dr. Kevin Downing  
City University of Hong Kong

**Introduction**

At City University of Hong Kong, our experience with LASSI began in 1996. In the beginning LASSI proved to be a useful tool for individual students and teachers in terms of analyzing and improving particular skills and strategies. Over time we have found it valuable to integrate LASSI results with other information in the University. This paper is a brief description of that ten-year history.

The Hong Kong Universities General Council (UGC) has issued a mandate on the adoption of outcome-based teaching and learning (OBTL). That mandate requires a four-year curriculum and places responsibility for providing evidence for effective student learning squarely upon the University. Therefore, it was decided to use the LASSI as one institution-wide measure of the effectiveness of the learning environment, and of the 'added value' that City University provides to students. This decision was made following a pilot run involving some 1,800 volunteer freshmen from the September 2005 intake. In September, 2006 the LASSI was made compulsory for all freshmen at City University. Handling the LASSI and other institutional data for approximately 5,000 new students who would take the test three times during their undergraduate careers (entry, interim and exit tests) clearly required a more integrated approach with our institution-wide information systems.

The LASSI data system provided by H&H worked well for programme-level or even departmental purposes, but it was not sufficient for managing the large

data sets generated and used at an institutional level. Therefore, we worked with H&H to develop a system which clearly identified each student who completed the LASSI and allowed the data to be stored centrally at City University for further analysis.

### **The Information Systems at City University**

The integration of administrative systems to achieve better efficiency and effectiveness is one of the main objectives of City University's information technology strategy. The student information system (SIS) used at City University is SunGard SCT Banner which was purchased in mid-1997. In February 1998, Admissions went live as the first module of the SIS. In the ensuing years, implementation and development continued on the student system and by 2000, City University had a fully integrated SIS, from admissions to graduation, with a suite of web-based functions to deliver services directly to end users. Once the student system was established and functioning well, human resources went live in 2001, followed by an alumni system in 2002. Given this context, it was decided that AIMS (our internal name for the Banner system) would be used for student identification for LASSI completion. Therefore, in common with all other student related data, the resulting LASSI data of individual students would be stored inside AIMS so that more detailed analyses and correlation with other data is facilitated.

### **Integrating the LASSI with City University Systems**

With students required to take the LASSI on three separate occasions as their undergraduate study progresses, it is crucial that only designated students are allowed to complete the questionnaire at specific time frames; in other words, freshmen on entry, Year 2 students in semester three, and graduating students in their final semester. Consequently, the Enterprise Solutions Unit, which is in charge of administrative

computing at City University, developed a programme in AIMS which checks students' IDs for their privilege to take the LASSI. This programme was then released to the University e-portal, the most familiar interface for students, to make it possible for only designated students to complete the survey. As soon as a designated student is identified, the programme automatically connects him/her to the LASSI system and provides LASSI with our invoice number, school number, student ID, student name and email in order to allow each student to complete the questionnaire. Once the student starts completing the questionnaire, he/she is in the LASSI environment and the normal functions and features of LASSI are available. On completion, the student can print out a copy of the results for personal records, and the raw data are stored in the LASSI system. H & H Publishing then provided a tailor-made programme to allow City U personnel to do a batched download of our students' LASSI data on a routine basis. This data download includes full responses to the 80 questions and the consolidated percentiles of the 10 LASSI items with a date stamp to mark when the test was taken.

These batches of data are then uploaded into our Banner system according to the student IDs so that individual LASSI data pertaining to each student is stored together with the individual's other academic and related data. This final step allows us to track the number of times each student has completed the LASSI survey, and prevent ad hoc completions which might confound our results. With the LASSI data properly stored in AIMS, we can now use the standard web functions to make the results available to individual students as part of their academic and learning profile. Our students are used to getting their academic and other related information via the University e-portal which provides single sign-on facilities to AIMS. By making the LASSI results a composite part of their records on AIMS, student retrieval is easily facilitated within their familiar learning environment.

## Conclusion

In addition to providing easy access to their own results, aggregated results from the entire class in any course are provided to teachers in order to allow them to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses in learning and study strategies for their classes and devise appropriate teaching and learning activities which address the specific identified learning needs. The system used to disseminate this information is our e-learning platform, Blackboard Academic Suite and every credit-bearing course at City University now has a Blackboard component which contains class based LASSI information. Using the single sign-on function between Blackboard and AIMS, the ESU has provided a further programme which ensures that the aggregated LASSI results from each course can be accessed by the corresponding teachers via the standard class list function. All academic staff are familiar with the University e-portal which provides access to their Blackboard courses and by successfully integrating the LASSI scores into our standard information systems, we have ensured that both students and teachers are better informed and can readily use this data to improve our learning environment. Finally, this combination of systems has allowed those responsible for institutional research to ensure that data from a variety of sources is integrated for more efficient analysis and publication. Consequently, university staff take a renewed interest in both the practical and academic uses of the LASSI, some of which is evidenced in the publication list which has resulted from this initiative, and City University has taken another important step to ensure that improvements in our learning and teaching environment are demonstrably student-focused and data driven.

## Publication List

- Downing, K.J., Shin, K., & Wong, E. (2006) 'Social and Cultural Factors in Metacognitive Development. IUT.' (Improving University Teaching) 31st International Conference, Dunedin, New Zealand, July 2006.
- Downing, K.J., Cheung, H., Shin, K., & Wong, C. (2006) 'Thinking About Thinking Online.' International Conference on ICT in Teaching and Learning, The Open University of Hong Kong, July 2006.
- Downing, K.J. & Shin, K. (2006) 'Developing Metacognition with LASSI Online.' International Conference of the Asia-Pacific Educational Research Association, Hong Kong Institute of Education, November 2006.
- Downing, K.J., Kwong, T., Shin, K., Lam, I. & Chan, B., (2007). 'Does problem-based learning enhance metacognition?' International PBL Symposium 2007 – Reinventing PBL, Republic Polytechnic, Singapore, March 2007. (Invited paper).
- Downing, K., Ho, R., Shin, K., Vrijmoed, L. & Wong, E. (2007). 'Metacognitive Development and Moving Away.' *Educational Studies*. Vol.33, No.1 1-13, 2007.