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Suzanne V. Newbold, Ph.D. and Jose A. Velasquez, Ph.D.
College of the Bahamas
Students consistently cite effective academic advising as a crucial element that supports their success in college. In fact, a recent study by the Community College Research Center at Columbia University (October 2007) cites effective academic advising as one of the major contributors to the success of underrepresented students at postsecondary institutions. According to Vincent Tinto, "Advising should be woven into the fabric of the freshman year in ways that promote student development . . . Quite simply, good advising should not be left to chance" (1999).

However, advising is not a one size-fits-all prescription, and each student needs to be considered as an individual with unique goals and challenges. Emerging discourse in the field of developmental education has suggested that advisors need to look at the whole student instead of relying solely on test scores for placement into English and mathematics (and other) courses (Saxon et al 2008). Affective factors like motivation, attitude, and belief in self can dramatically affect the likelihood that a student will succeed in college. Furthermore, skills like time management and ability to concentrate are critical for college students and are not taught in most freshman level courses. Clearly, we needed more information to target interventions to individual students that would support their success.

Kodiak College Student Services has a mission to provide academic advising that is "an on-going, collaborative, nurturing
process involving students and educators who develop trusting relationships and personal connections." Following best practices, we require mandatory assessment and placement in math and English courses prior to registration. In spring of 2008, we started giving each student the LASSI as well as the Accuplacer placement test. We are calling this program "Targeted Advising" since it allows our advisors to quickly know more about the unique characteristics of each student they see and suggest appropriate interventions. For example, if students scored in the lowest percentile on multiple scales of the LASSI, we would strongly encourage them to take a college success course. Another specific way we have used the LASSI is to help determine placement if students are very close to a cut score in English or math. For example, if students are slightly below the cutoff for the freshman-level composition course and most of the scores on their LASSI scales are in the top percentile, we may allow them to take the freshman-level course. We predict that the consideration of multiple factors in addition to test scores will ensure more appropriate and effective placement and advising of students.

The Targeted Advising program is aligned with the Kodiak College Strategic Plan 2006-2010. One of our strategic directions is to "Reflect our diverse community populations in our students, faculty and staff." One objective under that strategic direction is to "Promote enrollment of under-represented groups through targeted academic
advising, financial aid awareness, bridging, and peer support programs." The program has already enabled advisors to better understand the needs of our diverse students by considering a variety of factors that can affect student success.

We are currently in the initial phases of data analysis of the Targeted Advising program. Preliminary examination of the evidence suggests that there is a significant increase in the persistence of first-time degree-seeking students since we started the program. We will continue to track students who participated in the program to determine if they progress toward their stated academic goals more efficiently than previous cohorts. This type of research will include some qualitative data collection including clarification of student academic goals and student feedback on the program. We also plan to compare the spring 2008 first-time degree-seeking cohort with the spring 2009 cohort to see if there were differences in GPA and attrition rates.

Regardless of what the data reveal, the benefits of using LASSI are already apparent. The enhanced advising model is being used by advisors and students to prompt discussion of skills and characteristics of successful students. LASSI results are also providing an increased institutional understanding of the Kodiak College first-time degree-seeking student population. The additional information LASSI reveals is allowing us to better match students with well-designed learning environments that are tailored to enhance their success.


LASSI Utilization

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The Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI) was first introduced to Riverside School of Health Careers (RSHC) during the 2007-2008 academic year; and initially utilized with the Surgical Technology (ST) Program. Although the Psychological Services Bureau (PSB) Health Occupations Aptitude Examination is employed as an entry instrument with potential incoming ST students, the LASSI has been instituted to obtain a more comprehensive analysis of the student.

Initially, each potential student was provided with a designated appointment time to arrive at the school and take the LASSI with a counseling session immediately following. It was soon determined that it is both more accommodating for the student and for the inventory administrator to offer the inventory online. Hence, we began to order and offer the LASSI online.

Each potential student is given the online instructions on how to complete the LASSI and then asked to make an appointment with the RSHC Counselor for an in-depth interview. Within the interview process, the students' prior academic record(s), their strengths/weaknesses and the LASSI results are reviewed. The student has the opportunity to discuss and reflect upon their personal beliefs regarding the ten scales on which they are inventoried. Additionally, strategies and interventions pertaining to the results of the ten LASSI scales are discussed. Furthermore,
the Counselor then makes recommendations to the Program Director(s) and to the Program Faculty members as to the needs of the incoming students, with suggested advisement/teaching/study group strategies that will assist with program and most importantly, student success.

RSHC has also started utilizing the LASSI as a tool of information in the provision of services needed and Counseling Program development. For example, if the LASSI results reflect that a large number of students can greatly improve in any given area, e.g., time management, test strategies or anxiety, then an appropriate group (time management, testing skills/strategies or stress management etc.) is instituted to assist that benefit.

Future utilization of the LASSI at RSHC will continue with all of the above, in addition to the planned implementation of its use with the Professional Nursing Program. The LASSI will be utilized with this program, for remedial assistance to students who receive scholarships for disadvantaged students.

The LASSI has proved to be a valid instrument of great significance at RSHC. It has been valuable as it pertains to assistance with student success, program success and remediation. Its' applicability and usage ease is of great importance to students and faculty. Students have reported their amazement and awe at the ability of the inventory to accurately access their personal academic position via the ten scales. Faculty members have raved as to how it has allowed them to better understand the needs of their students and allow for the utilization of variable teaching strategies and techniques.

We will definitely continue to utilize the LASSI and all of the benefits that it has to offer for many academic years to come!
We first began to use LASSI in January 2006 to evaluate and assist students with their study skills needs. We believed that many students were not being successful in their coursework, not because of the material, but because of a deficit in study skills. LASSI results confirmed this. We initiated a math study skills course designed exclusively for students in the SSS program. The course covered concepts such as time management, test taking skills, how to read a textbook, managing anxiety, memory skills, learning styles and note taking with an emphasis on applying these skills to math courses, but with general application as well. We also offered individual counseling sessions on study skills to assist students in customizing the tools they needed to be successful.

We were unfortunately not able to continue offering the free study skills course, but continue to use LASSI to help students on an individual basis via individual counseling sessions on study skills. Students take the LASSI and then meet with an SSS advisor to score and discuss the results. Students who need help with study skills then meet with the Learning Services Coordinator to plan and discuss specific tools that might be utilized to improve their skills. The LSC will engage with the students in follow up sessions to ascertain how the skills are being applied and if additional tools are needed.

We now also use LASSI as a tool to provide assigned tutors and mentors with additional information to customize their sessions.
Our mentors focus almost exclusively on study skills, and while tutors focus on material, integrating study skills into their sessions can really make a difference in terms of student success in a course. During these sessions, students are able to further hone their study skills with the help of a mentor or tutor. Students who have effectively applied new study skills techniques have reported improved confidence and course grades. Students are thankful for the services we provide and appreciate the opportunity to customize study skills to their needs. We will continue to use LASSI to assess and administer help to students on an individual basis.
LASSI Saves The Day
Robert Phaneuf
The University of Texas at Brownsville and Southmost College

Prior to 2001, Lassi was only a canine hero, a beautiful collie, that week-after-week saved the day for Timmy or his friends and family from impending disaster. In the Spring Semester of 2001, my world changed. Something else suddenly had the same name as my favorite collie of yesteryear. LASSI, the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory, now stood for an instrument, designed to avert certain disasters for unsuspecting students entering the precarious world of higher education. The self-reported diagnostic tool for evaluating a would-be student’s learning and study practices and attitudes would be as helpful to avert certain disasters as the first Lassi.

I first met my new-found LASSI friend while teaching University Experience classes at Rhode Island Community College. During the first five weeks of the semester, the curriculum focused on student success skills measured by the ten LASSI scales. The students were given the assessment to help them not only learn where they stood regarding the necessary skills needed for student success but also to pave the way for implementing newly-learned strategies to reach this success.

In 2003, I accepted a position as a counselor in the Student Support Services Program/ASPIRE at the University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College. Soon afterward, LASSI was used in the screening process for all new students in the program. As the Academic Counselor in the Student Success
Center, I've used the LASSI with our student-athletes, students who self-refer for academic counseling, and the College Assistance Migrant Program (C.A.M.P.).

Currently, there are plans for incorporating the LASSI in our NCB-1000 curriculum, a course designed to assist all students who have not complied with the Texas Success Initiative policy (College Ready). In fall 2009, our Academic Advising Center will require students who have academic success contracts, due to low GPA's, to complete the LASSI.

LASSI has come not only to the rescue of students who need study skills counseling but also to the rescue of those in need of strategies for achieving their academic goals. I believe the instrument is useful for all students entering college.

LASSI provides an excellent visual presentation of student strengths and weaknesses by focusing on the skills necessary for academic success. I applaud Dr. Weinstein and her colleagues for their well-thought-out work that culminated in the LASSI that provides strategic assistance for students who otherwise might become victims of academic disaster. LASSI is still saving the day!
The LASSI: An Interactive Group Approach  
Elaine Beaton and Kathy Fellowes  
University of Toronto Scarborough

The Academic Advising & Career Centre at the University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC) serves a campus of approximately 10,500 students. Our centre is rather unique in that it provides a comprehensive and integrated set of services including: academic advising, learning skills, career and employment planning. We had been utilizing the LASSI for about 13 years; however, the tool was underutilized despite the fact that we removed the fee for students. As Academic and Study Skills Advisors, we firmly believe in this as an effective tool, but we felt that it needed new appeal for students. As such, we decided to "re-launch the LASSI" at UTSC. Our goal was to make it "new and exciting" as well as more accessible through delivering it in a medium that met student needs. We moved to the online version and launched our new initiative in the summer of 2011. In an attempt to reach more students and not overwhelm our resources, we developed an interactive workshop. It remains at no cost to the student. We ask each student to complete the Web LASSI prior to the workshop, which includes:

• An explanation of the design and interpretation of the LASSI  
• Interpretation of the scores allowing each student to review their own report  
• A take away "tool kit". The tool kit contains a card for each of the LASSI scales. Each student can identify the range that they fall into on each of the scales and turn the card over to review resources and tips. The resources associated with each scale
were tailored to reflect the many different services and programs offered on our campus. Students were also directed to our website for additional resources that are updated regularly.

- Students are then divided into groups to discuss their outcomes and work together to develop additional resources to assist the group. They share their ideas with the larger group.
- Students are provided with a goal-setting worksheet to help them identify growth areas and develop specific and measurable study goals.
- Students are invited to book a follow-up appointment with an Academic Advisor if they feel that they need additional assistance.

To date, we have offered this session 5 times and have had 51 students attend. Out of this 51, 7 students attended a follow-up 1-on-1 meeting with an Advisor. We have also offered this workshop as a pre-workshop as part of a study skills package called the "Study Skills Boot Camp." After attending the LASSI workshop, students are then able to discern which of the Boot Camp sessions they want to attend. This allows them to be more focused in their study skills development. For example, they may want to focus their weakest areas first, such as Time Management, Memory and Concentration, etc.

Student comments taken from the Workshop evaluation forms include:

- "Group discussion was the most useful part of the session."
- "I was glad to learn more about LASSI and thought the flash card type resources were very good."
"Resources given and cards to take home will help me stay focused."

"The group discussions were really great eye-openers to different perspectives and situations - discussing the different types of study skills was useful."

"Group discussions and just having everyone share and relate each other's experiences and understanding of each skill-area really helped."

"I like how everyone gets a chance to talk in groups and relate to one another in terms of our strengths and weaknesses."

We are encouraged that interest in this tool has increased, however, we are still working to reach more students. There is no mandatory advising on our campus, even for those in academic jeopardy. Our hope is to reach more of these students to help them better identify weaknesses in their studying and help them to improve their overall academic standing.
Introduction:

The Search for Education Elevation and Knowledge (SEEK) program has administered the LASSI assessment as part of their summer orientation program for entering students since 2008. SEEK is an educational opportunity program that provides access to college to motivated high school graduates who need academic and financial support. SEEK provides tutoring, supplemental instruction, counseling, and an enhanced financial aid package to historically underrepresented students in higher education in an effort to increase their level of education, social capital, and workforce expertise. SEEK students are usually low-income, first-generation college students from ethnically diverse backgrounds living in underserved communities. Often times, they live in single-parent households and are considered Generation 1.5 students, that is, they moved to the United States at the age of 12 or older and enrolled in middle school or high school in this country.

LASSI research:

The SEEK program at Lehman College incorporated the LASSI assessment to better understand the factors that contribute to college success as well as to identify “high-risk” students early on. Research on the LASSI, has demonstrated that the “will component” (anxiety, attitude and motivation scales) of the LASSI is related to college students’ achievement (Prus, 1995, Mancuso, 2010) and retention (Newmeyer, 2006). Other studies that have
examined the academic achievement among vulnerable student populations have shown that LASSI scales are able to identify students at-risk of academic failure (Aragon, 2004). Similarly, Carrubba-Whetstine and Nixon (2009) reported in their LASSI in Action article, that the Anxiety, Information Processing, Concentration, and Self-Testing LASSI scales provided the most useful information when working with “high-risk” students. More specifically, they noticed that “high risk” students often reported having elevated levels of anxiety that prevented them from focusing while studying and from performing while taking exams. They also observed that low scores in Information Processing and/or Concentration often times reflected a high level of frustration with the studying process and that many "high risk" students scored low on the Self-Testing scale, revealing poor and ineffective study habits.

In addition, the Counseling Center at Lehman College reported that the LASSI assessment has had a positive impact in building and reinforcing first-year students’ academic self-efficacy. They found that the LASSI subscales often helped students to compartmentalize their scholastic competencies and helped them to broaden their dichotic ‘pass or fail’ mentality. The Center observed that LASSI results served to validate the students' areas of strength and allowed for a discussion of areas of improvement. Additionally, highlighting areas of strength and improvement helped to normalize the college experience as a time of transition in one’s life (McGilchrist, 2009).
LASSI administration:
The on-line LASSI assessment is easy to use and to administer to large groups of students. It takes approximately thirty-minutes to complete and it is scored using a computer-based program. Students can view their scores and an interpretation of their scores immediately after completing the assessment. To ensure the successful administration of the LASSI, the SEEK program staff reserves computer labs on-campus and equips them with upper-division students who are familiar with this assessment. In addition, SEEK counselors visit the computer labs to see that all students complete the LASSI, print their reports, and schedule appointments to review their LASSI reports with SEEK counselors during the summer.

Uses of the LASSI in the Lehman College SEEK Program:
SEEK counselors understand the importance of utilizing effective assessment tools such as the LASSI to help students advance their understanding of themselves as learners and to facilitate their academic and personal growth. As a result, counselors have utilized the LASSI in three important ways, as a vehicle to academic and personal counseling during the summer program, as a guide for the development of the fall first-year initiative course curriculum, as well as to design interventions for “high-risk” students during the spring academic semester.

SEEK counselors use the LASSI to help students reflect on their areas of academic
strengths and weaknesses. Throughout the summer program, counselors meet with students to review their LASSI results and to help them interpret their scores. In their meetings, counselors ask students to identify areas of LASSI in which they did above and below the national norms and then ask them if they believe their scores accurately reflected their approach to learning in college. This is important because it allows students to describe their approach to learning and while doing so they reveal their beliefs and attitudes towards college as well as their motivation for learning in college. Counselors also invite students to reflect on key factors that might interfere with their academic performance and help them to connect with the appropriate on-campus and community resources during the summer program.

SEEK counselors also utilize the LASSI assessment to highlight students’ areas of strengths and to caution them about specific study skills areas that they will need to improve in order to achieve academic success. The LASSI allows counselors to give feedback to students about their use of learning and study strategies based on concrete evidence and in a timely manner. This helps them to be objective and proactive in their work with students and it allows students to be proactive in their own learning. In addition, the LASSI has been used to facilitate a conversation about the role of personal responsibility and choice in individual learning. For these reasons, the LASSI has proven to have great counseling utility.
LASSI results have also been used to guide the curriculum development and the teaching of the fall college readiness course. For example, the review of the LASSI in individual counseling meetings with students prompted counselors to redesign their first-year initiative seminar to include principles and language from the On-Course text by Skip Downing. The principles that were selected were those that coincided with the areas of concern identified by the LASSI (e.g. time management, discovering self-motivation, and accepting personal responsibility). As part of the reorganization of the course, students were required to keep journals, write reflective essays on topics regarding their use of learning and study strategies, and practice effective self-management skills. The review of the LASSI results prior to the beginning of the fall academic semester has also enabled counselors to tailor their teaching and address the unique needs of their students in the classroom.

The LASSI results have been useful at identifying “high-risk” students. For instance, over the years, counselors have observed that students who often end up in academic warning or even probation usually scored below the 50th percentile in the “will component” of the LASSI (anxiety, attitude, and motivation scales). And, they also scored low in time-management and self-testing scales. This information has prompted counselors to expand their supportive programming to include workshops and guest speaker lectures throughout the academic year that center on helping students explore their
reasons for attending college and their educational values. And, to include educational activities that focus on helping students gain self-awareness, identify their learning style, reflect on their learning process, practice effective study skills, improve their concentration and adopt more positive views about learning in college.

Overall, the LASSI is a useful assessment because it informs the development of interventions tailored to the unique needs of students and provides a great deal of data that is used to inform educational planning. The LASSI also helps counselors to determine the learning and study strategies that students bring to college and express it quantitatively thus allowing them to make important decisions regarding how to allocate time, energy and resources. In addition, the

LASSI provides a baseline measure of how prepare students are when they first arrive at Lehman College and thus helps program staff set sensible objectives for each academic semester. Further, the LASSI provides standards for establishing comparisons and demonstrating student growth. Finally, the LASSI also helps counselors to work more effectively with others and to share findings with other opportunity programs.

In sum, The LASSI is a valuable and useful diagnostic tool that can be used as a gateway to personal counseling and as a liaison to on-campus resources such as the Tutoring Center, Career Services, Disability Services, Academic Advisement, and Writing Center. It is evident that LASSI results combined with information gained from
information gained from conversations with students can lead to powerful interventions, appropriate referrals and meaningful conversations about the students’ educational experience. This is particularly important for educational opportunity program students because many need to get to know themselves as learners, realize that they have potential and figure out how they can be successful in college. Thus, charting their growth, identifying their weaknesses, and instilling personal responsibility for learning early on is critical to retaining them in college.

The SEEK program at Lehman College plans to continue to use the LASSI in their work with students and is presently working in collaboration with the SEEK Learning Center staff to integrate the LASSI assessment into the training activities and work of tutors.

REFERENCES
The Counseling and Health Services at The College of The Bahamas (COB) serves faculty, staff, and students. The Counseling Centre has used the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI) from 1999 to the present in several capacities. The LASSI results that were monitored for years have been used to validate academic deficits and needs. The information obtained through years of monitoring students ultimately contributed to successfully securing of a grant for a 3-year Academic Resiliency Program, funded by The Organization of American States (OAS). As a result we used the LASSI in three countries in the Caribbean, six islands and fifteen institutions.

In addition, LASSI results from our programs (at the high school and college levels) have been a useful tool. They have been instrumental in informing (appraising) the government of students’ standings and areas needing attention. Programs were developed to suggest approaches that address existing deficits and further refine existing strengths. Hopefully this information will continue to influence the Ministry of Education when crafting their policies.

At the College of The Bahamas, the faculty has used the LASSI results as bench markers in research initiatives and programs implemented. One significant impact that emerged is the assessment of college freshmen. All students enrolled at the COB must take the First Year Studies mandatory course in order to graduate. Approximately 25-30 sections of the course are offered
each semester.
The first day of the First Year Studies course is allocated for assessment of college freshmen. Students are administered the Learning Assessment Battery (LAB) which consist of five instruments: a) Learning Styles Inventory, b) Personality Inventory, c) Procrastination Index, d) Student Questionnaire and e) the LASSI.

Students with scores indicating more than 3 deficiencies (on the 10 scales of the LASSI) are considered at risk for under-functioning and failure. These students are followed up and monitored. Each student is given the results of their LAB assessment. They are given instructions for the use of the LASSI e-modules and counseling services (if required). Each professor teaching the FYS course is provided with an overall LAB profile of the students enrolled in their course. Professors may use this information to influence how they implement their course work.

Students considered at risk are followed up individually or in small groups of 4 – 6 students. The areas that are posing challenges for students are explored and discussed with a counselor. At that time a determination is made if further follow up sessions will be needed. If academics is the main issue students are referred to the Peer Tutoring Program to receive the help and support needed.

Recently, we have included a Peer Mentoring Program. When students are at risk and also struggle with chronic or severe procrastination, they are provided with a peer mentor
to support them. Mentors work especially with students battling issues with Attitude, Time Management, Study Aids and Motivation. Among the many tasks they embrace, they help students:

1. Clarify their goals and set realistic goals,
2. Establish schedules, identify and avoid time traps and distracters, establish procrastination logs and identify which of the 6 reasons for their procrastination and provide strategies to overcome them,
3. Shift from the high school perspective of being taken care of to taking personal responsibility for their academic and personal success,
4. Integrate their study strategies with their learning style to facilitate ease of learning.

Peer mentors have been trained to identify other issues that might interfere with college adjustment and academics and they refer such students to a counselor.

Over the past few years the program for students who are re-entering college, on probation or suspension, have been benefiting from the evaluation the LASSI provides. The workshops and assignments provided for the students are more finely tuned to address their needs as highlighted by the LASSI scales. As students complete the activities and exercises in the LASSI e-modules, counselors are able to identify other underlying issues and dormant strengths students possess. This information is used to guide and influence further therapy. The use of the LASSI has become an integral aspect in implementing our work. Because of the numerous ways the LASSI is used, we will continue to use it as we seek to serve our community here at the College of The Bahamas.