

# LASSI-IN-ACTION

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## ATHLETIC PROGRAMS

Increasing the Academic Confidence of Student Athletes with the LASSI  
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Using the LASSI with Student Athletes  
Corinne Corte, Arizona State University

Student-Athlete Academic Success:  
The LASSI in Action  
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LASSI IN ACTION IS A USER DRIVEN NEWSLETTER THAT ALLOWS PROFESSIONALS TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH LASSI ASSESSMENT. WE WELCOME YOUR FEEDBACK ON LASSI, AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO SHARING YOUR SUCCESS STORIES.

# Increasing the Academic Confidence of Student Athletes with the LASSI

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American International College

Building student confidence in the first year of college can increase or decrease retention. Students have to learn how to resolve the academic challenges that arise during their educational experience to become successful college students. It is important to acknowledge that not all students know how to seek the guidance they need to reach their academic goals. Failure to identify challenges and seek out support often leads down a path of academic probation, academic dismissal, and subsequent failure to retain. Freshmen student-athletes are one group particularly vulnerable to this cycle.

The Center for Academic Success and the Division II football program at American International College (AIC) began a pilot study in fall 2011 to change the way that academic support is delivered to the freshmen football team. American International College's Center for Academic Success addresses the needs of AIC learners by providing developmental education courses, academic tutoring, writing support, and academic coaching. In fall 2011 the Center began implementing an academic study hall to increase the use of services by student-athletes and to build their motivation. The program is called "Increasing the Academic Confidence of Freshmen Football Student-Athletes through the Center for Academic Success".

Most college athletes have distinctive and special challenges. The LASSI was used as a resource to identify and address the needs

## Increasing the Academic Confidence of Student Athletes with the LASSI, Page 2

and obstacles faced by AIC student-athletes. We assessed the incoming freshmen football players using the LASSI as a pretest to identify the student-athletes' weaknesses in academic confidence. We found, for example, the major areas we wanted to focus on came from the attitude and study aid scale values of the LASSI. From this, we have identified two academic goals based on benchmark data analysis. First, we have created a learning plan for each student and continue to use that learning plan to document the academic progress of the student. Second, we are working with staff from the Center for Academic Success to create interactive workshops on goal-setting and note taking for freshmen football student-athletes based on the data collected from the pre-test.

The Center for Academic Success will continue to track freshmen football student-athlete progress over the course of the spring semester. Preliminary observations

indicate to us that the LASSI has helped us to evaluate and provide educational support to a population that has a history of not reaching out for academic assistance. Attendance at study halls is consistently good. Staff members have become increasingly involved in meaningful conversations with the freshmen football student-athletes around academic goal setting and engagement.

Based on what we feel are early signs of success, we have expanded the program in the spring 2012 semester to include a small group of sophomore football players that will be mentored by Center staff based on data from the LASSI. At the end of the spring 2012 semester, we plan to use the LASSI again as a post-test to identify increases in achievement and engagement through the intervention of the study hall program. In addition, the results of the post-test will help us to determine if this program has helped in the area of retention.

# Using the LASSI with Student Athletes

Corinne Corte

Arizona State University

One of the key factors in planning programs for a student-athlete's academic success, especially if they arrive at a university without the skills necessary to be successful, is assessing their academic achievement level and their use of study skills. LASSI has been a valuable tool as part of the assessment process. If, after assessment, it is determined that a student-athlete needs a more structured study program and is assigned to work with one of our part-time mentors, the results from the LASSI are incorporated both into training the mentors and their daily work with the students.

An initial training session for mentors is held at the beginning of each semester where I review the LASSI – I explain what each of the areas mean and provide a hand-out with multiple strategies listed to use with students who score low in the areas. I also created a form that each mentor receives that lists the student's strengths and weaknesses based on LASSI results and some suggested strategies based on the courses the students are currently enrolled in. The mentors are then shown how those strategies can be incorporated into their sessions with the student-athletes. The results, especially information processing and test taking strategies, provoke valuable dialogue with mentors. There are so many useful strategies within both domains that many students may not be aware of and if LASSI results indicate that these are areas of weakness, just suggesting a few to a student may be what that student needs to be more successful.

The mentors find this information very useful – it provides insight into the student's academic preparedness and allows them to obtain information that the student may not be able to articulate very well. It also provides a direction for their interactions with the students and a possible measuring stick for the student's progress in gaining the academic skills necessary for success.

# **Student-Athlete Academic Success: The LASSI in Action**

## **Shelly Lovelace, Heather Downs, and Megan Dailey University of Virginia**

### **Student-Athlete Transition**

The transition from high school to college can be difficult for any student, but student-athletes find the shift particularly challenging as they acclimate to highly competitive and demanding academic and athletic expectations. Many NCAA colleges and universities have designated staffs of advisors, tutors, and learning specialists posited with supporting the continued eligibility and successful degree completion of this unique student population. Despite these additional supports, the federal graduation rate for student-athletes is only 1% higher than their peers in the general population with Division I institutions failing to graduate approximately a fifth of the students recruited for athletic participation, leaving obvious room for improvement (NCAA Research Staff, 2014).

The NCAA focuses solely on the alignment of student-athletes' high school grade point average (GPA) and standardized test scores (SAT or ACT) when determining initial athletic eligibility. Widely used as entrance criteria for college admissions, academic support staffs typically begin working with student-athletes knowing little more than these scores and basic demographic information. Research indicates, however, that these criteria alone are not sufficient in determining the likelihood of retention or academic success in student-athletes (Gaston-Gales, 2004; Jolly, 2008; Ting, 2009; Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992).

Both social and academic integration are important to ensure

## Student-Athlete Academic Success: The LASSI in Action, Page 2

student persistence in higher education; as academic and social involvement increase, so does a student's commitment to degree completion (Tinto, 1975). Student-athletes often naturally develop an institutional and social commitment as part of a sports team, but social involvement alone cannot support a lack of academic commitment (Tinto, 1997). Regardless of athletic motivation, academic motivation significantly contributes to a student-athlete's academic success (Gaston-Gales, 2004). Negative faculty and peer perceptions can create additional barriers including low motivation and self-image (Jolly, 2008). Thus, it is imperative that student-athletes create strong academic goals and understand the ways in which academic success contributes to later success in life (Ting, 2009). Student-athletes differ from other traditional student groups due to the uniqueness of their social and academic experiences, as well as the

significance of non-cognitive factors in determining their success (Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992). Therefore, efforts to support the academic success and retention of student-athletes should take a holistic approach to student needs, beyond the scope of GPA and standardized test scores. In order to ensure a strong transition to college, including academic achievement while balancing athletic responsibilities, this holistic support must be a proactive approach to success rather than a reactive intervention to difficulty.

### **LASSI in Action**

To that end, Athletic Academic Coordinators at the University of Virginia utilize the LASSI as an integral tool for supporting student-athlete success. All first year student-athletes take the LASSI online within their first week at the university. Academic Coordinators then use the results in three ways over the course of the academic

### *Student Self-Awareness*

While most students expect a challenging academic environment when entering college, few are completely prepared for the level of academic rigor. As one of the first steps in providing support services, Academic Coordinators review the LASSI results with each first year student-athlete individually. As a standardized measure, LASSI results help incoming students identify their learning and studying strengths and weaknesses, as well as how their results compare to national norms. An initial review of LASSI results across all 10 scales can be overwhelming for some student-athletes, so Academic Coordinators help students develop academic goals for their semester based on the findings, choosing a few specific areas on which to focus.

### *Academic Coordinator Guidance*

Beyond GPA, SAT scores, and minimal demographics, LASSI results provide an initial student

profile for Coordinators charged with holistic academic development and support. These profiles help Coordinators determine student-athletes who may be at risk for academic difficulty and provide context for conversations with incoming students about the study skills and learning techniques needed to be academically successful in college.

The Anxiety, Attitude, and Motivation scales within the LASSI's Will component are particularly beneficial for Coordinators. Athletic motivation alone does not always translate to academic motivation, especially for student-athletes with professional aspirations. Given that many collegiate student-athletes are driven by success experienced within their sport, the Will component provides Coordinators a clearer picture of student-athletes' academic drive. Academic Coordinators can then intervene, when necessary, to demonstrate the relationship between academic and athletic success

## Student-Athlete Academic Success: The LASSI in Action, Page 4

and help students create complimentary goals that lead to long-term preparation and achievement following college.

As part of a holistic approach to advising, Academic Coordinators use results from the LASSI to connect students with available resources in Academic Affairs or other offices across campus. For example, students who demonstrate relative weaknesses in Time Management or Study Aids are directed to in-house workshops held throughout the semester that are open to all student-athletes and aimed at improving these specific skills. Likewise, students with relative weaknesses in Selecting Main Ideas or Information Processing receive direct instruction from Coordinators on strategies for unpacking complex readings, making sense of lecture notes, or drawing connections across these forms of instruction. Each of these strategies is then reinforced through weekly academic tasks completed by all first-year student-athletes aimed at solidifying a practical

connection between effective learning strategies and students' actual course assignments. Academic Coordinators also use early LASSI results as a first step to discussing students' relative strengths and possible career goals, connecting them with the campus Career Center and additional assessments designed to help students choose a major and career path that supports these strengths and their personal interests.

### *Strategic Tutoring- Pre-test and Post-test Measure*

The Skill and Self-Regulation components of the LASSI aid Coordinators in identifying incoming student-athletes who would benefit from additional strategic tutoring interventions on skills for studying and learning. Strategic tutoring takes place in small-group or individual sessions focused on improving time management, organization, reading skills, study skills, and test-taking skills over the course of an academic semester.

Initial LASSI results upon

# Student-Athlete Academic Success: The LASSI in Action, Page 5

matriculation serve as pre-test measures for the intervention. While the tutoring program follows pre-designed lesson plans, strategic tutors also use results to gain a better understanding of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the student-athletes in their sessions and are encouraged to tailor their approach accordingly.

Each student-athlete who participates in strategic tutoring takes the LASSI again at the end of the semester. These results are used as a post-test measure, both to gauge change in students' studying and learning strategies and evaluate program effectiveness. Along with experiential surveys for tutors and students, post-test LASSI results provide evidence for the continued use of departmental resources in supporting strategic tutoring.

Academic Coordinators also use post-test results to encourage student-athlete self-awareness and provide positive reinforcement for notable gains.

## **A Valuable Tool**

While student-athletes face many of the same challenges as peers when transitioning to college, they also balance additional pressures from high expectations in both athletic and academic commitments. As a measure of student self-awareness,

a guide for Coordinator intervention, and a pre- and post-test measure of tutoring programs, the LASSI facilitates holistic, proactive support for student-athletes and is a valuable tool for Academic Coordinators working with students in this unique population.

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