

LASSI-IN-ACTION

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

ROBERT D. HACKWORTH

Welcome to the latest edition of LASSI in Action – our popular effort to inform those interested in LASSI of the successful efforts of others in varied programs across the spectrum of academic programs.

This edition features six articles about pre-emptive programs aimed at catching students before a lack of study strategies creates problems threatening college success. These programs bring welcome news to administrators seeking cost-effective ways of implementing improved policies and practices for large swaths of the student body. The same programs document the ways that faculty members working daily with students can more effectively begin moving them toward changes in study routines that will make their efforts more successful.



TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP ASSESSMENTS

Academic institutions use two major types of assessments.

Top-Down assessments are usually administrative driven, require large economic outlays, seek data for institutional improvement, and data is not quickly shared with others.

By contrast, Bottom-Up assessments are usually faculty driven, require small economic outlays, seek data for individual student improvement, and data is immediately available for action.

Both types of assessments are valuable, but each has its limitations.

LASSI is an assessment that is both top-down and bottom-up. Its feedback mechanisms serve administrations well while providing faculty with full use of group data and students with full use of personal data. Every person controls the data that pertains to their position in the institution. That is one of the reasons LASSI has a 30-year record of success. It explains why most students immediately show signs of having benefited from taking it.

WE ARE
COMMITTED TO
MAKING YOUR
CONNECTIONS TO
LASSI FRUITFUL
AND PRODUCTIVE.
TO THAT END, WE
URGE YOU TO
PHONE US WITH
ANY QUESTIONS.
YOU'LL FIND OUR
CUSTOMER
SERVICE IS
FRIENDLY,
HELPFUL, AND
PLEASANT.

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PUBLISHING

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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.

REFOCUSING ON STUDENTS' NEEDS TO ENHANCE PERFORMANCE AND WELLBEING

ERIC-GENE SHREWSBURY, PHD, PATRICK HENRY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Patrick Henry Community College (PHCC) has been using the LASSI assessment since 2009 in various courses and programs. Instructors were assessing students in remedial reading and writing courses, College Survival Skills, and as an evaluation to determine if students were eligible for specific programs designed for at-risk students. The results, however, were not being used to analyze student needs to provide a more in-depth portrait of the community college student body as a whole.

In 2016, the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) was preparing for a new system-wide initiative, Complete 2021, that requires each community college to triple the number of credentials awarded in the system by 2021. This initiative was a reaction to the national focus on improving completion rates and to increasing the percentage of the population with additional credentials beyond the high school diploma. In an attempt to understand low completion rates at community colleges and to provide a strategy to increase student

success, the VCCS and many other state community college systems have adopted Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins's (2015) *Redesigning America's Community Colleges: A Clearer Path to Student Success* as a blueprint for restructuring the traditional community college. Their primary emphasis is to limit course options in order to reduce frustration and confusion, but the authors only briefly discuss the necessary involvement required by the students themselves in the learning process. At PHCC student success is our college vision and an integral component of the college mission statement. In order to "place the student in the center of his or her learning so that the student can connect his or her inner world to the outer world" (Barbezat & Bush, 2014, p. 6), we were investigating methods that had not already been utilized. As Keeling and Hersh (2012) explained, students who are lacking a readiness to learn experience more challenges in higher education than students who are prepared and ready. This lack of readiness could be the result of students experiencing chronic stress

that makes learning or retaining information difficult or impossible (Keeling & Hersh, 2012; Willingham, 2010; Zull, 2002, 2011), and/or believing in a fixed mindset and not believing that intelligence can change (Dweck, 2006). In Goldstein's (2015) work, he also described characteristics of depression and learned helplessness. Individuals with these experiences often feel that they are not in control of their learning and may stop trying even when methods and strategies for success are available.

At that time, I decided to reexamine our LASSI data. According to the assessment, students scoring 50 or below in any category may need assistance to be successful. During the fall 2015 semester, 30 students enrolled in an SDV 108: College Survival Skills course completed the LASSI assessment with 66.6% (n=20) scoring 50 or below in anxiety. Forty-three percent scored 25 or below and 36.6% scored 15 or below. Other categories such as concentration, attitude, and motivation showed similar patterns. In addition, when analyzing LASSI scores of students who did not return for the fall 2015 semester, patterns of low scores in the anxiety and concentration categories were similar.

As explained in Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins's (2015) work, many foundations have been funding various initiatives to increase

"PLACE THE STUDENT IN THE CENTER OF HIS OR HER LEARNING SO THAT THE STUDENT CAN CONNECT HIS OR HER INNER WORLD TO THE OUTER WORLD."

community college enrollments, to improve tutoring programs, and to reduce the time under-prepared students were spending in developmental or remedial education. However, the authors admit that these efforts were not increasing graduation rates as much as predicted. Could other factors such as anxiety levels, inability to concentrate, and attitude be a critical component of the students' college experiences?

During the spring 2016 semester, I received a grant to document student LASSI scores and classroom behavior for one of my remedial reading and writing courses. Seventeen students completed the LASSI assessment. Of those students, 53.9% (n=9) were identified as needing assistance dealing with anxiety, 35% (n=6) needing assistance with a negative attitude about college, 35% (n=6) needing assistance with concentration, and 47% (n=8) needing assistance with a lack of motivation regarding college.

After taking the assessment, the students met with me individually to discuss their results. Students were not surprised about their results, and we discussed some strategies they could practice during the semester. During the semester, as I worked with students, it was obvious that students were struggling to pay attention and to focus during class assignments.

For example, until recently, it was required that every student applying to a VCCS college took a series of placement tests in reading, writing, and mathematics. When I compared the placement test writing sample with the first essay assigned to the students, the essays for class were much better. When we discussed the differences during our one-on-one meetings, many students explained that they just did not want to write and that they were tired. Some students also stated that they just clicked answers because the test was taking too long. My primary research question for the grant was to analyze anxiety and to provide strategies to reduce anxiety, however, while observing the students during the semester I realized that the inability to concentrate was even more problematic for student success.

After the spring 2016 study, I read a report by the Wisconsin Hope Lab, *Too Distressed to Learn?: Mental Health Among Community College Students* that further explained the need for another approach to teaching community college students. PHCC is currently in the process of restructuring the student development courses to address anxiety, concentration, and attitude. As a major component of the new course, students

will be developing an individualized action plan to help guide them while at PHCC and beyond. The LASSI assessment will be used during the first semester course, and students will work on methods to address their personal needs. Students will then retake the LASSI assessment during the last semester capstone or student development course and we will begin comparing the results.

At this time, our Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for reaccreditation affirmation is being developed and will be focusing on employability or soft skills. While reviewing the literature, it is obvious that many skills being assessed by LASSI are similar to those many employers are considering a deficit for recent college graduates and new employees. This means that not only is the LASSI assessment a powerful tool to assist students with college success, but also an asset in providing students with a positive direction going into the future as they start their new careers after graduation.

MY PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION FOR THE GRANT WAS TO ANALYZE ANXIETY AND TO PROVIDE STRATEGIES TO REDUCE ANXIETY, HOWEVER, WHILE OBSERVING THE STUDENTS DURING THE SEMESTER I REALIZED THAT THE INABILITY TO CONCENTRATE WAS EVEN MORE PROBLEMATIC FOR STUDENT SUCCESS.

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USING THE LASSI TO ENGAGE METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES THAT FOSTER A GROWTH MINDSET IN COLLEGE STUDENTS PLACED ON ACADEMIC PROBATION

DR. GINA BURKART, LEARNING SPECIALIST, CLARKE UNIVERSITY

At Clarke University, students placed on Academic Probation are required to create an Academic Success Agreement, meet with the Learning Specialist regularly, and take the 1-credit course CU100: College Study Strategies. In designing and teaching the course, I created authentic activities that engage students in setting goals and using strategies that will increase this success. This goal setting and self-reflection facilitates growth mindset in that it challenges them to think about their strengths and weaknesses, strategies they have used in the past, and how they can use the new strategies to improve their performance. Additionally, students are encouraged to reflect on the campus resources available to them that will help them with achieving their goals and make plans for implementing those resources. Since most students on probation do not yet have a growth mindset, the LASSI has been a useful tool for them to quantify their strengths and weaknesses and set the goals for the semester. In essence, the LASSI helps me achieve buy in from the students. In the first class and in our first regular meeting, students take and share the results of the LASSI and the

goals they set for themselves for the semester. Both administrations are included in the course text, 16 Weeks to College Success (Burkart, 2015 <https://he.kendallhunt.com/product/16-weeks-college-success>). In initial one-one conferences and class discussion, students overwhelmingly confirm the scores to be accurate and begin to realize the reasons they have been unsuccessful in college. The scores trigger a desire for success in the students, and in class, I discuss research about metacognition, growth mindset, and grit that confirms that they can succeed, and they own the power to change their success (Bandura, 1994; Marzano, 2001; Dweck, 2007; Ducksworth, 2016). Students are encouraged to create goals in the following areas: time management, reading, organization, use of campus resources, note-taking, studying, and test-taking.

Each week of the 16 week course, students use the course text, 16 Weeks to College Success (Burkart, 2015 <https://he.kendallhunt.com/product/16-weeks-college-success>) and class instruction to practice, reflect on and discuss how they will apply the featured strategy in their

courses during the week. As part of this reflection, students are directed back to the LASSI scores that correlate with the strategy and their goals. For example, the time management score on the LASSI is used when discussing and practicing new time management strategies, and when students learn new college reading strategies, they are directed to look at the SMI and INP scores. Students also engage in online discussion throughout the week on a Moodle discussion board in responding to questions about the strategies and how they are using the strategies. As part of the discussion, students are required to post a 150 word response to the question and a 50 word response to one of their classmate's responses. At the final conferences, students often share that the online discussions were a valuable part of their growth, as they saw that they were not alone in their struggles and got ideas from each other.

As assessment of the course curriculum and their own growth and use and application of the strategies, students are required to organize a portfolio around their goals and the

strategies they have used. In the portfolio, they are required to include a one-page reflection about how they grew in their goal areas over the course of the semester and how they used the course strategies to facilitate that growth. They are to also include evidence of the campus resources they used and their online discussion blogs. In organizing the portfolio, students are asked to create a section for each strategy covered in class that includes artifacts of how they used the strategy and improved throughout the semester. The pre and post LASSI scores also provide quantitative evidence of growth. For example, in the time management section, students might include pages from their planner, a study schedule, weekly "to do" lists, the semester calendar, and so on. For reading, they may include copies of textbook pages with SQ3R annotations, a short story with critical reading annotations, KWL charts, and concept maps. What is included in the sections is unique to each student and his or her authentic application of the strategies. Key to the assessment is their ability to show

AS ASSESSMENT OF THE COURSE CURRICULUM AND THEIR OWN GROWTH AND USE AND APPLICATION OF THE STRATEGIES, STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO ORGANIZE A PORTFOLIO AROUND THEIR GOALS AND THE STRATEGIES THEY HAVE USED.

understanding of the strategy and artifacts and meaningfully discuss how the application of the strategy related to their strengths and weaknesses and overall growth.

The portfolios are presented in individual 15-minute conferences at midterm and at the end of the semester. In the conferences, the students present their portfolio to the instructor and explain how they are using the strategies and how they are progressing in achieving their goals. At the final conference, students are challenged to reflect on how they will continue to apply and use the strategies in the following semester based on the courses that they will be taking and their understanding of self. The post-LASSI scores are key to this conference because the scores display tremendous growth in all areas of the LASSI and offer evidence of how using the strategies made a difference, which reinforces growth mindset. As a result, the students learn that they are in control of their own growth and engage in metacognitive discussion about how to use the strategies effectively based on their strengths, weaknesses, and the context of their courses.

This use of the LASSI with the course curriculum has proven very successful in helping students succeed. Here are some highlights from an analysis of the course and LASSI data.

Fall 2016 CU-100 College Study Strategy data (3 sections, total of 31 students)

- **77% of the students in CU100 (students designated as high retention risk) avoided probation.**
- **32% of the students in CU100 achieved 3.0 or higher. 70% of the students on probation were no longer on probation the following semester.**
- **Of the 7 students who ended below 2.0 - 2 were very close (1.999 and 1.98).**
- **One student went from probation to Dean's List (3.76) and had an overall GPA growth of 2.1 - in one semester**

Spring 2017 CU-100 College Study Strategy data (3 sections, total of 18 students)

- **33% of the probation students achieved semester GPAs over 3.0.**
- **One of the probation students achieved a 3.87 (Dean's List) raising his Cum GPA to 2.91.**
- **2 students achieved Cum GPAs of 3.0 or greater.**
- **66% of the students achieved GPAs of 2.0 or higher and are off probation.**
- **Returning Probation: Of the 6 students who didn't reach a Cum GPA of 2.0 or higher, one was very close (1.939). All made tremendous growth for semester GPAs. For example, one earned a 2.21 semester GPA (previous semester and Cum GPA was a .455). Two others were in similar situations (1.37 to 2.899; 1.05 to 2.07) and will likely be off probation after next semester.**
- **94% of the students achieved semester GPAs above 2.0.**

In analyzing the LASSI first and second test data, it was found that the mean of all categories in the second test scores for students was 50 or higher. This is significant growth and shows that after one semester, all of the students had achieved at least an average level of ability in all of the key areas of success, and most had substantially higher levels of skill.

Additionally, the analysis of the data revealed the following means for lowest scores on the first administration (week 1), the highest scores on the second administration (week 14), and the mean change growth overall.

LASSI Fall 2016

| LOWEST PRE-TEST | HIGHEST POST-TEST | HIGHEST CHANGE |
|-----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| TST 33.2 | SFT 66.48 | TST 31.7 |
| MOT 33.5 | TMT 67.07 | MOT 31.8 |
| TMT 34.1 | UAR 68.07 | TMT 30.8 |

Observation: The highest areas of change were also the lowest areas on the pre-test. The appearance of motivation in the lowest scores and highest area of change suggests growth mindset, as students seemed to show an increased urgency and sense of ability to change their condition. It also suggests that as motivation improves skill level improves because students begin to use the strategies to improve their academic standing.

SPRING 2017

| LOWEST PRE-TEST | HIGHEST POST-TEST | HIGHEST CHANGE |
|-----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| SFT 26 | SMI 72.85 | TMT 45.8 |
| UAR 26.2 | TST 72.5 | SFT 44.1 |
| TMT 30.4 | ANX 70.2 | INP 38.9 |

Observation: Time management is a consistent indicator in both semesters. Its appearance on the lowest area and highest area of change for both semesters suggests that growth in time management positively impacts all other areas of growth and reinforces the curriculum choice of introducing it the first week of class and continual reinforcement of it each week throughout the semester.

In conclusion, this data revealed that the LASSI is a useful tool for facilitating metacognition and growth mindset with college students – particularly with students who have been placed on probation and are enrolled in a college success course that reinforces the LASSI as a measure of growth in applying course strategies.

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LASSI SUCCESS STORIES

EVE WALDEN, VALENCIA COLLEGE

Valencia College is well acquainted with the LASSI. For years, the college has partnered with H&H Publishing to provide a study "plumb line" for students enrolled in the New Student Experience Course (NSE). In the past, NSE faculty utilized assessment results in assignments specifically designed to engage students in the development of personalized learning plans.

Three years ago, Valencia began a mandatory online orientation for all new degree-seeking students entering the college. Since New Student Orientation (NSO) is a component of the New Student Experience, the LASSI was integrated into this online portion of orientation. Now, at the conclusion of one of the sections of online orientation, students are asked to click the link to the LASSI. Students complete the assessment and results are sent to Valencia. That data is retrieved and included in the on-campus orientation

paperwork for students to reference, and for advisors to note. During NSO advising, the results can be referenced to direct students based on observational data, helping them design a schedule suitable for their strengths. By completing the assessment in orientation, all students are assured of having results when they enroll in the NSE course, another required experience for degree-seeking students in their first year at the college. Faculty are still able to utilize the LASSI for course assignments and with greater participation from their students. Incorporating the LASSI in this manner is a practical example of the partnership between NSO and the NSE course.

During summer orientations, Valencia serves approximately 11,000 students. Since this model has been utilized, approximately 40,000 students have completed the LASSI.

LASSI FOR NEW STUDENT ORIENTATION

**SHANE ARMSTRONG, ED.D.
KENTUCKY WESLEYAN COLLEGE**

At Kentucky Wesleyan College, the LASSI is a valuable tool that is administered to all incoming students during New Student Orientation as they prepare to take KW 101, the Freshmen Seminar, during their first semester of enrollment.

The results of the student scores are shared with KW 101 faculty prior to the first day of classes. This allows faculty, in a crucial class, to know in advance of any students who may already be struggling with anxiety or motivation issues.

Through the Student Success Center, a weekly workshop is presented focusing on a different scale of the LASSI. We begin the series with Anxiety during the first full week of the semester and reach out to students who had low Anxiety scores with an invitation through campus mail. We incentivize attendance at all

workshops with homemade baked goods and the chance to win a gift card.

During the second full week of classes, a classroom presentation by our Dean of Student Success, is given to students in every section of the Freshmen Seminar course. The Dean distributes a worksheet with scores to each student at the beginning of the presentation and asks them to write down strategies for any scale where their score was lower than 50%.

**THROUGH THE STUDENT
SUCCESS CENTER, A
WEEKLY WORKSHOP IS
PRESENTED FOCUSING ON A
DIFFERENT SCALE OF LASSI.**

The presentation explains what each scale measures and gives strategies to address deficiencies in each scale. What seems to pique student interest and gain their buy-in are questions/statements that follow each scale description. For example,

TEST STRATEGIES SCALE

- ▶ The **Test Strategies Scale** assesses students' use of test preparation and test taking strategies

Test Strategies sample

"I am sometimes surprised by material on the test or the format of the test."

Test Strategies

- ▶ Taking time to develop study skills
- ▶ See Molly Gross in the SSC
- ▶ Student Success Series in the Student Success Center
- ▶ Faculty recommendations

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Each week throughout the semester, students receive emails and campus mail reminding them about the workshops, flyers are posted throughout campus and workshops are announced in the Freshmen Seminar course.

The LASSI has become an important retention tool on our campus.

LASSI USE AT MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

DARRYL WILLIAMS, M.S.

What we have done for our Strategies for College Success classes (SCS-101) is have students do a pre-test during the first two weeks of the semester and have them complete the post-test during the last two weeks. We have them complete a short exercise to assess and review their pre- and post-test results in the form of a short essay. This has been very helpful to students as they see their academic growth and progress as well as what areas they still need to continue to work on. Approximately 600 Montgomery County Community College students have completed the pre/post-testing and follow-up assignment.

Below you will find the 5-question assignment we give to students. It's really self-reflective for them and gives them a sense of pride and confidence to see how far they have grown in various areas during the class.

**STRATEGIES FOR
COLLEGE SUCCESS
(SCS-101)**

Am I a Master Student?

Directions: Answer all five essay questions in paragraph form. Explain in detail.

Goal: This is an opportunity for you to reflect on your results from the LASSI post-test. Using the guiding questions below, you will begin to evaluate and analyze ways in which you improved from your pre-test as well as elements within this course.

Compare and contrast your LASSI pre-test and post-test results and respond to the following questions.

1. In what areas did you improve based on the **LASSI results**? (Ex., Motivation, Concentration, Anxiety, Test Taking, Time-Management, Use of Academic Resources, etc.) How will you continue to reinforce these areas next semester?
2. In what areas do you still need to improve upon based on the **LASSI results**? Did you decline in any areas? Why?
3. What are you going to do the *same or differently* in your classes next semester in order to help you learn? Explain.
4. What subject did you enjoy learning about the most in this class? What was your least favorite topic? Why?
5. What suggestions do you have (if any) to make the class even better?

(Please be honest with your responses! Thank you)

YOU-TUBE VIDEO ON THE MODEL OF STRATEGIC LEARNING

TAYLOR ACEE, PH.D., TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Author of the LASSI and Model of Strategic Learning, Claire Ellen Weinstein, Ph.D., was a pioneer in learning strategies research. Synthesizing research in the fields of education and psychology, Dr. Weinstein identified three major components as key to becoming a strategic learner and succeeding academically:

Skill, Will, and Self-Regulation

Dr. Weinstein recognized these three interrelated components were necessary to students' learning and academic success. The skill component, knowing HOW to successfully complete an educational task, for example, writing a paper was not going to be enough without the will component, generating the motivation to actually DO the work required for success on the task. In addition to skill and will, Dr. Weinstein identified self-regulation as a crucial component in the learning process. Even when students have high levels of skill and will to accomplish

an academic task, they must still oversee and actively manage the entire learning process.

Self-regulation occurs on global levels (e.g., managing one's time by creating a semester calendar) and on real-time levels (e.g., managing concentration from moment-to-moment while studying).

In developing The Model of Strategic Learning, Dr. Weinstein outlined the characteristics of each of the three components of strategic learning: skill, will, and self-regulation.

LASSI SCALES

- ANIETY
- ATTITUDE
- CONCENTRATION
- INFORMATION PROCESSING
- MOTIVATION
- SELECTING MAIN IDEAS
- SELF-TESTING
- TEST STRATEGIES
- TIME MANAGEMENT
- USING ACADEMIC RESOURCES

LASSI scales are directly related to these components as follows:

SKILL SCALES:

- INFORMATION PROCESSING
- SELECTING MAIN IDEAS
- TEST STRATEGIES

WILL SCALES:

- ANXIETY
- ATTITUDE
- MOTIVATION

SELF-REGULATION SCALES:

- CONCENTRATION
- SELF-TESTING
- TIME MANAGEMENT
- USING ACADEMIC RESOURCES

Using LASSI with [The Model of Strategic Learning](#) (MSL) allows students and educators to identify strengths and weaknesses, capitalizing on strengths and targeting areas in need of improvement. Educators can use the MSL as a framework for developing curriculum and interventions for students. Teaching students about the MSL can help them develop a stronger understanding about how learning works and improve their strategic approaches to learning.

In this presentation, LASSI (3rd Edition) co-author Dr. Taylor Acee provides an overview of Weinstein's Model of Strategic Learning and discusses strategies for improving learning and success in college.

