

## **An Ohlone Story**

### **Learning Assistant Program/Supplemental Instruction – LAPSI Program**

#### **Submitted by LAPSI team**

LAPSI Motto:

Tell me, and I forget,  
Show me, and I remember,  
Involve me, and I understand.  
~ Chinese Proverb

#### **Overview**

In Fall 2006, the focus on Basic Skills had become an important topic of discussion in California Community Colleges. By that time, faculty at Ohlone College had already had several meetings to work on ways to improve the teaching of Basic Skills at Ohlone. At one such meeting, a few instructors (Ilene Katz, Paula Schoenecker, and Shirin Maskatia) decided to explore the possibility of starting a program of Supplemental Instruction at Ohlone College.

Supplemental Instruction programs – highly acclaimed by the US Department of Education – have been established at colleges and universities throughout the United States. The program was first developed at the University of Missouri at Kansas City to address rising drop out rates. SI utilizes peer assisted study sessions which are free, voluntary, and open to the entire student population of a specific course. SI sessions are regularly scheduled, out of class study sessions in which students compare notes, discuss readings and concepts, work on handouts, review lecture materials, develop essential learning and study skills and predict test items. SI helps “A” students keep their “A” and helps struggling students improve their grades.

Prior to LAPSI, Ohlone College already had well-established tutoring programs. The Math Learning Center and the English Learning Center at Hyman Hall, the Chemistry/Biology Learning Center, The Accounting Learning Center, and the Student Technology Center/Tutorial Center were all effective means of academic support for students. What was different about SI was the presence of the tutor in the classroom and the emphasis on teaching collaborative learning strategies. The goal was not just to get students to succeed in the course; it was to empower them by teaching them strategies that would make them effective learners.

After months of diligent assessment and evaluation of the SI program, Wendy Lin, a classified staff member from the Student Technology Center/Tutorial Center located at Ohlone College library was invited to join the team. We *{should we use the third person here?}* ordered the Kansas University Instruction tapes and manuals for SI and proposed the program at a Dean’s meeting. Since the acronym SI was already used by an item in our tutoring budget, Dr. Wright suggested using a different term for the Supplemental Instruction program at Ohlone, and thus the term LAPSI -- Learning Assisted Program/Supplemental Instruction was created. The Administration approved a budget allocation for twenty LAPSI leaders through the 2006-07 school year, and LAPSI became a reality.

One of our early mentors was Frank Henderson, who oversees the Supplemental Instruction program at Hartnell College. Mr. Henderson conducted an all-day training session for student leaders and faculty members and has been available for consultation by e-mail. In Fall 2006, nine courses -- Math 151B, English 151A, Chemistry 106B, Biology 103A, Biology 106, History 117A, History 117B, CS102, and Spanish 101A implemented the LAPSI program. In Spring 2007, 10 courses – Math 151A, Math 152, Chemistry 106B, Biology 103A, Chemistry 106, History 117A, History 117B, CS 102, English 151B, and Spanish used the program. This semester LAPSI covers four math classes (151A, 151B, 152 and 190), two English classes (151A and 151B), three history classes (117A and two sections of 117B), ESL 181,

Chemistry 101A, and Speech 101. More than 200 students have now participated in one or more LAPSI session at Ohlone College.

Even though LAPSI has been implemented at Ohlone for only two semesters, we have some outstanding success stories. The program has succeeded in a variety of classes including math, history, chemistry, and English. In a math class, the mean grade of the students attending LAPSI was 1.2 letter grades higher than the mean grade of students not attending LAPSI. In history classes as well, the students scored 8%-11% higher than those who did not attend. A chemistry instructor reported that after years of trying to achieve 100% retention and success in his classes, he finally achieved it when LAPSI was integrated into his course. One of the English sections is using LAPSI sessions to focus on the needs of ESL students and students with learning disabilities. Some of the math students who attended LAPSI sessions last semester and saw a significant improvement in their grades, continued to meet over the summer to study together and benefit from group learning! Clearly, LAPSI is on its way to becoming one of Ohlone's most effective student-support systems.

However, the students enrolled in the courses are not the only ones benefiting from the program. LAPSI leaders have also found the experience beneficial. One of our LAPSI leaders is an aspiring teacher and is now Physics major at Berkeley. She felt that many of the students gained tremendously from the program and wishes that Berkeley had a similar program for her class! A newly hired LAPSI leader recently sent us a note stating that being a LAPSI leader was "more than just a job." She said that it was very challenging, but that the students' support motivated her and kept her going. She ended with, "Thanks for giving me this opportunity. I appreciate it. I really enjoy doing the job though it takes a lot of time." Teachers involved in LAPSI automatically become mentors for their LAPSI leaders and encourage these students to take up leadership roles in society.

As the program evolves, we are looking for ways to improve the services we provide. Ilene Katz and Wendy Lin attended a training session for Supplemental Instruction coordinators at the University of Missouri in Kansas City. They came back with renewed enthusiasm and greater expertise in training our LAPSI leaders. We hold two training sessions every semester. All LAPSI leaders are required to undergo training and we are developing a program for observing each leader and giving feedback on their sessions. This semester, Ilene Katz is sending out weekly hints to LAPSI leaders about ways to improve their sessions.

### **Relationship to College Core Values**

Diversity and Inclusiveness and Open access to higher education and actively reach out to underserved populations.

LAPSI supports Ohlone's commitment to opening access to higher education for all. It works well for students who may not succeed otherwise. For instance ESL students and students with learning disabilities find it helpful to review the material in a different setting. Whereas tutoring may sometimes make the student dependent on the tutor, LAPSI supports students with special needs by teaching them learning strategies, so that they may become successful in their future academic experiences as well. By facilitating the success of all students enrolled in a course, LAPSI supports the core values of diversity and inclusiveness as well.

### Team work and open communication:

LAPSI is, by definition, a program that works through team work and open communication. It is based on the belief that students learn better by studying in groups and teaching one another. LAPSI leaders are trained to use effective and essential collaborative learning strategies. to encourage students to converse with each other, find answers through various techniques such as group discussion, think pair share, jigsaw, using board work, etc. Students have a chance to ask questions of their peers during the study session.

### Innovation, risk-taking and entrepreneurship:

Instituting any new program requires innovation, risk-taking, and entrepreneurship. The LAPSI team had to face the possibility that we may not find teachers who wanted to implement it or students who wished to attend the sessions. However, we were convinced of the merits of the program and impressed by its record of success; hence we moved forward. As we proceed, it will take innovation to adapt LAPSI to the diverse needs of various divisions. One such innovation was having the English LAPSI leaders sign up as ELC tutors as well, thus reducing the possibility that students will use them as tutors, not LAPSI leaders.

### **Relationship to Strategic College Goals**

#### Learning college model:

Ohlone College sees itself as a “learning college” which “promotes lifelong learning for all and a creative, innovative, and effective learning process.” LAPSI is creative and innovative and has proven to be effective. Moreover a learning college respects the dignity of each student and believes in meeting the students’ needs in a flexible manner. Because it provides a venue for students to meet and learn under the guidance of a LAPSI leader and creates ways for the student to learn outside the classroom, LAPSI is an important addition to a learning college.

### **Relationship to Accreditation Standards**

#### II: Student learning programs/services: C. Library/Learning Support Services

LAPSI provides an important learning support system for students. All students benefit from reviewing material in a different setting. Students who are not entirely comfortable with the classroom learning delivery mode get an opportunity to study the same material in different ways. Thus LAPSI caters to the diverse needs and learning styles of our students.

LAPSI is located in the Student Technology Center (STC)/Tutorial Center in the Ohlone College library. The center provides technical support and learning support services to Ohlone college students. The mission of the Student Technology Center (STC)/Tutorial Center is to cooperate with teachers and students to achieve the full potential of academic learning. Its location makes LAPSI an integral part of the learning support services at Ohlone.

### **Relationship to Accreditation Themes**

#### Student learning outcomes:

The Ohlone statement of accreditation themes emphasizes the need to “provide programs to support . . . learning, and to evaluate how well learning is occurring.” LAPSI supports classroom learning and we have consistently evaluated every section. At the end of the semester, we compare the final course grades of students who attended LAPSI and students who did not. We compare the percentage of Ds, Fs and withdrawals of both groups. The results of these evaluations are presented in the overview.