

UNIVERSITY *of* HOUSTON

LEARNING SUPPORT SERVICES

SFAC REPORT

FY 2010

2009-2010

QUESTION #1

Please provide a one-page executive summary of your questionnaire responses. This summary should include, in brief terms: your unit's mission, how you accomplish your unit's mission, and a justification of your unit's student fee allocation in terms of benefits for students.

The mission of Learning Support Services (LSS) at the University of Houston is to increase graduation and retention rates by helping students learn how to learn. We offer learning support programs and self-development activities designed to increase student performance in learning and improve student retention. Individualized learning plans as well as group intervention programs are available. All services are free to currently enrolled students. The primary services offered by LSS include tutoring (provided by our College Reading and Learning Association certified tutors), Learning Strategies Counseling (including assessment), Learning Strategies workshops (for both undergraduate and graduate students), and multi-media support. LSS is open to all students, and we therefore serve those who are in good standing, trying to maintain a high GPA, as well as those encountering difficulties, who may be at-risk for non-retention or graduation. We have found that the services we provide maximize student learning and help students achieve their graduation goals within a reasonable time frame.

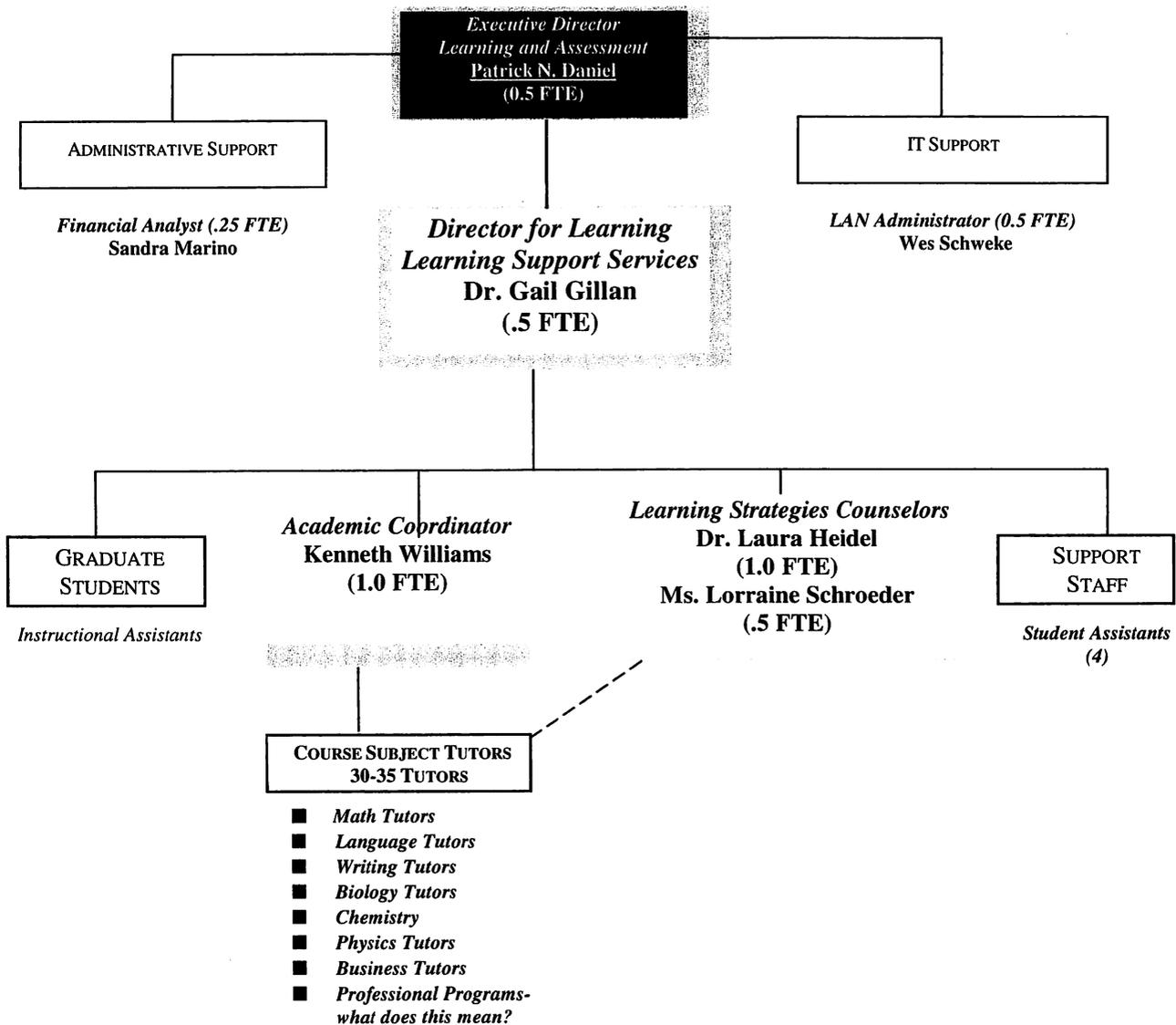
This past year has been a busy and productive one for LSS. Our total contacts for FY 08 were 19,870 , which includes 9,846 tutoring sessions, 9,466 learning strategies workshop/outreach participants, and 558 learning strategies counseling sessions,(37% of which were unique). For fall 2008, our contacts total 5,889, which include 3,205 tutoring sessions, 2,432 learning strategies workshop/outreach participants, and 252 learning strategies counseling sessions. There are 716 subscribers to our new listserv. Our services are even more important for students in light of tuition costs and the importance of staying on course for projected graduation. LSS has a documented success rate for those who participate in services. The fall 2007 cohort who came for tutoring at LSS had a one year retention and graduation rate of 82.61%; and 87.92% were in good academic standing in fall 2008. Additionally, our Learning Strategies Counselors often see students who are at very high risk for retention, many of whom are on academic probation. Of the fall 2007 cohort, only 56.36% had a GPA above 2.0 when they came for services; by fall 2008 that had increased to 61.95% for students who received counseling. The one year retention and graduation rate for this cohort was 72.76%.

With our team of approximately 30-35 tutors (all recommended by UH faculty), we are able to provide tutoring in over 150 courses, including upper level courses that often serve as roadblocks to graduation. Our learning strategies counseling and workshops add the catalyst needed for students to get the most out of their studying. They can learn metacognitive strategies for encoding, retaining, and recalling information. Unique to LSS is that students come for more than just tutoring. Our tutors are trained in learning theories, and they know how to use these theories to help the students master the subject. We approach student learning with strategic and comprehensive methods. LSS continues to provide quality tutoring and learning strategies assistance to a wide variety and high volume of students. In addition to tutoring, we provide learning strategies counseling. Currently, a licensed psychologist or a licensed professional counselor works with students by providing assessment and by developing individualized learning plans. Finally, we offer workshops for students to help them improve their learning skills. We have expanded our offerings to two to four workshops per week. Necessitated by usage and enrollment numbers, these workshops often fill quickly. It is not uncommon for staff to add an additional 3-4 workshops around midterm or finals.

We are working to become the premier learning center in the country. We are streamlining some of our methods and increasing our multi-media resources. Our tutoring numbers remain strong now. Our learning strategies counseling was up over 100% from fall 2005 to fall 2006 and was up again slightly in both spring/summer and fall 2008. Our number of workshops offered was increased due to high demand. We are also offering a mandatory college success seminar to each incoming freshman during orientation. As the demand continues to grow, we will continue to look to innovative ways to meet the demand.

QUESTION #2

**LEARNING SUPPORT SERVICES
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART
(4.25 FTE)**



QUESTION #3

List the objectives that you provided with your 2008-2009 SFAC request. Please comment on your success in achieving these objectives. If an objective changed during the year, please note this and explain. Also, list any new objectives, the rationale for the addition, and comment on your success in achieving these objectives.

Objective #1 To provide tutoring by qualified and trained peer tutors in a wide range of courses in support of the academic mission of the university.

The mission of Learning Support Services (LSS) at the University of Houston is to increase graduation and retention rates by helping students learn how to learn. Our tutoring service is the only tutoring service on campus that is open to all students, with tutoring for students across multiple subjects. For fall 2008 alone, we offered tutoring in 156 different subjects. We serve a wide range of students from those struggling with the basics of college level work to those who are trying to better themselves from a B+ to an A. Although we cannot provide expertise in every course in every department, we are remarkably able to serve most requests from our students. We also tutor up through higher level courses. With such a wide range of courses offered, LSS must operate at an optimum level of service within the parameters of the budget. We have become extremely efficient by hiring only the highest quality of tutors who can tutor a variety of courses. We offer training and supervision to assist them in shifting from tutoring at a more basic level to tutoring graduating seniors. We also offer training to help them stay current on the courses they tutor as well as to become proficient at tutoring new areas and we offer them feedback on their skills by doing regular tutor observations. This allows us to see their strengths and areas for growth and to give them immediate feedback on their skills.

One-on-one tutoring is the primary method used at Learning Support Services. Although we make use of technology that can aid the learning process, we believe that personal attention and tutoring crafted to individual needs can be the most beneficial to our students. Training manuals are continually updated and expanded. The training program, certified by the International College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA), offers three levels of certification: regular, advanced, and master. Tutors are required to review the LSS tutorial procedural manual, attend a mandatory four hour orientation training, and participate in an additional 12 hours of tutor training per semester. The tutors are supervised throughout their tutoring experience and are free to seek consultation with professional staff whenever necessary. Many of our better tutors stay with the program for several years, growing in tutoring ability as they proceed through the three levels of certification. Our tutors operate at maximum capacity in order to provide the large number of sessions each semester. The service is provided on a walk-in basis; students do not need to make appointments and seldom do they have to wait for their tutors. If requested by students, special study groups will be established and facilitated by a tutor proficient in the subject. Tutoring requests for FY 08 totaled almost 20,000; and for fall 2008 totaled 3,205 for the one semester.

LSS takes a leadership role offering our 16-hour Tutor Training course to other departments within the university, such as the Scholars Community, who have tutors as part of their program. Any tutoring lab indicating interest in sending their tutors for training at LSS will be invited to participate on a limited, space available basis.

Objective #2 To provide learning strategies counseling as a necessary and vital complement to our tutoring services. Expansion of these services will be sought as more students are referred by faculty, department advisors, other students who received the service, and self-referral.

The learning strategies counseling component consists of psycho-educational interventions designed to encourage student self-management and academic success. During sessions, learning assessments and a

diagnostic inventory of study strategies are conducted, followed by an individualized strategic learning plan. Students address academic difficulties with the learning strategies counselor and often work together with the professor involved and with a tutor proficient in the problem courses. The Wholistic Learning model, which consists of a four point cross-connection between student, learning strategies counselor, tutor, and professor has proven to be a successful model for learning enhancement.

We have been pleased with our work thus far in establishing learning strategies counseling as a distinct component of LSS services. Professors and advisors have often told us how delighted and relieved they were to have someplace to send their students for help, and to know they would receive professional and comprehensive assistance. The anecdotal student comments usually have had the theme of feeling they are someplace where everyone is working with and for them. We have also begun to evaluate our learning strategies counseling. Specifically, we are looking to see graduation and retention rates for students who seek this service. Among the fall 2007 cohort came to LSS for learning strategies counseling, only 56.36% had a GPA of 2.0 or above; at one year, this increased to 61.95%. Retention and graduation rates for this group was 72.73% at one year.

LSS has a well-developed system that establishes relationships with university departments and processes departmental referrals to give efficient and effective service to referred students. We now have a system whereby the Learning Strategies Counselor: (1) receives a department referral or self-referral; (2) determines with the student which services will best meet the student's needs; and, (3) oversees the delivery of those services whether they be learning strategies seminars, individual learning strategies counseling, tutoring, computer software practice, video instruction, or any combination of the above. Relationships with U Scholars, Urban Experience Program, College of Technology, College of Engineering, Professional School of Optometry, College of Business, Law School, Political Science Department, Architecture, Graduate College of Social Work, and CAPS have been established. In addition, we have received independent referrals from advisors and professors of various departments. We are currently meeting with advisors at the beginning of each semester to encourage them to identify students who could benefit from services prior to academic suspension or probation. Additionally, the Director speaks to all incoming students about our services. Our hope is to make them aware of these services as soon as they arrive. We want to prevent difficulties as much as to help remediate them.

We have sought to expand the center's learning strategies counseling program by marketing our services in a proactive manner. We send brochures about tutoring and learning strategies workshops/counseling as well as our newsletter to advisors in every department on campus at the beginning of each semester; included in this mailing is a Referral form for services. We advertise our learning strategies counseling/workshops and tutoring in the Daily Cougar, and speak at Orientations throughout the year. Our best source of referrals, however, has been from other students who have had good experiences at our learning center. The total learning strategies counseling contacts for FY08 was 558 and for fall 2008 was 252. These sessions involve a minimum of one hour with a licensed staff member who provides assessment and a comprehensive plan to improve learning and study strategies.

LSS has a special learning strategies counseling training program for master's level practicum students from educational psychology, social work, or another mental health related field. This program allows for the trainees to spend the semester learning how to form a therapeutic counseling relationship for the purposes of facilitating growth, independent learning, and decision making on the part of the student client. The program has been refined and integrated into the life of the learning center. There is a practicum learning strategies counselor training manual and a comprehensive training course. In addition the trainees receive extensive experiential training and supervision by the counselors at LSS, and provide individual learning strategies counseling to students who are either self-referred to LSS or referred by departments. This year, we did not have a practicum student, but our new Learning Strategies Counselor is making contact with appropriate departments to try to help this program evolve further.

Objective #3

To provide learning strategies workshops for students both within the learning center and throughout the university.

LSS almost seems to have become synonymous with (L)earning (S)trategies for (S)uccess. Our expertise in this area is requested throughout the campus and it is clearly one of the areas where we have experienced the most growth. In FY08, we documented 8,956 contacts through or workshops; for fall 2008, contacts totaled 2,206. We provide seminars both within the center and out in the university community.

The learning strategies workshops held in our center consist of anywhere from two to four presentations per week, beginning with the first week of the semester and continuing through final exams. The workshops are designed to promote academic achievement by presenting methods for coping with challenges of time, anxiety, learning and remembering new material and preparing effectively for exams. New workshops have been added to meet student needs, such as GRE preparation, concentration, and understanding motivation. Workshops specifically designed for graduate students are also offered in an independent series.

In keeping with our mission of serving the entire university, LSS moved out into the university community to provide workshops and seminars to classes, organizations, residence halls, and other retention programs. Our objective was to reach diverse settings that could benefit from our learning strategy instruction and from our positive approach to learning success. These seminars were all in addition to the learning skills program which we provide at our learning center. LSS professional staff members were invited to present at Excel, residence halls, Greek organizations, PROMES, CBA, Mexican American Studies, Challenger, Optometry, Upward Bound, and regular classes as guest lecturers on various topics related to learning strategies.

During the summer, 2008, LSS again provided programming for the TEXOCOP program, offering workshops on such issues as critical thinking, time management, reading and vocabulary, exam preparation, and learning strategies assessment. LSS staff members also were guest presenters at seminars for graduate students of Curriculum and Instruction, Education Dept., on data collection and writing research papers. In addition, college survival and success seminars were led by LSS throughout the summer for new student orientation. Unlike in years past, this 45 minute "College Success" series, currently called Cougar Tracs, is given to EVERY incoming, first year student who attends orientation. We consider this a major step forward in our ability to help students achieve success. It is also a compliment to the program that LSS has been asked to contribute in such a significant way to new student orientation.

LSS keeps the university aware of our programs and services through our newsletter called "The Tutorial." Currently, we have expanded the newsletter to a four page document that includes tutor tips and learning strategies ideas for students as well as referral information for faculty and staff. We have developed an LSS listserv and are in the process of creating a list in order to send out the newsletter electronically, saving a great deal of money and also targeting those who specifically want to receive it, making it a higher quality contact. We also reach students through participating in outreach events, such as information fairs or event booths. For FY08, we spoke to 510 students directly about services. For Fall 08, we spoke to 226 students.

Objective #4

To provide graduate and professional student support programs.

LSS developed a support program for graduate students as a response to requests from graduate and professional departments on campus for assistance. This assistance has been given in several areas, incorporating the resources and expertise of our center. Many students enter graduate or professional studies without having been required to write to a professional standard, summarize and present data, or apply research methods. We have been asked by some departments to offer programs specifically suited to their needs. Professional staff have conducted special workshops in data collection, American Psychological Association (APA) writing style, writing a thesis or research paper and other professional/technical writing.

We also conduct workshops on topics such as time management, comprehensive exam or regular exam preparation, planning and making presentations, memory improvement, and learning styles. During the past year, our staff also provided workshops on preparing for the GRE and MAT. We have been requested to do so again this spring.

We assist students on an individual basis in the assessment of learning strategies, using the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI), and in the assessment of the student's individual learning style, using the Learning Styles Inventory (LSI). Individual learning strategies counseling was provided and referrals from departments were encouraged. All of these services were provided for both department referred students and self-referring students.

A full 16-20 hour/week practicum in learning strategies counseling opportunity was available at LSS for master's level students in educational psychology, social work, or other related mental health fields. The program is designed to train these students in forming therapeutic relationships, assessment, treatment planning, psycho-educational interventions, and documentation of records. A complete training course and supervision is also part of the program.

This year we have begun to develop a more comprehensive learning library, including computer interactive materials and an academic support link on the LSS website. We have tried to obtain software or other technology that will assist graduate and professional students. Finally, we have added tutoring for graduate courses as is possible.

Objective #5 *To continue the process of becoming a national leader on the creation, certification and implementation of programs designed to improve learning and retention.*

LSS is proud of being one of the first three developmental education programs in the nation to become certified by the National Association of Developmental Educators (NADE). This certification involved an extensive self-evaluation process with criteria developed by the national organization. The former Director has attended a national training seminar and guided the self-evaluation process. She was awarded the certification at a special recognition ceremony at the National Association for Developmental Education annual conference. The documentation and evaluation provided by LSS was used as a model for developing review criteria for a national certification process. LSS has submitted for renewal of our NADE certification, awaiting confirmation this spring. We are one of the first programs to apply for recertification.

The tutor training program at LSS has been certified by the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA) since 1991. We are recertified until 2010. We are certified at all three levels of training (regular, advanced, and master), Professional staff members attend the national and state conferences to stay current on tutor training and strategic learning innovations. Professional staff members have presented at conferences on topics such as Assertiveness Training for Tutors and Learning to Learn Day. In addition, our full time Learning Strategies Counselor is facilitating the development of a graduate student support track within CRLA.

These processes of national certification not only showcases our accomplishments, it is a means of self assessment, such that we can determine what other needs we might have.

Objective #6 *To increase resources for students in computer instruction, video assistance, and learning reference materials such as handouts and books.*

LSS increased the resources available for students at the center. Our computer lab was updated with three faster, more responsive three years ago machines; however these are our only student computers and three is insufficient to meet the demand. The computers are heavily used, even though use is focused only on learning support. Often tutors can better assist a student after the student finishes a tutoring session, and then works some practice problems on what has been learned. We also ordered all the current practice tests for standardized tests such as GRE, GMAT, and LSAT. We installed software to aid our computer science tutors in working with their tutees. We acquired Minitab for our business students to use while being tutored. These new resources are in addition to the software that we already had for assisting in the various courses such as physics and chemistry. We also continue to have basic skills assistance in math and English. We began collaboration with Counseling and Psychological Services to provide computerized rehabilitation for students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD). This program is entitled Brain Train and is currently used by students referred from CAPS who have been tested as having ADD. We have installed a computer interactive program called Speak English to one of our computers. This is a program that allows English-as-a second-language learners to practice speaking English and receive feedback on such things as pronunciation. Use of the computers in our multi-media center is high. Over 1,500 contacts on these three computers were documented in FY 08 and almost 500 contacts have been documented already in fall 2008. As noted, the computers are only used for learning support and use is limited to 30 minute intervals to maximize availability to more students and to encourage students to use our programs as a supplemental component to learning.

We have recently acquired videos addressing learning disabilities and are beginning to expand our video learning library. These have been used in tutor training and will be available for anyone interested in learning more about the subject. We have been using new videos to assist in our tutor training course. These videos provide good role modeling of situations and good tutoring practices. The other videos that are used the most are those related to learning strategies such as time management, exam preparation, reading textbooks, and note taking. We have recently ordered more learning strategies videos that cover subjects that were previously unavailable on video. We have also installed several learning support programs into our new computers in the media lab, including a Reading program called Ace Reader

LSS has the current textbooks for all of the major courses that are tutored. In addition, we have acquired more self-help books on learning strategies, revised and undated our repertoire of handouts on the racks, and purchased more reference books such as the APA and MLA writing style manuals. We have many grammar and writing assistance books for students who prefer to improve their learning strategies through the medium of written materials.

Students now use our web site often because we publish the specific hours that tutors will be tutoring certain courses. They can go to our site, for example, and find out when we have a chemistry tutor available. We also have our learning strategies workshops listed at the site. We now have our handouts on learning strategies available for downloading from the web. Finally, there is a search engine that can be used to identify online programs that supplement learning. Fliers and brochures are available on our website and on site. We distributed more than 3,000 fliers in FY08 and over 900 in fall 2008.

QUESTION #4

Please discuss the means that you are utilizing to evaluate both your success in achieving the aforementioned objectives and their importance as compared to other objectives that you might pursue. Where data exist, discuss the number of persons served by each of your programs and the satisfaction level of those served. Please provide the method for collecting these data.

Learning Support Services is based on accountability and outcome; therefore we do everything possible to make certain our mission of teaching students how to learn and improve graduate and retention rates is met. To that end, we calculate student usage of services, satisfaction with services, and impact on graduation and retention. Additionally, we are assessing the extent to which students have identified new skills they can utilize and the extent to which they are implementing it into their work.

Use of LSS Services, including tutoring, learning strategies counseling, learning strategies workshops, and use of media resources (computer, video, audio, books) is high. Overall contacts and specific service usage is outlined in the chart below. This is further delineated within the objectives listed. Retention and graduate rates are also outlined in the objectives below, subject to the specific area of service.

LSS Contacts FY08	
<i>Tutoring Session</i>	9,846 (1035 unique in fall 2007)
<i>Learning Strategy Workshops</i>	9,466
<i>Learning Strategies Counseling</i>	558 (37% unique)
<i>Outreach/Info Fairs</i>	510
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Total Service Contacts	19,870
Computer Use	1,539
Fliers/Brochures	3,017

LSS Contacts Fall 2008	
<i>Tutoring Session</i>	3,205
<i>Learning Strategy Workshops</i>	2,206
<i>Learning Strategies Counseling</i>	252 (44% unique)
<i>Outreach/Info Fairs</i>	510
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Total Service Contacts	5,889
Computer Use	487
Fliers/Brochures	918

Objective #1

To provide tutoring by qualified and trained peer tutors in a wide range of courses in support of the academic mission of the university.

A total number of 9,846 tutoring sessions were conducted for the fiscal year 2007-2008. During the fall semester, 2008, a total of 3,205 walk-in and assigned tutoring sessions were conducted

The LSS data reported on tutoring does not fully describe the amount of time and service provided by our busy team of 30-35 tutors. The student utilization reports have a tabulation of participation in terms of number of sessions. Each session of walk-in tutoring usually represents a minimum of 30 minutes but often represents up to two hours of time spent per session. Assigned tutoring was usually one hour in length. Additionally, tutors may go into the media lab to assist a student who is completing practice sessions or is using learning support software.

LSS has put into operation a computerized sign-in system in order to collect data on student attendance. The transition to computer use was smooth and the students appreciate not having to bubble in scan forms. LSS now has a more efficient method of collecting data. Using this system, reports and analyses are current and provide more useful up-to-date information for making both programmatic and individualized decisions. However, the new People Soft system conversion made it impossible to utilize this system last fall 2007. However we have now returned to using it fully.

In order to be apprised of students' comments and needs, LSS provided a comment form for students to provide feedback throughout the year. Among tutees who responded to feedback forms, 25% were first time visitors. Additionally, 94% (FY08) and 96% (Fall 08) (strongly agree plus agree) of those completing the form believed that their LSS tutor was knowledgeable and clear in the explanation of the material and 85% (FY08) and 91% (Fall 08) said that LSS helped them to improve their academic performance. In an effort to assess whether tutees are learning new skills, we added a question to our tutor evaluations and 84% (agree or strongly agree) indicated they had learned new study strategies during tutoring.

Because of limits on number of tutors we can hire, LSS prioritizes in the following manner: (1) concentrate on hiring tutors in highly demanded courses, 2) provide tutoring in courses where students are instructed by faculty to come to LSS for assistance, 3) hire tutors who can tutor a variety of courses, 4) reduce and/or eliminate offering tutoring in those courses that are not in high demand, and 5) provide group instruction when three or more students request such group assistance in the same course and section (this may not be as beneficial as one-on-one tutoring for some students).

Objective #2

To provide learning strategies counseling as a necessary and vital complement to our tutoring services. Expansion of these services will be sought as more students are referred by faculty, department advisors, other students who received the service, and self-referral.

Individualized learning strategies counseling has become an integral complement to our tutoring program. Faculty and advisors now understand the power of combining the learning strategies counseling and the tutoring to effect strategic change in the way students learn and retain information. This aspect of our program has now evolved to include referrals from departments throughout the university. The students are offered diagnostic assessment, learning strategies counseling, assigned or walk-in tutoring, and periodic monitoring of progress.

For the fiscal year 2007 - 2008 we conducted 558 learning strategies counseling sessions. For the fall semester 2008, we have already conducted 252 learning strategies sessions (44% of them unique students). Sessions usually last approximately 50 minutes. These numbers do not reflect the additional time spent by the

learning strategies counselor linking students with appropriate tutors, communicating with advisors and faculty concerning the student, and consulting with tutors concerning progress and needs of the students.

The learning strategies counseling component is becoming known on campus as a place to receive individual assistance in becoming a better student. There was no practicum counselor participating at LSS in the fall 2008. The learning strategies counselor and part time learning strategies counselor on staff conducted all the learning strategies counseling during the fall 2008. The learning strategies counselors also act as liaisons to participating departments.

Often students who come seeking assistance from the Learning Strategies Counselor are among the university's highest risk students. Of the fall 2007 cohort, only 56.36% had a GPA above 2.0 when they came for services; by fall 2008 that had increased to 61.95% for students who received counseling the previous year. The one year retention and graduation rate for this cohort was 72.76%. In addition to examining retention and graduation rates, we have also established a system for evaluation for these services.

Objective #3 *To provide learning strategies workshops for students both within the learning center and throughout the university.*

For the 2007-2008 fiscal year, LSS staff presented workshops *both* on site at LSS and throughout the university community. Through these seminars and programs, we were able to present to 8,956 students. (a 34% increase from FY07). During fall 2008, we presented workshops serving 2,206 students both at LSS and at other sites on campus such as classes, sororities, departments, retention programs, residence halls, and professional student societies.

Attendance at learning strategies workshops on-site at LSS was formerly recorded on a scanable workshop attendance form. A scanable workshop evaluation form was used to obtain feedback about the quality of the workshops. Beginning last spring, students signed up online at the LSS website for on site workshops using a new computerized sign in system. We also evaluate each of these workshops, including efforts to determine whether students are able to identify and implement new skills as a result of these sessions. In fall 2008, 96% (agree or strongly agree) rated the workshops as excellent and more importantly, 96% were able to identify a new skill they intended to implement. In order to assess sustainability, we are sending out one month follow ups to determine whether students were able to implement the skill and to what extent they did so. Students who responded to the one month follow up were asked the extent to which they incorporated the new skill into their college experience; 53% indicated they had incorporated it much to very much while 83% had incorporated the new skill at least somewhat. Asked the impact of the skill on their college experience, 56% indicated it had much to very much impact, 84% indicated it had at least some impact.

Objective #4 *To provide graduate and professional student support programs.*

LSS has focused on the graduate and professional students by providing services to assist them in accomplishing their academic goals. Their needs are different from the undergraduate students' needs because they are focused on conducting research, taking comprehensive exams, and even participating in altered exam schedules (such as in the Optometry School) which require intense time management for exam preparation.

We provided workshops and individual consultations on many of the learning strategies, particularly on professional writing skills, and on data collection and research as well as on critical thinking. Our learning strategies counselor also provided individual learning strategies counseling to professional and graduate

students. Director of LAS was available for survey research and consultation. In addition, staff was asked in summer and fall 2006 (and again in 2007) to create and present programs on MAT and GRE preparation. Feedback from staff for the MAT preparation was extremely positive, with students who attended apparently all scoring well above the requirements they needed.

Objective #5 *To continue the process of becoming a national leader on the creation, certification and implementation of programs designed to improve learning and retention.*

Learning Support Services completed the certification process and the former director was honored before 1,200 national conference delegates in 2001 for being one of the first three learning centers nationwide to be certified by the National Association of Developmental Educators. In order to achieve this outstanding honor we had to complete a developmental self-evaluation, make the necessary changes to bring all aspects of our program to the highest standards expected of a certified learning center, make the extensive formal application for certification, submit documentation, and finally receive certification by the NADE certification board. Since we were one of the pilot programs, our materials and data collection methods were implemented as development models for other programs across the nation to use. This spring we have submitted for renewal of our certification and are awaiting notification. We are the first institution to submit for certification renewal.

Our tutoring program has been certified by the College Reading and Learning Association since 1991 and the Director assisted other university programs who wanted certification. In summer, 2005, we were recertified for five more years until 2010. In addition, our Learning Strategies Counselor is facilitating the development of a CRLA graduate student support track.

Other institutions and departments have requested information on our program. We are currently also certified to implement ADD training (through Brain Train) for students diagnosed through CAPS.

Objective #6 *To increase resources for students in computer instruction, video assistance, and learning reference materials such as handouts and books.*

During the FY08, we had 1,539 students who used our computer resources; 487 students utilized these services in fall 2008. We are in the process of refining our documentation system for use of media services. We gave out 918 handouts from our racks during fall 2008 and 3,017 for FY08.. These handouts present learning strategies and ways to handle test anxiety and stress. Handouts are also available on line.

LSS increased the resources available for students at the center. Our computers were updated three years ago with faster, more responsive machines. We have ordered all the current practice tests for standardized tests such as GRE, GMAT, and LSAT. We also installed software to aid our computer science tutors in working with their tutees. We acquired Minitab for our business students to use while being tutored. These new resources are in addition to the software that we already had for assisting in the various courses such as physics and chemistry. We also continue to have the basic skills assistance in math and English. We have added software to assist remediation for students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. In addition, we have added five additional CD/DVD programs to be used in the media center, including four that are for language development (Spanish, English, French, and German). We have also updated our computers and are working on a method for better documenting media assisted learning. We are also developing an Access Data Base to better track resources.

LSS keeps current textbooks for all the major courses that are being tutored. Students may use the textbooks but must remain on site. The tutors use them when working with students, and when reviewing to confirm their knowledge of the material. We acquired more self-help books on learning strategies and added to our

repertoire of handouts on the racks. We have many grammar and writing assistance books for students who prefer to improve their learning strategies through the medium of written materials.

Students often use our web site because we publish the specific hours that tutors will be tutoring certain courses. They can go to our site, for example, and find out when we have a language tutor available. We also have our learning strategies workshops listed at the site. We now have our handouts on learning strategies available for downloading from the web. We will be adding a link to the wellness search engine to give students access to learning/academic support websites.

QUESTION #5

Please discuss any budget changes from that which you requested from your last (FY2008) SFAC request, their impact on your programs, and your reason for implementing them. SFAC recognizes that some programs did not receive the funds that they requested, that some programs were impacted by additional expenses after the conclusion of the budget cycle, and that some programs may be ahead of or behind their self-generated income projections. In addition, if your unit concluded FY2007 with a Ledger 3 Fund Equity balance, please describe the conditions which caused the fund balance.

As student salaries have risen, in large part due to mandated increases in minimum wage, we have had to incur increases in support staff wages. The current budget request reflects that need.

QUESTION #6

Please list 2009-2010 objectives in priority order. Larger units may wish to group your response by subprogram. Under each objective state the specific programs, activities and/or services you plan to implement to meet your objectives.

Objective #1 To provide tutoring by qualified and trained peer tutors in a wide range of courses in support of the academic mission of the university.

Learning Support Services maintains the tutoring program as the center and foundation of all the services we provide. The retention and graduation of the students we serve depends on the vital assistance of peer tutors who know their subjects and can help students become self-directed learners. We are careful to always maintain that core of quality by basing our selection of tutors on recommendations from faculty. LSS communicates with faculty about tutoring availability in their subject area and consults as needed concerning individual and supplemental group tutoring. Additionally, faculty from some departments routinely request that we provide tutors for some of their courses. Whenever possible, LSS tries to provide tutors for students enrolled in these courses.

Tutor training and supervision has been the focus for providing quality tutoring. Hiring high performing students, adding extensive training in communication and teaching skills, and supervising with a consistent and personal involvement by professional staff have been the guiding principles of the tutor program at LSS. To ensure that LSS maintains the quality of its tutorial staff, prospective tutors must meet the following minimum requirements: a) be, preferably, of junior, senior, or graduate standing; b) have a 3.25 G.P.A. in their academic major; c) have a 3.00 overall G.P.A.; d) have high recommendations from at least two University of Houston faculty members; and e) have completed at least nine semester hours at the University of Houston. Candidates will also be screened for their interpersonal skills, teaching ability, and communication effectiveness. As resources are made available, courses not currently offered for tutoring will be identified and tutors hired. This will be done systematically by researching courses that have a high drop or failure rate.

To ensure that tutors are well trained, tutor procedural manuals will continue to be revised and enhanced. All tutors must participate in an orientation and a 16 hour tutor training course. Each tutor will also be required to schedule at least one evaluation conference with LSS staff in the fall and spring semesters to discuss performance/issues related to tutoring. LSS has been recertified every five years since 1991. LSS has been recertified again for five more years until 2010. Under CRLA guidelines, LSS has been certified to train tutors at the regular, advanced, and master level. Please see Appendix a sample, 12 hour Tutor Training course; a four-hour orientation is also held at the beginning of each semester bringing the total number of training hours in each course to 16.

Tutoring services will be evaluated each semester. All tutees are encouraged to complete a tutor evaluation form. In addition, tutors evaluate the training sessions offered through LSS each fall and spring semester.

LSS plans to continue the convenient availability of tutoring for the students, including evening hours. Tutoring hours for each course that is tutored are posted on the web site. Students do not have to make an appointment and may come at any time during our open hours. Several of our long time tutors have devised new methods for explaining material and making problem-solving less overwhelming to students.

Objective #2

To provide learning strategies counseling as a necessary and vital complement to our tutoring services. Expansion of these services will be sought as more students are referred by faculty, department advisors, other students who received the service, and self-referral.

The learning strategies counseling component is proving to be a vital addition to LSS and is filling a need and providing a service that the students are now recognizing and using. The interaction and combined efforts of the tutoring assistance and learning strategies counseling greatly enhance academic progress. The students become comfortable at LSS and begin to use the other available resources, and the ultimate goal is for the students to develop into independent learners. The desired outcome is the retention of these students.

The learning strategies counselor coordinates all the services of LSS for the benefit of students who participate in the strategic learning process. This component is now operating successfully in departments such as the College of Business Administration, University Studies Division, and the School of Optometry. LSS would like to continue expanding the use of the program, thereby effecting increased retention throughout the university. The learning strategies counselor conducts an assessment of individual problems and finds solutions through integrating the services of learning strategies counseling, faculty consultation and participation, tutoring, and help with accessing resources. All students referred from advisors, faculty, other programs, or self-referred will benefit from interventions based on this retention model. LSS will monitor retention and graduation rates for those receiving these services. This is vital since many of these students are referred as a result of been placed on probation or upon return after suspension.

LSS will continue to provide a training practicum experience for master's level counseling or social work students, which incorporates learning strategies counseling. This program provides training, supervision, and the opportunity to develop counseling skills.

Objective #3

To provide learning strategies workshops for students both within the learning center and throughout the university.

Learning Support Services has greatly expanded its outreach program to promote awareness of our center and to benefit more students with instruction on learning strategies. LSS will continue to provide outreach programs to various segments of the university community. LSS staff members frequently present learning strategies workshops or self-improvement programs for campus groups such as students in the residence halls, fraternities, student organizations, athletic department and classes. We presented seminars to many organizations as part of our outreach program this past fall semester. Currently, we offer 2 to 4 workshops per week beginning from the first week of the semester, continuing until final exams.

LSS will present a series of college success seminars during orientation. It is critical to familiarize students with techniques and strategies for improving learning skills, study habits, and achieving academic success. Workshops assisting students in American Psychological Association (APA) professional writing style will also be offered, with particular emphasis on graduate writing and research requirements. We will again offer workshops designed to reduce test anxiety connected with taking computer based exams.

Objective #4

To provide graduate and professional student support programs.

LSS has been responding to requests from graduate and professional departments on campus for assistance for several years. By making it an objective, we began focusing on the delivery of these services. By

incorporating the resources and expertise of our center, we are able to serve the graduate and professional students in several areas.

The professional staff will offer special workshops for these students in preparing for comprehensive exams, writing a research article for publication, preparing a professional presentation, data collection, survey design, American Psychological Association (APA) writing style, writing a thesis or research paper and other professional/technical writing. Many students enter graduate or professional studies without having been required to write to a professional standard, summarize and present data, or apply data collection methods.

We will also offer general group topics such as time management, exam preparation, planning and making presentations, memory improvement, or learning styles. We will design workshops to meet the unique needs of the particular graduate or professional program.

We are also prepared to offer either group or individual assistance in the assessment of learning strategies, using the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI), and in the assessment of the student's individual learning style, using the Learning Styles Inventory (LSI). Individual learning strategies counseling will be available and referrals from departments will be encouraged. All of these services will also be provided for self-referring students.

We also continue to build relationships with the various graduate departments and professional schools. LSS staff have been approached by many graduate and professional programs to offer workshop on a wide variety of topics.

A full 16-20 hour/week practicum opportunity in learning strategies counseling will be available at LSS for master's level students in educational psychology, social work, or another related mental health field. These practicum counseling students will be trained in forming therapeutic relationships, assessment, treatment planning, psycho-educational interventions, and documentation of records. A complete training course and supervision will be provided.

Objective #5 To continue the process of becoming a national leader on the creation, certification and implementation of programs designed to improve learning and retention

Learning+ Support Services staff will continue to maintain certifications and to seek new ways to achieve excellence in programming. Staff will become active in the professional community and will maintain licenses as appropriate.

Objective #6 To increase resources for students in computer instruction, video assistance, and learning reference materials such as handouts and books.

LSS is continuing to increase the resources available to students through the acquisition of pertinent materials to assist the student in various mediums of learning. There are many new software assistance packages for those students who learn better on their own with computer interaction. We will attempt to keep updated both our computer hardware and the latest in reportedly successful software. There are many new videos available, particularly on learning strategies. We will keep our racks of handouts updated and always full and ready for the students. We will seek new subjects for our handouts to interest those students who have already used what we have. We have a library of textbooks, reference books (such as grammar books and APA Publication Manual), and books on learning strategies. We will review new publications and order those books that can best help the student. We will increase our resources for graduate and professional students whenever possible.

We will keep updated on the current textbooks in use for the courses that we commonly tutor. We will also update our software resources to aid our tutors when helping students in computer science and business courses. We have installed a computer remediation for students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

We are going to focus on our web-based materials that are helpful to students. We have our tutor and learning strategies workshop schedules on our site. We also have our handouts on learning strategies available for downloading from the web. We will become creative in seeking new ways to inform the students about better methods for learning that they can easily access and use from our site.

QUESTION #7

What are the other possible sources of funding available to your unit and what efforts are being made to access them (e.g. grants, donations, etc.)?

Student Service Fees are the only major source of funding for most programs at LSS. We will look for any other funding opportunities that may allow us to better serve students and we will continue to maximize our use of financial and other resources.

QUESTION #8

Please describe any overlap between your unit and any other unit(s) providing services to students and the rationale for the overlap.

There are other programs, such as the Athletic Department's Academic Center for Excellence, the Urban Experience program, U Scholars, Mexican-American Studies, and the Challenger Program, on campus that also offer tutoring and learning strategies assistance. Each of these programs is targeted to a specific and limited population of students. One must apply and be accepted into these programs or meet specific requirements. LSS serves all students, including those students enrolled in other programs. We have tutoring in a wider variety of courses than some of the programs, a more extensive offering of learning skills workshops, and the availability of individual learning strategies counseling. Therefore we complement their services and their students are often referred to our center. In addition, we offer tutor training to other programs on campus.

Several departments on campus have tutoring labs for their academic area. Again, these tutoring labs have their range of subjects limited to one area whereas LSS offers tutoring in many subjects. For other areas, these students will come to LSS. Some labs provide tutoring, but on a group basis. These labs quite often refer students to LSS who need the one-on-one tutoring as well as other LSS services. In addition, the LSS intervention addresses both content and psychological barriers to learning math, i.e. math anxiety.

LSS is unique because we address not only the subject difficulties but also the strategic learning process itself. We teach students how to become self-managed learners. We continue to grow each semester, a fact that indicates that students seek our services because they want to learn strategies for handling increasingly difficult material. They need this strategic learning development to advance in school and to graduate.

To the extent possible, we coordinate services with other support groups such as the Math Lab, Writing Center, and other tutoring services. (1) We send the tutoring labs who have indicated interest an invitation to attend our tutor training course. . We enjoy the interaction and exchange of information with tutors from other services. (2) Tutoring labs that operate in a format where students raise their hands for quick assistance; they refer their students to LSS for more extensive one-on-one tutoring for understanding concepts. (3) We cooperate with tutoring labs such as the Language Acquisition Center to offer complementary services. (4) We post the hours and distribute brochures about the Writing Center and Math Lab and any other tutoring service who wants their information known to students. (5) The Accounting, Math, and Economics Labs tutor only lower level courses and refer students to LSS for upper level courses. (6) Faculty and advisors refer students to LSS if they wish the student to experience the combination of tutoring and learning strategies counseling. We have also invited other programs to participate in our Learning to Learn Day this spring.