

The Dynamic Duo of Learning Strategist and Librarian

Partnering for Academic Skills Instruction

Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada
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Wilfrid Laurier University

- Mid-size University
- 4-year, degree granting
- 3 Campuses



- 14,000 Undergrads
- 1350 Grads

Why are we here?

“Research S.I.”

An academic enhancement program that integrates learning and research strategies instruction and application into course curriculum.

What is S.I.?

Supplemental Instruction (“S.I.”)

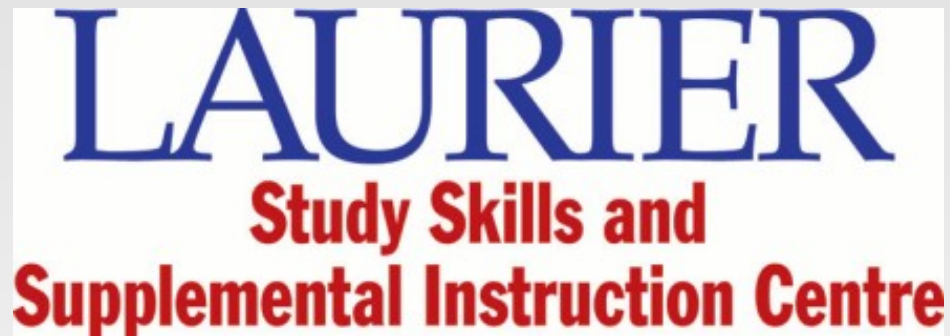
- Student academic support program.
- Integrated into courses that are “traditionally difficult” (defined as 30% DFW rate).
- Weekly, voluntary, and informal.
- Near-peer Facilitators.
- Sessions focus on:
 - Content review.
 - Learning strategies integration.
 - Peer collaboration.

Supplemental Instruction: History

- 1973: S.I. was created at UMKC by Deanna C. Martin, Ph.D.
- 1981: US Department of Education designates S.I. as an Exemplary Educational Program.
- 2002: International Centre for S.I. established at UMKC.
- 2009: 1800 institutions from 30 countries have implemented S.I. programs.



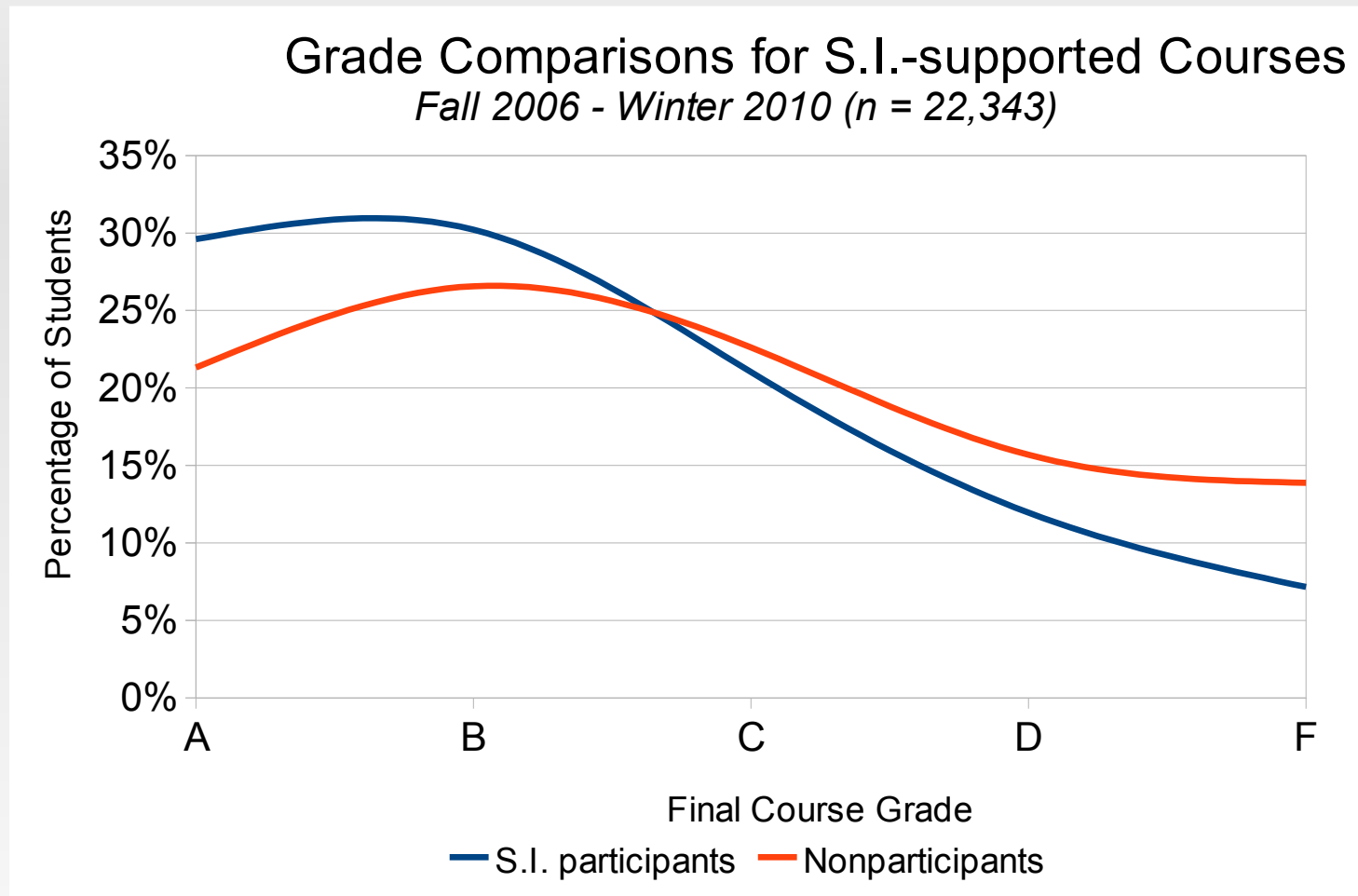
Supplemental Instruction: At Laurier



Engage · Learn · Prepare

- Created in 2006.
- Skills-first approach.
- Supports 40 courses.
 - 80 sections.
 - 1st through 3rd year.
 - All Faculties/Schools.
- 1 Professional Staff.
- 12 Senior Mentors.
- 75 Learning Assistants.

Supplemental Instruction: Overall Results



On average S.I. participants received higher rates of A and B grades and lower rates of C, D, and F grades suggesting lower attrition rates.

Where did the idea of Research S.I. come from
and what is it?

Background: NSSE / HEQCO Project

- Fall 2008
- Women's Studies / Political Science
- Focus on Information Literacy, Research, and Writing skills
- Outcome:
 - Shift writing skills to second term or senior years.
 - Focus on information literacy and research skills in junior years.

Background: Role of a Librarian

- **Research strategies instruction.**
- Locate and purchase materials for library collections.
- May conduct and publish research.
- Responsibilities:
 - Individual Consultations
 - **Campus and In-class Workshops**
 - Work with faculty members

Background:

Role of a Learning Strategist

- Teach students “**how-to-learn**” so professors can teach “what-to-learn”.
- More than students with learning disabilities.
- Responsibilities:
 - Individual Learning Consultations
 - **Campus, Residence, and In-class Workshops**
 - Hire, Train, and Supervise Student Employees
 - At Laurier: Coordinate Academic Skills, Academic Mentoring, and **Supplemental Instruction** Programs

Research S.I.

- A partnership between the S.I. programme and the Library.
 - Training near-peers to deliver research strategies instruction.
- A modified S.I. program where the major written assignment of a course is used as the medium to learn research and information literacy skills.
 - Weekly, voluntary, informal sessions.
 - Senior student facilitators.
 - Along with traditional S.I.: study and learning skills through course content.

Research S.I.:

Learning Objectives

- Improve learning strategies.
- Improve research/information literacy skills.
- Broad research definition, including:
 - Topics/theses, determining information needs, finding information, evaluating sources, integrating into papers, outlining/editing papers, citations.
- Integrate skills instruction with course curriculum.

Immediate application of research skills into course written assignments.

Why was Research S.I. developed?

Reasoning for Research S.I.:

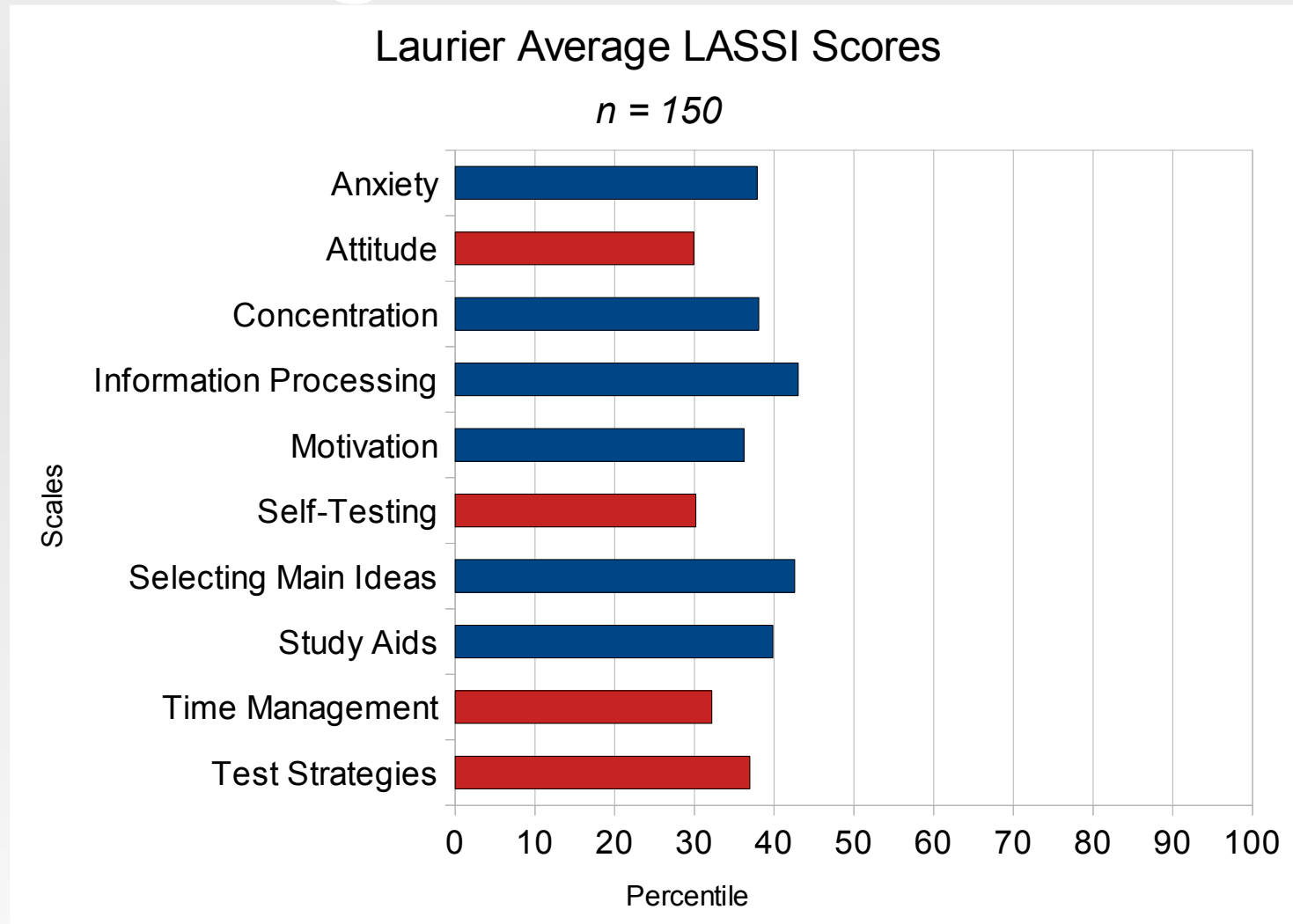
Faculty of Arts

- Focus is on research and writing.
- “Not fashionable”.
- “Dumping ground” for other faculties.
- Large faculty, many departments and programs looking for money.
- High attrition rates.

Little Money, High Attrition Rates

Reasoning for Research S.I.:

Assessing Academic Skills



Students Lack Academic Skills

Reasoning for Research S.I.:

Assessing Research Skills

- Assessment
 - Research Strategies survey
- Low Results
 - Searching for & evaluating scholarly sources
 - Research topics: focusing
 - Critical reading of sources
 - Citations

Students Lack Research Skills

What are the Research S.I. program results?

Research S.I. Results: Courses

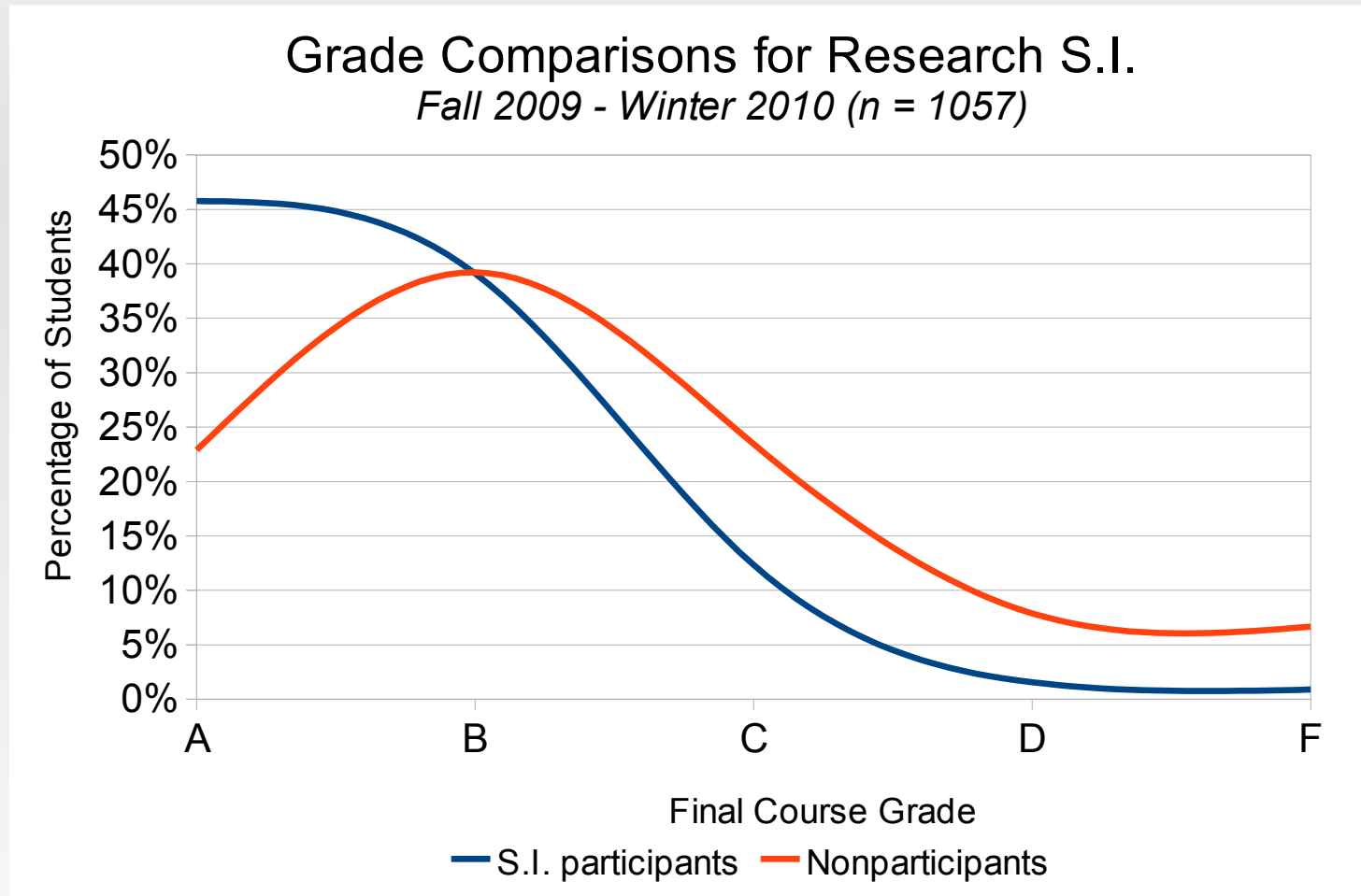
- **Fall 2009**

- Film Studies: Film History 1939-1969
- Global Studies: The Theories of Development
- Women's Studies: Introduction

- **Winter 2010**

- Film Studies: Film History 1895-1939
- Religion: Religions of the Americas
- Religion: Hinduism
- Religion: Gender and Islam
- Women's Studies: Introduction
- Women's Studies: Women and Work

Research S.I. Results: Grades



On average S.I. participants received higher rates of A and B grades and lower rates of C, D, and F grades suggesting lower attrition rates.

Research S.I. Results: Grades

Total Students Reached: 164

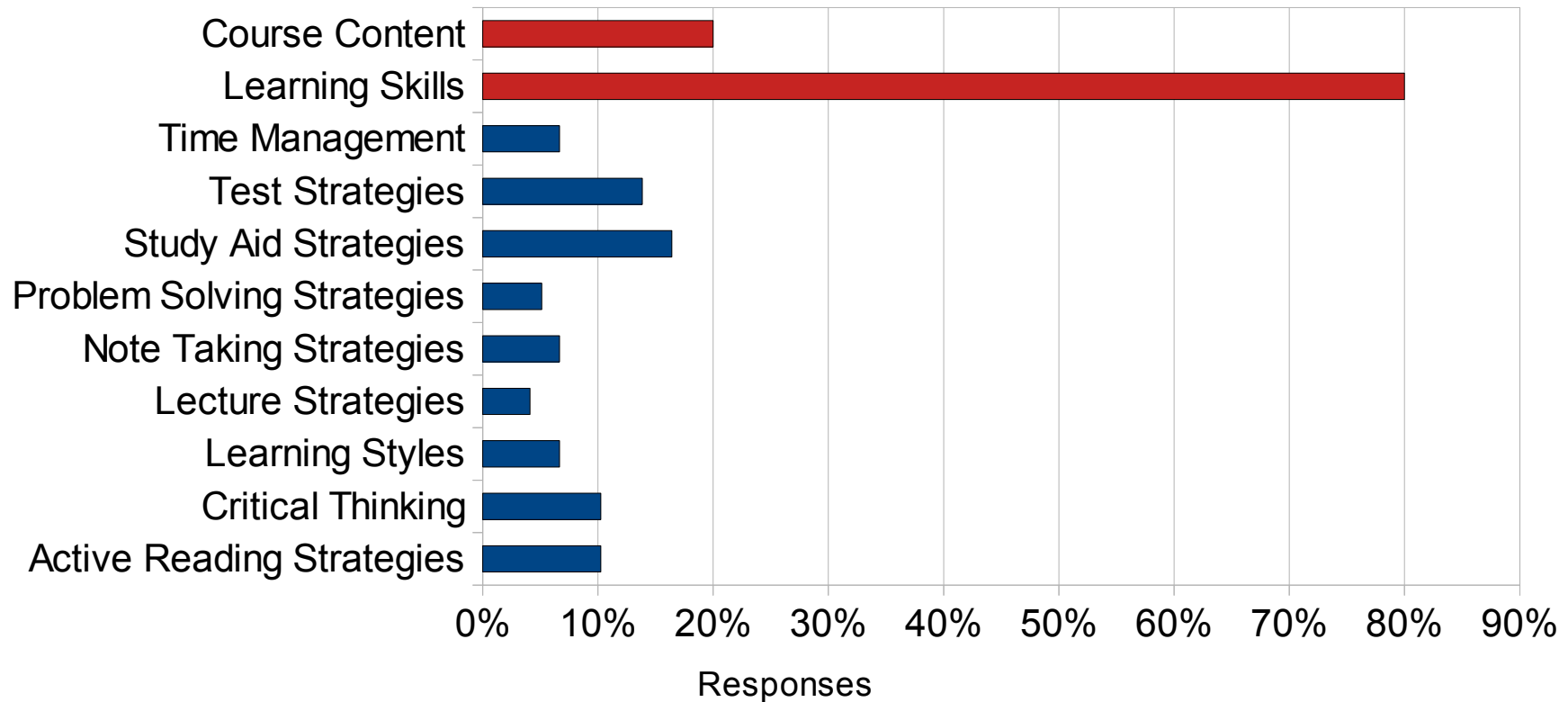
Course	S.I. Participants		Nonparticipants		Difference	t-Test Analysis	Regression Analysis
	Attendance	Average GPA	Attendance	Average GPA	Average GPA		
Film Studies 242	11%	9.3	89%	7.6	+1.7	p < .001	ns
Global Studies 211	16%	8.9	84%	7.1	+1.8	p < .01	ns
Women's Studies 100 (Fall Term)	15%	8.1	85%	6.9	+1.2	p < .01	p < .1
Film Studies 240	24%	8.3	76%	4.9	+3.4	p < .02	ns
Religion 100	10%	8.5	90%	5.9	+2.6	p < .01	p < .01
Religion 255	11%	8.6	89%	7.8	+0.8	ns	ns
Religion 377	5%	10.5	95%	9.5	+1.0	ns	ns
Women's Studies 100 (Winter Term)	10%	8.1	90%	6.9	+1.2	p < .10	p < .01
Women's Studies 204	51%	7.9	49%	5.8	+2.1	p < .001	p < .01
All Courses	17%	8.7	83%	6.9	+1.8		

On average S.I. participants received higher final course grades than the nonparticipants.

Research S.I. Results: Learning Strategies

Learning Skills Outcomes for Research S.I.

Fall 2009 - Winter 2010 (n = 55)

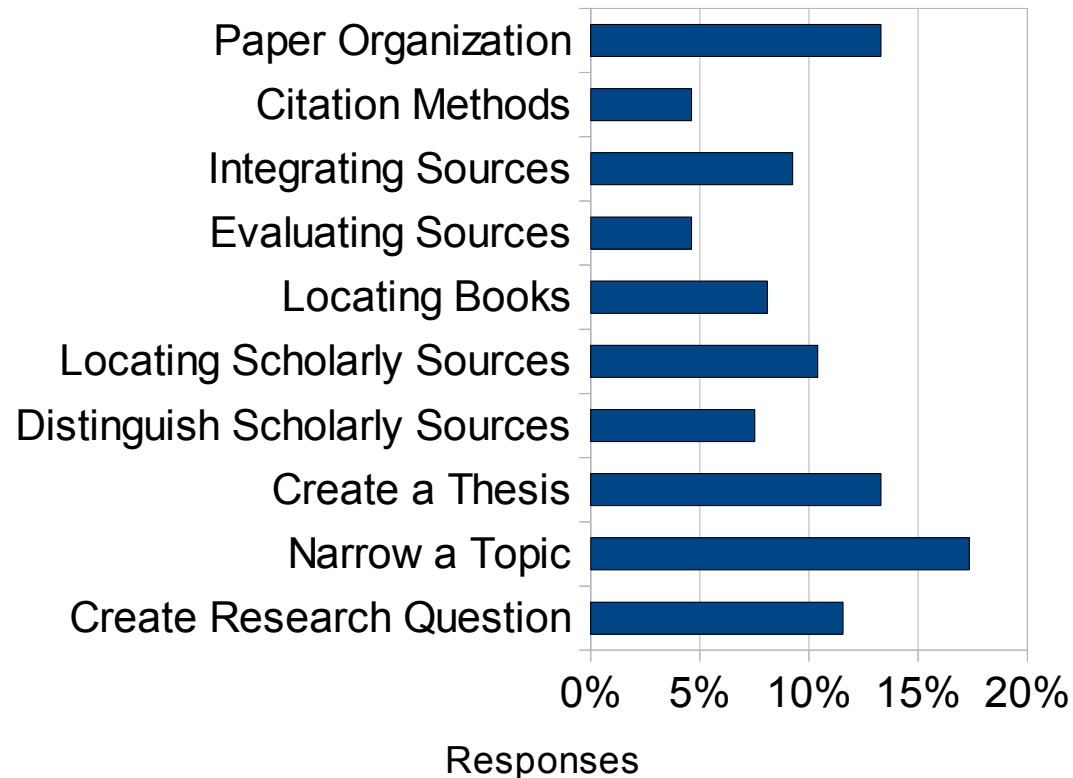


Students were aware that they had learnt new learning skills.

Research S.I. Results: Research Strategies

Research Skills Outcomes for Research S.I.

Fall 2009 - Winter 2010 (n = 45)



Students were aware that they had learnt new research skills.

Research S.I. Results: Skills Development

With increased skill development comes better students with the hope of increased retention rates.

Research S.I. Results: Student Testimonials

- I learnt a lot in S.I. by answering questions aloud with my fellow peers. It was helpful to think aloud and hear everyone's thoughts and opinions.
- S.I. really assisted me with the lecture material, ways to study, preparing for exams and writing research papers. I learnt how to distinguish between scholarly journals and non-reliable Internet sources. It has a positive environment and it is very beneficial in a number of ways.
- S.I. made me feel more comfortable, and cleared up a few questions that I wasn't totally comfortable asking a tutorial leader or prof.
- S.I. was really helpful with writing an effective essay.

Research S.I. Results: Faculty Testimonial

I have consistently found that by using S.I. in my classes that I can see marked improvement in the research and writing skills of those who attend these sessions against students who choose not to participate. Principally what I have witnessed is that the analysis component of students' written and oral work is much higher. Over time what follows is better writing skills; suggesting that there is a convincing argument to create a structure where students have access to this process more than once in their time here at Laurier.

Dr. Helen Ramirez

Assistant Professor

Women's Studies 100 and 204

How is Research S.I. structured?

Research S.I. Structure: Facilitator

- S.I. Learning Assistants
 - Senior student
 - Major or minor in the discipline
 - A- or greater in the course, B+ overall GPA
- Duties
 - Attend course lectures
 - Prepare weekly S.I. review sessions
 - Meet with faculty member, senior mentor, or both.
 - Facilitate S.I. sessions

Research S.I. Structure: Session Format

- In the Library instructional room.
- Weekly for two hours.
- Three parts: Warm-up, Exercise, Cool-down.
- Students in partners or groups.
- Focus:
 - Facilitation not instruction.
 - Collaboration amongst peers.
 - Direct application of skills to meaningful content.

Research S.I. Structure: Session Sample Activities

- Structured Learning
 - Research question worksheet
 - Comparing search strategies
 - Library scavenger hunt
 - Evaluating sample sources
 - Assessing & correcting sample theses
 - Foreign language bibliography
 - Citation cue cards

Research S.I. Structure: Faculty Relations

- Selecting the courses.
- Approaching faculty members.
- Communication updates.
- Final Report.

Faculty buy-in and support is important; however, faculty shouldn't feel burdened by the program.

How is S.I. funded?

S.I. Funding: How much does it cost?

- \$2500 per S.I. Learning Assistant per Term
 - Salary
 - Senior Mentor Salary
 - Photocopying Costs
 - Text Books
 - Office Supplies
- S.I. Learning Assistant to Student ratio
 - 1:250

S.I. Funding:

Where does the money come from?

- 40% base university funding
- 60% student comprehensive fees
 - The S.I. programme exists under the department of Learning Services which falls under the Student Affairs umbrella.

Why S.I.?

S.I. Conclusions: Retention and Funding

Ongoing academic skills development through course integration will ease the student transition from secondary school and result in students who are more academically prepared for the rigours of university studies and who have higher final course grades.

The results for the university include higher retention rates over the long-term resulting in stable government funding.

S.I. Conclusions: Long-term Planning

Students who feel that they have been supported by their academic departments are more likely to stay within their discipline resulting in better long-term planning by administration.

S.I. Conclusions: Future Direction

- Deeper course-integration:
 - Participation Bonus Grades
 - Intentional Learning Outcomes/Grades
 - Mandatory
 - S.I. scheduling within Registration System
- Integrated and scaffolded learning support:
 - Learning S.I., Research S.I., Writing S.I.

The future is the integration of services into curriculum to support students in a meaningful and intentional way.

Why partner for academic success?

Partnership: Pros

- Breaking through silos.
- Money.
- More efficient use of librarian time.
- Good way to deal with basic research needs.
- Librarians can focus on more senior students.
- Reaching more students.
- Integrated approach to academic skills.
- All skills addressed.
- Integrated into coursework.

Partnership: Cons

- Less control over program: S.I. and Library
- Communication: between partners
- Large initial time commitment from Library

Partnership: Success Strategies

- Trust
 - be willing to give up control
- Collaboration
 - work toward shared goals, mutual interests
- Communication
 - regular and clear communication
- Flexibility
 - be willing to adapt, do things differently

Questions?

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