

The Learning Strategies Center

# Supporting Student Learning During COVID-19



***“Breakout rooms were actively encouraged to communicate, resulting in helpful group discussions.”***

-LSC Course Participant

***“I was so grateful to actually meet someone in my asynchronous class! Now more than ever, this one personal connection to the school was so important to keep me motivated and present”***

-LSC Study Group Participant

***“Thank you for offering this class in person - it allowed me to meet new people during my first semester year... increasing the amount of familiar faces”***

-LSC Course Participant

***“The professor was understanding of the fact that there was a lot going on in the world.”***

-LSC Course Participant

***“I really like the fact that this course had no charge, to help low-income students...”***

-LSC Winter Math Prep Participant

In the 2020-2021 academic year, the LSC recorded **18,367** instances of in-person and virtual visits.



Cornell University

Drawing on our deep understanding of student learning, the Learning Strategies Center has anticipated needs and provided relevant support throughout the pandemic.



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420 Computing and Communications Building  
235 Garden Avenue Extension  
Cornell University  
Ithaca, NY 14853

Web: [lsc.cornell.edu](http://lsc.cornell.edu)

Email: [learningstrategiescenter@cornell.edu](mailto:learningstrategiescenter@cornell.edu)

YouTube: <https://tinyurl.com/LSCYouTube>

Phone: 607-255-6310

Fax: 607-255-8009

## Expanding LSC Services to Meet Emerging Needs

Students' need for academic support increased with the switch to remote, online learning - both the amount of support needed and the ways in which students needed support. LSC's expanded offerings met students where they were, regardless of whether they were online or in-person.

The LSC provided supplemental courses and tutoring in support of select, large introductory gateway courses, as well as workshops, consultations, and courses in study skills. In addition, the LSC launched impactful new services including study-partner matching and "Motivation Stations." For students who found themselves needing extra support after the Fall 2020 semester, the LSC launched two new winter-session courses "Strategies for Time- and Self-Management" and "Preparation for Calculus," to prepare them for the spring semester.

### Study Partner Matching

During the year-plus of online and physically distanced in-person learning, making connections and finding other students to study with was a challenge. LSC helped students navigate that challenge by facilitating study partner matching for any course in which they were enrolled. Students were able to find others to study with, in-person or online, no matter what country or time zone they were in. LSC peer study skills facilitators provided study tips and consultations for study partners to help get them launched successfully. Though most requests were in STEM disciplines, study partner matches were made in humanities, social sciences, and creative arts courses, and students of every level, from first year to graduate, took advantage of this service. By request, LSC consulted with faculty interested in study partners about best practices for student learning through peer work.

“The LSC study partner matching is very helpful especially if you are more introverted during this period where classes are mostly online.

“It was helpful to just have a support system with another student especially in a course with such limited student interaction by default.

“Being able to connect with fellow students made the class experience a lot more enjoyable.

“I was so grateful to actually meet someone in my asynchronous class! Now more than ever, this one personal connection to the school was so important to keep me motivated and present.

**Fall  
2020**

**824** unique students requested study groups in **375** courses for a total of **1,338** requests. **1,132** total matches were made and **413** study groups were formed.

**Spring  
2021**

**877** unique students requested study groups in **409** courses for a total of **1,576** requests. **1,381** total matches were made and **503** study groups were formed.

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## LSC Offered Two New Winter Session Courses

The Fall 2020 semester was especially challenging for many students. The LSC knew it would be important to provide special support for students who didn't meet their academic goals in the fall so that they could have new tools, strategies, and skills to start the spring semester strong.

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### HE1111: Strategies for Time- and Self-Management

(1 credit) was offered through the School of Continuing Education. Students with demonstrated financial and academic need were eligible for funding for this class through the LSC Scholarship. Students who took the course were able to:

- 1: Implement strategies to manage their time.
- 2: Evaluate different learning methods and study skills (that were most effective for them).
- 3: Recognize what motivates them to learn.
- 4: Design strategies to recover from setbacks.
- 5: Identify what personal factors influence their learning.



“ I learned a lot of skills such as time management, study skills, and reducing the workload by doing a small part each day.

“ The class sharpened not only my calculus skills but also provided a thorough review of important algebra and pre-calc concepts. In addition, the course was well-paced and the professor was understanding of the fact that we were on winter break and there was a lot going on the world (capital attack, COVID-19).

“ I really like the fact that this course had no charge, to help low-income students... I would recommend that the course continue to be offered free of charge in order to benefit everyone who needs to review calculus concepts.

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### Calculus Preparation

An LSC math instructor designed and offered a calculus preparation winter pilot specifically targeted to students who dropped their calculus course during the Fall. To maximize students' ability to participate and make the experience as stress-free as possible, the course was offered tuition-free and was not credit-bearing. The class format included pre-recorded video lectures, small group problem solving sessions, and peer-led office hours. Fifteen students participated in the winter, and nine went on to take math in the Spring 2021 semester. All nine who took the winter course earned A's and B's in their subsequent math class. The LSC will continue to offer this course credit- and tuition-free in the future.

## Motivation Station

The Motivation Station was a new online program launched in Fall 2020 that provided an online space for students to study alone, with others, or ask study skills questions to tutors - mimicking the in-person study environment of an on-campus library or help center. There were over **100** visits, and this is a good example of the less structured programming LSC developed to help students build connections while also acknowledging their genuine fatigue with structured Zoom gatherings. One of our regular student visitors returned in Fall 2021 as a study skills tutor and workshop facilitator.

“ I feel as if in a tumultuous semester, the motivation station was able to provide not only study advice, but a person to talk to for students studying off campus.



## Mentor Program

In early May 2021, LSC was invited to participate in a meeting of the Implementation Committee on Teaching and Advising, Academic Advising and Policies Subcommittee, where the discussion focused on additional support new students would need transitioning to Cornell. Following up with both the Dean of Students Office (DoS) and the Intergroup Dialogue Project (IDP), LSC and IDP, with input from DoS, quickly developed and launched a pilot mentoring program to help new students learn about Cornell and make connections with other students before the start of the semester. Over the summer, 25 mentors met regularly on Zoom in small groups with 362 students. The discussions encompassed a wide range of topics including logistics of dorm life, pre-enroll, the weather in Ithaca, imposter syndrome, and belonging at Cornell. Students appreciated the program and reported that it helped them learn about Cornell and feel more connected.

“ Hearing other students’ perspectives helped me feel less alone in my fears about moving onto campus and assured me that I am going to have a supportive community at Cornell.  
-Mentee

**Summer  
2020**

**25** mentors met regularly on Zoom in small groups with **362** students.

“ As a mentor, it was really nice passing on my wisdom and being part of a program that helped students feel an easier transition.  
-Mentor

## Electronic Resources

In March 2020, the LSC developed extensive electronic resources supporting students during their abrupt transition from on-campus, in-person courses to online learning remotely from home. Though some resources were modified and repurposed for Fall 2020, some were specific to this unprecedented shift and the challenges students were facing. Some Spring 2020-specific resources included a [remote learning checklist](#) to help students identify technical and logistical needs for remote and online learning, information for families in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#) about how to support students as they were suddenly learning from home, tips for finishing the remote semester strong, and a [guide for mapping](#) in-person course activities to the new online expectations.

For the Fall 2020 semester the LSC continued to develop additional resources -- including Canvas modules for students on making a successful transition to Cornell, note-taking (including leveraging Cornell Notes), getting organized in time and space, and preparing for exams (in-person, online, and open-book). These resources continue to be relevant and accessible through the LSC website. An additional Fall 2020 resource created by the LSC was a web guide with tips and strategies to successfully [prepare for semi-finals](#).

### 2020-2021 Academic Year

During the 2020-2021 academic year, **285** unique students enrolled in the LSC Canvas Study Skills modules with about **4,500** page views.

### YouTube Analytics:

*March 2020-August 2021*

The LSC has **19** YouTube videos, **6** of which were created to support online learning during the pandemic. By far our most viewed videos are on Cornell Notes, which have been accessed **283,129** times between March 2020 and August 2021. The number of hours spent on our YouTube channel during this same period was almost **9,000** hours – incredibly high for a purely academic content channel.

Video Titles	Views
How to Use Cornell Notes	164,438
What are Cornell Notes?	106,982
The Key to Good Notes	1,278
The Key to Tests	1,133
The Key to Problem Solving Tests	1,090
Lecture Reading Courses Before/After Class	896
The Key to Reading	863
Time Management for Online Learning Part 1, Workday Structure	860
The Best Weekly Routine	808
The Key to Multiple Choice Tests	791

Top 10 viewed YouTube videos on the LSC Channel between March 2020 and August 2021

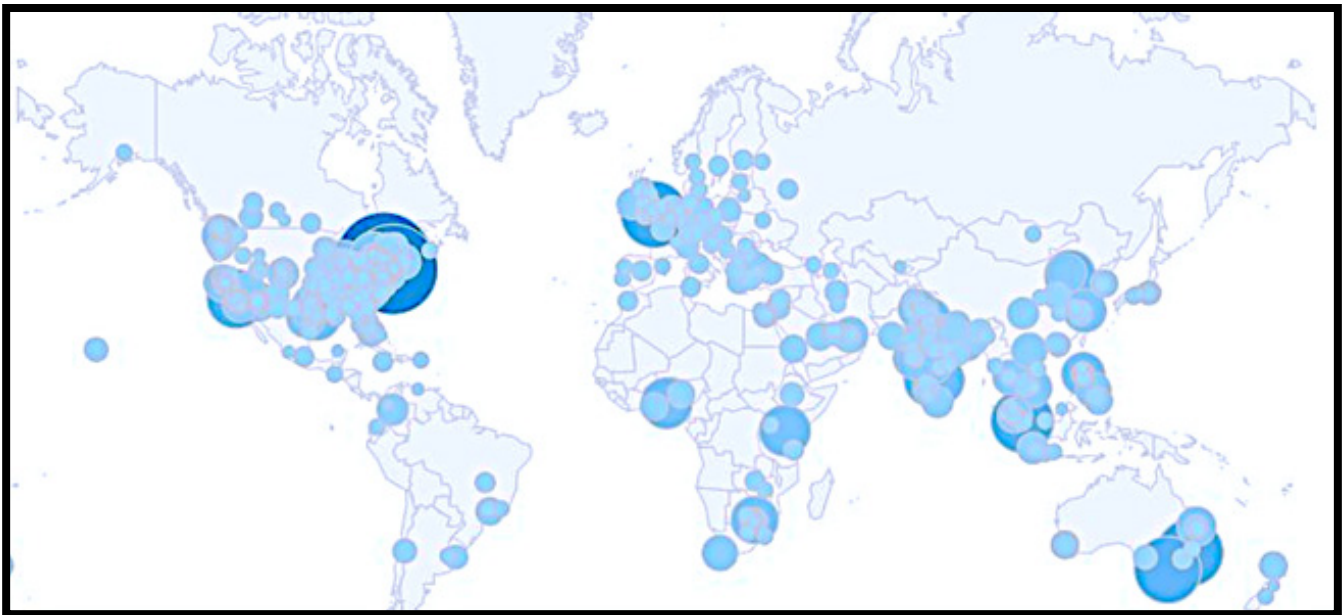


## LSC Website Analytics

From March 12, 2020 through August 6, 2021, our website was viewed a total of **207,791** times by **119,213** total users. This data was pulled from Google Analytics, a web analytics service offered by Google that tracks and reports website traffic and provides statistics and basic analytical tools.

In Fall 2020, many students took courses online, whether they were in Ithaca or at home around the world. The LSC anticipated that students would primarily access resources and services via the LSC webpage.

The map below shows where [lsc.cornell.edu](https://lsc.cornell.edu) was accessed - LSC's reach spans the globe.



The most frequently accessed content on the LSC website was:

Content Area	Page Views
Cornell Notes	109,943
How to Study	26,325
Home Page	11,654
Studying Together Online	10,197



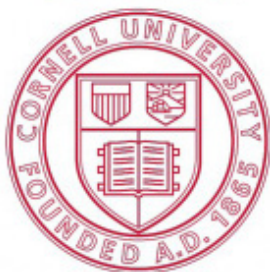
## Developing and Sharing Best Practices in Student Learning

The LSC continues to be a leader in developing and sharing best practices for supporting students' learning, both within the Cornell Community and with our peer institutions. As early as March 2020, rather than simply moving content to an online platform, LSC researched, identified, and trialed best practices for teaching and learning online and designed courses specifically intended to be taught online.

During the pandemic, LSC instructors embraced pedagogy to support students' online learning, including use of structured breakout rooms, activities to facilitate engagement and community-building among students, and development of class agreements regarding camera use. The LSC team regularly reflected on and debriefed what was working and what changes needed to be made. Department meetings pivoted to focus on supporting and sharing ideas with one another as we collaboratively worked to provide the best and most engaging experience possible for students.

In developing an online curriculum for peer mentor training, the LSC gained valuable experience that was useful to colleagues at other institutions. In July 2020, the LSC hosted an online workshop on best practices in online pedagogy training for academic peer mentors, attended by our Ivy Plus Learning Services colleagues. The workshop was appreciated, both in terms of the content and the opportunity to connect with others.

“ Thank you so much for preparing, organizing, and holding today's [Ivy Plus] session! It was great to connect and to hear more about what you're doing up in Ithaca. Good luck to us all!  
-Ivy Plus Learning Services Colleague



Cornell



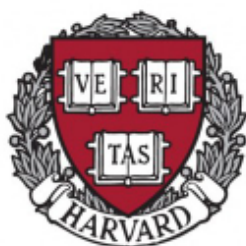
Yale



Stanford University



COLUMBIA



HARVARD



Dartmouth



BROWN



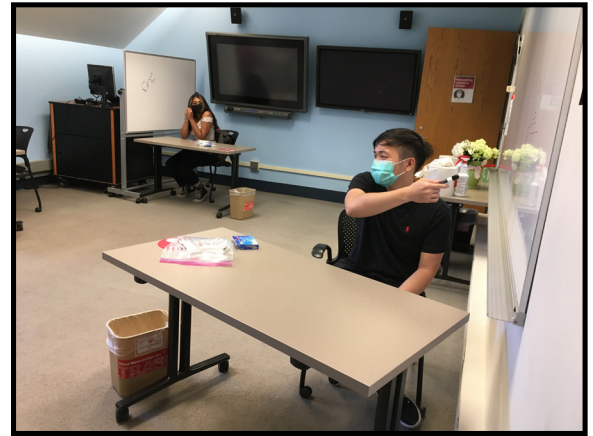
PRINCETON



The LSC contributed to a variety of campus-wide endeavors to support students and colleagues in many areas including:

*Preparing for online learning*

- » Offered Zoom drop-in hours in collaboration with CIT for students on “Preparing for Remote Learning.”
- » Hosted a Friday conversation with OADI (Office of Academic Diversity Initiatives) on “Preparing for Remote Learning.”
- » Presented a virtual workshop to the 47 enrolled students in NS 1200 (Nutrition and Health: Issues, Outlooks, and Opportunities), March 2020, on preparations for remote learning.



*In-person tutoring during COVID-19.*

*Making and maintaining connections*

- » Met/brainstormed with faculty who reached out to discuss best practices for helping students work together.
- » Continued to foster a sense of community throughout Spring 2020 by planning and hosting “building” meetings with OADI, CTI (Center for Teaching Innovation), and IDP (Intergroup Dialogue Project).



*Academic peer mentors working during COVID-19.*

*Promoting student success and well-being*

- » Collaborated with colleagues in SCL (Student and Campus Life) on needs for programming and engagement for students during isolation.
- » Participated in the Mental Health Programmers committee to stay abreast of emerging student issues.
- » Presented to faculty across the university, as part of a panel on “Supporting Student Well-Being in the Remote Environment,” in April 2020.
- » Collaborated with colleagues across campus to strategize the use of the LSC Scholarship to best support students through the challenging summers of 2020 and 2021.
- » In late spring and during the summer of 2020, the LSC met with colleagues in New Student Programs to share ideas and experiences about online orientation.
- » Participated on four SCL panels for parents and students about academic support at Cornell.

**The LSC’s carefully thought through reactivation plan was used as a model for peer units across the university.**



## Shifting LSC Services to Meet the COVID-19 Paradigm

Through program offerings that encourage students to develop effective approaches to mastering the academic rigors of Cornell, the LSC strives to actively engage students in the learning process and support their efforts to become more successful and independent learners. We are committed to addressing the emerging needs of Cornell's diverse student body as they meet and exceed Cornell University's high academic standards.

The LSC's mission aligned well with the needs that emerged throughout the pandemic, and in many ways the LSC has been fortunate to always have been available for students to support their success in the ways they need. Along with everyone else, the LSC had to pivot to adapt support for students as the situation evolved. Throughout the pandemic, the LSC was able to stay keenly mission focused, and in addition to new programming, provided the same tutoring and support courses that were previously offered.

LSC instructors embraced the challenges they were presented with and worked with the LSC Director and Senior Associate Director, undertook extensive course design work to engage students and best meet their needs. The LSC worked to ensure that instructors were supported as they developed, tried out, and revised new pedagogical approaches. Instructors shared these ideas with their parent departments and infused some of these practices throughout the University.

### LSC Supplemental Courses

LSC instructors offered classes in a variety of modalities, including in-person, online, and asynchronous. Because students were on campus for fall and spring courses, it was important LSC offer services and programming in-person. This provided an opportunity for students to get away from their screens and engage with each other face-to-face. One of the greatest measures of success is that students found the work of the LSC valuable, as illustrated in the quotes below.

“ Breakout rooms were actively encouraged to communicate, resulting in helpful group discussions.

“ I really liked that we got to meet other students in the call. It created a community.

“ As an asynchronous class, the professor did a great job on presenting the material and keeping the class engaged.

**2020-2021  
Academic  
Year**

The LSC had **10,901** visits to supplemental course lectures.

“ Thank you for offering this class in person -- it allowed me to meet new people during my first semester freshman year which was very important to me. I liked seeing my classmates around campus outside of class and increasing the amount of familiar faces.

## LSC Tutoring

LSC tutors provided their peers with drop-in support over zoom throughout the pandemic and in person by appointment starting in September 2020. Tutors were trained in safety protocols to keep the Cornell community safe, as well as best practices to support learning. LSC tutors who offered in-person tutoring felt it was an important service they could provide to their peers who had few opportunities for peer-peer interaction early in the pandemic.

**2020-2021  
Academic  
Year**

The LSC had **5,536** visits to office hours and tutoring online and in person.

“ This interaction the students are getting [in-person] is really important and beneficial.



*The LSC redesigned office and classroom spaces to accommodate physically distanced office hours and peer tutoring.*

**687** hours of **IN-PERSON** tutoring were offered for the courses supported by the LSC.



*The LSC held in-person tutoring in our main office, the CCC Building, located on the Ag Quad.*



*In-person LSC tutoring during COVID-19.*



## LSC Peer Study Skills Workshops

From Fall 2020 to Spring 2021, peer facilitated study skills workshops were virtual. **38** workshops were offered with **1,000+** attendees. Study skills facilitators shared tips and strategies for online learning, asynchronous classes, Zoom fatigue, and maintaining resilience. The LSC offered workshops for NS 1200, BIOMG 1340, BIOG 1440, ALS 2400, HD/PAM/FSAD first-year seminars, students returning from health leave during COVID-19, the APO service fraternity, Hotel School advising seminar, Biology Peer Advising, Tatkon, Cornell Minds Matter, AIISP Soup Day, and OADI Tuesday Lunch.

“ I think the session went very well! In our teaching team meeting afterward, the TAs all agreed, and were all very impressed...all saying they learned helpful things as well. Both [facilitators] were so clear, professional, and accessible, and gave great advice. Our TAs commented that students asked more questions over the chat than they usually feel brave enough to ask in class! I am very grateful to you and your whole team for providing this timely and excellent guidance to our students.

-Dr. Julia Felice, Assoc. Director of Undergraduate Studies, workshop for NS 1200.

## LSC Tutor Training

LSC tutors received extensive training in on-line pedagogy and worked together regularly. They conducted peer observations and shared structured feedback with one another, allowing them to continue to learn and grow themselves through their tutoring work. LSC tutors overcame many challenges and became confident and thoughtful providers of online tutoring.

“ I make sure that the students know they are not alone when they face hard times and that their peers at Cornell care about them. I firmly believe that nobody has each other's backs like Cornell students do in times of extreme academic stress. I always reminded and encouraged them to remember the growth mindset. I reminded them that they were completing their first semester in a pandemic, and if they would not give themselves grace, I would remind them to because that is an incredible feat.

-LSC Tutor

“ I was overwhelmed at first, but after taking a deep breath, I began to utilize the skills we learned in class to manage large groups of students. This allowed me to turn individual questions into a more collaborative group discussion in which students were answering other students' questions, with me jumping in when there was overall confusion.

-LSC Tutor

“ Visual materials could be tricky with the online setup, but I realized I could get creative with simple stuff around me. It brings a smile to students' face when I work with this stuff [pencils, erasers, folders] and they told me it helped them to visualize the problems better, so it's totally worth making a bit of a fool of myself :)

-LSC Tutor

## From the Director



Throughout the pandemic, the LSC staff and instructors strived to keep connected with each other, to support our colleagues in other units at Cornell, to share ideas with other institutions, and to provide a positive, engaging, supportive experience for our students. I am grateful for all the work done by so many across the university to keep our community safe while moving Cornell's educational mission forward.

The pandemic provided little opportunity for prolonged planning at the LSC. As the University shifted to remote offerings in March 2020, the LSC was simultaneously developing online options for our courses and services while we were identifying various scenarios for our first-year summer bridge program (PSP) that started in June. When the decision was made for summer 2020 to be completely virtual, we focused our design and development efforts on that front, while at the same time preparing for the fall programming would be needed. Once we learned that Cornell was going to have students on campus in Fall 2020, we knew it would be critical that we provide in-person offerings in as many areas as possible, and we had a strong presence on campus, including in-person courses and tutoring.

The LSC team learned from what worked and what didn't, shared ideas with others, adapted, iterated, grew, and asked for help when we needed it. We worked to anticipate as many of our students' needs as possible before they arose and to fill in gaps we saw related to student learning. It wasn't always perfect, but our work was useful and valued by students – and that is the greatest endorsement we can have. The LSC is as relevant and utilized as ever, and we have emerged stronger as a team and as a unit.

I am proud of all the work we have done, and I am excited about building on our work as we see what the future will bring.

Warm regards,  
Amy



Cornell University

Amy M. Godert Ph.D.,  
Director, LSC