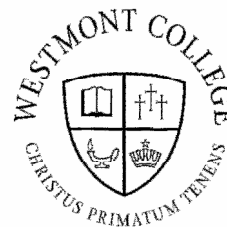


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Memorandum

To: Westmont College Faculty and Staff
Date: 9/16/2009
Re: Collegiate Learning Assessment Results

In order to provide an outside perspective on our institutional effectiveness, Westmont College incorporates the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) into our overall program review strategy. The CLA is designed to evaluate general thinking and communication skills. Each participating student is assigned to do one of two types of tasks: a performance task or an analytic writing task.

Each Performance Task requires students to use an integrated set of critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, and written communication skills to answer several open-ended questions about a hypothetical but realistic situation. In addition to directions and questions, each Performance Task also has its own document library that includes a range of information sources, such as letters, memos, summaries of research reports, newspaper articles, maps, photographs, diagrams, tables, charts, and interview notes or transcripts. Students are instructed to use these materials in preparing their answers to the Performance Task's questions within the allotted 90 minutes.

Students write answers to two types of essay prompts, namely: a "Make-an-Argument" question that asks them to support or reject a position on some issue; and a "Critique-an-Argument" question that asks them to evaluate the validity of an argument made by someone else. Both of these tasks measure a student's skill in articulating complex ideas, examining claims and evidence, supporting ideas with relevant reasons and examples, sustaining a coherent discussion, and using standard written English.

– *From the Institutional Report prepared by CAE*

Sample questions can be found at the *Council for Aid to Education (CAE)* web site at http://www.cae.org/content/pro_collegiate_sample_measures.htm.

Westmont has adopted an alternate year schedule for administering the CLA. The 2008-2009 academic year marks the second administration of the instrument. Once again our seniors scored at the highest levels. Excerpts from the Institutional Report are included at the end of this memo.

CLA results:

- 104 entering students and 57 graduating students participated in the assessment.
- The entering students' average total score fell at the 93rd percentile meaning that Westmont ranked 13th out of the 189 participating schools.
- Our graduates' average total score fell at the 97th percentile (6th of 189) with particular strength in the writing tasks demonstrated by a 98th percentile (4th of 189) average.
- The only (relative) weakness in our graduates was in the performance task in which students are asked to use multiple documents of varying types and relevance to write a memo addressing a related question and to make a recommendation. Westmont graduates scored at the 91st (17th of 189) at this task. This is somewhat in contrast to the 2006-2007 CLA assessment in which Westmont graduates scored at the 97th percentile. Since the groups taking this portion of the exam were rather small both years, some variation is to be expected and there is no particular cause for concern.
- Westmont students, both entering and graduating, have significantly higher SAT scores than students at other institutions. As such, it is expected that they will perform better on tests such as the CLA. CAE provides adjusted CLA scores to reflect this expectation. Using a linear regression model, a predicted CLA score is computed from a student's SAT score. The adjusted score is the difference between the actual and the predicted score. Scores that are higher than predicted receive positive values and negative values represent scores that are lower than predicted. When the adjusted institutional scores are compared, Westmont's entering and graduating students scored at the 84th and 64th percentiles respectively. It is conjectured that the relatively lower percentile ranking of the adjusted scores is due in large part to ceiling effects of the exam. (With a maximum score of 1500, it is probably significantly more difficult to increase from 1250 to 1350 than from 1000 to 1100.) This effect seems to be visible on the graph on page 6 of the full report where the scores appear to plateau around 1375 even as SAT scores continue to increase. (Of the 6 school with visibly higher average SAT scores than Westmont, only one school had a higher than predicted CLA score.)

The entire report can be read at

http://www.westmont.edu/offices/institutional_portfolio/program_review/documents/CLA%20Reports/CLA%200809%20Institutional%20Report_Westmont%20College.pdf

Local Option Questions:

In addition to the standard assessment, the CLA provides institutions with the option of adding up to nine institution-specific questions to be answered by the graduating seniors. These questions are not related to the CLA itself but are intended to make use of the pool of students who are already gathered to take the CLA to glean additional information. Westmont used these questions to probe issues related to frequency of oral presentation, interaction with faculty, and church attendance as well as students' experience with the Serving Society portion of the

General Education program. The information that can be obtained from the local option questions is limited since institutions may use at most nine multiple choice questions.

Significant/Interesting findings:

- 40% of graduating seniors made 5 or more formal oral presentations during their time at Westmont. Only 6% had presented 2 or fewer times. In addition, 58% of graduating seniors gave five or more informal presentations to peers in non-classroom setting while 30% made two or fewer informal presentations. Between the two types of presentations, only one student did not make at least four. This is a significantly better showing than might have been predicted based on the small number of explicitly identified speech-intensive courses in our GE curriculum.
- 72% of graduating seniors found that their Serving Society; Enacting Justice placement was moderately or extremely valuable to their academic development. 82% found the experience moderately or extremely valuable to their personal development. While it is not clear exactly what students mean in these self reports, it does seem clear that students are having a positive experience. This confirms the choice to add this requirement to the GE program when it was revised.
- 57% of graduating seniors reported that they attended an off-campus worship service weekly. On the other hand, 37% said they did so at most monthly with 21% attending only once or twice per term if at all.

A complete summary of the data can be read at http://www.westmont.edu/offices/institutional_portfolio/program_review/documents/CLA%20Reports/Local%20Response%20Report.pdf. One will note that there is some confusion in the coding of the responses to question 8. Apparently, text oriented responses were coded as if they were numeric. We have not been able to resolve this issue with the CAE staff. We expect that the responses are listed in order of increasing frequency of visits, but we are not able to verify this.

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3 Relationship Between CLA Performance and Entering Academic Ability (EAA)

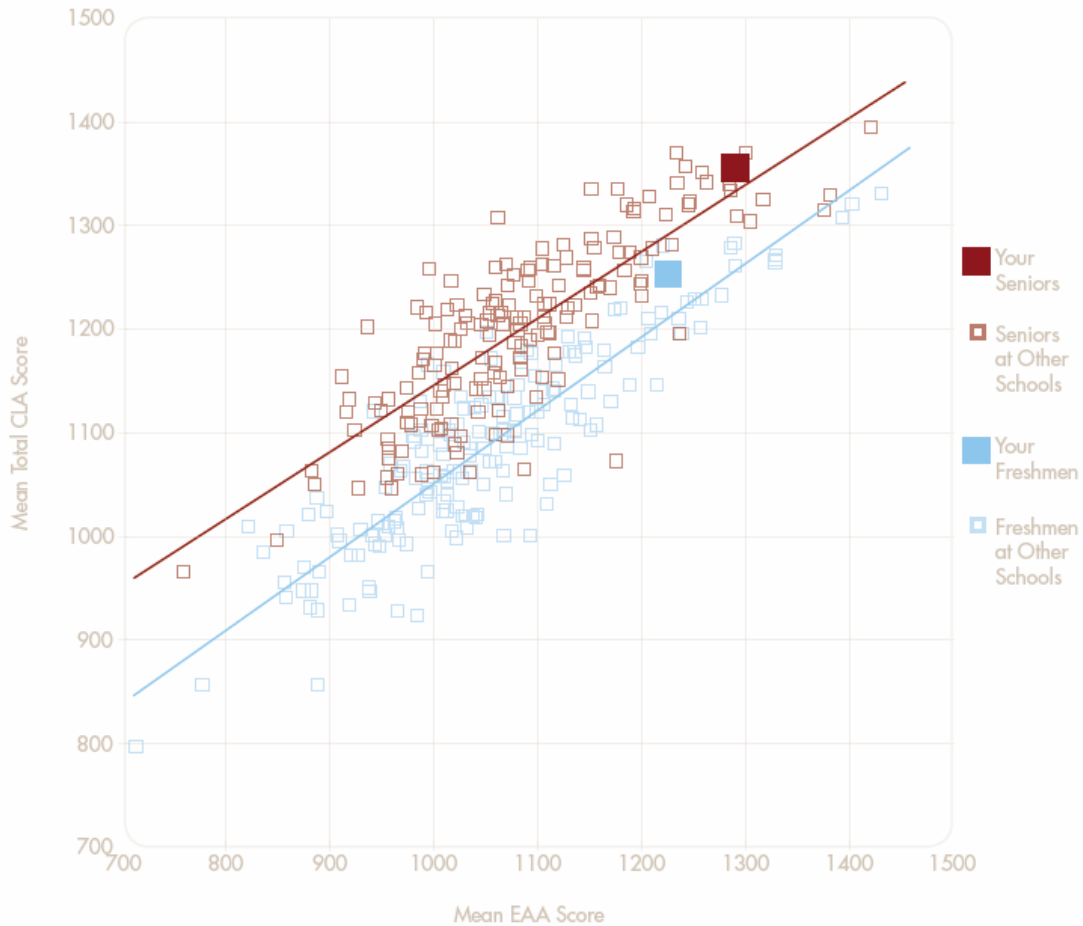


Figure 3 above shows data for schools where at least 25 students had both a CLA and EAA score in fall 2008 and/or spring 2009.

The solid blue square (freshmen) and solid red square (seniors) represent the samples of students you tested.

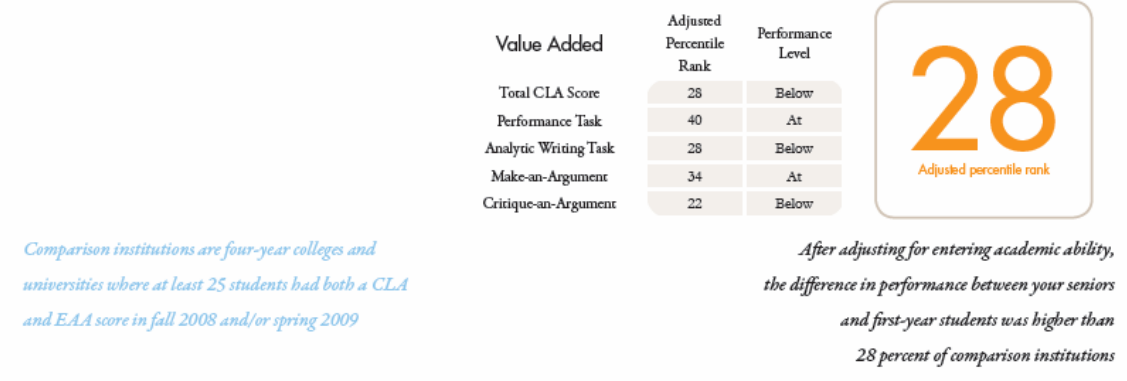
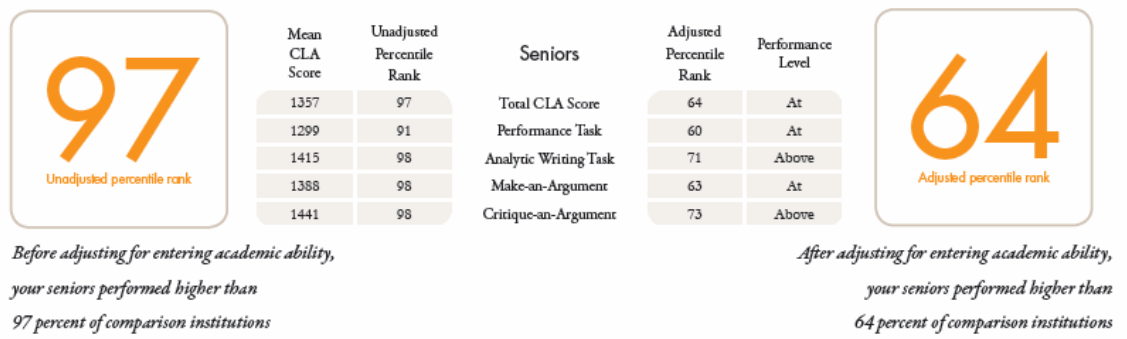
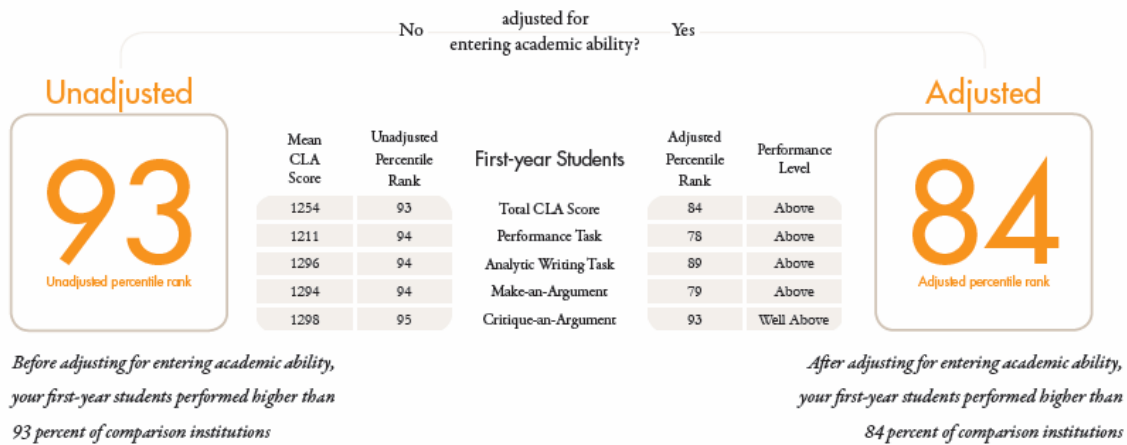
Outlined blue and red squares represent other schools.

The diagonal lines (blue for freshmen and, above that, red for seniors) show the estimated linear relationship between an institution's mean EAA score and its mean CLA score for its students.

Schools above the relevant lines scored higher than expected, whereas those below the lines did not.

Appendix 8 summarizes the equations used to estimate expected mean CLA scores on the basis of mean EAA scores across schools.

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First-Year Students	Performance Level	Adjusted Percentile Rank	Deviation Score	Unadjusted Percentile Rank	Observed Mean CLA Score	Expected Mean CLA Score	Mean EAA Score	Student Count
Total CLA Score	Above	84	1.0	93	1254	1209	1223	104
Performance Task	Above	78	0.7	94	1211	1182	1225	52
Analytic Writing Task	Above	89	1.2	94	1296	1234	1220	52
Make-an-Argument	Above	79	0.8	94	1294	1242	1220	52
Critique-an-Argument	Well Above	93	1.5	95	1298	1226	1220	52
Seniors	Performance Level	Adjusted Percentile Rank	Deviation Score	Unadjusted Percentile Rank	Observed Mean CLA Score	Expected Mean CLA Score	Mean EAA Score	Student Count
Total CLA Score	At	64	0.4	97	1357	1335	1288	57
Performance Task	At	60	0.2	91	1299	1289	1271	28
Analytic Writing Task	Above	71	0.6	98	1415	1386	1305	29
Make-an-Argument	At	63	0.4	98	1388	1368	1305	29
Critique-an-Argument	Above	73	0.7	98	1441	1404	1305	29
Value-Added Estimates	Performance Level	Adjusted Percentile Rank	Difference Score					
Total CLA Score	Below	28	-0.6					
Performance Task	At	40	-0.5					
Analytic Writing Task	Below	28	-0.6					
Make-an-Argument	At	34	-0.4					
Critique-an-Argument	Below	22	-0.8					

Moving from right to left, Table 1 above shows how many students completed the CLA and their mean Entering Academic Ability (EAA) scores,* as well as their expected and observed mean CLA scores.**

Unadjusted percentile ranks show how your school's mean CLA scores compare to those at other schools BEFORE adjusting for ability.

Adjusted percentile ranks are based on deviation scores and are used to assign performance levels.***

Deviation scores control for ability and quantify the difference between observed and expected mean CLA scores in standard error units.

Difference scores represent estimates of value added. They are calculated by subtracting first-year deviation scores from senior deviation scores.