

Collegiate Learning Assessment Results, Fall 2008 and Spring 2009

Prepared by the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness

The Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) is administered to freshmen students in the fall semester and graduating senior students in the spring semester. The test is designed to assess students' abilities to "think critically, reason analytically, solve problems, and communicate clearly and effectively." It is a written exam (not multiple choice).

As a part of Highlands' participation in the Voluntary System of Accountability, we must administer a measure of student learning outcomes at least once every three years. The CLA was first administered at Highlands' in the 2008-2009 academic year. We will administer it again in the 2011-2012. This report summarizes the results from our first administration of the survey.

More information about the CLA can be found here: <http://www.collegiatelearningassessment.org/>.

More information about the Voluntary System of Accountability can be found here:

<http://www.voluntarysystem.org/>.

The CLA provides unadjusted scores and scores adjusted for entering academic ability. The test also provides a "Value Added" score, which is based on the difference in performance between our entering freshmen and our graduating seniors. All scores are percentile ranks, which demonstrate how our students performed compared to all four-year colleges and universities participating in the CLA in 2008-2009.

The adjusted percentile ranks are based upon deviation scores, which are used to control for entering academic ability. The deviation scores quantify the difference between the observed and expected mean CLA scores in standard error units. Performance levels are assigned based upon the adjusted percentile ranks. They are defined as follows:

90-99 th	Well Above Expected
70-89 th	Above Expected
30-69 th	At Expected
10-29 th	Below Expected
0-9 th	Well Below Expected

Full results can be seen [here](#). A summary is presented below.

First-year Students	Mean CLA Score	Unadjusted Percentile Rank	Adjusted Percentile Rank	Performance Level
Total CLA Score	948	7	38	At
Performance Task	918	4	21	Below
Analytic Writing Task	977	9	52	At
Make-an-Argument	958	8	38	At
Critique-an-Argument	998	14	72	Above

Seniors	Mean CLA Score	Unadjusted Percentile Rank	Adjusted Percentile Rank	Performance Level
Total CLA Score	1064	7	44	At
Performance Task	1031	3	37	At
Analytic Writing Task	1097	8	48	At
Make-an-Argument	1103	11	58	At
Critique-an-Argument	1091	6	42	At

Value Added	Adjusted Percentile Rank	Performance Level
Total CLA Score	61	At
Performance Task	69	At
Analytic Writing Task	51	At
Make-an-Argument	74	Above
Critique-an-Argument	27	Below

There are several interesting points about these results. First, although our unadjusted percentile ranks are very low, this is in comparison to group of schools (about 175) that is quite different from Highlands overall. For example, 50% of the schools in the CLA sample are private, the mean number of undergraduates receiving Pell grants in the CLA sample is 31% (compared to 51.8% at NMHU), and their mean Barron's selectivity rating is 3.3 (on a 7-point scale with open enrollment institutions such as NMHU at 1).

Our adjusted percentile ranks, however, show our seniors performing at expected levels on every task. And our Value Added overall score is a respectable 61, which means that, after adjusting for entering academic ability, the difference in performance between our freshmen and our graduating seniors was higher than 61% of the comparison institutions.

Summary: This is our first attempt at gathering data on learning outcomes for our students as a whole. Given our students' entering academic ability, they performed quite well. The CLA has an interesting format, and the administering provides a great deal of guidance on using the test results in assessment processes throughout the university. We need to spend some time discussing how to better use this test at NMHU.