Results from the FY2007-2010 Collegiate Learning Assessment

A Historic Analysis of FHSU Freshmen and Seniors Completing the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)

1. Analytic Parameters

These analyses are predicated on the following parameters, unless otherwise indicated:

Dependent measures: Adjusted and unadjusted CLA scales
Sample\Population: Sampled students with class rank of freshman and senior

2. Methods Notes

The Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) is an intensive written evaluation which utilizes direct open-ended measures of cognitive skills that students are required to perform as a function of becoming "liberally educated". The CLA is administered in two forms: Performance Task (90 minutes) or the Analytic Writing Task (45 minutes). Students are randomly split into the two tasks.   Student performance is adjusted for entering academic ability through application of students' ACT or SAT scores or through a proprietary academic ability assessment administered by the CLA.

Student participation is voluntary. Freshman participants are generally provided through accessing ENG 101 classes. Freshmen take the CLA in the fall semester. Senior students are typically recruited through an appeal to departments for capstone enrollees.   Senior students take the CLA in the spring semester. CLA estimates that 100 freshman and 100 senior students are an appropriate sample for most institutions. The CLA is administered in a secure online laboratory environment, and results are scored by the CLA. Aggregated results are sent to institutions and all participants receive individual results. FHSU disaggregates the institutional report by department major code, and distributes that report annually to departments which have CLA participants. Several departments use CLA results as a direct indicator of student learning in their Department Annual Report.

3. Freshman Results

From FY2007 through FY2010, FHSU averaged 60 FR students submitting usable CLA results. Table 1 documents mean scores (actual and expected), and student performance level on the Performance Task and Analytic Writing task. Freshman CLA Mean Score (actual) represents the actual unadjusted score that students achieved across the Performance Task and Analytic Writing task. Freshman CLA Mean Score (expected) is the actual score adjusted for actual student achievement (performance on ACT or SAT). Freshman Performance Task Mean Score is the actual score attained by students completing only that test, and the Analytic Writing Score is limited to students completing only that task. The Freshman Sample size is the total FR

sample reduced by the number of students that did not have an ACT or SAT score accessible on CICS.

Table 1. Freshman Mean Score Analysis.

	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	Mean
FHSU - Freshman CLA Mean Score	972	1010	1058	1012		1013
CLA - Freshman CLA Mean Score	*1081*	*1071*	*1089*	*1092*		*1083*
CLA - Expected Freshman CLA Mean Score	*1029*	*1038*	*1059*			*1042*
FHSU - Freshman Performance Task Mean Score	964	984	1081	1009		986
CLA - Freshman Performance Task Mean Score	*1070*	*1064*	*1067*	*1070*		*1068*
FHSU - Freshman Analytic Writing Task Mean Score	979	1036	1030	1014		1010
CLA - Freshman Analytic Writing Task Mean Score	*1101*	*1077*	*1110*	*1115*		*1101*
FHSU - Freshman Sample Size	57	76	47	95		69

Note: Table rows which are shaded indicate FHSU performance. The CLA prefix indicates that these are average scores from all Freshman CLA participants while a FHSU prefix are average scores for just FHSU Freshmen participants.

The results of Table 1 indicate that FHSU Freshmen students generally perform about 5 – 10% lower than the CLA average on overall CLA scores, the Performance Task, and Analytic Writing Task. CLA reports FHSU Freshmen students' performance to generally be placed at the well below average to poor level of skill based on adjustment for academic performance and percentile placement. Since the CLA is generally administered to students enrolling in random sections of ENG 101 their first semester, these results should be useful as a gross measure of incoming student performance and high school preparation. Even after adjustment for student academic ability (CLA Expected Freshman CLA Mean Score), FHSU students still perform significantly lower than the national average of peer students.

4. Senior Results

From FY2007 through FY2010, FHSU averaged 64 SR students submitting usable CLA results. Table 2 documents mean scores (actual and expected), and student performance level on the Performance Task and Analytic Writing task. Senior CLA Mean Score (actual) represents the actual unadjusted score that students achieved across the Performance Task and Analytic Writing task. Senior CLA Mean Score (expected) is the actual score adjusted for actual student achievement (performance on ACT or SAT). Senior Performance Task Mean Score is the actual score attained by students completing only that test, and the Analytic Writing Score is limited to students completing only that task. The Senior Sample size is the total SR sample reduced by the number of students that did not have an ACT or SAT score accessible on CICS.

Table 2. Senior Mean Score Analysis.

	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	Mean
FHSU - Senior CLA Mean Score	1191	1121	1143	1160		1154
CLA - Senior CLA Mean Score	1192	1173	1136	1191		1173
CLA - Expected Senior CLA Mean Score	1179	1144	1180			1168
FHSU - Senior Performance Task Mean Score	1171	1116	1125	1128		1135
CLA - Senior Performance Task Mean Score	1195	1164	1115	1156		1158
FHSU - Senior Analytic Writing Task Mean Score	1211	1126	1160	1190		1172
CLA - Senior Analytic Writing Task Mean Score	1224	1182	1157	1226		1197
FHSU - Senior Sample Size	72	66	54	96		72

Note: Table rows which are shaded indicate FHSU performance. The CLA prefix indicates that these are average scores from all Senior CLA participants while a FHSU prefix are average scores for just FHSU Senior participants.

The results from Table 2 demonstrate a much better performance for FHSU Seniors than for FHSU Freshmen students. Though there is significant variation between years, average alignment of FHSU and CLA scores shows a much tighter gap than for FHSU Freshmen students. Nonetheless, FHSU Senior students generally perform about 2% lower than the national CLA average (looking across our four year participation in the CLA). Certainly this gap when scaled to a national assessment is significant, yet the gap is small enough to provide hope that with additional writing intensive activities, our undergraduate education can improve enough to meet the national CLA average. These results must be placed in the context of the significantly lower Freshmen scores which differ from CLA average by over 5% in most cases. One reasonable conclusion that must be drawn from the four-year analysis – FHSU provides an education that brings well below average to poor Freshmen students up to very near, but slightly below average Senior performance.

5. Value Added Estimates

One of the most important outputs of the CLA is the "value added" estimates that are calculated by determining the relative difference between freshmen and senior actual and expected mean scores. Table 3 details the value added differences. Value Added Difference Actual (SR - FR) represents the difference in actual scores between FR and SR. Value Added Difference Expected (SR - FR) represents the difference in expected SR and FR scores. Expected versus Actual signifies the difference between the actual and expected CLA scores (a higher positive number indicates a larger value added effect for FHSU). The Value Added Performance level shows, in percentile, how large the value added effect is in relation to the population of CLA schools.

Table 3. Value Added Estimates.

	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	Mean
Value Added Difference Actual (SR - FR)	149	111	85	148		115
Value Added Performance Level	90%ile	59%ile	19%ile	62%ile		NA
	Well Above	At	Well Below	Above		NA

The results of Table 3 support the general conclusion emergent from the discussion of FHSU Senior performance on the CLA. Specifically, in looking at three of the four years, FHSU increased student learning better than 60% of the schools we are compared to. This result is substantial in supporting the concept of "value added" education at FHSU. In our case, FHSU takes a well below average Freshmen student, educates them, and graduates a Senior with very near average writing ability. On average, FHSU does a better job with "value added" education than 60% of our peers.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Analysis of our four-year history with the CLA yields several interesting data-emergent conclusions, specifically:
1. Performance of FHSU Freshmen students is generally well below average to poor, averaging 5 – 10% below the national CLA average on all three indexes. Even after adjustment for academic ability, our incoming Freshmen students are well below average on all three aspects of CLA performance (Overall CLA mean, Performance Task, and Analytic Writing Task).
2. The historic sub-average performance of FHSU Freshmen is a gross indicator of high school preparation and student ability and can help to inform expectations for performance in ENG 101 and ENG 102.
3. FHSU Senior students generally perform about 2% below the national CLA average across all three indexes.
4. The much tighter gap between FHSU Senior and CLA Senior performance suggests that FHSU may realistically be able to improve our Senior's scores to meet national benchmark through existing initiatives like writing intensive coursework and increased utilization of the Writing Center.
5. FHSU provides an education that brings well below average to poor Freshmen students up to very near, but slightly below nationally average Senior performance.
6. FHSU takes a well below average Freshmen student, educates them, and graduates a Senior with very near average writing ability. Our experience with the CLA is empirical proof that FHSU does a better job with "value added" education than 60% of our peers.

Relative to the administration and sampling for the CLA, participation in 2010 would be best considered as the new baseline. As can be assumed with any project it takes a year or two (or three in our case) to get the right mechanisms in place on campus. With the sampling minimum goal of 100, the team worked very hard to make sure that at least 100 students took the spring CLA. In the spring administration we had almost 140 students complete the CLA, with 96 usable reports generated. The fall 2010 administration had comparable results. This notable increase in participation certainly had an impact on the substantial rise in the overall FHSU performance. The process utilized for FY2010 will be further expanded to assure the same consistent level of participation in future administrations. FHSU will continue to closely examine the process of recruiting FR and SR participants, especially the applicability of the CLA model to international students.