Academic Planning
THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

The Collegiate Learning Assessment at UGA
2008-2012 Analysis

The Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) at the University of Georgia

The CLA has been used at the University of Georgia since 2008, following the adoption of the new General Education Core Curriculum. The new curriculum embeds learning goals for written communication and critical thinking in course content throughout the General Education Core Curriculum. These learning goals are closely aligned with skills the CLA seeks to measure.

The CLA is an open-ended assessment measure developed by the Council for Aid to Education (University of Missouri) that calculates an institution's contribution to the development of the critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem- solving and writing skills of its students. The CLA has been used by over 500 colleges and universities in the United States. Appendix D shows the most recent list of participating schools. The General Education Subcommittee of the University Council's Curriculum Committee determined the Collegiate Learning Assessment to be an appropriate measure for assessing the skills and abilities targeted by the Core Curriculum. The goals for using the CLA at UGA were to evaluate and improve the curriculum, provide comparative data with peer universities, meet requirements for UGA's participation in the Voluntary System of Accountability, and help meet regional accreditation requirements for ongoing assessment of student attainment of general education competencies.

CLA Tasks

To evaluate student critical thinking and writing skills, the CLA offers two formats for the test; the Performance Task and the Analytic Writing Task. The *Architecture of the CLA Tasks* manual (p. 2-3) describes the two tasks in the following way:

Performance Task

> Each Performance Task assesses analytic reasoning and evaluation, problem solving, writing effectiveness and writing mechanics by asking students to answer several open-ended questions about a hypothetical but realistic situation. No two Performance Tasks assess skills in the same exact way. Some ask students to identify and then compare and contrast the strengths and limitations of alternative hypotheses, points of view, courses of action, etc. To perform these and other tasks, students may have to weigh different types of evidence, evaluate the credibility of various documents, spot possible bias, and identify questionable or critical assumptions.

Analytic Writing Task

> 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.

For more information about the tasks and testing procedure, see http://www.collegiatelearningassessment.org/files/Architecture_of_the_CLA_Tasks.pdf.

Value-added Methodology

The CLA seeks to measure value-added achievement, or how much the institution contributes to the development of the targeted skills. More specifically, the CLA estimates the degree to which the observed senior mean CLA score meets, exceeds, or falls below expectations by controlling for two factors: the level of ability of seniors when they entered the institution[1] and the mean CLA performance of freshmen at the institution. This methodology allows for comparison between schools that have different academic achievement levels of entering students by controlling for entering ability.

Longitudinal CLA Results

Four years of CLA data allows comparative analysis of UGA students' performance over the years immediately following the implementation of the new General Education Core Curriculum. The first administration of the CLA in 2008 indicated that UGA students performed well below the expected levels on the Analytic Writing Tasks and thus achieved a lower than expected Total CLA Score. Results from subsequent administrations, however, indicate that UGA students performed near the expected levels on the Performance Task, the Analytic Writing Task and the Total CLA Score (see Appendix A). To determine if the increases in scores are significant and thus suggest improved performance, it is necessary to analyze the difference in value-added scores—the representation of the institution's contribution to student learning--over the four administrations at UGA.

As the equations used to calculate the value-added scores are owned by the Council for Aid to Education, local analysis is limited to the data provided in the report, specifically the value-added scores and confidence intervals. The official CLA scores from 2008 were estimated

[1] Entering Academic Ability (EAA) of seniors is estimated using SAT Math + Critical Reading, ACT Composite, or Scholastic Level Exam (SLE) scores on the SAT scale (2011-2012 CLA Institutional Report, p. 4,)

as the difference between senior and freshmen deviation scores calculated through an ordinary least squares regression model. In 2009 the CLA methodology was revised to employ hierarchical linear modeling (HLM), a technique that accounts for variation between and within schools. With the switch to HLM, the official CLA report format also changed to include confidence intervals for the value-added scores. Therefore the local analysis excludes confidence intervals for the 2008-2009 administration.

In the absence of raw scores, an alternative method for analyzing the difference in scores is to look at the range of the confidence intervals for each value-added score. If confidence intervals overlap from year to year, differences in value-added scores are not statistically significant. As graphed in Appendix B, the overlapping confidence intervals reveal this to be the case for the value-added scores in the three UGA CLA administrations between 2009 and 2012. While CLA value-added scores for UGA students have varied over time, we cannot conclude from this data that changes are significant. Further, the CLA scores do not indicate that students in the most recent two administrations, many of whom would have entered UGA under the new Core Curriculum, perform significantly better or worse than students in earlier administrations, who would have completed the previous Core Curriculum. We can, however, state that students have performed near expected levels in each of the last three years.

Comparison to Other Schools

Figures in Appendix C show UGA's achievement in comparison to other four-year colleges and universities. In each figure participating schools are plotted in relation to a diagonal line that represents the intersection of expected performance and observed performance. Vertical distance from the diagonal line indicates the value added by the institution. Institutions falling above the diagonal line are those that add more value than

expected and those who fall below add less value than expected based on the CLA model. UGA's placement is highlighted in red. As illustrated in the figures, UGA students have both expected mean scores and observed mean scores consistently near the very top of the distribution of other participating 4-year institutions. In addition, UGA students have consistently met or exceeded expectations. Although UGA students do not show appreciable "value-added" over entering expectations as calculated by the CLA, the distributions indicate that UGA adds value at similar or better levels as other institutions with extremely high performing students. Finally, it should be noted that the most recent list of schools participating in the CLA (see Appendix D) includes only one official comparator peer (University of Kentucky) and one aspirational peer (University of Texas at Austin).

Summary and future use of CLA at UGA

The CLA has been much debated across the academy. Criticism includes questions about the validity of the "value-added" measure, the small sample sizes (N = 100) used to determine the value added score, and the usefulness of the data returned to institutions. Although CLA stands behind the research basis of its measure and contends that the sample size is adequate for its measurements regardless of institution size, it is clear that the CLA provides at best one data point about student learning that should be combined with other measures to provide a useful understanding of how well UGA's curriculum achieves its goals.

In light of these questions and the lack of significant differences between annual administrations of the exam, UGA should reconsider how or when we administer the CLA in the future. We propose incorporating CLA into a staggered cycle of administration that includes other general education assessments used at UGA, such as the National Survey of Student Engagement, the College Basic Subjects Examination, and the Global Perspectives Inventory.

This would allow UGA to continue to assess the targeted outcomes of the General Education Core Curriculum, comply with regional accreditation expectations for assessment of general education, and meet requirements of the Voluntary System of Accountability. Additionally, such a schedule would also allow UGA to devote time and resources to more focused research on student learning in the General Education Core Curriculum that could be combined with the CLA and other measures to provide richer information about the UGA curriculum. For future administrations of the CLA, recruitment procedures should be reviewed to ensure they yield a truly representative sample. Furthermore, UGA should consider the effects of motivation upon potential freshmen and senior participants and, further, determine which types of incentive will be more likely to positively influence participation.

Appendix A

2011-2012 Administration

3.1 Value-Added and Precision Estimates

	Performance Level	Value-Added Score	Value-Added Percentile Rank	Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Confidence Interval Upper Bound	Expected Mean CLA Score
Total CLA Score	Near	0.07	54	-0.54	0.68	1304
Performance Task	Near	0.10	53	-0.59	0.79	1312
Analytic Writing Task	Near	0.09	54	-0.58	0.76	1293
Make-an-Argument	Near	0.18	55	-0.55	0.91	1275
Critique-an-Argument	Near	0.04	48	-0.64	0.72	1307

2010-2011 Administration

3.1 Value-Added and Precision Estimates

	Performance Level	Value-Added Score	Value-Added Percentile Rank	Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Confidence Interval Upper Bound
Total CLA Score	Near	0.4	63	-0.22	1.02
Performance Task	Near	0.27	60	-0.44	0.98
Analytic Writing Task	Near	0.6	73	-0.11	1.31
Make-an-Argument	Near	0.27	55	-0.46	1
Critique-an-Argument	Near	0.81	80	0.06	1.56

2009-2010 Administration

3.1 Value-Added and Precision Estimates

	Performance Level	Value-Added Score	Value-Added Percentile Rank	Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Confidence Interval Upper Bound
Total CLA Score	Near	0.36	60	-0.32	1.04
Performance Task	Near	0.85	83	0.08	1.62
Analytic Writing Task	Near	-0.16	43	-0.89	0.57
Make-an-Argument	Near	-0.03	46	-0.81	0.75
Critique-an-Argument	Near	-0.26	39	-1.05	0.53

2008-2009 Administration

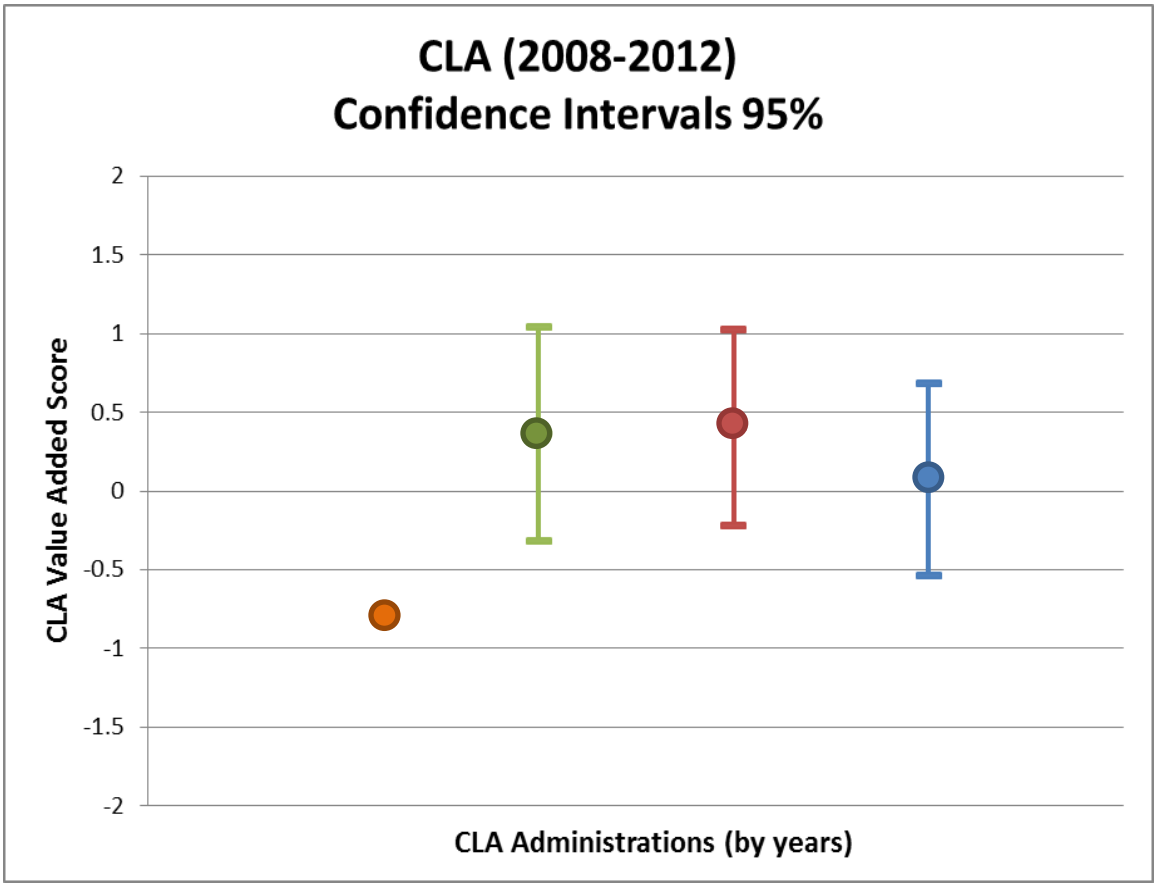
Value Added	Adjusted Percentile Rank	Performance Level
Total CLA Score	21	Below
Performance Task	63	At
Analytic Writing Task	8	Well Below
Make-an-Argument	11	Below
Critique-an-Argument	7	Well Below

After adjusting for entering academic ability, the difference in performance between your seniors and first-year students was higher than 21 percent of comparison institutions

Appendix B

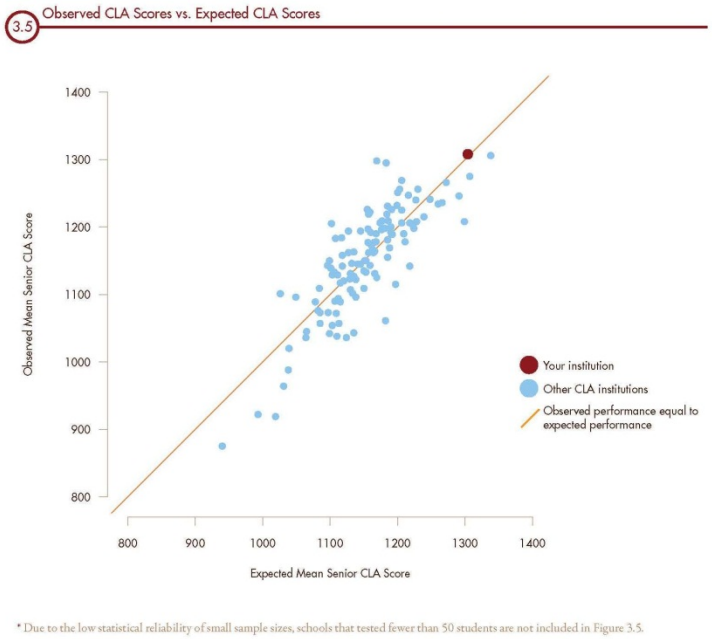
UGA CLA Value Added Scores Over Time

Value-Added Percentile Rank	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Total CLA Score	-0.7	0.36	0.4	0.07
Lower Confidence Interval		-0.32	-0.22	-0.54
Upper Confidence Interval		1.04	1.02	0.68



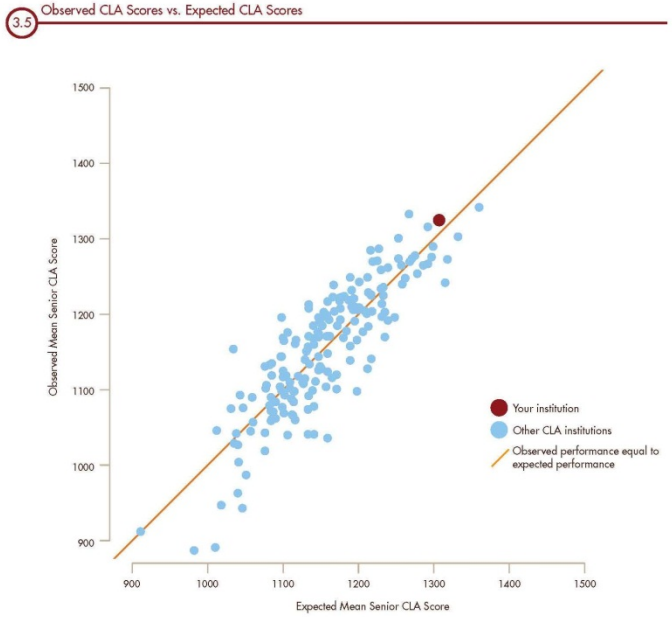
Appendix C—UGA Comparative CLA scores, 2009-2012

2011-2012

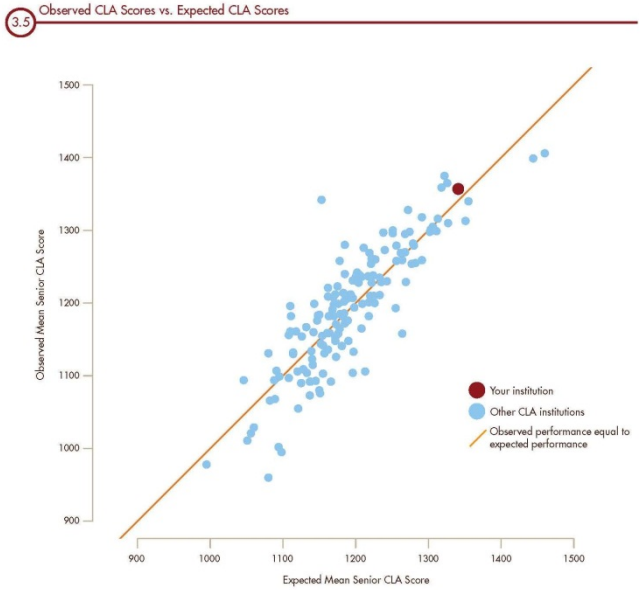


* Due to the low statistical reliability of small sample sizes, schools that tested fewer than 50 students are not included in Figure 3.5.

2010-2011



2009-2010



The institutions listed here in alphabetical order agreed to be identified as participating schools and may or may not have been included in comparative analyses.

CLA Schools

Alaska Pacific University
Arizona State University
Augsburg College
Averett University
Baker University
Barton College
Bellarmine University
Bethel University
Bluefield State College
Bowling Green State University
Brooklyn College
Burlington College
Cabrini College
California Baptist University
California Maritime Academy
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
California State Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo
California State University, Bakersfield
California State University, Channel Islands
California State University, Chico
California State University, Dominguez Hills
California State University, East Bay
California State University, Fresno
California State University, Fullerton
California State University, Long Beach
California State University, Los Angeles
California State University, Monterey Bay
California State University, Northridge
California State University, Sacramento
California State University, San Bernardino
California State University, San Marcos
California State University, Stanislaus
Carlow University
Carthage College
Central Connecticut State University
Charleston Southern University
Clarke University
College of Our Lady of the Elms
College of Saint Benedict / St. John's University
Concord University
Culver-Stockton College
Delaware State University
Dillard University
Dominican University
Earlham College
East Carolina University
Eastern Connecticut State University
Eastern Illinois University
Elizabethtown College
Emory & Henry College
Emporia State University
Fairmont State University
Fayetteville State University
Flagler College
Florida International University Honors College
Florida State University
Fort Hays State University
Glenville State College
Gordon College
Greenville College
Hardin-Simmons University
Hawaii Pacific University College of Natural and Computational Sciences
Holy Spirit College
Hong Kong Baptist University
Humboldt State University
Illinois College
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Indiana Wesleyan University
Jacksonville State University
Jamestown College
Kansas State University
Keene State College
Kent State University
King's College
LaGrange College
Lane College
Lewis University
Louisiana Tech University
Loyola University of New Orleans
Luther College
Lynchburg College
Lynn University
Macalester College
Marshall University
McMaster University, Faculty of Social Sciences
Mills College
Minot State University
Misericordia University
Monmouth University
Morgan State University
Morningside College
Mount St. Mary's College
New Mexico State University
New York Institute of Technology
New York University - Abu Dhabi
Newman University
Nicholls State University
Norfolk State University Department of Interdisciplinary Studies
Northern Illinois University
Northwestern State University
Notre Dame Maryland University
Oakland University
Our Lady of the Lake University
Pittsburg State University
Point Loma Nazarene University
Presbyterian College
Queen's University, Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science
Ramapo College of New Jersey
Randolph-Macon College
Rhodes College
Rice University
Robert Morris University
Roger Williams University
Rutgers University-New Brunswick
Saginaw Valley State University
Saint Paul's College
Saint Xavier University
San Diego State University
San Francisco State University
San Jose State University
San Jose State University History Department
Seton Hill University
Shepherd University
Sheridan College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning, Four-Year Bachelor's Degree Programs
Slippery Rock University
Sonoma State University
Southern Cross University
Southern Oregon University
Southwestern University
St. Ambrose University
St. Cloud State University
Stonehill College
SUNY College at Oneonta
Texas A&M University-Kingsville
Texas Lutheran University
Texas State University San Marcos
Texas Tech University
The Citadel
The City College of New York
The College of Idaho
The College of St. Scholastica
The College of Wooster
The University of British Columbia - Okanagan
The University of Montana
Transylvania University
Trinity Christian College
Truman State University
University of Baltimore
University of Bridgeport
University of Charleston
University of Evansville

University of Georgia
University of Great Falls
University of Guelph, Bachelor of Arts, Honours & Bachelor of Science, Honours
University of Hawaii at Hilo College of Business and Economics
University of Houston
University of Kentucky
University of Massachusetts, Amherst
University of Missouri - St. Louis
University of New Hampshire
University of Pittsburgh
University of Saint Mary
University of San Diego School of Business Administration
University of St. Thomas (TX)
University of Texas - Pan American
University of Texas at Arlington
University of Texas at Austin
University of Texas at Dallas
University of Texas at El Paso
University of Texas at San Antonio
University of Texas at Tyler
University of Texas of the Permian Basin
University of the Virgin Islands
University of Vermont
University of Washington Bothell
University of Wyoming
Upper Iowa University
Ursuline College
Weber State University
Wesley College
West Liberty University
West Virginia State University
West Virginia University
West Virginia University Institute of Technology
Western Carolina University
Western Governors University
Western Michigan University
Westminster College (MO)
Westminster College (UT)
Wichita State University
William Paterson University
William Peace University
Winston-Salem State University
Wisconsin Lutheran College
Wofford College
Wright State University
Wyoming Catholic College

CWRA Schools

Abington Friends School
Akins High School
Albemarle County Public Schools
American Canyon High School
Anson New Tech High School
Asheville School
Barrie School
Bayside High School
Beaver Country Day School
Brimmer and May School
Catalina Foothills High School
Collegiate School
Colorado Academy
Crystal Springs Uplands School
Culver Academies
Currey Ingram Academy
Da Vinci Charter Academy
Eagle Rock School
First Colonial High School
Floyd Kellam High School
Frank W. Cox High School
Friends School of Baltimore
Gilmour Academy
Graettinger-Terril High School
Green Run High School
Greensboro Day School
Hebron Academy
Heritage Hall
Hillside New Tech High School
Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy
James B. Castle High School
Kahuku High & Intermediate School
Ke Kula O Samuel M Kamakau
Kempsville High School
Kimball Union Academy
Lake Forest Academy
Lakeview Academy
Landstown High School
Le Jardin Academy
Los Angeles School of Global Studies
Maryknoll School
Math, Engineering, Technology, and Science Academy (METSA)
McKinley Academy
Mead High School
Menlo School
Metairie Park Country Day School
Mid-Pacific Institute
Moorestown Friends School
Moses Brown School
Mount Vernon Presbyterian School
Mt. Spokane High School
Nanakuli High and Intermediate School
Napa High School
Napa New Tech High School
New Tech at Ruston
Newell-Fonda High School
Ocean Lakes High School
Palisades High School
Parish Episcopal School
Porterville Unified School District
Princess Anne High School
Ramsey High School
Regional School Unit 13
Renaissance Academy
Riverdale Country School
Sacramento City Unified School District
Sacramento New Tech High School
Sacred Hearts Academy
Salem High School
San Francisco Day School
Sandia Preparatory School
School of IDEAS
Severn School
Sonoma Academy
St. Andrew's School
St. Christopher's School
St. George's Independent School
St. Gregory College Preparatory School
St. Luke's School
St. Margaret's Episcopal School
St. Mark's School
Staunton River High School
Stevenson School
Stuart Country Day School
Tallwood High School
Tech Valley High School
Tesseract School
The Haverford School
The Hotchkiss School
The Hun School of Princeton
The Lawrenceville School
The Lovett School
The Sustainability Workshop
The Webb School
Tilton School
Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District
Trinity School of Midland
Upper Arlington High School
Vintage High School
Waianae High School
Wardlaw-Hartridge School
Warren New Tech High School
Warwick Valley High School
Watershed School
Westtown School
Wildwood School
York School

CCLA Schools

Arizona Western College
Bronx Community College
Collin College
Fanshawe College of Applied Arts and Technology, Health Science Program
Howard Community College
LaGuardia Community College
Middlesex County College
Northern Marianas College