

**COLLEGIATE LEARNING ASSESSMENT
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS
*2007-2008***

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Overview

This report summarizes the results of the California State University, Stanislaus' (CSU Stanislaus) second consecutive year of Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA). Developed by the RAND Corporation and the Council for Aid to Education (CAE) and launched in the fall of 2000, the CLA is a standardized testing initiative that allows for a direct measure of student learning by combining two types of testing components, a set of real-world performance tasks and a set of analytic writing prompts.

The CLA differs largely from other assessments of undergraduates' learning, in that, instead of a multiple-choice format it poses real-world performance tasks that require students to analyze complex material and provide written responses. Through student-generated written responses the CLA engages students in tasks to assess their cognitive abilities to think critically, reason analytically, problem solve, and communicate clearly and cogently. The CLA does not focus on measuring changes in individual students, but rather to learn more about a college or university's contribution to student learning, thus the CLA relies on the institution, rather than the individual student, as the primary unit of analysis. The main intent of the CLA is to provide results that will support the improvement of teaching and learning by understanding the strength of higher order skills among freshmen and seniors.

Collegiate Learning Assessment Structure

As outlined by the 2007-2008 CLA Technical Appendices (2008), there are three task-types in the CLA: *Performance Task*, *Make-an-Argument Task*, and *Critique-an-Argument Task*. The last two tasks combine to form an overall *Analytic Writing Task* score. They are defined as follows:

- The *Performance Task* consists of:
Synthesizing information from multiple sources; recognizing conflicting evidence, weighing the credibility of different sources of evidence; identifying logical fallacies, interpreting data, tables, and figures correctly; drawing reasonable and logical inferences from the available information; developing sound conclusions based on all available evidence; and utilizing the most relevant and credible evidence available to justify their conclusion. (p. 6)
- The *Make-an-Argument Task* consists of:
Establishing a thesis or a position on an issue; maintaining the thesis throughout the essay; supporting the thesis with relevant and persuasive examples (e.g., from personal experience, history, art, literature, pop culture, or current events); anticipating and countering opposing arguments to the position, fully developing ideas, examples, and arguments; crafting an overall response that generates interest, provokes thought, and persuades the reader; organizing the structure of the essay (e.g., paragraphing, ordering of ideas and sentences within paragraphs); employing transitions and varied sentence structure to maintain the flow of the argument; and utilizing sophisticated grammar and vocabulary. (p. 6)

- The *Critique-an-Argument Task* consists of: Identifying a variety of logical flaws or fallacies in a specific argument; explaining how or why the logical flaws affect the conclusions in that argument; and presenting their critique in a written response that is a grammatically correct, organized, well-developed, logically sound, and neutral in tone. (p. 6)

Comparative Function

As designed by the CAE, one of the most important features of the CLA is that the University's results may also be compared to the aggregate scores for the other 176 participating CLA institutions that tested sufficient numbers of freshmen and seniors. The aggregate scores of these universities, or CLA institutions, may be used as a frame of reference to gauge the progress of CSU Stanislaus freshmen and seniors against that of other universities. The CLA institutions provide sufficient reliability to compare with local results and therefore, serve as a benchmark for comparisons. According to Shavelson (2008), one of the primary architects of the CLA, states:

The CLA is a summative instrument that focuses on outcome rather than on the process that gave rise to those outcomes. Hence summative accountability asks the question of how well, compared to other colleges or some standards, this college is performing. It sends a *signal* of where a campus is successful and where more work is needed to improve student outcomes. By estimating value added or by benchmarking with peer institutions, it addresses the question, "How good is good enough?" Without these measures, institutions cannot answer that question. (p. 23)

One final measure, provided by the CLA, of institution performance is the *Value-added Estimate*, which is intended to capture an institution's contributing effect on the students' competencies beyond what would be expected from entering students' SAT scores. CSU Stanislaus Value-added Estimate scores are displayed in Tables 1 and 2.

Summary of Results

To participate in the CLA students must be in the correct class year; be enrolled as a full-time student (as defined by the University); and have either an ACT, SAT, or Scholastic Level Exam (SLE) score. During the 2007–2008 academic year, CSU Stanislaus tested seventy-one first-year, full-time freshmen in fall 2007 and sixty-four full-time seniors in spring 2008.

The CLA describes expected performance of undergraduate students as:

- 0-9th percentile=*Well Below Expected*
- 10-29th percentile=*Below Expected*,
- 30-69th percentile=*At Expected*,
- 70-89th percentile=*Above Expected*, and
- 90-99th percentile=*Well Above Expected Level*.

Table 1 summarizes the results. The table shows the total Performance Level score for freshmen is above their expected level; and the total Performance Level score for seniors is well above their expected level. In the overall Analytic Writing Task, freshmen scored above their expected level compared to seniors who scored well above their expected level. In the component task of Make-an-Argument, freshmen scored at their expected level, whereas seniors scored well above their expected

level. In the Critique-an-Argument Task, both freshmen and seniors scored above their expected levels.

Table 1 also displays the Value-added Estimate. As noted previously, the CLA tested a sufficient number of freshmen and seniors in order to provide reliable comparisons to the aggregate results for 176 institutions participating in the CLA. The Value-added Estimate simply means, for example, using the Total CLA Score, CSU Stanislaus is contributing more to the learning gains of its freshmen and seniors than 61 percent of the 176 four-year undergraduate institutions participating in the 2007-2008 CLA. Therefore, the CSU Stanislaus Value-added Performance Level is at the expected level. The Make-an-Argument score indicates the CSU Stanislaus is contributing more to the learning gains of its freshmen and seniors than 87 percent of the 176 four-year undergraduate institutions participating in the 2007-2008 CLA. Thus, as displayed, the CSU Stanislaus Value-added Estimate performance level in the Make-an-Argument task is above the expected level.

Table 1:
Summary Results, 2007-2008

	Freshmen		Seniors		Value-added Estimate	
	Percentile Rank	Performance Level	Percentile Rank	Performance Level	Percentile Rank	Performance Level
<i>Total CLA Score</i>	86	Above	92	Well Above	61	At
<i>Performance Task</i>	90	Well Above	85	Above	45	At
<i>Analytic Writing Task</i>	75	Above	94	Well Above	80	Above
<i>Make-an-Argument</i>	67	At	95	Well Above	87	Above
<i>Critique-an-Argument</i>	83	Above	89	Above	53	At

For more detailed results, Table 2 Part A: Freshmen tested in fall 2007 and Part B: Seniors tested in spring 2008, provides information on how many students completed the CLA in column 1, their SAT mean test scores in column 2, as well as their expected CLA scores in column 3 and actual CLA scores in column 4.

Column 5 presents the percentile rank for CSU Stanislaus' CLA mean scores and indicates the comparison of the real mean CLA scores for CSU Stanislaus to the real mean scores of other CLA institutions, before any adjustment for the student's SAT scores. There is one set of percentiles for freshmen and another set for seniors. Column 6 quantifies the difference between the real and expected CLA scores in standard error units, called the deviation scores. Column 7 shows percentile ranks for the deviation scores.

In Part C: Value-added Estimates, column 1 displays difference scores, which are the deviation scores for seniors minus the deviation scores for freshmen. Difference scores are converted to percentile ranks that are displayed in column 7 and then performance levels, displayed in column 8, are assigned using similar ranges as displayed in Table 1.

**Table 2:
CLA Outcomes**

Part A: Freshmen tested in fall 2007	<i>Student Count (1)</i>	<i>Mean SAT Score (2)</i>	<i>Expected CLA Score (3)</i>	<i>Actual CLA Score (4)</i>	<i>Percentile Rank (5)</i>	<i>Deviation Score (6)</i>	<i>Percentile Rank (7)</i>	<i>Performance Level (8)</i>
<i>Total CLA Score</i>	71	1030	1050	1088	60	1.1	86	Above
<i>Performance Task</i>	36	1022	1032	1085	62	1.3	90	Well Above
<i>Analytic Writing Task</i>	35	1038	1064	1091	62	0.7	75	Above
<i>Make-an-Argument</i>	36	1028	1060	1082	59	0.5	67	At
<i>Critique-an-Argument</i>	35	1038	1060	1099	68	1	83	Above
Part B: Seniors tested in fall 2007	<i>Student Count (1)</i>	<i>Mean SAT Score (2)</i>	<i>Expected CLA Score (3)</i>	<i>Actual CLA Score (4)</i>	<i>Percentile Rank (5)</i>	<i>Deviation Score (6)</i>	<i>Percentile Rank (7)</i>	<i>Performance Level (8)</i>
<i>Total CLA Score</i>	64	1032	1140	1193	59	1.4	92	Well Above
<i>Performance Task</i>	32	1020	1118	1168	54	1.1	85	Above
<i>Analytic Writing Task</i>	32	1044	1158	1217	63	1.6	94	Well Above
<i>Make-an-Argument</i>	32	1044	1152	1224	71	1.7	95	Well Above
<i>Critique-an-Argument</i>	32	1044	1163	1210	59	1.2	89	Above
Part C: Value-added Estimates						<i>Difference Score (1)</i>	<i>Percentile Rank (7)</i>	<i>Performance Level (8)</i>
<i>Total CLA Score</i>						0.3	61	At
<i>Performance Task</i>						-0.2	45	At
<i>Analytic Writing Task</i>						0.9	80	Above
<i>Make-an-Argument</i>						1.2	87	Above
<i>Critique-an-Argument</i>						0.2	53	At

Finally, in Table 3 the Percentile Rank and Performance Level are presented for CSU Stanislaus' retention and graduation rate outcomes. As displayed, compared to the 176 CLA institutions, CSU Stanislaus performs extremely well in the first-year retention rate. That is, CSU Stanislaus performs better than 99 percent of the 176 CLA undergraduate institutions. Here, the Performance Level is well above the expected level. As for the 4-year graduation rate, CSU Stanislaus performs better than 72 percent of the CLA institutions thus performing above the expected level. Consider the 6-year graduation rate, CSU Stanislaus performs higher than 96 percent of the 176 CLA undergraduate institutions, and earned a Performance Level at well above the expected level.

**Table 3:
Retention and graduation rate outcomes**

	<i>Actual Value</i>	<i>Expected Value</i>	<i>Deviation Score</i>	<i>Percentile Rank</i>	<i>Performance Level</i>
<i>First-Year Retention Rate</i>	81	67	2.3	99	Well Above
<i>4-year Graduation Rate</i>	20	14	0.5	72	Above
<i>6-year Graduation Rate</i>	50	37	1.5	96	Well Above

Concluding Remarks¹

To conclude, the 2007-2008 performance of CSU Stanislaus is good to excellent and shows important gains compared to the Total CLA Outcomes for the 2006-2007 testing period. (California State University (2008). *Collegiate Learning Assessment, 2006/07, Summary of Findings.*)

In 2007-2008, the Total CLA Outcomes indicate freshmen scored above the expected level, and seniors scored well above the expected level. Both freshmen and seniors scored above their expected level in 2006-2007.

In 2007-2008, the Value-added Estimate shows CSU Stanislaus to be better than 61 percent of the other CLA institutions, and thus an improvement from 2006-2007 when it was rated better than 40 percent of the other CLA institutions.

In 2007-2008, the Performance Task score for freshmen improved to well above expected level, and for seniors it was above expected, compared to Performance Task scores for both freshmen and seniors that were above the expected level in 2006-2007.

In 2007-2008, the Make-an-Argument Task score for freshmen dropped to at expected, while for seniors the score improved to well above expected, compared to well above expected for freshmen, and above expected for seniors in 2006-2007.

In 2007-2008, the Critique-an-Argument Task score was above expected for both freshmen and seniors, compared to above expected for freshmen, and at expected for seniors in 2006-2007.

The CSU Stanislaus' first-year retention rate was well above expected level in 2007-2008, which is unchanged from 2006-2007.

The CSU Stanislaus' four-year graduation rate improved to above expected level in 2007-2008, from at expected level in 2006-2007.

The CSU Stanislaus' six-year graduation rate also improved to well above expected in 2007-2008, compared to above expected level in 2006-2007.

¹ Note: Independent samples T-test and ANOVA were used to test the difference of mean scores by gender and by race/ethnicity among freshmen and senior students. The results by gender reveal no statistically significant differences among freshmen and seniors. The results by race/ethnicity show a statistically significant difference in the Critique-an-Argument task between other minorities and Hispanics among the freshman group: Hispanic students performed significantly better than other minorities. A significant difference was found between other minorities and White non-Hispanics in Critique-an-Argument task with White non-Hispanics performing better than the other minorities group; a significant difference was found between Hispanics and White non-Hispanics in the Critique-an-Argument task with White non-Hispanic students performing better than the Hispanic group. There were no statistically significant differences found among seniors either by gender or by race/ethnicity for any of the tasks. Also, we found no statistically significant differences by age for any ethnic group and no statistically significant differences by language background (English primary language vs. non-English language background) for any ethnic group.

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