

Collegiate Learning Assessment 2010-2011

Methodology

- The Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) is an open-ended assessment of students' critical thinking and written communication skills. Participating students complete one of two tasks:
 - A performance task, which presents a realistic problem, provides students with multiple relevant documents, and asks students to analyze the materials and identify an appropriate conclusion.
 - An analytic task, which consists of a "make-an-argument" prompt, in which students are given a position on an issue and asked to write a persuasive, analytic essay supporting the position, and a "critique-an-argument" prompt, in which students are asked to evaluate the reasoning used in an argument.
- The CLA uses a value-added approach – students' ACT/SAT scores and first-year students' CLA scores are taken into consideration, such that the final results indicate how well an institution enhances students' critical thinking and communication skills given the type of students who enter the institution.
- In 2010-2011, 104 Miami first-year students (fall) and 104 seniors (spring) completed the CLA.

Results

- Overall, Miami University students score above students at nearly all other institutions. Miami seniors rank in the 95% percentile for all participating CLA institutions (i.e., the mean score for Miami seniors is at or above 95% of other institutions' mean scores). Miami first-year students rank in the 96% percentile.
- Examining the value-added performance-levels, Miami students score "near expected." A score of "near expected" suggests that the gain in skills from first-year to senior year at Miami University is near what would typically be observed at schools testing students of *similar entering academic ability*.
- The "near expected" value does not imply that no gain in skills occurred between freshman and senior year. Seniors at Miami ($M = 1290$) scored significantly higher than first-year students ($M = 1215$), $t(206) = -4.23$, $p \leq .001$, suggesting that students made considerable gains during their time at Miami.

Student Achievement at Miami University

- Miami students demonstrate critical thinking and written communication skills that are above the norm compared with students at other universities. This excellence can be partially attributed to the type of students that Miami attracts, as Miami seniors score "near expected" based upon students' entering academic abilities.
- Some caution should be taken in generalizing the CLA results to all Miami students, as the results are based upon a small sample (approximately 3% of the eligible first-year and senior population).
- At the same time, other assessments of Miami students' critical thinking and level of academic engagement, such as the NSSE, also suggest that Miami students display greater levels of academic achievement compared with students at other institutions. For example, compared with seniors at other participating NSSE institutions, Miami seniors score higher on all five NSSE benchmarks of effective educational practice. (Visit <http://www.units.muohio.edu/oir/Surveys/NSSE> for details on the most recent NSSE results.)
- Despite Miami students' consistently high achievements, Miami University continually strives to improve students' academic experiences. Evidence of this effort can be found in the NSSE; between 2005 and 2011, students at Miami displayed significant improvement on all five NSSE benchmarks.
- Taken together, the CLA and NSSE suggest that Miami University has created an environment that emphasizes both academic excellence and continued improvement. Although students demonstrate high levels of academic achievement, Miami continues to strengthen and improve the academic environment.

For additional information, contact the Office of Institutional Research at institutionalresearch@muohio.edu or 513-529-7095.