First in 2006 – 2007 and again in 2008 – 2009, Westmont College administered the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) which is run by the Council for Aid to Education (CAE). The CLA is designed to evaluate students’ abilities to write, analyze and formulate arguments, and to take information from various sources and use it to come to a reasoned conclusion. In short, this instrument is intended to evaluate students’ capacities in some of the areas that we hold up as being important for Westmont graduates.

For more information about the instrument, please see http://www.cae.org/content/pro_collegiate_sample_measures.htm.

Westmont’s purpose in using the CLA is to provide external, objective evidence that our students are achieving the outcomes that we wish for them in the areas of effective communication and critical thinking.

Westmont has established a protocol whereby our students are tested in alternate academic years. In each administration, a set of incoming students is evaluated in the fall and a group of graduating seniors is tested in the spring. While these groups are not the same, the CLA is often used to gauge the change in student performance from the time a student enters an institution until graduation. The 2010-2011 administration will be the first occasion where we will have the opportunity to have students who have taken the exam as entering freshman retake the exam as graduating seniors. Meanwhile, our focus is more on the level of performance of our graduating students. This seems to be particularly appropriate for Westmont since our incoming students tend to score high, leaving less room for improvement than would be possible otherwise. In this regard, performance on the CLA appears to be analogous to fitness. Even modest gains for a highly fit individual represent a significant achievement whereas a person of modest fitness level can realize noticeably improved fitness with relatively less effort.

Our benchmark is that our seniors perform above the 80th percentile among all schools and above the 50th percentile among comparable schools. For this purpose, comparable means a school having a similar average SAT score.
Our seniors scored at the 97th percentile for the Total CLA score. They scored at the 91st percentile for the Performance Task and at the 98th percentile for the Analytic Writing, Make-an-Argument and Critique-an-Argument tasks. This exceeds the first benchmark by a significant margin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Unadjusted Percentile Rank</th>
<th>Percentile Adjusted for SAT</th>
<th>Percentile among Schools within 100 SAT Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total CLA Score</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Task</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytic Writing Task</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make-an-Argument</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critique-an-Argument</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the scores are adjusted for differences in SAT scores1, our students are placed in the 64th percentile for the Total CLA Score and at the 60th, 71st, 63rd, and 73rd percentiles respectively for the Performance, Analytic Writing, Make-an-Argument, and Critique-an-Argument tasks. For the Total CLA Score only, it is possible to compare Westmont’s overall score to those of the participating schools with SAT scores within 100 points of ours. When this is done, Westmont seniors ranked at the 88th percentile. We can feel proud about these results.

An expanded version of this report can be viewed at http://www.westmont.edu/_offices/institutional_portfolio/program_review/documents/CLA%20Reports/CLA%202009-Long.pdf

The entire CLA report from CAE (including a list of participating institutions on page 26) can be read at http://www.westmont.edu/_offices/institutional_portfolio/program_review/documents/CLA%20Reports/CLA%20200809%20Institutional%20Report_Westmont%20College.pdf

**Local Option Questions:**
Since students have already gathered in an assessment context, CIA offers the option to add up to nine multiple-choice, institution-specific questions. These questions are not related to the CLA itself but are intended to glean additional information about our students. Westmont used these questions to probe issues related to frequency of oral presentation, interaction with faculty, and church attendance as well as students’ experience with the Serving Society portion of the General Education program.

**Significant/Interesting findings:**

1 Using a linear regression model.
• 40% of participating seniors made 5 or more formal oral presentations during their time at Westmont. Only 6% had presented 2 or fewer times. In addition, 58% of participating seniors gave five or more informal presentations to peers in non-classroom setting while 30% made two or fewer informal presentations. Between the two types, only one student did not make at least four presentations. This is a significantly better result than might have been predicted based on the small number of explicitly-identified speech-intensive courses in our GE curriculum.

• 72% of graduating seniors found that their Serving Society; Enacting Justice placement was moderately or extremely valuable to their academic development. 82% found the experience moderately or extremely valuable to their personal development. While it is not clear exactly what students mean in these self reports, it is apparent that students are having a positive experience. This confirms the choice to add this requirement to the GE program when it was revised.

• 57% of graduating seniors reported that they attended an off-campus worship service weekly. On the other hand, 37% said they did so at most monthly with 21% attending only once or twice per term if at all.

A complete summary of the data can be read at http://www.westmont.edu/_offices/institutional_portfolio/program_review/documents/CLA%20Reports/Local%20Response%20Report.pdf.

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2 One will note that there is some confusion in the coding of the responses to question 8. Apparently, text oriented responses were coded as if they were numeric. We have not been able to resolve this issue with the CAE staff. We expect that the responses are listed in order of increasing frequency of visits, but we are not able to verify this.