MEMO

DATE: September 14, 2007

TO: All Faculty

FROM: General Education Committee

RE: CLA Results

As part of our overall program review strategy, Westmont students participated in the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) during the 2006-2007 school year. The CLA is designed to evaluate general thinking and communication skills. Each participating student was assigned to one of two types of exams: a performance task or an analytic writing task consisting of make-an-argument and critique-an-argument. These are exactly the types of flexible and general thinking skills that we claim result from a Westmont education.


If you have questions, I am happy to these results with you.

Congratulations to all of us!

Ray Rosentrater

CLA Highlights:

- Westmont scored at the 7th decile for value added. In other words, the improvement shown by our students from year 1 to year 4 is greater than the corresponding at least 60% of all participating schools. I find this particularly gratifying given the high scores of our incoming students.

- From figure 1 below, it seems that only about seven schools (6% of 115) had raw scores better that those of our incoming students. Even after accounting for predicted differences in CLA scores due to SAT scores, Westmont’s average incoming-student score was in the top 20%. You can see this high performance
by comparing the height of the solid blue dot to the line. The first graph in the second set of figures provides a second representation.

- After accounting for differences due to SAT scores (height above red line), Westmont’s average graduating-senior CLA score was in the top 10%. Only one institution had a higher raw score! (See figure 1.)
- The performance task measures student’s ability to analyze and make use of disparate types of data in order to come to a conclusion and/or make a recommendation. This is precisely the type of general thinking skill that we claim should issue from a Liberal Arts education. Our incoming students had a deviation score of 1.4 (i.e. top 10%) and our seniors had deviation score of 2 (top 2.5%) on this part of the exam. The value added (or improvement) for this score places Westmont in the top 30%. Again, I find this gain impressive given the exceptionally high scores of our incoming students.

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**Figure 1: Relationship between CLA Performance and Incoming Academic Ability**

![Graph showing the relationship between CLA performance and incoming academic ability.](image)

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Distribution of schools by actual versus expected scores (in standard errors) and performance levels

Each solid square represents one CLA school. Solid black squares (■) represent your school as applicable within the distribution of actual versus expected scores for freshmen (■) or seniors (■) or estimates of the actual value added (■) between freshmen and senior years.