

CLA+ Longitudinal Study Results for Illinois College

Illinois College administers the Collegiate Learning Assessment+ (CLA+) to its first-year students and seniors to measure their abilities in the areas of critical thinking, problem solving, critical reading, scientific and quantitative reasoning, and analytic writing. Using IC's CLA+ results, the Council for Aid to Education (CAE) conducted a longitudinal study on IC's fall 2013 entering first-year students to estimate their growth in these important areas, via a pre-test/post-test model. The same students who were tested during Welcome Week in the fall of 2013 were tested again during the 2016-17 academic year. Multiple test sessions were offered as part of the longitudinal study, which yielded valid pre- and post-test scores for 104 IC students.

CAE concluded that "Illinois College students graduating in spring of 2017 showed significant growth in their CLA+ scores from their freshman year." In particular, based on Performance Task sub-scores shown in Table 1, students showed substantial growth in skill areas related to analytical thinking and written communication. The tested aspects of analytical thinking included students' ability to analyze and synthesize disparate pieces of information, assert a logical decision or conclusion, and to support the decision or conclusion with appropriate information from provided documents. The tested aspects of written communication included students' facility with the conventions of standard written English and their ability to present solutions in an organized, grammatically correct form.

Table 1. **Illinois College PT Subscores**

	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Effect Size
PT: Analysis and Problem Solving			
Time 1	2.9	.75	--
Time 2	3.5	.82	.67
PT: Writing Effectiveness			
Time 1	3.0	.74	--
Time 2	3.5	.82	.68
PT: Writing Mechanics			
Time 1	3.4	.63	--
Time 2	3.7	.61	.48

As shown in Table 2, in the domains of data literacy, critical reading, and critiquing an argument, CAE also reported gains of a significant magnitude. Tested aspects of data literacy included students' ability to make reasonable inferences from data (taking into account such factors as the influence of outliers and sample size), their ability to detect questionable assumptions (such as implying causation from correlation), and their ability to evaluate the adequacy of an experimental design or data collection methodology. Tested aspects of critical reading included students' ability to consider the author's purpose, understand the author's tone and persuasive elements, and to recognize bias.

Table 2. Illinois College SRQ Subscores

SRQ: Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning			
	Mean	SD	Effect Size
Time 1	483	96	--
Time 2	526	88	.45

SRQ: Critical Reading and Evaluation			
	Mean	SD	Effect Size
Time 1	495	91	--
Time 2	532	96	.41

SRQ: Critique an Argument			
	Mean	SD	Effect Size
Time 1	493	91	--
Time 2	557	92	.70