

The Collegiate Learning Assessment at UNCP, 2007-2008

The Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) is an assessment instrument which measures a variety of student learning outcomes: critical thinking, problem solving, analytical reasoning, and writing. Because the focus of the assessment is value added from the first to the senior year of university attendance, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at UNCP administered this assessment to first year students in the fall of 2007 and to seniors in the spring of 2008.

Fall, 2007: A random sample of 550 first-year, full-time students (who had SAT scores on file with the university) were drawn from the total population of all entering first-year students at UNCP with the goal of having 100 first-year participants. (Research indicates that the ratio of invited students to actual participants in the CLA is approximately 6 to 1). These students were sent an initial invitation in which they were asked to go to a web page and choose a CLA session by clicking a radio button on a web form. Follow-ups were sent to remind those who registered and to re-invite those who did not. E-mails were personalized with students' first names and they were given contact information for the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Institutional Effectiveness in case they had questions about CLA administration. With repeated e-mails (invitations and reminders), over 90 students from the initial random sample eventually participated (16%). To get the last few students, we resorted to convenience sampling and recruited from among UNCP's teaching fellows and library patrons. The final sample totaled 101 (11% of all first-year students at UNCP in the fall of 2007). There was a monetary incentive for first-year students to participate: \$50 for each participant and \$100 to each of the top ten performers on the assessment.

Spring, 2008: Because of the difficulty of getting 100 first-year students to participate in the CLA, when invitations for seniors to participate went out in the spring of 2008, they were sent to the entire senior class at UNCP (1134 students). In addition to personalized e-mail invitations and reminders, the recruitment plan for seniors also included an ad in the student newspaper about the CLA prior to the first e-mail and e-mail follow-ups for no shows. The incentive plan was slightly different for seniors as well: \$50 to each student who participated and \$200 to the top five scorers. Despite all of these efforts, however, the final sample of seniors consisted of only 80 participants (7% of the senior class).