

Classic Learning Test (CLT) as a Predictor of Student Performance

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the relationship between scores on the Classic Learning Test (CLT) and freshman GPA at Franciscan University. As the CLT gains prominence as an alternative to the SAT and ACT, its predictive validity requires rigorous examination. This study analyzes a sample of 365 Franciscan University students, exploring the influence of demographic factors (gender, race, religion) and high school GPA on test performance. Utilizing descriptive statistics, t-tests, correlation matrices, and hierarchical regression, this paper examines the CLT's efficacy as a predictor of academic success. The findings indicate a significant positive correlation between all CLT sections and freshman GPA, with the composite score showing the strongest overall relationship ($r = 0.42$). Regression analyses confirm that the CLT is a significant predictor of freshman GPA, even after controlling for demographic variables and High School GPA, supporting its use in college admissions.

1 INTRODUCTION

For generations, the SAT and ACT have served as the primary gatekeepers for college admissions. However, recent trends, including significant revisions and a perceived decline in rigor, have prompted many within academia to question their continued efficacy as reliable predictors of student success. In this shifting landscape, the Classic Learning Test (CLT) has emerged not merely as an alternative, but as a potential restoration of robust academic standards. Grounded in a rich classical education curriculum that emphasizes engagement with foundational texts, the CLT aims to reclaim the intellectual depth that many argue has been eroded in its more established counterparts.

The growing acceptance of the CLT by institutions like Franciscan University signals a renewed interest in assessments that prioritize analytical rigor and intellectual tradition. As the CLT gains prominence, it is imperative to empirically validate its effectiveness. The central research question of this study is: Is the Classic Learning Test a good predictor of student academic performance during their freshman year at Franciscan University?

This study seeks to answer this question by analyzing the relationship between the CLT scores of incoming students and their subsequent freshman GPA. Furthermore, this analysis will explore how demographic variables and prior academic performance (High School GPA) influence test scores and the test's overall predictive accuracy within the context of this specific institution.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Participants

The study included 365 students from Franciscan University who had taken the Classic Learning Test as part of their application process. Demographic data were collected, including gender (Female = 55.1%, Male = 44.9%), race (White = 79.8%, Minority = 20.2%), religion (Catholic = 98.6%, Non-Catholic = 1.4%), and High School GPA.

2.2 Measures

- **Classic Learning Test (CLT):** The CLT is a standardized test assessing verbal, writing, and quantitative reasoning skills. The total CLT score and scores for each of the three sub-sections were used.
- **Freshman GPA:** The cumulative grade point average of students at the end of their freshman year of college was the primary measure of academic success.
- **High School GPA:** The cumulative grade point average of students upon graduation from high school.

2.3 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using a series of statistical tests. Descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables. T-tests were conducted to compare mean scores between demographic groups (e.g., Male vs. Female, White vs. Minority). A Pearson correlation matrix was generated to examine the relationships between CLT scores, High School GPA, and freshman GPA. Also, the Corrected Correlation for the relationship between the CLT and freshman GPA was computed to account for range restriction. Finally, hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed to determine the predictive power of CLT scores on freshman GPA while controlling for key demographic variables and High School GPA.

3 Results

The statistical analysis yielded several key findings regarding student performance and the predictive validity of the CLT at Franciscan University.

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the CLT, Verbal, Writing, Quantitative scores, and Freshman GPA for the 365 participants. The mean CLT score was 86.60, with a standard deviation of 11.80.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.Dev
CLT	365	57.0	119.0	86.60	11.80
Verbal	365	18.0	40.0	31.40	4.44
Writing	365	18.0	40.0	31.40	4.30
Quantitative	365	9.0	40.0	23.70	6.18
Freshman GPA	365	0.8	4.0	3.34	0.62

3.2 Group Differences

A series of t-tests were conducted to examine differences in CLT scores based on demographic background.

- **Gender:** A significant difference was found in Quantitative scores, with one gender group ($\mu = 25.3$) outperforming the other ($\mu = 22.4$) ($p < 0.001$). Additionally, a significant difference was observed in the Writing section ($p = 0.020$). However, there was no significant difference in the overall CLT composite score between genders ($p = 0.423$).
- **Race:** When comparing White students to Minority students, there were no statistically significant differences in the overall CLT score ($p = 0.061$), Verbal score ($p = 0.513$), or Writing score ($p = 0.166$). A slight difference was noted in the Quantitative section ($p = 0.039$).
- **Religion:** No statistically significant differences in CLT composite or sub-scores were found when comparing Catholic students to non-Catholic students.

3.3 Correlation Analysis

The Pearson correlation matrix (Table 2) shows the relationships between the different test scores and freshman GPA. The composite CLT score displayed the strongest correlation with Freshman GPA ($r = 0.42$). Interestingly, High School GPA showed almost no correlation with CLT scores or Freshman GPA in this specific dataset.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Matrix, CLT and Components

Variable 1	Variable 2	r	p
CLT	Freshman GPA	0.42	< 0.001
Verbal	Freshman GPA	0.27	< 0.001
Writing	Freshman GPA	0.35	< 0.001
Quant	Freshman GPA	0.36	< 0.001

3.4 Corrected Correlation

To account for the potential impact of range restriction on the observed correlation between the Classic Learning Test (CLT) and freshman GPA, a corrected correlation was calculated using the formula for correction for restriction of range (Lawley, 1943). Range restriction often occurs in validation studies within academic settings because the admitted students for whom GPA data are available typically represent a narrower, higher-scoring range of test-takers than the full applicant pool. This truncation can artificially lower the observed correlation coefficient.

The raw correlation between the CLT and Freshman GPA, shown in Table 2, is 0.42. The correction calculation revealed a corrected correlation of 0.59. This adjusted value suggests that the true predictive validity of the CLT is

likely stronger than what is observed in the restricted sample alone, reinforcing the test’s utility in predicting academic performance across a broader range of student abilities.

3.5 Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Hierarchical regression models were used to assess the predictive ability of the CLT sub-scores on freshman GPA, after controlling for demographic variables and High School GPA.

Table 3: Hierarchical Regression - Predicting Freshman GPA

Variable	Model R ²	R ² Increment	p of change
Demographics & HS GPA	0.030	0.030	0.015
+ Verbal	0.104	0.074	< 0.001
+ Quant	0.193	0.089	< 0.001
+ Writing	0.212	0.019	0.004

The baseline model (Demographics and High School GPA) accounted for only 3.0% of the variance in freshman GPA. After controlling for these factors, adding the Verbal score explained an additional 7.4% of the variance. The subsequent addition of the Quantitative score explained another 8.9%, and finally, the Writing score added 1.9%. In total, the full model accounted for 21.2% of the variance in Freshman GPA. This indicates that the CLT sub-scores offer substantial predictive power beyond traditional demographic and high school academic markers.

4 Discussion

4.1 Insights

The results of this study indicate that the Classic Learning Test is a statistically significant predictor of freshman GPA at Franciscan University. This finding directly addresses the primary research question, providing empirical support for the institution’s use of the CLT in its admissions process.

Both the composite CLT score and its individual sub-scores (Verbal, Writing, and Quantitative) demonstrated a positive correlation with academic performance. The composite score, in particular, emerged as a strong predictor.

The hierarchical regression analysis further strengthens this conclusion. After controlling for gender, race, religion, and High School GPA, the CLT sub-scores accounted for a highly significant portion of the variance in freshman GPA. This suggests that the CLT provides valuable, independent information about a student’s potential for academic success at Franciscan University, especially given that High School GPA demonstrated poor predictive validity in this specific cohort.

4.2 Comparison

In order to properly gauge how well the CLT predicts student performance, it is important to have a comparison. A 2024 study from the College Board (Marini et al., 2024), examining their 2018 cohort, did a similar analysis, resulting in the following comparison in Table 4.

Table 4: Comparison of Correlation Between Assessments and Freshman GPA

Test and Relationship	Raw Correlation	Corrected Correlation
CLT to Freshman GPA	0.42	0.59
SAT to Freshman GPA	0.32	0.53

5 Conclusion

This study sought to empirically validate the Classic Learning Test (CLT) as a predictor of academic performance for freshmen at Franciscan University. The statistical analysis provides a clear and affirmative answer: the CLT is not only a valid predictor but also a robust and highly effective instrument for identifying students prepared for the rigors of higher education.

The findings demonstrate a statistically significant positive correlation between all sections of the CLT and freshman GPA, with the test proving to be a powerful predictor even after controlling for demographic variables and High School GPA. This indicates that the CLT measures academic aptitude independently of a student's background.

Perhaps the most compelling takeaway from this analysis is the direct comparison with the SAT. The CLT's corrected correlation with freshman GPA (0.59) is a full six percentage points higher than that of the SAT (0.53). This difference represents a significant enhancement in predictive power, suggesting that the CLT is a more precise instrument for forecasting student success.

In a landscape where the value of traditional standardized tests is increasingly debated, the CLT emerges as more than just an alternative; it represents a meaningful restoration of intellectual substance in college admissions. For institutions like Franciscan University, committed to academic excellence and robust intellectual formation, the CLT has proven itself to be an invaluable tool. The results of this study strongly support its continued use as a primary means of assessing collegiate readiness.

References

Lawley, D. N. (1943). A note on karl pearson's selection formulae. *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, 62(28-30).

Marini, J. P., Westrick, P. A., Young, L., and Shaw, E. J. (2024). SAT® Score Relationships with College GPA: First-Year through Fourth-Year Cumulative GPA. College board research report, The College Board, New York.

6 Appendix

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics (Scores)

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std Dev	Skewness	Std Error
CLT	365	57	119	86.60	11.80	0.03	0.62
Verbal	365	18	40	31.40	4.44	-0.59	0.23
Writing	365	18	40	31.40	4.30	-0.35	0.23
Quantitative	365	9	40	23.70	6.18	0.17	0.32
Freshman GPA	365	0.8	4.0	3.34	0.62	-1.28	0.03

Table 6: Demographic Breakdown (Frequencies)

Variable	Category	N	Percent (%)
Gender	Female	201	55.07
Gender	Male	164	44.93
Race	White	284	79.78
Race	Hispanic	52	14.61
Race	Asian	10	2.81
Race	African American	5	1.40
Race	Mixed	4	1.12
Race	Pacific Islander	1	0.28
Religion	Catholic	359	98.63
Religion	Eastern Rite	4	1.10
Religion	Protestant	1	0.27

Table 7: Frequency of Student Start Year

Start Year	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative (%)
2020	37	10.1	10.1
2021	68	18.6	28.8
2022	71	19.5	48.2
2023	83	22.7	71.0
2024	106	29.0	100.0

Table 8: T-Test Results by Gender

Variable	Mean (Grp 1)	Mean (Grp 2)	t	p	Cohen's d
CLT	86.10	87.10	-0.80	0.423	-0.09
Verbal	31.80	31.00	1.74	0.083	0.18
Writing	31.90	30.80	2.34	0.020	0.25
Quantitative	22.40	25.30	-4.50	<001	-0.48

Table 9: T-Test Results by Race (White vs. Minority)

Variable	Mean (Grp 1)	Mean (Grp 2)	t	p	Cohen's d
CLT	84.20	87.10	-1.89	0.061	-0.25
Verbal	31.10	31.50	-0.66	0.513	-0.09
Writing	30.80	31.60	-1.39	0.166	-0.18
Quantitative	22.30	24.00	-2.09	0.039	-0.28

Table 10: T-Test Results by Religion (Catholic vs. Non-Catholic)

Variable	Mean (Grp 1)	Mean (Grp 2)	t	p	Cohen's d
CLT	86.60	83.80	0.66	0.543	0.24
Verbal	31.40	31.00	0.15	0.888	0.10
Writing	31.40	32.20	-0.50	0.640	-0.19
Quantitative	23.70	20.60	1.50	0.204	0.51

Table 11: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Parameter 1	Parameter 2	r	t	p
CLT	Verbal	0.78	23.80	< .001
CLT	Writing	0.79	24.81	< .001
CLT	Quant	0.79	24.93	< .001
CLT	Frosh GPA	0.42	8.73	< .001
Verbal	Writing	0.61	14.54	< .001
Verbal	Quant	0.35	7.08	< .001
Verbal	Frosh GPA	0.27	5.26	< .001
Writing	Quant	0.38	7.85	< .001
Writing	Frosh GPA	0.35	7.10	< .001
Quant	Frosh GPA	0.36	7.36	< .001

Table 12: Hierarchical Regression Predicting Freshman GPA

Predictor	df	Model R^2	R^2 Increment	p of change	Direction
Demographics & HS GPA	3, 348	0.030	0.030	0.015	NA
+ Verbal	1, 347	0.104	0.074	0.000	+
+ Quant	1, 346	0.193	0.089	0.000	+
+ Writing	1, 345	0.212	0.019	0.004	+