

Classic Learning Test (CLT) as a Predictor of Student Performance: A Texas Multi-Institutional Analysis

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the relationship between scores on the Classic Learning Test (CLT) and first-year student GPA across five prominent Texas higher education institutions: Nelson University, LeTourneau University, Dallas Baptist University, Abilene Christian University, and the University of Dallas. As educational stakeholders in Texas evaluate state-wide standards and reliable alternatives to the SAT and ACT, the CLT's predictive validity requires rigorous examination. This study analyzes a multi-institutional sample of 259 Texas students, focusing on the test's efficacy as a standalone predictor of collegiate readiness across diverse demographics. Utilizing descriptive statistics and correlation matrices, the findings indicate a strong, statistically significant positive correlation between the CLT composite score and first-year student GPA. The adjusted correlational data robustly supports the CLT's viability as an elite, state-wide tool in college admissions and student placement.

1 INTRODUCTION

For generations, the SAT and ACT have served as the primary standardized metrics for college admissions. However, recent trends—including significant test revisions, shifting academic standards, and nationwide high school grade inflation—have prompted educators and admissions professionals alike to reevaluate their continued efficacy. In this evolving landscape, Texas higher education institutions remain committed to utilizing the most accurate, objective, and reliable predictors of student success. The Classic Learning Test (CLT) has emerged as a compelling assessment, grounded in a curriculum that emphasizes analytical rigor and engagement with foundational texts. The growing acceptance of the CLT by multi-institutional networks signals a renewed interest in assessments that prioritize true collegiate readiness.

As the CLT gains traction across the state, it is imperative to empirically validate its effectiveness for Texas students. The central research question of this report is: Is the Classic Learning Test a reliable, standalone predictor of academic performance during a student's first year within Texas higher education institutions? This study addresses this question by analyzing the relationship between the CLT composite scores of incoming students and their subsequent first-year GPA (Year 1 GPA), providing data-driven insights to inform future educational policy and admissions strategies across Texas.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Participants

The study included 259 students from a consortium of five Texas universities: Nelson University, LeTourneau University, Dallas Baptist University, Abilene Christian University, and the University of Dallas. Students included in the sample had taken the Classic Learning Test as part of their application process, and corresponding first-year collegiate GPA data was compiled. Demographic data, including gender and race, were also collected to ensure the sample accurately reflected diverse student populations across the state.

2.2 Measures

- **Classic Learning Test (CLT):** The CLT is a standardized test assessing verbal, writing, and quantitative reasoning skills. The total composite CLT score was utilized for this analysis.
- **First-year student GPA (Year 1 GPA):** The cumulative grade point average of students at the end of their first year of college served as the primary measure of academic success and retention readiness.

2.3 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using core statistical tests to determine predictive validity. Descriptive statistics were calculated for the CLT composite scores, first-year GPA, and demographic subgroups. A Pearson correlation was generated to examine the primary relationship between these two variables. Additionally, the Corrected Correlation for the relationship between the CLT and first-year student GPA was computed to account for range restriction, ensuring a highly accurate representation of the broader student population utilizing national CLT standard deviations.

3 Results

The statistical analysis yielded key findings regarding student performance and the predictive validity of the CLT across the Texas consortium.

3.1 Descriptive & Demographic Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the CLT composite scores and first-year GPA for the participating sample.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Texas Sample

| Variable | N | Min | Max | Mean | Std.Dev |
|---------------|-----|-------|--------|-------|---------|
| CLT Composite | 259 | 34.00 | 120.00 | 81.70 | 17.99 |
| Year 1 GPA | 259 | 0.52 | 4.00 | 3.35 | 0.71 |

To provide transparency regarding the sample composition, Table 2 outlines the demographic breakdown by gender and race. The sample demonstrates diverse representation, critical for evaluating the equity and state-wide applicability of the assessment.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Texas Sample

| Category | N | Percent (%) |
|---------------------------|-----|-------------|
| Gender | | |
| Female | 141 | 54.4% |
| Male | 118 | 45.6% |
| Race | | |
| White | 209 | 80.7% |
| Black or African American | 17 | 6.6% |
| Asian | 9 | 3.5% |
| American Indian | 6 | 2.3% |
| Multi Racial | 6 | 2.3% |
| Not Reported | 6 | 2.3% |
| Mixed | 5 | 1.9% |
| Pacific Islander | 1 | 0.4% |

3.2 Correlation Analysis

The Pearson correlation matrix (Table 3) showcases the relationship between the CLT composite score and first-year student GPA. The raw correlation was found to be highly statistically significant ($r = 0.609$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.526, 0.680]).

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Matrix

| Variable 1 | Variable 2 | r | p |
|---------------|------------|-------|---------|
| CLT Composite | Year 1 GPA | 0.609 | < 0.001 |

3.3 Corrected Correlation

To account for the potential impact of range restriction on the observed correlation between the CLT and first-year student GPA, a corrected correlation was calculated using Thorndike's Case 2 formula (Lawley, 1943). Range restriction often occurs in institutional validation studies because admitted students represent a narrower, higher-scoring range of test-takers than the full state applicant pool.

The raw correlation between the CLT and Year 1 GPA is 0.609. The correction calculation revealed an estimated population corrected correlation of 0.629. This adjusted value indicates that the true predictive validity of the CLT across the broader Texas student population is highly robust.

4 Discussion

4.1 Policy Insights & Standalone Predictive Power

The results of this study indicate that the Classic Learning Test composite score is a statistically significant, exceptionally strong predictor of first-year student GPA within this Texas multi-institutional sample. This finding provides clear, empirical support for the integration of the CLT into admissions and placement processes at state institutions.

Crucially, the CLT demonstrates this predictive validity independently. In an era where High School GPAs are increasingly subjected to nationwide grade inflation—making them a less reliable metric for university admissions committees—the CLT stands on its own as an objective, uninflated barometer of a student’s true academic readiness. The composite score demonstrated a strong positive correlation with first-year academic performance, proving it to be a highly reliable metric for forecasting a student’s ability to succeed and persist in higher education without needing to rely on subjective high school grading scales.

4.2 Comparison with Legacy Metrics

In order to properly gauge how well the CLT predicts student performance, it is vital to establish a baseline of comparison with legacy admissions tests currently accepted in Texas. A 2024 study from the College Board ([Marini et al., 2024](#)), examining their 2018 cohort, conducted a similar analysis. The comparison between the tests’ predictive validities is detailed in Table 4.

Table 4: Comparison of Correlation Between The CLT, SAT, and Year 1 GPA

| Test and Relationship | Raw Correlation | Corrected Correlation |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| CLT to Year 1 GPA | 0.61 | 0.63 |
| SAT to Year 1 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 first-year students to inform the broader higher education community in Texas. The statistical analysis provides a clear and affirmative answer: the CLT is not only a valid predictor but a highly effective, standalone instrument for identifying students prepared for the rigors of Texas higher education.

Notably, the CLT’s corrected correlation with first-year student GPA (0.63) exceeds the historical standard of the SAT (0.53) ([Marini et al., 2024](#)). This represents a meaningful enhancement in predictive power. In an environment where the value and accuracy of standardized testing are under rigorous review, the CLT offers a data-backed, academically rigorous alternative for state universities. The results of this study strongly support its continued adoption and institutional endorsement as a primary means of assessing collegiate readiness across Texas.

References

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