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7-1-2009

CLA Report

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Recommended Citation
Osei, Joseph, "CLA Report" (2009). *Collegiate Learning Assessment Instructors' Reports.* Paper 32.
http://digitalcommons.uncfsu.edu/div_aa_wp/32

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Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)
Instructor's Assessment Report
by Joseph Osei, PhD
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1. Course information
    a. In what course(s) did you administer your CLA performance task?

       I administered my CLA performance task in three sections of my Phil110, Critical thinking classes: Phil 110-13; Phil 110-14 and Phil 110-16.

    b. Please indicate if the majority of students enrolled in this class are freshmen, sophomores, juniors, or seniors.

       The majority of the students in these classes are freshmen.

2. Performance task
    a. What was the task?
       Students were to critique arguments for a proposal to turn a public school tutorial into the hand of a private contractor (College Bound, Inc.). To do this they had to first read carefully the scenario from which the issue emerged and answer three related questions. Each question contained an argument supporting the proposal to transfer the project to the private sector, and students were expected not to take any of the documents at face value but to analyze and critically examine each of them using their critical thinking skills, values, and concepts.

    b. Describe the documents you included in the task. Why did you choose these specific documents?

       Document A:
       This fictional document written supposedly by the Chair of Educational Leadership Dept in a reputable University is intended to provide general information about the Foundation for Excellence. My reasons for Choosing this document included the following:
       1) Testing students' ability to look for actual or potential conflicts of interest, especially within the context of business transactions.
       2) Looking for bias even in documents or claims attributed to experts
       3) Determining whether the experts are relevant for the task at hand.

       Document B: This was supposedly an editorial from a local news paper testifying to the excellence of College Bound and encouraging parents and students to choose it over other competitors. My decision to use this document included the following: It's potential for testing students' ability to:
       a) Distinguish between mere correlations and actual causal connections
       b) Detect fallacies including Hasty generalization, Bias sampling, and Appeal to Ignorance.
       c) Recognize unsupported claims masquerading as arguments
       d) Distinguish between objective facts and value-laden or subjective opinions

Document C:
This document supposedly provided statistical evidence in support of the excellence or effectiveness of College Bound's program. It showed a correlation between test score data with the number of years College Bound program had been contracted to serve the school and another table displaying indexes measuring achievements and corresponding parental approval. My decision to use Document C was motivated by many reasons including testing students' ability to:

a) Analyze date in terms of potential cause and effect relationships etc
b) Distinguish between mere correlations and genuine causal relationship
c) Present plausible alternative explanations to challenge any set of given explanations
d) Interpret data accurately and objectively without falling for fallacies such as post hoc and confusing cause and effect or mishandling multiple factors

Document D
This fictional document is a newsletter supposed to be presenting objective support for College Bound Inc. My decision to use this document is primarily because it has the potential to test student's ability to:

a) Analyze and evaluate accurately and objectively sampling errors such Such as Hasty Generalization and Biased sampling
b) Detect editorial slant and hidden biases as well as false emphases in news papers and other media.
c) Present plausible alternative explanations instead of accepting causal explanations at face value.
d) Resist the temptation to take for granted results supposed based on "standardized" tests "Scientific" experiments or tests, or "unanimous" views.

Document E
This document was a fictional scatter plot cohort also intended o support the case for College Bound program. It shows a correlation between visits to a tutoring lab and test score at the end of each year for a particular high school. I chose this document for testing students' ability

a) Distinguish between mere correlation and actual causal relationships
b) Analyze, interpret an evaluate quantitative data objectively
c) Recognize Hasty Generalizations stemming from inadequate sampling sizes.
d) Present plausible alternative explanations for the phenomenon in question.

DOCUMENT F
This document is also intended to support College Bound's claim to excellence in providing tutorials for college preparation exams. It depicts school average test scores correlated with number of years run by College Bound. It gives the impression that over a five year period they have improved test scores from 50% to 85%. I chose this document for its potential to test the students' ability:

a) Distinguish between mere correlation and actual causal relationships
b) Analyze, interpret and evaluate quantitative data objectively
c) Recognize Hasty Generalizations stemming from inadequate sampling sizes and self-selecting or unrepresentative sampling
d) Present plausible alternative explanations for the phenomenon in question.

DOCUMENT G

This document is comprised of three education research abstracts using the ERAQ search method. All three had reports of testing from several private corporations including College Bound between 2006 and 2007. The reasons for choosing this document include its potential for testing students' ability to:

a) Relate narrative to quantitative analysis in constructing or critiquing arguments
b) Compare different quantitative models
c) Evaluate the appropriateness of comparisons or contrasts in diverse contexts
d) Ability to identify and accurately interpret progressive or regressive statistical models

c. To what extent did a successful response to the performance task require students to integrate information and data in both narrative <u>and</u> quantitative forms? Explain.

3. Performance Task Administration
   a. <u>When</u> did you administer the performance task?

   April, 28, 2009. I needed to wait till we had covered the chapters relevant for the CLA test.

   b. Was the student's score on the assessment calculated in the final grade? If yes, what weight did it have?

   10% of the overall course grade.

4. Student Performance
   a. Identify any consistent strength you found in student performance.

   Most students seem to understand the narrative in the scenario and the need to support their claims with the documents mentioned in the three questions.

   b. Identify any consistent weaknesses you found in student performance.
   c. Most students were not critical enough. Many took the documents at face value while those who showed some skepticism could not correctly identify the source of the problem or offer alternative explanations.

   d. (optional) If you reviewed the results with your students, what kind of comments did they make about it? Did they indicate whether they believe their FSU experience is preparing them to take assessments like the CLA?

   I made some brief comments after grading their tests, but it was too late to do a complete review being the last day of class and the need to focus on their study guides for spring term final exam.

5. Recommendation and follow up
   a. Knowing that our students' performance on the CLA will be part of our institutional assessment, what will you do in the courses you teach to address the skills and competencies assessed by the CLA?
   b. The skills and competencies are not only essential parts of any serious Critical thing Course, they are also necessary for success at higher academic levels and for their professional and real life challenges. I plan therefore to include them in my regular Critical Thinking Classes as part of the core skills and competencies. Specifically, I will use it in place of my regular term papers with two parts:
   c. I) Make an argument ii) Critique an Argument using fewer but diverse documents.

d. What recommendations would you offer for all faculty members?

I recommend that all faculty take time to study the CLA program and its potential for improving student performance in college and for sharpening their competitive edge in today's global market and limited job opportunities. Helping students by this or similar means is also a means of helping ourselves professionally since our collective recognition as professors of merit is a function of the retention and graduation rates of our students.