

RESEARCH BRIEF

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

VOLUME 11 NUMBER 3

MARCH 2002

THE COLLEGE LEVEL ACADEMIC SKILLS TEST (CLAST)

The CLAST (College Level Academic Skills Test) must be passed by two groups of college students, those who enter a state university as a freshman to pursue the Baccalaureate degree and those who enter a state community college to pursue an Associate of Arts (A. A.) degree. The test is intended to show students have mastered the communication and computation skills prerequisite to upper division undergraduate instruction. Students may exempt the CLAST under the following two conditions:

1. Achieve a set score on either the Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT I) or the American College Testing Program (ACT).
 - a. SAT I quantitative score equal to 500 for computation section and verbal score equal to 500 for Reading, English Language Skills, and Essay.
 - b. ACT mathematics score equal to 21 on the Enhanced ACT, reading score equal to 22 for Reading, and English score equal to 21 for English Language Skills and Essay.
2. Earn a grade point average of 2.5 or above on a 4.0 scale in selected college credit courses.
 - a. Two courses for a minimum of six semester hours of credit from ENC 1101 and ENC 1102 or their equivalents for English Language Skills, Reading and Essay.
 - b. Two courses for a minimum of six semester hours of credit from MAC 1105 plus another MAC course with the last three digits higher than 105, MGF 1106 and MGF 1107, or MGF 1106 and MAC 1105, or STA 2023 for Mathematics. (Equivalent courses may be substituted as appropriate as MGF 1113 for MGF 1106).

The CLAST standards were raised gradually since the inception of the test in August 1984. Beginning October 1, 1992, and thereafter, the sub-tests and the minimum scores that can be earned are Essay (6 on a scale that ranges from 2 - 12), Reading (295), English Language Skills (295), and Mathematics (295). Students who began the CLAST prior to 1992 may have a different standard to meet. The CLAST is administered three times per year in October, February and June. St. Petersburg College (SPC) follows state law in requiring a student to have completed 18 semester hours before attempting CLAST.

Table 1 (on the next page) shows the passing rates of first-time-tested students on each sub-test (and all sub-tests) for SPC, all public community colleges, and all state universities plus community colleges for each CLAST administration from October 1996 through June 2001. Although students are encouraged to take all the sub-tests at the same time, it is not required. For that reason, the number of students shown as being tested may vary from sub-test to sub-test. SPC's passing rate was higher than the passing rate of all community colleges for each sub-test administration with two exceptions. On the October 1997 English Language Skills sub-test SPC's passing rate was 64% compared to a passing rate of 69% for all community colleges. Likewise, on the same sub-test in February 2000, SPC's passing rate was 70% compared to 71% for all community colleges.

While it is essential that students pass each sub-test, it may be more meaningful to look at the percentage of students who pass all four sub-tests the first time they are tested. In order to eliminate bias (that is, more prepared students may prefer to take the CLAST at a certain time of the year) it may be preferable to compare the percentage of students who pass the CLAST annually during any one of the three administrations rather than each test administration. Table 2 shows the average annual pass rate on all four sub-tests for first-time-tested students (column 4) at SPC, all state community colleges and all state community colleges plus universities. The last column on the table, the difference between the percentage passing at SPC and the other two groups, shows that in the last five years SPC's annual percentage passing was between 3.3% (1996-1997) and 7.0% (2000-2001) higher than all public community colleges. A comparison of SPC's pass rate to all community colleges plus state universities, shows that SPC's rate was higher all five years as well. The percentages ranged from 0.6% in 1996-1997 to 3.3% in 2000-2001.

Table 1
FIRST-TIME-TESTED STUDENTS' CLAST PASSING RATES
October 1996 -June 2001

<u>Test Date</u>		<u>ESSAY</u>		<u>ENGLISH LANG.</u>		<u>READING</u>		<u>MATHEMATICS</u>		<u>ALL SUBTESTS</u>	
		<u>Number</u> <u>Tested</u>	<u>Percent</u> <u>Passing</u>	<u>Number</u> <u>Tested</u>	<u>Percent</u> <u>Passing</u>	<u>Number</u> <u>Tested</u>	<u>Percent</u> <u>Passing</u>	<u>Number</u> <u>Tested</u>	<u>Percent</u> <u>Passing</u>	<u>Number</u> <u>Tested</u>	<u>Percent</u> <u>Passing</u>
Oct. 1996	SPC	362	75	362	77	363	68	407	61	345	40
	Statewide CC	4149	74	4151	73	4175	61	5104	56	3746	37
	Statewide All	7646	77	7653	76	7687	66	9437	60	6769	41
Feb. 1997	SPC	376	82	376	69	373	80	443	60	361	43
	Statewide CC	4175	81	4174	66	4226	72	5398	57	3643	38
	Statewide All	7518	82	7542	68	7609	74	9920	59	6464	40
June 1997	SPC	236	84	236	62	236	77	284	61	226	41
	Statewide CC	3319	80	3316	62	3359	72	4301	59	2846	39
	Statewide All	5247	81	5246	65	5282	74	6821	61	4461	41
Oct. 1997	SPC	246	86	246	64	246	60	304	56	226	38
	Statewide CC	2818	83	2815	69	2815	55	3846	55	2334	34
	Statewide All	6077	85	6080	74	6081	62	7740	60	5067	40
Feb. 1998	SPC	236	82	235	67	236	77	305	52	217	41
	Statewide CC	3126	79	3125	66	3130	68	4126	48	2516	37
	Statewide All	5526	81	5524	69	5542	70	7242	49	4553	38
June 1998	SPC	116	85	116	59	115	66	165	61	95	39
	Statewide CC	2125	79	2126	57	2133	59	2792	49	1621	31
	Statewide All	3258	80	3257	60	3269	61	4363	49	2586	34
Oct. 1998	SPC	175	82	176	72	176	70	218	51	146	36
	Statewide CC	2236	78	2237	71	2234	60	2829	48	1703	34
	Statewide All	3888	78	3891	73	3888	61	4995	47	3071	36
Feb. 1999	SPC	213	85	213	68	213	79	256	53	185	43
	Statewide CC	2831	81	2836	65	2834	71	3524	47	2226	37
	Statewide All	4551	83	4567	67	4568	73	5856	48	3643	40
June 1999	SPC	138	82	138	62	140	69	157	55	103	36
	Statewide CC	2071	80	2071	56	2063	59	2544	46	1566	31
	Statewide All	3200	81	3203	59	3188	62	4123	46	2473	34
Oct. 1999	SPC	141	85	142	70	142	77	182	52	114	45
	Statewide CC	2121	81	2122	60	2118	71	2557	46	1587	34
	Statewide All	3531	83	3536	63	3535	74	4629	47	2754	38
Feb. 2000	SPC	165	90	165	70	163	65	199	47	131	34
	Statewide CC	2575	83	2573	71	2569	58	3062	45	1951	32
	Statewide All	4318	83	4318	74	4314	62	5573	46	3395	37
June 2000	SPC	124	80	123	75	124	81	145	45	90	39
	Statewide CC	1854	76	1814	62	1813	65	2018	42	1306	32
	Statewide All	2840	78	2756	66	2756	67	3354	44	2064	36
Oct. 2000	SPC	121	86	118	55	116	60	141	47	92	27
	Statewide CC	1905	84	1771	54	1766	55	1980	42	1273	29
	Statewide All	3468	85	3268	58	3261	59	3958	44	2474	34
Feb. 2001	SPC	130	85	129	69	130	72	156	57	99	47
	Statewide CC	2172	81	2046	66	2006	63	2317	52	1469	40
	Statewide All	4091	82	3889	68	3861	66	4742	52	2954	43
June 2001	SPC	95	84	93	73	92	74	100	56	64	50
	Statewide CC	1751	82	1626	64	1613	65	1765	44	1145	34
	Statewide All	2947	83	2768	66	2757	68	3350	44	2065	37

"Statewide All" consists of all public state universities and community colleges only.

Table 2
ANNUAL AVERAGE PASSING RATES
ON ALL FOUR CLAST SUBTESTS

Test Years		AVERAGE ALL SUBTESTS		SPC's Percent Above/ Below
		Number Tested	Percent Passing	
1996-1997	SPC	311	41.3	
	Statewide CC	3412	38.0	3.3
	Statewide All	5898	40.7	0.6
1997-98	SPC	538	39.3	
	Statewide CC	6471	34.0	5.3
	Statewide All	12206	37.3	2.0
1998-99	SPC	932	38.3	
	Statewide CC	10235	34.0	4.3
	Statewide All	17694	36.7	1.6
1999-2000	SPC	434	39.3	
	Statewide CC	5495	32.7	6.6
	Statewide All	9187	37.0	2.3
2000-2001	SPC	434	41.3	
	Statewide CC	5495	34.3	7.0
	Statewide All	9187	38.0	3.3

Following every test administration, the College receives separate reports that show the number and the passing rates for students taking the CLAST at each public college and each public university for the first time and for those retaking sub-tests. For the October 2001 administration, Table 3 shows the first-time-tested number of students and the percent passing each sub-test and all four sub-tests for the public community colleges

TABLE 3
FIRST-TIME-TESTED CLAST PASSING RATES FOR
COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN THE WEST CENTRAL REGION
October 6, 2001

	ESSAY		ENGLISH LANG		READING		MATHEMATIC		ALL SUBTESTS	
	Number Tested	Percent Passing	Number Tested	Percent Passing	Number Tested	Percent Passing	Number Tested	Percent Passing	Number Tested	Percent Passing
Edison Community College	41	85	41	61	40	53	53	30	38	29
Hillsborough Community College	96	90	97	78	97	60	108	48	75	39
Manatee Community College	41	83	41	68	41	66	48	54	36	36
Pasco-Hernando Community College	48	92	48	73	48	58	57	51	44	34
Polk Community College	62	85	62	77	61	54	62	56	44	39
South Florida Community College	11	100	11	64	11	64	12	50	9	33
St. Petersburg College	120	80	119	63	119	58	145	46	93	38
Statewide CC	1922	84	1812	66	1808	55	2022	46	1325	33
Statewide All	3732	84	3542	69	3543	57	4361	47	2724	37

in the west central region to which SPC belongs. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of the tested SPC students passed all four sub-tests. Only Hillsborough Community College (39%) and Polk Community College (39%) had a larger percentage passing the four CLAST sub-tests in the region. SPC's passing rate on all four sub-tests was higher than the rates for all community colleges and for community colleges plus universities.

The SPC pass rate on all four sub-tests have been relatively consistent and better than the average of all community colleges. In reviewing the pass rate for all four sub-tests, one must bear in mind several factors. First, high achieving students are able to exempt one or more of the CLAST sub-tests. Second, students are encouraged but not required to sit for all CLAST sub-tests during a single administration of CLAST. Third, a student may have taken all four sub-tests at a previous test administration passing three. This student would be included in the re-take group. In none of these instances would the student be included in the passed all four sub-tests category of first-time-tested students. Thus, while the pass rate is significant, one must remember that the CLAST requirement is satisfied by many more students than reflected in the data herein and by all students receiving the A.A. degree from the College.

Office of Institutional Research
March 2002