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Test Comparability

by Christine Keller and David
Shulenburger

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“Test comparability,” with Christine Keller in the Letters section of *Change*, September/October 2010, p. 6.

Letter to the Editor
Change Magazine

June 22, 2010

The article “What Do They Measure? Comparing Three Learning Outcomes Assessments” in the current issue of *Change* recommends additional research on the comparability of the three learning outcomes measures included within the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) and reported on the College Portrait. The VSA supports any research that further clarifies the differences and similarities across the CAAP, CLA, and ETS Proficiency Profile (formerly known as MAPP).

The three tests reported as part of the VSA were carefully evaluated and selected, in part, based on each sponsoring organization’s statement that each test or group of tests were designed to measure (at a minimum) critical thinking, analytic reasoning, and written communication, as well as the organizations’ willingness to use a similar methodology to compute and report scores.

The Test Validity Study (TVS) was conducted to gather more information about the comparability of the results across tests and to mitigate concerns among some VSA institutions that it would be possible to “game” the results if one test consistently produced higher scores than the other two.

The TVS results demonstrated that gaming concerns were largely unwarranted and provided evidence that the test results were highly correlated and reliable at the institution level. The VSA recommends that institutions select the test instrument that best fits the circumstances at a particular institution. The VSA is also cognizant of overextending the results of the TVS and cautions VSA institutions against doing so in source documents on the VSA website as well as within presentations to interested audiences.

In short, the VSA welcomes further study that delineates more precisely the construct or constructs measured by the CAAP, CLA, and ETS Proficiency Profile and increases the comparability of these tools for reporting on the College Portrait.

Sincerely,

Christine Keller, Executive Director, VSA
David Shulenburg, VP Academic Affairs, APLU