

Committee on the Classical Learning Test – Hillsdale College

Executive Summary—March 8, 2017

Formation and Charge

Hillsdale College officially began investigating the Classic Learning Test (CLT) in 2016, although members of the faculty and staff had been aware of the initiative since its inception the previous year. Dr. David Whalen, Provost and Professor of English, appointed members to a committee in September 2016 with the charge of 1) evaluating the exam as a measure of college preparedness, and 2) recommending how, if at all, it may be used in Hillsdale College's admissions process. Committee members included staff from the Admissions Office, the Provost's Office, and the Barney Charter School Initiative, as well as faculty from Hillsdale College and Hillsdale Academy (a private K-12 classical school located on Hillsdale's campus). Beginning in October 2016, the committee devoted over four months researching, conferring, and evaluating the CLT before delivering a recommendation.

Review Process and Findings

Hillsdale's Committee on the Classic Learning Test organized an exhaustive review process for examining the Classic Learning Test. Tasks were assigned amongst committee members, and findings were presented and discussed at subsequent meetings. The review process included the following initiatives:

- **A familiarization of CLT's mission, test overview, and data.** Committee members reviewed materials provided by Classic Learning Initiatives (CLI), the parent company who created the CLT. These materials included overview documents, validity and reliability evaluations from outside sources, test data from previously administered CLT exams, and information found on the CLT website.
- **An evaluation of the exam question bank.** The committee received all questions used in previously-administered exams from CLI. Questions from each section were evaluated by multiple committee members based on subject material covered and strength in predicting college preparedness. The committee found the questions to be challenging, sophisticated, and good measures of testing what is necessary to determine aptitude and college preparedness.
- **A test group of current Hillsdale College freshmen completing the exam.** A group of 38 current Hillsdale College freshmen completed a version of the exam under normal testing conditions. The test group contained a mixture of students from public, private, and homeschooling backgrounds. The committee found the correlation of scores between CLT and the students' original entrance examination scores to be largely acceptable, based on conversions provided by CLI. This supported similar data provided by CLI which had examined students who had taken both the CLT and another standardized entrance exam.
- **A survey of institutions already adopting the CLT.** Appointed members of the committee contacted institutions currently accepting the CLT to gain insight into their review and adoption processes, experience working with CLI, and current usage of CLT scores in the admissions review process. The committee received positive feedback from member institutions.
- **An in-person discussion with CLI leadership.** CLI's Jeremy Tate (Co-Founder and President) and Noah Tyler (Development Team) presented to the committee an overview of the CLT on December 14, 2016, followed by a question-and-answer session with committee members. Discussion included business operations and funding, points raised during Hillsdale's research, and CLI's future plans. The meeting productively addressed concerns and questions that had been raised by the committee through its research.

Summary Judgment

The committee recommended adopting the Classic Learning Test alongside other standardized college entrance exams currently used for admissions processes. After extensive review, the committee believes the CLT to be a superior assessment of a student's aptitude and reasoning ability. The use of texts from the Western Tradition adds depth and richness to the questions students must confront. Research and data suggest that a student's exam results, in conjunction with the many component parts of the review process, will greatly aid the Admissions Committee in evaluating applications for admission. Hillsdale College is excited to adopt the CLT as one of three acceptable standardized tests.