

ACT Research and Policy

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Information Brief

Many students who enter postsecondary education do not leave with a degree or certificate. Among those who do, many do not graduate in a timely fashion (within 4 or 2 years, depending on institution type).

Academic readiness, psychosocial factors, and interest-major fit have all been documented as predictors of timely degree attainment.¹ The psychosocial factors measured by ENGAGE™ that are important for student success can be grouped into three domains:

- Motivation and Skills
- Social Engagement
- Self-Regulation

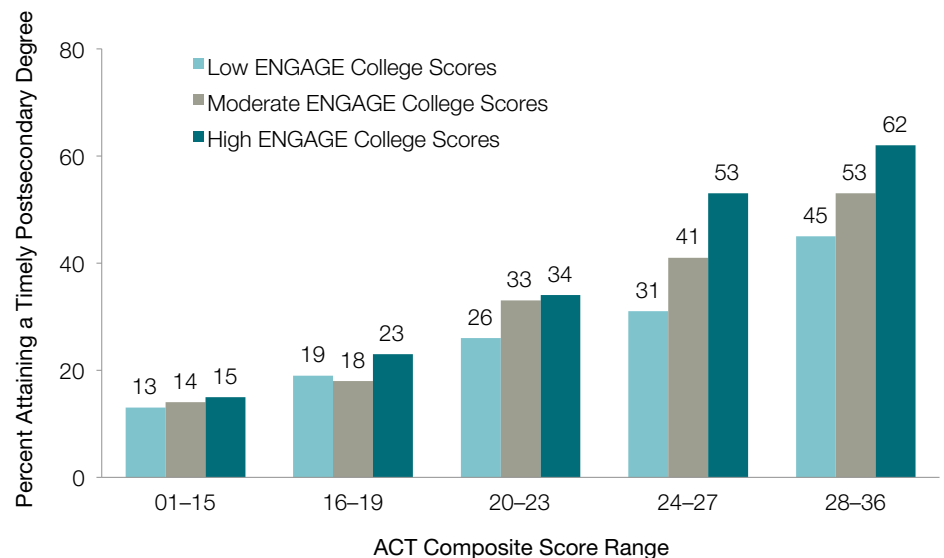
Timely Postsecondary Degree Attainment

Motivation and Engagement Matter

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In a recent study, students who scored higher on the ACT in high school and on motivation and engagement scales as entering college students were more likely to obtain a degree in a timely fashion than their peers. The study results are from both two- and four-year institutions.¹ As the chart below shows, the motivation and engagement measure was a stronger predictor of degree attainment as ACT Composite score increased.

Timely Postsecondary Degree Attainment, by ACT and ENGAGE College Scores



Note: Data include 3,860 (3,072 four-year and 788 two-year) students from 28 (15 four-year and 13 two-year) institutions.¹ Students completed ENGAGE™ College at the beginning of their first semester of college. The motivation and engagement measure used in this chart is the sum of three ENGAGE College scales: Academic Discipline, Commitment to College, and Social Connection. For students entering 4-year institutions, timely degree attainment was defined as having earned a bachelor's degree after four years. For students entering 2-year institutions, timely degree attainment was defined as having earned an associate's degree or certificate after two years.

¹ Allen, J., Robbins, S. (2010). Effects of interest-major congruence, motivation, and academic performance on timely degree attainment. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 57(1): 23-35.

infobrief@act.org for more information or to suggest ideas for future ACT Information Briefs.



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