

## ACT Research and Policy

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## Information Brief

Success in the first year of college is critical to subsequent student success in college. Students at four-year postsecondary institutions with higher first-year college GPAs are more likely to have higher cumulative GPAs at the end of year 6.

# ACT Scores, High School GPA, First-Year College GPA, and Year 6 College Cumulative GPA

among students enrolled in a four-year postsecondary institution

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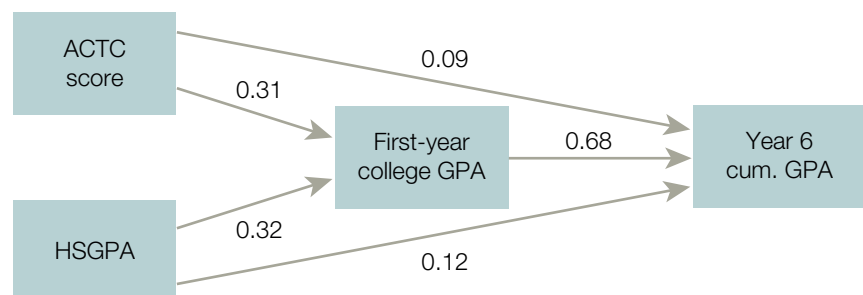
Long-term college grade point average (GPA) at four-year postsecondary institutions is related to past academic performance—both during high school and the first year of college.

Both ACT Composite (ACTC) score and high school grade point average (HSGPA) are directly related to first-year college GPA and year 6 cumulative GPA. These relationships are illustrated by the straight lines from the high school performance measures to college GPA at the end of years 1 and 6 in the figure below.

Although high school measures play a role in subsequent college performance at four-year postsecondary institutions, first-year college GPA has a much larger direct effect than either ACTC score or HSGPA on a student's year 6 college GPA (0.68 vs. 0.09 to 0.12).

In particular, students with higher ACTC scores and HSGPAs generally earn higher first-year college GPAs than those with lower scores and HSGPAs. And, students with higher first-year college GPAs tend to earn higher year 6 GPAs.

### Factors Influencing Year 6 College GPA at Four-Year Postsecondary Institutions



Note: Standardized regression coefficients are provided to allow for direct comparisons among variables. A positive coefficient indicates that a variable has a positive effect on the other; larger coefficients indicate stronger effects.

Based on data from nearly 69,000 ACT-tested students who enrolled in a four-year postsecondary institution as first-time entering students in fall 2000 through 2003 and were still enrolled six years later or had completed a bachelor's degree prior to the end of year 6. Nearly 60 institutions were represented. For a more detailed description of the study, see the full ACT Research Report numbered 2012-5 at [http://media.act.org/documents/ACT\\_RR2012-5.pdf](http://media.act.org/documents/ACT_RR2012-5.pdf).

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