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The first year in college is critical to student success. Students at two-year postsecondary institutions with higher first-year college GPAs are more likely to have higher cumulative GPAs at the end of year 3.

ACT Scores, High School GPA, First-Year College GPA, and Year 3 College Cumulative GPA

among students enrolled in a two-year postsecondary institution

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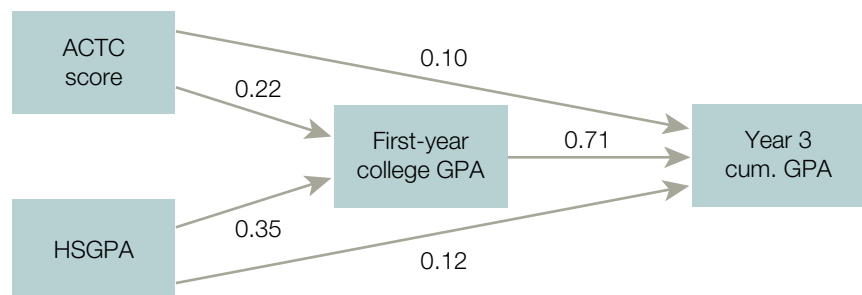
ACT Composite (ACTC) score and high school grade point average (HSGPA) each play an important role in predicting both first year and subsequent college performance at two-year postsecondary institutions.

Both high school performance measures are directly related to first-year college GPA and year 3 cumulative GPA. These relationships are illustrated by the straight lines from the performance measures to college GPA at the end of years 1 and 3 in the figure below.

Although high school measures play a role in subsequent college performance, first-year college GPA has a much larger direct effect than either ACTC score or HSGPA on a student's year 3 college GPA (0.71 vs. 0.10 to 0.12). Both high school performance measures are, for the most part, indirectly related to year 3 college GPA through their positive, unique effects on first-year GPA.

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 3 GPAs.

Factors Influencing Year 3 College GPA at Two-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 29,000 ACT-tested students who enrolled in a two-year postsecondary institution as first-time entering students in fall 2000 through 2006 and were still enrolled three years later or had completed an associate's degree prior to the end of year 3. Over 40 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.

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



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