

A Success Guide
from ACT

How to Decrease Dropout Rates in 30 Minutes

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ACT[®] Engage[®]
College

What We're Up Against

America's college dropout rates have gotten worse. As the National Student Clearinghouse reports, only 55 percent of the students who started school in the fall of 2008 graduated within six years—an overall decrease compared to recent years. When you look at the global landscape, this epidemic leaves us with one of the lowest college completion rates in the developed world.

In short, this is a challenge postsecondary institutions, like yours, are facing.

How do we address this? Student success and persistence are most affected by a complex blend of factors, including academic, behavioral, social, and psychological. Forget intervention. Identification of at-risk students alone poses an enormous challenge, especially in a climate of decreasing budgets and dwindling resources.

ACT has been working to understand and improve college readiness for more than 50 years. We created The ACT®, which assesses students' academic readiness for college. We'd like to share what we've learned about improving student success and retention at the college level.

In the end, you'll see that there's a simple solution for decreasing dropout rates in just 30 minutes. Let's get started by looking at what factors into student success.



The Most Overlooked Success Factors

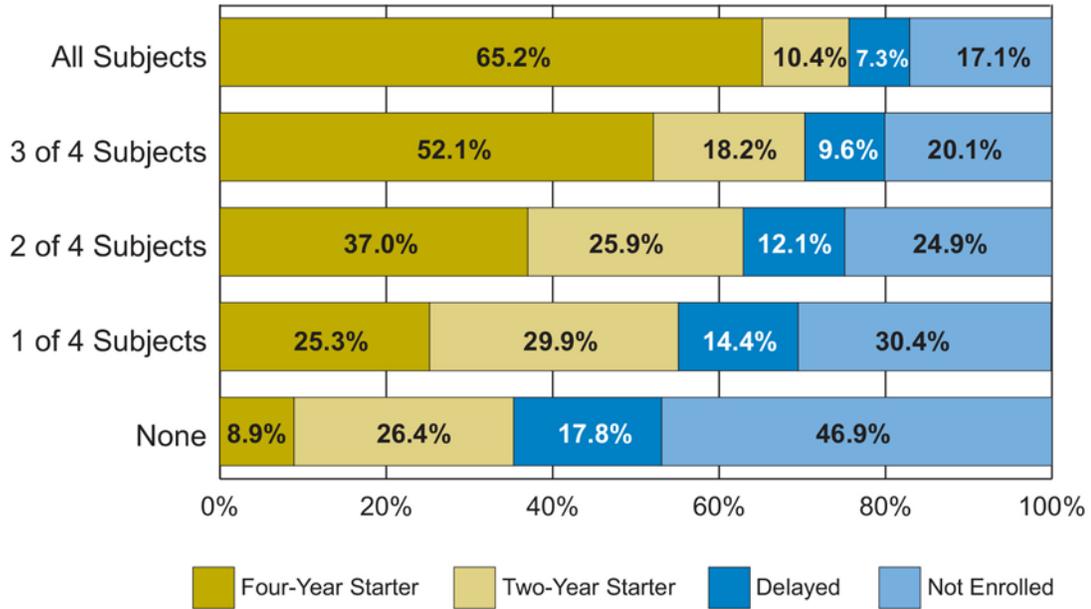
One of the biggest challenges in raising student achievement and reducing dropout is early identification of those students who would benefit most from intervention. This is easier said than done.

While assessments of academic achievement provide early indication of risk, academic *behaviors* are also important factors in student success. For example, student motivation is directly tied to an individual's interest and drive to get their schoolwork done (ACT 2011).

What if a college could identify which students had academic behaviors that put them at risk before they started their college career?

In a recent study, the State of Illinois found that about 83 percent of the students who meet the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks in all four subject areas are graduating—leaving 17 percent who don't complete their degree.

Figure 4.
College Enrollment Patterns by the Number of ACT Benchmarks Met



Source: State of Illinois Education Research Council

Additionally, an ACT research report found that of a national sample of nearly 25,000 ACT-tested high school graduates who met all the ACT College and Career Readiness Benchmarks, less than 80 percent earned their college degree within six years.

At-risk academic behaviors include:

- **Motivation**—personal characteristics that help students succeed academically by focusing and maintaining energies on goal-directed activities.
- **Social Engagement**—interpersonal factors that influence students' successful integration into their environment.
- **Self-Regulation**—the thinking processes and emotional responses of students that govern how well they monitor, regulate, and control their behavior related to school and learning.

These critical behaviors and psychosocial attributes are often overlooked once a student gets to college.

But what if they weren't?



A New Path Ahead: Identification and Intervention

Based on our decades of research in secondary and postsecondary college readiness, we developed ACT Engage® to measure these often-overlooked behaviors and attributes.

We can now predict—with a remarkable degree of accuracy—how likely each of your incoming freshmen is to return for a second year and whether they will earn at least a 2.0 GPA. This provides additional information that more accurately identifies students who are at risk of poor grades and dropout, beyond measures of academic achievement alone.

In just 30 minutes, without the pressure of a high-stakes assessment, students answer 108 simple questions about themselves. You will have online reports available immediately that you can use to identify students who are most at risk of running into academic difficulty or even dropping out during their first year.

ACT Engage is a powerful and affordable way to improve your first-year retention rates and directly reach students whose personal challenges go unreported in standardized academic tests. It's easy for colleges to administer and requires minimal time and financial resources. There's no proctoring and schools pay only for completed surveys—test materials are free. ACT Engage is an ideal fit for any orientation program you have in place.

ACT Engage is administered online. Reports can be easily configured by assessment date range and student demographic information. Schools can seamlessly manage all ACT Engage reports and data in our easy-to-use online system.

View ACT Engage sample reports
http://www.act.org/engage/college_results.html

Sounds like a good plan, right? But does this actually help? Will it move the needle for your institution and, more importantly, your students?

The Impact on Success

We tested more than 14,000 students at 48 postsecondary institutions using ACT Engage College and tracked these students through their college careers. Results show that ACT Engage is a valid predictor of academic performance and persistence. Let's take a look at what this means for an individual institution.

The University of North Texas used ACT Engage College to improve retention by 3 percent. This represented about 105 students at \$5,662.80 in annual tuition—totaling \$594,594 in savings for the institution.

From the student perspective, this early intervention can set a trajectory for future success in the workplace. For example, a student who learns to study diligently and becomes more invested in their coursework is more likely to be successful and productive in their career.

All of this by taking just 30 minutes of time for incoming freshmen.



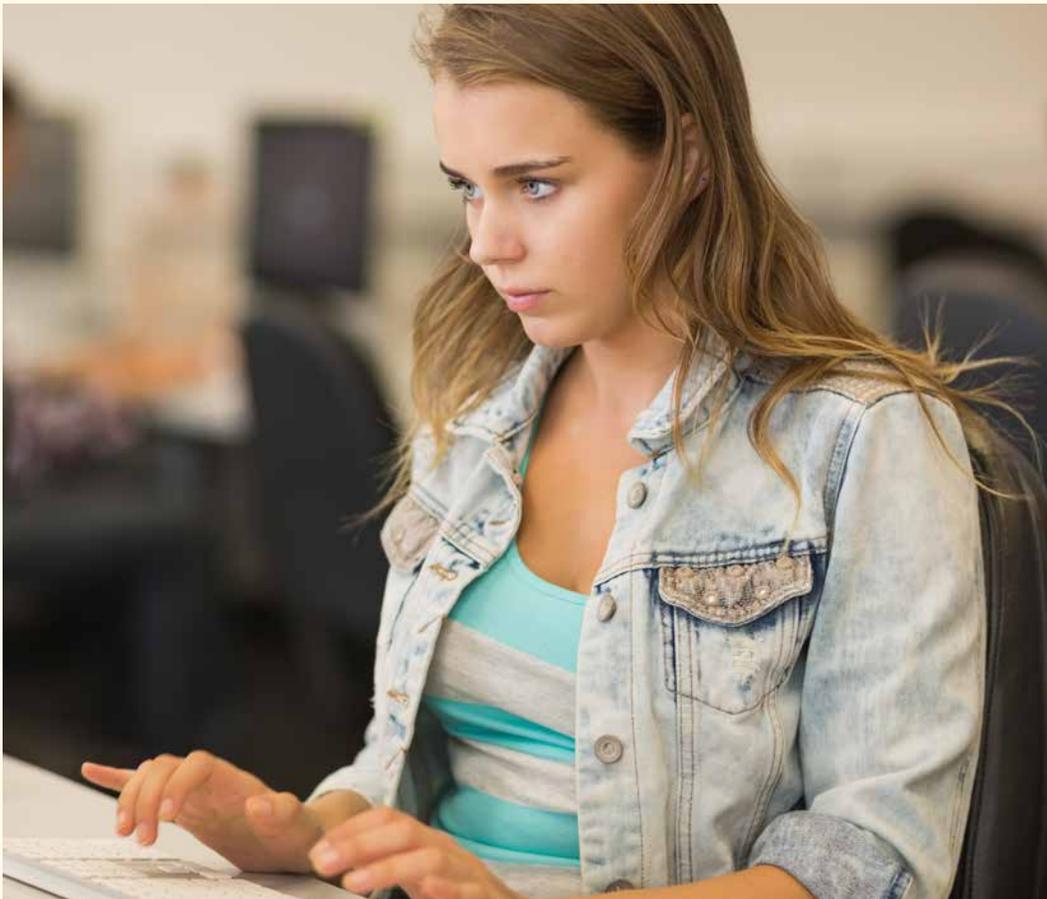
Just 30 Minutes

Thirty minutes isn't a lot of time. When you consider the long-term impact that early identification and intervention has on college success and career readiness, it seems almost negligent *not* to make this one of your tools for student success. Are you ready to get started?

To schedule a consultation with an ACT Engage Success Specialist, please complete the form found at act.org/engage/contact. Like ACT Engage itself, your call will be just 30 minutes.

When it comes to improving student success, who doesn't have 30 minutes?

Learn more at act.org/engagecollege



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