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Because ACT scores and HSGPA predict first-year college GPA, they also predict bachelor's degree completion within six years of initially enrolling in a four-year institution.

These results highlight the importance of ensuring that all students are academically prepared for their first year in college.

Connecting ACT Scores, High School GPA, First-Year College GPA, and Degree Completion

for students enrolled in a four-year postsecondary institution

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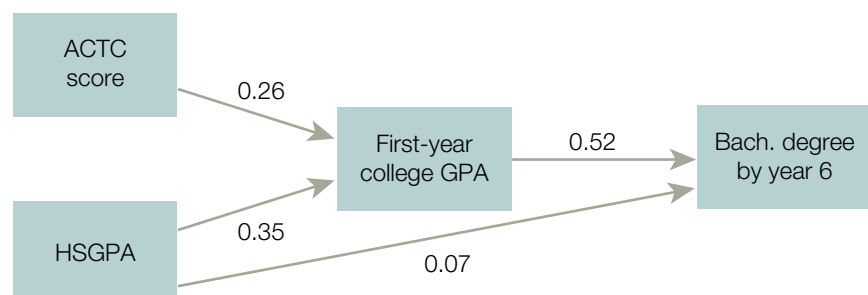
To improve their chances of completing a bachelor's degree within six years from their initial four-year institution, students must be strong academically—both during high school and their first year of college.

As illustrated by the straight lines in the figure below, both ACT Composite (ACTC) score and high school grade point average (HSGPA) are directly related to first-year college grade point average (GPA).

First-year college GPA has a much larger direct effect than HSGPA on bachelor's degree completion within six years (0.52 vs. 0.07).¹ Both ACTC score and HSGPA are, for the most part, indirectly related to students' chances of completing a bachelor's degree by year 6 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 are more likely than those with lower ones to complete a bachelor's degree by year 6.

Factors Influencing Bachelor's Degree Completion by Year 6



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 126,000 ACT-tested students who enrolled in a four-year postsecondary institution as first-time entering students in fall 2000 through 2003. Over 60 institutions were represented. Degree completion from the initial institution was tracked. 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.

¹ ACTC score is not directly related to bachelor's degree completion by year 6.

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