

GRADES vs TEST SCORES

PREDICTING SUCCESS AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

“High school grades are a far better predictor of both four-year and six-year graduation rates than are SAT/ACT scores.... The consistency of the results is extraordinary.... The findings are dramatic”

— Bowen, Chingos, McPherson; Crossing the Finish Line: Completing College at America’s Public Universities. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

GPA is a more powerful predictor of six-year graduation rates than SAT/ACT scores*:

2.5x more powerful at the most selective public flagships

4.1x more powerful at selective public flagships

6x more powerful at selective state system colleges/universities

8.3x more powerful at less selective public flagships

9.7x more powerful at less selective state system colleges/universities

SAT/ACT has a **negative correlation** in predicting success at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, while GPA is highly predictive

“Test scores, on the other hand, routinely fail to pass standard tests of statistical significance when included with high school GPA in regressions predicting graduation rates....”

— Bowen, Chingos, McPherson

*These data and analyses come from chapter six of Crossing the Finish Line, a compilation of research that examined the progress of 202,522 full-time, first-time freshmen (1999) at 68 public universities – 21 flagship institutions in 20 states and 47 state-system universities in four states.



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