

Using High School Data to Explore Early College Success on Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia

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To increase the number of college graduates in Pohnpei, the Pohnpei Department of Education and the College of Micronesia–Federated States of Micronesia (COM–FSM) are working together to improve the early college outcomes of their students.

This study examined associations of high school academic preparation and student characteristics with early college success outcomes. Examining links between these measures could help inform strategies to increase degree attainment.

What We Knew Before the Study



As of 2010 about 15% of residents over age 25 on Pohnpei in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) had completed an associate degree or higher.¹



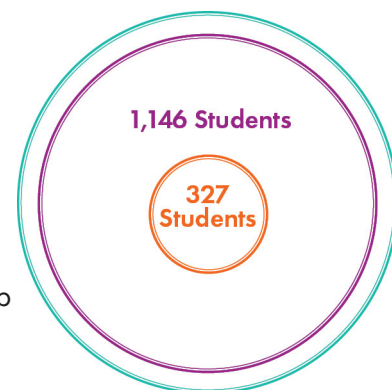
In 2018, 58% of high school students² from Pohnpei who took the College of Micronesia Entrance Test (COMET) received a high enough result to be considered for admission to a degree program or Achieving College Excellence (ACE) program.^{3, 4}



Additionally, in 2020, 58% of full-time, first-year college students persisted to a second year of college.⁵

Who was included in the study?

- **Group 1:** Students who graduated from a Pohnpei public high school between spring 2016–2018 and took the COMET in grade 12. This group represents 88% of all public school graduates on Pohnpei during those years.
- **Group 2:** Students from group 1 who enrolled at COM–FSM during the summer or fall term after their high school graduation in a degree program or ACE program. This group represents 25% of all public school graduates on Pohnpei during those years.



1,305 Total Public High School Graduates

What measures were examined?

High school academic preparation characteristics

- Grade point average (GPA).
- Coursework track: Academic, Business, Vocational.

Student characteristics

- College enrollment type (full- vs. part-time).*
- College placement type (ACE vs. degree).*
- First term of college enrollment after high school graduation (summer vs. fall term).*
- Gender.
- Ethnicity.

Early college success outcomes

- COMET result (**Group 1**).
- Placement in credit-bearing reading, writing, and math courses (**Group 2**).
- Persistence to a second year of college (**Group 2**).

* These measures were only used to examine associations with persistence to a second year of college.



COMET Result

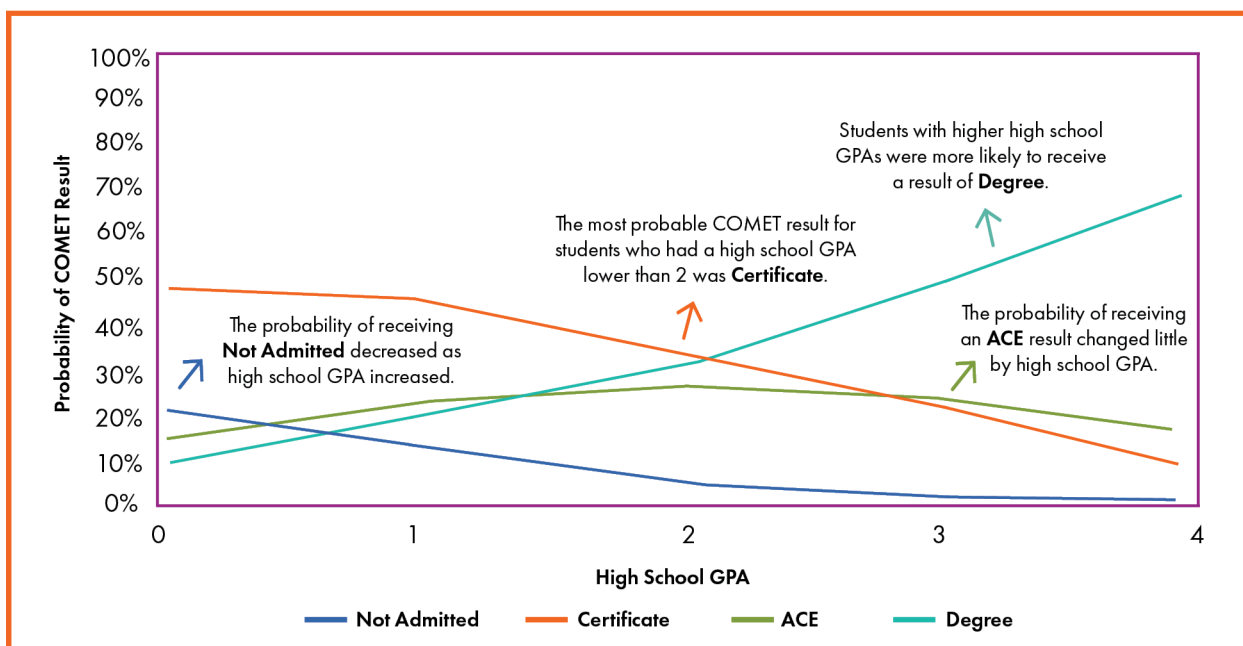
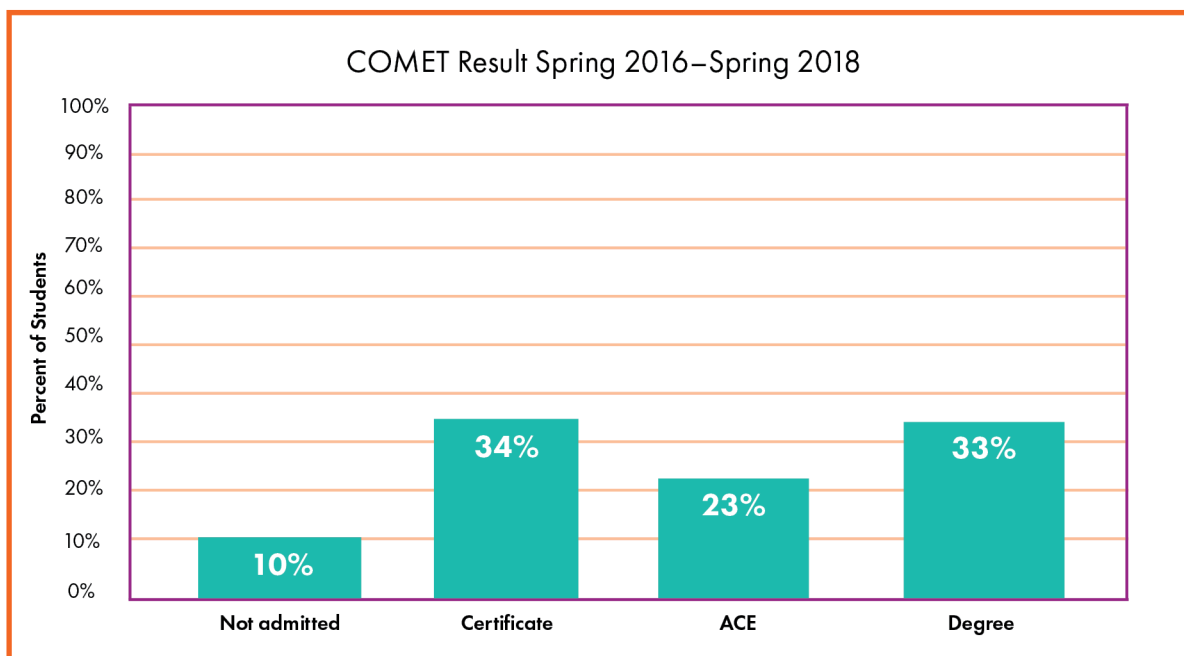
The entrance exam is one factor in college admission decisions and comprises three subtests: math, English reading, and English writing. There are four possible results for students:

- **Not Admitted:** Student is not considered for admission.
- **Certificate:** Student is considered for admission to a one-year certificate program.
- **ACE Program:** Student is considered for conditional admission to a two-year associate degree program but must complete one or two series of expedited developmental math and English courses before being admitted to a degree program.
- **Degree Program:** Student is considered for admission to a two-year associate degree program.

Key Takeaways

COMET Result

The study found that 56% of students taking the COMET scored well enough to qualify for enrollment in a degree program or ACE program.



High school GPA was positively associated with receiving a COMET score high enough for direct admission to a degree program.



High School Coursework Tracks and Degree or ACE Results

Academic Track

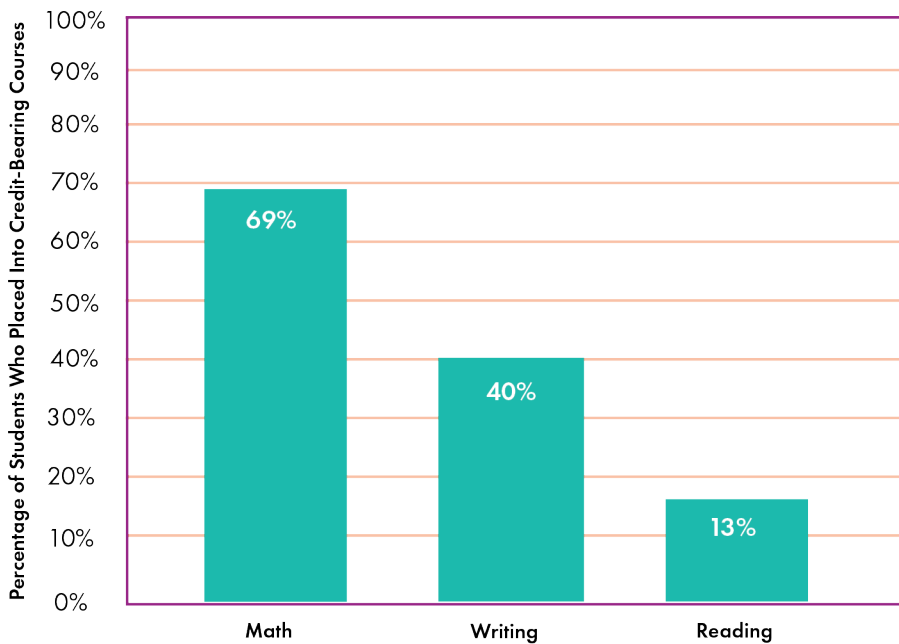
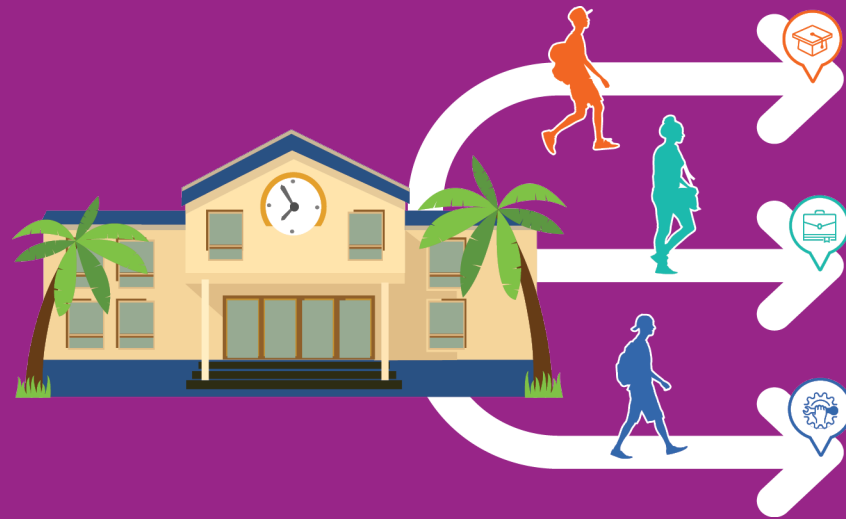
Students who enrolled in the academic coursework track have a **72 percent** probability of receiving a result of ACE or Degree. Students in this track have a 46 percent probability of receiving a Degree result, far higher than students in the other tracks.

Business Track

Students who enrolled in the business coursework track have a **50 percent** probability of receiving a result of ACE or Degree.

Vocational Track

Students who enrolled in the vocational coursework track have a **42 percent** probability of receiving a result of ACE or Degree.



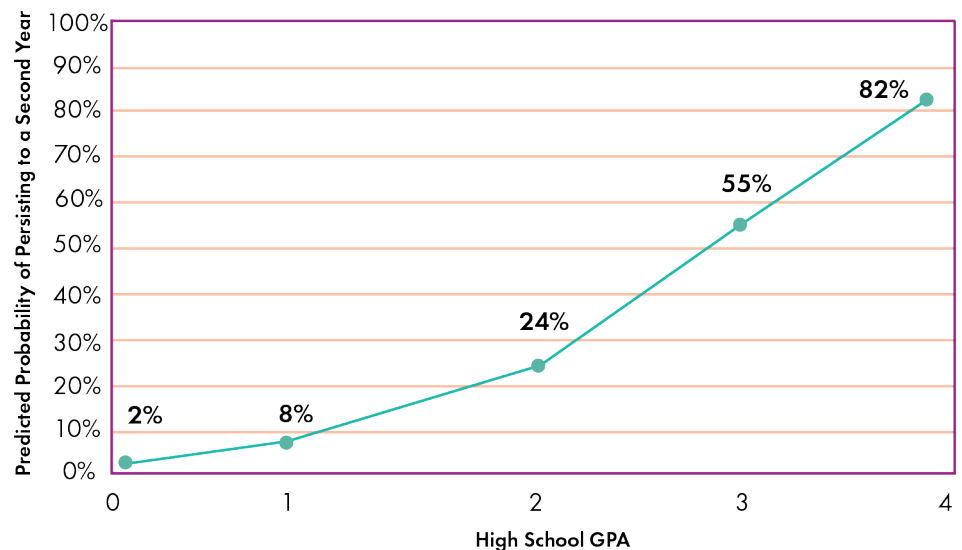
Student Placement Into Credit-Bearing Courses

- **High school GPA** was positively associated with placement into credit-bearing math, English writing, and English reading courses.
- Enrolling in the **academic coursework track** was positively associated with placement into a credit-bearing English reading course.
- The probability of being placed in credit-bearing English reading and writing courses was low for all college students.

Persistence to a Second Year

- About 72% of first-time college students persisted to a second year of college.
- **High school GPA** was positively associated with persisting to a second year.
- **Enrolling in the summer term** immediately after high school graduation, rather than waiting for the fall term, was positively associated with persisting to a second year.

High school GPA was positively associated with persisting to a second year.



Reflection Questions for Pohnpei High School and College Educators and Policymakers

Students in the study had low placement rates in credit-bearing English reading and writing courses, even for high-performing students. Research in the United States has shown that college course placement tests often underplace students.⁶ **Is the COMET appropriately placing COM–FSM students into college courses, especially for English reading and writing courses?** Moreover, most students who graduate from a Pohnpei public high school do not speak English as their home language. Other research suggests that education in a student’s home language may be associated with improved student outcomes.^{7, 8} **What supports are available on Pohnpei for high school and college students in their home languages?** What supports are available to help students learn English?

Students who enrolled in the business and vocational coursework tracks were less likely to be placed in some credit-bearing courses at COM–FSM than students who enrolled in the academic coursework track. **What supports can be provided for students enrolled in the business and vocational coursework tracks in high school and in college to support those students’ college readiness and success?** To what extent is each high school coursework track’s curriculum aligned with the intended student outcomes of that coursework track? How are students advised to select a coursework track, and to what extent does advisement take into account students’ college and career goals?

This study found that students who first enroll in college in the summer term immediately after high school graduation have higher persistence rates than students who wait to enroll until the fall term. What may be some of the reasons for this difference? **What can be done to support the persistence of students who enroll in the fall term?**

Endnotes

1. As of 2010. FSM Office of Statistics, Budget, Overseas Development Assistance and Compact Management. (2010). *Summary analysis of key indicators from the FSM 2010 Census of Population and Housing*. Government of the Federated States of Micronesia.
2. These percentages vary from the current study’s findings because these numbers include students from private schools, and people applying to COM–FSM after high school graduation, who were not included in the study’s sample.
3. Achieving College Excellence is a series of accelerated developmental courses. Students admitted to ACE must complete these courses prior to enrolling in degree courses.
4. FSM National Department of Education. (2018). *FSM education data digest school year 2017–2018*. Government of the Federated States of Micronesia.
5. National Center for Education Statistics. (2020). *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System: College of Micronesia–FSM*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.
<https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/institutionprofile.aspx?unitId=243638&goToReportId=6>
6. Barnett, E. A., Kopko, E., Cullinan, D., & Belfield, C. R. (2020). *Who should take college-level courses? Impact findings from an evaluation of a multiple measures assessment strategy*. Center for the Analysis of Postsecondary Readiness, Community College Research Center. Retrieved April 6, 2021, from
<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/multiple-measures-assessment-impact-findings.pdf>
7. García, O. (2009). *Bilingual education in the 21st century: A global perspective*. Blackwell.
8. May, S. (2014). *The multilingual turn: Implications for SLA, TESOL and bilingual education*. Routledge.



To access the published REL study, visit: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectID=5667>

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