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Education Sciences

What are some examples of effective use of multiple measures for student placement in college?



Selected Evidence-Based Resources*

- A randomized controlled trial of a multiple measures placement system [across seven community colleges in New York](#) resulted in 3.1 percent and 12.5 percent more students enrolling in and passing math and English courses, respectively, compared to the control group. Additionally, the cost of the multiple measures program, though initially high, proved less expensive than the status quo placement system over time.
- A randomized controlled trial of various multiple measures placement systems [across five colleges in Minnesota and Wisconsin](#) showed that students placed using multiple measures were 28 percent more likely to have completed their college-level English course by the end of their first college semester and were 12 percent more likely to have completed their college-level math course by the end of their first semester, compared to the control group.
- [A study of California community colleges](#) demonstrated that the use of multiple measures may better support placing underrepresented minoritized students into higher-level math courses. The study shows marginally positive relationships between the use of measures like prior math background and high school GPA and performance in higher-level math courses.
- Data from more than [42,000 first-time entrants](#) to a large, urban community college system show that a multiple measures model most accurately predicts course success (earning a grade B or higher) when combining the following measures:
 - placement test scores.
 - high school grade point average.
 - total number of college preparatory units completed.
 - whether the student graduated from a local high school.
 - the number of years since high school graduation.

However, the model did not as accurately predict who would be a low performer.

- A study on [urban and rural college students in Alaska](#) shows that high school GPA was a better predictor of math and English course grades than standardized exam scores when students entered college within a year of high school graduation. However, when students delayed college entry for more than one year, the strength of high school GPA as a predictor decreased for math and English, while standardized exam scores were better at predicting math grades. This suggests that accurate college course placement is more complex when more time passes between high school graduation and college enrollment.

*Note: All studies cited in this FAQ, with the exception of Hodara & Lewis (2017), have been reviewed by the [What Works Clearinghouse](#).

The Hodara & Lewis (2017) study has undergone IES peer review.

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