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What factors has research shown to be associated with college readiness and success in the Pacific region?



Background

Although there have been numerous studies in the United States about factors associated with college readiness and success, these factors can vary substantially by [college](#), [locale](#), [graduation cohort](#), and [student demographics](#). Results of research studies about college readiness and success may not always generalize beyond their study populations, which is especially true in the [Pacific region](#), where there may be large structural and demographic differences between jurisdictions across education systems. [Examining factors for each local context](#) can help support efforts to improve students' college readiness and success. In the U.S.-affiliated Pacific region, there have only been a few studies that examined college readiness and success within the last decade (2011–21), most of which have been completed by REL Pacific.



Selected Research Evidence

American Samoa

- [A study](#) focused on higher education in American Samoa found that high school cumulative grade point average (GPA), grade 12 SAT-10 reading scores, and grade 12 absenteeism were associated with enrollment in credit-bearing courses.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

- [REL Pacific research](#) in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) found that college outcomes were associated with several high school factors, including enrollment in Advanced Placement courses and high-level high school math courses, grade in Algebra 2, cumulative high school GPA, standardized test scores, and students' [growth mindset social-emotional competency scores in grade 12](#).
- Students in the CNMI who initially placed into college credit-bearing math and English courses [were more likely to complete a college degree within eight semesters](#) than students who placed into developmental courses.

Federated States of Micronesia

- [REL Pacific research](#) on Pohnpei in the Federated States of Micronesia found that several high school factors, including cumulative GPA and student's choice of coursework track, were associated with college entrance test results and college outcomes. For example, students who first enrolled at the college in the summer term immediately after high school graduation were more likely to persist to a second year of college than students who waited to enroll in the fall term.

Guam

- Several high school factors, [including high school GPA and completing a high-level math course](#), have positive associations with college outcomes for students on Guam. Completing a high-level math course in high school was also positively associated with enrolling in credit-bearing math and English courses and earning all attempted credits. Some indicators of college readiness and early college success varied by the student's gender, [ethnicity](#),* and high school attended.

Hawai'i

- [In one study, Students' socio-economic background, gender, ethnicity, and standardized test scores](#) were associated with enrollment in a public postsecondary institution in Hawai'i. The study also found that enrollment in a four-year university versus a two-year community college varied by student gender, standardized test scores in reading and math, and ethnicity. In particular, Hawaiian and Filipino students were more likely to enroll in two-year community colleges and less likely to later transfer to a four-year college than other students. Additional data and summary files about college and career readiness for students in the state can be found via the [Hawai'i Data eXchange Partnership](#) website.

Republic of the Marshall Islands

- [REL Pacific research](#) in the Republic of the Marshall Islands has found that high school GPA was positively associated with students earning all attempted credits during their first year of college and persisting to a second year. Student gender and high school attended were also significant factors associated with college outcomes.

Republic of Palau

- Several high school factors were positively associated with college outcomes, like persistence and degree completion. These factors include [GPA, grade 9 and 12 English course grades, standardized test scores, and student's choice of career academy](#).

*See Badowski & McVey (2021, p. 69) for an example.

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