

Demographic and Academic Characteristics Associated with College Readiness and Early College Success in the Republic of the Marshall Islands

In the Republic of the Marshall Islands, college readiness and early college success are major concerns. More than 75 percent of a recent cohort of incoming students at the College of the Marshall Islands did not place into credit-bearing math and English courses,¹ which suggests that students might not be academically prepared to take postsecondary coursework. This study yields information about which demographic and academic preparation factors relate to college readiness and early college success in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. The findings can inform potential policy and practice around college preparation.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands Ministry of Education and College of the Marshall Islands provided data for students who graduated from Republic of the Marshall Islands public high schools between spring 2015 and spring 2017 and enrolled as first-time, degree-seeking students at the College of the Marshall Islands between fall 2015 and fall 2017 ($n = 482$). The study examined the relationships between student characteristics and college readiness and early college success based on students' achieving three indicators: placing into only credit-bearing math and English courses, earning all credits attempted during the first year of college, and persisting to a second year of college.²

Key findings

- **Only 3 percent of students demonstrated college readiness and early college success by achieving all three indicators.** About 5 percent of students placed into only credit-bearing math and English courses, 19 percent earned all the credits attempted during their first year of college, and 53 percent persisted to a second year of college.
- **High school grade point average predicted earning all credits attempted and persisting to a second year of college, the high school students attended predicted earning all credits attempted during the first year of college, and gender predicted persisting to a second year of college.** Students with a higher cumulative high school grade point average were more likely than other students to earn all credits attempted during the first year of college and to persist to a second year of college, after other characteristics were accounted for. The difference was major. Graduates of Laura High School were more likely than graduates of other high schools to earn all credits attempted. The difference was major. Finally, male students were more likely than female students to persist to a second year of college. The difference was also major.

1. Vila, C. T. (2016). *CMI degrees awarded and graduates 2011–2016*. College of the Marshall Islands. <https://www.cmi.edu/about-cmi/institutional-research/institutional-research-reports/>.

2. Group differences were considered major if they were significant and corresponded to a difference of at least 10 percentile points in magnitude. They were considered minor if they were significant but corresponded to a difference of less than 10 percentile points.