

Capitol Graduate Research Summit

The Great Debate of College Achievement: Which Non-Academic Factors Contribute Most to College Readiness and Success?

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Today, graduating from high school, enrolling in college, and obtaining a bachelor's degree are the primary means of increasing one's cultural capital and subsequent upward social mobility. In fact, many scholars explain that "Education beyond high school is the passport to the American dream." Too often, however, high school graduates enroll in colleges/universities and realize they are not completely prepared for the college environment/culture and academic rigor. Considering these findings, emphasis is placed on which academic factors best predict college readiness/success. The traditional academic indicators (e.g., high school GPA, standardized test scores, etc.) continue to lose their predictive power, and it is now time to investigate nontraditional (nonacademic) factors (e.g., perseverance, social support, empathy, college knowledge, etc.). The aim of this study was to investigate which nonacademic factors improve the prediction of perceived college preparedness and college GPA. Results indicate that nonacademic factors do improve the predictive power for regression models—including traditional academic factors—and improve the prediction of perceived college preparedness and college success. Results also indicate that students who complete all enrolled credit hours during their first semester of college is associated with greater college knowledge, feel confident to continue college, and earn higher college GPAs.