

Common student misconceptions about college readiness ²

What You May Believe

What You Should Know

I don't have to worry about my grades or the kinds of classes I take until my sophomore year.

Students need to prepare well for college in order to enroll in college-level courses. Students need to take a carefully planned series of courses starting no later than ninth or tenth grade.

It's better to take easier classes in high school and get better grades.

One of the best predictors of college success is taking rigorous high school classes. Getting good grades in lower-level classes will not prepare students for college-level work.

Meeting high school graduation requirements will prepare me for college.

Adequate preparation for college requires a more demanding curriculum than is reflected in minimum requirements for high school graduation.

I can take whatever classes I want when I get to college.

Virtually all community colleges and many universities require entering students to take placement exams (such as COMPASS) in core subject areas. Those tests determine which classes students can take.

Community colleges don't have academic standards.

Community colleges have stringent academic standards that mirror those of four-year colleges. Community college courses are not "easy."

Four-year colleges will admit anyone.

Most four-year institutions do not admit students who are not college ready. Many four-year schools are in a position where they can be very selective.

² Adapted from "Betraying the College Dream: How Disconnected K-12 and Postsecondary Education Systems Undermine Student Aspirations," a final policy report from Stanford University's Bridge Project, 2003.

If I'm not ready for a four-year college, I can go to community college and easily make up the work that I didn't do in high school.

While most community colleges admit all applicants who have completed high school, these colleges also make mandatory course placements based upon assessment scores.

If I graduate from high school and I am not college ready, I will never be successful in college or in life.

Many students improve academically in college and go on to be very successful. However, making up work that should have been done in high school is very challenging and costly. Work hard now and avoid this difficult path.