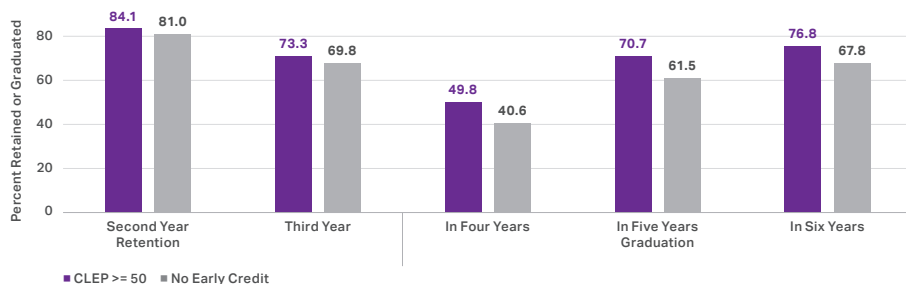


# High School CLEP Test Taking and College Outcomes

## Key Findings

- High school CLEP® test takers who score 50 or higher and matriculate to a **four-year college** have higher retention and graduation rates than a comparable group of students without early credit.<sup>1</sup>
- High school CLEP test takers who score 50 or higher and begin at a **two-year college** have considerably higher transfer rates to a four-year college, higher graduation rates, and higher rates of bachelor's degree completion than a comparable group of students without early credit.
- Among **first-generation college-going students** and **underrepresented students**, those earning a CLEP score of 50 or higher have considerably higher graduation and retention rates at colleges as well as higher transfer rates from two- to four-year colleges.

## Figures and Results



**Figure 1: Percent Retained or Graduated at Four-Year Colleges/Universities**

Figure 1 shows the retention and graduation rates of both CLEP test takers scoring 50 or higher and students without early credit, who began at a four-year college or university. Retention rates to second year are about 3 percentage points higher for the CLEP students, while retention rates to third year are 3.5 percentage points higher. The largest advantage for CLEP students was in graduation rates: CLEP students have a four-, five-, and six-year graduation rate that is about 9 percentage points higher than that of students without early credit.

## DATA SOURCES

This study includes approximately 4,500 CLEP students and 4,500 students without early credit, who took the SAT®, graduated high school in 2006, 2007, or 2008, and enrolled in a postsecondary institution, according to enrollment records from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC).

## METHODOLOGY

To ensure that differences in college outcomes between CLEP and no-early-credit students were not due to differing academic or demographic characteristics, we created a sample in which each group of students had near identical academic and demographic characteristics.

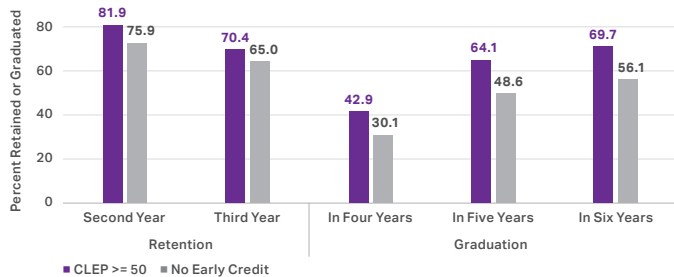
We matched exactly on:

- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Parental Education
- College Sector (2- or 4-year)

and to within 20 points on each SAT section:

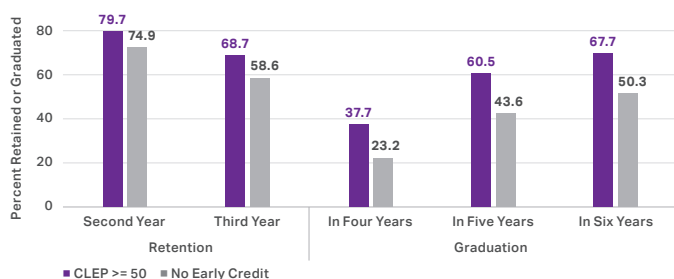
- Critical Reading
- Math
- Writing

<sup>1</sup> Early credit is defined as participating in a program that awards college credits for students in high school. Specifically, these students did not take the CLEP or Advanced Placement® (AP) Exams or participate in dual enrollment coursework.



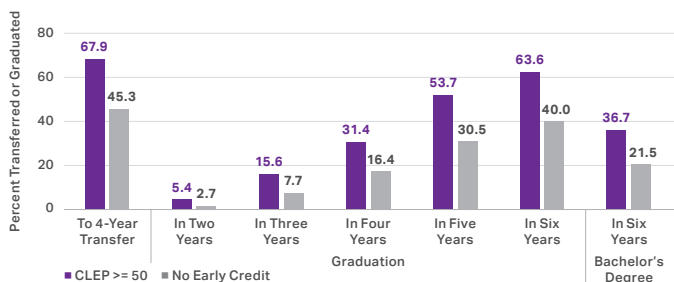
**Figure 2: Percent of First-Generation Students Retained or Graduated at Four-Year Colleges/Universities**

Figure 2 shows the retention and graduation rates of first-generation college-going students. These results indicate that first-generation CLEP students scoring 50 or higher outperform the first-generation students without early credit by an even wider margin. The CLEP students have second- and third-year retention rates that are roughly 6 percentage points higher, and graduation rates that are approximately 13 to 16 percentage points higher.



**Figure 3: Percent of Underrepresented Students Retained or Graduated at Four-Year Colleges/Universities**

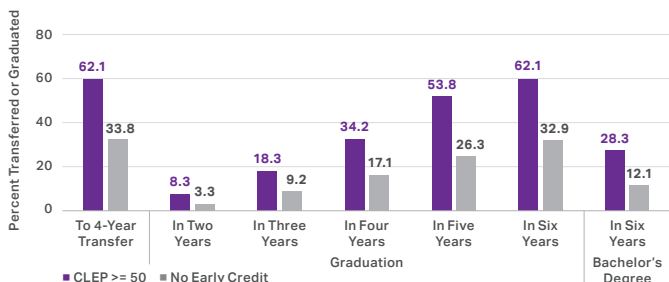
Figure 3 shows the retention and graduation rates of underrepresented college-going CLEP students scoring 50 or higher and underrepresented college-going students without early credit. The CLEP students have retention rates that are roughly 5–10 percentage points higher and graduation rates that are between 14–17 percentage points higher.



**Figure 4: Percent Transferred or Graduated at Two-Year Colleges/Universities**

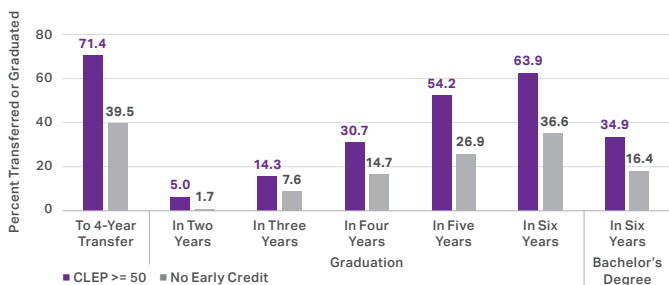
Figure 4 compared the college outcomes of CLEP students scoring 50 or higher and students without early credit who begin college at a two-year institution. The CLEP students are

considerably more likely to transfer to a four-year institution (over 20 percentage points higher), graduate from college (up to 24 percentage points higher), and graduate with a bachelor's degree (15 percentage points higher).



**Figure 5: Percent of First-Generation Students Transferred or Graduated at Two-Year Colleges/Universities**

Figure 5 compared the college outcomes of first-generation CLEP students scoring 50 or higher to first-generation students without early credit who begin college at a two-year institution. The CLEP students are considerably more likely to transfer to a four-year institution (almost 30 percentage points higher), graduate from college (up to 29 percentage points higher), and graduate with a bachelor's degree (16 percentage points higher).



**Figure 6: Percent of Underrepresented Students Transferred or Graduated at Two-Year Colleges/Universities**

Figure 6 compared the college outcomes of underrepresented CLEP students scoring 50 or higher to underrepresented students without early credit who began college at a two-year institution. The CLEP students are considerably more likely to transfer to a four-year institution (almost 32 percentage points higher), graduate from college (up to 27 percentage points higher), and graduate with a bachelor's degree (18 percentage points higher).

**A LINK TO THE REPORT IS COMING SOON!**

Please email [jwyatt@collegeboard.org](mailto:jwyatt@collegeboard.org)

for a copy of the research report.