

Understanding Persistence and Academic Success Across the College Journey

These two complementary studies examined college persistence and academic success at Sam Houston State University, offering a comprehensive perspective.

- Study 1 analyzed data from all undergraduate students (N > 17,000), using matched comparisons to explore what helps students stay enrolled.
- Study 2 focused specifically on juniors and seniors (N = 23,687), exploring how institutional supports and student characteristics impact academic performance and persistence during the final stages of college.

Together, the studies reveal a developmental perspective: early college persistence is driven by academic momentum and foundational support, while later academic success is shaped by deeper engagement and targeted institutional interventions.

Distinctive Contributions by Study

Theme	Study 1: All Undergraduates	Study 2: Juniors & Seniors
Focus	Early to mid-college persistence	Academic performance & persistence in upper division
Method	Propensity score matching of persisters vs. non-persisters	Correlational analysis by classification
Population	All enrolled undergraduates	Juniors and Seniors
Unique Insight	Full-term credit load is a major predictor of retention	Instructor quality and ACE courses strongly affect late-stage success
Support Use	Academic support use predicts persistence (reactive but helpful)	Support centers appear reactive; ACE and work-study are more proactive

Conclusion and Institutional Implications

Together, the two studies provide a developmental framework for supporting student success across the undergraduate experience. Early college success (Study 1) hinges on academic momentum, financial aid, and the use of foundational support services. Upper-division success (Study 2) relies on engaged instruction, targeted programming (ACE), and continued support for high-risk groups like transfer and first-gen students.