# **Assessment Note**

#### Office of Academic Assessment and Institutional Research

Ball State University

AAIR No. MAP-A1-2005

#### Who Earns A's and B's Their First Semester?

In Fall 2004, all first time matriculating freshmen were sent the *Making Achievement Possible (MAP) Survey*. Of the 3,376 students who received it, 2,697 freshmen returned the survey, for a response rate of 78 percent. Approximately 44 percent of MAP respondents earned a grade point average of at least 3.00 during their first semester. Because student success is an important issue at Ball State, we decided to find out more about the students who perform well academically. Specifically, we investigated the links between students' early experiences and expectations with the grades the students earned their first semester. Our findings are described below.

#### 1. Freshmen who plan to do well academically are more likely to earn A's and B's.

Two-thirds of freshmen who expected to get A's in their freshman year earned A's or B's in their first semester. Similarly, more than one-half of freshmen who planned to study 21 or more out-of-class hours earned A's and B's. Only three out of every ten students who planned to study five hours or less earned A's or B's. (Table 1)

#### Table 1

	Percentages Earning A's or B's
Overall grade expectations for freshman year	
A	67
В	36
C	13
Planned outside-of-class study hours	
21 or more hours per week	55
16-20 hours per week	45
11-15 hours per week	42
6-10 hours per week	41
0-5 hours per week	31

### 2. Freshmen who adjust academically during their first few weeks are more likely to earn A's and B's.

Freshmen who agreed that they were managing their time well, adjusting to college study demands, and satisfied with their academic life and their courses were more likely to earn A's and B's in their first semester. Similarly, students who agreed they were attending their classes were also more likely to earn A's and B's. Overall, students who report academic issues early in the semester are less likely to earn A's or B's. (Table 2)

Table 2

	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Undecided	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree
	Percentages Earning A's or B's		
I am managing my time well.	47	41	29
I am adjusting to college study demands.	47	41	32
I am satisfied with my academic life at BSU.	47	35	38
I am satisfied with my courses for this semester.	46	37	39
I am attending all my classes.	45	26	23

## 3. Although initial academic adjustment was related to academic performance, initial social adjustment was not.

Freshmen who agreed that they were pleased about attending Ball State, fit in well, were adjusting well, and were satisfied with their social lives were not more likely to earn A's and B's in their first semester than other students. Overall, social adjustment does not appear related to first semester academic performance. (Table 3)

Table 3

	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Undecided	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree
	Percentages Earning A's or B's		
I am pleased about attending Ball State.	44	46	47
I feel that I fit in well at Ball State.	44	46	45
I feel that I am adjusting well to BSU.	44	41	51
I am satisfied with my social life at BSU.	43	47	46

## 4. Freshmen who rated their academic abilities and motivation as above average were more likely to earn A's and B's in their first semester.

Of first-year students who rated their abilities in math, writing, and reading as above average, more than one half earned A's and B's during their first semester. These percentages were significantly higher that the percentages of students who rated their skills as average or below average. Similarly, freshmen who rated their academic self-confidence and self motivation as above average were more likely than other students to earn A's and B's in their first semester. (Table 4)

Table 4

	Above Average	Average	Below Average
How would you rate your skills or abilities in	Percentages Earning A's or B's		
the following areas			
Math	53	40	33
Writing	53	34	25
Reading	51	37	34
Academic self-confidence	56	33	25
Self motivation	54	36	23

## 5. Freshmen who rated their time-management abilities as above average were more likely to earn A's and B's in their first semester.

First-year students who rated their ability to get started on tasks, their ability to stick with tasks, their ability to complete tasks on time, and their ability to set goals as above average were significantly more likely than other students to earn A's or B's their first semester. Similarly, freshmen who rated their ability to manage their time as above average were more likely to earn A's and B's.

Table 5

	Above Average	Average	Below Average
How would you rate your skills or abilities in	Percentages Earning A's or B's		
the following areas			
Ability to get started on tasks or activities	54	38	35
Ability to manage your time and activities	53	38	27
Ability to stick with tasks	53	37	35
Ability to complete tasks on time	53	31	21
Ability to set goals	51	36	28

### 6. Freshmen with clear goals were more likely than other students to earn A's and B's their first semester.

First-year students who planned to complete a Bachelor's degree were significantly more likely than students who planned to complete an Associate's degree or were uncertain about their degree goals to earn A's and B's during their first semester (46% compared to 36% and 33%, respectively). (Table 6)

Freshmen who had chosen a major and were certain about their choice were more likely than other students to earn A's and B's during their first semester (50%). Forty-four percent of students who had made a choice but may change it earned A's and B's during their first semester. Only three out of every ten students who were completely undecided about their major earned A's or B's their first semester. (Table 6)

Table 6

	Percentages Earning
	A's or B's
Immediate education goals	
No specific degree goals	33
Associate's degree	36
Bachelor's degree	46
Choice of academic major	
I have made a choice and am certain of it.	50
I have made a choice, but may change it.	44
Many different majors appeal to me, but I haven't decided on one yet.	35
I have examined the requirements for at least one major, but haven't made a decision.	32
I am completely undecided.	31

Overall, these results from the MAP project demonstrate some early indicators about students may perform during their first semester at Ball State. Faculty and professional staff who work closely with freshmen should therefore encourage students to pay close attention to those indicators and seek assistance if they need it.

For additional information about the MAP Project, please contact Sherry Woosley in the Office of Academic Assessment and Institutional Research.