

Why are Men Falling Behind? Gender Gaps in College Performance and Persistence

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This paper examines the male disadvantage in grade point average (GPA), credits earned, and persistence in college. We use data on enrollees in Florida and Texas four-year colleges to decompose gender differentials in the 1st semester, changes in the differentials between semesters, and persistence through college. We find that males earn lower GPAs and credits in their first semester of college largely because they enter college with lower high school grades. After the first semester, males fall further behind their female counterparts in grades and credits. Some of this widening disparity continues to be explained by females' higher high school grades, yet gender differences in college course-taking and majors also plays a substantial role in explaining gaps in credits, grades, persistence, and graduation.

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