UNIVERSITY PERFORMANCE DETERMINANTS: DOES THE RELATIVE ABILITY MATTER?

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ABSTRACT
This paper analyzes the determinants for first-year students’ performance results in four Chilean universities. In addition to the standardized college entrance exams (PSU, for the Spanish acronym) and high school marks aggregation (NEM, for the Spanish acronym), this study includes a measurement of relative ability based on Registro de Estudiantes de Chile (RECH), as an outcome predictor. Results indicate that a good performance of high school students is directly related to better university results, even when controlled by marks in college entrance exams and high-school marks for each degree. This suggests that our relative ability measure captures information (eventually non-cognitive skills) that the selection variables currently in use do not provide, which is important for explaining the first year college performance.

Key words: class rank, education, GPA, non-cognitive abilities
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