Why Postsecondary Access & Success?

Talent is everywhere, but opportunity is not.

• The odds of a high-income student enrolling in postsecondary education directly after high school are **more than 3 times higher** than those of a low-income student.

• A high-income student is **more than twice as likely** to complete a postsecondary certificate or degree by age 26 as a low-income student.

Source: Education Pays 2016, p. 10 (College Board)
Source: Postsecondary Attainment: Differences by Socioeconomic Status (NCES, May 2015)
NCAN’s Member Footprint
NCAN’S MISSION AND GOALS

To build, strengthen, and empower education communities and stakeholders to close equity gaps in postsecondary attainment for all students.

REALIZED BY

Goal 1:
Promote high-quality services to support equitable outcomes for students

Goal 2:
Champion practice-informed federal and state policy
WHAT IS THE TO & THROUGH ADVISING CHALLENGE

• On-going project led by the National College Access Network and supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

• 20 grantees aim to “change the way they do business around postsecondary advising” through four goals:
  • Incorporate fit and match into postsecondary advising
  • Increase access to financial aid by improving FAFSA completion
  • Reduce the harmful effects of summer melt
  • Accomplish the above through the strategic use of data
WHAT IS THE TO & THROUGH ADVISING CHALLENGE

• During the 2018-19 academic year, grantees developed implementation plans for accomplishing the project’s goals. Starting in 2019-20, grantees will put these plans into place.

• Grantees receive funding for implementation, expert coaching on postsecondary advising and data use, NCAN memberships, targeted technical assistance, and opportunities to learn from each other.
WHAT IS SUMMER MELT

Summer melt is the phenomenon of college-intending students who have applied to, been accepted by, and made a deposit to a college or university, but fail to matriculate to that college (or any other) in the fall following their high school graduation.
WHY IS SUMMER MELT IMPORTANT?

• According to the Harvard Strategic Data Project (2013), summer melt impacts 10-40% of college-intending graduates.
  • Impacts vary widely by demographics

• The most disadvantaged students are the most susceptible to summer melt.
WHO DOES SUMMER MELT IMPACT?

• Low-income students
  • In Fulton County, GA, 37% low-income college-intending graduates melted while only 7% of non-low-income graduates melted

• Students intending to enroll at community colleges
  • In AZ, TX, NM, the melt for 2-year institutions was 37% and only 19% for 4-year institutions in 2011

• First-generation students
• Students with lower academic achievements
• Students with atypical family situations
• Students of color underrepresented on college campuses
CAUSES & CHALLENGES

• Difficulty navigating complex forms & processes
• Lack of financial literacy & financial aid gaps
• FAFSA Verification and "Verification Melt"
  • NCAN estimates that 50% of Pell-eligible students are flagged for FAFSA verification annually. ~25% of these students will fail to receive their Pell Grant.
• Lack of access to high-quality, professional assistance
• Lack of confidence and college knowledge
HOW TO MEASURE SUMMER MELT

1. Identify college-intending students
   1. Administer an exit survey as close to graduation as possible
   2. Offer incentive for survey completion or make survey a graduation requirement

2. Obtain college enrollment records from National Student Clearinghouse through Student Tracker service
   1. Bonus move: Add data about student demographic characteristics, academic background to provide additional context to analysis

3. Calculate:
   1. \[ 100 \times \left(1 - \frac{\text{# of students enrolled}}{\text{# of college-intending graduates}}\right) = \% \text{ of students melting} \]
KEY PLAYERS: STUDENTS & FAMILIES

• **Students:**
  - Remain proactive!
  - Check emails & student portals consistently
  - Key message: don’t be afraid to ask for help; plenty of it is out there!

• **Parents:**
  - Track students’ completion of enrollment milestones
  - Advocate for students
  - Provide students with encouragement and affirm their decisions to pursue a postsecondary degree
  - Remind students to check their email & student portal
KEY PLAYERS: HIGH SCHOOLS, COUNSELORS, & COLLEGE ACCESS PROGRAMS

- Administer exit surveys to record students’ postsecondary plans
  - Consider collecting these earlier in high school so these data are actionable and identify students for advising and support
- Schedule initial postsecondary advising sessions prior to graduation
- Help students review financial aid award letters and (if available) assess affordable options prior to graduation
- Host summer drop-in hours at school or in students’ neighborhoods
- Advocate to institutions on students’ behalf and form lasting partnerships
- Fill in student knowledge with access to resources and caring, expert adults
- Equip students with skills and confidence to troubleshoot and self-advocate
KEY PLAYERS: HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

- Facilitate interdepartmental collaboration for at-risk students
- Maintain strong communication with high school counselors, students, and families (including over the summer prior to matriculation)
- Create opportunities for student and family summer engagement and orientation
HOW TO FREEZE SUMMER MELT: STAFFING

• **Extend counselor contracts for summer outreach**
  • **Pros:** High impact, personalized advising from personnel students trust
  • **Cons:** May require additional training for, buy-in from, counselors

• **Launch peer-led mentorship program**
  • **Pros:** Students can connect with their peers more easily
  • **Cons:** Requires management, supervision, and training of peer mentors

• **Partner with local college access program**
  • **Pros:** High impact, expert knowledge
  • **Cons:** Can be expensive, resource-intensive, need to put energy into developing and maintaining a partnership
HOW TO FREEZE SUMMER MELT: 
NON-DIGITAL INTERVENTIONS

• Create institution-specific transition “cheat sheets”
  • One-page summaries of all pre-matriculation tasks and deadlines to complete over summer

• Include relevant links, web pages, and institution contact information

• Create sheets for the most popular institutions amongst students (find this information via reports from the National Student Clearinghouse’s Student Tracker for High Schools service)
HOW TO FREEZE SUMMER MELT: DIGITAL INTERVENTIONS

• Technology:
  • Phone, email, text, Facebook, Twitter campaigns
    • Texting is most popular amongst students
• Tip: Accommodate student schedules
  • Send messages early afternoon through early evening
• Lots of research in the literature about texting interventions
• For more on this topic see “Nudges, Norms, and New Solutions”
BEST PRACTICES FOR TEXT-BASED OUTREACH INTERVENTIONS

- Collect student name, intended institution, and cell phone number through exit survey, registration records

- Personalized, automated messages
  - Inform students of college-related tasks they may not be aware of
  - Remind students of time-sensitive tasks & deadlines
  - Help students complete matriculation tasks

- Tip: Focus on one enrollment milestone per text and include links to action items. Send 4-5 texts per month
TEXT-BASED OUTREACH INTERVENTIONS: STUDIES

• Rhode Island Pipelines to College & Career Research Partnership

• Costs: $5-$10 per student

• Results:
  o 73% low-income students who received text nudges enrolled in college, compared to 66% that did not receive tests
  o 71% of first-generation students who received text nudges enrolled in colleges, while only 63% of students who did not receive texts enrolled

https://www.the74million.org/article/nudging-students-to-college-matriculation-how-one-school-network-is-using-text-messages-to-combat-summer-melt-and-ensure-alumni-make-it-to-their-first-day-on-campus/
TEXT-BASED OUTREACH INTERVENTIONS: STUDIES

• Summer PACE: School District-Led Support
• Fort Worth (TX) Independent School District
• Cost: $48/student
• Staffed by district counselors, teachers, other school staff
• Provided financial aid support, social and emotional support, assistance completing paperwork, and other enrollment tasks
• Results:
  • Participants 5 percentage points more likely to enroll on-time than previous cohorts
TEXT-BASED OUTREACH INTERVENTIONS: STUDIES

- uAspire: Peer-Based Support
- Partnership between uAspire & Mastery Charter Schools in Philadelphia, PA
- Cost: $90/student
- uAspire intervention implemented simultaneously with texting initiative
- 20 peer mentors advised ~1,000 college intending graduates
- All graduates from same school district, often same school
  - Most junior and senior students attending four-year institutions
- Did not work on tasks that required sharing student/family financial documents
- Results:
  - All participants who received peer-support more likely to enroll on-time at four-year institutions
  - Participants who were college-intending, but had not yet chosen an institutions were 9 pp more likely to enroll on-time
TEXT-BASED OUTREACH INTERVENTIONS: STUDIES

- Summer College Connect: College Access Program-Led Support
- Partnership between uAspire & Boston Public Schools in MA
- Cost: $200/student
- Advisors worked with ~400 students – many of whom they’d previously worked with throughout school year
- Phone, text, Facebook outreach
- Provided advising, award letter analysis, offered encouragement and advice, help boost students’ confidence

Results:
- Participants were 5 pp more likely to seamlessly enroll in college following high school graduation
- Participants were 8 pp more likely to persist into their second year of college
- Low-income students saw the largest gains
  - Participants 13 pp more likely to seamlessly enroll and persist into their second year
GSU POUNCE: INSTITUTION-LED SUPPORT

Georgia State University in Atlanta, GA

Administration designed a chatbot to guide students through pre-matriculation milestones –
  The chatbot sent customized messages that tracked student progress towards enrollment

Results:
  Summer melt declined 21% compared to previous cohorts
SUMMARY: BEST PRACTICES

- Start early, be proactive, be ready, and be flexible
  - “Summer Melt starts in February”
- Establish credibility
  - Alert students to summer outreach plans
  - Use local area code for texting interventions
- Use existing relationships when possible
SELECTED RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

• Harvard University – Center for Education Policy Research - Strategic Data Project: Summer Melt Handbook

• Find the Fit: Text-based intervention sample messages


• https://eab.com/insights/blogs/community-college/worried-about-summer-melt-heres-how-to-fight-it/

• “Lessons Learned from a Summer Melt Prevention Program”

• NCAN eLearning
For more information about the To & Through Advising Challenge and postsecondary match and fit advising, contact:

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