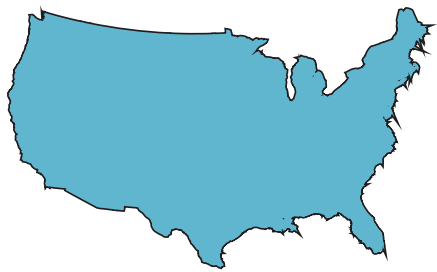


Can We Boost College Summer Enrollment Using Behavioral Science?

MDRC's Center for Applied Behavioral Science (CABS) and Postsecondary Education policy area launched the Encouraging Additional Summer Enrollment (EASE) project in collaboration with Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation & Affiliates and the Ohio Association of Community Colleges. The project aims to increase summer enrollment rates among low-income community college students using insights from behavioral science.

WHY ENCOURAGE SUMMER ENROLLMENT?



Year-round Pell Grant has been restored

Community college students may have additional funds available for summer.



Summer bridges the gap between fall and spring semesters

It is a transition point when many students leave college.



Enrollment increases graduation

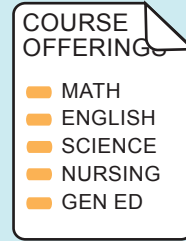
Students who enroll in summer courses are more likely to stay in school and graduate.

WHY DON'T STUDENTS ENROLL IN SUMMER COURSES?

Using a proven framework developed by CABS and informed by behavioral science, we identified five main reasons why students may not enroll in summer courses.



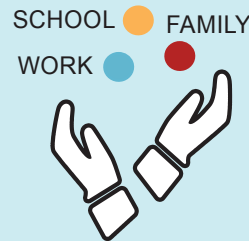
Various college policies and procedures don't encourage summer attendance. Students don't think of summer term as the norm.



Degree planning and course decision making is confusing. Seemingly small barriers in registration and course selection can lead to inaction.



Paying for summer courses is complex. Students often don't know if they have funding available.



Students have competing obligations. Many students work or care for family during the summer.

DECISION ~~---~~ **ACTION**

Students intend to enroll in summer but don't follow through.

WHAT ARE WE TESTING?

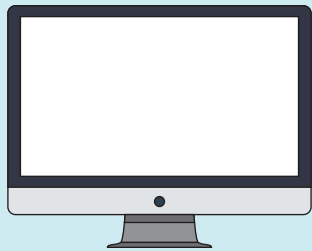
To determine whether strategies informed by behavioral science can increase summer enrollment, MDRC designed two interventions to address these five barriers. The first is a new communication strategy that includes techniques such as simplifying information and providing personalized funding estimates. The second intervention is a financial incentive that closes any gap between a student's Pell Grant award and summer tuition and fees. To test the effectiveness of these interventions, MDRC is conducting a three-way randomized controlled trial with two intervention groups and one control group.

Target Population:

Low-Income, First-Year Pell Grant Recipients Enrolled in Spring Semester

About 10,000 Students at 10 Ohio Community Colleges

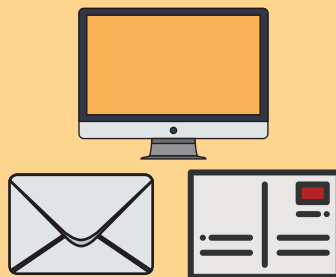
Control Group:
College's Usual Messages



College's standard messages about summer enrollment

vs.

Intervention 1:
Messages Informed by Behavioral Science



Eight emails, two postcards, and one letter

vs.

Intervention 2:
New Messages Plus a Financial Incentive



Adds a financial support component

WHAT'S NEXT?

We are working with 10 Ohio community colleges to determine if the interventions increase enrollment in summer courses.



1. Clark State Community College
2. Columbus State Community College
3. Lakeland Community College
4. Marion Technical College
5. North Central State College
6. Northwest State Community College
7. Rio Grande Community College
8. Sinclair Community College
9. Southern State Community College
10. Stark State College



MDRC's Center for Applied Behavioral Science (CABS) is an initiative that combines MDRC's expertise in social and education programs with insights from behavioral science. CABS develops innovative, low-cost interventions, tests their impact through experimentation, and provides technical assistance to programs incorporating behavioral insights.



For more information about the EASE project, email EASE@mdrc.org or find us on Twitter at: [@cabs_mdrc](https://twitter.com/cabs_mdrc) or [@mdrc_news](https://twitter.com/mdrc_news).



SEPTEMBER 2017