



Preventing Early Attrition

Pathing Students to Success from Application Through
the First Year

Community College
Executive Form





EAB

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the First Year

Community College Executive Forum

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Supporting Members in Best Practice Implementation

Resources Available Within Your Membership

This publication is only the beginning of our work to help members reduce early attrition. Recognizing that ideas seldom speak for themselves, our ambition is to work actively with members of the Community College Executive Forum to decide which practices are most relevant for your organization, to accelerate consensus among key constituencies, and to save implementation time.

Implementation Road Maps and Tools

Throughout the publication, this symbol will alert you to any corresponding tools and templates available in the Toolkit at the back of this book. These tools are also available on our website at eab.com.

Recorded and Private-Label Webconference Sessions

Our website will include hour-long webconferences walking through the practices highlighted in this publication. Forum experts are also available to conduct private webconferences with your team.

Unlimited Expert Troubleshooting

Members may contact the consultants who worked on any report to discuss the research, troubleshoot obstacles to implementation, or run deep on unique issues. Our staff conducts hundreds of telephone consultations every year.

Facilitated Onsite Presentations

Our experts regularly visit campuses to lead half-day to day-long sessions focused on highlighting key insights for senior leaders or helping internal project teams select the most relevant practices and determine next steps.



All Community College Executive Forum resources are available to members in unlimited quantity.

To order additional copies of this book, or to learn about our other services, please visit us at eab.com or contact your dedicated advisor.

Beyond the Community College Executive Forum

Additional Resources and Services for Community College Leaders

Community College Executive Forum members have access to the research, webconferences, toolkits, and publications from all of EAB's best practice memberships. These programs provide strategic guidance for leaders at four-year institutions within functional areas such as academic affairs, business affairs, continuing and online education, student affairs, advancement, enrollment management, information technology, and facilities. EAB has also launched the Student Success Collaborative–Navigate, a technology platform designed to streamline student onboarding and set students on a path to success.



Research and Insights

Academic Affairs Forum

Strategy advice for provosts and deans on elevating performance in teaching, research, and academic governance

Advancement Forum

Breakthrough-practice research and data analytics to help maximize philanthropic giving and support institutional goals

Business Affairs Forum

Research and support for chief business officers in improving administrative efficiency and lowering costs

COE Forum

Breakthrough-practice research and market intelligence to help universities grow continuing, professional, and online programs

Enrollment Management Forum

Best practice research and analytics to support enrollment managers as their scope of responsibilities expand

Facilities Forum

Best practices and executive networking to elevate space forecasting, utilization, and service quality

IT Forum

Research and advice for CIOs on leveraging information and technology to further the higher education mission

Student Affairs Forum

Research for student affairs executives on improving student engagement and perfecting the student experience

University Systems Forum

Research for system leaders to understand the challenges faced by systems and institution-level best practices

Community College Executive Forum

Strategic advice for chief executives and their senior leadership teams to improve student success outcomes, win future enrollments, and build financially sustainable college enterprises



Performance Technologies

Higher Education Spend Compass

Business intelligence and price benchmarking to help colleges reduce costs of purchased goods and services

Student Success Collaborative–Campus

An academic advising platform and predictive analytics for four-year schools to identify and intervene with at-risk students

Academic Performance Solutions

Data analytics service to help academic leaders identify opportunities to improve resource allocation and efficiency

Student Success Collaborative–Navigate

A student onboarding and academic planning platform for community colleges to enhance student persistence and on-time graduation

Executive Summary

Student Enrollment and Market Share Declines at the Top of Member Priority Lists

Since 2010, community college leaders across the country have seen student headcount and credit hour production decline at unanticipated rates. The country's economic recovery is the most common rationale for the enrollment downturn—as the economy improves, students leave higher education for the prospect of an immediate paycheck. However, this most recent economic recovery differed from previous economic rebounds. Despite record enrollments during the recession, community colleges' share of the total undergraduate population remained flat and then declined, starkly different from previous recessions when two-year colleges experienced gains in both headcount and market share. Since 2002, community colleges have lost nearly 6 percentage points of market share to competitors that have invested heavily in advertising, convenience, and the appearance of low cost.

Applicant Attrition Rates Reveal Problematic Intake Process at Two-Year Colleges

From 2011 to 2013, two-year colleges lost more than half of all prospective students between application and the first day of the fall term. In the fall of 2013, community colleges converted only 42% of all applicants into enrollees at their institutions—a 58% attrition rate before the semester even began. The applicant conversion challenge is exacerbated by the increasingly risky profile of incoming students. Over the past decade, more students have entered community college with remedial needs, applying for financial aid, and enrolling in college after years away from a formal educational setting, resulting in greater demands on college resources to help students navigate the enrollment process. In an era of declining enrollments and heightened competition, community college leaders must focus on optimizing intake for incoming students by smoothing their path to enrollment and completion.

Financial Aid Presents Greatest Barrier to College Entry and Persistence

In a survey of our members, community college leaders overwhelmingly identified financial aid as the greatest pain point in the enrollment process for incoming students. Research confirms that finances are a top reason students struggle during the intake process, as well as a barrier to their persistence. Many of the reasons finances hinder enrollment and completion are rooted in decisions students make early in the intake process: students skip the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), fail to complete the federal verification process, make poor assumptions about the size of their aid packages, overlook alternative sources of support, and accept aid without consideration of the repayment schedule. To reduce the financial barrier to student success, college leaders must help students make optimal financial decisions.

Nudge Students via Text Message to Check Institutional Email for Financial Aid Updates

After completing the FAFSA, eligible students may still face difficulties in securing the financial aid they need. If aid application forms have missing, inaccurate, or suspicious information, the federal Department of Education may flag a student for additional verification materials. Every year, more than 12 million FAFSA applications are selected for federal verification. Unfortunately, many students miss these calls to action that are sent to rarely-checked institutional email address. To help ensure students get the aid they need, the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC) pushes alerts about federal verification using a more familiar channel—cell phones. Using text message alerts, WVHEPC has prompted hundreds of students to complete previously unknown financial aid application and college enrollment steps.

Executive Summary (cont.)

Traditional Advising Conversations Lead to Rushed, Suboptimal Academic Decisions

The typical new community college student has little time and only fragmented support when making academic decisions at intake. Ideally, advisors would help new students select a degree program, first semester schedule, and course load, and then build a long-term academic plan. However, the average community college advisor manages hundreds, if not thousands, of students simultaneously, making it difficult to provide in-depth intake guidance for every student. If a student makes an appointment with an advisor during peak registration period, she is likely to participate in a short, 15-minute meeting that reviews only a fraction of the necessary topics. The onus for personal reflection and career exploration typically falls on students' shoulders with minimal supervision from staff, meaning that most students never experience any sort of formal goal-setting exercise before selecting a major or first-semester schedule.

Allow Students to Register for More than One Term at a Time to Encourage Persistence

Many students enter college without considering the long-term commitment it will take. They do not see the connection between courses from one semester to the next, and they fail to consider how their nonacademic and educational lives will converge during future terms. Several institutions have created multi-term registration systems to alleviate this challenge. At institutions like West Hills Community College, students can plan for a year's worth of courses in a single registration process. Faculty plan course schedules once per year instead of revisiting the calendar each term. Student services staff ensure students remain on track by reviewing student progress in prerequisite courses. These systems require minimal technological effort and have shown positive results in retention from term to term.

Most First-Term Attrition Occurs When Life Factors Disrupt Students' Educational Plans

The typical community college serves a large and growing population of students with many risk factors for dropping out (e.g., first-generation college attendee, employed, family caregiver, low-income, etc.). These competing responsibilities and demands often converge at the same time, and ultimately cause students to drop out mid-semester. To minimize this early attrition, college leaders must align on-campus services with student needs, connecting individuals with the right support at the right time.

Designate Withdrawal Prevention Specialists to Provide Personalized Intervention

Academic difficulties, a sudden lack of motivation, or unexpected life events could all lead students to withdraw from college before completion. Community college students are especially prone to early attrition due to non-academic factors, which are more difficult to identify and track than academic behaviors alone. To understand the reasons students withdraw from courses mid-semester, Manchester Community College designated Withdrawal Prevention Specialists who are responsible for speaking directly with students who express interest in withdrawal. When students request a withdrawal form, staff begin on-the-spot conversations to uncover their motivations for leaving the institution and identify appropriate campus services. Through this intervention, withdrawal rates at the college have plummeted; administrators credit the success of the coordinators to the personal relationships they build with students, demonstrating that someone at the institution cares about their success.

Restructure the Academic Calendar to Mitigate Pain of Unavoidable Drop Out

Sometimes, withdrawal is the best option for students even though they leave behind unfinished courses and lose tuition dollars spent. The high cost of mid-semester attrition was one of many reasons that prompted Trident Technical College's leadership to restructure the academic calendar. In 2014, Trident replaced the traditional fifteen-week semester with two 7-week terms. Enrolling in a few courses at a time has positively impacted student academic performance. It also helps students who must withdraw from the institution mid-semester. Rather than lose all credit and tuition for time spent in the classroom, a student who withdraws from the college in week 12 still earns credit for the work she completed in the first 7-week term. In select cases when the college cannot prevent early attrition, Trident reduces the long-term impact of mid-semester withdrawal.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Understanding Your Current Practice

The following questions are designed to help you evaluate your current activities. Use them to determine which of the strategies presented are most relevant and needed at your institution.

I. Supporting Optimal Financial Decisions	Yes	No
Does your institution offer in-person support during the FAFSA completion process? <i>If you answered "No" to this question, please refer to page 27.</i>		
To assist students in completing the FAFSA and other financial aid related tasks, does your institution offer dedicated computer lab space with posted staff year round? <i>If you answered "No" to this question, please refer to page 27.</i>		
Do students complain of being uninformed of their financial aid status? <i>If you answered "Yes" to this question, please refer to page 29.</i>		
Does your college currently use text messages to prompt students to check institutional email address for updates about FAFSA? <i>If you answered "No" to this question, please refer to page 29.</i>		
Do you employ non-email based notifications of verification during the financial aid process? <i>If you answered "No" to this question, please refer to page 29.</i>		
Are students missing out on available financial aid funds because they are not completing the verification process correctly, on time, or at all? <i>If you answered "Yes" to this question, please refer to page 29.</i>		
Do students complain about the lack of information about their potential aid package? <i>If you answered "Yes" to this question, please refer to page 32.</i>		
Does your institution provide students with an estimate of their financial aid package at the start of the FAFSA application process? <i>If you answered "No" to this question, please refer to page 33.</i>		
Many students don't realize that they may be eligible for public benefits. Does your institution proactively screen students for benefit eligibility and connect them with resources? <i>If you answered "No" to this question, please refer to page 34.</i>		
Are students struggling to finance college in addition to their life responsibilities? <i>If you answered "Yes" to this question, please refer to page 34.</i>		
Do students' overburdening work commitments interfere with their academics? <i>If you answered "Yes" to this question, please refer to page 34.</i>		
Are students taking out unnecessarily large loans? <i>If you answered "Yes" to this question, please refer to page 36.</i>		
Do you offer debt management workshops for first time borrowers? <i>If you answered "No" to this question, please refer to page 36.</i>		

Understanding Your Current Practice

The following questions are designed to help you evaluate your current activities. Use them to determine which of the strategies presented are most relevant and needed at your institution.

II. Guiding Intentional Academic Decisions	Yes	No
Do you have meta majors available on your campus to reduce the impact of switching among related programs? <i>If you answered "No" to this question, please refer to page 42.</i>		
Are new applicants required to declare a major during the application process? <i>If you answered "Yes" to this question, please refer to page 42.</i>		
Does your college's data show students taking excessive credits? <i>If you answered "Yes" to this question, please refer to page 42.</i>		
Does your institution provide pre-determined course menus for first term students that fit a variety of student needs and interests (e.g., different educational plans, part-time, full-time, and different types of day)? <i>If you answered "No" to this question, please refer to page 42.</i>		
Do your student success courses integrate career exploration activities and educational planning? <i>If you answered "No" to this question, please refer to page 46.</i>		
Does your college provide dedicated time for students to create an academic plan and identify goals/interests across the first semester? <i>If you answered "No" to this question, please refer to page 46.</i>		
Does your college require students to register for multiple terms/semesters at one time? <i>If you answered "No" to this question, please refer to page 48.</i>		
Are summer scholarships available for students to encourage the completion of 30 credits per year? <i>If you answered "No" to this question, please refer to page 50.</i>		
Are full-time students taking longer than two years to graduate? <i>If you answered "Yes" to this question, please refer to page 50.</i>		

Understanding Your Current Practice

The following questions are designed to help you evaluate your current activities. Use them to determine which of the strategies presented are most relevant and needed at your institution.

III. Minimizing First Semester Dropout	Yes	No
Does your campus provide students with a long list of un-personalized resources at the time of orientation? <i>If you answered "Yes" to this question, please refer to page 55.</i>		
Does your college collect information on students' specific needs so as to tailor non-academic resource recommendations? <i>If you answered "No" to this question, please refer to page 55.</i>		
Are students able to withdraw from your college without interacting with a live person on campus? <i>If you answered "Yes" to this question, please refer to page 58.</i>		
Are campus staff members trained on how to intervene and advise students expressing interest in withdrawal? <i>If you answered "No" to this question, please refer to page 58.</i>		
Does your college offer traditional 15 week semesters? <i>If you answered "Yes" to this question, please refer to page 61.</i>		
If students at your college experience mid-semester crises that force them to withdraw from classes mid-semester, do they lose all progress made that semester? <i>If you answered "Yes" to this question, please refer to page 61.</i>		



Introduction

Preventing Early Attrition

Still Seeking the Right Answer on Student Success

Since the launch of the completion agenda, community colleges have poured staff and faculty energy and millions of dollars into student success efforts. Despite this tremendous investment, college leaders and their teams continue to express frustration that they have not made enough progress. Completion and retention rates remain nearly unchanged.

With mounting public pressure to retain and graduate more students at a faster rate, Community College Executive Forum members posed a number of critical questions to uncover the primary factors impeding progress on ambitious student success goals.

Colleges Still Struggling to Move the Needle

26%

Completion rate of entering students in the 2008 cohort

39%

Fall-to-fall retention rate of first-time, part-time students, 2013

59%

Fall-to-fall retention rate of all students, 2013

Questions Abound to Uncover Reasons for Attrition



"What are we missing from our student services portfolio that causes students to drop out?"



"Are the causes of drop out more related to academics or life factors?"



"Why do students seem to leave when we have so many services that would relieve some of their issues?"

Source: National Student Clearinghouse, "Snapshot Report: Persistence-Retention," April 22, 2015, <http://nscresearchcenter.org/snapshotreport-persistence/retention18/#prettyPhoto>; Shapiro D, Dunder A, et al, "Completing College: A National View of Student Attainment Rates – Fall 2008 Cohort (Signature Report No. 8)" Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, <https://nscresearchcenter.org/signaturereport8/>; EAB interviews and analysis.

An All-Too-Common Story

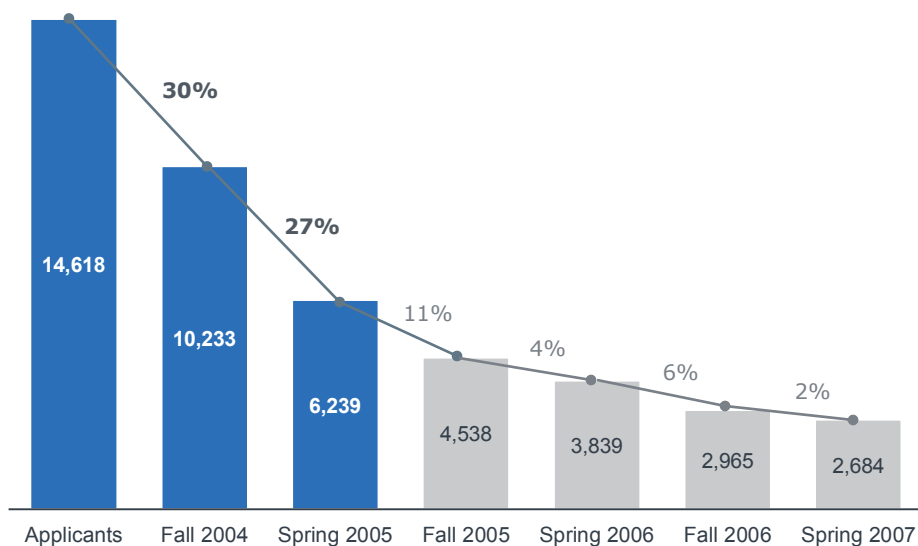
At the beginning of this research, the research team traveled to a large, multi-campus community college in the mid-Atlantic region. Administrators at the college shared their historical application and enrollment figures with us—a data set that is otherwise difficult to secure from colleges, which tend to keep this information guarded, if collected at all.

The data confirmed a popular theory among two-year college presidents and executives: the greatest amount of attrition occurs in the first 12 months of a student's time on campus. Before the first year is over, this college lost 57% of all students who submitted applications for the fall term. *What happened?*

College Measures Highest Rates of Attrition in Students' First Few Months

Massive Loss All Before First Spring

Enrollment Figures at a Mid-Atlantic Community College



”

Too Much Effort

“We analyzed the steps students take from application to registration and had a flow chart with more arrows, dots, and triangles than I even want to think about. And I have three degrees.”

Director of Institutional Research

”

Too Little Help

“In the beginning of the semester there is so much chaos and a lot of people don't know what to do next. Usually after you apply to a school you're on your own.”

Community College Student

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Learning by Doing

To understand the challenges and barriers students experience on campuses, our research team visited 22 community college campuses across 11 states just ahead of their fall 2014 terms. Across the industry, the weeks before enrollment are widely considered to be peak registration period, a time when hallways are flooded with students and their extended network of friends and family. Each campus visited was unique—our on-site observations took place in rural, urban, and suburban settings at institutions of various sizes, cultures, and demographic makeups.

The only constant across these visits was our steadfast adoption of the new student perspective. Despite a combined 30+ years of experience in higher education, members of the research team attempted to forget everything they knew about the post-secondary experience and approach each campus as a new student. Campus signage and staff guided us from one step to the next, we documented the experiences of students from a wide range of backgrounds, and we came as close as we could to enrolling in courses for that term.

Forum Researchers Gather Student Experiences of Intake Processes

Back to School (Secret) Shopping

CCEF Fall 2014 Enrollment Pain Point Visits



Number of community college campuses visited during peak registration period for the Fall 2014 semester



Number of states visited across rural and urban settings all over the United States

150+

Number of observation hours invested in Enrollment Pain Point Audit white paper

Adopting the Student Perspective

Guiding Principles for the Research Team



Assume Nothing

Follow campus signage and staff instructions to navigate intake as new student would

Consider the Outliers

Document experience of several student archetypes to capture nuances in intake practices



Aim for Enrollment

Complete as many enrollment steps as possible over the course of a single campus visit

Source: EAB interviews and analysis. Photos by EAB employees: Audrey Wilson and Melinda Salaman.

Three Primary Causes of Attrition

After over 200 research interviews, focus groups with students, and hundreds of hours of secret shopping, three primary challenges emerged that lead to student attrition. First, students fail to collect the financial support they need to make college a possibility. Second, they make academic decisions in compressed time frames, often days before classes start and without understanding how their choices will connect with their long-term career goals. Finally, when the reality of balancing classes and life strikes, many students feel that something has to give. Typically, higher education is the first thing to go.

Flaws Emerge from Interviews and Secret Shopping



Financial Support Remains Incomplete

Students Struggle with FAFSA, Verification, and Public Benefits

- "I don't know how to answer these FAFSA questions."
- "Why did the government say my information was incomplete?"
- "I didn't know what SNAP, TANF, and WIC were, so I just stuck with my loans and grants."



Academic Decisions Go Off-Course

Critical Choices Made Without Full Information

- "I was undecided, but they forced me to choose so I could get aid."
- "My original course schedule doesn't really fit with my future career interests."
- "I know what I'm doing this term, but the next few are a mystery to me."



Life Factors Disrupt Education

Out-of-Class Responsibilities Create Dilemmas for Students

- "I didn't think the college could help me with my challenges."
- "I needed more time to work, so I just went online to withdraw."
- "When I dropped out, I lost all of the work I did over the past 12 weeks."

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Financial Aid Greatest Barrier to Success

In a survey of over 125 member executives, we asked respondents to identify the step in the enrollment process that presents the greatest pain point for incoming students. Unequivocally, financial aid rose to the top of that list.

Institutional data seemed to confirm executives' suspicions: three of the top five reasons students seek support during the enrollment process relate directly to financial aid.

Students who struggle with obtaining and maintaining financial aid are most at-risk of failure. According to Public Agenda, a nonprofit research organization, financial aid poses a major threat to persistence and completion. Students who lack financial support in the form of grants, loans, or scholarships, are less likely to persist and also less likely to access the in-person guidance necessary to secure these sources of funding.

Enrollment, Persistence Threatened by Student Finances

Pointing the Finger at Finances

EAB Survey of 125+ Community College Presidents

Which Step of the Intake Process is the Biggest Student Leakage Point?

1 Financial Aid

2 Placement Testing

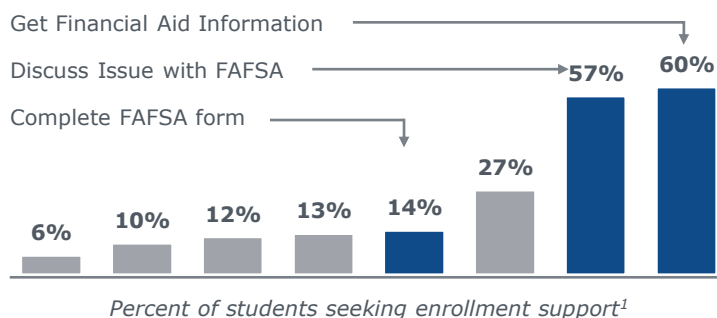
3 Academic Advising

4 Mandatory Medical Forms

5 Lack of Motivation

Student Survey Numbers Don't Lie

Ivy Tech Student Survey: Reasons for Seeking Enrollment Support, 2014



“Young people who fail to finish college are also substantially less likely to have received scholarships or financial aid, loans or even good advice about how to get help. About 7 in 10 of those who leave school report that they did not have scholarships or financial aid, compared with about 4 in 10 of those who graduate.”

Public Agenda

¹ Students are allowed to enter more than one reason for seeking enrollment support

Source: Johnson J, Rockkind J, "With Their Whole Lives Ahead of Them: Myths and Realities About Why So Many Students Fail to Finish College," Public Agenda, 2009 <http://www.publicagenda.org/files/theirwholivesaheadofthem.pdf>; EAB interviews and analysis.

Not Our Fault, But It Is Our Problem

Executives shared stories about aid officers who received so many small questions from new students that they couldn't keep up with their administrative responsibilities, and aid offices that processed aid packages so slowly that students dropped out.

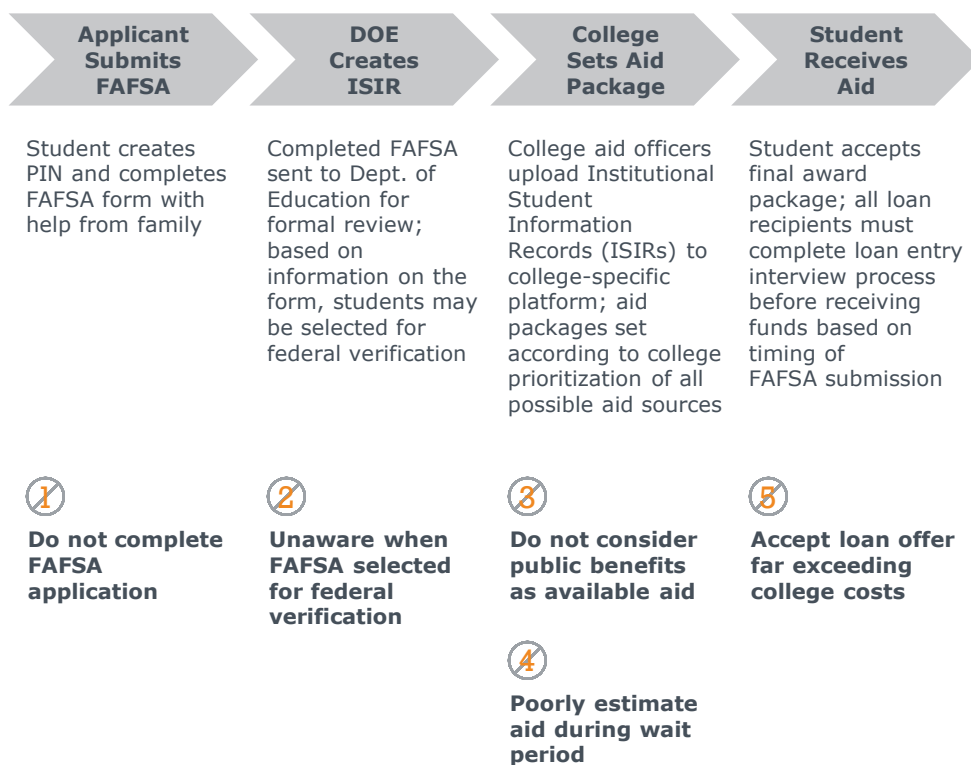
Dozens of interviews with financial aid staff and hundreds of pages of aid handbooks revealed one thing: student and staff frustrations were not the result of staff inefficiency.

Instead, the complex process of the aid application itself resulted in students' struggles to secure aid. Due to the complicated system, students fail to complete the FAFSA, are unaware of the verification process, make poor assumptions about the size of their aid packages, overlook alternative sources of support, and accept aid without consideration of true cost or later responsibilities.

Federal Aid Process Open to Consequential Student Missteps

(Very) Simplified Overview of a Complex Process

Top Four Student Missteps Along the Way to Aid Disbursement



Source: Cochrane D, LaManque A, Szabo-Kubitz L, "After the FAFSA: How Red Tape Can Prevent Eligible Students from Receiving Financial Aid," The Institute for College Access and Success, 2010 http://ticas.org/sites/default/files/pub_files/AfterFAFSA.pdf; EAB interviews and analysis.

Merely Scratching the Surface

Our on-site campus visits and interviews with administrators and students helped us form a clear picture of how the typical new community college student makes long-term academic decisions. If a student can make an appointment with an academic advisor during peak registration period, his appointment is likely to last between 10 and 15 minutes. In such a short meeting, an advisor can cover only a fraction of the topics that would ideally be included and gesture toward the available career exploration tools at the college.

The onus for personal reflection and career exploration typically falls on students' shoulders with minimal supervision from staff. Unfortunately, this means most students never do any formal goal-setting exercise before selecting a major or first-semester courses.

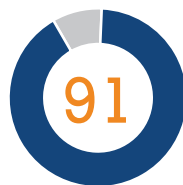
Intake Conversations Suffer When Advisors Have Limited Time per Student

Much to Cover in 15 Minutes

Idealized Agenda for Intake Advising Appointment

- ? What major do you want to pursue?
- ? What are your goals in coming to college? Why are you here?
- ? What are you good at? What are your weaknesses?
- ? What do you care more about—job satisfaction, salary, free time, etc.?
- ? What other responsibilities do you have outside of school?

Advising Considered Universally Important...



Percentage of CCSSE respondents who report that academic advising and planning is an important service¹

...But Few Students Get the Attention They Need



Percentage of SENSE respondents who agree that an advisor helped them set and plan for academic goals²

1) n= 414,646
2) n=73,502

Source: "Matter of Degrees: Promising Practices for Community College Student Success," Center for Community College Student Engagement: 2012 https://www.ccsse.org/docs/Matter_of_Degrees.pdf; EAB interviews and analysis.

Uncertainty Hidden Behind Declarations

All students need support when making academic decisions. A study conducted by ACT found that 79% of high school seniors had selected a college major at the time they completed the ACT exam. Based on students' major declaration alone, a college executive may be tempted to focus all intake advising efforts on the remaining group of undecided students. However, this approach risks excluding entering students from receiving the advising support they need.

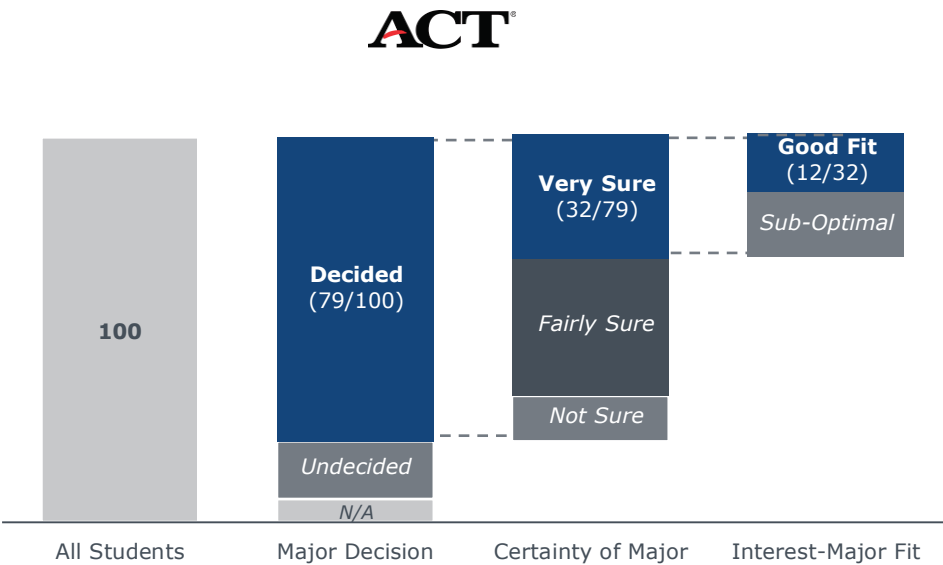
Of the high school seniors in the ACT study who decided on a college major, 60% were only "fairly sure" or completely unsure of their choice, making them appropriate candidates for further advising support.

Even those students who were "very sure" of their major selection in the study risked making a suboptimal major selection. According to information collected when students register for and take the ACT, the majority of high school seniors who were "very sure" of their major selection chose programs that were a suboptimal fit with their interests.

Even the Most Confident Incoming Students Need Academic Guidance

What It Means to Be Decided

National Study of Major Selection, Certainty, and Fit Among 2013 High School Graduates



1) n=1,799,000

Source: ACT, "College Choice Report: High School Class of 2013," Nov. 2013 <http://www.act.org/collegechoice/13/>; EAB interviews and analysis.

Odds Against Them

Not only are more first-generation students attending community colleges, but more students work at least part time, care for dependents in their families, and rely on financial aid to cover college expenses.

Students constantly face the decision to continue to prioritize their education over the challenges that they may face outside of the classroom.

Students Enter College with Historically Risky Profiles

Snapshot of Community College Students



First-Generation

36%

First in their families to attend college



Employed

74%

Work at least part-time while taking college classes



Family Duties

33%

Care for family dependents at least one hour per week



Low-Income

72%

Apply for financial aid to cover college expenses



At-Risk Student

Difficult Class

Short on Cash

Overwhelmed



Unclear Outcomes

"I'm not smart enough."

"I'll work more hours."

"My family needs me."

Source: "Matter of Degrees: Promising Practices for Community College Student Success," Center for Community College Student Engagement: 2012 https://www.ccsse.org/docs/Matter_of_Degrees.pdf; American Association of Community Colleges, "Fast Facts From our Fact Sheet" 2015 <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Pages/fastfactsfactsheet.aspx>; EAB interviews and analysis.

Preventing Early Attrition

Each section of this study tackles one of the three primary challenges uncovered during the course of our research on new student intake at community colleges.

These recommended practices form a playbook for college leaders to strengthen the path to credential attainment starting from day one.

Pathing Students to Success from Application Through the First Year

1 Supporting Optimal Financial Decisions

1. On-site FAFSA Completion Lab
2. SMS Verification Updates
3. Automated Aid Estimates
4. FAFSA Benefits Eligibility Screens
5. Pre-loan Workshop

2 Guiding Intentional Academic Decisions

6. Meta Major Scheduling Menus
7. Completion Mapping Course
8. Multi-term Registration
9. Full-Time Summer Scholarships

3 Minimizing First Semester Dropout

10. Personalized Resource Nudges
11. Withdrawal Prevention Specialist
12. Compressed Mini-semesters

Source: Juskiewicz J, "Community College Students and Federal Student Financial Aid: A Primer," American Association of Community Colleges, April 2014, http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Publications/Reports/Documents/CCStudents_A_Primer.pdf; EAB interviews and analysis.



Supporting Optimal Financial Decisions

Preventing Early Attrition

SECTION

- Practice 1: On-site FAFSA Completion Lab
- Practice 2: SMS Verification Updates
- Practice 3: Automated Aid Estimates
- Practice 4: FAFSA Benefits Eligibility Screens
- Practice 5: Pre-loan Workshop

1

Supporting Optimal Financial Decisions

The practices in this section outline strategies to provide students with the right information about financial aid at the most appropriate time, supporting optimal financial decisions.

The first three practices featured in this section support students during the aid application process. The final two practices offer methods of expanding financial aid support by considering alternative sources of aid and responsible debt management.

Providing the Right Information at the Right Time

1. On-site FAFSA Completion Lab

- From confusion-fueled inaction to guided financial aid application
- Case Study: Fresno City College (CA)



2. SMS Verification Updates

- From obscure proceedings to fully transparent aid process
- Case Study: West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WV)



3. Automated Aid Estimates

- From uninformed guess of payment needs to informed aid estimate
- Case Study: Bergen Community College (NJ)



4. FAFSA Benefits Eligibility Screens

- From missing out to earning full benefits
- Case Study: La Guardia Community College (NY)



5. Pre-loan Workshop

- From blind acceptance to careful examination of aid offer
- Case Study: Broward College (FL)



Complexity Breeds Confusion

Completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is incredibly confusing for new college students. For some, finding the right form is a difficult feat—during our research, we heard stories of students who were routed to fraudulent websites charging over \$100 to apply for aid, only to find out later that their money was lost and information stolen.

Those who avoid online scams and find the right FAFSA form still face difficulties applying for aid. The FAFSA's 100+ questions require students to gather information from their prior year's tax returns as well as that of their parents. Ultimately, 42% of Pell-eligible students are deterred from applying for aid every year, and \$3 billion in federal aid goes unclaimed.

FAFSA Deters Aid-Eligible Students from Applying for Financial Support

Not So Simple

Frustrating

23%

Percentage of students who cite insufficient information on how to apply for financial aid¹

Intimidating

42%

Percentage of Pell-eligible community college students who never complete a FAFSA

But Costly to Opt-Out

\$3B

Total unclaimed aid by Pell-eligible students not submitting FAFSA in 2014

”

“More than 20 million college students will complete the dreaded 108-question FAFSA...some pay someone to help them. Colleges hire thousands of staff members to assist. Too many students are so intimidated by the form that they don't bother to apply.”

Senators Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Michael Bennet (D-CO)

1) n=114,000 undergraduate students; n= 14,000 graduate students

Source: Alexander L. Bennett M, “An Answer On A Postcard: Simplifying FAFSA Will Get More Kids Into College,” *The New York Times*, June 18, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/19/opinion/simplifying-fafsa-will-get-more-kids-into-college.html?_r=0; Davidson JC, “Why Community College Students Are So Poor But Only 16.9% Received Federal Pell Grants,” *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 38, no. 7, (2013): 503-513; Dynarski S, Scott-Clayton J, “There is a Simpler Way for Students to Apply for Financial Aid,” *The New York Times*, June 20, 2014 <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/21/upshot/a-simpler-way-to-help-financial-aid-do-its-job.html>; Sen-Gupta G, “Students Leave Over \$2.9 Billion In Free College Money On The Table,” *Nerdwallet*, January 12, 2015, <http://www.nerdwallet.com/blog/nerd-scholar/2015/fafsa-college-money-left-on-table/>; EAB interviews and analysis.

On-site FAFSA Completion Lab

During a review of the effectiveness of the financial aid office, administrators at Fresno City College recognized a gap in in-person student support: the financial aid office lacked dedicated computers for students to complete FAFSAs with staff support.

Through grant and state funding, the financial aid office opened an 18-computer financial aid lab that is available year-round for students to receive financial aid assistance. Including technology and staffing, the annual cost of the lab is approximately \$100,000.

The lab is staffed by one full-time financial aid assistant at a time: Fresno City College has nine full-time staff members in this position, and they rotate working in the lab every week. These staff members, however, mainly answer students' more complex questions, while two to three work-study student staff members answer more basic questions.

Fresno City College Creates Central Location for Financial Aid Inquiries

Year-Round Resources for All Students



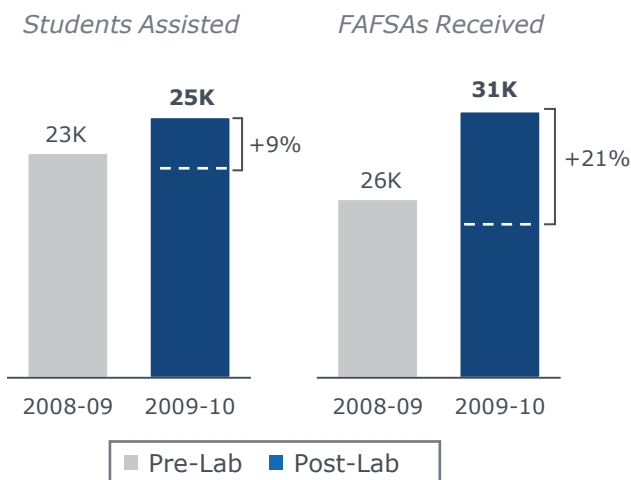
Student Supports

- Apply for PIN on FAFSA.gov
- Complete FAFSA, resubmit FAFSA
- Check aid status, accept awards
- General questions and support

Lab Layout

- 18 computers
- Located next to financial aid office
- Staffed by 2-3 work study students
- Supervised by 1 financial aid assistant

Lab Increases Efficiency and Effectiveness



Institution in Brief: Fresno City College

- Located in Fresno City, California (large city)
- Enrolls 21,344 undergraduates
- 37% full-time enrollment

Source: National Center for Educational Statistics; <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/> (accessed April 2015); EAB interviews and analysis.

There's More Than One Step?

Students eligible to receive aid often still face difficulties in securing financial support if they are selected for federal verification. If submitted FAFSA forms contain missing, inaccurate, or "suspicious" information, the Department of Education can flag the student for additional verification.

The government selects more than 12 million students for federal verification each year, requiring these students to submit documentation to prove residency, for instance, or to add a missing signature to their application.

Unfortunately, many students are unaware that the verification process even exists, and miss out on millions of dollars of aid as a result of the smallest errors. Our interviews with students and administrators revealed a major reason verification eludes so many students: communication about the process and next-steps takes place through institutional email. Most students fail to check their college email inbox before the first day of class, causing them to miss out on available (and much-needed) aid.

Federal Verification Creates Unforeseen Barrier to Aid



Applicants Caught Off Guard

62%

Percentage of students selected for federal verification who thought financial aid application process was complete



Aid Loss for the Smallest Reasons

\$39M

Amount of available Pell funds denied to applicants whose FAFSA forms are rejected due to missing signatures



No Guide for Next Steps

15%

Percentage of students selected for federal verification who did not know how to correct errors on aid application



High Costs to Verify Students

\$130K

Average annual cost to the college to verify student aid applications beyond minimum required by Dept. of Ed.



"The challenge for me was verification. I didn't know I needed to submit more stuff. They emailed me at the college's email, but I didn't even check it until the first day of class! By then I had paid for my textbooks myself, which was a lot of money."

Student

Nudge in the Right Direction

The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC) launched an initiative to support prospective college students during the enrollment and financial aid application process using SMS text messaging.

In 2014, the organization partnered with Ben Castleman, a scholar at the University of Virginia, to communicate with high school students about the college enrollment process early, starting in the winter of their senior year. Messages clearly outline steps for submitting applications and securing financial aid, and the messages continue to support students even after they matriculate to college through the completion of their first semester.

SMS messages are sent using Signal Vine, a text messaging platform, and have proven to be highly effective. Each message prompts students to complete discrete enrollment steps, including checking their aid status.

Students stated that without the text message intervention, they would have been unaware of steps necessary to complete college enrollment.

SMS Updates Remind Students to Check Aid Status

Double Checking Aid Progress

State Project Sends Reminders of Next Steps



SMS Counseling Project Begins

WVHEPC partners with UVA's Ben Castleman in 2014 to directly message new college students

Salient Messages Prompt Action

State system and partner colleges send messages to prompt students to complete application and enrollment

Text Nudges About Aid Process

Students reminded to check college email for financial aid updates once they select a college

\$1.15

Monthly cost to text each student, totaling about \$21 per student over intervention

87%

Percentage of Signal Vine recipients who said texts prompted them to complete previously unknown enrollment tasks¹

¹) n=799

Source: Owens A, "Teens, Smartphones & Texting," Pew Research Center, 2012, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2012/03/19/teens-smartphones-texting/>; Phillips O, "How A Text Message Could Revolutionize Student Aid," National Public Radio, 2014 <http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2014/07/08/329465900/how-a-text-message-could-revolutionize-student-aid>; Signal Vine, www.signalvine.com, accessed Feb. 2015; EAB interviews and analysis.

Optimizing Messaging for Community Colleges

Despite the ubiquity of text messaging in our social lives, many community college executives do not use texting to communicate with students directly. Several administrators we interviewed raised potential pitfalls of direct text message communication with students.

First, leaders worried that students may not desire or be able to afford regular text message communication with the college. Secondly, research contacts suggested that the college may over-message students, becoming more of a nuisance than support. Lastly, administrators feared that each department would become so enamored with text message communication that messages would originate from all over campus, compounding the issue of over-messaging.

The recommendations outlined on this page help college leaders avoid these pitfalls and ensure broad access to financial aid updates among incoming students.

Quick Wins to Ensure Broad Access to Aid Updates

1 Provide Alternatives to Text Messages

In the body of the first text message, allow students opportunity to update their preferred mode of contact

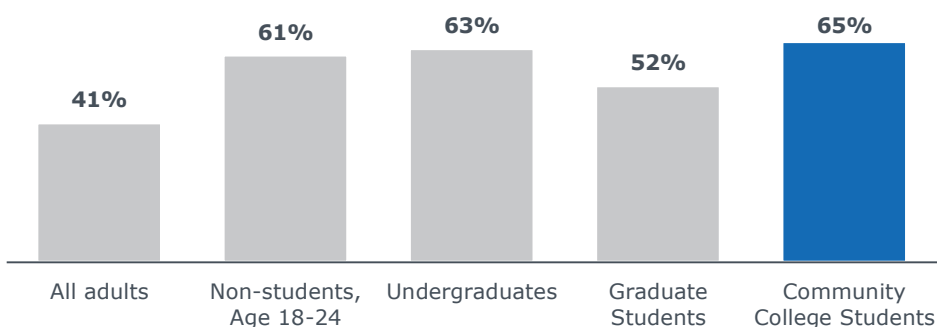


Text messages may be poor-fit for:

- Students with pay-per-text plan
- Older students with low cell phone utilization

Cell Phone and Internet Connectivity

Percentage of Cell Phone Owners in Each Group Who Use the Internet or Email on Their Cell Phones



2 Allow Students to Opt Out of Reminders

Include an "opt-out" feature in all text notifications (e.g., "To opt out of receiving further text messages, reply STOP to this message.")



Only 11% of students in WVHEPC intervention opted out of receiving text messages in first 14 months; likely due to cell phone turnover

3 Limit Frequency of Messages with Centralized Schedule

Set up a meeting for all student services officers to suggest topics for SMS reminders; set limit to five messages per month



Designate one staff member with "veto power" over all text message communication; consider the Vice President of Student Services as initial choice

Vicious Cycle of Delays

The period of time between when students submit FAFSA and later receive information about the size of their aid package varies considerably by campus, and by time of year. During slow periods for a typical community college financial aid office (January through June), a student might wait only a few days between FAFSA submission and receipt of an award letter. However, during the summer, when the aid office must process an influx of applications, the wait period becomes much longer.

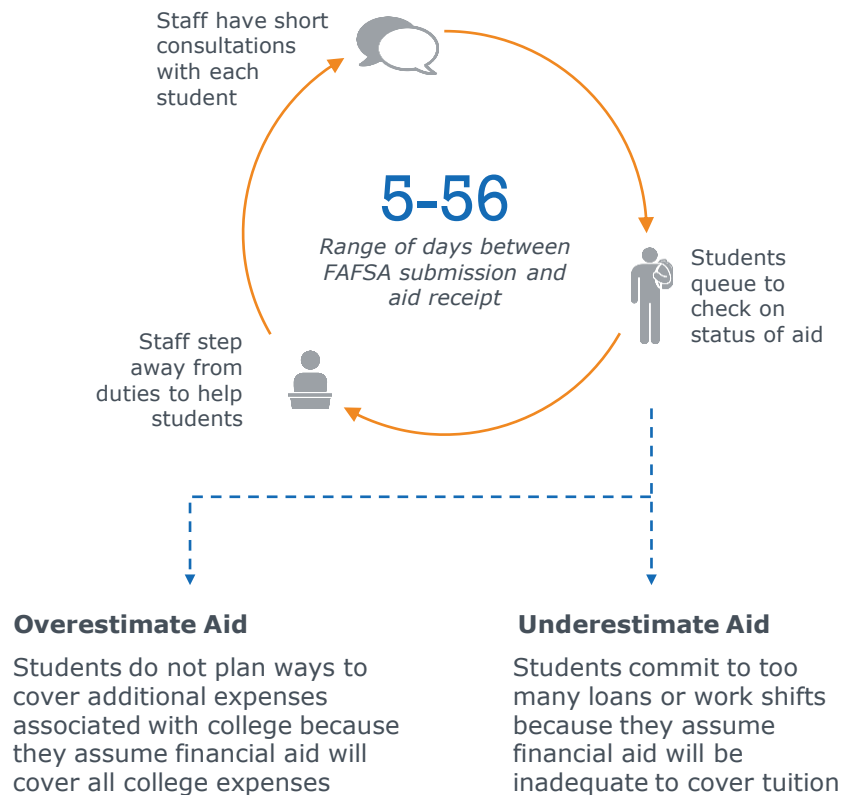
During this waiting period, many students will visit the financial aid office seeking updates (which disrupts staff from processing the applications in the first place). Research contacts also suggested that the waiting period creates the perfect opportunity for students to make poor assumptions about the size of their aid package. They may overestimate the amount of aid they will receive, leaving them unprepared to handle the cost of college attendance, or they may underestimate their aid package, causing them to commit to more loans and working hours than necessary.

These assumptions leave students in precarious financial situations that threaten their enrollment and persistence at the institution.

Late Applicants Make Poor Assumptions in Absence of Aid Information

Long Wait Times Spur Bad Student Decisions

Window into a Typical Financial Aid Office



“In financial aid applications, the early bird gets the worm. If you apply early, you get your aid early. If you apply late, it’ll take five to six weeks.”

*Steven Myrow, Dean of Financial Aid
Santa Monica Community College*

Automated Aid Estimates

In 2014, Bergen Community College changed their internal financial aid processes to provide students with an early estimate of their financial aid package before they receive their official award letter. These automated aid estimates allow students to plan for tuition costs not covered by federal aid, which contribute to more informed decisions about scholarships, job opportunities, and course loads.

The college made three small changes to their financial aid processes to quickly produce automated aid estimates for students. First, the college downloads Institutional Student Information Records (ISIRs) from the Department of Education's Central Processing System daily, rather than their previous weekly schedule. Secondly, Bergen uses information housed in their student information system (SIS) to create estimates. Lastly, they send estimates directly to students, emphasizing that it is an estimated amount and not a final offer.

Overall, administrators at the college are satisfied with the results of the initiative. The increased transparency about the financial aid process drastically reduced the number of complaints from students to the financial aid office.

Bergen Provides Early Aid Information for Financial Planning

Small Administrative Changes Speed Process Considerably



► PRE-2014

TODAY

Downloads student ISIR forms 1-2 times per week

One of 85% of two-year colleges who notified students of Pell eligibility after verification complete

Students unsure about financial aid eligibility during 2-to 5- week process of verification

1

Download ISIRs daily, rather than standard biweekly schedule

2

Auto-package aid using SIS; Datatel Colleague module estimates aid based on full-time enrollment, EFC, and college aid priorities

3

Send aid estimate before verification, reminding students that final award letter is forthcoming

Students receive aid estimate within 48 hours of FAFSA submission

Students receive notifications about status of financial aid at each step

Number of complaints to financial aid office decreased from 10 per day to maximum of 5 per semester

Institution in Brief: Bergen Community College

- Located in Paramus, New Jersey (large suburb)
- Enrolls 15,882 undergraduates
- 56% full-time enrollment

Source: National Center for Educational Statistics, <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/> (accessed April 2015); Cochrane D, LaManque A, Szabo-Kubitz L, "After the FAFSA: How Red Tape Can Prevent Eligible Students from Receiving Financial Aid," The Institute for College Access and Success, 2010 http://ticas.org/sites/default/files/pub_files/AfterFAFSA.pdf; EAB interviews and analysis.

A Helping Hand, Not a Handout

Even students who receive financial aid have unmet needs that demand attention to make college attendance a reality—this may include securing health insurance, food stamps, or even assistance paying for basic utilities.

Despite the number of government support services available to low-income students, few students use them. Even among Pell-eligible community college students, who traditionally have the highest support needs, only 14% of students receive public benefits.

When we interviewed students and staff who work closely with low-income students, they offered a range of explanations for such low uptake; many revolve around students' misconceptions about the purpose of the programs or their own eligibility for the benefits.

Students Avoiding Social Stigma Miss Widely Available Public Benefits

Many Government Support Services...



Temporary Assistance Programs



Women and Children Programs



Child Care



Supplemental Nutrition Assistance



Public Health Insurance



Energy Assistance

...But Public Benefits Underutilized



Lack of awareness



Fear of social stigma



Perception of benefits as charity



Assumption of ineligibility

Missing a Target Audience

14%

Percentage of community college students eligible for maximum Pell grants who receive public benefits¹

1) n=6,203

Source: Price D, Long M, et al., "Lessons from the Benefits Access for College Completion Evaluation," OMG Center for Collaborative Learning, 2014, <http://www.equalmeasure.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/BACC-Final-Report-FINAL-111914.pdf>; EAB interviews and analysis.

FAFSA Benefits Eligibility Screens

To ensure student awareness of available public benefits, LaGuardia Community College formed a partnership with Single Stop USA, a national nonprofit network that connects students with public benefits assistance, including free legal and tax counseling.

The financial aid staff at LaGuardia use information on students' FAFSA forms (e.g., annual income and number of household residents) to identify students who might be eligible for public benefits.

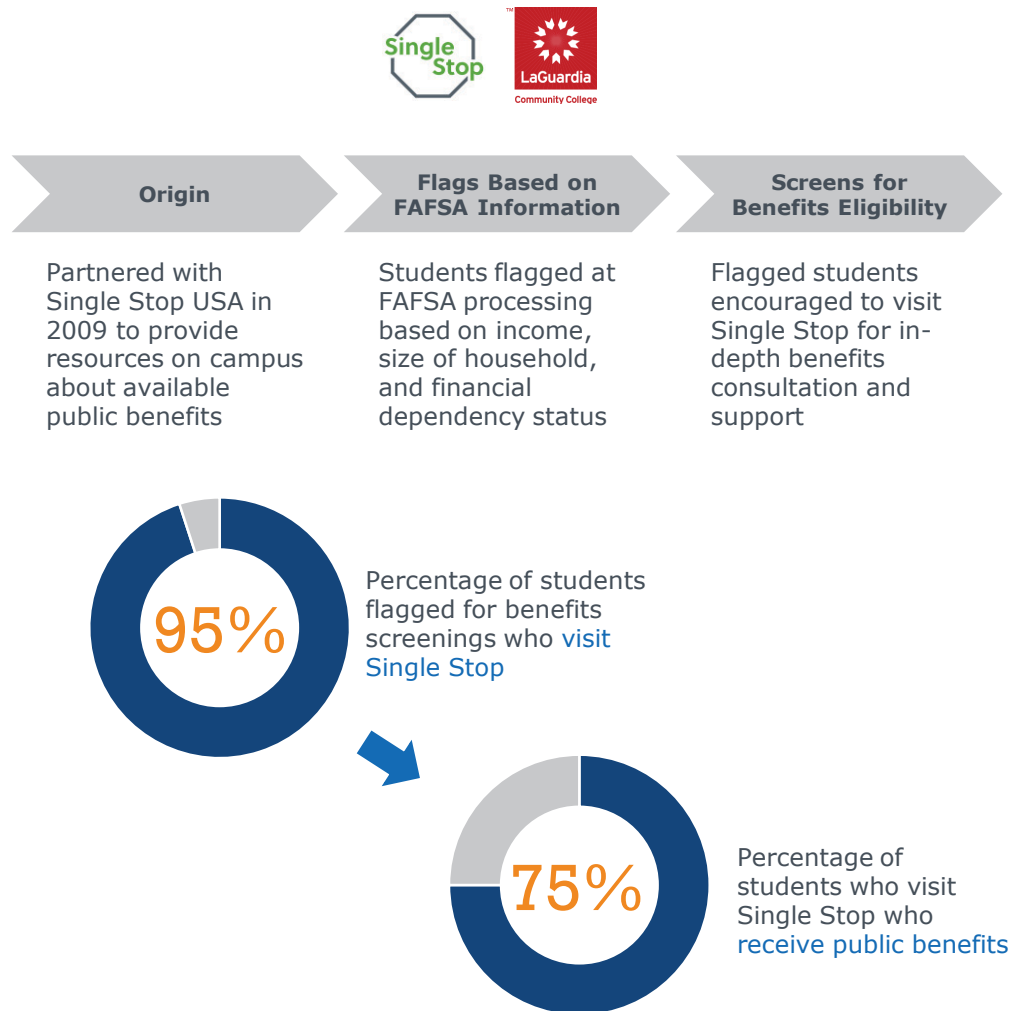
These public benefits pre-screens result in flags on students' SIS records, prompting them to visit the on-campus Single Stop office. At LaGuardia, the Single Stop office is located directly next to the financial aid office.

The flags present Single Stop visits as mandatory, even though the follow-up visits are in fact optional: a flag remains on a student's SIS record until she visits Single Stop. Even though the flag doesn't prevent students from completing any other enrollment steps, the vast majority of students with these flags visit the Single Stop office and receive public benefits.

LaGuardia Flags Needy Students for Public Benefits

FAFSA Inputs Inform Benefits Flags

LaGuardia CC Sends Needy Students to Single Stop Benefits Screens



Institution in Brief: LaGuardia Community College

- Located in Long Island City, New York (large city)
- Enrolls 19,564 undergraduates
- 53% full-time enrollment

Source: National Center for Educational Statistics; <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/> (accessed April 2015); EAB interviews and analysis.

Crushing Debt Load

When students finally receive a financial aid package, they must accept the terms of the aid offered before receiving the support. Too often, students accept large sums of public and private loans without considering their responsibility to repay the sum in the future, leading many students to default on their federal loans, meaning they do not make a payment on their federal student loans within nine months after graduation. Of the 2011 graduating class, 17.1% defaulted on their loans.

The cohort default rate is more important now than ever: as part of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, legislators are tracking institutional cohort default rates (CDRs) more closely. Colleges with CDRs above 30% for three consecutive years will face discontinuation of federal financial aid for their students. The Obama Administration may include CDR in its proposed national scorecard for institutions of higher education.

Our interviews with college leaders highlight the increased pressure to ensure students are taking out the right type and right size of loans, necessitating further financial education for students at intake.

Community College Students Fall Victim to Loan Mismanagement, Default

Students' Financial Mismanagement...



\$100B

Total federal loans borrowed by students in FY 2014



\$10,000

Average community college student debt in 2015



17.1%

Cohort Default Rate of Community College Students in 2011

...Influencing Public Evaluation of Community Colleges

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

More Metrics, More Problems: Breaking Down Obama's College-Ratings Plan

INSIDE
HIGHER ED

Looming Default Rates Could Penalize Community Colleges Where Few Students Borrow

Bloomberg
Businessweek

This Fed Official Just Perfectly Described Why Student Loans are a Terrible Investment

THE HUFFINGTON POST

Student Loan Debt Crisis in America

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, "Student Loan Volume and Default Rates," accessed Feb. 2015), http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cug.asp; New America Foundation, "Federal Education Budget Project" <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/federal-education-budget-update/>; Zillman C, "How Free Community College Could Help The Student Loan Crisis, In One Chart," January 14, 2015, <http://fortune.com/2015/01/14/free-community-college-loan-default/>; EAB interviews and analysis.

Scared Straight

Broward College recommends that all students planning to accept public or private loans to pay for college attend a two-hour debt management workshop. The content of the workshop expands on traditional financial literacy curricula by personalizing the consequences of loan default. Contacts at the college highlight anecdotes and personal stories as effective methods of explaining to students the potential impact loans and debt can have on their future goals, including careers, home ownership, and relationships.

After creating the workshop, the college's CDR has declined from 15.3% in 2010 to 12.3% in 2011 and has continued to decrease since then.

Pre-Loan Workshops Humanize the Effects of Debt

Aid Recipients Learn Real Impact of Financial Decisions

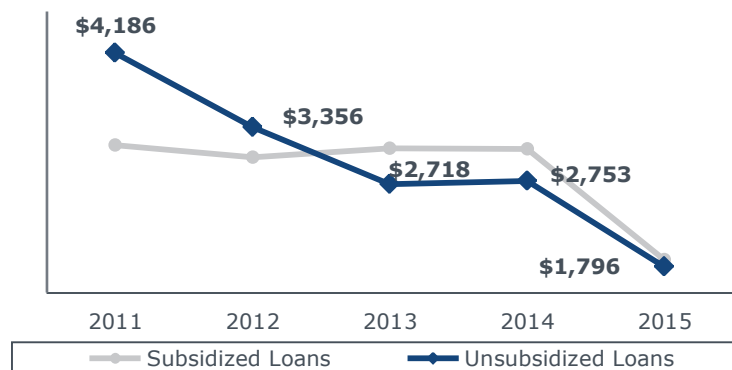


IMAGE CREDIT: JOHN O'CONNOR/WLRN

- **Strongly Encouraged:** All new students and current students planning to take out loans pushed to attend
- **Flexible:** 100+ sessions offered annually at times to accommodate work schedules
- **Realistic:** Personal stories of people struggling to manage debt major reason for workshop's effectiveness

Workshops Shrink Student Loan Burdens and Broward's CDR

Average Size of Student Loan Debt, 2011-2015



Institution in Brief: Broward College

- Located in Fort Lauderdale, Florida (large suburb)
- Enrolls 43,883 undergraduates
- 30% full-time enrollment

Source: National Center for Educational Statistics; <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/> (accessed April 2015); EAB interviews and analysis.

Walking in the Debtor's Shoes

Students often have trouble understanding how taking on debt in the present will impact their future goals. Behavioral economists explain this using two related theories: limited cognitive horizon and time inconsistency. The first is the theory that people (typically young or low-income) have difficulty envisioning their needs and desires in the future because they are solely focused on meeting present needs. A limited cognitive horizon can lead to time inconsistency, a phenomenon in which people deprioritize the future when compared to current needs.

Broward's pre-loan debt management workshop is an effective way of challenging these instincts and demonstrating to students why they must prepare themselves for their futures.

Through conversations with financial aid directors at colleges across the country, contacts directed us to consider an online module for students to complete before accepting loans. The game SPENT inspired our initial outline of what such a module might look like; SPENT was created by the Urban Ministries of Durham to educate players about the difficult decisions impoverished people must make to survive.

Simulation Game Could Personalize Debt at Scale

Now or Later?

Students Struggle to Prioritize Future Well-being



Limited Cognitive Horizon

Inability to envision the needs of their future selves



Time Inconsistency

Inability to prioritize future needs against current needs

"If you look at someone who is financially unstable—someone who can't even pay their bills from month to month—and said that they need to be better about planning for the future, they're going to look at you and tell you to get lost."

*Elijah Herr
Assistant Director of Financial Aid
Portland Community College*

Gamification Meets Debt Management

Elements of Online Game Inform Financial Training of the Future

SPENT

Tough trade offs

force participant to choose between two necessary items



"Your car breaks down the first day of class. Should you use your financial aid check to buy textbooks or take your car to a mechanic?"

Real-world data

provided throughout game as context



"Nurse practitioners in your region earn \$95,000 a year and physical therapists earn \$80,000, on average. Which position will you apply for?"

Interactive content

is customized to player's game choices



"Your monthly loan payment is \$500 per month and you chose an apartment with a \$1,000 rent. You'll need a second job to pay off both."

Source: Play Spent, playspent.org; EAB interviews and analysis.



Guiding Intentional Academic Decisions

Preventing Early Attrition

SECTION

2

- Practice 6: Meta Major Scheduling Menus
- Practice 7: Completion Mapping Course
- Practice 8: Multi-term Registration
- Practice 9: Full-Time Summer Scholarships

Haste Makes Waste

Without proper advising, all students risk making poor-fit choices that can derail their progress toward graduation.

First, when confronted with a thick course catalogue with over 300 pages of course options and descriptions, students often make course selections at random. Many students in our research admitted their initial course enrollments were more strongly influenced by how interesting the course appeared than if the course would further their progress toward completion of a major and credential.

Similarly, students typically set career goals with incomplete information. One student we interviewed said her decision to pursue a nursing degree was based on seeing a family member in the same field, not because she understood requirements, local employer demand, or day-to-day responsibilities of the role.

Students register for courses at the start of every term, which fosters fragmented, erratic academic planning decisions.

Finally, in the absence of proper advising, students risk choosing a full-time or part-time course load based on perceived ease, without careful consideration of how school fits with their lives or their odds of goal attainment.

Poor Academic Decisions at Intake Have Consequences Down the Road



Short-Sighted Course Choices

Selected at Random

- Average course catalogue contains 300+ pages
- Total freedom of choice now results in excess credits later



Peer-Pressured Goal Setting

Influenced by Social Network

- Students have limited information about careers outside of personal connections
- Poorly chosen goals lead to major switches and attrition



Last-Minute Scheduling

Determined Just Ahead of Semester

- Registration for upcoming semester opens during finals period and last day of class for current semester
- Fragmented planning results in erratic path to graduation



Opting for Lightest Load

Based on Personal Feasibility

- Full-time enrollment (15 credits per semester) not possible for many nontraditional students
- Part-time students less likely to graduate than full-time peers

Guiding Intentional Academic Decisions

The first two practices featured in this section offer guidance for college leaders when building in additional supports so students make intentional academic decisions at intake. The final two practices outline strategies that further engage students in their academics and encourage their long-term retention at the college.

Structured Supports Set Foundation for On-Time Graduation

6. Meta Major Scheduling Menus

Intentional Course Choices

- From random decision to guided, constrained selection
- Case Study: Queensborough Community College (NY)



7. Completion Mapping Course

Informed Goal Setting

- From peer pressure impulse to self-exploration and reflection
- Case study: Cuyamaca College (CA)



8. Multi-term Registration

Pacing Time to Completion

- From last-minute hustle to thought-out academic plan
- Case study: West Hills Community College (CA)



9. Full-time Summer Scholarships

Right-Fit Course Load

- From making the low-cost choice to the right choice
- Case study: Indiana State University (IN)



Good Intentions, Counterproductive Results

During the Enrollment Point Visits, researchers expressed frustration with how insistently staff urged them to declare a major. Community college staff members, however, are not necessarily in the wrong for pushing students too quickly towards a major or degree track: they're following financial aid regulations.

In 2011, the Consolidated Appropriations Act made undecided students ineligible for financial aid. In response, most community colleges removed the option to declare "undecided," on applications so students do not unknowingly prevent their own financial aid eligibility.

Yet, students' original major declaration determines course selection, advising, and more. Because these original decisions are rushed, average students take 20 credits more than necessary for a 60-credit associate's degree. This figure translates to \$7.4 billion spent by students on credits not required to receive a degree.

Without giving students the opportunity to make informed course selections, community colleges continue to set students up to spend highly valued resources on courses that are not necessary for attainment.

DOE Inadvertently Prompts Random Program Selection

No Major? No Aid

DOE Regulation Bars Undecided Students from Federal Financial Aid



U.S. Department of Education

34 CFR 668.32 – Student Eligibility

*"A student is eligible to receive Title IV, HEA program assistance if the student...is a regular student enrolled, or **accepted for enrollment, in an eligible program** at an eligible institution."*

Quick Decisions Easy, but Costly

20⁺

Average excess credits earned pursuing a 60-credit AA/AS

\$7.7B

Total annual cost to students for excess credits

\$11.5B

Total annual cost to U.S. taxpayers for excess credits subsidized by DOE



"Just pick one. My sister was here last week and spent an hour reading all the programs they have here. I'm not like that—if I have to pick a major, I just pick an easy one and switch later."

Community College Student

Source: "Student Eligibility," Department of Education Federal Student Aid Office, 2015, <http://ifap.ed.gov/qahome/qaassessments/studentelig.html>; Complete College America, "The Game Changers: Are states implementing the best reforms to get more college graduates?," 2013 <http://completecollege.org/pdfs/CCA%20Nat%20Report%20Oct18-FINAL-singles.pdf>; EAB interviews and analysis.

Meta Majors

Many leaders have introduced meta majors on their campuses as a way to help students with their initial program selection. Rather than selecting from a list of over 200 program offerings, students at these campuses have a choice of a short list of meta majors—families of like-majors clustered under broad thematic titles (e.g., Business, Health Science, etc.). One of the goals of this model is to reduce unproductive credit accumulation by directing students to courses that apply to a large set of majors.

Regardless of whether a college formally adopts a meta major model, our research pointed us to first semester course selection as a remaining challenge for new students.

Colleges Condense Program Offerings to Ease Major Selection Decision

200+ Programs Grouped into a Handful of Choices

Sample of Valencia College's Meta Major Options

Business	Health Science
Accounting Technology AS	Cardiovascular Technology AS
Economics AA	Nursing AS
Human Resources Operations Certificate	Magnetic Resonance Imaging Certificate
Medical Office Administration AS	Health Information Technology AS
Office Support Certificate	Emergency Medical Technology Certificate
STEM	Public Safety
Computer Information Technology AS	Public Administration AA
Marine Biology AA	Paralegal Studies AS
Laser and Photonics Technician Certificate	Homeland Security Specialist Certificate
Network Engineering Technology AS	Fire Science Technology AS
Advanced Electronics Technician Certificate	Correctional Officer Career Certificate

Meta Majors Catch on Across Community Colleges Nationally

- CUNY Lehman College
- Valencia College
- Palm Beach State College
- Ivy Technical Community College
- Queensborough Community College
- Monroe Community College
- Macomb Community College

Source: "New Student Experience," Valencia College, <http://valenciacollege.edu/academic-affairs/new-student-experience/meta-majors.cfm>; EAB interviews and analysis.

À La Carte Academic Schedules

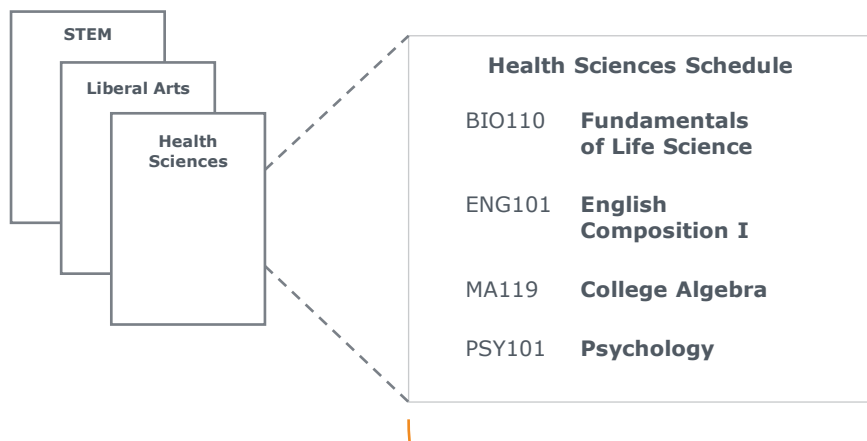
New students at Queensborough Community College (QCC) choose a major and meta major at the time of enrollment. To aid in first semester course registration, students can refer to one of 10 prefabricated scheduling menus the college offers across its five meta majors.

Each scheduling menu outlines recommended first-term courses in a particular meta major. A student enrolled in a Health Sciences major, for example, would review a scheduling menu containing courses that meet general education requirements (e.g., English Composition I) and distribution requirements for all of the majors in the meta major (e.g., Biology 101). Students are also given flexibility to choose electives.

There are two primary benefits of QCC's practice. The first is the ease of implementation—the college creates scheduling menus for each meta major, rather than every individual program offering at the college. The second benefit is the flexibility of the scheduling menus—each menu applies to all majors within a given meta major. If students later switch majors (commonly within the same meta major), their first-semester courses will still count toward their degree.

Prefabricated Meta Major Scheduling Menus

Highlighting Most Relevant Course Options



Class schedules crafted to guide students to enroll in:

- Half of recommended first semester credits
- English Composition I
- Distribution requirements

Institution in Brief: Queensborough Community College

- Located in Bayside, New York (large city)
- Enrolls 16,291 undergraduates
- 59% full-time enrollment



Source: National Center for Educational Statistics; <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/> (accessed April 2015); EAB interviews and analysis.

Allow Choice, But With Guardrails

Quensborough Community College staff recommend assessing historical enrollment data to identify the most popular classes for first-year students. Using historical data to shape the meta major scheduling menus ensures that students find them appealing. More important, however, is that the meta majors include first-year general education requirements.

Staff that design the menus build schedules that suit students' often varying non-academic commitments (e.g., jobs, familial duties). Students typically favor completing all of their courses in a block, rather than spaced out with long breaks in between classes. This reduces the amount of trips they have to make to campus, and makes the prefabricated menus more compatible with their schedules.

Finally, many students enter college unsure of their major, but sure that they intend to transfer. Clearly marking courses that transfer to four-year university partners helps students make informed decisions.

Three Pieces of Implementation Advice for Meta Major Scheduling Menus



Search Records

- Analyze historical data to identify ten most enrolled courses in each meta major among first-year students
- Identify which courses on the list are applicable to programs in the meta major



Provide Many Timeslots

- Courses on scheduling menus should be available all throughout the day and night
- Consider variations of scheduling menus that align to certain times of day (e.g., all courses on the scheduling menu are offered from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm)



Optimize for Transfer

- When selecting courses for scheduling menu, indicate which courses are accepted by four-year university transfer partners
- Consider creating specialized scheduling menus for students planning to transfer



Tip: If historical data shows that a significant number of students switch between meta majors, this is cause to ensure some overlap of scheduling menus across meta majors (e.g., the scheduling menus for the STEM and Health Sciences meta majors share ENG101 and MAT119)

A Narrow Definition of Success Skills

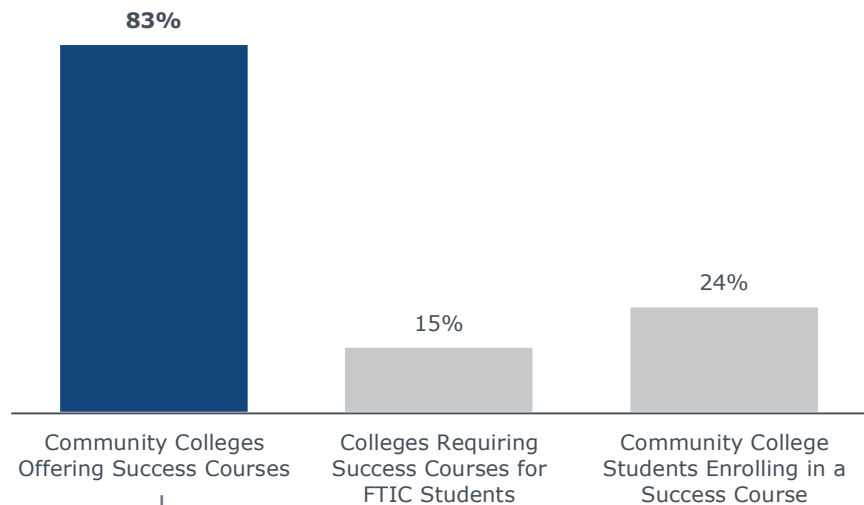
To support students in their selected course of study, the vast majority (83%) of two-year colleges offer student success courses. These courses primarily teach basic study skills, time management, and test-taking strategies. These critical topics often fail to engage students, particularly when introduced separate from discipline-specific material.

As a result, less than a quarter of community college students ever enroll in these often optional success courses.

Student Success Courses Plentiful, but Miss the Mark

Courses Suffer from Low Utilization and Limited Scope

Results from 2011 Community College Survey of Student Engagement and Community College Institutional Surveys



Top 5 Components of Success Courses

-  Study skills
-  Time-management skills
-  Note-taking skills
-  Test-taking skills
-  Use of library resources

“Right now, students are using an entire credit to learn study skills and explore the resources on our campus...but many of them don't even know what they want to study! We have to integrate these valuable lessons into relevant self-exploration conversations or nothing will stick.”

Director of Student Success

Source: “Matter of Degrees: Promising Practices for Community College Student Success,” Center for Community College Student Engagement; 2012 https://www.ccsse.org/docs/Matter_of_Degrees.pdf; EAB interviews and analysis.

Career Planning as a Student Success Skill

Cuyamaca College addressed both of the challenges often cited with student success courses (i.e., lack of relevancy and low enrollment) with PDC 124, a completion mapping course introduced in the early 1990s.

In 1991, administrators at the college surveyed students who enrolled in the fall semester but did not enroll the following spring semester. The survey asked students to articulate their reasons for discontinuing. Among the group of students who did not earn a credential, two major reasons provided were a lack of clarity on their reason for attending college and slow progress made toward their goals.

In response, the college created a student success course that focused on goal-setting and completion mapping, or academic planning. Course activities included personality self-assessments, reflective journaling exercises, and guided career exploration. Most recently, fall-to-spring persistence rate for career mapping course completers was 85%, compared to 65% for non-enrollees.

The course is not mandatory, but students are incentivized to participate because the course boasts many attributes not commonly seen in traditional student success courses: it is relevant, offered in flexible modalities, and transferrable to nearby four-year universities.

Career Exploration Draws Crowds, Boosts Persistence

Cuyamaca's Completion Mapping Course



Exploring Personality Type:
Do What You Are
self-assessment



Defining Multiple Intelligences:
Student journaling
class activities



Articulating Career Interests:
O*NET exploration
assignments



Determining Learning Style:
Productivity
Environmental
Preference Survey

Boost Course Enrollment with Perks



Flexible: Course offered in multiple course modalities (e.g., online, face-to-face, hybrid) to suit different students



Transferrable: Fulfills general education requirements at Cuyamaca, California State University, and University of California for transfer



Impactful: 85% of course enrollees retained fall to spring, versus 65% for non-enrollees

2,000

First-year students
participating in optional
PDC 124 course annually



Institution in Brief: Cuyamaca College

- Located in El Cajon, California (large suburb)
- Enrolls 8,859 undergraduates
- 24% full-time enrollment



Source: National Center for Educational Statistics; <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/> (accessed April 2015); Fralick M, "Career Development in a College Success Course," National Resources Center for the First-Year Experience, 2011, http://www.collegesuccess1.com/research/sect2.3_cuyamacacommcollege.pdf; EAB interviews and analysis.

Extending Registration's Reach

Once students incorporate academic and career goals into educational plans, colleges should provide tools for students to act on these plans. Over the last decade, West Hills Community College (WHCC) took a close look at its student success data: in particular, they focused on the demonstrable impact educational plans have on student success.

In 2014, West Hills Community College helped its students implement longer term educational plans by reframing the traditional term-by-term approach to registration. Through its program, Reg365, WHCC students with an educational plan enroll in an entire year of courses (summer, fall, and spring) at one time.

Students chart out their educational plan with an advisor and then register for the coming year's courses at once. Before Reg365, about 14% of students enrolled in 30 or more units in their first year of college. After a year and a half of implementation, over 18% of students now enroll in 30 credits per year, allowing them to stay on track for graduation.

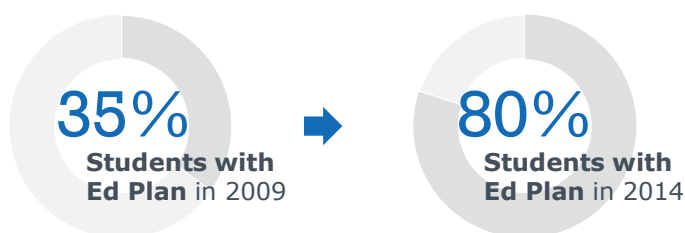
Data collected during the registration period allows colleges to forecast section and course demand far into the future. This additional insight facilitates more confident, proactive budgetary and strategic planning for the years ahead.

Multi-term Commitment Enables Advanced Planning



Investments in Ed Planning Infrastructure Foreshadow Multi-term Registration

West Hills Recognizes Implications of Uninformed Course Selection



Reg365 Supports Student Success and Institutional Management



“When we allowed students to queue up their spring classes, they began to think about their future year prior to the start of registration period. They started to take notice of how their life demands might conflict with their academic and class requirements, so they began to adjust accordingly.”

*Stuart Van Horn, Vice Chancellor
West Hills Community College*

Institution in Brief: West Hills Community College District

- Located in Coalinga, CA (rural)
- Enrolls 6,805 undergraduates
- 32% full-time enrollment

Source: National Center for Educational Statistics; <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/> (accessed April 2015); Grasgreen A, "Registering Toward Completion," Inside Higher Ed, April 11, 2014 <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2014/04/11/cleveland-state-aims-boost-completion-through-multiterm-registration>; "Cleveland State University - Multi-Term Registration: Course Scheduling for Student Success," AACU Innovations Exchange, April 28, 2014 <http://www.aascu.org/programs/ie/SubmissionDetails.aspx?id=8076>; EAB interviews and analysis.

Getting Multi-term Registration Right

Complete redesign of the registration process may seem too drastic an approach, yet the majority of effort required to implement this change is up-front and long-lasting.

Stuart Van Horn, Vice Chancellor at WHCC, commented that academic and instructional faculty initially responded to the proposed changes with concerns. Faculty were concerned that they would have to fully commit to teaching courses so far in advance, and administrators expressed concerns about the amount of logistical planning such a change might require.

Less than a year after implementation, however, early opponents have come to understand that planning the course schedule a year in advance reduces the number of course scheduling meetings, encourages more students to enroll in courses full-time, and improves the college's ability to predict course demand.

This page outlines the five keys to successfully transition from a one-term registration model to a multi-term model.

Key Pieces of Advice from Multi-Term Registration Pros

1 Conduct Pre-Requisite Checks Multiple Times

Staff use degree audit system to notify and drop students from summer, fall, and spring courses if prerequisites are no longer satisfied because of dropped (previous semester) courses



Conduct degree audit two times prior to each semester:

- Spring: early January, late April
- Summer: late May, mid-July
- Fall: early August, mid-November

2 Reduce Number of Course Scheduling Meetings

Faculty assemble once annually to plan a full year's worth of courses, rather than meeting two to three times per year to plan the schedule for each semester



College realizes advantage of long-term schedule planning:

- Forecast for budget needs
- Plan personal life around anticipated courses
- Identify course capacity and faculty demand earlier

3 Emphasize Full Course Load

Students urged to enroll in 15 credits per semester, instead of 12, during educational planning session with advisor; encourage students to adhere to previously developed educational plan



"15 credits is our standard. Anything less is an intervention."

*Stuart Van Horn, Vice Chancellor
West Hills Community College*

4 Adjust Student Billing Timeline

Students billed in a two-part process for the entire year's tuition because district requires student payment within 24 hours of registration



- Fall and summer tuition due within 24 hours of registration
- Reminder statements sent out on October 1
- Spring tuition due on November 1

5 Market Multi-Term Registration Transition

Registrar works with marketing department to disperse clear information on new multi-term registration system



Learn from West Hills' Mistakes:

- Clarify who is eligible for multi-term registration
- Publish and explain new payment schedule proactively

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Federal Funding Stream Dries Up

Students must enroll in 30 credits annually to graduate with a 60-credit associate degree in a standard two-year time frame. Students may earn these credits by enrolling full-time with 15 credits each in the fall and spring with summers off.

Perhaps more feasible for students attending four-year colleges, this arrangement is much more difficult for community college students who often balance school with family, children, or employment. As a result, the vast majority (70%) of two-year college students take fewer than 15 credits per term and have much lower odds of success than full-time peers.

If students take courses during the summer term, they could then enroll in fewer than 15 credits per term and still complete 30 credits annually to stay on track to graduate.

However, financial support for summer enrollment is limited. In 2011, a change in the federal financial aid budget cut year-round Pell funding, giving students an unfortunate ultimatum: take 15 credits per semester, pay out of pocket for summer courses, or give up on full-time enrollment and accept lower odds of attainment.

Part-Timers Seek Summer Financing to Stay on Track

Path to Low Retention

Majority of Two-Year College Students Attend Part-Time



Percentage of students taking fewer than 15 credits per term at community colleges and thus off-track for timely graduation

Fall-to-fall retention rate for part-time community college students, compared to 59% for full-time students

Grand Experiment Comes to End

Year-Round Pell Grants Ended in 2011



2008 Higher Education Opportunity grant lets students qualify for Summer Pell grant



From 2008 to 2010:

- Two-year college enrollment grows by 200,000
- FTE enrollment grows 14%, head-count grows 9%
- Summer FTE enrollment grows 15%, summer head-count grows 10%



2011 federal spending bill eliminates summer Pell grant

Source: Sieben L. "Community College Students Take More Credit Hours, and Report Says Pell Increases Are Why," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 8, 2011, <http://chronicle.com/article/Community-College-Students/127077/>; Johnson J., Rockkind J., "With Their Whole Lives Ahead of Them: Myths and Realities About Why So Many Students Fail to Finish College," *Public Agenda*, 2009 <http://www.publicagenda.org/files/theirwholivesaheadofthem.pdf>; EAB interviews and analysis.

Summer Pell Alternative

Indiana State University's full-time summer scholarships break this uneasy trade-off by providing financial support for summer enrollees.

Scholarship funding for summer enrollees first became available in the summer of 2014. Before the program was piloted, administrators at the college observed that traditional incentives designed to encourage full-time enrollment only focused on 15-credit enrollment in the fall and spring semesters. A model like banded tuition, for example, offers students a chance to enroll in 15 credits in a semester for the price of 12 credits. This lowers financial costs, but students' busy schedules are another barrier to 15-credit enrollment per term.

Indiana State's summer scholarship provides students just shy of completing 30 credits annually with up to six free college credits for summer courses. In addition to tuition stipends, the college also grants money for books and other expenses.

The costs of tuition stipends can add up quickly for a college, but the scholarship's impact on term-to-term retention more than makes up for the up-front expense, particularly with careful implementation planning and continued student support services during the summer.

Scholarship Makes 30-Credit Annual Enrollment Possible

Full-Year Enrollment

ISU's Summer Scholarship Pays Students to Reach Full-Time Status



Past Pilot Phase

On-Track Summer Scholarship program first piloted in summer of 2014; set for growth in summer of 2015



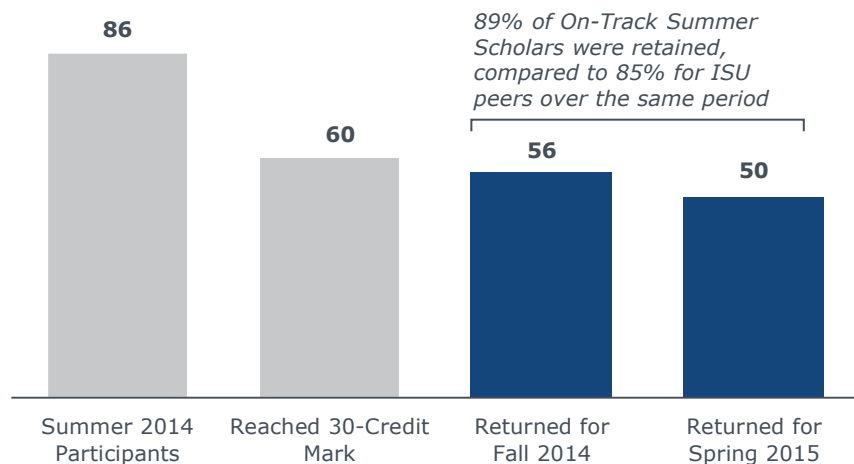
Meeting a Need

Tuition discounts alone are insufficient incentive for full-time enrollment if students have other demands on their time



Program Benefits

Scholarship incentive provides students with 6 free credits over summer and a \$300 book stipend



Advice from the Front Lines:



Expect increased demand for summer courses



Expand size of summer tutoring network



Consider summer orientation for new online students

Institution in Brief: Indiana State University

- 4-year doctoral/research university
- Located in Terre Haute, Indiana (small city)
- Enrolls 12,448 undergraduates

Source: National Center for Educational Statistics; <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/> (accessed April 2015); EAB interviews and analysis.



Minimizing First Semester Dropout

Preventing Early Attrition

SECTION

3

- Practice 10: Personalized Resource Nudges
- Practice 11: Withdrawal Prevention Specialist
- Practice 12: Compressed Mini-semesters

Minimizing First Semester Dropout

The final section of this study describes new student intake as an opportunity to minimize the risk of attrition during the first semester. College administrators must empower students to manage unexpected life circumstances that could derail them from their completion goals.

While many students struggle academically, often what prevents students from completion are non-academic life factors: a realm in which community colleges have historically had little control. The first practice in this section introduces a way to proactively connect students with the right support services before a challenge arises. The last two practices offer strategies to reengage students who intend to drop out of the institution.

Align Services to Students Based on Demonstrated Need

10. Personalized Resource Nudges

Connecting with Services



- Proactive communication of services best-suited for student profile
- Case Study: Mount Wachusett Community College (MA)

11. Withdrawal Prevention Specialist

Intervening Before Dropout



- Designated staff help students explore alternatives to dropout
- Case study: Manchester Community College (CT)

12. Compressed Mini-semesters

Reducing Cost of Deviation



- Condensed courses across new academic calendar reduce impact of credit loss during dropout
- Case study: Trident Technical College (SC)

Peering into the Black Box



"A student enters into the admissions process, we get them registered for classes, and then they disappear into the crowd! You think you've got all your ducks in a row, but the reality is you lose people along the way."

*President
Community College in the Midwest*

If You Build It...?

Despite the significant investments college leaders have made in on-campus support programs for students, very few students take advantage of available resources. A study from CCSSE in 2011 shows that while the vast majority of two-year colleges have built academic tutoring centers, student success courses, and first-year experience programs, less than half of students report participating.

After speaking with students, staff, and examining our own campus visit experiences, we identified three major barriers preventing students from connecting with on-campus support services.

First, students feel overwhelmed by the number of programs, services, and clubs offered at the institution, typically presented all at once during new student orientation. The offerings tend to meld together indistinctly, stopping students from participating at all.

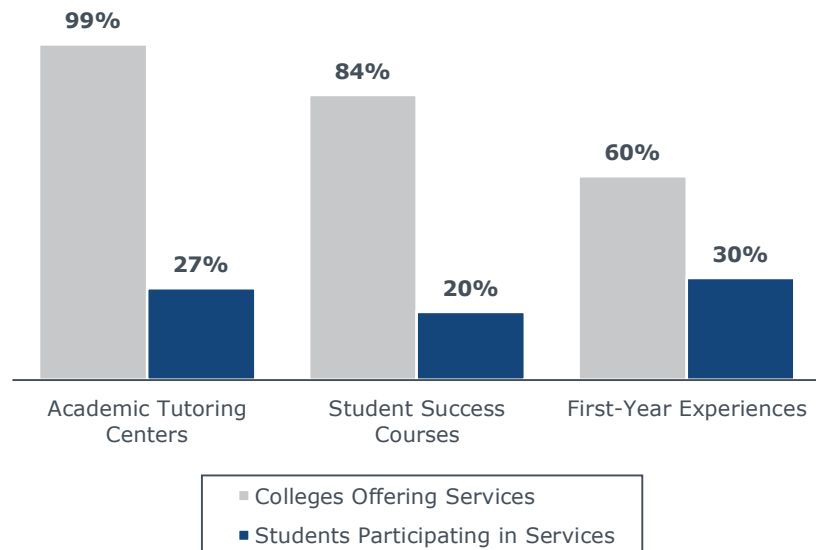
Second, students may dismiss programs because they fear social stigma associated with needing assistance to achieve graduation goals.

Finally, when faced with the myriad options on campus, students will often choose the easiest or none at all.

Despite Significant Investments, Student Services Often Underutilized

Campus Services Fail to Recruit Participants

Results from 2011 CCSSE and CCIS Surveys



What Prevents Use of Services?



Options Feel Overwhelming

Average community college has 200+ student services offices, special programs, and clubs to choose from



Services Easily Dismissed

Most students don't identify as needing additional support and want to avoid social stigma of "looking stupid" in front of friends, peers



Easy Choice Not Best Choice

Students more likely to select extracurricular activities that seem easy; groups requiring more commitment neglected

Source: "Matter of Degrees: Promising Practices for Community College Student Success," Center for Community College Student Engagement: 2012 https://www.ccsse.org/docs/Matter_of_Degrees.pdf; EAB interviews and analysis.

Proactive Service Matching

Mount Wachusett Community College encourages students to utilize on-campus services by understanding their needs and connecting with them early. The college administers a survey at the time students take placement exams that includes a wide variety of questions, including access to technology, confidence in academic decision making, and transportation to campus. The answers to these questions form part of the student profile in the student information system. The college also uses the survey responses to suggest matches via SMS with campus resources through a Campus Services Referral Matrix.

Rather than receive a list of 30 to 40 resources available to them, students receive customized invitations to participate in right-fit clubs, programs, and services. Students who indicate a specific area of need on their initial intake survey (e.g., support caring for young children) receive personalized nudges that proactively connect them to resources that would suit those specific needs (e.g., on-campus child care).

Since the inception of this intervention in 2013, persistence rates increased 20%, largely credited to increased usage of on-campus services.

Using Intake Survey Results to Identify and Push Relevant Resources

Mount Wachusett's Personalized Resource Nudges



1

New Student Intake Survey

30-question survey collects information about risk factors like family support, transportation, financial literacy, etc. Survey required during placement test

2

Campus Services Referral Matrix

Assistant Dean of Student Services assembles team to create matrix. Each question on intake survey corresponds with relevant services

3

Personalized Resource Nudges

Nudges follow four key rules:

- ✓ Element of personalization
- ✓ Relevant information
- ✓ Timeliness or urgency
- ✓ Call to action and next step

4

Improved Student Performance

↑20%

Increase in fall-to-fall persistence rate of first-time, full-time 2013 cohort, compared to 2012 cohort

Institution in Brief: Mount Wachusett Community College

- Located in Gardner, Massachusetts (rural)
- Enrolls 4,734 undergraduates
- 42% full-time enrollment

Make Your Message Stick

During the research phase of this project, our research team interviewed experts in user experience, behavioral economics, and consumer researchers to identify practices that ensure direct-to-student nudges are engaging, meaningful, and drive the recipient to the intended action.

Quick Wins to Ensure Resource Nudges Have an Impact



Personalization: Informing students of the sender's name or illustrating that the sender knows personal information about the student ensures the sender is a real person, not a robot.



Sense of Urgency: Including deadlines and just-in-time reminders emphasizes the importance of accomplishing tasks on time and prompts student to action before it's too late.

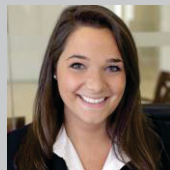


Relevant to Goals: Reminding students that the work they have to do now to enroll in the college will help them achieve their long term goals of employment and success.



Next Steps: Attaching a hyperlink, phone number, or other avenue for next steps helps student take action on message immediately.

Crafting an Introductory Text Message



Introduce sender with their name, role, photo, and college

Hey! I'm Katie, an advisor at EABCC. I'll be texting you information about your financial aid and other important college to-do's so you can start off on a good path to graduation! **You can expect to hear from me about 5 times per month**, but feel free to text me if you have questions. I'm always here to help. *If you'd rather receive emails, or hear from us another way, or if you received this message in error, please reply 'STOP' to this message.*

Always include an option to opt out and sign up for messaging in another way

Give students a sense of how often to expect to hear from you

Mid-Semester Melt

Despite many efforts to keep students on track to completion, nearly one-quarter of all 2011 CCSSE respondents indicated they were uncertain of when they would return or had no plans to enroll in more courses, representing a high risk of mid-semester attrition.

The remaining group of respondents had plans to return in the next 12 months, or were on-track to accomplish their academic goals that semester. Despite students' optimism, we consider these students to be still at some risk of early attrition. Academic difficulties, personal challenges, or unexpected life events could lead a student to withdraw before graduation. Community college students are especially prone to early attrition due to non-academic factors, which are far more difficult to track and identify than academic behavior alone. Research by Completion by Design suggests that 40% of students who drop out or withdraw from community college have an "A" or "B" grade point average.

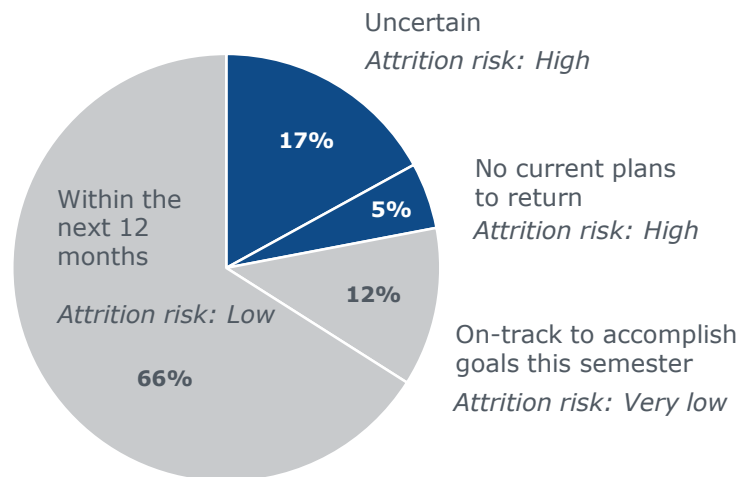
Unfortunately, the dropout process at most colleges requires little effort; students can often drop off a form or press a few buttons on a computer to withdraw from the institution before staff have an opportunity to intervene.

One-Quarter of Community College Students at High Risk of Dropping Out

...And All Students Present Some Attrition Risk

Responses to CCSSE 2011 Survey Item:

"When do you plan to take classes at this college again?"¹



The Best Laid Plans...

Nearly one-quarter of current students are at high risk of dropping out. Even students who have plans to take classes within the next 12 months are at risk of mid-semester attrition due to:

- Academic difficulty
- Personal challenge
- Unanticipated life event

1) n=433,639

An Intentional Student Barrier

Though students face many barriers during intake, they can often withdraw with a single click online.

Manchester Community College decided to create an intentional barrier to student attrition: they designated five on-campus Withdrawal Prevention Specialists who are responsible for intercepting students interested in withdrawal.

During peak registration period, these staff members help students through the onboarding process. Through these experiences, staff become cross-trained by learning about financial aid advising and processing, admissions advising, outreach and student recruitment, program operation, record keeping, and reporting.

During the academic semester, Withdrawal Prevention Specialists meet with students who request to drop a course, or withdraw from the institution altogether. They ask students the reason for their requested drop and remind them about the consequences of dropping out, such as missing out on their goals or losing financial aid eligibility.

College Deploys Designated Staff to Dissuade Potential Drop Outs

Last-Touch Intervention Strategy

Manchester's Withdrawal Prevention Specialist Reduces Number of Unnecessary Dropouts



1 Student Attempts to Drop Courses

Common reasons for withdrawal:

- Avoiding a failing or low course grade
- Disliking an instructor
- Feeling overwhelmed by number of responsibilities

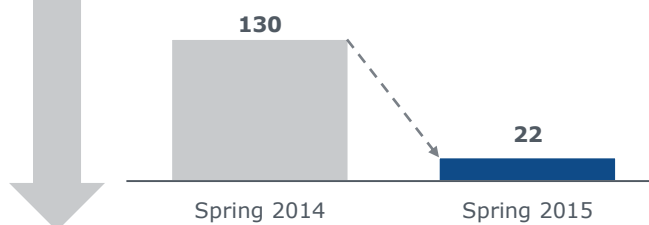
2 Specialist Presents Alternatives to Drop

Primary characteristics of withdrawal prevention specialist role:

- **Cross-trained:** Withdrawal Prevention Specialists rotate between admissions, registrar, and financial aid offices
- **Intrusive:** Students must speak with specialist before submitting withdrawal form

3 Student Remains Enrolled in Classes

Withdrawals plunge as counselors introduced



Institution in Brief: Manchester Community College

- Located in Manchester, Connecticut (large suburb)
- Enrolls 7,571 undergraduates
- 36% full-time enrollment

Source: National Center for Educational Statistics; <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/> (accessed April 2015); EAB interviews and analysis.

Personal Touch Key to Success

To make the Withdrawal Prevention Specialists initiative possible, the school eliminated the option to withdraw from courses online entirely. Now, students are required to visit the campus in person to request a withdrawal form from a staff member.

When students request a withdrawal form, staff begin on-the-spot counseling with the student to uncover their motivations for leaving the institution and identify any services that may be helpful for the student before deciding to withdraw altogether.

The presence and role of the Withdrawal Prevention Specialists has trickled into the mind-set of staff across the institution and impacted their approach to engaging with students who express an interest in withdrawing. Since implementation, all staff at the college have adopted the Withdrawal Prevention Specialists' on-the-spot advising techniques in their own roles to prevent early attrition.

Students Need Connection to College to Reconsider Withdrawal

Manchester's Staff Investment

Background Profiles of Withdrawal Prevention Specialists

5

Number of full-time specialists integrated into college's student services offices



All specialists have at least a BA degree and some counseling experience



Staff stationed in financial aid, admissions, and registrar 3 days per week; rotate 2 days



Specialists staffed in one-stop shop before fall term to help with new student enrollment

Real Conversation Makes a World of Difference

"The [Withdrawal Prevention Specialist] position gives students an opportunity to talk with someone, even if it's only for a few minutes..."

"But if they can build that rapport in five minutes and really make a connection to the college, then the student might rethink their decision to leave."

*Peter Harris
Director of Enrollment Management
Manchester Community College*

No Other Options

In some cases, withdrawing may be the best option for the student.

Even the most prepared student cannot prepare for unexpected roadblocks: a child suddenly getting sick, loss of a home, or worse. When these unexpected events happen, students must drop out mid-semester, leaving behind unfinished courses and lost tuition.

Severe Life Events Force Withdrawal Mid-Semester

One Small Hurdle Becomes an Insurmountable Barrier

Students Must Prioritize Personal Issues Over School in Times of Urgency

! Engine Malfunction • Late for work shift • Unable to drive children to school • Short \$100 for towing fee	! ER Visit • Missed work shift • Health Insurance paperwork piles up • Follow up appointments require more time
! Job Loss • Severance check doesn't meet needs • Job interviews demand attention • Out-of-work parent takes on child care responsibilities	! Unexpected Pregnancy • Doctor appointments cut into work schedule • Neonatal care exceeds budget • No maternity leave policy at work



“Middle class students are sufficiently resourced to contain outside life circumstances, so that they do not overflow into every aspect of that student’s life. On the other hand, when something goes wrong for low-income students, the effect surpasses a safety-net threshold which then cascades across their life triggering additional consequences. For this reason, **a roadblock that only causes minor tremors in a traditional student’s academic performance is more likely to be insurmountable for a nontraditional student.** Unfortunately, many of these roadblocks occur mid-semester, putting these nontraditional students at risk of losing all progress made toward completing credits and reducing their odds of ever returning.”

*William Watson, Director of SparkPoint
Skyline College*

Reducing the Penalty for Stopping Out

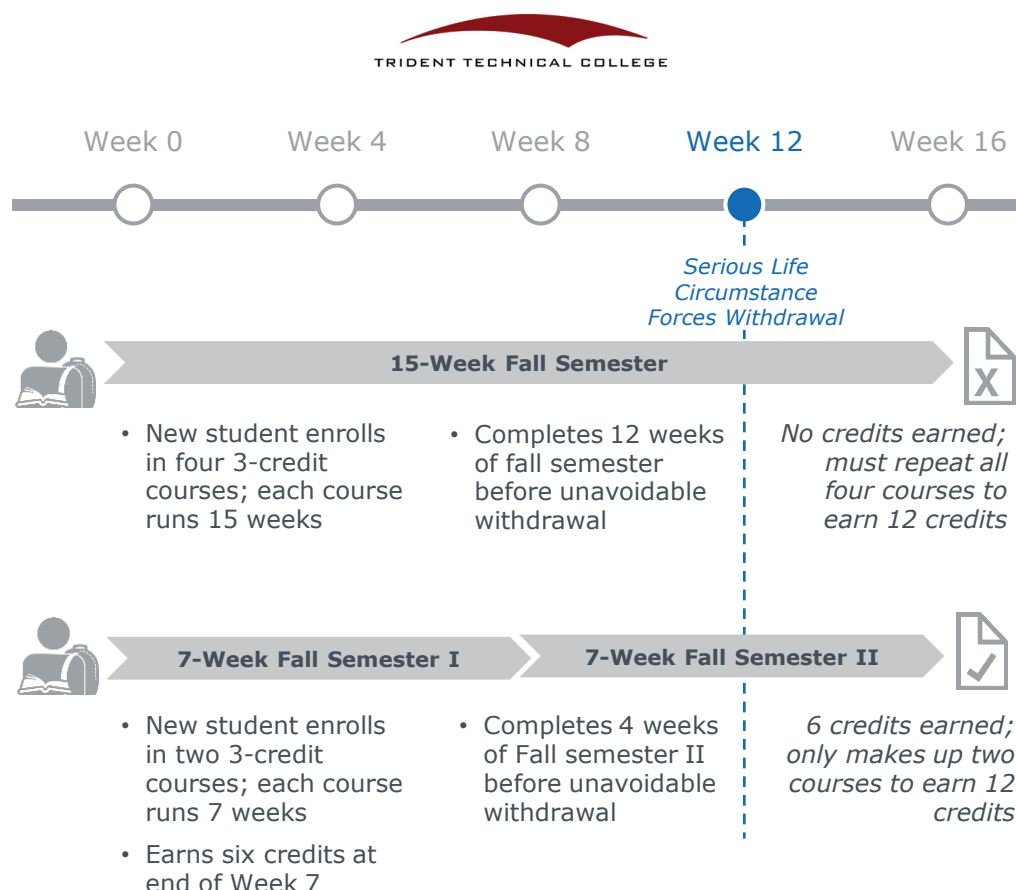
The high cost of mid-semester attrition was one of many reasons that prompted leadership at Trident Technical College (TTC) to restructure the academic calendar. In 2014, Trident replaced the traditional 15-week semester with two 7-week terms.

The new format allows students to take two or three 7-week courses at a time; classes meet for two hours instead of 55 minutes. Students have the opportunity to enroll in the same number of courses in the new format as they would in the old format. The primary distinction is that in the new format, students do not take all of their courses simultaneously.

Enrolling in a few courses at a time has had a positive impact on academic performance (see next page), and is also extremely beneficial to students who encounter difficulties mid-semester. For example, a student who must withdraw from the college in week 12 still earns credit for the work she completed in the first compressed term. Rather than withdrawing from four courses at once, this student must only make up two courses upon her return.

Alternately, students who enroll at Trident too late in the summer have the opportunity to begin taking classes in Fall Semester II, rather than wait until the next spring semester.

Compressed Mini-semesters Give Dropouts a Chance at Credit Attainment



Institution in Brief: Trident Technical College

- Located in Charleston, South Carolina (small city)
- Enrolls 17,489 undergraduates
- 43% full-time enrollment

Transforming the Academic Calendar

Thus far, the compressed semester model at Trident has been a great success. Students perform better in their courses when they focus on a few at a time, and they are retained at higher rates from semester-to-semester than under the traditional model.

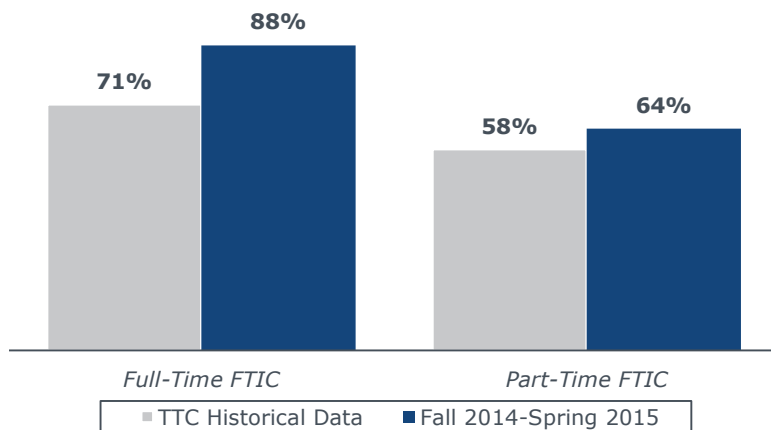
To meet staff resistance to the conversion to compressed mini-semester, Trident allocated \$100,000 for faculty professional development scholarships. Faculty were given the opportunity to apply for small scholarships to pursue training on teaching methods in compressed schedules. Faculty used these funds to attend conferences, workshops, participate in online courses, and even purchase iPads for their students to support new pedagogy.

Inevitably, questions arose regarding the financial aid disbursement schedule. Campus-wide advertisement of the changes and the implications for financial aid eased students' concerns about the timeline of disbursements.

Mini-semester Boost Outcomes, but Require Careful Campus Redesign

Compressed Mini-semester Keep Students Engaged

Fall-to-Spring Retention Rates



↑13

Percentage point increase in course pass rates from 62% in fall 2011 to 75% in fall 2014

Key Transition Elements

Lessons Learned from Trident Technical College



Campus Advertisement of Changes

Must communicate new schedule to new and returning students; Trident recommends in-class, online, and paper announcements



Faculty Professional Development

Faculty can apply for small funding to pursue professional development on compressed scheduling



Financial Aid Disbursement

Financial aid office must designate staff member to manage disbursement of funds and track students that meet the criteria for return to Title IV funds

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Preventing Early Attrition

Each section of this study tackles one of the three primary challenges uncovered during the course of our research on new student intake at community colleges.

These recommended practices form a playbook for college leaders to strengthen the path to credential attainment starting from day one.

Pathing Students to Success from Application through the First Year

1 Supporting Optimal Financial Decisions

1. On-site FAFSA Completion Lab
2. SMS Verification Updates
3. Automated Aid Estimates
4. FAFSA Benefits Eligibility Screens
5. Pre-loan Workshop

2 Guiding Intentional Academic Decisions

6. Meta Major Scheduling Menus
7. Completion Mapping Course
8. Multi-term Registration
9. Full-Time Summer Scholarships

3 Minimizing First Semester Dropout

10. Personalized Resource Nudges
11. Withdrawal Prevention Specialist
12. Compressed Mini-semesters

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.



Preventing Early Attrition Implementation Toolkit

TOOLKIT

- Tool 1: FAFSA Lab Ambassador Job Description
- Tool 2: FAFSA Lab Ambassador Training Curriculum Outline
- Tool 3: Public Benefits Screening Form
- Tool 4: Public Benefits Screening Providers Evaluation Matrix
- Tool 5: Implementing Meta Majors on Your Campus
- Tool 6: Completion Mapping Course Curriculum Builder
- Tool 7: Non-cognitive Student Needs Intake Survey
- Tool 8: Non-academic Resource Matrix
- Tool 9: Tips for Texting Students and Parents
- Tool 10: Sample Text Message Nudge Calendar
- Tool 11: Compressed Mini-semester Business Case Template

FAFSA Lab Ambassador Job Description

Purpose of the Tool

This tool is an adaptation of a recent job posting for the FAFSA Lab Peer Ambassador position at Fresno City College. The job description provides great detail on the expected duties of the student work-study staff, as well as essential hiring criteria to ensure that well-suited candidates are selected.

Job Description

Job Title: Financial Aid Lab Peer Ambassador

Supervisor: Financial Aid Assistant I

Department: Financial Aid

Type: Part Time

Supervision Received

Financial Aid Assistant I

Pay: \$9.10 (*Based on state-specific student employee compensation regulations*)

Hours/Week: 12

General Statement of Responsibilities

Provides welcome, informational, and support services to current and prospective students regarding financial aid. Acts as central point of contact for in-person financial aid inquiries. Advocates for needs of students, teaches students to access self-service Fresno City College resources. Communicates and acts in accordance with applicable federal and state regulations and institutional policies and procedures.

Assists students and parents with financial aid applications, answers questions, maintains sign-in logs, files, provides customer service.

Application Details

Special instructions to the applicant:

To be eligible for student employment, you must be enrolled at Fresno City College in at least 6 credits and have a cumulative GPA of 2.0 for regular student positions or 3.0 for tutor/peer assistant positions.

Experience: Experience working with the public highly desired.

Knowledge of: Office functions, office machinery, multi-line telephone use needed.

Ability to: Work and communicate within a team environment required; pass a criminal background check.

Required: Skill to read and comprehend a variety of written material from basic handwritten or typed notes; understand and carry out verbal instructions; verbally convey information on a person-to-person basis; add, subtract, multiply, and divide; interact with students, instructors, classified employees, and administrators from a wide variety of ethnic, cultural, educational, and economic backgrounds; receive and follow oral and written instructions.

Willingness to: Work up to 19 hours per week; work occasional evenings, weekends, and during class recess periods; perform routine repetitive duties to completion; attend in-service training meetings; learn college rules and regulations pertaining to the duties of the financial aid lab ambassador position.

Required Application Packet Documents: Resume, Cover Letter, Unofficial Transcripts

Optional Application Packet Documents: Letter of Recommendation

FAFSA Lab Ambassador Training Curriculum Outline

Purpose of the Tool

Work-study student employees hired for the Financial Aid Lab Ambassador position may have intimate familiarity with the financial aid process, but they still require a thorough training on all aspects of financial aid application submission, filing, and more. This curriculum outline is adapted from Fresno City College's financial aid lab ambassador training modules and may be adjusted to include information regarding institution-specific regulations and policies. The outline is meant to be filled in by the trainer with training activities and preexisting material from state- and institution-specific financial aid information. A recommended timeline of optimal seasons for training is also included.

Module One: Financial Aid 101	Topic Area	Recommended Month
Completing the FAFSA: - Tax transcripts (include examples in reference binder) - Completing the FAFSA federal publication	Aid 101	October (Session 1)
Types of Financial Aid: - State aid - Federal aid - Federal work study - Loans (subsidized vs. unsubsidized) - Scholarships	Aid 101	October (Session 1)
Basic Eligibility Requirements: - Social Security Number, Citizenship - High school diploma, GED, high school equivalency, ability to benefit - Selective Service - Loan default - Eligible program - Make satisfactory academic progress - Graduate and professional students - Financial need - Attending two schools at once	Eligibility	October (Session 1)
Dependency Status: - Dependency status questions, proof of independence, special populations (foster youth, orphans, homeless) - Dependent children	Eligibility	October (Session 2)
FAFSA Filing: Special cases in financial aid (e.g., My father claimed me on his taxes but I live with my mother)	Eligibility	October (Session 2)
The Application Process & Cycle: - FAFSA vs. state aid - Institution specific office timeline - Emails and notifications	Process	October (Session 2)
Business Office Holds: Review each specific type of hold	Process	October (Session 2)
Financial Aid Problems: - Duplicate applications (FAFSAs and State Applications or other records) - SSN/PIN problems - Mismatched major/location	Process	October (Session 2)

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

FAFSA Lab Ambassador Training Curriculum Outline

Module One: Financial Aid 101 (cont.)	Topic Area	Recommended Month
State, Local, Other Fee Waivers	Process	October (Session 3)
Loans: - Review institution specific webpage on loans - Entrance counseling	Process	October (Session 3)
Disbursements: - Understanding award letters - Disbursement calendar - Calculating your disbursement	Process	October (Session 3)
Application Periods & Deadlines: - Appeals - FAFSA application deadlines - Completing award year files	Process	October (Session 3)

Module Two: Lab Protocol	Topic Area	Recommended Month
FERPA: - Department of Education FERPA - FERPA release form	Protocol	October (Session 1)
Lab Protocol: - Check in/sign in process - Allowable use - Assisting students do's and don'ts - To-do lists	Protocol	October (Session 1)
Emergency Protocol: - Rude/disruptive student - Violent/aggressive student - Active shooter - Emergency alerts/evacuations (alarm or announcement) - Contacting campus police	Protocol	October (Session 1)

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

FAFSA Lab Ambassador Training Curriculum Outline

Module Three: Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)	Topic Area	Recommended Month
Satisfactory Academic Progress: • What aid is affected by SAP? • What is SAP applied to? • Minimum standards (GPA, completion rate, maximum time frame) • When is SAP checked? • SAP notices	SAP	November
Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeals: (Specifically regarding how lab ambassadors should respond to appeals in the lab) • When can a student appeal? • Printing degree evaluation reports (if the site is not working) • NSLDS financial aid history (if the site is not working) • Transcripts	SAP	November

Public Benefits Screening Form

Purpose of the Tool

Benefits access programs often utilize a questionnaire during the new student intake process. Students are prompted to fill out several basic questions that provide college staff with indicators of whether or not they may qualify for public benefits assistance.

Though it is optimal for financial aid offices to direct students to the benefits access office directly, staff members must collect more detailed information from students about their financial and family situation to flag potentially eligible students. These questionnaires should be no longer than one page, so as not to deter students from completing the form.

The following questionnaire is an adaptation of several benefits screening forms from colleges profiled in this study.

Benefits Screening Form

Date: _____

First Name: _____ Middle: _____ Last Name: _____

Address: _____

Unit # City State Zip

Student ID: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Gender: M or F Marital Status: _____ DOB: ____/____/____

Military Service: ☐ Active Duty ☐ Veteran ☐ Never Served

Are you married to, or the dependent of, someone in the military? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you receive financial aid? Describe: _____

Number of semesters completed: _____

Do you need help with groceries? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you currently working at least 20 hours per week? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you or any member of your family need health insurance? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please list any benefits (e.g., WIC, SNAP) you are currently receiving: _____

Please check next to any services which you may be interested in receiving or learning more about:

Legal services____ Health screening services____

Filing taxes____ Child care____

Include any additional services offered to students in this space

Public Benefits Screening Providers Evaluation Matrix

Purpose of the Tool

Community colleges have several options when it comes to implementing a service that screens and refers students to publicly available benefits. This tool is designed to assist in the decision making process by allowing staff to clearly outline the requirements and considerations necessary for each service provider.

This public benefits screening provider evaluation matrix provides the key considerations college leaders should think through when selecting a screening provider. For each question, write down a detailed response and utilize the results in discussion with staff. Staff may consider using this chart to determine which questions require the most consideration when pursuing a screening provider. For each provider, staff should identify how screening services will be administered and the logistics associated with each decision.

Consideration	Homegrown Screening Services	Third-Party Vendor	State or Local Provider
What is the start-up cost?			
Is there room in the budget to accommodate the start-up and annual costs?			
Will we need to apply to participate? Is the provider readily available to us?			
Is the provider currently taking on new college partnerships? Is there a wait-list?			
Will we need to hire additional staff?			
Will this require additional space in one of our current buildings?			
How long will it take to integrate this provider with our current system?			
When will students access the screening services? How frequently?			
Under which departments' responsibility will the provider fall?			

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Implementing Meta Majors On Your Campus

Meta Majors in Brief

Purpose of The Tool

EAB experts interviewed hundreds of students who repeatedly expressed frustration about the program selection process. They were overwhelmed by the sheer number of options and often chose programs based on incomplete or inaccurate information. Meta majors were developed as a part of the broader effort to address this problem. EAB consulted hundreds of community college course catalogs from across the country, examining program offerings at technical schools and comprehensive colleges, rural schools as well as urban ones. The result is our Meta Major Taxonomy, a collection of meta majors compiled exclusively for community colleges.

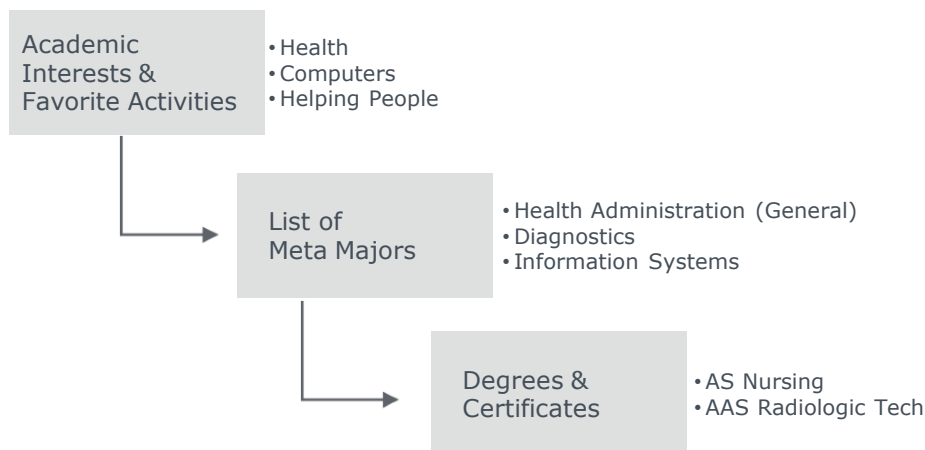
What Is a Meta Major?

Meta majors are general academic pathways that group together degrees or certificates that share certain commonalities such as common coursework, employment prospects, or general subject matter.

Meta majors are used to help guide the program selection process for students. Instead of being faced with an entire course catalog full of options, students will gradually “drill-down” to a best-fit program that accounts for their unique interests and abilities.

Guiding Students to a Best-Fit Program

Meta Majors a Crucial Piece of Drill-Down Process



Each community college has its own specific set of degree and certificate offerings. For that reason, the EAB Meta Major Taxonomy can be customized for each school. To do this, you will need to select which meta majors are most relevant to you and your students. Any meta majors that are not relevant will be “turned off” for your school; they will not be linked to any degrees or certificates, and students will not be able to see or choose them.

Implementing Meta Majors On Your Campus

EAB Meta Major Taxonomy

Listed below is the complete EAB Meta Major Taxonomy. This taxonomy is not intended to recommend a specific quantity of meta majors but rather the type and style of descriptions necessary when implementing meta majors. Meta majors are in alphabetical order. For each meta major option, you will see a sample student-friendly description, typical jobs, and sample degree programs that could be linked to that option.

Accounting

Description: Were you always the banker when you played monopoly? The treasurer for your student government? Accounting professionals are organized, analytical people that help businesses and people record and track the flow of their money as it's earned and spent. Accountants know all about tax codes and related local, state and federal regulations as well to make sure all that money is flowing legally! You'll need at least a bachelor's degree to be an accountant, but an AA or AAS can be used for other accounting-related careers.

Sample Majors: Accounting Technician, Accounting Specialist, Business Administration

Sample Jobs: Audit Administrator, Accounting Clerk, Financial Assistant

Skills: You must be highly trustworthy, organized, excellent with numbers, and intrigued by financial statements. Communication skills are also a plus. Many accountants have Bachelor's degrees, Master's degrees, or take additional courses to take the CPA exam to become a Certified Public Accountant.

Administrative and Support Services

Description: Administrative and support services personnel can work in hospitals, small businesses, large companies, or law offices. They help to keep things organized and running efficiently and are great at managing multiple tasks at once. For example, they may keep track of customer or patient records or appointments, manage spreadsheets and databases, and coordinate meetings and events. If you're detail-oriented, comfortable with computers, and enjoy helping people, this field may be a good fit for you.

Sample Majors: Medical Office Assisting, Paralegal Studies, Clerical Studies

Sample Jobs: Paralegal, Administrative Assistant, Medical Office Clerk

Skills: You've got to have great people-skills to interact with various professionals, patients, or customers, be comfortable on the computer, and be detail-oriented and organized. Specialized knowledge may be required for certain jobs, such as those in hospitals or law offices.

Agriculture

Description: What is organic food, anyway? People working in agriculture know! Agriculture is the scientific study of the food we grow, the animals we raise, and the natural resources – like water and soil – that we use every day. People in agriculture love science and work in a variety of different jobs. Some might work in a lab, others outdoors, and some might do both! As an agriculture worker, you'll be making our food safer and more nutritious, our livestock healthier, and our environment more suitable and sustainable.

Sample Majors: Agricultural Technology, Veterinary Studies, Food Science

Sample Jobs: Food Scientist, Farmer, Veterinary Technician

Skills: You should have a knack for science and math, and an interest in plants, animals, and possibly nutrition. Depending on your job, you might need to be comfortable in a lab setting or outdoors. Business skills and research skills are also handy.

Implementing Meta Majors On Your Campus

EAB Meta Major Taxonomy

Animal Science

Description: How do we manage our animals and keep them healthy? This is the question people in animal science explore every day. You can expect to be well-trained in the life sciences—biology, biochemistry, and anatomy—as well as animal reproduction, breeding, and nutrition. People in this field work with many types domestic animals, including pets, livestock, exotic animals, and laboratory animals. They also have business sense when it comes to knowing how the agriculture industry operates.

Sample Majors: Wildlife Management, Veterinary Technician, Food Science

Sample Jobs: Veterinary Technician, Feed Formulator, Breeding Manager

Skills: You should be comfortable with numbers, science, and technology. Make sure you're happy working in a lab as well as outside, and of course, be comfortable interacting directly with animals.

Architecture

Description: Ever stared up at skyscrapers and wondered how they came to be? Architecture employees love problem solving as much as they love building things—offices, houses, bridges, you name it. They blend art and mathematics to create a vision for the spaces we live and work. It's not all staring at skylines, though! Be prepared for some challenging math, computerized design, and lots of teamwork!

Sample Majors: Architectural Technology, Computer-Assisted Design (CAD), Construction Planning

Sample Jobs: Drafter, Facility Manager, Urban Planner

Skills: You've got to be a creative problem solver with a knack for math, design, and working with others. Keep in mind that some architecture jobs require a bachelor's degree too!

Arts

Description: Who doesn't love going to the theater? A concert? A painting exhibit? The arts are a haven for creative types who thrive on self-expression. Though many artists continue to pursue careers in traditional arts fields—theater, dance, music, visual arts, etc.—many more are also blending their creative talents with technology, education, or business. These people might teach the next generation of artists, manage exhibits, or work on advertising for a variety of companies.

Sample Majors: Arts Education, Visual Arts, Theater, Arts Management, Design

Sample Jobs: Graphic Designer, Sales Representative, Film Production Technician, Interior Designer

Skills: Depending on your job, you could need skills ranging from design to management. As a rule of thumb, communication skills and basic business skills are useful for most arts-related careers.

Business

Description: Let's get down to business! Businesspeople work in the private sector; they make products or provide services to earn money (profit). There are many different types of businesses that are divided into different categories or industries. For example, Subway is a business in the food industry. Many people who pursue a business career are persuasive, organized team players. They enjoy competition, and aren't afraid of working with numbers. If you're a hard worker with lots of motivation, you might even start your own business as an entrepreneur!

Implementing Meta Majors On Your Campus

EAB Meta Major Taxonomy

Business (cont.)

Sample Majors: Management, Marketing/Sales, Accounting, Finance, Economics, Entrepreneurship

Sample Jobs: Sales Representative, Office Manager, Financial Analyst

Skills: Teamwork and communication are highly important for business. You'll also need to be comfortable with computer programs (Microsoft Excel, PowerPoint, etc.), math, and financial analysis for certain roles.

Communications

Description: These days, we hear about things in so many ways: television, radio, newspapers, and of course, websites and apps. Communications professionals are the creators and distributors of all this information. They use their talents to turn ordinary words or complicated ideas into catchy ads, dynamic websites, or moving speeches and articles. Others bring us the news from places near and far. If you're great at taking in lots of ideas and information and boiling them down into a concise, elegant message, communications might be for you!

Sample Majors: Graphic Design, Website Design, Journalism, Broadcasting, Advertising

Sample Jobs: Graphic Designer, Reporter, Public Relations Associate

Skills: You've got to be great with people, writing, and speaking. Some jobs may also require design skills.

Construction

Description: It's not all about laying concrete! Construction professionals combine craftsmanship, business sense, and architecture skills to shape our cities and towns. They oversee blueprints and crunch numbers to make sure our buildings and bridges are built both safely and within budget. They shape the tops of skyscrapers and create family homes. Construction professionals generally love numbers and geometry, get a thrill from building something from the ground up, and work well with all kinds of people building our world takes a lot of teamwork!

Sample Majors: Construction Drafting, Construction Management, Construction Inspection

Sample Jobs: Project Site Manager, Construction Cost Manager, Residential Remodeling Lead

Skills: Be ready to be great with math. You'll need it to calculate the right angles for buildings, as well as to manage the dollars and cents for construction jobs. You'll also need to be a team player who can stay on top of complex, multi-step projects.

Diagnostics and Medical Technology

Description: Sometimes, health is a mystery. We can pick up clues about what might be ailing a patient through questioning and observation, but sometimes we need advanced technology to really figure out what's going on. That's where diagnostics and medical technology come in. These professionals might use science and technology to help pregnant women monitor their baby's growth, help dentists locate cavities, or prepare Xrays that will help doctors heal broken bones. They spend a lot of time in labs using medical equipment, but also collaborate with medical professionals and occasionally work with patients.

Implementing Meta Majors On Your Campus

EAB Meta Major Taxonomy

Diagnostics and Medical Technology (cont.)

Sample Majors: Radiologic Technology, Medical Sonography, Dental Assisting

Sample Jobs: Radiologic Technician, Ultrasonography Technician, Lab Technician

Skills: You'll need to be trained on specific medical equipment to work in this field. An interest in science and health is a must, as is a great attitude that will help patients feel at ease.

Digital Media

Description: Let's break it down. Media refers to all the things we use to communicate: TV, radio, books, etc. "Digital" has to do with computers and the Internet. So people who work in digital media use our latest and greatest technology to create engaging, interesting communication with people everywhere. Think Facebook ads, tablet apps, animation, audio content, web design. Digital media pros are creative, tech-savvy, and great communicators all in one!

Sample Majors: Web Design, Digital Media Production, Digital Marketing

Sample Jobs: Web Designer, Multimedia Animator, Social Media Manager

Skills: Overall, you must be a computer whiz who's also got talent for creative design and communication. Some jobs will require you to be able to use specific software as well (Dreamweaver, InDesign, etc.).

Earth/Environmental Science

Description: From the air we breathe to the water we drink and the food we eat, our earth and environment have a direct impact on our survival. People in this field figure out the impact that we humans have on our earth, what we can do to preserve it, and how we can use it to benefit our society as a whole. These people enjoy science, research, and while they may, at times, work in a lab, they have a deep appreciation for the great outdoors.

Sample Majors: GIS (Geographic Information System) Technology, Environmental Studies, Natural Resource Management

Sample Jobs: GIS Specialist, Surveyor, Environmental Research Assistant

Skills: You've got to be great with science and also comfortable working with computers. Writing and research skills are often necessary for certain positions.

Education

Description: If you're reading this, thank a teacher! Educators make sure we all know our ABC's, our 1-2-3's and so much more. Educators can focus on a specific age group (early childhood, for example), a particular subject, or other support services in schools. No matter what, you've got to have a lot of energy, a love of learning, and a passion for helping the next generation flourish. Note that to be a classroom teacher, you'll need a bachelor's degree and possibly other state-required certifications.

Sample Majors: Early Childhood Education, Health Education, Arts Education

Sample Jobs: Classroom Teaching Assistant, Pre-school Teacher, School Office Administrator

Skills: Excellent organizational and communication skills are needed to work in education. And, of course, you've got to be a team player who enjoys working with children and youth.

Implementing Meta Majors On Your Campus

EAB Meta Major Taxonomy

Engineering

Description: What does the future look like to you? Engineers are working on it right now—blending science and technology to invent new things or improve the stuff we use every day. There are different types of engineers who focus on different types of innovations: for example, aerospace engineers design and develop air and space crafts, while chemical engineers manipulate atoms and molecules to create new materials. A two-year degree is a great start to get into math and science careers more generally, or to set a foundation for an engineering major at a four-year school.

Sample Majors: Engineering Sciences, Engineering Technology, Manufacturing

Sample Jobs: Engineer (with BA), Drafter, Engineering Technician

Skills: You’ve got to be endlessly curious with a strong interest in physical and computer sciences. Be prepared to be work with numbers regularly, and pursue a four-year degree if you want to be a certified engineer.

Finance

Description: From working on Wall Street to working for a school, finance workers are sought after by thousands of organizations worldwide. If you are interested in learning about the stock market and how companies and organizations use, borrow, and lend money, or are just interested in learning about how a business runs from the inside, finance is a powerful way to get your foot in the door. Be prepared to brush up on some tough math and business courses—finance workers are highly analytical people!

Sample Majors: Financial Analysis, Budgeting, Corporate Finance, Financial Planning

Sample Jobs: Bank Teller, Financial Services Representative

Skills: Be comfortable working with numbers, pay attention to detail, and be familiar with Microsoft Excel and/or other software. Depending on the job function, a Bachelor’s degree may be required.

Graphics/Web Design

Description: It’s where technology meets art. Graphic /web designers are responsible for crafting a business’s visual brand—think of the Nike swoosh or the bright red Coca-Cola script. They’re creative thinkers with a knack for marketing, able to predict how different designs will make an audience feel. They are also very detail-oriented; from fonts to colors to layout to text content, everything counts when you’re responsible for creating the “face” of a company!

Sample Majors: Graphic Design, Web Design, Multimedia Arts

Sample Jobs: Graphic Designer, Web Designer, Animator, Advertising Associate

Skills: You must be detail oriented and artistic to work as a graphic or web designer. You’ll also need to know how to use certain software (DreamWeaver, InDesign, etc.) and/or web design tools (HTML, Javascript, etc.)

Hospitality

Description: If you’ve ever gone on vacation or been to a big wedding, chances are you’ve met someone who works in hospitality. Hospitality employees provide a variety of services in restaurants, hotels, and travel agencies. If you’re looking for a fast-paced career that requires you to meet lots of different people, stay organized, and come up with quick, creative solutions to different issues, a hospitality program might be the right fit for you!

Implementing Meta Majors On Your Campus

EAB Meta Major Taxonomy

Hospitality (cont.)

Sample Majors: Hotel Management, Culinary Arts, Travel/Tourism

Sample Jobs: Hotel Manager, Travel Agent, Chef, Event Planner, Caterer

Skills: Excellent customer service skills and business skills are needed for hospitality careers. Depending on your job, you might also need other specialized skills, like cooking or interior design.

Human Services

Description: Human services employees take on a range of roles, but all have one thing in common: they enjoy helping people and improving communities. They can help the elderly, counsel troubled families, care for children, or assist people who are overcoming addiction. If you're compassionate and driven to make a difference in the lives of people in your community, human services could be a good fit for you.

Sample Majors: Cosmetology, Psychology, Counseling

Sample Jobs: Substance Abuse Counselor, Early Childcare Specialist

Skills: Human services requires excellent communication and listening skills. Some jobs may require specialized training for specific skills (i.e., Elderly Healthcare) or further education (i.e., Counseling).

Information Technology

Description: Welcome to the technology era—computer whizzes wanted! As an Information Technology (IT) employee, you might work with networks, making sure computers communicating with one another. Or maybe you'll work with databases, making sure mountains of information can be stored and found at the touch of a button. Or in cybersecurity, policing our technology and keeping it safe from viruses and hackers. Chances are you'll learn a new language—computer code! IT workers are generally analytical people with a love for technology, logic, and problem solving.

Sample Majors: Computer Science, Computer Networking, Cybersecurity

Sample Jobs: Database Administrator, Computer Programmer, Software Engineer

Skills: Must be comfortable with numbers and technology, an adept problem solver, and great at communicating with non-tech people who need your help!

Language/Ethnic Studies

Description: Our world is becoming increasingly connected. People who study languages and other cultures are getting prepared to work with diverse groups of people around the world. Some use their education to teach others about global issues, others pursue research on a specific region or population, and others still go on to careers helping governments and businesses embrace diversity. Some people even go off to work in foreign countries. So if you're curious about the world and its many different people, and you enjoy research, writing, geography and history, you might enjoy this path!

Sample Majors: Anthropology, Gender Studies, Foreign Languages, International Relations

Sample Jobs: ESL (English as a Second Language) Instructor, Interpreter, Researcher

Skills: Be prepared for lots of writing and research. Some jobs will require you to be fluent in other languages. Some teaching or research jobs will require a four-year degree.

Implementing Meta Majors On Your Campus

EAB Meta Major Taxonomy

Legal Services

Description: Shows like *Law & Order* flaunt the drama of the courtroom and its intense lawyers. But in truth, there's a much larger cast of characters in the real legal system – and a ton of different careers. Legal services employees work in government offices, courthouses, and at private legal firms to make sure that our legal system operates fairly and efficiently. They know how to stay calm and professional under pressure, can read complex legal documents, and always write clearly. If you're someone who's detail-oriented, fascinated by law, and thrive in a demanding, professional environment, legal services could be a great fit.

Sample Majors: Pre-Law, Paralegal Studies, Legal Administration

Sample Jobs: Paralegal, Legal Secretary, Court Reporter

Skills: Excellent English language reading and writing skills are a must. You should also be professional and organized with good computer processing skills.

Liberal Arts

Description: Sometimes this is called "Humanities." Essentially, liberal arts degree is interdisciplinary—it covers a mix of academic subjects with the goal of giving you a well-rounded education. Similar to how you studied a range of subjects in high school, a liberal arts path will allow you to study a bit of mathematics, science, arts, history, psychology, etc. You can also focus on any one of these subjects individually.

Sample Majors: Psychology, English, Mathematics, Humanities, Political Science

Sample Jobs: Educator, Researcher, Nonprofit Organization Coordinator

Skills: You should be comfortable researching, writing, and have strong critical thinking skills.

Life Sciences

Description: How do our bodies work? Why do things live and die and change? Life sciences examine living things—plants, animals, humans, microbes – and how they relate to each other and their environments. Employees can choose to focus on any one of many life science fields: biology, medicine, botany, zoology, etc. They work in labs, hospitals, or in research offices. They enjoy posing questions, testing solutions, and conducting research. Fascinated yet? Put on your goggles and head to the lab!

Sample Majors: Biology, Biochemistry, Botany, Zoology

Sample Jobs: Research Technician, Lab Technician, Medical Assistant

Skills: Excellent at science, comfortable with technology and research. To work in research labs, you may need a further education.

Maintenance and Repair

Description: Are *you* that handy person people call when something's broken? Maintenance and Repair careers rely on people who have a lot a different skills—a "jack of all trades." No two days are alike—you'll fix an electrical problem one day, and be up on a roof the next. If you enjoy working with your hands, helping people, and solving new problems each day, this path could be a great fit.

Sample Majors: Plumbing, Electrical Repair, HVAC

Implementing Meta Majors On Your Campus

EAB Meta Major Taxonomy

Maintenance and Repair (cont.)

Sample Jobs: Plumber, Carpenter, Electrician, HVAC specialist

Skills: You can pursue a broad set of skills, or focus on one specialization, depending on your interests. Either way, you've got to be good with mechanics and have exceptional customer service skills.

Manufacturing Trades

Description: Look around you. A manufacturer has been involved in most things you see. People in manufacturing or production make everything from our computers to our clothes and furniture. Some manufacturers like to be hands-on, making the things we use or to operating the complex production machinery. Many love mathematics – they work with computers and calculate *how* things should be made to ensure high quality and of course, workers' safety. Both types of people often work with the latest production technology, like 3-D printing!

Sample Majors: Welding, Skilled Trades, Hydraulics and Motors, Engineering Technologies

Sample Jobs: Facilities Manager, Machine Operator, Floor Assembly Supervisor, Product Manager

Skills: You should enjoy math, technology, and for some jobs, physical science. For managerial positions, people skills are a must, as is attention to detail, especially when it comes to safety.

Marketing/Sales

Description: Could you sell a bicycle to a fish if you really tried? Are you upbeat and energized about meeting lots of people? Marketing and sales might be for you. Marketers and salespeople are charmers. They get along with a lot of different people, and know how to craft a message to land a sale. It's a little bit business, a little bit psychology with a dash of creativity and enthusiasm. Some of these people work in business offices to create marketing strategies. Others are on the road, traveling to meet with clients, recruit new employees, and make business happen!

Sample Majors: Marketing, Business, Sales, Human Resources

Sample Jobs: Sales Associate, Marketer, Business Representative, Human Resources Representative

Skills: You must be a great communicator with exceptional customer service skills. Business skills are also a plus, so you've got to be comfortable with numbers and computers as well.

Mathematics

Description: Math – the universal language! It's true. Being a whiz with numbers is a skill that's valued in many different careers around the world. Generally, people pair this interest with another area of study to help guide their path. Some will go into business, using their math skills to drive profits. Others mix math with technology to manage large computer information systems. No matter how you choose to use your math skills, with all the opportunities out there, you can be sure that things will add up nicely!

Sample Majors: Calculus, Mathematics, Engineering, Business, Computer Technology, Education

Sample Jobs: Math tutor, Engineering Technician, Business Analyst, Budgeting Officer

Skills: Have an analytical mind, and an interest in applying math to various other fields. For some jobs, you'll need additional specific skills related to math, like financial analysis for business.

Implementing Meta Majors On Your Campus

EAB Meta Major Taxonomy

Nursing

Description: Are you a people person with a passion for health care? Nurses are hands-on health professionals who help prevent sickness, care for patients, and advocate for health. They can work in clinics, hospitals, or other health care centers. To be a nurse, you've got to love science and math, and enjoy teamwork. Keep in mind that recently there's been a national push for nurses to have higher levels of education, including bachelor's degrees (BSN) and, for some jobs, master's degrees.

Sample Majors: Nursing Assistant, Nursing, Pre-Health

Sample Jobs: Registered Nurse (RN), Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)

Skills: You've got to be great at working with people—both patients and your team of colleagues. Excellent communication skills, math, and science knowledge, and an ability to stay organized, efficient, and detail-oriented are also expected.

Nutrition and Wellness

Description: It's all about diet and exercise! People who work in Nutrition and Wellness professions focus on keeping communities healthy. Some do this by helping people eat the right foods, others do it by figuring out exercises to get people in shape or help people recover from injuries. They enjoy helping people, and tend to study health and science – especially subjects like biology and physiology. People in this profession can work in health care centers, build their own nutrition or wellness-related business, or travel around helping individuals (like athletes, children, or the elderly) maintain their health and fitness.

Sample Majors: Rehabilitation Therapy, Sport Science, Biology, Nutrition Science

Sample Jobs: Physical Therapy Assistant, Physical Trainer, Massage Therapist, Health Educator, Dietitian

Skills: Generally, you should have great customer service and communication skills. Business and math skills can also come in handy. Some jobs also require specialized skills (i.e., massage therapy, physical trainer) or certifications.

Personal Care Services

Description: Everyone needs a helping hand or some pampering now and then. Personal care professionals take care of that, and so much more. They're the customer service pros who make everyone's day a little better. You can find them working at the spa, the salon, clinics, gyms, hotels...just about anywhere there are people who need help looking and feeling their best. Prefer working with our furrier friends? Some personal care professionals also specialize in pet care!

Sample Majors: Cosmetology, Early Childhood Development, Mortuary Science, Culinary Arts

Sample Jobs: Makeup Artist, Manicurist, Hotel Concierge, Pet Groomer, Funeral Home Manager

Skills: Customer service skills are VERY important in this line of work. Depending on your career, you may also need specific licenses or certificates as well.

Physical Sciences

Description: These are sometimes called "Earth and Space Sciences," and rightly so! Physical sciences examine the forces that affect our planet: Why do oceans have waves? What causes volcanic eruptions? You'll study the math and science behind each of these questions and so many more. People in this field may go on to work in labs, assisting scientists, or in national parks, educating the public about the mysteries of the earth around them. Others go on to pursue four-year degrees in Engineering or another science area in order to become scientists themselves.

Implementing Meta Majors On Your Campus

EAB Meta Major Taxonomy

Physical Sciences (cont.)

Sample Majors: Chemistry, Geology, Astronomy, Physics

Sample Jobs: Geothermal Technician, GIS Specialist, Civil Engineering Practitioner

Sample Skills: You should love science, math, and technology. Specialized skills may be needed for certain jobs (i.e., Geographical Information Systems [GIS]).

Programming

Description: If computers ever really do take over the world, programmers would be the ultimate rulers. Programmers write the rules (code) that computers follow in order to work correctly. Programmers work on a wide variety of technology—from the apps on your phone to the program you’re using right this moment, programmers played a role. Programmers are highly logical thinkers and problem solvers. They tend to be great with math and have the patience to work through complex processes. Some work in offices, but many programmers are also allowed to work on their computers from home as well.

Sample Majors: Computer Science, Computer Engineering, Coding, Programming

Sample Jobs: Mobile Application Developer, Programmer, Systems Analyst, Software Engineer

Skills: You will have to learn various coding languages (Java, SQL, HTML, Visual Basic, etc.). You should also be comfortable with new technology, math, and problem solving.

Protective Services

Description: People in protective services tend to have a high degree of integrity; they help to keep our communities safe, enjoy public service, and have a great respect for the law. There are many positions in this area, including police officers, correctional officers, and firefighters. In most positions, you should be prepared to be great under pressure, and several of these jobs have certain health and physical fitness requirements. Certain positions may also require special training, such as police academy.

Sample Majors: Fire Science, Police Academy, Criminal Justice

Sample Jobs: Firefighter, Police Officer, Correctional Officer

Skills: You should be ready to get physically fit and become very familiar with the different rules and laws. Specialized skills and training are often required for certain jobs (ex: Fire fighter, Police Officer).

Social Sciences

Description: People in social sciences are curious about human nature itself: why do we do the things we do? How do societies become what they are? You can learn about politics, economics, and psychology through the social sciences. People who study social sciences can go on to a variety of careers, depending on their focus. They may work in schools, government offices, or as human resource professionals in various companies. However, many of these careers may require a four-year degree. Social science provides a broad education, with coursework that requires a lot of reading, writing, and math.

Sample Majors: Economics, Political Science, Sociology, Psychology

Sample Jobs: Counselor, Social Worker, Sales Manager, Researcher

Skills: You should be curious about people and interested in helping them. Strong reading and writing skills are often necessary.

Implementing Meta Majors On Your Campus

EAB Meta Major Taxonomy

Sports and Recreation

Description: Who wants to go to the ball game? People in this field generally have a great appreciation for the outdoors and athletics. Jobs in this field range from managing the daily operations of community centers and parks, to organizing sports programs and keeping athletes in top form. You should enjoy working with people, excel at keeping things organized, and, in some positions, have an understanding of health science and athletic training.

Sample Majors: Recreation Management, Therapeutic Recreation, Sports Management

Sample Jobs: Personal Trainer, Youth Program Coordinator, Sports Announcer

Skills: You should have great communication, management, and organizational skills. Some positions require specialized skills or knowledge (ex: sports rules and regulations, health science, etc.)

Technical Trades

Description: Technical trades include a wide span of careers for people who generally enjoy fixing things and working with their hands. For example, you might work in machine repair or as an electrician. These jobs are sometimes known as “skilled trades” because each requires a specialized skill set. Many people will work for companies, keeping our buildings, roads, and equipment in working condition. Others opt to be their own boss and offer up their skills to a wide variety of clients. If you choose to do this, you’ll also need to have some business savvy, as well as customer service and marketing skills.

Sample Majors: Carpentry, Electronics, Repair Mechanics

Sample Jobs: Automotive Technician, Carpenter, Plumber

Skills: Each trade has a different skill set, but in general, expect to be good at problem solving, communicating with others, and working outdoors. Understanding basic business and management skills is also useful.

Transportation and Logistics

Description: Planes! Trains! Automobiles! People who enjoy logic, math, and marvel at the buildings, machinery, and roads around them are a great fit for Transportation and Logistics majors. People in this field may learn specific technical skills to build and fix the cities around us. Others enjoy working in offices on the business side of things; they help companies figure out the best ways to get products from one place to another—from the moment someone clicks “buy” online to the moment that package arrives on their doorstep. If you enjoy solving puzzles, working with technology, and don’t mind doing a bit of math, this area could be a good fit for you.

Sample Majors: Aviation Science, Supply Chain Management, Automotive Electrical Systems

Sample Jobs: Crane and Tower Operator, Aviation Inspector, Distribution Manager

Skills: You should be good with math and technology. For many jobs, specialized skills may be needed to operate or manage specific machinery.

Completion Mapping Course Curriculum Builder

Purpose of the Tool

Community colleges have already invested significant resources in career exploration services and tools. This tool is designed to support staff in creating a curriculum for a Completion Mapping Course that integrates already existing services and resources into current curriculum, with the intention of emphasizing the new curriculum on career and educational path exploration and planning. We recommend that this tool be used in conjunction with traditional curriculum writing practices as an informative supplement.

Step 1:
Brainstorm with staff all of the existing resources available to students for career and educational planning (e.g., EMSI Career Coach, EAB’s Student Success Collaborate – Navigate, State or Local Career Resources, Advising, Career Counselors, etc.). List these resources in the table below.

Current Resource	Potential Learning Outcomes

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Completion Mapping Course Curriculum Builder (cont.)

Step 2:

Utilize the brainstorming from the previous page to group together learning outcomes. Based on staff expertise, determine the optimal thematic order of the curriculum and input into following table.

Session (include date)	Topic	Current Assignments (e.g., reading, writing, exercises, etc.)	Desired Learning Objectives
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Non-Cognitive Student Needs Intake Survey

Purpose of the Tool

Colleges collect a wide range of information on student profiles during the student application process but rarely utilize the information collected to tailor student interventions. The following sample student intake survey provides a template for a basic student intake survey that is mapped to the non-academic resource matrix on the following page. These survey questions may be integrated into the application itself or included as an addendum to the application.

Student Intake Survey		
1	Do you need information about housing options?	
	No	Unsure Yes
2	Are you comfortable using a computer on a daily basis?	
	No	Unsure Yes
3	Do you have regular (daily) access to a reliable computer with reliable Internet access?	
	No	Unsure Yes
4	Do you plan on joining any social or extracurricular groups?	
	No	Unsure Yes
5	Would you like to learn more about accommodations from Disability Services?	
	No	Unsure Yes
6	Do you have reliable transportation to and from class?	
	No	Unsure Yes
7	Do you feel confident in your major and/or career pathway selection?	
	No	Unsure Yes
8	Are you sure of your declared program/major?	
	No	Unsure Yes
9	Do you plan to work while attending college?	
	No	Unsure Yes
10	Do you have a financial plan to pay for all present and future semesters?	
	No	Unsure Yes
11	Are you responsible for the care of children and/or other dependents?	
	No	Unsure Yes
12	Are you or a family member a veteran or a current member of the armed forces?	
	No	Unsure Yes
13	Do you or a family member need assistance understanding English?	
	No	Unsure Yes
14	Do you have trouble feeding yourself or a family member?	
	No	Unsure Yes
15	Do you feel comfortable managing stress?	
	No	Unsure Yes

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Non-academic Resource Matrix

Purpose of the Tool

Fill out this worksheet with all contact information for all resources in the column titled "Suggested Resources" as well as any other institution-specific resources identified on your campus. Once the table is as comprehensive as possible, formalize the information into a handout for *all* faculty and staff; urge them to keep the handout in plain sight in their offices. Student responses to the survey questions in Tool 7 should guide faculty and staff toward appropriate resources with which students should be connected. In addition, staff and faculty should refer to the handout whenever a student expresses a non-academic need.

Consider the student intake survey as only one supplemental aspect of understanding student profiles, and ensure that faculty and staff continue to gather pertinent information on student needs.

Topic	Questions	Suggested Resources	Additional Space (include phone number and website)
Housing	1	• Student housing	
Technology	2-3	• Help Desk • Computer Skills Training Workshops • Library • Open Computer Labs & Hours • College Email Support • Technology-Related Grants and Scholarships	
Connecting with Campus	4	• Student Activities Center • Clubs & Organizations • Intramural Sports • Student Counseling • Social Media Resources	
Disabilities	5	• Disability Services • Assistive Technology • Student Counseling	
Transportation	6	• Transportation Hotline • County/City Transit	
Academic Decisions	7-8	• Career Counseling • Advising • Mentor Programs • Occupational Outlook Handbook (Often state/region specific) • Career Coach (EMSI) or other Labor Market Software • Interest Inventories • Career Assessments • Student Success Coach • Internship Opportunities	

Non-academic Resource Matrix (cont.)

Topic	Questions	Suggested Resources	Additional Space (include phone number and website)
Finances	9-10	• Financial Aid Office • Veterans' Benefits • Money Management Workshop • Financial Literacy Programs • Benefits Access Support • Loan Counseling • Pre-loan Debt Management Workshop • Scholarships • Textbook Vouchers • Student Employment • Tax Filing Support • TRIO	
Family	11-13	• College Child Care Services • Veteran Services • Translation Services • ESL Classes • ESL Office • ESL Support Groups	
Health	14-15	• College Health Center • Fitness and Wellness Services • Counseling • Food Pantry • Community Clinics • Public Benefits Office	

Tips for Texting Students and Parents

Purpose of the Tool

The following list of best practices for texting students and parents was compiled by experts at Signal Vine, a text messaging provider that works with many colleges, school districts, and community-based organizations nation-wide. These tips are intended to provide additional context for practitioners when devising text messaging calendars, schedules, and content.



1 Frequency

The recommended number of prescheduled or programmed messages is 2-5 per month. We discourage more than that, but strongly encourage back-and-forth conversation if a student replies to the message.

2 Personalization

Make sure that the messages are personalized and include relevant student information (e.g., student's first name, grade, school, etc.) and the counselor/advisor's name, especially in the first message. The more personalized the message, the higher the response rate.

3 Relevancy

The content of the messages should be relevant to the particular recipient's needs. Colleges often filter messages to only those students who meet certain criteria that would make the message relevant. We strongly discourage mass texting where everyone receives the same message.

4 Action

Include "calls to action" in the text messages that will nudge students and/or parents to complete their necessary tasks or to take an action which moves forward in the process. For example, you might include a short link (e.g., bit.ly or goo.gl) to a resource or have a student respond back to answer a question about their progress.

5 Urgency

When possible, create urgency by using dates and sending messages about 3 days prior to deadlines. Make sure that you send the message on a date that is not too close to the deadline (so recipients aren't overwhelmed) but that also is not too far away from the deadline (so they don't forget about the deadline).

6 Timing

Timing can impact the rate of student responses to text messages. During the school year, K-12 students reply most frequently before school (7am) or after school (4-7pm). College student messaging should begin between 10-11am; the lunch hour is popular and we have found no need for class-day limitations.

7 Interactive

Ensure that the conversations are two-way and interactive, and that counselors are responding to students' messages by answering questions in a timely manner. Prepare staff to monitor/reply to messages the hour after a programmed message is sent. Most student replies will be sent back within the first 15 minutes.

8 Programmed

Productivity increases when time is spent up-front to design a program of messages around key dates, which reduces the pressure on staff to remember when to engage specific students. We have seen a 4x-10x increase in counselor capacity when they are able to readily respond to student replies from programmed messages.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Tips for Texting Students and Parents (cont.)

9 Opt-Out

Recipients need to be able to opt out of receiving text messages. In the first message, let students know that they always have the option to text back STOP or CANCEL to stop receiving messages. They can always opt back in at a later time and start receiving text messages again.

10 Introduction

It's best to begin the engagement with an introduction message that introduces the counselor and solidifies the connection. We also recommend that you suggest students save the number and text anytime they need help.

11 Prepared Responses

To further productivity, prepare responses to common or anticipated questions in advance to avoid duplicative or inconsistent work on behalf of staff.

12 Prepared Links

Often students would be best suited to utilize an online resource, rather than including all of the content in a text. Make these links readily available for counselors to send students to improve productivity and responsiveness.

13 Link Shortening

When including web links, we find using a link shortener like bit.ly or goo.gl to be useful in conserving characters in programmed messages.

14 Less is More

The 160-character limit can be challenging for some organizations that want to send two- and three-part messages. Do not exceed the 160 character limit: the process of honing the content of a text message down to its main point ensures students are able to digest the content quickly.

15 10-Digit Personal Touch

Although short codes (3-6 digit numbers) are popular for marketing companies and some may consider sending texts via email (from an email address), students are most likely to trust a 10-digit phone number.

16 Ad-Hoc Messages

Programmed messages can only cover the expected communications, so counselors should text students with one-off, ad-hoc messages as necessary. This keeps the texting informal and relevancy high.

17 Ask Questions

The best interactions happen when you ask students a question that invites a response. Messages that contain questions have 30%-40% higher response rates, and they are a great way to get information from students.

Tips for Texting Students and Parents (cont.)

18 Limited Automation

There is value in automating some student messages, but students are perceptive and therefore quickly recognize when a “computer” has taken over the conversation. We generally advise no more than 2-3 automated messages in a row if you’re looking to keep the relationship personal.

19 Group Messaging

Messaging students in large groups may save time up-front, but it’s important that each message is still sent one-on-one to avoid unintended connections being made between text message recipients.

20 Multi-language for Parents

When messaging parents, determining the parent’s language of choice is important when engaging them, or you can give them an option to select their native language.

Sample Text Message Nudge Calendar

Purpose of the Tool:

The following text message nudge calendar is taken directly from a calendar utilized at a college in West Virginia. This tool is meant to serve as an example of the quantity and type of text messages as they pertain to specific times in the student life cycle. Text messages have a 160-character limit and this college sends 31 text messages in total across a 14-month period.

Date	Content Theme	Text Message Content
3/5	Welcome to EABCC	We're excited you are joining us at EABCC! Thanks for choosing us for the next stage in your education. Check out our website at www.eabcc.edu
3/20	Advising	Look for your scheduled advising date. Be sure to confirm your appt. with the EABCC Admissions office @ 202-555-5551. What to expect at this session: http://goo.gl/Wkssr
4/2	Summer Employment	Need a summer job? Career services is hosting an open house tomorrow from 1-4 pm. Details: http://bit.ly/asle283j
4/7	Admissions	Don't forget to fill out and return the forms in your admissions packet
5/15	Incomplete Financial Aid	Hi [student name]! It looks like you might be missing some financial aid paperwork...give us a call ASAP at 202-555-5555
5/17	High School Graduation	Only a few more days until your graduation! EABCC is gearing up for commencement too. This will be you in two years! Watch graduation here today: eabcc.edu (commencement link)
5/26	Portal	Check your MyEABCC account and EABCC email regularly for updates. Go to http://myeabcc.edu Click here to find your user information: http://goo.gl/bsoeri2
6/4	Educational Planning	Still undecided on a major? Visit http://goo.gl/aw9342n and log in via MyCU and your login.
6/9	High School Transcripts	Make sure to request and send all final official transcript including those for dual enrollment to EABCC Admissions.
7/1	Financial Aid	How are you paying for college? A payment plan may be available (upon request) at 202-555-5552 or acctsrec@eabcc.edu
7/23	Loan Borrowers	First-time loan borrowers must complete their Entrance Counseling and Master Promissory note. Visit www.studentloans.gov . Questions: 202-555-5553
8/15	First Days Check List	First days at EABCC. What to do: Orientation, campus map (http://goo.gl/werns93k), buy books (http://eabcc.bkstr.com)
8/18	Advising	Get off to a great start. Introduce yourself to your Advisor. Request a tutor (202-555-5556)
9/1	Emergency Alert System	Remember to enroll in the Emergency Alert System http://sms.eabcc.edu
9/15	Advising	How's the beginning of your semester going? Have a question? Ask your student success course instructor, your advisor, or call the advising center.
10/6	Mid-terms	Are you ready for mid-terms?!
11/3	Registration	Meet with your advisor to obtain your online PIN for access to Spring Registration.
11/24	Contact Information	Happy Thanksgiving break! Is your address and contact information up-to-date in MyEABCC?
12/5	Library	Looking for a study stop? Check out the library. It's open 24 hours during exams. Good luck!

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Sample Text Message Nudge Calendar (cont.)

Date	Content Theme	Text Message Content
12/27	Application Referrals	Reconnecting with friends over break? Encourage them to apply to EABCC! Send them a text by going to http://goo.gl/aSim23
1/12	Welcome	Welcome back and happy New Year! Do you have all your textbooks for the semester?
1/29	Business Office	Last day to pay fees is 2/15. Check with the Business Office with questions or concerns.
2/9	Tutoring	Feeling overwhelmed in class? To get a tutor for extra help, contact Academic Success Center (202)555-5557. Or asc@eabcc.edu . Drop-in tutoring (http://goo.gl/PN234I)
2/27	Summer Employment	Think Summer... employment. Check out the spring job fair to get a head start.
3/9	Academic Advising	Do you know if you're on track to complete your major? Check in with your advisor to make sure you're on track.
3/13	Advising	Look for your scheduled advising date. Be sure to confirm your appt. with the EABCC admissions office @ 202-555-5552. What to expect at this session: http://goo.gl/WRksdr
3/13	Spring Break	Enjoy your Spring Break!
3/30	Financial Aid	Get your FAFSA in by April 15 to qualify for more \$\$\$ -- www.fafsa.gov
4/1	Registration	Meet with your advisor to obtain your online PIN for access to Fall Registration.
5/1	Summer Semester Push	No summer plans? Check out our on-campus and online course offerings
5/13	Summer	Go forth, have a good time, get experience. See you in August! Need anything? Contact us at 202-555-5555 or asc@eabcc.edu

Compressed Mini Semester Business Case Template

Purpose of the Tool

Developing a sound business case for the mini-semester model is the first step toward robust implementation; it is critical for determining whether compressed semesters are a viable and reasonable solution for an institution. Without a business case as a guideline, administrators may underestimate costs, downplay risks, or overlook barriers to success. A business case also helps garner buy-in from campus constituents.

This compressed mini-semester business case template guides users through the key factors that should influence the decision to implement (or not) compressed mini-semesters at their institution.

Anatomy of a Business Case

The diagram below depicts the components of a business case that guide the decision of whether to transition to compressed mini-semesters.



Developing a Business Case

Fill out the following tables to collect the information needed to develop a sound business case for compressed mini semesters. In each table, the first consideration has been filled in with a sample response. Each table also includes customizable cells for considerations that are not already listed.

1. What Are the Business Drivers?

Consideration	Inputs that Impact the Driver
Opportunity to increase enrollment by targeting students who apply late during summer period	- Targeting students who enroll past the enrollment deadline for registration in second mini-semester classes - Providing additional enrollment support during early weeks of first mini-semester to ensure late applicants enroll in second mini-semester
Increased tuition revenue from students who may otherwise withdraw mid-semester	
Custom:	
Custom:	
Custom:	
Custom:	

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Compressed Mini Semester Business Case Template

2. What are the Projected Benefits?

Consideration	Inputs That Impact the Driver
Increased course completion among current students	• Conversion to compressed course pedagogy • Development of new financial aid disbursement schedule
Faster rate of developmental student enrollment in college-level courses	
Reduced cost of mid-semester withdrawal for students facing unexpected life events	
Custom:	
Custom:	
Custom:	

3. What are the Associated Costs?

Consideration	Estimated Cost
Faculty stipend funds (faculty may utilize for professional development)	
Custom:	
Custom:	
Custom:	
Custom:	

Compressed Mini Semester Business Case Template

4. What Are the Potential Risks?

Consideration	Risk Drivers	Ways to Avoid Risk
Students do not understand the new scheduling format, errors occur	• Lacking appropriate advising for students who take compressed mini-semester courses • Awareness campaign unsuccessful at informing students of changes	• Advertise changes early and provide adequate resources for students to ask follow-up questions • During initial transition, implement additional safeguards to ensure students understand the new scheduling format
Students struggle with new financial aid format		
Faculty frustration with implementation of compressed mini-semesters		
Custom:		
Custom:		
Custom:		

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.



Institutions Examined in Our Research

Algonquin College of Applied
Arts and Technology
Ottawa, ON

Allegheny College of Maryland
Cumberland, MD

Amarillo College
Amarillo, TX

Anne Arundel Community
College
Arnold, MD

Armstrong State University
Savannah, GA

Austin Community College
Austin, TX

Bakersfield College
Bakersfield, CA

Bay de Noc College
Escanaba, MI

Bergen Community College
Paramus, NJ

Bismarck State College
Bismarck, ND

Blinn College
Bryan, TX

Bossier Parish
Community College
Bossier City, LA

Brazosport College
Lake Jackson, TX

Bucks County
Community College
Newton, PA

Butler Community College
El Dorado, KS

Casper College
Casper, WY

Catawba Valley
Community College
Hickory, NC

Centennial College
Toronto, ON

Center for Community College
Student Engagement (CCCSE)
Austin, TX

Central Arizona College
Coolidge, AZ

Cerritos College
Norwalk, CA

Cerro Coso Community College
Ridgecrest, CA

Chaffey College
Rancho Cucamonga, CA

Chesapeake College
Wye Mills, MD

Chipola College
Marianna, FL

City Colleges of Chicago
Chicago, IL

Clackamas Community College
Oregon City, OR

Cleveland State University
Cleveland, OH

Coastal Carolina
Community College
Jacksonville, NC

Coastline Community College
Fountain Valley, CA

College of DuPage
Glen Ellyn, IL

College of Marin
Kentfield, CA

College of the Sequoias
Visalia, CA

Colorado Community
College System
Denver, CO

Colorado Mountain College
Glenwood Springs, CO

Columbia Basin College
Pasco, WA

Columbus State
Community College
Columbus, OH

Community College of
Philadelphia
Philadelphia, PA

Community College of
Rhode Island
Warwick, RI

Community College System
of New Hampshire,
Concord, NH

Community Colleges of Spokane
Spokane, WA

Connecticut State Colleges
and Universities
Hartford, CT

Continuous Quality
Improvement Network (CQIN)
Ranch, TX

Corporate Executive Board
(CEB)
Arlington, VA

County College of Morris
Randolph, NJ

Cowley County
Community College
Arkansas City, KS

CUNY LaGuardia
Community College
New York, NY

CUNY Queensborough
Community College
Bayside, NY

Cuyahoga Community College
Cleveland, OH

Delaware County
Community College
Media, PA

Dutchess County
Community College
Poughkeepsie, NY

Eastern Gateway
Community College
Steubenville, OH

Eastern Iowa Community
College District
Davenport, IA

El Paso Community College
El Paso, TX

Elgin Community College
Elgin, IL

Educational Testing Services
(ETS)

Fayetteville Technical
Community College
Fayetteville, NC

Flagler College
St. Augustine, FL

Florida Southwestern
State College
Fort Myers, FL

Forsyth Technical
Community College
Winston-Salem, NC

Fox Valley Technical College
Appleton, WI

Fresno City College
Fresno, CA

Gateway Community and
Technical College
Florence, KY

Gateway Community College
New Haven, CT

Gateway Technical College
Kenosha, WI

Gavilan College
Gilroy, CA

George Brown College
Toronto, ON

Wallace State
Community College
Hanceville, AL

Georgia Regents University
Augusta, GA

Glen Oaks Community College
Centreville, MI

Glendale Community College
Glendale, CA

Golden West College
Huntington Beach, CA

Grossmont College
El Cajon, CA

Guilford Technical
Community College
Jamestown, NC

Gulf Coast State College
Panama City, FL

Harper College
Palatine, IA

Harrisburg Area
Community College
Harrisburg, PA

Hawkeye Community College
Waterloo, IA

Henry Ford College
Dearborn, MI

Highland Community College
Highland, KS

Hocking College
Nelsonville, OH

Houston Community
College System
Houston, TX

Humber College
Toronto, ON

Indiana State University
Terre Haute, IN

Iowa Lakes Community College
Estherville, IA

Iowa Western
Community College
Council Bluffs, IA

Irvine Valley College
Irvine, CA

Ivy Tech Community College
Indianapolis, IN

Jackson State
Community College
Jackson, TN

Jefferson Community and
Technical College
Louisville, KY

Johnson County
Community College
Overland Park, KS

Kentucky Community and
Technical College System
Versa, KY

Kern Community College District
Bakersfield, CA

Kilgore College
Kilgore, TX

Lakeshore Technical College
Cleveland, WI

Lake-Sumter State College
Leesburg, FL

Landmark College
Putney, VT

Lane Community College
Eugene, OR

Langara College
Vancouver, BC

Lansing Community College
Lansing, MI

Laredo Community College
Laredo, TX

Lone Star College System
The Woodlands, TX

Lorain County
Community College
Elyria, OH

Lord Fairfax Community College
Middletown, VA

Los Angeles Mission College
Sylmar, CA

Los Medanos
Community College
Pittsburg, CA

Macomb Community College
Clinton, MI

Madison Area Technical College
Madison, WI

Manchester Community College
Manchester, CT

Manchester Community College
Manchester, NH

Miami Dade College
Miami, FL

Middlesex Community College
Bedford, MA

Middlesex Community College
Middletown, CT

Minneapolis Community and
Technical Colleges
Minneapolis, MN

Mississippi Gulf Coast College
Perkinston, MS

Mohave Community College
Kingman, AZ

Mohawk College
Hamilton, ON

Monroe Community College
Rochester, NY

Montgomery College
Rockville, MD

Moorpark College
Moorpark, CA

Moraine Valley
Community College
Palos Hills, IL

Morton College
Cicero, IL

Mott College
Flint, MI

Mount Wachusett
Community College
Gardner, MA

Mt. Hood Community College
Gresham, OR

Mt. San Antonio College
Walnut, CA

Mt. San Jacinto College
San Jacinto, CA

Nashua Community College
Nashua, NH

National Association of
Non-Traditional Students
(NANTS)

New Mexico Junior College
Hobbs, NM

New River Community College
Dublin, VA

NHTI-Concord's
Community College
Concord, NH

North Carolina Central
University
Durham, NC

North Iowa Area
Community College
Mason City, IA

Northeast Alabama
Community College
Rainsville, AL

Northeast Iowa
Community College
Calmar, IA

Northeast State
Community College
Blountville, TN

Northeastern Junior College
Sterling, CO

Northern Virginia
Community College
Annandale, VA

Northwest Florida State College
Niceville, FL

Northwest Vista College
San Antonio, TX

Oconee Fall Line
Technical College
Dublin, GA

Oklahoma City
Community College
Oklahoma City, OK

Olympic College
Bremerton, WA

Ozarks Technical
Community College
Springfield, MO

Palo Alto College
San Antonio, TX

Palomar College
San Marcos, CA

Pellissippi State
Community College
Knoxville, TN

Peninsula College
Port Angeles, WA

Pennsylvania Highlands
Community College
Johnstown, PA

Peralta Community
College District
Oakland, CA

Persistence Plus (P+)
Boston, MA

Phillips Community College of
the University of Arkansas
Helena, AR

Prince George's
Community College
Largo, MD

Pueblo Community College
Pueblo, CO

Quincy College
Quincy, MA

Richland College
Dallas, TX

Richland Community College
Decatur, IL

Rio Hondo College
Whittier, CA

River Valley Community College
Claremont, NH

Riverland Community College
Austin, MN

Rogue Community College
Grants Pass, OR

Rose-Hulman Institute
of Technology
Terre Haute, IN

Saddleback College
Mission Viejo, CA

San Diego City College
San Diego, CA

San Juan Community College
Farmington, NM

Santa Barbara
Community College
Santa Barbara, CA

Santa Monica College
Santa Monica, CA

Santa Rosa Junior College
Santa Rosa, CA

Schenectady County
Community College
Schenectady, NY

Sierra College
Rocklin, CA

Sinclair Community College
Dayton, OH

Skyline College
San Bruno, CA

Snead State Community College
Boaz, AL

South Puget Sound
Community College
Olympia, WA

South Seattle College
Seattle, WA

South Texas College
McAllen, TX

Southeastern
Community College
West Burlington, IA

Southwest Virginia Community
and Technical College
Logan, WV

Southwest Wisconsin
Technical College
Fennimore, WI

Southwestern College
Chula Vista, CA

Spokane Community College
Spokane, WA

Spokane Falls
Community College
Spokane, WA

St. Johns River State College
Palatka, FL

St. Louis Community College
St. Louis, MO

St. Petersburg College
St. Petersburg, FL

Tallahassee Community College
Tallahassee, FL

Technical College
System of Georgia
Atlanta, GA

Tennessee Board of Regents
Nashville, TN

Thomas Nelson
Community College
Hampton, VA

Trident Technical College
Charleston, SC

Triton College
River Grove, IL

Truckee Meadows
Community College
Reno, NV

University of Dayton
Dayton, OH

University of New Mexico,
Gallup Campus
Gallup, NM

Valencia College
Orlando, FL

Vance-Granville
Community College
Henderson, NC

Virginia Highlands
Community College
Abingdon, VA

Wake Technical
Community College
Raleigh, NC

Walla Walla Community College
Walla Walla, WA

Walters State
Community College
Morristown, TN

Washtenaw Community College
Ann Arbor, MI

Wayne Community College
Goldsborough, NC

West Hills Community
College District
Coalinga, CA

West Kentucky Community and
Technical College
Paducah, KY

West Virginia Higher Education
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West Virginia University
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Parkersburg, WV

Western Nebraska
Community College
Scottsbluff, NE

Western Technical College
La Crosse, WI

Western Wyoming
Community College
Rock Springs, WY

White Mountains
Community College
Berlin, NH

Wisconsin Indianhead
Technical College
Shell Lake, WI

Wor-Wic Community College
Salisbury, MD

Yakima Valley College
Yakima, WA

York Technical College
Rock Hill, SC

Zane State College
Zanesville, OH



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President
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Chaffey College

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Director, SparkPoint
Skyline College

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Wor-Wic Community College

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St. Petersburg College

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