



Increasing Applicant-to-Enrollment Conversion Rates

Streamlining the Enrollment Process from Application to the First Day of Class

*David Bevevino,
Research Consultant*

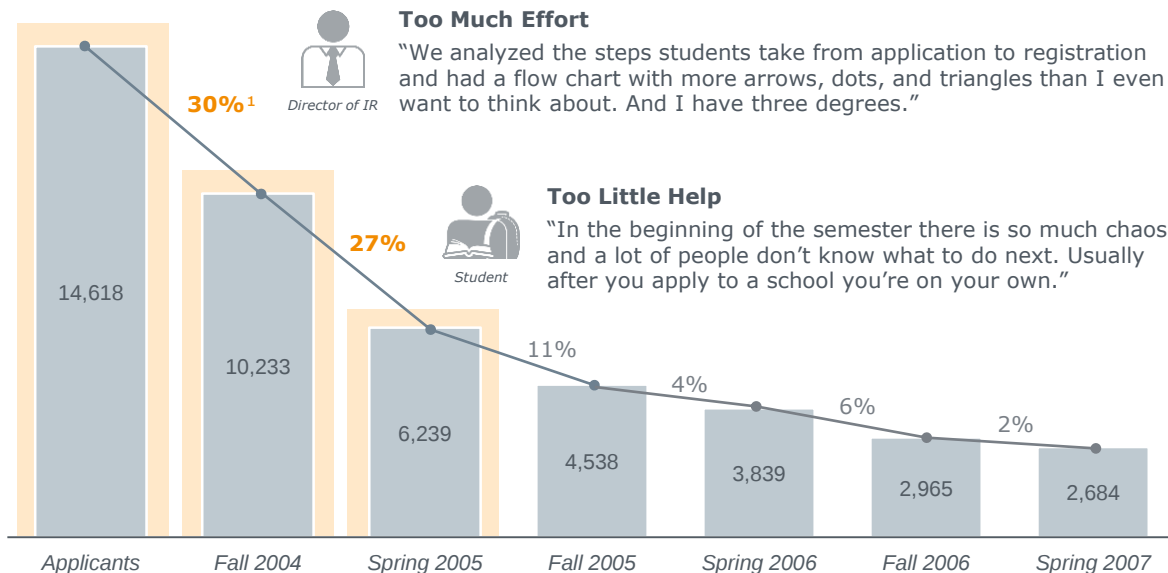
Community College Executive Forum

All Too Common Story

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



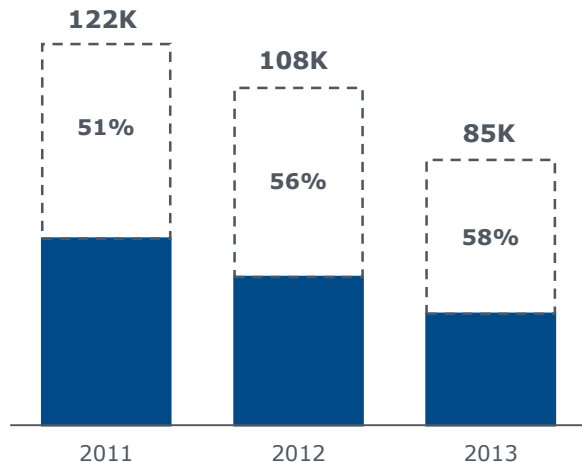
1) Figures represent calculation of percent of total applicant pool lost between the two time periods.

A National Phenomenon

Applicant Conversion Rates Worsen as More At-Risk Students Enter College

Smaller Pieces of a Shrinking Pie

Average Attrition Rates across Fall Applicants¹



Factors Exacerbating 'Melt'

Profile of Incoming Two-Year College Students

60% Community college students placed into a remedial course in 2008, compared to 41% in 2003-2004

72% First-time community college students completing a financial aid application in 2013, compared to 42% in 2007

38% Non-traditional age community college students in 2011, compared to 40% in 2013

Source: "Fast Facts", Association of American Community Colleges, 2015, 2011; "Community College FAQs," Community College Research Center (accessed March 2015); National Center for Education Statistics; Thomas Bailey, "Challenge and Opportunity: Rethinking the Role and Function of Developmental Education in Community College," New Directions for Community Colleges, Spring 2009; Thomas D. Snyder, "Digest of Education Statistics 2010", U.S. Department of Education, NCES2011-015 (accessed: March 2015); EAB interviews and analysis.

1) n=156 Two-year colleges reporting application data

From Good to Great



Current Efforts to Improve Intake Useful, But Ultimately Insufficient

Where We've Invested

Incremental Advances

But Still Much Left to Do



**Express
Registration Day**



*Reminds public about
opportunity to enroll*



**Incentivize earlier
application submissions**



**Customer Service
Staff Training**



*Avoids confrontation
between students, staff*



**Reduce amount of effort
needed to complete intake**



**Added Channels
of Communication**



*Acknowledges needs
of incoming Millennials*



**Nudge students to best
communication option**



**One-Stop Student
Services Shops**



*Makes navigating
campus easy for visitors*



**Reduce number of steps
needed to complete intake**

Learning By Doing



Forum Researchers Gather Student Experiences of Intake Processes

Back to School (Secret) Shopping

CCEF Fall 2014 Enrollment Pain Point Visits



22 member community college campuses visited during peak registration for Fall 2014



11 states visited in total
(Note: Only partially influenced by their scenic locations)

150+

Total number of observation hours invested in Enrollment Pain Point Audit Whitepaper

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

Four Key Findings

Major Flaws in Current Practice

1

*Self-Service
Intake
Doesn't Work*



- Delays during most unexpected times
- Websites lead to more questions than answers
- College terminology difficult to interpret
- Staff assistance comes from all over campus

2

*Financial
Support
Incomplete*



- Applicants do not complete FAFSA form
- Verification catches students by surprise
- Local and federal benefits go unused
- Students accept loans without knowing costs

3

*Academic
Decisions Made
at Random*



- Students select courses at random
- Time constraints force haphazard goal selection
- Course registration happens in a vacuum
- Students can't commit to 15-credit courseload

4

*Life Factors
Often Disrupt
Completion Goals*



- Students don't access on-campus services
- Course withdrawal occurs anonymously
- Mid-semester dropouts lose all progress made

Guiding Students to the Right Choice

Choice Architecture Theory Highly Applicable to the Intake Process

Government and Private Industry Makes Preferred Option the Default

But Higher Education Misses Chance to Encourage Completion Behavior

Framing

"Medium" most popular coffee size, even when actual size manipulated



Not Enough Credits

Students take "full load" of 12 credits, assume they'll graduate on time



Path of Least Resistance

Consumers more likely to purchase food easily reached at eye level



Unguided Course Selection

Students pick courses based on flawed criteria, delay graduation requirements



Burdening Bad Choice

Motorcyclists must pass extra test and prove insurance to forgo helmet



No-Fault Withdrawals

Students able to drop out or deviate from plans with easy transaction

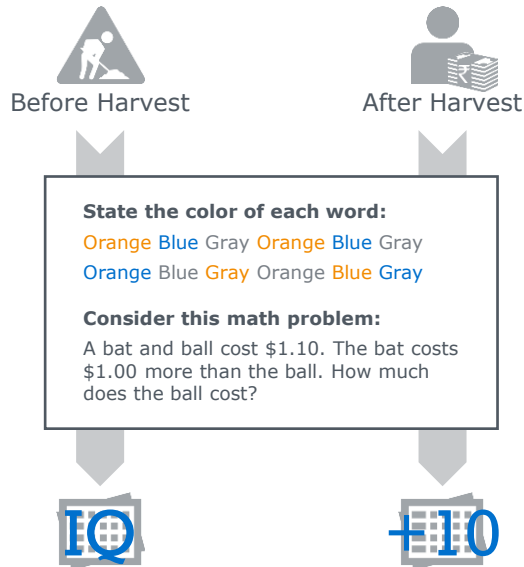


Understanding Cognitive Depletion

Behavioral Economics Explains Why We Make Poor Choices Under Pressure

Lessons from Around the World

World Bank 2015 World Development Report



”

Findings Hold Stateside

“When your bandwidth is loaded... you’re just more likely to not notice things, you’re more likely to not resist things you ought to resist, you’re more likely to forget things, [and] you’re going to have less patience.”

*Eldar Shafir, Professor of Psychology
Princeton University*

Source: World Bank, *World Development Report 2015: Mind, Society, and Behavior*, 2015; Raven’s Progressive Matrices, Standard Progressive Matrices (Standard, Sets A–E); Emily Badger, “How Poverty Taxes the Brain,” *City Lab*, Aug. 2013; EAB interviews and analysis.

How Can We Optimize New Student Intake?

The Destination Remains Clearer than the Path for Most

	Today		Future
Pace	Stop and Start	➡	Streamlined
Language	Confusing Jargon	➡	Easily Understood
Content	Generic	➡	Personalized
Locus of Support	Fragmented	➡	Comprehensive
Financial Assistance	Opt-In	➡	Intrusive
Academic Decisions	Random	➡	Guided
Student Services	One-Size-Fits-All	➡	Aligned with Needs

Preventing Early Attrition



1

Increasing Applicant-to-Enrollment Conversion Rates



- Immediate ID Provision
- Sequential Student Web Portal
- Jargon Reduction Audit
- Registration Case Manager

2

Supporting Optimal Financial Decisions



- Onsite FAFSA Completion Lab
- SMS Verification Updates
- FAFSA Benefits Eligibility Screens
- Pre-Loan Debt Management Workshops

3

Guiding Intentional Academic Decisions



- Meta Major Scheduling Menus
- Completion Mapping Course
- Multi-Term Registration
- Full-Time Summer Scholarships

4

Minimizing First Semester Dropout



- Personalized Resource Nudges
- Withdrawal Intervention Specialists
- Compressed Mini-Semesters

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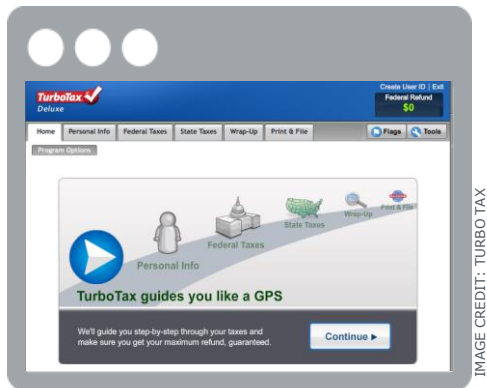
SECTION

The New Normal



Today's Consumer Self-Serves in All Aspects of Life

From Taxes to Medical Diagnoses



Food delivery



Real estate



Self-diagnosis

College Research Often Done Online

Surveys Reveal Shift Among HS Students



High school students using the Internet to [research colleges](#)¹



High school juniors wishing to [submit online applications](#)²



Age students prefer live support over self-service³

Source: Lee Raine, "College Searching Online," Pew Research Center, 2005; Noel-Levitz, "Navigating toward e-recruitment: Ten revelations about interacting with college-bound high school students," 2006; Matthew Dixon, Nick Toman, and Rick Delisi, "The Effortless Experience: Conquering the New Battleground for Customer Loyalty," Corporate Executive Board, 2013; EAB interviews and analysis.

1) n = 1,100 persons ages 12-17

2) n = 1,000 high school juniors

3) n = 879 customers

But Intake Not Easy Alone

Students Face Significant Challenges Trying to Self-Navigate

Primary Obstacles Impeding New Students from Self-Service

Lessons from Adopting the Student Perspective



Unexplained Delays slow movement from step to step



Generic Information given to students with diverse needs



Confusing Terminology makes intake even more intimidating



Countless Transfers between departments to answer inquiries

Making Self-Service Work

Administrative Redesigns Boost Throughput from Application to Enrollment



Streamlined Admissions

Immediate ID Provision

- From notoriously long wait times to instant notification
- Case Study: Laredo Community College (TX)

Understandable Language

Jargon Reduction Audits

- From confusing terminology to clearly understood online content
- Case Study: Travelocity



Personalized Information

Sequential Student Web Portal

- From generic calls for action to custom prompts and updates
- Case study: Harper College (IL)

Reduced Transfers

Registration Case Managers

- From run around campus to true one-stop experience
- Case study: Rogue Community College (OR)



Stopping Students at Step One

Delay in Receipt of Student ID Adds Extra Time and Steps

Even Short Admissions Delay Has Negative Effects



*24-48 Hour
Wait Period*



Halts Progress: Cannot take placement exams without a student ID number



Damages Confidence: Students expect immediate acceptance to open-access college and may discontinue enrollment



Requires Rescheduling: Unanticipated delay interferes with time commitments, forcing new travel arrangements

90%

Colleges profiled in CCEF Enrollment Pain Point Visits with 24-48 hour minimum waits to receive student ID numbers after application submission

Immediate ID Provision



Laredo Community College Sends ID Numbers Within Minutes, Not Days



*In-person
applicant*

Paper Application

Recruiters encourage students to complete college applications during on-site visits and community events

Student ID

Student application information immediately entered into SIS on-site; SIS automatically generates student ID

Next Steps

Student may proceed through rest of enrollment process



*Online
applicant*

Online Application

Homegrown online application, separate from SIS, developed in 2011-2012

Temporary ID

Student application confirmed immediately and temporary ID automatically generated by college's application system

Next Steps

Student may proceed through rest of enrollment process with temporary ID and acceptance letter will later provide student ID

1

Minutes new applicants wait for student ID number after submitting application

2.5%

Applications with discrepancies that required follow-up in Fall 2014



Laredo Community College

Tailor-Made Webspace

Harper College's Sequential Student Web Portal

Self-Service Easier with Personalized Portal

Harper College's New Web Portal Eases Access to Information



- **Redesign:** Harper's Project Discover prompted overhaul of myHarper website in 2014
- **Calls for Relevancy:** Student surveys and focus groups revealed desire for personalized information during onboarding and registration
- **Providing Tailored Results:** New sequential web portal provides information based only on the students' status

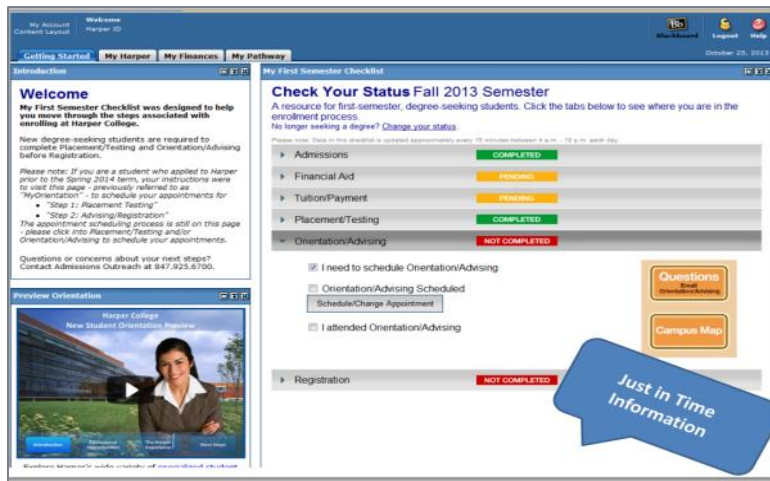


IMAGE CREDIT: HARPER COLLEGE

3

Simplified categorical tabs provide timely and relevant links

15

Minutes between automatic updates of portal content

↓ 12.8%

Decrease in call volume since introduction of myHarper 2.0

Do You Speak Higher Ed?

Students Unfamiliar with College-Specific Jargon

Seemingly Foreign Language

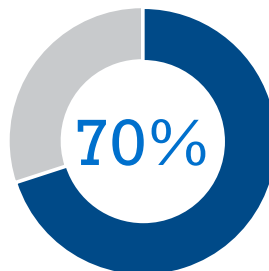
Common Higher Education Terminology



Prerequisite	Course Sequence
FAFSA	Registrar
Credit Hours	Liberal Arts
Syllabus	Distribution
Semester	Developmental
Course Catalog	Disbursement
Bursar	Program of Study

Jargon Abundant on Student Portals

Community College Journal Study of Accessibility and Usability of College Websites



Students surveyed who were confused by higher education terms on institutional websites¹

“We realized that we were explaining things from the point of view of the college, but new students don’t know that language yet.”

*Dr. Joyce Romano, Vice President Student Affairs
Valencia College*

1) n=30

Jargon Reduction Audit



Translating Student-Facing Material to Student-Friendly Language



Simplifying Content Reduces Call Volume



In 2001, measured spike in call and email volume for FAQs answered online



Gunning-Fog Index calculates reading level required to read online content



Removed jargon, used active voice, and simplified language used on website

↓ 5%

Drop in Travelocity helpline call volume after website improvement



THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

Translating Financial Aid Language

Before: The Carolina Computing Initiative ensures that students have access to high-quality and affordable technology. Through CCI, all students are required to own a laptop computer, and grants are available to help eligible students purchase their laptops.

Gunning Fog Index Score: 17.2



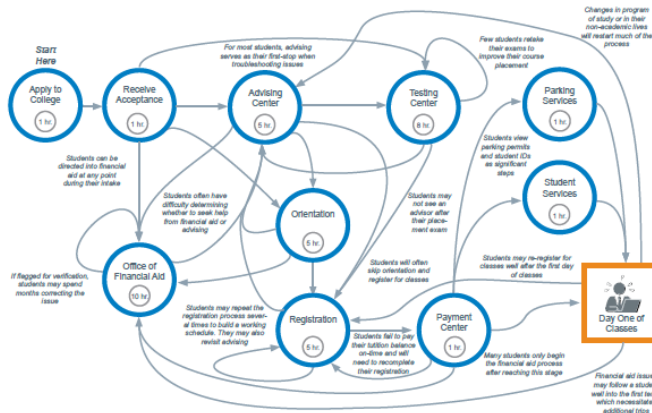
After: UNC requires you to have a laptop computer. If you can't afford one, grants are available.

Gunning Fog Index Score: 10.7

Choose Your Metaphor

Students Directed Between Multiple Offices to Complete Enrollment

Chutes and Ladders, Spaghetti, or Ping Pong?



15

Average number of stops to student services offices per campus visit across 20+ CCEF Enrollment Pain Point Visits



Exerts Unnecessary Effort



Feels Confused, Frustrated



Drops Out of Pipeline

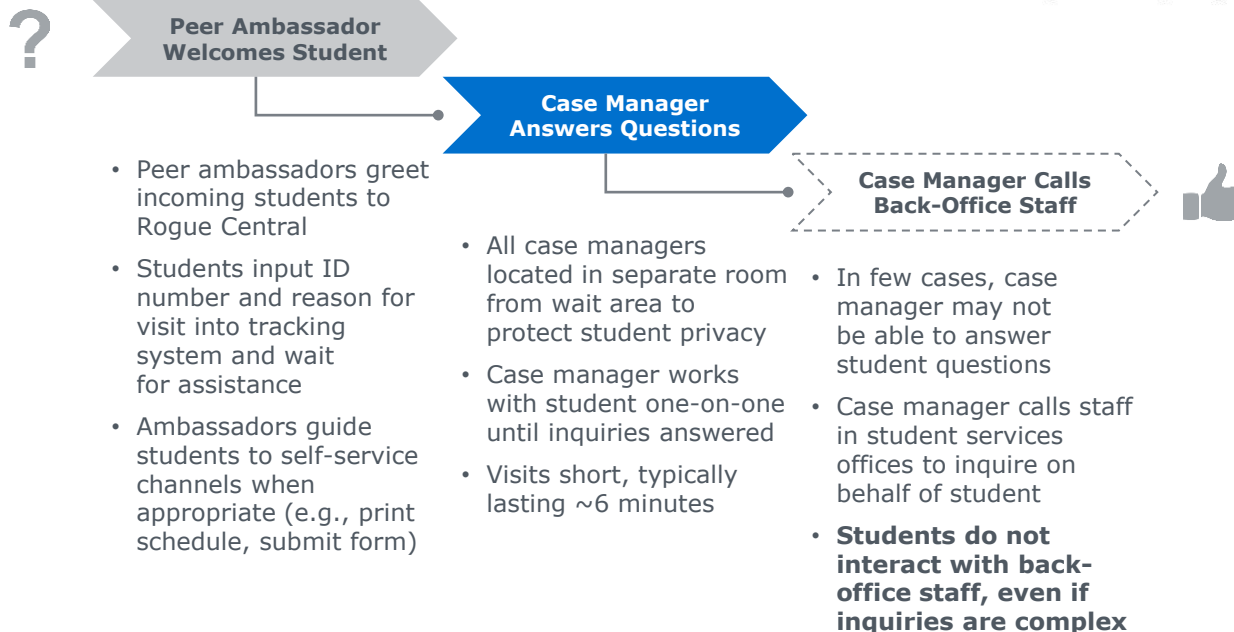
“A student gets handed off from one building to another building and then back again. It’s a bit like a ping pong match. We truly need to make enrollment process more seamless.”

*Allison Martin, Director of Institutional Effectiveness
Bossier Parish Community College*

From One Building to One Person

Rogue Community College's Enrollment Case Manager Model

Central Case Manager Key to Minimizing New Student Effort

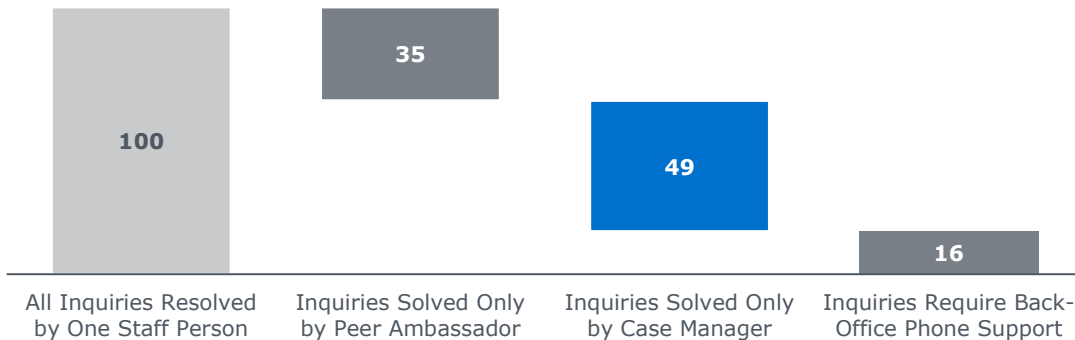


One and Done

Case Manager Model Eliminates Cross-Department Student Transfers

100 Students Walk Into Rogue Central...

Average Intervention Experience for New Students at Rogue Community College



Empowering Peer Ambassadors

- 12-14 Peer Ambassadors
- Work 20 hours/week in paid positions
- Current students at Rogue Community College

Cross-Training Case Managers

- Must have at least an A.A. degree and some customer service background
- Undergo 1 year of immersive cross-training

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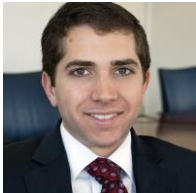
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