Making Summer Pay Off:

Encouraging Additional Summer Enrollment (EASE) in Ohio

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MDRC is a non-profit, non-partisan social policy research organization dedicated to:

• Conducting large-scale, **rigorous evaluations to learn what works** to improve education and social policies.

• **Designing and strengthening programs** and policies using research findings and lessons

• Providing **evidence-based technical assistance** to schools, programs, and organizations.
Our Time Today

Now: EASE project recap and evaluation findings

Later: Implementation Workshop (1:10 – 2 PM)
- Implementing the EASE strategies to increase summer 2020 enrollment
- Behavioral science insights for engagement and strategic communication
Recap: What is the EASE project?

- Research study involving 10 Community Colleges in Ohio and OACC
- Increase the number of students who enroll in summer courses
Why Encourage Summer Enrollment?

Research links summer enrollment to:
» persistence
» completion

Summer courses could:
» Bridge gap between spring and fall
» Mitigate loss of learning
» Accelerate time to completion
» Spread out “30 credits/year” target

Recent state and federal policies:
» Third-Term OCOG (~2016)
» AND...
Reinstatement of Year-Round Pell Grants (2017-2018)

Publication Date: June 19, 2017
DGL ID: GEN-17-06
Subject: Implementation of Year-Round Pell Grants

Summary: This letter describes a change to the Federal Pell Grant Program that allows an eligible student to receive up to 150 percent of the student’s Federal Pell Grant Scheduled Award for an award year beginning with the 2017–2018 award year.

Dear Colleague:

Section 401(b)(8) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA), as added by section 310 of the Department of Education Appropriations Act, 2017 (Title III of Division H of P.L. 115-31, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017), allows a student to receive Federal Pell Grant (Pell Grant) funds for up to 150 percent of the student’s Pell Grant Scheduled Award for an award year. This provision is effective beginning with the 2017–2018 award year.
Despite these benefits, summer enrollment rates were low

Only ~ 20% of community college students in Ohio enroll during summers
A Behavioral Science Approach

Focus on how people make decisions and behave

Provides insight into ways to help people achieve goals

Adaptable for different contexts
Two Strategies to Encourage Additional Summer Enrollment:

**INFORMATIONAL CAMPAIGN**
- Messaging
- Low cost
- Sustainable
- Easily scalable

**INFORMATIONAL CAMPAIGN & TUITION ASSISTANCE**
- Messaging + Financial support
- Built on past studies
  Inform state and federal financial aid policies
Financial aid is complex – few students had the full picture about summer aid.

- **Lengthy letters** may confuse or cause students to ignore information
- **Hassles**, such as additional forms, may discourage students from enrolling

Students reported lack of financial aid as a barrier to summer enrollment.

~80% of students had Pell remaining that could have been used to pay for summer courses but only ~20% were enrolling.
Hi Elspeth,

8 new Picker Packer jobs are now available at Pro FS. Come to Bedford job centre on Monday 10 June between 10am and 4pm and ask for Sarah to find out more. I've booked you a place. Good luck.

Michael
Incorporating Behavioral Insights

Dear Camielle,

I have good news! I took some time to review your financial aid package and want to make sure you know that you have grants available for summer courses. Based on my review, you have up to $480 from your Pell Grant (which you do not have to pay back) that you can use for summer courses!

I incorporate reciprocity.
Incorporating Behavioral Insights

- Provide gap funding for those in the tuition assistance group
- Leverage concept of mental accounting
Evaluating EASE with Rigorous Methods

**INFORMATIONAL CAMPAIGN**
- 6 e-mails, 2 letters, and 1 postcard
- Low cost
- Sustainable
- Easily scalable

**INFORMATIONAL CAMPAIGN & TUITION ASSISTANCE**
- Messaging + Gap Tuition
- Built on past studies
- Inform state and federal financial aid policies

**CONTROL**
- Colleges’ standard messages about summer enrollment & aid
Partner Colleges – THANK YOU

- Columbus State Community College
- Marion Technical College
- Stark State College
- Southern State Community College
- Clark State Community College
- Lakeland Community College
- North Central State College
- Northwest State Community College
- Rio Grande Community College
- Sinclair Community College

2017 Cohort (Pre-Year Round Pell)
2018 Cohort (Post-Year Round Pell)

Total sample: 10,668 students across both cohorts
Increased Summer Enrollment & Credits Earned

**Enrollment Rates**

- Control: 26.2%
- Informational Campaign: 31.5%
- Informational Campaign Plus Tuition Assistance: 38.4%

**Credits Earned**

- Control: 1.3 Credits
- Informational Campaign: 1.5 Credits
- Informational Campaign Plus Tuition Assistance: 1.8 Credits

**SOURCE:** MDRC calculations using transcript data provided by all ten colleges and pooled across cohorts. N > 10,000.
No Effect on Fall Enrollment

Fall Re-enrollment Rates

- **Control**: 55.3%
- **Informational Campaign**: 55.3%
- **Informational Campaign Plus Tuition Assistance**: 55.8%

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using transcript data provided by all ten colleges and pooled across cohorts. N > 10,000.
What are the Costs?

**INFORMATIONAL CAMPAIGN**

STAFF TIME

**INFORMATIONAL CAMPAIGN & TUITION ASSISTANCE**

$44 PER STUDENT
(average across 10 colleges for 2018 cohort that had access to Year-Round Pell)

+ STAFF TIME

Note: $4
What is the increased revenue?

Calculating Increased Revenue:

Increased Credits Attempted Per Student \times \text{Tuition/fees} \ ($137 \text{ per credit on average}) = \text{Increased Tuition + Fee Revenue Per Student}
Both Increase Tuition Revenue

Informational Campaign only

$52 per student

Informational Campaign + Tuition Assistance

$92 per student
What is the ROI (Net Revenue)?

Increased Revenue  Cost  Net Revenue
Both Have Similar, Positive Net Revenue

Informational Campaign only

- $52 per student

Informational Campaign + Tuition Assistance

- $92 per student

= $44 per student

= $48 per student
Both Strategies increase Pell Take-Up

### Average Summer Pell Disbursement in 2018
(With Year-Round Pell Available)

- **Control group**: $347
- **Informational campaign group**: $416
- **Informational campaign plus tuition assistance group**: $447

Average Pell Disbursement ($): 0 to 500

$100 and $69 represent the additional disbursements.
In Summary…

• A well-designed behavioral messaging campaign can cause more students to enroll in summer courses
  (When paired with an inexpensive tuition-waiver, effects are even larger.)

• Both strategies help students earn credits, bringing them closer to degree completion
  (and increase net revenue + Pell Grant take-up)
  (but don’t expect big impacts on spring to fall retention)

• Simple, cost-effective ways to boost student success at scale
  (incorporate into student success strategy/completion plans)
Thanks to:

Ascendium Education Group
Questions?

Contact:

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