Interventions to Increase College Reenrollment and Completion

AN EXAMINATION OF STRATEGIES
IMPLEMENTED AT FIVE COLLEGES

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Published September 2019

ABOUT HELIOS EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Helios Education Foundation is dedicated to creating opportunities for individuals in Arizona and Florida to achieve a postsecondary education. Our work is driven by our four fundamental beliefs in Community, Equity, Investment, and Partnership, and we invest in initiatives across the full education continuum.

Through our Florida Regional Student Success Initiative, Helios is helping undeserved, minority, and first-generation students from the state's large population centers in Miami, Orlando, and Tampa achieve a postsecondary education.

In Arizona, where Latino students comprise the largest percentage of the K–12 public school population, the Foundation is implementing its Arizona Latino Student Success initiative focused on preparing all students—especially students in high-poverty, underserved Latino communities—for success.

Dear Colleague,

While numerous students enjoy a direct path from high school graduation to postsecondary degree completion, others start their postsecondary journey only to be derailed by finances, work-related responsibilities, and other life circumstances. Often, these "stop outs" find reenrolling a challenge that compounds semester after semester.

In order to understand the multitude of reasons students fall short of degree completion and to prompt students to reenroll, Helios Education Foundation collaborated with researchers at the University of Florida on a demonstration study that engaged five state colleges and thousands of students. The study examined which incentives, if any, effectively prompt student reenrollment. Both qualitative and quantitative insights and researcher recommendations form the basis for this education brief.

Upon reviewing this brief, we hope more state leaders as well as leaders in higher education will consider the recommendations contained herein, advocate for legislative changes and institutional policy reform, and implement programs that encourage more students to not only reenroll, but also complete a postsecondary degree.

Sincerely,

Vince Roig

Founding Chairman

Paul J. Luna

President & CEO

INTERVENTIONS TO INCREASE COLLEGE REENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION: AN EXAMINATION OF STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED AT FIVE COLLEGES
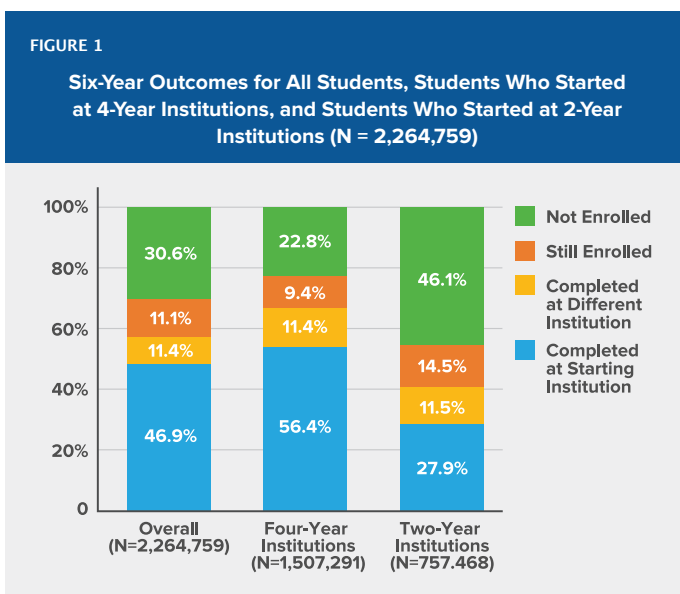
Helios Education Foundation (Helios) is dedicated to creating opportunities for individuals in Arizona and Florida to achieve a postsecondary education. Fundamental beliefs in Community, Equity, Investment, and Partnership drive our work, and we invest in initiatives across the full education continuum. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that every student graduates from high school ready for college and career and goes on to complete a high–quality postsecondary degree or certificate.

One recent project that exemplifies these principles is the Florida College Student Reenrollment Demonstration (Florida Reenrollment). Implemented in five Florida College System institutions, the program targeted students who had recently stopped out, had accumulated 30 or more credit hours, and had a GPA of 2.0 or higher. Building off of ideas based upon email reminders, the Florida Reenrollment program used "text nudges" and financial incentives to entice students to reenroll in their college.

This brief has three main sections. In Part I we describe the background and context surrounding supports for college completion. In particular we examine the workforce and individual economic benefits associated with a more highly educated community, and we identify the current trends and policies aimed at increasing college persistence and completion. In Part II, we explain the components of the reenrollment program in greater detail and share our initial findings from the study. We examine the extent to which different treatments impacted whether students reenrolled in college. Additionally, using respondent interviews, we describe qualitatively why former students stopped out of college. In Part III, we use information from this study and prior relevant research to offer opinion leaders, policy makers, and leaders of institutions of higher education a set of recommendations aimed at improving postsecondary attainment.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM

The benefits of completing college for both individuals and society are well known. College graduates typically are more employable, report greater job satisfaction, have higher earnings and increased job benefits (e.g., pension or retirement accounts), and obtain more opportunities for social mobility. Yet many students who enroll in college withdraw prior to completing their degree. According to data from the National Student Clearinghouse (2018), 67.8% of students enrolling in 4–year institutions graduate within 6 years from the date of their initial enrollment. In contrast, only 39.4% of students who enroll at 2–year institutions graduate within 6 years (see Figure 1). In addition, in both 4– and 2–year institutions, there are disparities in completion when data are disaggregated by race/ethnicity. For example, African American and Hispanic students graduate at much lower rates than White students.

FIGURE 1

Six-Year Outcomes for All Students, Students Who Started at 4-Year Institutions, and Students Who Started at 2-Year Institutions (N = 2,264,759)

	Not Enrolled	Still Enrolled	Completed at Different Institution	Completed at Starting Institution
Overall (N=2,264,759)	30.6%	11.1%	11.4%	46.9%
Four-Year Institutions (N=1,507,291)	22.8%	9.4%	11.4%	56.4%
Two-Year Institutions (N=757.468)	46.1%	14.5%	11.5%	27.9%

Reproduced from Completing College: A National View of Student Completion Rates – Fall 2012 Cohort (2018).

TABLE 1

Change in Employment During Recession and Recovery (2007–2016) by Level of Education			
Educational attainment	**Change in employment**		
	Recession (Dec. 2007 – Jan. 2010)	**Recovery** (Jan. 2010 – Jan. 2016)	**Net change** (Dec. 2007 – Jan. 2016)
High school or less	-5,611,000	80,000	-5,531,000
Some college/Associate's degree	-1,752,000	3,089,000	1,337,000
Bachelor's degree or higher	187,000	8,424,000	8,611,000
Bachelor's degree	-66,000	4,656,000	4,590,000
Master's degree or higher	253,000	3,768,000	4,021,000
All	**-7,176,000**	**11,593,000**	**4,417,000**

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of Current Population Survey (CPS) data, 2007–2016
Note: Columns may not sum due to rounding. Employment includes all workers age 18 and older. The monthly employment numbers are seasonally adjusted using the U.S. Census Bureau X–12 procedure and smoothed using a four–month moving average.

Trying to figure out why students stop out and how to convince them to reenroll can be quite challenging. Most colleges and universities lack a sophisticated tracking system for students who stopped out, and those that do try to track the former students often have limited understanding regarding why the former students left college. For example, many students might say the reason is "financial," but that can be associated with any number of issues with varying levels of complexities. Over time, research has highlighted that many students dropout because of cost burdens and a lack of academic preparedness. In a majority of cases, those students who stop out indicate that they plan to reenroll in college. Unfortunately, most never do.

WHAT ARE THE WORKFORCE AND INDIVIDUAL BENEFITS TO COMPLETING COLLEGE?

Why should state policy leaders care about the proportion of students entering and completing college? The answer is simple—economics. As a whole, the economy in the United States is rapidly changing with a growing need for an increasingly skilled workforce. In Florida, for example, economists project that roughly 65% of all jobs by 2020 will require at least some form of postsecondary education (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2013). However, current

estimates of Florida's postsecondary attainment show that just 49.3% of Floridians hold either a workforce certificate, associate degree, bachelor's degree, or graduate degree (Lumina Foundation, 2019).

The importance of a college degree in the future workforce cannot be overstated. Using data from the Current Population Survey, the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce (2016) highlighted the dramatic differences in employment changes and education requirements since the beginning of the recession in 2007 through January 2016. In short, the group that has suffered the most since the recession is the "high school or less" education cluster, and the differences between obtaining a high school degree (or less) and a college credential are substantial. Comparatively, those with some college or who have degrees have seen their employment opportunities increase substantially.

People in the "some college/associate degree" category have seen a net increase of nearly 1.4 million jobs, while those with a bachelor's degree have seen a net increase of nearly 4.6 million jobs (see Table 1).

Not only do college graduates have more opportunities for employment, but they also tend to earn substantially more than those with only a high school diploma or less.

[1] In June 2019 Florida Governor Ron DeSantis showed just how important the state government thought it was to increase the attainment goal when he signed House Bill 7071 into law. Under this law, the Florida Legislature set a goal to increase the percentage of Floridians holding a high–value postsecondary degree, certificate, or training experience to 60% by 2030.

According to the most recently reported data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics (2017), the median wages for a person in the United States with a high school diploma and no college is $712 a week. Comparatively, a person with an associate degree makes $836 a week, while an individual with a bachelor's degree makes $1,173 a week. (see Table 2) Over an individual's lifetime, those differences add up. Table 2 shows the lifetime earning variations within education levels in 2019 dollars. For example, a person in the 25th percentile with only a high school diploma would earn about $867,500 in his or her lifetime. Comparatively, a person with an associate degree in the 25th percentile would earn $1,177,100, and a person with a bachelor's degree would earn nearly double the high school graduate at roughly $1,490,600.

TABLE 2		
Median Weekly Earnings by Level of Education		
Educational attainment	**Median usual weekly earnings**	**Unemployment rate**
Doctoral degree	$1,743	1.5%
Professional degree	$1,836	1.5%
Master's degree	$1,401	2.2%
Bachelor's degree	$1,173	2.5%
Associate's degree	$836	3.4%
Some college, no degree	$774	4.0%
High school diploma, no college	$712	4.6%
Less than a high school diploma	$520	6.5%
Total	**$907**	**3.6%**

Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

A number of research studies have shown additional positive benefits of having a college degree. In its issue paper It's Not Just the Money, the Benefits of College Education to Individuals and Society, Lumina Foundation provided a rich review of existing literature. The following are a few of the indicators they highlight to show the benefits of having a college education.

- The incidence of poverty is 3.5 times lower.
- The likelihood of having health insurance through employment is 47% higher.

- Measures of occupational prestige are significantly higher.
- The probability of being employed is 24% higher.
- The likelihood of reporting health to be very good or excellent is 44% greater.
- Asset income is 4.9 times higher.

Overall, the issue of postsecondary attainment should be a key concern for state policy makers. When workforce and postsecondary attainment are aligned, states can maximize their full economic potential. This means more revenue for the state to collect in terms of tax dollars. At the same time, postsecondary attainment can lead to fewer dollars needed from the state for housing, food, and overall welfare.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT TRENDS IN COLLEGE COMPLETION SUPPORT?

Over the last three decades, educational leaders at institutions of higher education have sought ways to support their growing populations, especially those who might come from nontraditional backgrounds. The institutions have created and implemented a plethora of programs aimed at helping students prepare for and persist in postsecondary education. Called wraparound supports, these programs typically provide counseling, mentoring, and a number of additional resources aimed at keeping students in college. One of the most recognized and highly regarded programs is the Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP). Under ASAP the City University of New York provides financial assistance, an advisor/mentor, tutoring, and waivers for tuition and other mandatory fees as well as public transportation. To date, ASAP has been shown to be highly successful, with the graduation rate for ASAP participants more than double the rate of non-ASAP students.

Another growing trend to support college completion has been the expansion of reverse transfer programs in the United States. Reverse transfer is a process by which credits students earned at a baccalaureate institution (four-year institution) are transferred to a two-year institution where the student started, providing the student with an awarded associate degree from that two-year college. Having earned an associate degree or sub-baccalaureate credential can lead to better job opportunities and higher wages. In Arizona, for example, the Maricopa Community College District partnered with the state's three public universities (Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University, and the University of Arizona) on a reverse transfer program. To date, 823 students have been awarded an associate degree due to this partnership.

More recently, institutions of higher education have been seeking interventions that can foster reenrollment among former students who have stopped out of college. Colleges have previously reached out to students through mailings, targeted calls, emails (some general and some personalized), and even text messages. These "nudges" are meant to provoke a response to get the student to obtain more information and hopefully reenroll in college. However, while many colleges and universities are implementing these types of interventions, very little is known regarding how well these interventions are working or how they can be improved.

To better understand the effectiveness of reenrollment strategies, Helios partnered with the University of Florida's Institute of Higher Education to conduct a sophisticated research study aimed at identifying the impact of a set of low-cost interventions designed to increase student reenrollment. In the next section of this brief, we identify the components of this intervention along with early findings from the study.

PART II: THE FLORIDA COLLEGE REENROLLMENT DEMONSTRATION

This experimental study was conducted in collaboration with five high-enrollment colleges located in the state of Florida (Hillsborough Community College, Miami Dade College, Broward College, Palm Beach State College, and Valencia College). To be included in the sample and eligible for assistance, former students were required to meet the agreed-upon criteria of 30 accrued credit hours, a 2.0 GPA or better, and no behavioral or financial holds that would prevent them from being allowed to reenroll in college. In addition, researchers either obtained administrative data files or worked directly with the participating college to further restrict the study to former students who were enrolled in degree-seeking programs but stopped out of college within the past 3 years.

After removing all individuals who did not meet the above criteria or who had already reenrolled at another institution, the residual sample included 27,028 former students. Before employing the interventions (described in detail below), eligible students were randomly assigned to 1 of 3 groups—a control group or 1 of 2 treatment groups. The control group included 9,010 former students, and each treatment group included 9,009 former students.

WHAT WAS THE INTERVENTION DESIGN?

1. **Control Group:** Students within the control group received no information through this experiment.

2. **Information-Only Treatment:** Students within the information-only treatment group received 10 text messages encouraging them to reenroll in college and visit a custom website to be able to streamline the reenrollment process, apply for financial aid, and/or contact an assigned advisor for assistance.

3. **Information + Financial Incentive Treatment:** Students within the information + one-course waiver treatment group received the same information as the information-only treatment group as well as a one-course tuition waiver. This one-course tuition waiver could be a

conditional waiver (additional aid received only if the student did not already have all coursework covered by financial aid) or unconditional waiver (additional aid received even if all coursework is already covered by financial aid). Although we recommended that all participating colleges offer an unconditional waiver, two participating colleges offered an unconditional one-course waiver and three participating colleges offered a conditional one-course waiver.

Once former students were randomly assigned to the control or treatment groups, and balance checks were completed, a custom website was launched for each intervention (one information only site and another site including the same information and a one-course tuition waiver offer) for each of the five participating colleges (see Figure 2 for example sites). In May of 2018, a text messaging campaign began for students who were already randomly assigned to either treatment group, with the final text message sent in December of 2018 (see Figure 3 in Appendix A for a tabular visual of all text messages sent to former students).

In sum, 638 former students reenrolled from the control group, 689 former students reenrolled from the information-only group, and 772 former students reenrolled from the financial incentive group. Because former students were randomly assigned to each group, and balance tests revealed that each group was virtually identical as far as student characteristics, the only difference between these groups appears to be the assigned intervention.

Researchers also ran linear probability models to identify whether the differences between the information-only intervention and financial incentive intervention were statistically significant after controlling for a host of covariates. Both the conditional and unconditional tuition waivers, but not the information-only nudges, had a positive and statistically significant effect on former students' likelihood of reenrolling in college. In addition, results showed the financial incentive intervention worked across multiple student subgroups (racial minority, low-income, and adult students) for both the conditional and unconditional one-course tuition waiver.

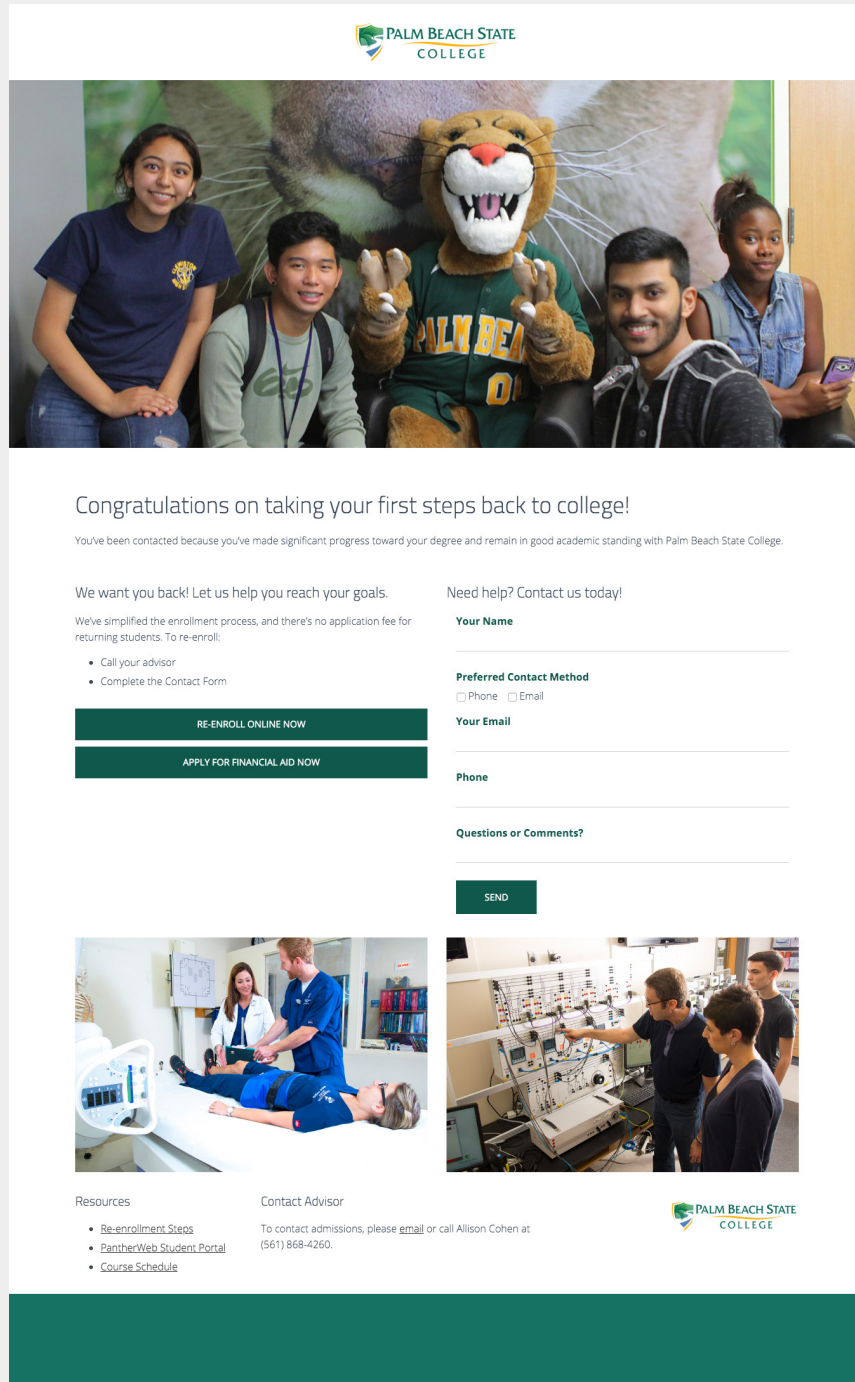### SURVEY FINDINGS: WHY DID FORMER STUDENTS LEAVE COLLEGE?

To supplement experimental findings, an original survey was conducted to investigate why former students stopped reenrolling in college. The survey was approved by each of the participating institutions before being sent to the entire sample of 27,028 participants. Students were initially invited to participate in the survey via email. A few days later, a text message inviting participation in the survey was sent to all participants who had not opted out of text messages during the reenrollment campaign. In total, 2,774 surveys were completed, which represents roughly 10.3% of the total sample. A copy of the complete survey is available upon request. A breakdown of the number of survey participants by institution is shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3

Number of Students Surveyed and Proportion Completed by College

College	Survey completed	Percentage	Total sample	Percentage
Broward College	698	25.16%	7,400	27.38%
Hillsborough Community College	349	12.58%	3,213	11.89%
Miami Dade College	857	30.89%	8,704	32.20%
Palm Beach State College	529	19.07%	4,793	17.73%
Valencia College	341	12.29%	2,918	10.80%
Total	**2,774**	**100%**	**27,028**	**100%**

FIGURE 2–2

Custom Website Examples (Information-Only and Unconditional Waiver Sites) [cont.]

VALENCIACOLLEGE

Congratulations on taking your first steps back to college.

You've been contacted because you've made significant progress toward your degree and remain in good academic standing with Valencia College.

We want you back. Let us help you reach your goals.

We've simplified the enrollment process, and there's no application fee for returning students. To re-enroll:

- Call your advisor
- Complete the Contact Form

RE-ENROLL ONLINE NOW

APPLY FOR FINANCIAL AID NOW

Need help? Contact us today.

Your Name

Preferred Contact Method
☐ Phone   ☐ Email

Your Email
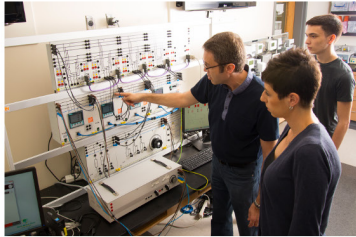
Phone

Questions or Comments?

SEND

Resources

- Re-enrollment Steps
- Atlas Student Portal
- Course Schedule

Contact Advisor

To contact admissions, please email us or call at (407) 582-5155.

VALENCIACOLLEGE

TABLE 4

Number of Interviews Completed and Proportion of Sample by College

College	Interviews	Percent of interviews	Total sample	Percentage of total sample
Broward College	25	22.32%	7,400	27.38%
Hillsborough Community College	18	16.07%	3,213	11.89%
Miami Dade College	24	21.43%	8,704	32.20%
Palm Beach State College	27	24.11%	4,793	17.73%
Valencia College	18	16.07%	2,918	10.80%
Total	**112**	**100%**	**27,028**	**100%**

Survey results indicate that two types of financial concerns were the most frequently selected reasons students stopped enrolling in courses. Specifically, 51.6% of participants identified tuition and fees and 48.2% identified paying for living expenses (such as rent, utilities, heath care, and childcare) as factors in leaving college. To pay for expenses, 83.9% of participants indicated that they were employed while taking classes. Among them, 32.3% indicated that having to switch from part-time to full-time work was a reason they stopped enrolling in courses. Working a job while going to school created time management problems and led many of these former students to leave college. Of the respondents, 28.1% noted they stopped enrolling because their weekly schedule was inconsistent, and 29.9% stopped enrolling because they could not find the time to study or prepare for class.

Perhaps in response to the time constraints outlined above, 57.5% of participants indicated that they took online courses while enrolled as a student. Respondents also faced traditional challenges related to their academic skills and preparedness, with 23.1% of former students suggesting they left college because the required math or science courses were too difficult. Because students were also given the opportunity to provide additional insights regarding why they left college, a disproportionate number of students described challenges pertaining to financial issues, course scheduling, and a health emergency as contributing factors behind their decision to stop enrolling

in courses. The last question of the survey asked if survey respondents would be willing to participate in a one-on-one qualitative interview for roughly 30 minutes in exchange for a $15 gift card. A majority, 56.4%, indicated that they would be interested in scheduling a one-on-one qualitative interview. Those qualitative findings are discussed in the next section.

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS: WHY DID FORMER STUDENTS LEAVE COLLEGE?

Researchers conducted 112 in-depth, one-on-one qualitative interviews (via telephone) with former students to better understand why students stopped enrolling in college. As noted previously, each interview was scheduled for roughly 30 minutes, and every former student who completed the interview received a $15 gift card. Because well over 1,000 students noted that they would be willing to complete an interview in exchange for a gift card, participants were randomly selected until theoretical saturation was reached. A research team member conducted each interview, and a transcription service transcribed each of the 112 interviews verbatim. The qualitative interview protocol was designed to expand upon the survey questions in an attempt to reveal a richer narrative from the former students. A breakdown of one-on-one interview participants by institution is shown in Table 4.

The qualitative interview data led to three emergent themes that appear to encompass the primary reasons former college students stopped enrolling in courses. The first and most common theme was related to former students' financial struggles and their inability to pay for the remaining courses out of pocket. As one student noted, "My financial aid stopped, and I couldn't afford to stop working because I have children. I needed to do a full-time semester out of pocket to reinstate financial aid and never got the opportunity or time." This type of issue surfaced repeatedly in the qualitative interviews, which led researchers to identify three subcategories of financial aid issues. First, former students may have been receiving a grant or scholarship for a fixed period of time, and the student would be unwilling to switch to loans to remain enrolled. Second, a former student may have been attending for greater than 150% of the time allotted to complete the degree and would thereby be denied continued financial aid due to not making satisfactory academic progress. Third, former students may have unintentionally maxed out the amount of federal aid they were eligible to use due to taking unnecessary courses. However, many of the former students facing this circumstance had no idea that a maximum existed until after they reached it and were told they could no longer receive federal aid.

The second emergent theme is associated with the challenge of advising and course scheduling. Many participants stated they did not meet with an advisor when they enrolled initially, or they enrolled repeatedly in unnecessary courses that did not advance the student toward the desired degree. The advising issue was exacerbated by working students having limited time to meet with an advisor during the day. Numerous students expressed frustration due to meeting with different advisors and receiving different recommendations regarding their requirements to graduate. Regarding course scheduling, former students repeatedly referenced challenges scheduling the courses they needed to persist and eventually graduate, as the specific courses may be offered only during the day when the students needed to be at work. One student reported that he did not "have enough time in the day to attend an on-site class," while another student noted that "The next courses [she] needed were not offered in the evening after work hours. [She] was unable to continue due to unavailability of classes." Researchers found significant variation across the types of advising or course scheduling issues mentioned by students, but a disproportionate number of students referenced some type of those issues as a contributing factor when describing why they stopped attending college.

The final emergent theme related to unexpected changes in former students' life circumstances. The majority of respondents were either parents or full-time employees, and these obligations often superseded their academic aspirations and led to their decision to stop enrolling in courses. Given the variance in their schedules at work or home, many interviewees noted that it was extremely challenging to remain enrolled in the face of unexpected changes in their personal or professional schedules. As one student noted, "Life gets in the way. We moved, got new jobs, had issues with trying to find all of the online courses needed. I am two classes away from graduating." Finally, unexpected health issues surfaced repeatedly as a reason students stopped enrolling in college coursework, which connects the first and third emergent themes of financial struggles and changes in life circumstances.

PART III: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recognizing the importance of increasing postsecondary completion and attainment in Florida, we offer a set of recommendations at both the institutional and state levels. These recommendations are based on findings from this study and prior relevant research that contributed to the production of this brief.

INSTITUTIONAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Offer tuition assistance in the form of a one-course waiver to encourage students to reenroll. Overall, this study showed that students in the information + financial incentive group were significantly more likely to reenroll than students in the information-only group. As a result, the positive impact of the combination of reenrollment information and financial incentives should not be undervalued when identifying strategies to encourage former students to reenroll. We believe that state educational institutions should continue to examine this and other plausible financial opportunities to increase the proportion of students completing their programs.

Increase online opportunities for critical courses. While reenrollment information and financial incentives are critical for success, a number of other challenges still lead to students stopping out of college. In this study one emergent theme that developed around stopping out was course availability or timing. A number of students indicated that they had work conflicts with available course offerings, which led to them to stop out of college. To remedy this type of situation, we ask institutions to consider strategic increases in the number of online offerings, especially for courses that are required to finish the degree. This will allow working students who face significant time constraints to continue to make progress toward their respective degrees.

Increase rainy day funds or provide more opportunities for emergency scholarships. Financial difficulties were identified as the most common reason for stopping out of college among our survey respondents and interview participants. We recommend that Florida College System institutions allocate a small proportion of revenue toward a rainy day fund to prevent at-risk but otherwise successful students from stopping out of college. Students who are near completion but facing financial difficulties or running out of financial aid would be able to receive targeted aid packages from this fund. Given the lower level of appropriations allocated for community colleges in Florida and nationwide, Florida College System institutions may face significant challenges when seeking to support financially needy students. We turn to the state of Florida to ensure that Florida College System institutions have the support and resources needed to not only foster reenrollment but also prevent students from stopping out in the first place.

STATE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase state funding or provide conditional funding for more advisers and advising resources for Florida College System institutions. Through respondent interviews, community college students often expressed a greater need for advising support that could have helped them navigate the system. As a result, some students used scholarship dollars too quickly or enrolled in courses that were not advancing them toward a degree. Having more intensive and available academic support personnel could alleviate this challenge and keep students on track for completion.

Amend or remove policies that inhibit students from reenrolling or completing. Under Florida Statues Section 1009.285, a student who enrolled in the "same undergraduate college-credit course more than twice shall pay tuition at 100 percent of the full cost of instruction and shall not be included in calculations of full-time equivalent enrollments for state funding purposes." In other words, if an in-state student registers for a course for a third time, he or she must pay the out-of-state tuition rate for that attempt. This can be extremely challenging for students who have failed courses or had to stop out of school for unforeseen purposes. Having to pay the full cost of the course (or out-of-state price) without financial aid creates a barrier that can inhibit students from reenrolling or completing their degrees. State leaders should look for ways to amend this policy so that it does not contribute to some students stopping out of college.

Implement a state-level policy that encourages FAFSA completion upon high school graduation and when enrolling in postsecondary institutions. As revealed in this study and around the country, a sizable proportion of students are not completing their FAFSA. These students are not eligible for many forms of financial aid, which can include grants and scholarships that do not need to be repaid. To combat this dilemma, some states have implemented policies to encourage students to complete their FAFSA (e.g., Tennessee), while others are beginning to take steps to require completion as a condition of high school graduation (e.g., Louisiana). We take a more neutral approach and ask state leaders to provide more incentives to encourage students graduating from high school and those already in postsecondary institutions to complete their FAFSA.

FIGURE 3

Text Messages Sent to Former College Students

Message	Information	Conditional Waiver	Unconditional Waiver
1	Palm Beach State College (PBSC) wants you back! We have simplified the enrollment process. Go to [web link for info site.] for more info. Reply stop to stop	Palm Beach State College (PBSC) wants you back! We will cover the tuition for your next course. See how at [link to waiver website] Reply stop to stop	Hillsborough Community College (HCC) wants you back! We will cover the tuition for your next course. See how at [link to waiver website] Reply stop to stop
2	You are so close to finishing your degree! Let Palm Beach State College help you reach your goals. Learn more at [web link for info site.] Reply stop to stop	If financial aid does not already cover your next course, PBSC will waive the tuition for that course. Learn more at [link to waiver website] Reply stop to stop	Need help paying for your degree? HCC can help you apply for financial aid (FAFSA). See how at [link to waiver website] Reply stop to stop
3	Need help paying for your degree? Palm Beach State College can help you apply for financial aid (FAFSA). See how at [web link for info site.] Reply stop to stop	Need help paying for your degree? Palm Beach State College can help you apply for financial aid (FAFSA). See how at [link to waiver website] Reply stop to stop	Do not miss this special offer to enroll in your next course at HCC for free. Learn more at [link to waiver website] Reply stop to stop
4	Any questions about registering for classes? PBSC can offer advising or enrollment assistance. More info @ [web link for info site.] Reply stop to stop	Any questions about registering using your tuition waiver? PBSC can offer advising or enrollment assistance. More info @ [link to waiver website] Reply stop to stop	Any questions about registering using your tuition waiver? HCC can offer advising or enrollment assistance. More info @ [link to waiver website] Reply stop to stop
5	It is not too late to register for classes! The fall semester at PBSC begins on August 23. Learn more @ [web link for info site.] Reply stop to stop	It is not too late to register for classes! The fall semester at PBSC begins on August 23. Claim your tuition waiver @ [link to waiver website] Reply stop to stop	It is not too late to register for classes! The fall semester at HCC begins on August 20. Claim your tuition waiver @ [link to waiver website] Reply stop to stop
6	You still have time to register! PBSC offers flexible online and night classes to fit your schedule. Get started @ [web link for info site.] Reply stop to stop	You still have time to register! PBSC offers flexible online and night classes to fit your schedule. Get started @ [link to waiver website] Reply stop to stop	You still have time to register! HCC offers flexible online and night classes to fit your schedule. Get started @ [link to waiver website] Reply stop to stop
7	Palm Beach State College wants you back! Spring registration is now open. Go to [web link for info site.] for more info. Reply stop to stop	Spring registration is now open! Palm Beach State College will cover the tuition for your next course. See how at [link to waiver website] Reply stop to stop	Spring registration is about to begin! Hillsborough CC will cover the tuition for your next course. See how at [link to waiver website] Reply stop to stop
8	Need help paying for your degree? Palm Beach State College can help you apply for financial aid (FAFSA). See how at [web link for info site] Reply stop to stop	Need help paying for your degree? PBSC will cover your next course and help you apply for financial aid. See how at [the waiver site link.] Reply stop to stop	Need help paying for your degree? HCC will cover your next course and help you apply for financial aid. See how at [the waiver site link.] Reply stop to stop
9	It is not too late to register for classes! The spring semester at PBSC begins on January 4. Learn more @ [web link for info site] Reply stop to stop	It is not too late to register for classes! The spring semester at PBSC begins on January 4. Claim your tuition waiver @ [the waiver site link.] Reply stop to stop	It is not too late to register for classes! The spring semester at HCC begins on January 7. Claim your tuition waiver @ [the waiver site link.] Reply stop to stop
10	This is your final reminder to register for classes at PBSC for the Spring semester. Contact your advisor at [web link for info site] Reply stop to stop	This is your final reminder to claim your tuition waiver at PBSC for the Spring semester. Contact your advisor at [the waiver site link.] Reply stop to stop	This is your final reminder to claim your tuition waiver at HCC for the Spring semester. Contact your advisor at [the waiver site link.] Reply stop to stop

FIGURE 4

Reenrollment Outcomes

Reenrollment Outcomes: Total Sample	Control	Information Only	Financial Incentive	Total
All Colleges	638	689	772	2,099

Reenrollment Outcomes by Subgroups: Conditional Waiver	Control	Information Only	Financial Incentive	Total
Racial minority (percentages)	30.39%	33.21%	36.40%	100%
Racial minority (actual)	323	353	387	1,063
Adults, age 25+ (percentages)	30.47%	31.50%	38.03%	100%
Adults, age 25+ (actual)	266	275	332	873
Need-based aid (percentages)	30.42%	34.01%	35.57%	100%
Need-based aid (actual)	195	218	228	641

Reenrollment Outcomes by Subgroups: Unconditional Waiver	Control	Information Only	Financial Incentive	Total
Racial minority (percentages)	30.39%	33.21%	36.40%	100%
Racial minority (actual)	323	353	387	1,063
Adults, age 25+ (percentages)	30.47%	31.50%	38.03%	100%
Adults, age 25+ (actual)	266	275	332	873
Need-based aid (percentages)	30.42%	34.01%	35.57%	100%
Need-based aid (actual)	195	218	228	641

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