Today’s Agenda

- MDRC’s work in postsecondary education
- How to strengthen your programs
- Q&A
Overview of MDRC’s Postsecondary Work
Goals for Postsecondary Education

*Increase* graduation rates for low-income students

*Improve* strategies throughout the postsecondary pipeline

*Reduce* college achievement gaps
Getting students enrolled and accurately placed, through developmental education, ...and to graduation.

- Text Ed
- Multiple Measures for Assessment and Placement
- Acceleration
- CUNY Start
- Dana Center Math Pathways
- CUNY ASAP
- ASAP Demo in Ohio
- Detroit Promise Path
- Behavioral Approaches/EASE
Lessons from 15 years of Postsecondary Education Research

1. **There is growing evidence on effective strategies** for improving student outcomes

2. **Comprehensive strategies** that combine opportunity with obligation have bigger effects (but cost more)

3. **Frequent advising and coaching** are vital

4. **Behavioral strategies** help drive success
Evidence-based Student Success Strategies: How to Improve Your Programs
Comprehensive programs that integrate different strategies and are sustained over time are more likely to produce long-term impacts on student success.
Comprehensive Programs for First-Year Students

- Students face many barriers to success
- Programs that simultaneously address multiple barriers can help students succeed
  - Student support services
  - Financial aid
  - Expenses like books, transportation, child care
  - Academic underpreparedness
  - Summer support
  - Jobs programs on or off campus
Overview

- **CUNY ASAP RCT**
  - At the end of 3 years, CUNY ASAP **nearly doubled graduation rates**
  - At the end of 6 years, CUNY ASAP **increased graduation rates and helped some students graduate faster**

- **ASAP Ohio RCT**
  - CUNY provided TA to 3 colleges in Ohio
  - Early findings are **in-line with CUNY ASAP findings**
ASAP Ohio Demonstration

- **Colleges:** Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, Cuyahoga Community College, and Lorain County Community College
- **Partners:** CUNY, ODHE, and MDRC
- **Student eligibility criteria:** Pell eligible, in a major that allowed student to graduate within 3 years, willing to attend school full-time
- **Model:** Very similar to CUNY ASAP with changes to reflect the local context
Ohio Program Model

Programs based on CUNY ASAP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Responsibility and Messaging</th>
<th>Financial Supports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Enroll Full-time</td>
<td>• Tuition Waiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Take Dev. Ed. Early</td>
<td>• Gas/Grocery Card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Graduate in 3 Years</td>
<td>• Textbooks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Services</th>
<th>Course Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Triage Advising</td>
<td>• ASAP Seminar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tutoring</td>
<td>• Course Schedules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Career Services</td>
<td>• Early Registration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ohio Serving More Nontraditional Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>CUNY</th>
<th>OHIO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average age</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (%)</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>63.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race other than white (%)</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>54.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has any children (%)</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed (%)</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nontraditional student (%)</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>46.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nontraditional students are defined as those who are 24 or older, work 35 or more hours per week, have children, or did not receive a high school diploma and are not currently enrolled in high school.
More Students Enroll Full-Time

Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.
Students Attempt & Earn More Credits

Statistical significance levels are indicated as *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.
How to strengthen programs

- Make your programs long-lasting
- Bring programming to students – don’t wait for them to come to you
- Make your college a one-stop shop
- Use financial incentives to keep students on track
Higher-touch advising and guaranteed time with advisors can improve the effectiveness and take-up of advising and improve student outcomes
Many successful programs have focused on enhanced student advising or coaching to help low-income and underrepresented students succeed.

Results:
- Improved academic outcomes during engaged semesters – staying enrolled, enrolling full-time, and completing credits
- Increased persistence during and immediately following intervention
- Completion of targeted milestones like academic plans
Detroit Promise Path: Challenges Students Face

- Motivation
- Transition from high school to college
- Financial aid
- Transportation
Students Value Detroit Promise Path

- 96 percent of surveyed students indicated that the Detroit Promise Path program was “valuable” or “very valuable” to them.

“[My coach] is my motivator because I don’t motivate myself.”

“[My coach] makes me feel like I’ve got someone in my corner.”

“You need some kind of guidance or motivation…to keep you on track and remind you that you’re trying to do something positive with your life.”
Detroit Promise Path Boosts Enrollment

- Semester 1
  - Enrollment:
    - Program Group: 1.0
    - Control Group: 1.0
  - FT Enrollment:
    - Program Group: 6.7*
    - Control Group: 35.0

- Semester 2
  - Enrollment:
    - Program Group: 11.5***
    - Control Group: 35.0
  - FT Enrollment:
    - Program Group: 15.0***
    - Control Group: 35.0

Note: * and ** indicate statistical significance.
How to strengthen programs

- Programs can help students enroll in future semesters by staying connected
- Advising/coaching should be holistic and action-oriented
- Be prepared to talk about a range of topics (and provide referrals)
- Successful programs make advising/coaching mandatory or incentivize participation
- Provide clear action steps for students – help them complete the task
Your friend tells you she plans to vote in an upcoming election. What is one question you can ask her that will increase the likelihood she will vote?

A) Who will you vote for?
B) What can we do to get more people to vote?
C) Where is your polling station?
Insights from behavioral science can be used to improve the effectiveness of programs.
Uses findings from psychology (cognitive, social), behavioral economics, and marketing to improve decision making.

Originally aimed to design “nudges”: low-cost, easy to implement changes to communications that have disproportionately large effects on what people do.

Nudges work because they appeal to human nature.
Behavioral Bottlenecks

What are behavioral bottlenecks?
Behavioral bottlenecks are a point of congestion or blockage in a process that interferes with the goal you are trying to achieve.

What causes behavioral bottlenecks?
One of the main causes behind bottlenecks is the intention-action gap, or the difference between what people intend to do and what people actually end up doing.

Why do we care about behavioral bottlenecks?
Behavioral bottlenecks help us clarify the behavioral reasons behind the drop-off points identified through the process map. This will inform what interventions we want to design and test.
Building Empathy with Behavioral Insights

Know
Knowledge and Awareness

Feel
Motivation and Identity

Do
Planning and Follow-through
Improving student communications

The SIMPLER framework:

- Social Influence
- Implementation Prompt
- Making Deadlines
- Personalization
- Loss Aversion
- Ease
- Reminder
Improving student communications

The SIMPLER framework:

- Social Influence
- Implementation Prompt
- Making Deadlines
- Personalization
- Loss Aversion
- Ease
- Reminder
Dear Sir/Madam

Please pay £99999999999999.99

Our records show that your Self Assessment tax payment is overdue.

Nine out of ten people pay their tax on time.

It is easy to pay. Please call the phone number above to pay by debit card, credit card, or Direct Debit.

You can also pay using internet and telephone banking. For more information on when and how to pay, go to www.hmrc.gov.uk/payinghmrc

If you don’t believe that this payment is overdue, please contact us on the number above.

If you have already paid, thank you. If not, please act now.
Loss Aversion

By not attending your appointment, you may:

- Miss out on jobs available now or training and education for your career.
- LOSE up to $2,508 a year in cash benefits.

By attending your appointment, you may:

- Take advantage of jobs available now or training and education for your career.
- KEEP up to $2,508 a year in cash benefits.
Developing SIMPLER Solutions

The SIMPLER framework describes the behavioral principles applied across the 15 tests in the Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency (BIAS) project, which was the first major effort to apply behavioral insights to the human services programs that serve poor and vulnerable families in the United States. Each intervention was highly tailored to the particular site’s problem and context using a systematic approach called “behavioral diagnosis and design.” However, a retrospective look at the tests across BIAS program areas identified common bottlenecks that various human services settings may share and, as a result, commonalities across interventions, even though implementation varied at each site.

SIMPLER was developed to summarize several key behavioral concepts that may be relevant for a variety of programs. In the figure below, each behavioral term is followed by a definition and an example of how this concept was applied in a BIAS site. While SIMPLER is not meant to encompass the full range of available behavioral techniques, practitioners may find it useful as they think about how to apply behavioral insights to their program areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>R</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Influence</td>
<td>Implementation Prompt</td>
<td>Making Deadlines</td>
<td>Personalization</td>
<td>Loss Aversion</td>
<td>Ease</td>
<td>Reminder</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DEFINITIONS**

- The way
- Bridges intention with
- Frames a future action
- Encouraging a particular
- Preference for avoiding
- Making processes
- Prompts to encourage
You are trying to refer a student to a form on your website. Do you:

A) Give the student the URL to your website’s homepage and provide instructions on how to navigate to the form (for example, www.mdrc.org)

B) Give them a longer URL that takes them directly to the form (for example, www.mdrc.org/forms/TA.pdf)
Effective data management can help staff and program coordinators monitor and continuously improve programs.
What we’ve learned

Successful programs:

- Treat data as a tool rather than as a report card
- Continually use data to identify problem areas and promote ongoing positive changes in the outcomes of students
- Measure a program against its goals and history to show improvement
# Program data examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH:</th>
<th>ENGAGEMENT AND KEY TASKS</th>
<th>ENROLLMENT AND MILESTONES:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Text messages</td>
<td>• Orientation attendance</td>
<td>• Enrollment in 12 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emails</td>
<td>• In-person meetings</td>
<td>• Enrollment at add/drop date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Phone calls</td>
<td>• Group meetings</td>
<td>• Specific class enrollment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Method and responsiveness</td>
<td>• Early alert</td>
<td>• Class registration for upcoming semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• FAFSA completion for upcoming year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tracking tool example

Create a simple tracking sheet for important data that is difficult to report.

Connect it to a second sheet that summarizes the data in real-time as you update it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Enrolled in Math</th>
<th>Completed Math Req</th>
<th>Enrolled in English</th>
<th>Completed English Req</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student5</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student6</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student7</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student8</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student9</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student10</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student Enrollment and Completion (as of 2/10/2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Students</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled in Math</td>
<td>11 37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed Math</td>
<td>18 60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled in English</td>
<td>7 23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed English</td>
<td>13 43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions?
Contact Us:

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andrea.vasquez@mdrc.org