

Student Success Leadership Institute  
April 27, 2017

# Encouraging Additional Summer Enrollment (EASE)

Camielle Headlam &  
Xavier Alemañy, MDRC

cabs  
@mdrc

# MDRC

MDRC is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with experience conducting demonstrations in postsecondary education

- Specializes in:
  - RCT evaluations
  - Qualitative studies
  - Program enhancement & technical assistance



# CABS

MDRC's Center for Applied Behavioral Science (CABS) uses **behavioral science** to make programs **more effective**



# Agenda

EASE Overview

Barriers to Summer Enrollment & Solutions

Why the EASE Project?

Study Design

A Behavioral Science Approach

Questions

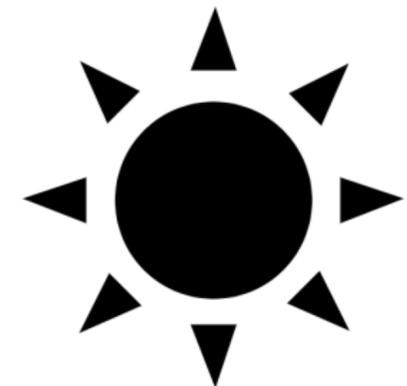
# What is the EASE project?

» Study involving up to 10 Ohio Community Colleges



» Target population:  
» Low-income  
» First-year  
» Enrolled in the Spring

» Increase the number of students who enroll in summer courses



# Why Any Project?



Community college provides a significant pathway to higher earnings and improved employment opportunities.



19% of first-time, full-time students complete a degree within 3 years. 37% of all students complete within 6 years.



14% of the lowest income students (<30k) earned a degree within 6 years; Pell Grant recipients less likely to complete



60% of low-income, first-generation students who drop out of college do so within their first year.

# Why the EASE Project?

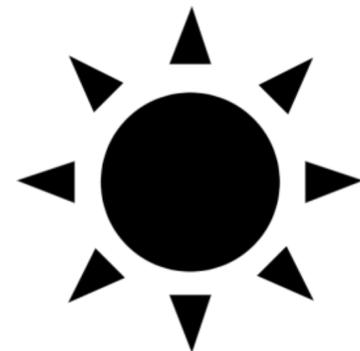
Research finds that students who enroll in summer - especially after their first year - are more likely to:

- » persist
- » graduate within five years



Summer courses could:

- » Bridge gap between spring and fall
- » Mitigate loss of learning
- » Accelerate time to completion



Inform recent policies and proposals:

- » Reinstatement of Third-Term OCOG
- » Proposals for year-round Pell



# Why the EASE Project?

Experimental research conducted by MDRC demonstrates the malleability of students' decision to enroll during the summer



# A Behavioral Science Approach

- Incorporates insights from behavioral science

» Focuses on how people actually make decisions and behave

- » Actions do not reflect intentions
- » Framing matters
- » Small—and often low cost—changes can affect outcomes



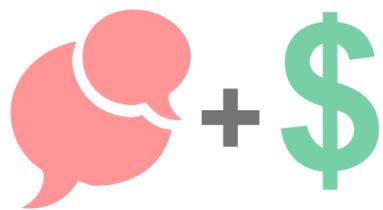
# A Behavioral Science Approach



**Behavioral  
messaging only**



- Low-cost
- Potential to reach large numbers of students
- Easily scalable

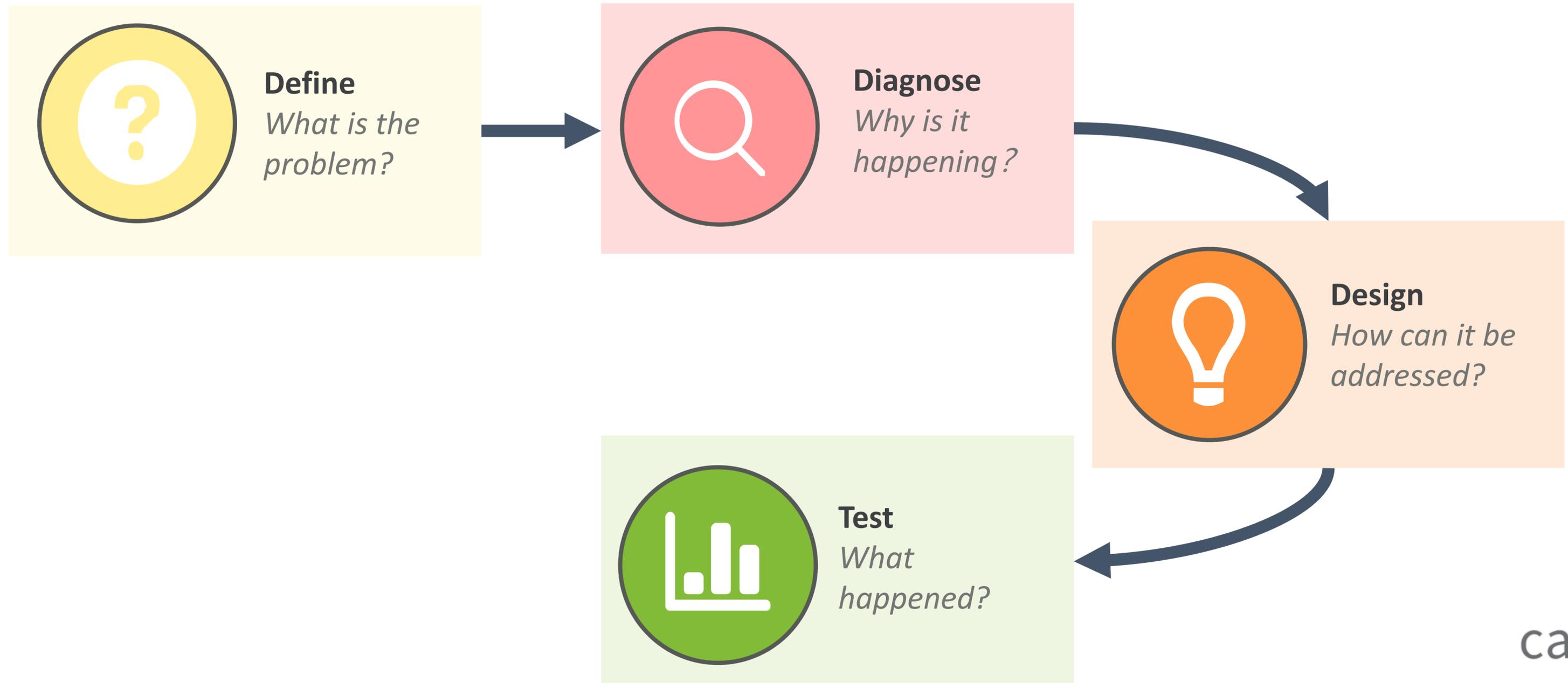


**Behavioral  
messaging + Summer  
Scholar Grant**



- Inform current and proposed state and federal policies

# Behavioral Diagnosis and Design



# Barriers to Summer Enrollment

## Contextual Factors

**1. Institutional Norms and Social Networks**

**2. Paying for Summer Courses**

**3. Degree Planning and Course Decision-Making**

**4. Conflicting Obligations**

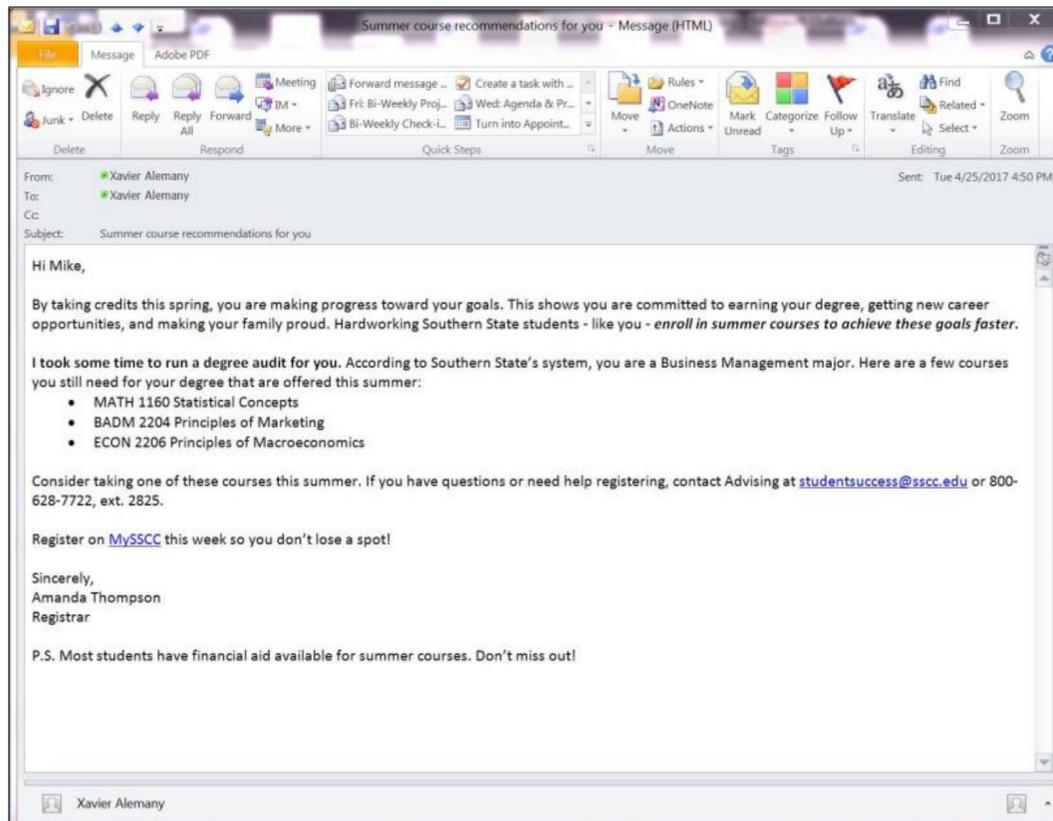
**5. Intention-Action Gap**

# Behavioral Messaging Design

## 8 Emails

## 2 Postcards

## 1 Letter



COLUMBUS STATE  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

[date]

Dear [First Name] [Last Name],

I wanted to follow up on the email I sent you last week with the good news to share! Columbus State has started a new Summer Scholar Grant. You are one of a limited number of students eligible to receive this grant if you enroll in summer classes. This grant will fully cover the cost of your tuition and fees for the Summer 2017 semester.

You do not have to pay back this grant, and you can use it for as many classes as you would like to take this summer. If you do not use your grant this summer, you will lose it next academic year. Don't miss out on this opportunity! You should take at least one summer class, since you have this grant available.

| Grant Name           | Grant Amount                              |
|----------------------|---|
| Summer Scholar Grant | Free tuition and fees for summer classes* |

To use your Summer Scholar Grant:

- If you have not already done so, register for summer classes. We will automatically apply this grant to your summer bill.
- Once you enroll, review your aid package on Financial Aid Self Service. The grant amount listed may be adjusted based on the number of credits you take.

I'm here to help. If you have questions about this award or your financial aid package, visit Student Central in Madison Hall on the Columbus Campus or Student Services in Moeller Hall on the Delaware Campus. We can also be reached at 614-287-5353 or at [summerscholar@csc.edu](mailto:summerscholar@csc.edu).

Sincerely,  
Stephanie Albrecht  
Student Central  
Columbus State Community College

\*Funding is contingent on good Academic and Financial Aid standing. The amount will be adjusted based on the number of credit hours and any remaining Federal Pell Grant or state grant funding. The Summer Scholar Grant can ONLY be used to cover tuition and fees for Summer 2017.

---

STUDENT CENTRAL Columbus Campus Student Central  
Madison Hall  
530 E. Spring St., Columbus, OH 43205  
(614) 287-5353 Fax: (614) 287-4112

COLUMBUS STATE DELAWARE CAMPUS Delaware Campus Student Services  
Moeller Hall  
5300 Concession Dr., Delaware, OH 43015  
(740) 203-6345 Fax: (740) 203-6143

# Barriers to Summer Enrollment

## Contextual Factors

1. Institutional Norms and Social Networks

2. Paying for Summer Courses

3. Degree Planning and Course Decision-Making

4. Conflicting Obligations

5. Intention-Action Gap

# Barrier 2: Paying for Summer Courses



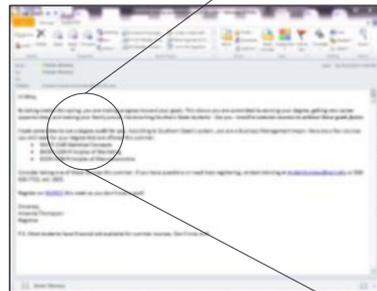
- » Financial aid is complex – few students had the full picture about summer aid
  - » Lengthy letters may confuse or cause students to ignore information
  - » Hassles, such as additional forms, may discourage students from enrolling
- » Lack of financial aid reported as a barrier to summer enrollment

**80%** of students have Pell remaining that could be used during summer



# Solutions: Paying for Summer Courses

- ✓ **Personalize and simplify the information delivery**
  - Efforts to personalize and simplify information, or give students personal assistance through a difficult task can improve outcomes.

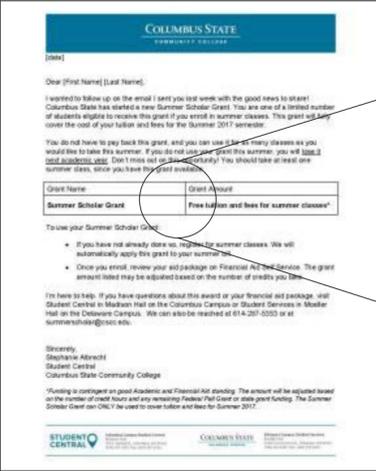


Dear Camielle,

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 \$2,908 from your Pell Grant (which you do not have to pay back) that you can use for summer courses.

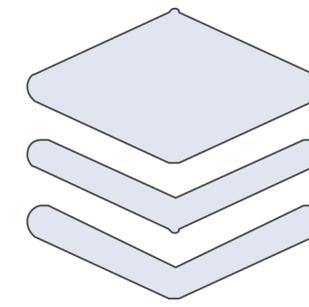
# Solutions: Paying for Summer Courses

✓ Provide financial incentives for those in the scholarship group



| Grant Name           | Grant Amount                              |
|----------------------|---|
| Summer Scholar Grant | Free tuition and fees for summer classes* |

# Barrier 3: Degree Planning and Course Decision-Making



- » Lack of summer course availability
  - » Real and Perceived
- » Students may not know what's available or what to take in summer
- » Summer courses are more difficult
  - » Compressed timeline (8, 10, 12 weeks vs. 16 weeks)

**60-80% of students are part-time**

- So likely do not complete all gen ed requirements in first 1 or 2 semesters

**Summer course pass rates similar to fall & spring<sup>1</sup>**

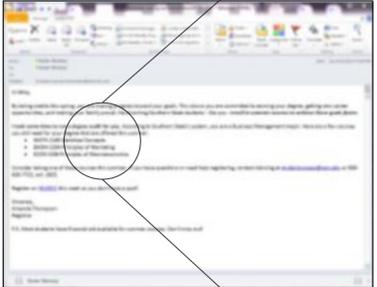
# Solutions: Degree Planning and Course Decision-Making

## ✓ Simplification

- Especially useful in cases where a process is currently complex or tedious, and people are likely to give up before reaching the conclusion or make mistakes.

# Solutions: Degree Planning and Course Decision-Making

» For both groups, highlight key course availability in summer.



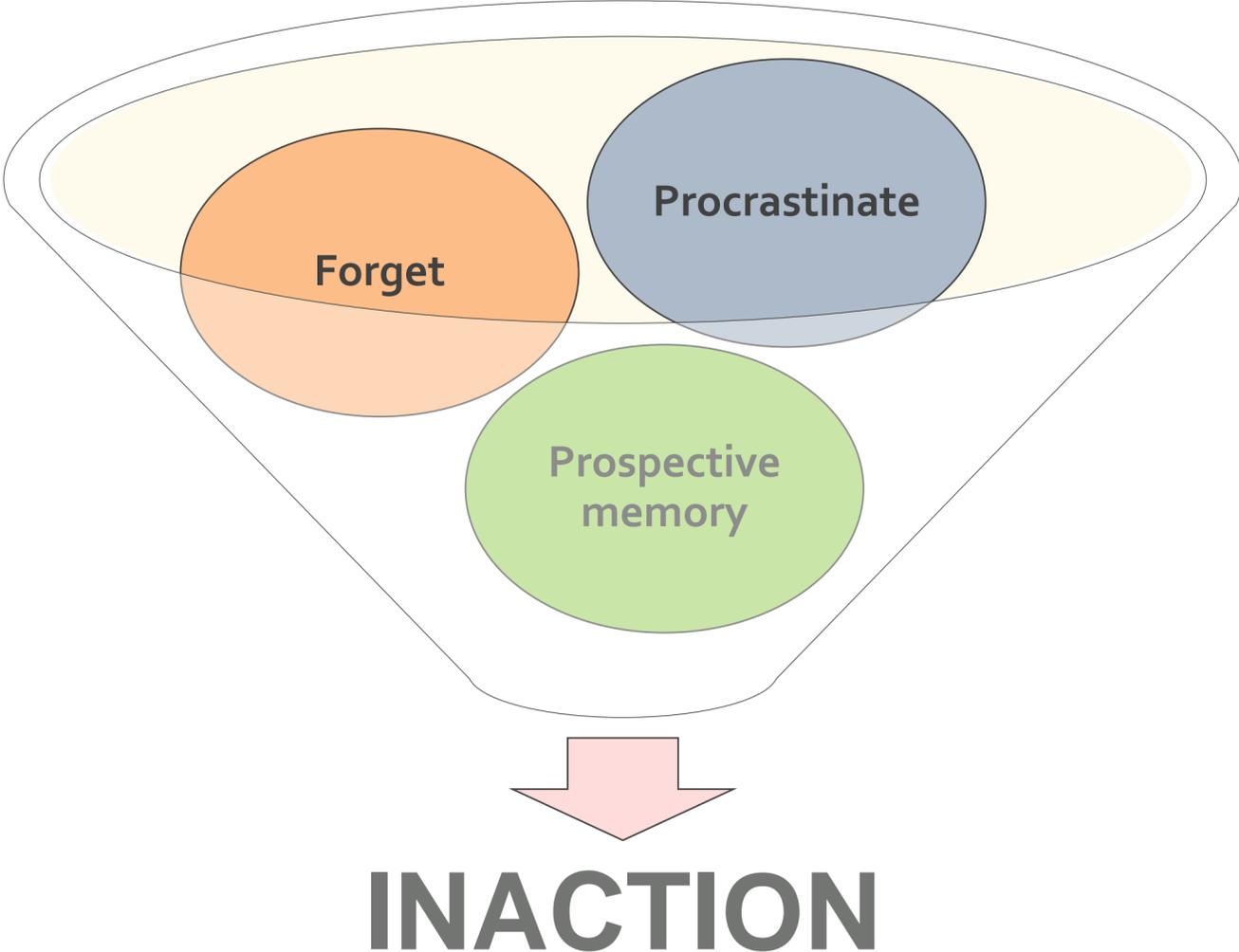
I took some time to run a degree audit for you. According to [redacted] system, you are a Business Management major. Here are a few courses you still need for your degree that are offered this summer:

- MATH 1160 Statistical Concepts
- BADM 2204 Principles of Marketing
- ECON 2206 Principles of Macroeconomics

# Barrier 5: Intention-Action Gap



Students **intend** to enroll next summer



# Solutions: Intention–Action Gap

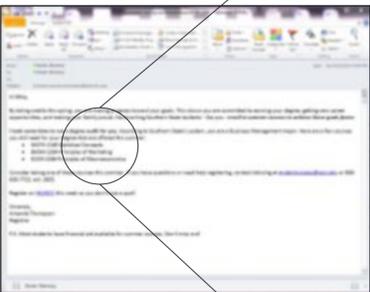
- ✓ **Create Implementation Prompts**
  - Encouraging people to plan the steps they will take to complete a task can move people from intention to action.

# Solutions: Intention–Action Gap

- » For both groups, created implementation prompts to help students plan for registration.

Follow these four steps to enroll in summer classes:

1. Log in to [MyMTC](#)
2. Use your academic plan to find classes that you need to take (click on “View Academic Plan”)
3. Search for Summer 2017 courses (many MTC courses are offered in summer)
  - ❖ Click “Find Courses” and choose the 2017 Summer period
4. Register for your summer classes by going to the “Register” tab



# Contextual Factors

- » Psychology of Scarcity
  - » Having scarce resources (money, time) produce a cognitive bandwidth tax
  - » Constant tradeoffs
  - » Must make higher quality decisions but you're in a worse position to do so.
- » Goal of a Behavioral Intervention

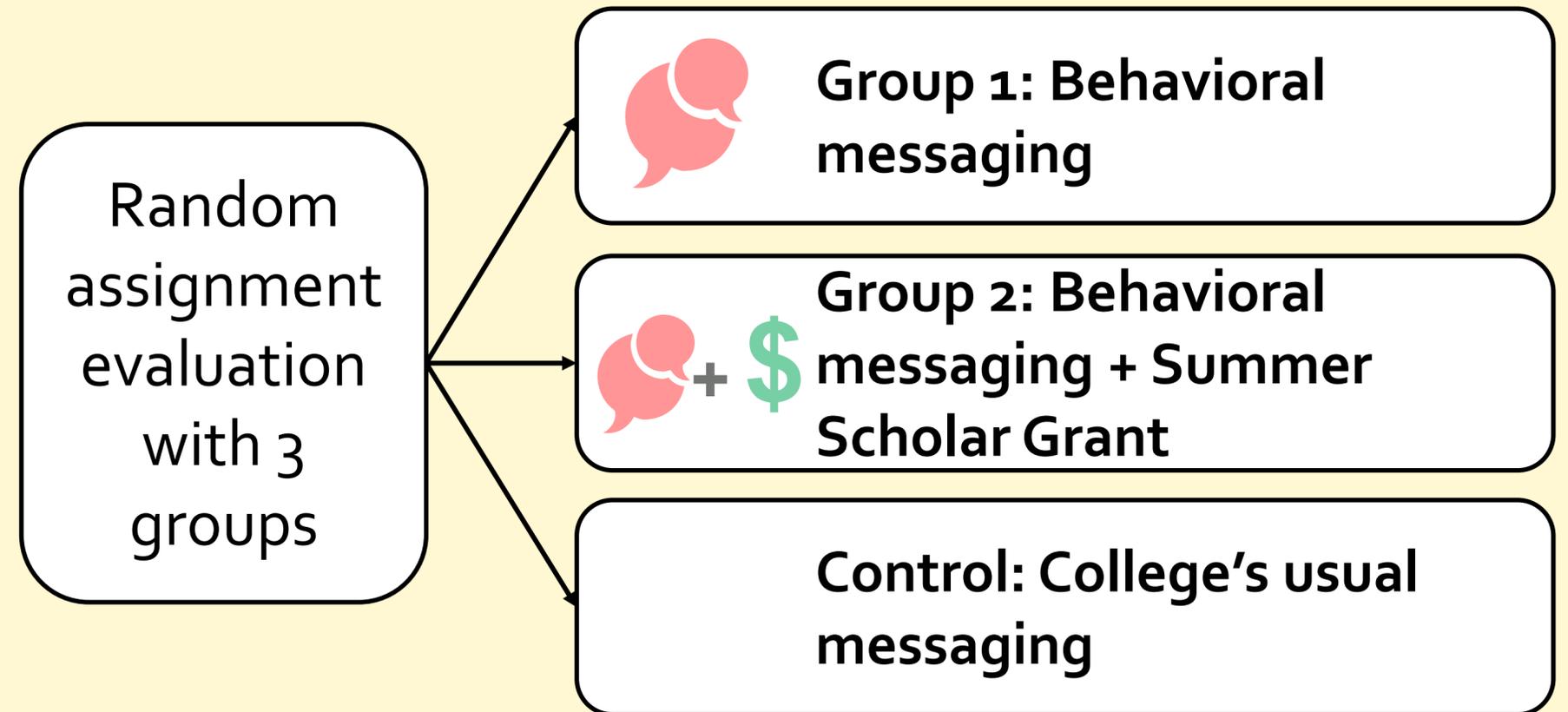
Source: Shafir (2012).



# Study Design

- Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) to build causal evidence

- What is the effect of each EASE intervention on summer enrollment?
- Will increased summer enrollment lead to better academic outcomes?



# Interested?

- EASE Phase II RFP available on OACCC's website.
- Submissions are due to [EASE@MDRC.org](mailto:EASE@MDRC.org) **by Monday, May 15, 12PM EST**

Don't miss out on this opportunity to participate in a **national evaluation**, potentially **increase summer enrollment and graduation rates**, receive **funding** to support research efforts, AND **full support for Summer Scholar Grants**