

# SUMMER (MELT) IS ALMOST HERE!

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# Why Summer??

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- Summer 2011
- The tale of two projects
  - US Department of Education's FAFSA Completion Project
    - 20 of the largest urban school districts in the US
    - Albuquerque
  - Summer Transition to College Project
    - Providence, RI
    - Boston, MA
    - Fulton County, GA

# FAFSA Completion



Logo Branding



Summit



Media Coverage

## Counselor Training



## Community Partnerships



Trusted Centers



Student Involvement

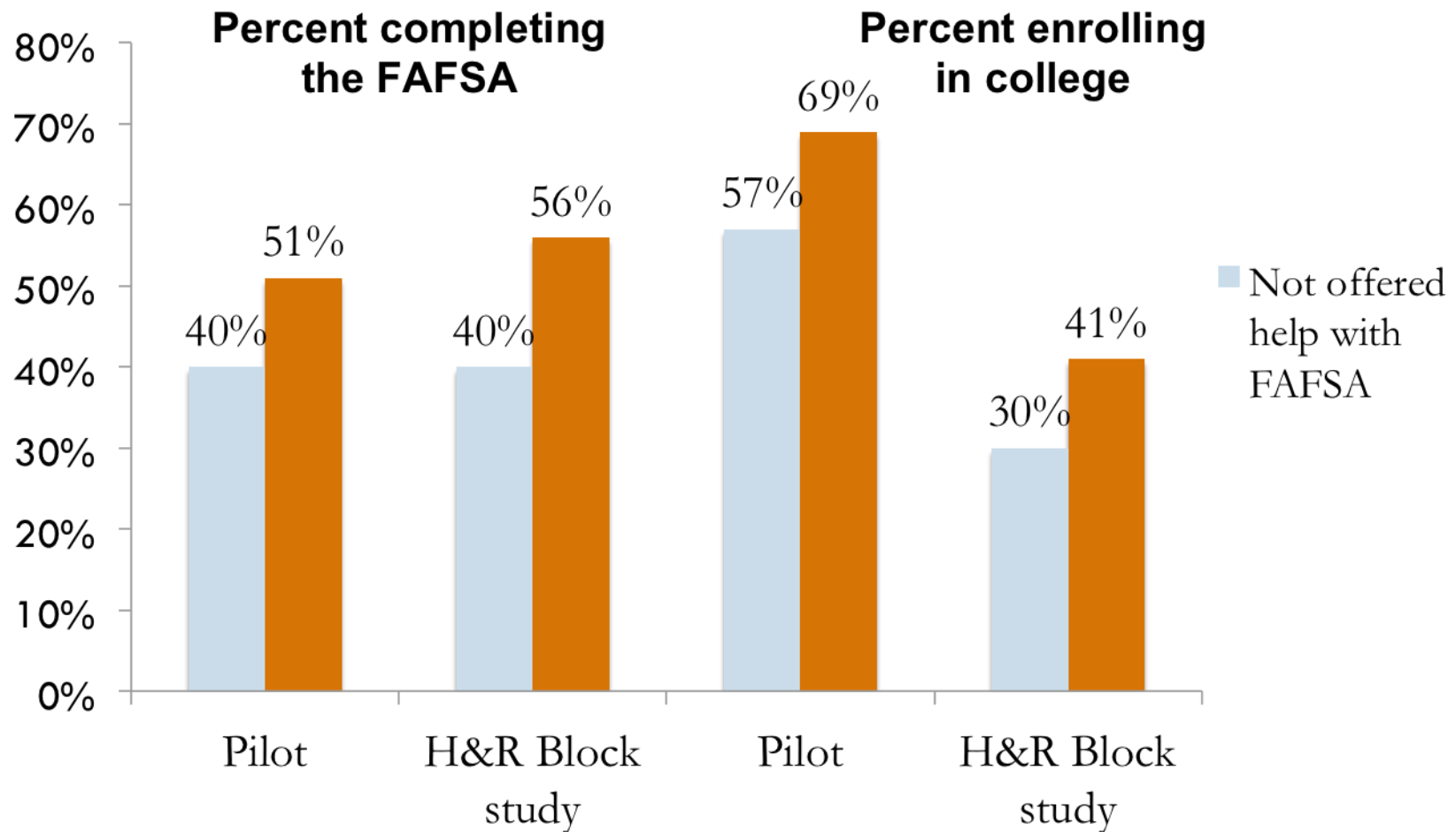


# Year to Year Overall FAFSA Results

Outcome	FAFSA Completion	FAFSA Initiation	College Enrollment
Treatment Effect	.103*** (.01)	.067*** (.01)	.117*** (.01)
2010 rate	.402 (.01)	.567 (.01)	.576 (.01)
N	8655	8655	8655

\*\*\*  $p < .001$

# Comparison to \*H&R Block Study



\*H&R Block Study – (Bettinger, Long, Oreopoulos & Sanbonmatsu, 2012)

# The concept of summer melt

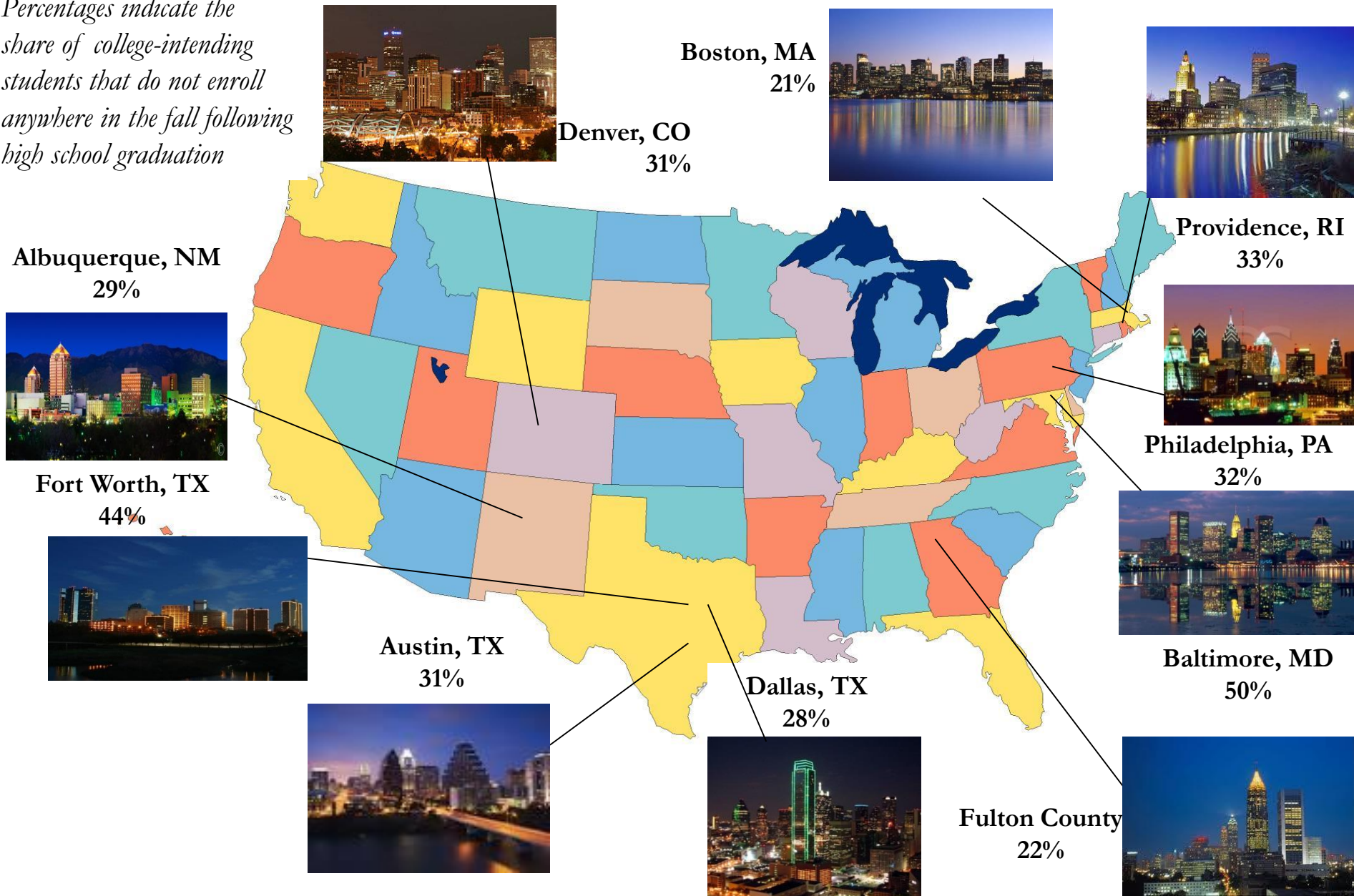
*Summer melt* is a term traditionally used by college admissions officers to describe the phenomenon that students pay a deposit to attend a particular college but do not matriculate *at that college* the following fall.

Here, *summer melt* describes the phenomenon that college-intending students fail to enroll in college *at all* in the fall following high school graduation.



# Magnitude of the Summer Melt Problem

*Percentages indicate the share of college-intending students that do not enroll anywhere in the fall following high school graduation*



# Determining Melt Rates

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- Step 1: Determine which of your graduating students intend to go to college in the fall after high school graduation.
  - ▣ Senior Exit Surveys
  - ▣ Transcript Requests
  - ▣ School Counselor Surveys
  - ▣ Collaborate with Colleges Directly



# Step 2

- Determine how many of your students actually enroll in college in the fall after high school graduation.
  - National Student Clearinghouse (NSC)
    - Individual enrollment records from NSC
    - School level postsecondary enrollment records
  - Work with local higher ed institutions

# Step 3

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- Calculate your summer melt rate

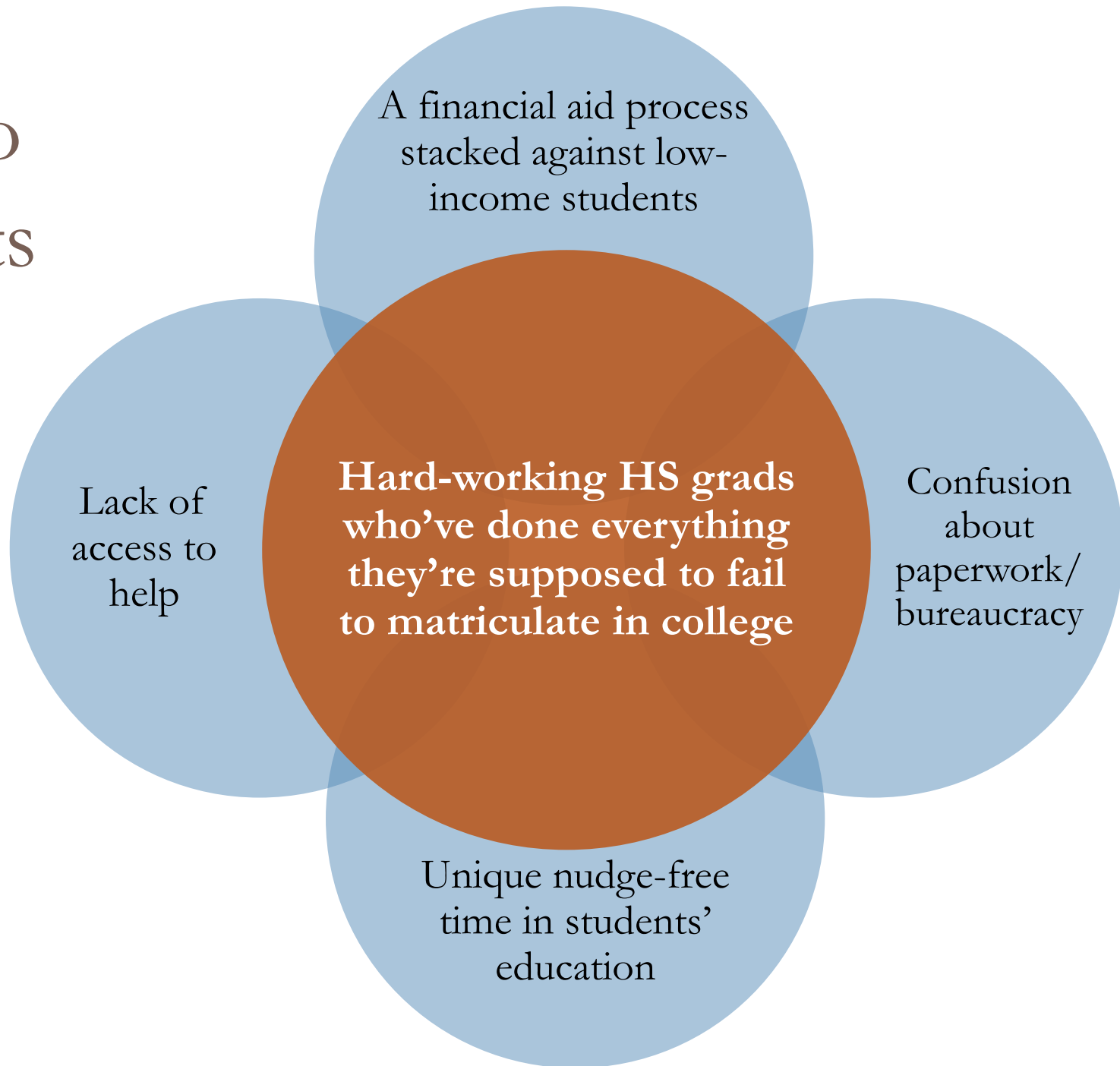
$$100 \times \left( 1 - \frac{\text{Number of enrolled students}}{\text{Number of college-intending students}} \right) = \text{percent of students "melting"}$$

# Guiding Questions

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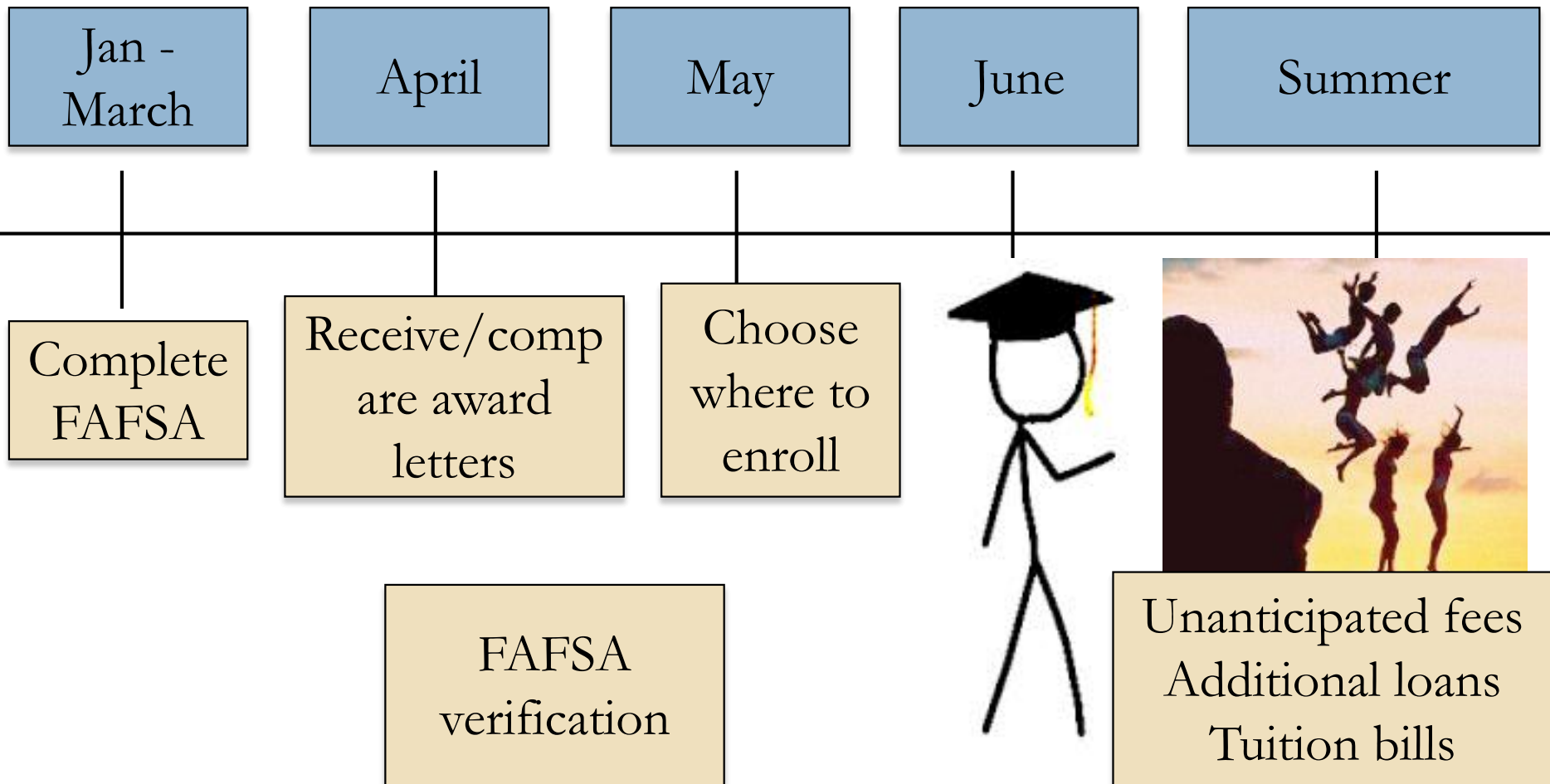
- *How prevalent is summer melt in your schools?*
- *Why are students in Region One choosing to forgo their college dreams?*
- *When might summer attrition be a good thing?*

# Why do students melt?



# Financial aid timing: design vs. reality

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# Why do students melt? A lack of access to support

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Low-income, 1<sup>st</sup> generation college going



Middle-income, college-educated family



# Summer Hurdles



- Understanding financial aid award letters
- FAFSA verification
- Financial aid gap
- Family and friends not supportive
- Forms, fees, deadlines
- Housing
- Orientation
- Health insurance, vaccinations
- Haven't started



# Guiding Questions

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- *How do the national research findings match-up with what you are seeing with your students?*
- *How do the national research findings differ?*

# Strategies to reduce summer melt

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## **Counselor Outreach:**

Counselors reached out to students to offer help with financial aid, required paperwork, and social-emotional issues

## **Peer mentor outreach:**

Peers in college reached out to offer advice and help navigating summer barriers

## **Online Platforms and Text messages:**

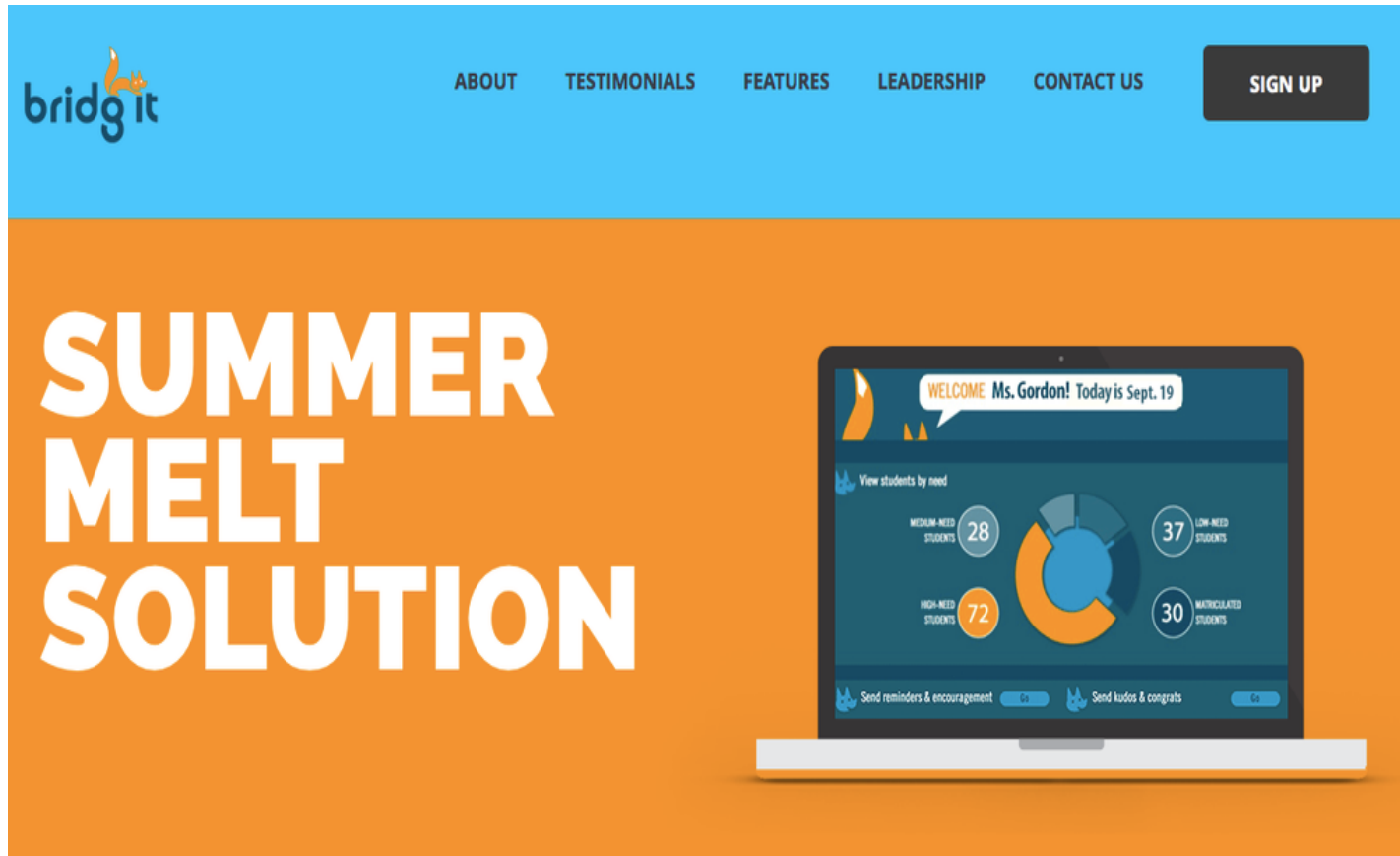
Personalized texts reminding students of tasks to complete at their intended college

## **Virtual Advising:**

Personalized advising via text messages

Over 150,000 students  
Participating across interventions and sites

# Adaptive online platform to increase counselors' capacity to mitigate summer melt



*Bridgit2college.com*

# What is Bridgit?

Bridgit is an online software that helps organizations get their college-admitted students out of the matriculation maze and into their college classrooms. The more students there are on an organization's caseload, the more Bridgit frees up time for meaningful advising.

## How does Bridgit work?

Students answer questions about their college choice and their progress toward matriculation focusing on steps that, uncompleted, will halt matriculation for 90 percent of students. Bridgit then sends this information back to counselors as actionable data, so they know immediately where to begin and with whom.

## Why is Bridgit receiving accolades?

Features in Bridgit such as texting, in-system messaging, a resource library, communication logs and 24/7 connectivity earned it the global Outsystems Innovation Award of 2014. More importantly, Bridgit's clean, intuitive design earned it a place in the hearts of HS and college access organizations (including NCAN members!) that worked passionately to help 1,500 low-income students achieve their college dreams.

# Three Evaluation Sites

- Shelby County Schools – Memphis, TN
- College Connections Center – Kansas City, MO
- St. Louis Graduates and Ferguson Florissant School Districts – St. Louis, MO



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# LEADERSHIP IN EVALUATION

## Evaluators

Next spring, you can look out for an evaluation on Bridgit by preeminent summer melt researchers and professors Ben Castleman, Lindsay Page, and Laura Owen.

They'll be writing about how Bridgit performed in high schools and college access organizations by using longitudinal data, a random control trial and qualitative information from students and counselors.



Ben Castleman  
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA



Laura Owen  
SAN DIEGO STATE



Lindsay Page  
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

# Graduate Student Participation

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- School Counseling graduate students traveled to Memphis, TN, St. Louis, MO, and Kansas City, MO
- They interviewed principals, school counselors and college advisors on their experience using Bridgit.
- They transcribed the interviews and participated in all aspects of the coding and analysis





# Memphis, TN

- Bridgit was implemented by site specific counselors and district counselors in select high schools within the Shelby County School District
- During the spring semester, surveys were administered to students by counselors. The results provided counselors with necessary information to properly support students with their transition from high school to college
- Support was provided to students via phone or in person based on student preference and need

# Kansas City

## College Connections Center

- Created to assist students who may fall victim of *Summer Melt*
- First summer melt center in the Kansas City Metro area
- Funding from The Greater Kansas City Community Foundation
- Space provided in-kind by the Metropolitan Community College System
- Model after the High School2College Center in St. Louis

# College Connections Center 2014

- Located at MCC – Penn Valley Campus, Humanities Building 029
- Opened June 2 – August 1, 2014
  - Monday – Friday 10AM-3PM, Wednesday 5PM-7PM, Saturday 11AM-2PM
  - 30 hours per week
- No-cost to students and families
- Marketed to the 105 high schools (public, private, and charter) in a five-county area of Missouri and Kansas

# Service Provided

- Students received FREE individualized assistance on the college-going process from certified high school counselors, college & university financial aid staff
- Students could meet with admission representatives from colleges and universities frequently attended by Kansas City metro students
- Center volunteers called MCAC advisees who recently graduated high school over the summer and provided assistance with the college going process over the phone

# Service Provided

- Assist students with the FAFSA
- Complete housing & orientation application
- Navigate through the financial aid award letter and identifying other possible financial assistance
- Provide information on financial aid and answer questions about types of aid
- Complete the admission process for those who have not applied yet
- Help students register for placement test for college; i.e. - COMPASS
- Answering general questions regarding college

# Volunteer Demographics

- 13 certified high school counselors worked at the Center
- 13 college access professionals from Kauffman Scholars and MCAC
- 11 campuses were represented among financial aid experts and admissions reps who volunteered at the Center

# Quantitative Findings

- Overall impact of Bridgit on on-time college enrollment between 3-4 percentage points
- 9 percentage point increase for 2-year institutions
- 5 percentage point decrease for 4-year institutions





# Text messaging to mitigate summer melt

- **The text intervention consisted of 10 messages:**
  - FAFSA and financial aid award letters
  - Orientation, placement tests, and housing
  - Tuition bill and health insurance



Hi Alex! have you signed up for the UM-Boston orientation? Last one is [7/15](#). Need to register? <http://1233433.org>. Need help? Reply to talk w/ an advisor.



Hi Alex! Need help w/ the FAFSA? Questions about your fin. aid award letter, or need more aid? Reply to meet with a DISD counselor

# Text messages: A behavioral multivitamin?

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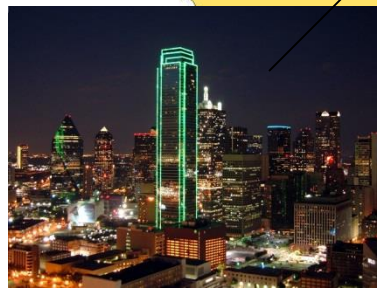
- *Reduce complexity*: Messages provide students with consolidated and timely bursts of information
- *Reduce hassles*: Task-specific web links allow students to complete a task in the moment
- *Combat procrastination*: Messages prompt students to deal with a task in the present
- *Identity priming*: Personalized college info makes students think of themselves as college material
- *Reduce barriers to professional assistance*: Getting help is as simple as responding to a text

# Summer 2012 text messaging intervention: Sites

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- Partner sites collected cell #s and intended college at the end of HS
- College-intending seniors randomly assigned to receive texts or to control
- Parents also messaged where possible

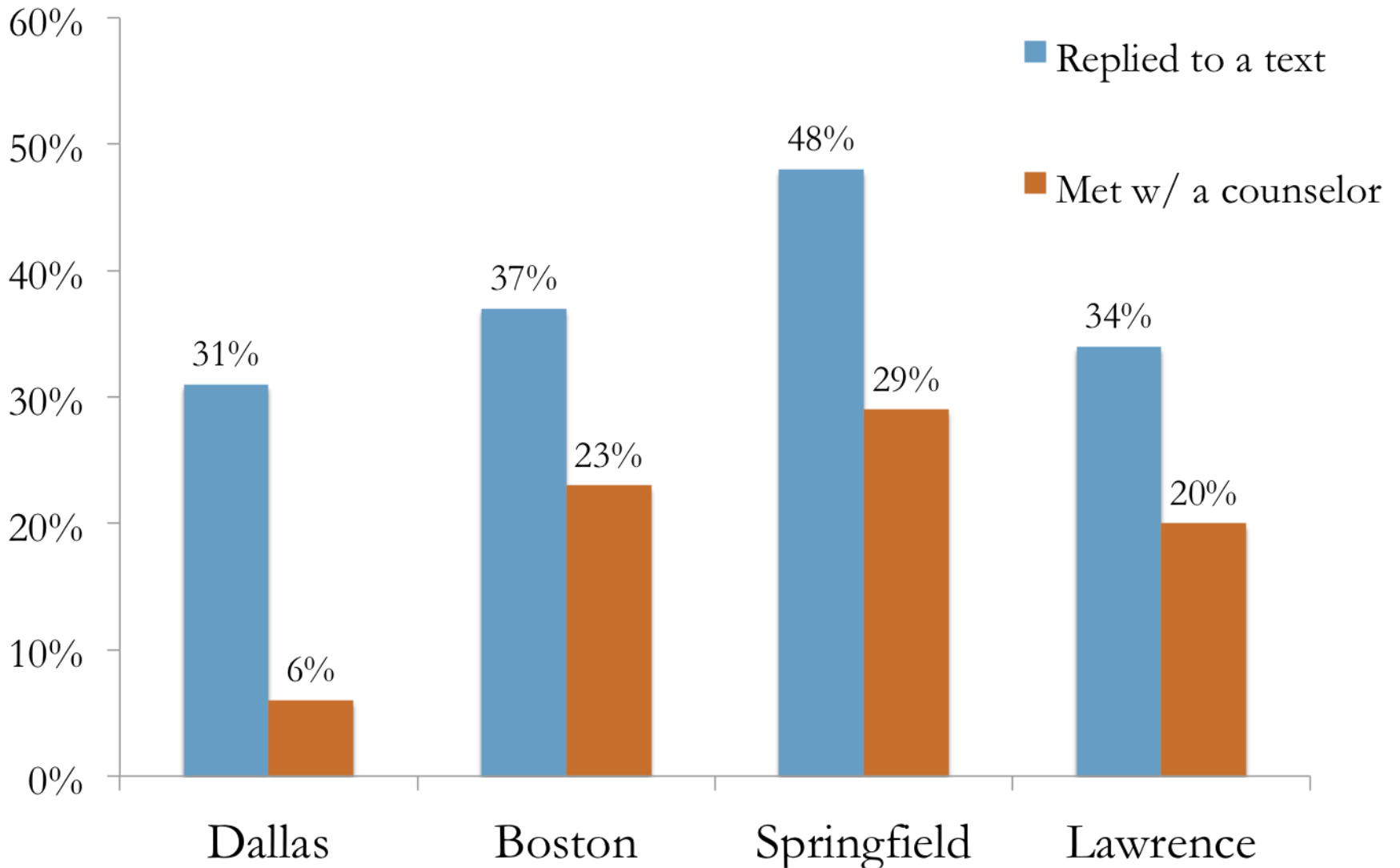
**uAspire college  
access organization:**  
Boston, Lawrence, and  
Springfield, MA



**Dallas Independent School District**  
Dallas, TX

# Text message response and meeting rates

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# Example text responses

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**July 2:** “Awwww! Thank you so much!”

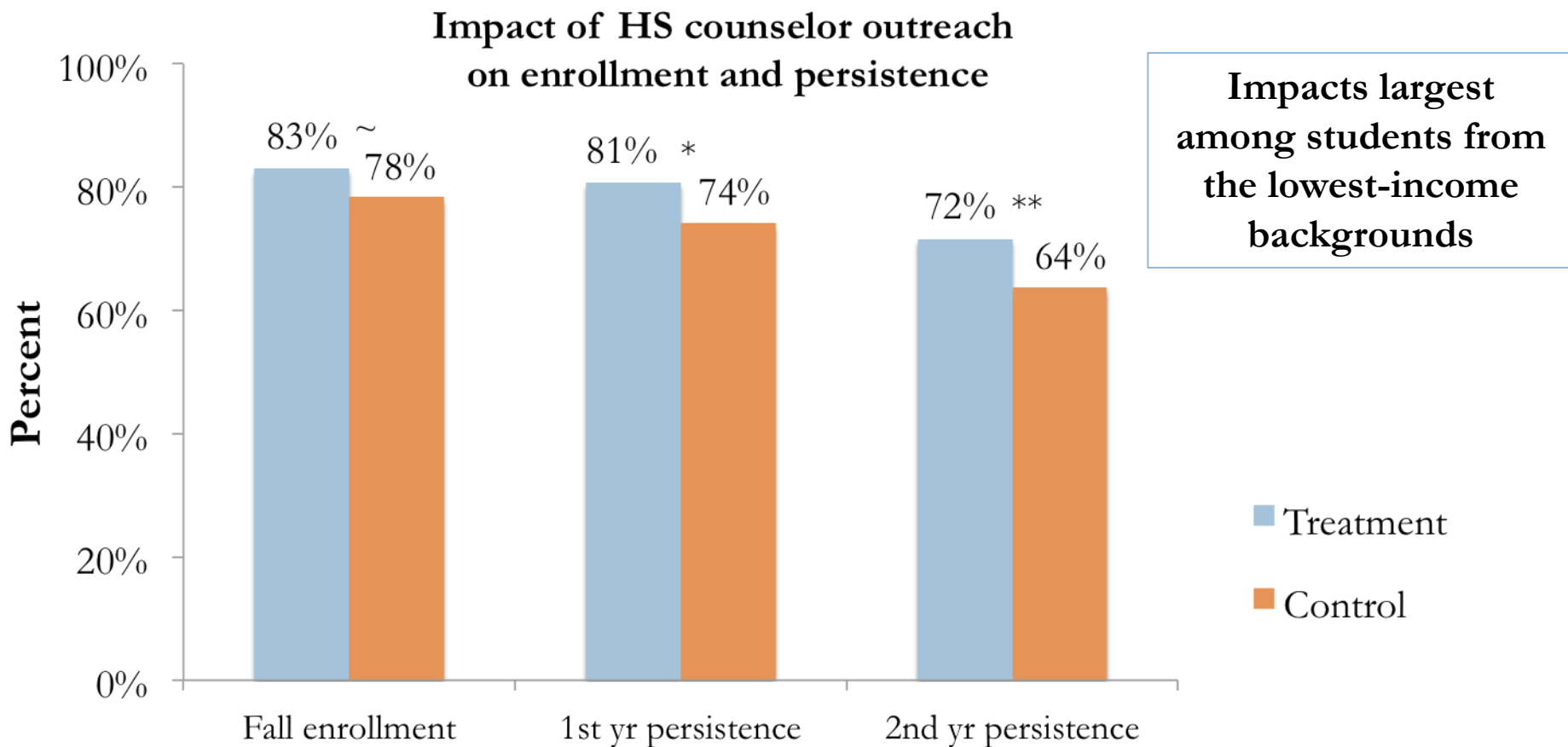
**July 2:** “Who’s this?”

**July 8:** “Oh hey! You couldn’t text me at a better time! I was wondering if I can make an appointment with you...I need to update my financial aid with the 2011 tax forms and I don’t know how to do it. I need your help!”

**Fewer than four percent of students or parents opted out of the text messaging campaign**

# Summer counselor outreach: Improved enrollment & persistence

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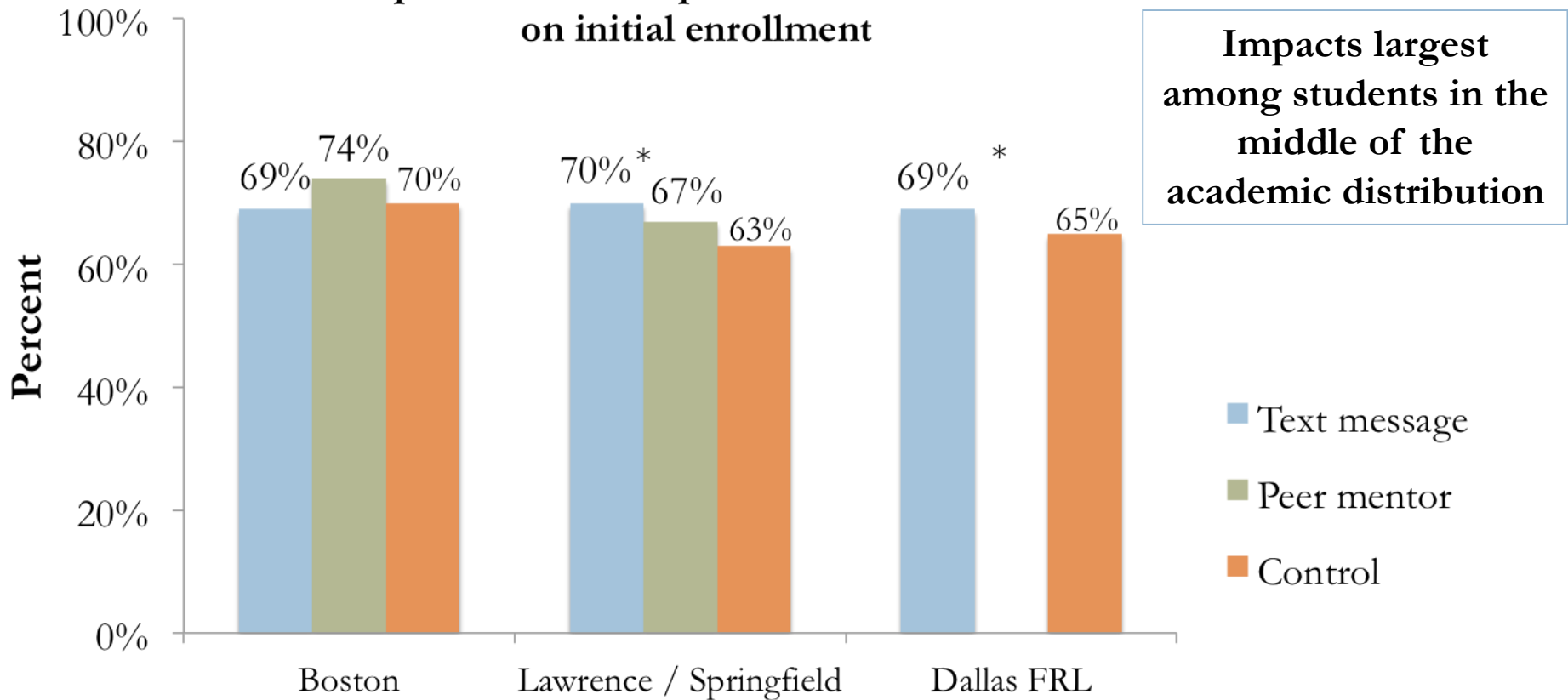


- Levels of statistical significance: ~  $p < 0.10$  \*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*  $p < 0.01$

# Text & peer mentor outreach: Increased enrollment among students with little college planning support

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### Impact of text and peer mentor outreach on initial enrollment



• Levels of statistical significance: ~ p < 0.10 \* p < 0.05 \*\* p < 0.01

# Qualitative student feedback on the texts

The text messages...

Percent of respondents who felt each statement was true

Got me to complete a task I hadn't yet done

**86%**

Informed me about something I hadn't realized I needed to do

**86%**

Helped me manage my time better

**75%**

Got me to reach out to a uAspire advisor for help

**72%**



# San Diego – Gear Up Program “Destination College” Center

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- SDSU school counseling graduate students volunteered 10 hours each during summer (2015)
- 2016 SDSU school counseling graduate students volunteered 40 hours each
- Graduate students quickly recognize the tasks that students need help with earlier in the year



# Scaling text-based outreach statewide

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Text message campaign for high school seniors & parents (January – August) on college-transition topics:

- Financial aid & scholarship applications
- Evaluation of admissions offers
- College selection
- College transition / summer melt

Messages are reaching 4000+ DE seniors & nearly 400 DE parents

Approximately half of message recipients responded to at least one message.

*Lindsay Page and Ben Castleman*

# Research design

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- Differences-in-differences with matched-comparison schools drawn from proximal states (MD, NJ, PA)
- Treatment: 32 DE public high schools
- Comparison:
  - ▣ 1:1 nearest-neighbor matched schools
  - ▣ Matching variables:
    - Racial / ethnic makeup
    - 12<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment
    - Share of students receiving free- or reduced-price school meals
    - March, April & June 2014 FAFSA submission rates



# Example responses

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- Now that I have decided which school I will go to, how do I go about beginning my enrollment?
- **I'm pregnant and due in November – does Del Tech have online classes I could take?**
- Is it okay that I'm scared for college?
- **Should I pick a school based on cost or the better major?**
- I haven't heard back from FAFSA – any way you can help me sort that out?
- **I have a felony conviction – do I have any options to go to college? I made the honor roll this semester. Have a nice evening.**
- Hi. Thank you for the text because we actually don't really know what we are doing. Unfortunately, we are not receiving a financial aid package and we are trying to line up some student loans. Does university of delaware require a deposit by May 1 and if so, how much are we required to pay? Thank you.

# Cost-effectiveness of text message intervention

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<b>Program</b>	<b>Intervention Design</b>	<b>Cost per participant</b>	<b>First fall semester enrollment impact</b>
Summer text interventions	Personalized text reminders of important tasks	\$7 or lower	Up to 7 %age points for students w/ little college planning
Summer 2011 counseling RCTs	Proactive outreach from financial aid advisors to help with summer tasks	\$150	5 - 8 %age points
H&R Block FAFSA Completion experiment	Help with the FAFSA as part of tax prep.	\$88	8 %age points
New Hampshire college mentor intervention	1:1 mentoring from college students and appl. fee waivers	\$500	12%age points for females

# Extensions earlier and later in college process

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## Application & choice

- Proactive outreach & support for college search and applications
- Personalized prompts to complete FAFSA and income verification

## Transition

- Assess comparative benefit of *personal* outreach from a counselor to *personalized* outreach via text messaging
- Collaboration with College Bound STL to evaluate an adaptive online platform to increase counselors' capacity to mitigate summer melt
- Collaboration with college access organizations and counseling students to address summer melt

## Persistence & success

- Encouragement to renew FAFSA and maintain financial aid
- Prompts to: make use of academic & social support services; meet with advisor during academic year; and get involved with campus-based organization

# Group Work

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- *Which of these interventions has promise for successful implementation and impact in Region One schools?*
- *What other interventions and approaches are of interest?*
- *What are reasonable first steps to address summer melt in your schools?*

# Tips to Address Summer Melt

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- Be proactive, and take initiative to address summer melt and the tasks needed for on-time matriculation.
- Calculate your school's summer melt rate.
- Disaggregate the data to determine if there are groups melting at higher rates than others.
- Design interventions to reach out to college-intending students
- Pay particular attention to first-generation, low-income students.



# Tips to Address Summer Melt

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- Connect students and parents to web-based resources that demonstrate the importance of financial aid and FAFSA completion
- Provide workshops and hands-on assistance to students and their families in completing the FAFSA form.
- Schedule FAFSA completion events before major deadlines.

# Tips to Address Summer Melt

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- Advocate for extending contracts to include summer months to support students who need help at a vital time when the school is typically closed and support services are not available.
- Administer a student exit survey to gather contact information and the most current student information.

# Tips to Address Summer Melt

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- Be creative and flexible when addressing barriers and concerns.
  - One school counselor met with students at Starbucks because that was a place they could meet when the school wasn't open.
  - Another school counselor shifted his hours toward the evening to accommodate student work schedules.
  - One school counselor helped a parent rent a car to drive a large group of students to freshman orientation.

# Tips to Address Summer Melt

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- Build collaborative relationships with others who are also committed to addressing summer melt.
- Organize a meeting, and invite stakeholders invested in increasing college opportunity in your community.
- Determine overlap and shared work areas to provide a seamless array of student supports.
- Bring in organizations specializing in areas of need (i.e. College Goal Sunday to help with FAFSA completion events)

# Tips to Address Summer Melt

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- Set up meetings with local colleges and universities, and advocate for student needs.
- Work with community organizations, business organizations, higher ed institutions, faculty/administration, parents and students to address issues and concerns.
- Utilize the faith-based community to help dispel the myths around college admissions and financial aid.

# Tips to Address Summer Melt

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- Coordinate with parent, business and community partners to deliver a seamless stream of resources supporting students through the college-going process.
- Find resourceful ways to address barriers and concerns.
- Provide workshops and office hours at varied times to accommodate parent schedules.
- Translate FAFSA and college admissions information into appropriate languages.

# Tips to Address Summer Melt

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- Offer translation services for meetings as needed.
- Connect students and parents to college-access resources.
- Ensure all students at every grade level are provided with adequate and appropriate supports in preparation for their transition out of high school.
- Become well-versed and knowledgeable regarding financial aid and college admissions preparation.
- Ensure all students at every grade level are provided with adequate and appropriate supports in preparation for their transition out of high school.

# Tips to Address Summer Melt

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- Ask for continued professional development to stay up to date and prepared for your role in college and career counseling
- Attend school counselor workshops provided by local colleges and college-focused organizations.
- Partner with higher education institutions to evaluate your school counseling programs, interventions and curriculum to determine outcomes and discover best practices.



# Tips to Address Summer Melt

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- Advocate to remove nonessential, non-school-counseling duties from your schedule so you can provide more direct services to all students.
- Measure the impact of activities, and share results.
- Measure impact of interventions on college enrollment.
- Report results of summer-melt interventions to stakeholders.

# Thank you!

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