ideas42

Adult Enrollment Design Guide

Strategies to Help Adults (re)Enroll in College

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About ideas42

We're a non-profit looking for deep insights into human behavior—into why people do what they do—and using that knowledge in ways that help improve millions of lives, build better systems, and drive social change. Working globally, we reinvent the practices of institutions, and create better products and policies that can be scaled for maximum impact.

For more than a decade, we've been at the forefront of applying behavioral science in the real world. We create innovative solutions to tough problems, ultimately striving to generate lasting social impact and create a future where the universal application of behavioral science powers a world with optimal health, equitable wealth, and environments and systems that are sustainable and just for all.

We are committed to putting our expertise to work in the world of higher education. Our aim is to help more people, particularly those from historically underrepresented groups, efficiently obtain quality post-secondary degrees or credentials that improve their economic well-being. We work in close partnership with colleges and universities, college success non-profits, foundations, and others to design and test innovations, as well as help others build their capacity to use behavioral approaches in their own work.

We've worked on over 55 projects aimed at helping students persist through their post-secondary journey. Our seminal paper Nudging for Success details the results of 16 interventions we designed in higher education, each of which successfully tackled the subtle, invisible barriers that hinder college completion. Our actionable, easy-to-use practitioner's guide, Nudges, Norms, and New Solutions offers 13 evidence-based interventions that can be put to work to help students access, succeed in, and pay for college.

We want to hear from you—contact us at education@ideas42.org with questions.

Visit our website and follow @ideas42 on Twitter to learn more about our work.

Introduction

States across the country are seeking to increase college attainment among their residents, and for good reason: College degrees create significant economic opportunity for both the degree-holders and their communities. But reaching these college attainment goals will be impossible if states focus only on graduating high school students; increasing degree attainment among adults is essential as well. Lumina Foundation has provided vital support to this effort and, beginning in late 2020, brought ideas42 into this conversation as well. Specifically, ideas42 has sought to understand what motivates adults to enroll in college, the supports they need, and how to address any challenges that stand in their way. This guide aims to contribute to that conversation.

At ideas42, we work on behavioral problems, or gaps between peoples' intentions (what they want to do) and their actions (what they do in practice). College enrollment is one such behavioral problem: Many adults want to go to college, but not all of them follow through on that intention. Over the last year we have explored what might be standing in their way, and came up with behaviorally-informed design ideas to address those specific challenges.

ideas42 always begins our work by carefully defining the behavioral problem we want to tackle. In this case, we identified the following issue: ***Too many adults who want to go (back) to school fail to successfully enroll in a good-fit program. We want them to persist through the enrollment process at a program that best meets their needs.***

We set out to understand why this problem was occurring or, more specifically, what was preventing these adults from returning to school. Through structured interviews with adult learners at two-year schools, we identified five main behavioral barriers to enrollment:

- *__Lack of external stimulus:__* Even when adults intend to enroll in college, they may not follow through unless an external event or person pushes them to do so.

- *__(Im)plausible pathways:__* Many adults don't understand how college could fit into their lives without clear, relatable examples.

- *__Money matters:__* Many adults are unaware of the many ways to pay for college or inaccurately believe they would not qualify for financial aid.

- *__Hassles:__* Prospective adult students, many of whom are questioning whether college is right for them, can be derailed by seemingly small hurdles, inconveniences, or administrative hassles in the enrollment process.

- *__Lack of reliable support:__* Many adults need reliable and accessible help navigating enrollment processes and may give up when they don't receive it.

Finally, with these behavioral barriers in mind, we developed a range of intervention concepts that higher education professionals like you can tailor to fit your two or four-year college context based on the barriers to enrollment you'd most like to tackle, your level of resources, constraints, and your school's priorities. Our hope is that the ideas shared in this guide will serve as a starting point for you as you work to overcome the barriers that exist in your school and increase adult enrollment or re-enrollment in your own community.

Part One of this guide provides 35 high-level design ideas that we hope will inspire you as you think about increasing adult enrollment. These ideas span four distinct topics, namely:

Reaching prospective students:
What are effective ways to connect with adults,
and how might this depend on the target population?

Messaging and themes:
How can communications be designed to resonate
with prospective adult students?

Pre-enrollment supports:
What can be done to sustain adult interest and drive
enrollment among those interested in your program?

Internal capacity building:
What in-house tools and services do you need
to support all of the above activities?

For each of these topics, we provide a number of design recommendations, organized by common themes. We also highlight which behavioral barriers each recommendation seeks to address, who could work together to make it happen,[i] and how difficult it may be to implement. In some instances, we also call out ideas that have been tried by schools or school systems already. We present the recommendations following the order of this framework because we think it's helpful to consider the activities in this order.

Because the ideas presented here are in no way exhaustive or tailored for your particular context, **Part Two** of this guide takes a step back and offers thoughts about how you might begin to design an implementation strategy within your own state, two-year, and/or four-year college, as well as ways that you might combine ideas to more effectively combat the behavioral barriers to enrollment most common among your specific student population.

We hope these ideas are helpful, and would welcome the opportunity to hear if they resonate with you! Please contact us at education@ideas42.org if you would like to discuss any of them further.

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[i] Many of the ideas in this guide require collaboration between organizations or departments to successfully design, tailor, and implement them. As you solidify your strategy, consider which departments or stakeholders at your school are best positioned to understand the problem, why it is occurring, and how to work together to ensure the most effective change. For each idea, we list some relevant departments to highlight how this work goes beyond just the responsibility of the admissions office.

»PART ONE
DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, we present 35 high-level design recommendations that span four distinct topics: reaching prospective students, messaging and themes, pre-enrollment supports, and internal capacity building. Within each category, recommendations are organized by common themes. Interspersed throughout you'll find references to ideas that schools have already implemented, along with links to more detail about what they did in practice, where available. For a condensed summary of all of our design ideas, see Appendix A.

How to read a design recommendation

Design recommendation

Peer Supports

9 **Develop a Peer Mentoring Program**

Description of idea

Enlist current and former adult learners to provide relatable guidance to their potential peers; this advice could address enrollment concerns as well as broader issues around balancing school with adults' other responsibilities. This might inclu

Ideal entities to implement change

Implementation suggestions

▸ Assigning adults who have i[n]
peer mentor with a similar ba[ckground]

▸ Providing peer mentors with FAQ answers and a script for certain topics that they should cover with their mentees, training on various enrollment-related topics like financial aid and registration, and broader guidance on effective relationship building, facilitation and providing feedback

▸ Compensating peer mentors in the form of wages (perhaps work-study), micro-credentials, or with other incentives

▸ Encouraging peer mentors to follow up with their mentees before any key deadlines in the enrollment process

How the idea has been used

In Practice
Nudge4 and ideas42 are currently working with two community colleges in Tennessee to test the impact of a peer mentoring program for enrolled adult learners. Around 10 mentors at each college have a caseload of about 30 adult students (some new to college, some with previous credits, some continuing students) who are all in their first year of receiving the Tennessee Reconnect scholarship. Mentors reach out on a weekly basis to share college resources and conduct virtual meetings with mentees to help them meet academic and personal goals. Follow up with us at education@ideas42.org for more information.

Barriers

Behavioral barriers addressed by idea

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Continuing Education
Student Affairs

Relevant departments

Effort level

Difficulty in making the idea a reality

See key on page 5

Symbol key

Behavioral Barriers

➡ Lack of External Stimulus

⤬ (Im)Plausible Pathways

$ Money Matters

⚠ Hassles

❓ Lack of Reliable Support

Implementers

🎓 One College

⚙ College System/Consortium

🤝 Partnership

Effort Levels

▮▯▯▯▯▯▯▯▯ Low Touch

▮▮▮▮▯▯▯▯▯ Medium Touch

▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▯ High Touch

REACHING PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

The recommendations in this section focus on how you might connect with more prospective adult learners to build awareness of your college programs, considering both digital and in-person channels. **Partnerships** with trusted organizations, such as churches or other community-based groups, can help get the word out about college opportunities and provide enrollment support, reduce hassles, and make college seem plausible for a greater number of adults. **Novel channels** have the potential to reach a different set of adults than more traditional mediums might.

Partnerships

1 Work with Local Employers

Partner with large local employers to identify potential adult students who could benefit from a degree or credential, and offer them on-the-job enrollment support. This might include:

▶ Working with employers to identify the credentials their employees need and to create a pipeline program to support such enrollment

▶ Identifying company employees who currently or previously attended your school, and supporting them as they share information about your college with potential new students

▶ Helping companies create opportunities to connect what's happening at work with specific educational offerings ("lunch and learn" conversations, etc.)

▶ Placing recruiting materials in employee break rooms, providing on-site access to computers to complete enrollment steps, and/or having a college employee on site to help with enrollment

▶ Working with employers to make on-site educational supports (study rooms, computers on which to work, etc.) highly visible. To the extent an employer offers additional support (tuition assistance or loan repayment programs, employer-sponsored childcare or childcare subsidies, flexible scheduling, etc.), make these programs highly visible as well.

▶ Working with employers to send reminders about adult enrollment events and deadlines when people are receiving their paychecks or seeking other employment-related services

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Career Services
Marketing & Communications

Effort Level

In Practice

In 2019, Columbus State Community College and Franklin University entered into a partnership with Huntington Bank. Called the Exact Track 3 + 1 dual business degree program, instructors came to the bank's operation centers to teach classes on weekday evenings and provided meals to attendees. Huntington identified 1,000 employees who would be good fits for the program, and paid for classes, books, and other costs up front.

2 Partner with Community Groups

Partner with groups that are well-connected to, and trusted by, adults you want to target for enrollment and provide them training on, or resources about, helping adults complete the enrollment process. This might include:

▸ Partnering with local chapters of advocacy groups such as the NAACP, unions, or trade organizations to publicize your programs and help enroll adult students. To the extent possible, equip these partners with information about specific programs that have clear opportunities for advancement in the field.

▸ Leveraging Black or Latinx fraternity and sorority public service events, especially those that take place in communities you want to recruit from, in order to introduce potential students to school programs

▸ Partnering with local religious groups to publicize your programs, and sending college representatives to help with enrollment where these groups gather

▸ Partnering with unemployment offices, food pantries, etc. to provide program materials and offer on-site enrollment support

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
DEI Council
Marketing & Communications

Effort Level

3 Join Forces with Tax Preparers

Partner with tax preparers to help adults think about enrollment at a time when they may have some money to dedicate to educational pursuits. This might include:

▸ Sending college representatives to tax offices to connect with adults, and provide enrollment support, while they wait

▸ Getting tax preparers to help people complete the FAFSA while also completing their taxes[ii]

▸ Supporting tax preparers in providing interested adults guidance around paying for college

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Student Financial Services
Marketing & Communications

Effort Level

[ii] See Bettinger, Long, and Oreopoulos, THE FAFSA PROJECT: Results from the H&R Block FAFSA Experiment and Next Steps, https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/btl/files/bettinger_long_oreopoulos_-_the_fafsa_projects_-_description_7-25-13.pdf

Novel Channels

4 Meet Adults Where They Are

Advertise programs, make enrollment materials available, and—where possible—offer real-time enrollment help in places that adults in your community already visit. This might include:

▶ Setting up enrollment booths outside grocery stores, local parks, sporting events, or popular shops (especially during busy times). Consider giving out gift cards to those who take steps towards enrollment in the moment and/or follow up with those who fill out an interest form.

▶ Making program materials and enrollment information available near the computer stations at local libraries

▶ Leaving pre-addressed, stamped postcards at local post offices for interested adults to complete and return. Have a trained enrollment representative follow up with them by phone to provide enrollment help.

▶ Providing adults with enrollment information at their children's schools or school events

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Marketing & Communications

Effort Level

See key on page 5

5 Use New Media

Use digital mass communication to reach more adult learners online. This might include:

▶ Creating a YouTube channel or podcast that talks about adult students, their concerns, challenges, and triumphs

▶ Utilizing streaming or social media ads about a school or program to reach adult learners in the geographic area of your choice

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Marketing & Communications
Student Affairs

Effort Level

MESSAGING AND THEMES

The following design recommendations focus on how schools can develop impactful messaging content, regardless of the delivery channel. We suggest strategies for creating **effective communications** that will resonate with target groups of prospective adult students. By also testing messages before sending them, schools can ensure their **message content is relevant** to their learners, will pique adult student interest, and prompt college-going action.

Effective Communications

6   **Conduct a Communications Audit**

Review and update adult-learner facing materials to ensure that they are effective. In all cases, ensure your messages grab attention, build adults' intention to return to school, and spur them to take action to enroll. Make sure your messages:

▶ Come from a trustworthy sender. To enhance credibility, make the sender a real person who is seen as an expert or who has a relationship with the target audience.

▶ Are thoughtful about word choice. Avoid jargon where possible and keep the message simple.

▶ Give concrete action steps. List each thing an adult must do and link them directly to resources explaining how to follow through.

▶ Provide help. Make it clear how and where adults can get real help, so their momentum doesn't stall.

For more on writing effective communications, see Appendix B.

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions

Marketing & Communications

Student Affairs

Effort Level

See key on page 5

Relevant Message Content

7   Use Intentional Message Framing

To ensure the message content resonates, develop communications that are tailored to the specific audiences that you want to reach. This might include:

▸ Researching and testing different messages—through focus groups, surveys, or user testing sessions—with adults you want to target in order to understand their needs and how to inspire them to enroll

▸ Using images or testimonials targeted adults can relate to

▸ Highlighting available supports that closely match their needs

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Marketing & Communications
Student Affairs

Effort Level

8   Create an Adult-Specific Brand

Develop adult-specific materials to help potential students find the information they need and show them your school is there to help. This might include:

▸ Aligning your messaging with the motivations and goals of your target adult audience

▸ Creating programs, services, scholarships, or other opportunities with special names and logos that adults can easily identify as they research program information

▸ Creating adult-specific web pages that feature pictures of real adult students performing educational activities

▸ Adding the name, picture, and contact information for any staff dedicated to helping adult learners

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Continuing Education
Marketing & Communications

Effort Level

📣 INSIGHTS FROM TESTING MESSAGE FRAMES

ideas42 developed a variety of short messages designed to build college-going intention and asked nearly 300 adults without a college degree which of these resonated with them. Respondents also provided key demographic information, which allowed us to evaluate which messages appealed to different audiences. All analyses used a statistical significance cutoff of *p < .10*. See Appendix C for details. We learned:

▸ *None of our individual messages were clear "winners" or "losers" across the board*. Instead of looking for a "silver bullet," or a message frame that will resonate well with everyone, focus on communications best practices.

▸ *Messages that reference parts of people's identities tend to resonate more*. For example, women and caretakers responded more favorably than other groups to messages that referenced children, family, or other caretaking responsibilities. In other instances, people responded less favorably to messages that were not targeted to them. As such, use data to personalize communications to applicants' specific contexts and identities whenever possible.

▸ *Non-white respondents were more receptive to messages across the board*. Respondents who identified as Black, Latinx, Asian/Pacific Islander, or Native American rated messages more favorably than White respondents; this difference was significant overall and also for nearly half of the individual messages. While our analysis was unable to uncover why non-white respondents were more receptive to messaging, it seems clear that race and ethnicity can play a role. Colleges should conduct their own research to identify the most effective ways of communicating with different groups of people.

▸ *Compared to any other demographic factor, self-reported intention to attend college was one of the greatest predictors of how well a message resonated with respondents*. People with a high intention to enroll in a degree program within the next two years were significantly more receptive to all the message frames tested, and also to more of the individual messages, than any other population segment. With this in mind, consider targeting your communications to those who have expressed some interest in returning to school.

Overall, while it's important to tailor your messaging to the specific identities and lived experiences of your intended audience, messaging alone is likely insufficient to build intention or to convince someone who does not already envision college as a real option for them. Instead, use messaging strategies to augment—but not replace—other efforts to connect with adults in your community.

PRE-ENROLLMENT SUPPORTS

Design recommendations in this section encompass a diverse set of strategies to help potential students understand, navigate, and successfully complete the college enrollment process. **Peer supports** provide accountability and real-life examples of how to fit college into busy lives, while **financial supports** help more adults figure out how to pay for college. **Learning previews and test drives** provide opportunities to experience being a student before committing, while **enrollment process changes** seek to address institutional barriers to student success.

Peer Supports

9   Develop a Peer Mentoring Program

Enlist current and former adult learners to provide relatable guidance to their potential peers; this advice could address enrollment concerns as well as broader issues around balancing school with adults' other responsibilities. This might include:

▶ Assigning adults who have indicated an interest in enrollment to a peer mentor with a similar background who can follow up with them

▶ Providing peer mentors with FAQ answers and a script for certain topics that they should cover with their mentees, training on various enrollment-related topics like financial aid and registration, and broader guidance on effective relationship building, facilitation, and providing feedback

▶ Compensating peer mentors in the form of wages (perhaps work-study), micro-credentials, or with other incentives

▶ Encouraging peer mentors to follow up with their mentees before any key deadlines in the enrollment process

In Practice

Nudge4 and ideas42 are currently working with two community colleges in Tennessee to test the impact of a peer mentoring program for enrolled adult learners. Around 10 mentors at each college have a caseload of about 30 adult students (some new to college, some with previous credits, some continuing students) who are all in their first year of receiving the Tennessee Reconnect scholarship. Mentors reach out on a weekly basis to share college resources and conduct virtual meetings with mentees to help them meet academic and personal goals. Follow up with us at education@ideas42.org for more information.

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Continuing Education
Student Affairs

Effort Level

See key on page 5

10   Host Virtual Information Sessions

Offer remote information sessions for prospective adult students hosted by current adult students who can provide their candid perspectives on balancing college and life, financing their education, and more. This might include:

▶ Offering virtual "happy hours" with current adult students and hosting breakout groups within the sessions to encourage discussion

▶ Recording these sessions and posting them on the adult-focused page of your website for others to view when they have time

▶ Holding targeted sessions for adults with specific identities, like BIPOC, parents, adults with some college credits, etc.

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Information Technology
Student Affairs

Effort Level

Financial Supports

11 **Facilitate/Streamline FAFSA Completion**

Identify ways that schools can support prospective adult students as they complete the FAFSA. This might include:

▸ Offering guided FAFSA completion sessions online or in person

▸ Pre-filling any applicant information you already have available so that students only need to complete certain sections and verify information before submitting

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Student Financial Services
Information Technology

Effort Level

12 **Help SCND Students Pay off Existing Debt**

Offer to pay off or forgive debt (up to a set amount) for prospective adult students who meet certain qualifications. This might include:

▸ Waiving any outstanding balances held by returning adults once they successfully complete one semester and enroll for a second

▸ Increasing the outstanding debt amount that can prevent students from re-enrolling

In Practice

Wayne State University's Warrior Way Back program forgives up to $1,500 over three semesters or upon graduation for qualifying students. To qualify, students need to have a GPA of 2.0 or more, $1,500 or less in debt, and not have attended a class at Wayne State in at least two years. In its first seven months, the program produced a net gain of $200,000 in revenue for the school and many of the current student recipients are African American and come from high financial need backgrounds. The program has since been expanded regionally and includes reciprocity agreements and transcript sharing across institutions.

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Finance
Student Financial Services

Effort Level

13   Demystify Costs and Payment Options

Provide prospective adult students a clear sense of what college will cost, their payment options, and information about potential funding sources (including links to relevant sites). This might include:

▶ Creating a secure digital financial tool through which an adult could add a rough estimate of their income (or upload a photo of last year's taxes) as well as other relevant information and receive a snapshot of the total cost and fees of college and direct links to applications for loans, grants, and other scholarships. If the tool uses the FAFSA Expected Family Contribution (EFC) formula, this could also include the amount of aid they would qualify for.

▶ Creating financial worksheets to help adults get clarity on average costs of attendance. Schools could provide one-pagers showing typical expenses, the average FAFSA award, and the average balance for the student.

▶ Creating and sharing short videos that explain how to apply for loans and how loan repayment works

▶ Providing adults with a list of budgeting apps along with advice about managing school financially

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Finance
Student Financial Services

Effort Level

Learning Previews & Test Drives

14 **Allow Adults to Try College Classes**

Give adults a realistic sense of their future college experience by allowing them to preview what school is like. This might include:

▸ Offering prospective adults a free course, or offering a course at a significant discount and—if the student passes and decides to enroll—providing a "rebate" that makes that "try out" course free (e.g. credit applied to their future tuition balance)

▸ Having adults complete a survey about their interests, and sending them a hypothetical course schedule with a sample assignment and syllabus

▸ Holding "preview day" classes on campus or within the community (e.g., parks, jobs sites, churches, etc.) and ensuring someone is on hand to help enroll interested attendees

▸ Sharing videos of enrolled adults describing what their daily lives and schedules are like, along with a self-paced digital orientation that has an active chat feature for attendees with questions

▸ Providing interested adults with a list of virtual classes they can join, along with remote tours of campus

In Practice

The University of Hawaii community college system reached out to stopped-out students by email, post card, and phone, and offered them their first class back for free. Of the 969 former students who were initially identified, 150 decided to return. The University of Hawaii planned to target about 34,000 of the system's stopped-out students in a multi-year campaign.

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Academic Affairs
Admissions
Student Affairs

Effort Level

15   Help Adults Plan College Around Everyday Life

Develop tools to help adults plan how they will fit college coursework into their lives and to remind them that while challenges are inevitable, they can be managed. This might include:

▸ Asking potential students to complete a pre-enrollment survey about their specific needs or concerns (financial counseling, childcare, learning disabilities, etc.) and tailoring the resources and in-person assistance provided to that applicant

▸ Providing adults with estimates of average workload (time in classes, homework assignments, consulting with teachers, etc.), and ways in which other adults have arranged their schedules to fit it all in

▸ Offering a digital or print calendar on which potential adult students can schedule classes, homework, time to meet with faculty/seek support (with guidance about how much time to budget for each)—as well as other personal commitments

▸ Offering advisement to prospective adult students about time management, money management, and study skills

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Academic Advising
Student Affairs

Effort Level

Enrollment Process Changes

16 Audit and Simplify the Enrollment Process

Review the enrollment process from the perspective of an adult learner to identify the parts of the process that hinder completion and remove any hassles found. This might include:

▸ Conducting focus groups with existing adult students to identify pain points in the enrollment process

▸ Removing altogether enrollment steps that are not essential

▸ Pre-filling all known application information for the prospective adult student, and requiring them to complete only that information that is essential for their enrollment

▸ Identifying those enrollment tasks that are essential and those that are less time-sensitive and considering adults "enrolled" when they have completed the essential ones (to foster a sense of endowed progress) and provide them a grace period in which to complete the others

▸ Providing the opportunity to enroll by phone if potential applicants are uncomfortable with computers

In Practice

In 2019, ideas42 worked with the Foundation for California Community Colleges to audit and analyze the California Community College's (CCC) system-wide application portal (CCCApply) and the enrollment process that follows. This effort resulted in a set of evidence-based behavioral design principles that the CCC system is using to simplify and streamline the way in which over one million students per year apply to and enroll in college in California.

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Information Technology
Student Affairs

Effort Level

17 Create a Digital Enrollment Portal

Develop an enrollment portal that clearly details the steps adult learners must complete and where they can get help. This might include:

▸ Graphically displaying all of the steps to enrollment and indicating, in real time, where each applicant is in the process

▸ Providing a checklist of next steps, estimates about how long each step should take, and a chat feature for people to get real-time help from a point person for adult learners

▸ Embedding relevant links throughout the portal, so it's a one-stop shop for enrolling adults

▸ Allowing adults to upload electronic versions of physical documents within the portal, to avoid having to send things to different offices

▸ Assigning adult applicants who are using the portal to a peer mentor or navigator who will follow up to answer questions or to nudge the applicant to complete the next enrollment step

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Information Technology

Effort Level

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18 Create an Enrollment Guidebook

Provide potential adult students with an enrollment guide (either paper or PDF) with clear instructions, answers to frequently raised concerns, and guidance on how to proceed. This might include:

▸ A graphic/roadmap of what the enrollment process should look like, including where to start looping in other people (like a coach/navigator) with links to adult-specific resources, information, and materials

▸ A clearly written and organized FAQ page

▸ A enrollment checklist that is easy to follow

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Marketing & Communications
Student Affairs

Effort Level

19   Email Adult-Specific Resources

Provide adult learners who express interest in your program with an automatic email that links to adult-specific resources they will need to guide them through enrollment. This might include:

▶ Application or enrollment checklists and relevant deadlines

▶ Information about scholarships or aid for adults

▶ Contact information for their adult-focused contact or navigator

▶ Links to adult-specific web pages or FAQs

▶ Exercises or tools that help adults plan how college will fit into their lives

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Student Affairs

Effort Level

20   Offer Non-financial Incentives

Encourage enrollment completion through incentives that will be valuable to adult learners once they start school. This might include:

▶ Giving adults who complete enrollment steps discounts for things they could use for school (e.g. bookstore credit, free use of on-campus laundry facilities, discounts on phone/internet services, gift cards for use at the cafeteria, gas stations, local grocery stores, etc.)

▶ Providing child care when they come to campus to complete enrollment activities

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Finance
Student Affairs

Effort Level

21   Make Enrollment Requirements Flexible

Give adult learners more leeway in how and what they submit during the enrollment process. This might include:

▶ Allowing adults to upload a screenshot of a required document for the enrollment process and sending the "PDF" version later

▶ Allowing adults to supply unofficial transcripts during the enrollment process, and submit the official version later

▶ Allowing on-campus students to submit electronic vaccination records and health forms

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Business Services

Effort Level

INTERNAL CAPACITY BUILDING

This last section of design recommendations focuses on ways institutions can ensure they both have, and effectively utilize, the resources necessary to successfully reach out to and support prospective adult learners throughout the entire enrollment process. **Building human capacity** and supporting people's work by **leveraging technology** can improve colleges' efficiency and overall capabilities. Increasing the level of **financial resources** that can be offered to students, as well as **centralizing administrative processes,** can put college within reach for more students.

Build Adult-Specific Human Capacity

22 Create Adult-Focused Staff Positions

Provide prospective adult students with relevant, reliable, and timely information and support, and gain student trust by assigning specific staff members to focus solely on adult student needs. This might include:

‣ Hiring adult navigators or coaches to walk adults through enrollment and financial aid, step-by-step

‣ Creating adult-focused departments or offices, providing greater permanence and consistent support even when individual staff members change

‣ Hiring adult specialists who are members of BIPOC communities and/or graduated from your school

‣ Training staff using a customer service model to ensure that every interaction is pleasant and leaves students satisfied

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Student Affairs

Effort Level

See key on page 5

23 Make it Easy to Contact Adult Specialists

Avoid unnecessary hassles by making it easy for adults to quickly connect with human support. This might include:

‣ Creating an adult-learner specific hotline staffed by specialists who can answer any and all questions about the enrollment process

‣ Listing adult-focused staff prominently on your website with a photo, contact information, and office location

‣ Prominently featuring adult specialists on all communications materials, student portals, tools, and other resources that adults will encounter

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Information Technology
Marketing & Communications

Effort Level

In Practice

In Minnesota, adults need only to complete a short form on the MN Reconnect website, and a navigator from their school of interest will reach out to guide them through enrollment. Similarly, in Tennessee, students can "Talk to a Navigator" through the TN Reconnect website, and connect with a single point of contact who provides free, institution-neutral college navigation, career exploration, and financial aid assistance.

24 Help All Faculty and Staff Answer Adult Questions

Equip all staff with the knowledge necessary to successfully assist adult students or direct them to specialists. This might include:

▸ Giving all admissions staff members an adult enrollment FAQ guide

▸ Providing staff with an adult-specific list of internal contacts to whom they should refer questions they can't answer

▸ Training admissions staff to identify potential adult students and quickly offer targeted support or transfer students to the right people

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Academic Affairs
Admissions
Student Affairs

Effort Level

Build Adult-Specific Financial Capacity

25 Fundraise or Earmark Adult-Focused Funds

Increase the amount and visibility of aid explicitly available to adult learners so more people can afford to attend college. This might include:

▶ Running alumni campaigns specifically geared toward raising scholarship funds for adult learners

▶ Offering first dollar scholarships that cover adult tuition and fees, so financial aid can cover books, materials, transportation, housing and other costs for low-income students

▶ Offering and advertising equity grants specifically for BIPOC adult learners

▶ Providing micro-scholarships to working adults based on their current income

In Practice

In February 2021, Michigan launched its Michigan Reconnect program, which covers tuition, mandatory fees (fees charged to all students per semester hour), and contact hours (extra charges for certain courses and programs) for adult residents without college degrees to attend their in-district community college. It also offers large discounts for out-of-district community colleges.

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Alumni Affairs
Finance
Student Affairs

Effort Level

26 Reimagine Full-time Enrollment

Make more students eligible for more financial aid by reimagining what constitutes full-time enrollment. This might include:

▶ Providing experiential learning opportunities that allow students to earn credit for activities performed outside the classroom or on the job

▶ Dividing semesters into multiple sessions (e.g Fall Session 1, Fall Session 2), providing adults greater flexibility and more opportunities to meet or exceed full-time enrollment levels

▶ Varying the timelines or intensities of courses to make it easier to manage a full-time load

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Academic Affairs
Finance

Effort Level

Leverage Technology to Better Serve Adult Students

27 **Build Adult-Focused Websites**

Help potential adult learners find relevant and inspirational information quickly, easily, and in one place with an accessible and easily navigable adult-focused website. This might include:

▸ Posting contact information for and photos of adult enrollment specialists

▸ Highlighting the positive experiences and challenges of current adult learners, as well as their advice around fitting college into their lives

▸ Giving information around college costs and available financial aid

▸ Publishing videos of professors talking about the ways they value adult student abilities and contributions

In Practice

The Washington Student Achievement Council created the College and Career Compass to provide interested adults with helpful information about returning to college. The tool starts by asking for the specific topics the person needs guidance around, then provides articles and resources for each topic. It also allows adults to search for programs by area of study or name, and connects them with campus representatives who can respond with tailored information and assist with enrollment.

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Information Technology
Student Affairs

Effort Level

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28 **Nudge Adults Using SMS**

Increase the number of adults you can support through the enrollment process by sending a targeted SMS campaign. This might include:

▸ Sharing helpful tips for navigating the enrollment process

▸ Reminding students of important next steps and deadlines

▸ Prompting action by including links

▸ Using automated responses to answer simple questions or refer students to specialists for more help

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Information Technology
Student Affairs

Effort Level

29 Leverage Existing Technologies

Repurpose technology you already have to streamline processes related to enrollment and improve the experience of potential students. This might include:

▶ Using an internal advising/referral system (e.g. Starfish) to allow staff members to assign one another tasks related to specific students, ensuring no one falls through the cracks

▶ Using customer acquisition/retention software (e.g. Salesforce) to help manage adult student prospects as soon as they enter the enrollment pipeline

▶ Leveraging course management technology (e.g. Blackboard) to house a "course" related to enrollment processes and resources

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Counseling
Information Technology
Student Affairs

Effort Level

30 Employ AI or Live Chat Help

Provide virtual assistance to those adults who have common questions or prefer online communication. This might include:

▶ Installing a chat help feature on your website, allowing people to get real time help without having to make a phone call

▶ Making the chat available during off-hours or on weekends to accommodate busy schedules

▶ Programming an AI chatbot to ask and answer simple or commonly asked questions, so that real people can tackle more complex issues

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Information Technology

Effort Level

31 Implement Electronic Tickets

Resolve prospective student questions and requests more quickly and efficiently by implementing an electronic ticket submission system. This might include:

- ▸ Allowing prospective students to ask questions and request help online, at any hour, using an electronic form
- ▸ Asking prospective students for their contact information and when they'd like to be contacted, so they can receive a call back at a convenient time
- ▸ Asking prospective students to choose whether they prefer a call, email, or text reply

In Practice

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Georgia State University (GSU) created an electronic ticketing system to replace their former call center. Students ask their questions in an online form (most of them related to financial aid) and provide contact information. A GSU employee then reaches out to the student and can more easily answer their questions. This strategy doubled the number of cases they were able to resolve.

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Student Financial Services
Information Technology

Effort Level

32 Provide Virtual Opportunities

Offer virtual versions of in-person events to accommodate busy adult schedules. This might include:

- ▸ Offering virtual enrollment-related events, campus tours, and college previews
- ▸ Providing virtual advising and counseling services
- ▸ Holding online assessments and placement testing

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Academic Advising
Admissions
Information Technology

Effort Level

Centralize Processes

33 Centralize Transcripts

Make it easier for students to secure transcripts by centralizing databases across school systems and states. This might include:

▶ Giving all schools within a system or state access to students' previous coursework and grades across institution types

▶ Putting the onus on the school to retrieve a student's records rather than asking a student to request and pay for them

▶ Agreeing to pay hold fees owed to a former school upon successful enrollment at a new school

▶ Temporarily or permanently forgiving previous balances for students re-enrolling at the same institution

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Business Services
Information Technology

Effort Level

34 Standardize Credits

Remove the hassles and potential financial penalties that adults face when trying to transfer credits, by accepting credits more consistently. This might include:

▶ Creating a course/credit standard within a school system or state that would allow earned credits to be transferable to and accepted by any partner institution

▶ Depositing credits into a central "bank" that any school within that system can withdraw for a student

▶ Providing a micro-credential upon successful completion of a standardized core curriculum that also satisfies the core requirements of every other school in a system

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Academic Affairs
Admissions

Effort Level

In Practice

In 2013, The City University of New York (CUNY) created Pathways, a 30-credit common core general education requirement that, once completed at one CUNY school, would transfer seamlessly to any other CUNY college. Pathways also aligns gateway courses to a number of popular undergraduate majors, making it easier for returning students to pick up where they left off and for current students to transfer between different institutions.

35 **Centralize Applications**

Implement a central application system so adult students can enter their information once, but apply to more than one college, both streamlining the process and lowering the time investment necessary. This might include:

▸ Updating an existing common application system with the forms and assignments that adults students must complete

▸ Building a system or state-wide application portal for adult students that would allow them to provide their information to a whole network of schools at once. Each school in that system could then decide, taking location, degree program, and other factors into account, if they'll accept or decline the student's application, leaving the student with a clear set of viable college options to choose from.

▸ Charging application fees only once rather than for each separate application

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
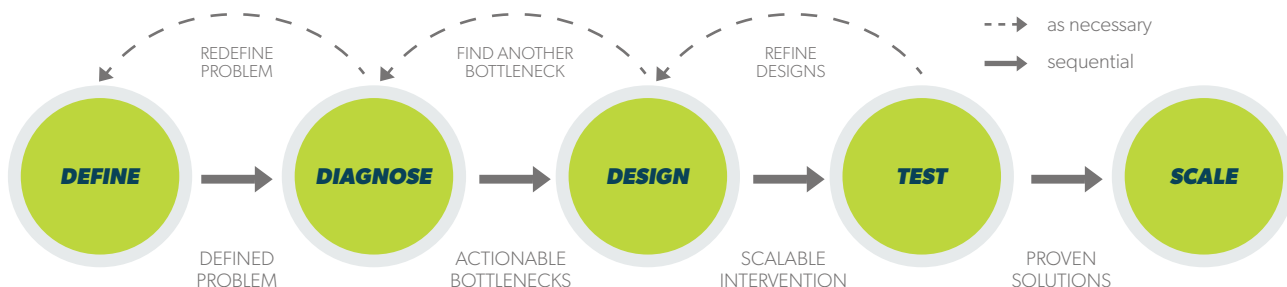Admissions
Information Technology

Effort Level

Though we focused our efforts on improving the pipeline leading up to enrollment, it is also important to consider the support and academic opportunities offered to adults post enrollment. For a list of design ideas that seek to address behavioral barriers to enrollment through changes made in later phases of the academic journey, see Appendix D.

»PART TWO
DESIGNING FOR YOUR CONTEXT

We expect that some of the design ideas we've presented in this guide will resonate with you more than others. Your expertise about the problems, needs, and opportunities for serving adults in your community is a critical component of developing effective solutions; indeed, even designs that resonate will need to be adapted. At ideas42, we have developed a five-stage behavioral design process to create solutions that fit a given context. You can follow this process to see what you might want to modify from these recommendations, or to create new ideas of your own. This section will walk you through our behavioral design process.

REDEFINE PROBLEM   FIND ANOTHER BOTTLENECK   REFINE DESIGNS   ---→ as necessary   → sequential

DEFINE → **DIAGNOSE** → **DESIGN** → **TEST** → **SCALE**

DEFINED PROBLEM   ACTIONABLE BOTTLENECKS   SCALABLE INTERVENTION   PROVEN SOLUTIONS

At ideas42, we always begin by working to **define** the specific problem we want to solve. In this instance, ask yourself: who in your community do you want to enroll, what exactly do you want them to do, and where, concretely, are they getting off-track in this process? Said another way, use data to identify the specific issue that, if solved, would have a real impact—both because of the population impacted and because it is tied to your ultimate outcome of interest. Ultimately, it's worth spending real time and resources at the outset to make sure you are focusing on solving the right problem.

Next, **diagnose** the behavioral reasons that problem is occurring. At ideas42, we look at what may be happening in a person's environment, and think about common human psychologies, to identify these behavioral barriers. To do this, it may be helpful to think through the specific decisions prospective adult students would need to make, and actions they would need to take, to follow through on the behavior you are trying to promote. And with these decisions and actions in mind, review your data, talk to current and prospective students, shadow someone seeking to enroll, and/or take other steps to understand why adults from your target population may not be making these desired decisions or taking these actions. Said another way, pinpoint the reasons why the adults you want to recruit are not successfully enrolling.

Once you have a sense of why the problem is happening, you can then **design** interventions that directly address the barriers you've diagnosed. Remember, your designs should always flow from your diagnosis—not the other way around. For example, reminders may be effective if the problem is that adults aren't keeping enrollment deadlines top-of-mind, but will be ineffective if adults are failing to submit their materials because they are confused about the process or need extra help. Since the adults you are targeting for enrollment likely face several behavioral challenges, you may want to leverage a range of touchpoints and a variety of behavioral techniques in your designs. The intervention you choose to implement will ultimately depend on the behavioral bottlenecks you identify, as well as practical factors such as your timeline, available resources, and the potential for the intervention to scale. Design ideas might range from small tweaks to existing programs to comprehensive process revamps.

💡 CHOOSING DESIGNS FOR THE BARRIERS IN YOUR CONTEXT

The key to ideas42's approach is choosing interventions that directly address the identified barriers. As you review the design ideas in Part One, first consider which behavioral barriers feel most relevant in your context. Then, filter for solutions that target those barriers. In many cases, for example:

→ *If the barrier you want to address is lack of external stimulus* (even when adults intend to enroll in college, they may not follow through unless an external event or person pushes them to do so), consider designing materials that center adult learners (idea 8) and meeting adults in places they already are (idea 4). Once they are excited about the idea of college, assign them a peer mentor (idea 9) to create accountability and keep them moving forward.

⤬ *If the barrier you want to address is (im)plausible pathways* (many adults don't understand how college could fit into their lives without clear, relatable examples), consider sending messages designed to address the specific concerns of your target population (idea 7) by creating a podcast or a YouTube channel that shares stories of adult students, their desires, challenges, and successes. This may help make the prospect of college seem all the more real for other would-be students (idea 5). Clarifying college costs and payment options (idea 13) may allay some people's concerns while leveraging planning and visioning tools could help people figure out how to fit school into their lives (idea 15). Allowing adults to try out a free college class may help address any last concerns about the plausibility of college (idea 14).

💲 *If the barrier you want to address is money matters* (many adults are unaware of the many ways to pay for college or inaccurately believe they would not qualify for financial aid), consider making it easier or even standard for all adults to complete the FAFSA (idea 11) perhaps even through guided sessions with a tax preparer (idea 3). Or build your school's capacity to financially support adult students who don't qualify for full aid or to cover adult-specific needs (idea 25). Additionally, consider using an AI chatbot to answer questions about paying for college (idea 30), and post all the specific financial information adults need to know on an adult-specific school website (idea 27).

⚠ *If the barrier you want to address is hassles* (prospective adult students, many of whom are questioning whether college is right for them, can be derailed by seemingly small hurdles, inconveniences, or administrative hassles in the enrollment process), consider providing information and hands-on enrollment help through community partnerships (idea 2), doing an enrollment process audit to find out where people struggle most and streamline processes internally (idea

16), and/or implementing a chat help feature that will allow adults to ask their enrollment questions the moment they have them (idea 30). You might also program an email that automatically sends links to all the resources someone might need as soon as they register interest in enrolling or talk to an admissions representative (idea 19) or offer virtual info sessions during non-business hours so working adults can more easily attend (idea 32).

? *If the barrier you want to address is lack of reliable support* (many adults need reliable and accessible help navigating enrollment processes and may give up when they don't receive it), consider offering an adult-specific seminar series (idea 10) and/or making help available on demand and at all hours. One way to do this could be by creating an electronic ticket system through which adults can submit a question at any time and receive a call back to answer that question (idea 31). Alternatively, to ensure that there is always someone available to help adult students, consider creating admissions positions that are focused on adult students (idea 22) and then making it easy for adults to find and contact those specialists (idea 23). Or make sure that any admissions officer who fields an adult question is able to answer them accurately or correctly refer those questions to someone who can by creating standard responses to FAQs and distributing them widely (idea 24).

When you are ready to implement your design idea, we suggest you ***test*** it, to see if it successfully addresses the problem you were trying to solve. There are many ways to evaluate impact, but the gold standard (and our default approach at ideas42, when possible) is the randomized controlled trial (RCT). RCTs demand a large sample size and the capacity to randomize. By randomly assigning people to get either the newly-designed intervention or business-as-usual, you can tell whether your change is an improvement over the status quo. Alternatively, you might use "A/B testing" to compare the efficacy of two different intervention types. To do this, assign people to receive either Version A or Version B of the new design (you might decide to have a third group of people receive business-as-usual). A/B testing can be especially useful for interventions where it's not clear which of two similar options will work best, and for interventions where it's cheap to produce (and deliver) different versions. Email interventions and other communications campaigns are great candidates for A/B testing. Ultimately, you need to know what works if you want to spend your resources to support the outcomes you are seeking.

Finally, once you know a design idea works, think about ***scaling*** it—perhaps reaching new potential students, or using it in a different context. As you do this, ask: Are there subgroups for whom the solution didn't work as well? Are the positive findings lumped in one demographic? Is there a cheaper way to execute your design? Adopting the behavioral design approach means that you can continually look for ways to incrementally improve your programs and policies in an evidence-based manner.

⚡ ADAPTING FOR SUCCESSFUL REPLICATION

Before using these ideas off the shelf, do some work to make sure these ideas resonate in your context, be it a two-year or four-year college, by checking in with students and relying on your professional experiences to decide which, if any, of these barriers apply. Then, tailor the ideas you choose based on your specific challenges, opportunities, and needs. The "In Practice" ideas give some insight into how schools implemented selected ideas in their specific context, but that implementation process might look different in yours.

»APPENDICES

Appendix A
Design ideas summary table

	Barriers	Implementers	Effort Level
Reaching Prospective Students			
1. Work with Local Employers			
2. Partner with Community Groups			
3. Join Forces with Tax Preparers			
4. Meet Adults Where They Are			
5. Use New Media			
Messaging			
6. Conduct a Communications Audit			
7. Use Intentional Message Framing			
8. Create an Adult-Specific Brand			
Pre-Enrollment Supports			
9. Develop a Peer Mentoring Program			
10. Host Virtual Information Sessions			
11. Facilitate/Streamline FAFSA Completion			
12. Help SCND Students Pay off Existing Debt			
13. Demystify Costs and Payment Options			
14. Allow Adults to Try College Classes			
15. Help Adults Plan College Around Everyday Life			
16. Audit and Simplify the Enrollment Process			

	Barriers	Implementers	Effort Level

Pre-Enrollment Supports

17. Create a Digital Enrollment Portal			
18. Create an Enrollment Guidebook			
19. Email Adult-Specific Resources			
20. Offer Non-Financial Incentives			
21. Make Enrollment Requirements Flexible			

Internal Capacity Building

22. Create Adult-Focused Staff Positions			
23. Make it Easy to Contact Adult Specialists			
24. Help All Faculty and Staff Answer Adult Questions			
25. Fundraise or Earmark Adult-Focused Funds			
26. Reimagine Full-time Enrollment			
27. Build Adult-Focused Websites			
28. Nudge Adults Using SMS			
29. Leverage Existing Technologies			
30. Employ AI or Live Chat Help			
31. Implement Electronic Tickets			
32. Provide Virtual Opportunities			
33. Centralize Transcripts			
34. Standardize Credits			
35. Centralize Applications			

Appendix B
Guidelines for effective communications

Grab Attention	Speak to Your Audience	Make Action Easy
1 Channel: Choose the most direct medium that adults are likely to notice and aligns with the purpose of your message	**1 Words Choice:** Avoid academic jargon where possible.	**1 Give Concrete Action Steps:** List each thing an adult must do and link directly to resources explaining how to follow through.
2 Timing: Send messages when adults are likely to notice and have time to act on them.	**2 Tone & Voice:** Be professional, but friendly and accommodating. Create urgency as deadlines near.	**2 Provide Help:** Make reliable help available outside of business hours and be clear about how and where adults can get assistance responsive to their specific needs.
3 Frequency: Minimize the number of messages sent, increasing the frequency as deadlines near.	**3 Framing:** Consider message frames that are likely to appeal to your target adults, who may respond better when messages reference salient parts of their identities.	**3 Emphasize Deadlines:** Highlight deadlines more frequently as due dates approach. Create artificial deadlines where formal ones don't exist.
4 Subject Lines: With digital communications, write brief and descriptive subject lines, personalizing them when possible.	**4 Graphics & Formatting:** Keep text to a minimum, instead communicating through infographics and realistic images of adults similar to your target audiences. Use bolding, color, etc. strategically.	These guidelines were adapted from the Student Success Toolkit, written for The City University of New York. Review it, as well as this other communications toolkit developed for the California Community College system, for more detailed information and examples of ways that these principles can apply in different contexts.
5 Trustworthy Sender: To enhance credibility, make the sender a real person who is seen as an expert or has a relationship with the target audience	**5 Personalize:** Personalize messages where possible and use individual-level information, so the message feels tailored to the specific adult.	

Appendix C
Sample messages and survey results

ideas42 recruited nearly 300 adults without a college degree through the mTurk platform to react to a subset of messages designed to promote college-going intention. ideas42 developed 21 messages for consideration, across seven framing approaches. Survey respondents were asked to rate how well each message resonated with them on a 7-pt Likert scale.

Each respondent saw 5-6 messages, for a total of approximately 85 scores per message. Message channel (on a billboard, in an email, on a postcard in the mail) was randomized between participants. Respondents also provided key demographic information, which allowed ideas42 to evaluate which messages appealed to different audiences. We conducted two-tailed t-tests with a significance level of $p < .10$ to identify significant differences in scores by key demographic segments.

ID	Message	Mean	Std Dev
Community: *Messsages using this frame highlight how the target action will affect not just the recipients' individual lives, but the wellbeing and outcomes of their entire community.*		**3.18**	**1.88**
1A	You won't have to leave your community and traditions to get a world class education. Stay where the people understand and care for you, while you better your life and theirs as well.	3.38	1.88
1B	As our worlds got smaller during the pandemic, we've relied on our closest communities to keep us grounded. What needs have you noticed in your community? With an education, you'll have the power to meet those needs and give back.	3.17	1.82
1C	Be a positive force for change in your community by shaping the current conversations with your voice! Having a college degree can help you move into more spaces to help create change.	3.02	1.96
Economic: *These messages were framed around economic impact, or how much money, financial security, etc. recipients will gain or lose by enrolling in college.*		**3.11**	**2.06**
2A	This coronavirus pandemic hit women and their families the hardest. Protect yourself from future economic downturns by enrolling in degree programs in resilient sectors.	2.64	2.03
2B	What sounds better: Getting what you make now for the next 5 years, or tripling your earning potential in 3-4 years with a college degree?	3.98	1.79
2C	Your child's degree will help them achieve more - getting your own degree helps them support themselves and start their lives, so they won't have to take care of you.	2.75	2.12

ID	Message	Mean	Std Dev
Family: *This frame focuses on how adults' decisions affect their children, spouses, or other family members, in both positive and negative ways.*		**3.28**	**2.05**
3A	Did you know that children of college-educated parents are more likely to then go to college themselves? Focus on yourself to fortify them.	3.06	2.05
3B	Because your family means everything to you, you always do whatever it takes to give them the best of everything. Earn your college degree now and protect them with the security of a salaried job and employer provided health care.	3.54	2.00
3C	You want your child to earn a college degree, so why not earn one for yourself? You take such good care of your family now. The best parents also take care of themselves.	3.24	2.10
Future/Aspirational: *Messages framed in this way focus on long-term gains and goals—who you could be tomorrow, if you acted today.*		**3.46**	**1.76**
4A	We've all spent a lot of time this past year dreaming about what the future might look like. What are your dreams? In your future, you could have that college degree you've been working toward.	3.68	1.72
4B	What does Joe in 2021 need to have the life he wants in 2031? You ultimately decide on the choices that your future self will be proud of, and what you'll experience. Take the chance.	3.28	1.83
4C	Adults with college degrees can earn 60% more than those with high school diplomas - complete your degree now to get the salary you want.	3.42	1.73
Historical/Retrospective: *This type of frame asks readers to look back through time, both personal and collective, to demonstrate how things have changed across generations and how each person may be tied to a long legacy.*		**3.31**	**1.99**
5A	Think back 10 years - Was this the life you wanted for yourself? The best time to plant the tree for your future was 10 years ago, but the next best time is today. Take the steps now to have the future you want.	3.51	1.93
5B	We'd like to make amends! We didn't work hard enough for you the first time you enrolled, but the changes we've made to our programs now will better accommodate your needs. Give us another chance to give you what you deserve.	3.47	1.86
5C	Generations of people before you have overcome challenges, inequity, and adversity -- all allowing you to become the person you are today. Use that strength to take your future to the next level. Make your ancestors proud.	2.97	2.14

ID	Message	Mean	Std Dev
Negative: *This frame includes messages focused on losses—what recipients might be missing or how their life might be worse—if they don't take action.*		**3.32**	**1.91**
6A	We couldn't find the right way to help you succeed the first time, and you lost out. But we've stepped up our game now with more flexible options for adults with busy lives.	3.07	2.01
6B	As the economy starts to reopen and companies continue to move toward automation, competition for good jobs will skyrocket. This is the moment to make yourself stand out. Don't get passed over and miss out on your chance for a good job by being under qualified.	3.72	1.75
6C	Don't choose between going into debt and taking care of your health. College degree holders are more likely to have employer provided insurance and get higher insurance contributions from their employers.	3.16	1.93
Positive: *This frame paints the message in terms of gains, or how recipients might improve their lives by taking the desired action.*		**3.40**	**1.85**
7A	The pandemic took a lot of things out of your control, but an education is something that can't be taken away. Regain control of your life and start your education today.	3.32	1.70
7B	Find yourself with more time and a college degree when you learn from home - no travel time is needed! Learn at your own pace from anywhere, so you can go everywhere. Bring the classroom to you with programs designed especially for adult students.	4.09	1.67
7C	Let us earn your trust, so that you can earn your degree.	2.78	1.94
TOTAL		**3.29**	**1.94**

Appendix D
Post enrollment design ideas

Though we focused our efforts on improving the pipeline leading up to enrollment, it is also important to consider the **post enrollment supports** and **academic opportunities** offered to adults all the way through to graduation. The following list of design ideas seeks to address behavioral barriers to enrollment by making changes beyond the initial enrollment phase of the academic journey.

Post Enrollment Supports

36 Provide Non-monetary Support

Make it easier for adults to focus on school by eliminating the need to think about, plan for, and pay for basic needs. This might include:

▸ Providing childcare, free meals, and healthcare services for students and their families

▸ Creating laundry facilities or family lounges with high-speed internet on campus

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions

Student Affairs

Effort Level

See key on page 5

37 Provide Unrestricted Financial Support

Help adults avoid common financial stressors that too often lead to stop out or drop out by providing unrestricted funds that can be used to satisfy any student need. This might include:

▸ Providing small grants to pay for food, childcare, transportation, technology, books, etc.

▸ Dispersing funds at regular intervals on a predetermined schedule or on an as needed basis throughout the year at the request of a specific student

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Student Financial Services

Student Affairs

Effort Level

38 **Modify Degree Pricing**

Lower the price of courses that adult students tend to choose.
This might include:

▸ Reducing the price of online or asynchronous courses for either all adult students or returning students only

▸ Creating a sliding scale payment structure based on income and financial aid eligibility

▸ Making courses cheaper as students near the end of their degree as an incentive to continue

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Academic Affairs
Business Services
Finance
Student Financial Services

Effort Level

In Practice

Starting August 2021, Morehouse College is offering an online program with reduced tuition ($600 per course credit) for adults returning to college. The program will be flexible by allowing students to set their own deadline for when they complete their degrees and freeing them from the constraints of a regular academic calendar.

39 **Provide Structured Advisement**

Help more students graduate by providing proactive academic advisement and counseling services. This might include:

▸ Requiring regular virtual check-ins as part of degree requirements, conveniently scheduled via SMS

▸ Reaching out to do pulse checks at regular intervals and providing resources based on student responses

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Academic Advising
Information Technology
Student Affairs

Effort Level

40 Build in Informal Support Networks

Help adults support one another by building social networks into your program model. This might include:

▸ Creating cohort-based programs or courses that are only for adult students

▸ Creating an adult student lounge on campus where adults can spend time in the company of others tackling similar challenges

▸ Planning adult-specific social events that create spaces for sharing experiences

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Academic Affairs
Student Affairs

Effort Level

41 Build Out Formal Peer Mentor Capacity

Peer mentors can be just as powerful post-enrollment as pre-enrollment. Add peer mentor capacity to further support adult students. This might include:

▸ Creating resource guides and tools to add structure to the mentor/mentee relationship

▸ Providing mentors access to SMS services to extend their reach

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Admissions
Student Affairs

Effort Level

Academic Program Updates

42 Offer Flexible Academic Policies

Structure courses in a way that makes it easier to successfully juggle both life and school. This might include:

▶ Accepting late assignments when students have extenuating circumstances

▶ Giving multiple assignments across a semester and allowing students to select a subset to submit

▶ Allowing a predetermined number of "late assignment days" and excused absences to be used at students' discretion

▶ Providing the same course in both synchronous and asynchronous modalities and allowing students to move back and forth between them at will

In Practice

In some classes, Pasadena Community College replaced a "no late assignments accepted" policy with more flexible language: "If you have an extenuating circumstance, please contact [the professor] by private message so we can discuss options." Professors noted this led more students to reach out for help when they needed it and resulted in fewer zeros on assignments, quizzes, and tests.

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Academic Affairs

Effort Level

43 Shorten Time to Degree Attainment

Make college a viable option for more adults by shortening the time it takes to earn a "four-year" degree. This might include:

▶ Adding competency based learning opportunities that allow students to demonstrate mastery of a subject matter, and get credit for it, without taking a whole semester-long course

▶ Assessing every incoming adult student for prior learning that could translate into credits earned

▶ Changing the frequency or timing of course offerings to increase the number of courses it is possible to complete in a year

▶ Exploring experiential learning courses that combine work and study, allowing students to earn credits for work done on the job

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Academic Affairs

Effort Level

44 Automatically Register Students

Avoid both the hassles involved with registering for classes and the chance of unintentionally lengthening time to graduation by making the course registration process automatic. This might include:

▶ Defaulting students into a recommended set of courses and asking them to confirm or change those selections

▶ Texting students a direct link to their individual course cart

▶ Creating warning pop-ups that appear when a less-than-ideal choice or change is made

Barriers

Implementer

Relevant Departments
Academic Affairs
Admissions
Information Technology

Effort Level