

REACT Reenrolls Nearly Twice as Many Students Who Have Stopped Attending College

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Over [40 million Americans](#) have some college credits but no postsecondary credential. Many of these students are considered “stop-outs,” meaning they earned some college credit and then withdrew from college for a time with the intention of eventually returning.¹ Stopped-out students [earn less and are more likely to be unemployed](#) than students who obtain a postsecondary degree.² The Re-Enrollment and Completion Team (REACT) intervention is an evidence-based approach designed to help stopped-out students return to college and eventually complete their degrees. Initial findings from an evaluation of REACT indicate that it could meaningfully help stopped-out students return to college. Across four colleges and a sample of nearly 3,000 students, students who received the REACT intervention were nearly twice as likely to reenroll.

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About REACT

REACT targets students who are within 15 credits of earning an associate’s degree but are not currently enrolled in college, aiming to help them reenroll and complete an associate’s degree. REACT provides outreach, services, and incentives to students for up to five semesters (including summers) and has three primary components:



- **MULTIMODAL COMMUNICATIONS:** Text messages, emails, phone calls, and postcard mailers inform stopped-out students about REACT and encourage them to reenroll.
- **DEDICATED REACT ADVISING:** After reengaging, students are connected with a dedicated REACT adviser who helps them with the reenrollment process and designing a plan to complete their degree. Once students reenroll, their REACT advisers continue reaching out to them, sending reminders and resources, and students are encouraged to meet with their advisers at least once per semester.
- **TUITION AND FEE WAIVERS:** These waivers cover the cost of up to 15 credit hours (approximately five courses), which should be enough for students to complete their degrees.³

About the Evaluation

The research team is conducting a randomized controlled trial to evaluate REACT's impact on reenrollment and degree completion at four community colleges in Florida: Florida SouthWestern State College, Northwest Florida State College, Hillsborough College, and Palm Beach State College. These colleges are in rural, suburban, and urban areas and range in size from about 5,000 to 25,000 students.

Before random assignment, the research team collaborated with each of the colleges to design the REACT program and prepare for the evaluation and program implementation. This collaboration included exploring the data infrastructure necessary to identify eligible students, designing outreach messages using principles from behavioral science, and outlining REACT adviser responsibilities and identifying a clear program staffing plan. MDRC also provided technical assistance to colleges throughout the program's implementation.

The research team worked with the colleges to randomly assign 4,268 total students into the study across two incoming groups of students (or *cohorts*), the first of whom entered college in Spring/Summer 2025 and the second of whom entered in Fall 2025. Approximately 40 percent of the students were randomly assigned to receive the REACT intervention (the program group) and the remaining students were randomly assigned not to receive it (the control group). The findings in this brief focus on the first cohort of 2,855 students and the initial outcome of reenrollment.

Students in the sample fit the following eligibility criteria:

- Stopped attending college within the past two years
- Were seeking an associate's degree when last enrolled
- Were within 15 credits of graduation
- Were in good academic standing (2.0 GPA or higher)

- Had no registration holds that would prevent reenrollment or completion (as often occurs when students have unpaid fees)
- Were not enrolled at another institution
- Had not completed their associate’s degree at any institution

Approximately 60 percent of the students in the first cohort are female. The cohort is diverse with respect to race/ethnicity: About 20 percent of students are Black, 40 percent are Hispanic/Latino, and 40 percent are White. Approximately two-thirds are age 24 or older. Before stopping out, about half had a GPA of 3.0 or higher. Similarly, about half had six or fewer credits remaining to complete an associate’s degree.

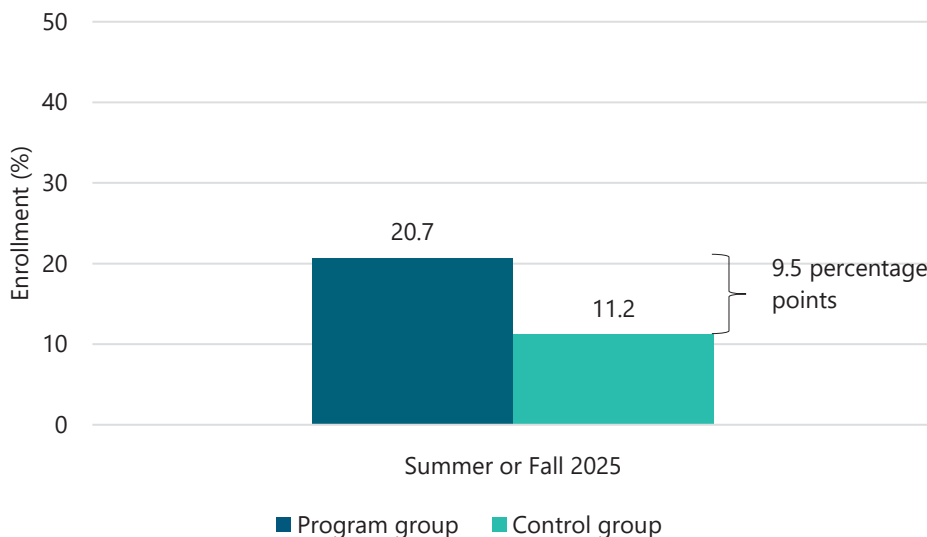
REACT nearly doubled reenrollment rates. In addition, the results appear to be consistent across colleges and across subgroups defined by gender, race/ethnicity, age, prior GPA, and number of credits remaining.

REACT Nearly Doubles Reenrollment Rates

Colleges began reaching out to the first cohort of REACT students between April and June 2025. This outreach timing enabled some students to return to college in Summer 2025 and others in Fall 2025, so the primary outcome for the early findings in this brief is defined as reenrolling in Summer 2025, Fall 2025, or both.⁴

In this time frame, REACT had a statistically significant impact on reenrollment rates: 11.2 percent of the control group reenrolled in college compared with 20.7 percent of the REACT group, an estimated impact of 9.5 percentage points (as shown in Figure 1). In other words, REACT nearly doubled reenrollment rates.

Figure 1. REACT Boosts Reenrollment



(continued)

Figure 1 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data from study colleges (Florida SouthWestern State College, Hillsborough Community College, Northwest Florida State College, and Palm Beach State College).

NOTES: Estimates are for cohort 1 only, a total of 2,855 students. The 9.5 percentage point effect estimate is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Estimates are adjusted by random assignment block, race/ethnicity, gender, age, number of credits away from graduation, and grade point average before stop-out.

In addition, these early findings suggest that REACT is a promising strategy to reengage a wide range of stopped-out students, across colleges and subgroups defined by gender, race/ethnicity, age, prior GPA, and number of credits remaining.

What's Next

Colleges will continue to implement REACT through Spring 2027, continuing to encourage students to reenroll and continuing to provide dedicated advising and tuition waivers to those who have reenrolled. Early findings for the full study sample of 4,268 students will be published in Fall 2026. Updated findings exploring REACT's impact on degree attainment, as well as findings on the program's costs and implementation, will be available by early 2029.

States or colleges interested in learning more about REACT or exploring potential partnerships are encouraged to email Project Director Colleen Sommo at colleen.sommo@mdrc.org.

Notes and References

1. National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, *Some College, No Credential: A 2025 Snapshot for the Nation and the States* (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2025).
2. Melanie Hanson, "College Dropout Rates" (website: <https://educationdata.org/college-dropout-rates>, 2025).
3. Tuition waivers are available to in-state students, and are a first-dollar scholarship, meaning they are applied before any other federal or state aid is considered.
4. The analysis plan for the REACT evaluation can be found here: <https://osf.io/c5m2x/overview>.

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