

MDRC | July 26, 2018

Using Behavioral Science to Improve Student Outreach

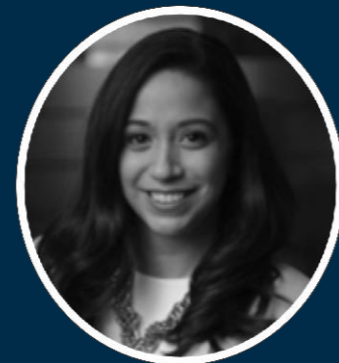
PRESENTED BY



Andrea Vasquez
andrea.vasquez@mdrc.org



Xavier Alemañy
xavier.alemany@mdrc.org



Rosario Torres
rosario.torres@mdrc.org





CPSI ■ mdrc

COLLEGE PROMISE SUCCESS INITIATIVE





Dedicated to:

- **Learning what works** to improve higher education programs and social policies.
- **Strengthening** programs and policies through demonstrations and evaluations.
- Conducting large-scale, **rigorous evaluations** to improve outcomes for college students across the country.
- Providing **technical assistance** to schools, programs, and organizations.





Open-Access Webinars

- *Getting Promise Students Through the First Year: Lessons from the Detroit Promise Path and Beyond*
- *Using Behavioral Science to Improve Student Outreach*

UPCOMING WEBINAR: *Adult Promise Programs*

- Co-presented by SHEEO
- October 30, 1-2PM EST



Webinar Objectives

- Learn how **behavioral science** is being used to improve the design of social programs, especially in the higher education space.
- **Learn to apply** behavioral techniques (SIMPLER framework) to help you improve student outreach and communications.
- Take home some **practical tools and resources** to help you craft intentional and responsive student messaging.





Important Housekeeping

- All lines have been muted to reduce distracting background noise
- Send questions or comments in the question box
- Poll questions at a couple points in the webinar
- Email additional questions to promise@mdrc.org

The screenshot shows a Q&A interface with a yellow header bar labeled 'Q&A' and a close button 'X'. Below the header, it says 'All (0)'. A large text input box contains the placeholder text: 'Select a question, and then type your answer here, There is a 256-charactors limit.' At the bottom of the input box are two buttons: 'Send' and 'Send Privately...'. In the bottom right corner, there is a 'Connected' status indicator with a blue dot.



CABS & Behavioral Science



- Center within MDRC that combines expertise in **behavioral science** with MDRC's expertise in social policy.
- **Tests behaviorally informed solutions** in the field using random assignment and rapid cycle evaluation designs.
- MDRC has **over 20 projects** that use lessons from behavioral science, including several in the higher education domain.





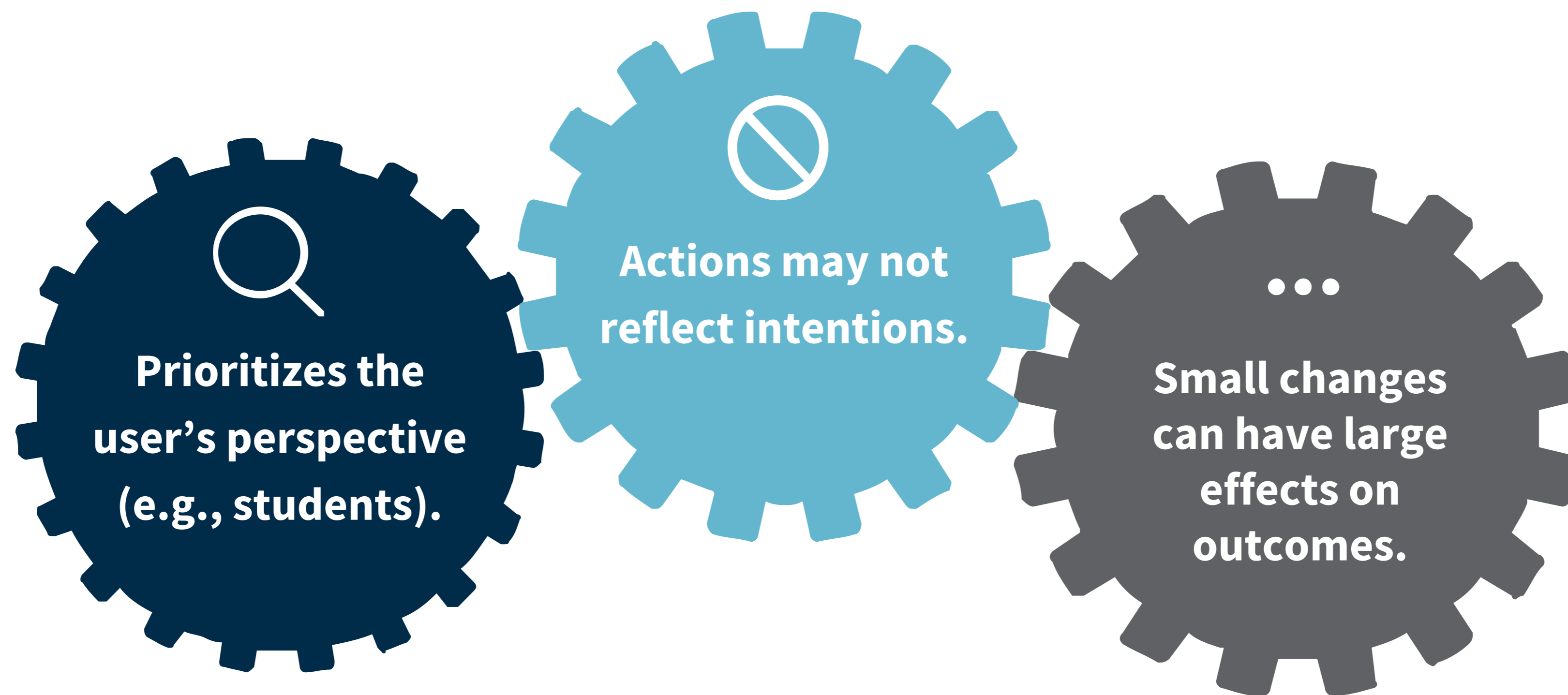
What is behavioral science?

- Studies how people **actually behave**
- Draws on research from psychology and economics, among others, about **decision-making** and **action**
- Allows us to change how we approach problem-solving by being more reflective about **predictable patterns of behavior**





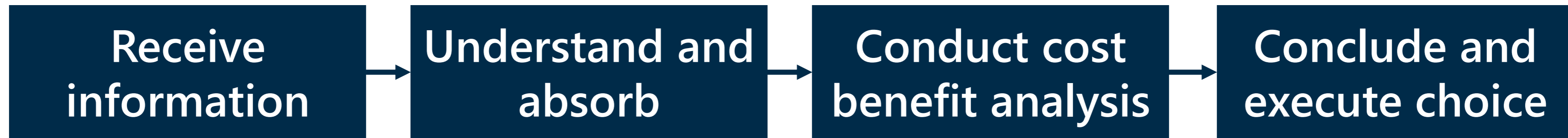
Key insights from behavioral science





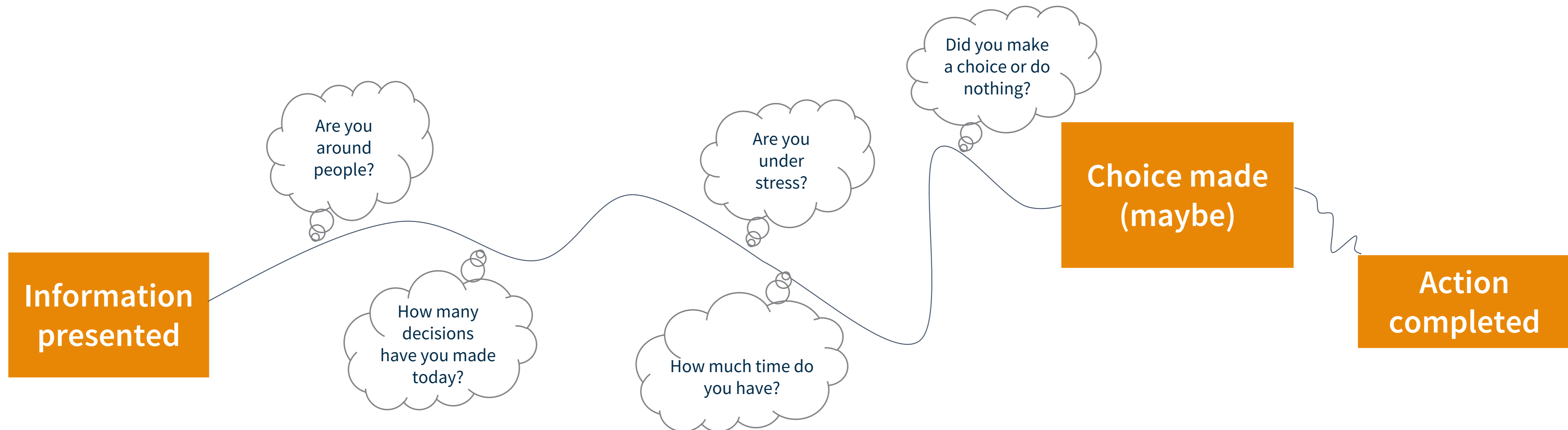
A “behavioral” view of decision-making

Traditional



“Rational agent” that economic models of decision-making are based

Realistic



Applies psychology to behavior to explain decision making

The SIMPLER Framework



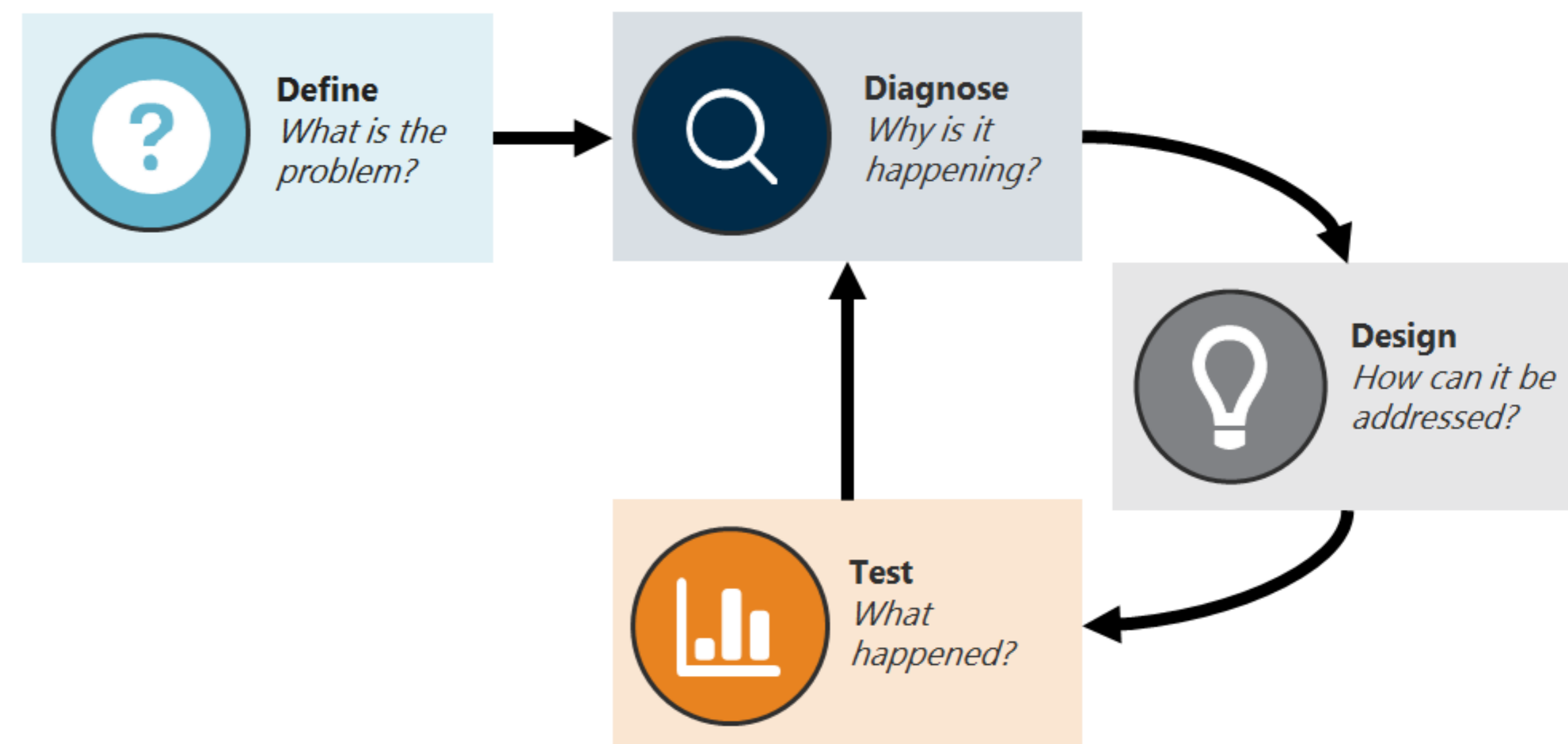
Developing

S I M P L E R

solutions

Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency (BIAS) Project

- Funded by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) of the Administration for Children and Families
- Conducted and evaluated 15 interventions in 7 states
- Each intervention used a systematic approach called “behavioral design”
- The SIMPLER framework was developed to summarize key concepts that are relevant and useful **across contexts**





Developing

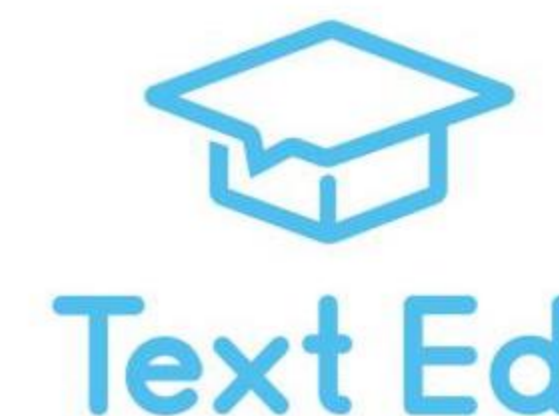
S I M P L E R

solutions



Encouraging Additional Summer Enrollment

- Study involving 10 Ohio community colleges
- Aims to increase the number of students who enroll in summer courses
- One way: behaviorally informed messaging campaign to students that included emails, postcards, and letters
- Increased enrollment in summer courses by 5 percentage points (a 21% increase!)
- *Funded by Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation*



Text Ed Demonstration Project

- Uses two-way text messaging to improve college access among non-traditional students
- Study involving 18 Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) across the country
- Implements an automated and personalized text messaging system designed to help participants navigate the FAFSA and successfully enroll in college
- *Funded by the U.S. Department of Education*



CABS SIMPLER Framework

S	I	M	P	L	E	R
Social Influence	Implementation Prompt	Making Deadlines	Personalization	Loss Aversion	Ease	Reminder

DEFINITIONS

<p>The way people perceive themselves in relation to others. Certain identities can be primed based on the desired behavior.</p>	<p>Bridges intention with action. When people feel they have made a commitment, they are more likely to follow through.</p>	<p>Frames a future action as important and urgent.</p>	<p>Encouraging a particular behavior through feedback or incentives.</p>	<p>Preference for avoiding losses over acquiring gains.</p>	<p>Making processes automatic through defaults, nudges, and other techniques.</p>	<p>Prompts to encourage the completion of an action, often in the form of a text message or a postcard.</p>
<p>Texas mailed to incarcerated parents who owed child support a postcard that included the line, "Other parents have had courts lower their child support."</p>	<p>appointment on time, with the proper documents.</p>	<p>that people who missed the first due date would have time to catch up before the real deadline.</p>	<p>asked providers to communicate with parents to assist them with renewing their CCDF voucher.</p>	<p>attending an appointment, and the other emphasizing losses they might incur by not attending.</p>	<p>to parents before they even asked that included a tip sheet specifying which questions in the application had to be answered.</p>	<p>Ohio sent a monthly reminder through mail, robocall, or text message to parents who owed child support but were not getting any other monthly invoice to remind them to pay.</p>

We'll email this to you at the end of the webinar!

For more details, see the final report of the BIAS project: Nudging Change in Human Services: Final Report of the Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency (BIAS) Project





IMPLER



S

Social Influence

Persuasion by society, peers, or a person of influence can affect people's decisions and actions. People tend to follow what they think other people are doing.

Could you benefit from summer courses?
Check out these stories of students
getting the most out of their summer at
Columbus.

Columbus State
Community College
550 East Spring Street
PO Box 1609
Columbus, OH 43216

First-Class Mail
U.S. Postage
PAID
Columbus, OH
Permit #540

D *“I think of it as a win-win situation. I was able to finish my modern language requirement as a result of taking a summer course. I had a couple friends in the class and we would typically study after classes together...it was a good experience overall.”*

S *“I know for me being a working adult... even if you just took a part-time course load during the summer, it doesn't take an enormous amount of time. The more you put in, the more you're going to get out of it. It will get you to where you want to be sooner, or at least get you on the path there sooner.”*

Need help registering for summer classes? Find your advisor:

Student Central | Columbus Campus at 614-287-5353
Student Services | Delaware Campus at 740-203-8345

Social Influence

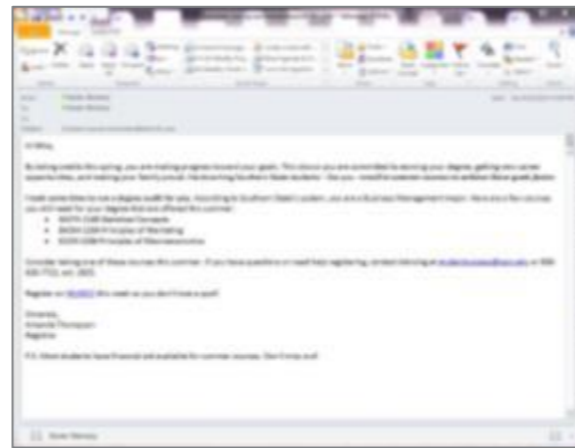
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S

M P L E R

I



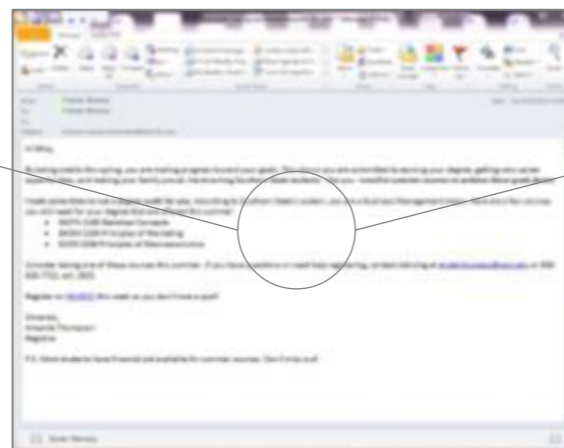
Implementation Prompts

Encouraging people to plan the steps they will take to complete a task can move people from intention to action.



Follow these four steps to enroll in summer classes:

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



Implementation Prompts

Encouraging people to plan the steps they will take to complete a task can move people from intention to action.



S I M P L E R

M

Make Deadlines

Framing a future action as important and urgent by setting a due date discourages the tendency to prioritize today's needs over tomorrow's.

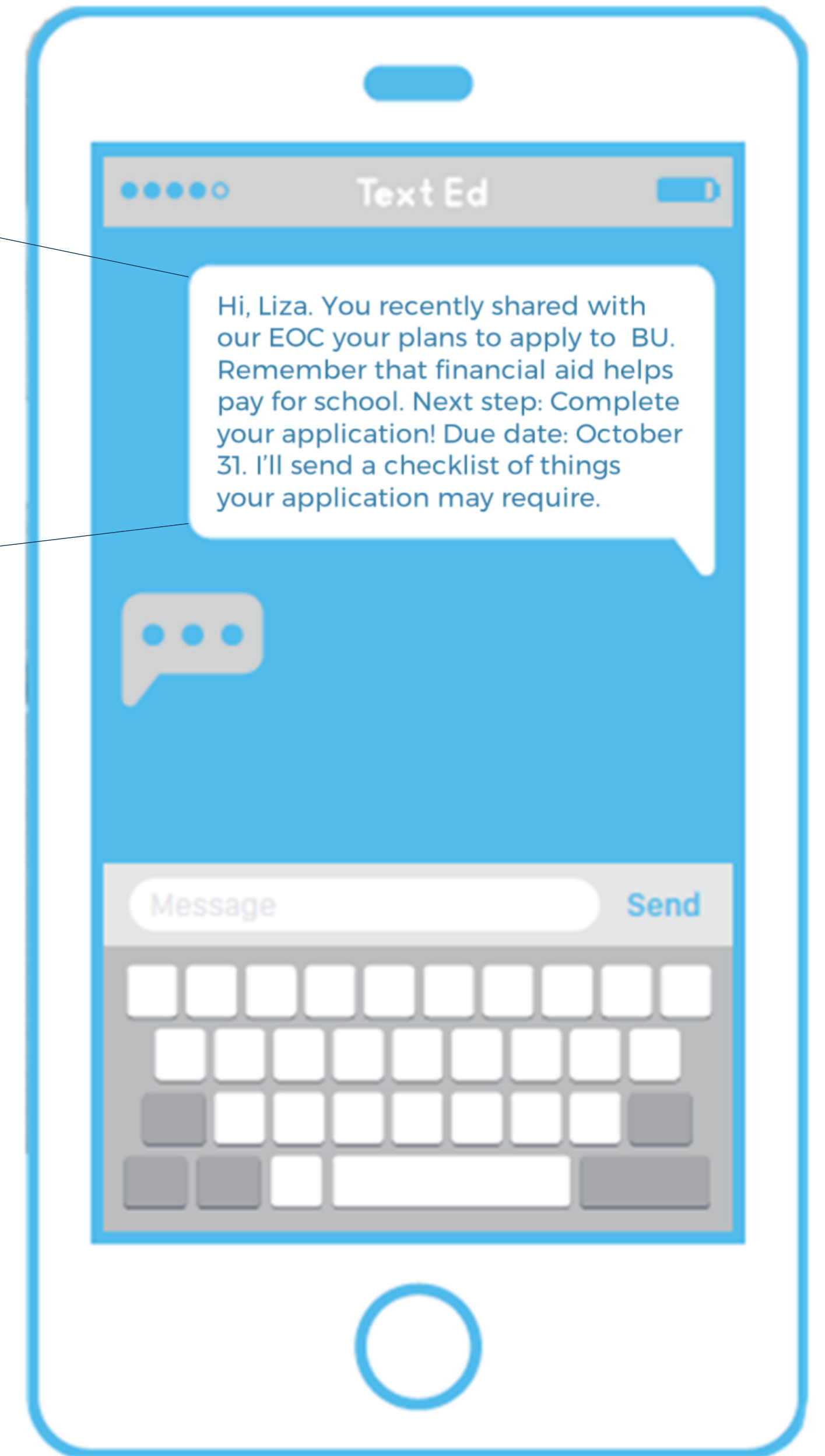


Hi, Liza. You recently shared with our EOC your plans to apply to BU. Remember that financial aid helps pay for school. Next step: Complete your application! **Due date: October 31.** I'll send a checklist of things your application may require.



Make Deadlines

Framing a future action as important and urgent by setting a due date discourages the tendency to prioritize today's needs over tomorrow's.





S I M

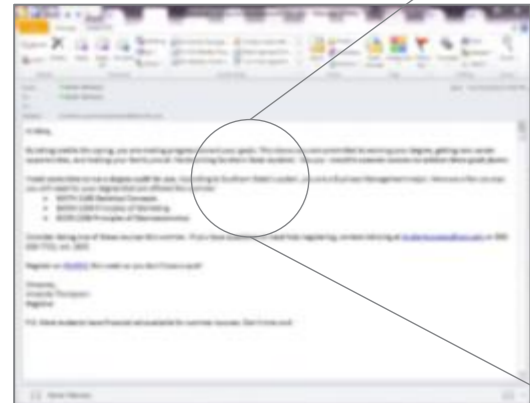
L E R

P

Personalization

Efforts to personalize information or give customers personal assistance through a difficult task can improve outcomes.





Dear Camielle,

I took some time to review your financial aid package and want to make sure you know that you have grants available for summer courses. Based on my review, you have up to \$2,908 from your Pell Grant (which you do not have to pay back) that you can use for summer courses.



P

Personalization

Efforts to personalize information or give customers personal assistance through a difficult task can improve outcomes.



S I M P

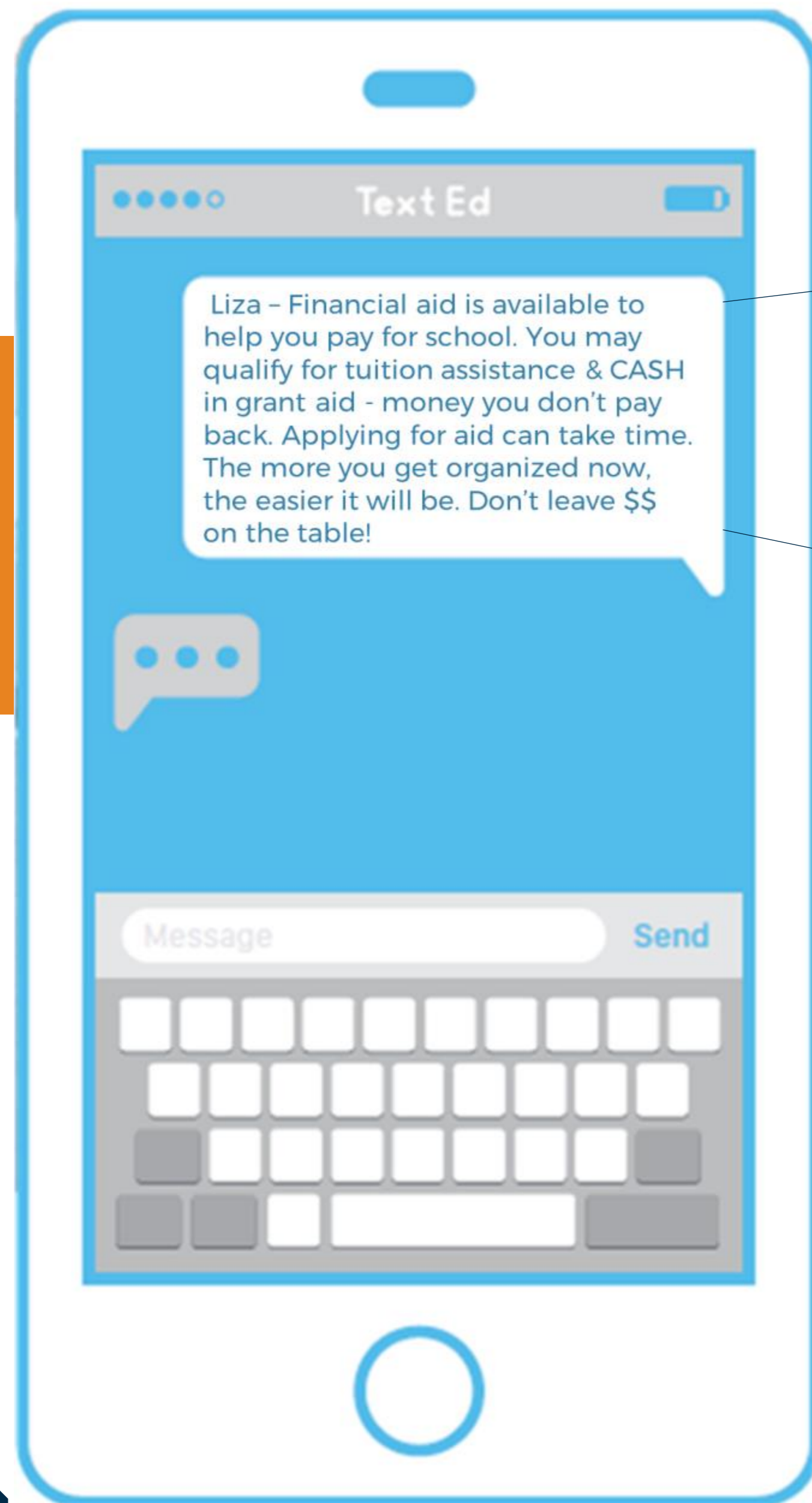
E R

L

Loss Aversion

Humans tend to prefer avoiding losses to achieving equal-sized gains, relative to a reference point. Framing the same policy or opportunity as a loss can drive behavior more strongly than framing it as a gain.





M P

Liza – Financial aid is available to help you pay for school. You may qualify for tuition assistance & CASH in grant aid - money you don't pay back. Applying for aid can take time. The more you get organized now, the easier it will be. **Don't leave \$\$ on the table!**

L

Loss Aversion

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S I M P L R

E

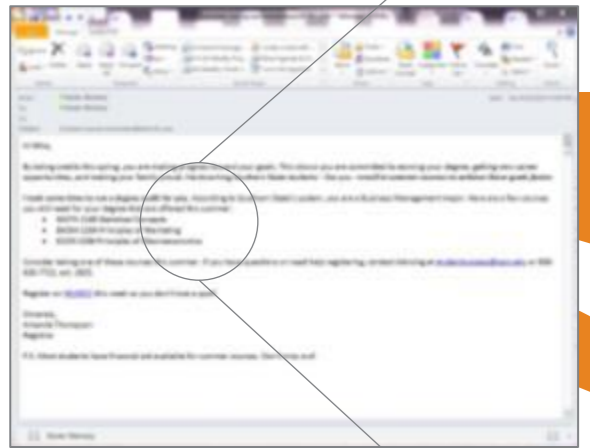
Ease

Reduce complexity through, for example, defaults, simplification, removing hassles, and color-coding.



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

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



Ease

Reduce complexity through, for example, defaults, simplification, removing hassles, and color-coding.



S I M P L E

R

Reminders

Reminders reduce mental effort by providing a cue that the task still needs to be completed.

No Reminders: More mental effort to complete a task

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
			2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	Registered for summer?		

LE

R

***Registration
Deadline***

Reminders

Reminders reduce mental effort by providing a cue that the task still needs to be completed.

Reminders: lead to stronger results

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
			2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14		16	17	18	19
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LE

R

***Registration
Deadline***

Reminders

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S **Social Influence**

I **Implementation Prompts**

M **Make Deadlines**

P **Personalization**

L **Loss Aversion**

E **Ease**

R **Reminders**

Q&A

PRESENTERS



Andrea Vasquez
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rosario.torres@mdrc.org

The SIMPLER Framework

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- I** Implementation Prompts
- M** Make Deadlines
- P** Personalization
- L** Loss Aversion
- E** Ease
- R** Reminders

FURTHER READING

- [Encouraging Additional Summer Enrollment](#)
- [Text Ed Demonstration](#)
- [Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency \(BIAS\) Project Final Report](#)
- [Nudging for Success](#)
- [Summer Nudging](#)



Thank you for joining!

Promise@mdrc.org

