



SOME COLLEGE,
NO CREDENTIAL

Project Reconnect

Supporting Students with Some College, No Credential

This guide covers the following topics related to assisting students with some college, but no credential, re-enroll and graduate:

Step 1: Assess Causes for Student Stop Out

Understand why students have stopped out as a first step to supporting their return

Step 2: Identify Students Eligible to Return

After reviewing reasons for stop-out, create lists of student to invite back

Step 3: Design Student Friendly Processes

Create infrastructure to support re-enrollment

Step 4: Begin Re-Engagement Outreach

Reach out to students with a clear and easy path to re-enrollment

Step 5: Provide Ongoing Support After Re-Enrollment

Identify risks for stopping out again and monitor student progress

Step 6: Complete the Checklist

Answer the questions to see how ready your campus is to re-enroll students with some college, but no credential

Step 7: Complete the Outreach Campaign Planning Form

Use the campaign planning form to plan the outreach campaign. The form will help identify which students will be contacted, the timeframe for contact, the re-enrollment processes and any programs to deal with special circumstances or challenges students have. The form is a useful tool to align all the departments that will have a stake in re-enrolling students.

About Project Reconnect

Project Reconnect is a special strategy for institutions that focuses on assisting students with some college, but no credential to return to the institution to graduate. Project Reconnect includes research, planning, and direct student outreach to make the re-enrollment process as seamless as possible for both the institution and students.

About Trellis Strategies

We are a strategic research and consulting firm dedicated to advancing postsecondary education and strengthening the workforce by delivering unparalleled insights into the modern learner experience, from application through graduation. With over 40 years' experience serving higher education institutions and helping students navigate complex processes, we have the knowledge, insight, and experience to help organizations turn their data into action and action into results.



Overview

Institutions across the country are focused on helping individuals re-enroll in postsecondary education. This is likely due to the fact that there are over 40 million individuals with some college, no credential (SCNC) in the United States. This population represents a large market that has already shown an interest in postsecondary education which, in theory, should make them easier students to enroll. However, these students come with many unique and interesting roadblocks to enrollment.

SCNC outcome indicators - re-enrollment, completion, and perseverance - declined from the 2020/21 academic year to the 2021/22 academic year, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. In total, over 864,000 SCNC students re-enrolled, 53,300 students completed their first-ever undergraduate credential the same year they re-enrolled, and 508,700 re-enrollees from

the previous year persevered into their second year. These represent one-year declines of nearly 80,000 re-enrollees, 7,000 completers, and 23,100 perseverers relative to the 2020/21 academic year.

Most SCNC students were younger than 35 at last enrollment. Potential completers and recent stop-outs were younger still. 24.6% of recent stop-outs were younger than 20 and over half of potential completers were in their early 20s (55.6%).

From registration holds (both academic and financial) to perceptions that they can't be successful in courses, institutions must provide robust support to help these individuals enroll. What follows is a guide to help you develop a strong strategy to engage, re-enroll, and support students with some college, no credential.

There are over **40 MILLION** individuals with **some college, no credential** in the United States.



46.7% of re-enrollees were between the ages of 25 and 34.



There was a **decline** in nearly **80,000 re-enrollees** in the 2021/2022 academic year.



Process

STEP 1: ASSESS CAUSES FOR STUDENT STOP-OUT

Core to developing re-enrollment related support is understanding your existing departing population. In this way, you can help support their return to campus when they re-enroll.

- **Retention Analysis**

Institutions can regularly look at their departing students to identify risk indicators. These indicators are normally fairly stable (DFW in a course, unpaid balances, or a GPA under a 2.5), but further exploration can get to the root cause like individual stumbling block courses, unattainable levels of unmet need, an unrealistic or incomplete plan to pay tuition and institutional charges, and unfulfilled pre-enrollment supports, such as adequate advising, housing, or other issues.

- **Exit Survey**

Conducting an exit survey often provides a way to collect some qualitative feedback as many students do not participate in exit related interviews with campus staff as they depart. Response rates to these instruments are often low, but can provide very strong thematic responses that may highlight areas for improvement in student support.

- **Clearinghouse Analysis**

It is highly encouraged that institutions run files against the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) student tracker database on an annual basis. This will allow institutions to see where, if anywhere, students subsequently enrolled. This data allows campus staff to better understand key profile variables like: institution type, price, location, and degree program mix. Additional analysis of matching to student personas can help to identify those that are eligible for re-enrollment.

- **Faculty and Staff Engagement**

Data collection from students is very important to an effective campaign. However, faculty and staff also have numerous insights and perceptions from working with students. Administering feedback instruments (interviews and focus groups) with faculty and staff can provide valuable insight into campus policy, procedure, and practice.

- **Personas Developed**

For campuses to effectively engage students, it is important to develop personas of those students that have left campus. This often includes three personas:

- Students with academic barriers are students that have had some level of academic challenges that may be indicated through SAP, low GPAs, or DFW's in courses. Assessing the key drivers of this, including pre and post enrollment characteristics, can help to inform re-enrollment strategy and targets.
- Students with financial holds have likely been barred from registering and may owe a balance to the institution. Understanding the level of unmet need that is manageable is key to re-engaging these students (including any potential balance forgiveness efforts) and preventing the stop out from occurring in the future. Students who were allowed to matriculate without being packaged at all are often another risk. Students with no holds are the most likely to re-enroll. It is important for institutions to understand if these students have enrolled elsewhere and to attempt to collect qualitative themes on why students left to inform messaging campaigns.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY STUDENTS ELIGIBLE TO RETURN

After identifying the causes for stop-out and the personas of students who stopped attending, identify those students are the best candidate for return. Students with easily-solved issues are the easiest to re-engage.

- **Students with Small Financial Holds**
Students with small financial balances likely discontinued enrollment after being barred from registering for courses. This population is a primary population for re-enrollment, especially once you provide them solutions (see “Student Friendly Processes” below) to help address the small balance issue.
- **Students with Temporary Life Circumstances**
Review information from faculty and staff engagement, and exit surveys above on students who stopped due to temporary circumstances such as personal or family health, relocation, childcare, transportation, or other temporary circumstances. These students should be re-invited to return to campus.
- **Students Almost Finished**
Students who stopped out with one year or less of coursework to graduate are also prime candidates for re-enrollment, especially those whose GPA is above the graduation standard.

STEP 3: DESIGN STUDENT FRIENDLY PROCESSES

Re-enrolling stopped out learners requires flexible and friendly policies and procedures for student support. Create simple processes, such as those below, that will make re-enrollment easier on returning students.

- **Re-Apply Application Flow**
Most campus have an “Apply Now!” button on their website to help students easily access the application. Fewer institutions have a “Re-Apply Now” or a specific application flow for those that have been enrolled elsewhere. This application flow can help the student feel more connected to the process.
- **Transcript Review**
Campuses need a timely and efficient way to review individuals transcripts for transfer credit and other prior learning activities. This should be embedded into the onboarding process.
- **Balance Forgiveness**
Many students leave an institution due to a past due balance. Enacting balance forgiveness, or deferred payment options, can assist students in navigating the financial hurdle to re-enrollment. New federal guidance may limit transcript withholding, but barriers remain for re-enrollment at the same institution due to past due balances.
- **Term Start Dates**
Individuals with some college, no credential have already been through the college process and are interested in re-engaging as soon as possible. Offering multiple term start dates to accelerate time to learning can help to reduce the risk of melt and make institutions more appealing for re-enrollment.

STEP 4: BEGIN RE-ENGAGEMENT OUTREACH

After identifying students who stopped-out (and the reasons), creating a list of those eligible to return, and designing student-friendly processes, it's time to begin outreach to students to invite them to re-enroll. The re-engagement outreach process requires separate and dedicated outreach channels. Key drivers:

- **Segmented Campaigns**

Campaigns should be segmented to allow for targeting of those that have departed the institution within one term, two terms up to two years, and longer than two years. Additional variation should occur for students that were previously enrolled at the re-enrolling institution versus those that were enrolled elsewhere.

- **Multichannel**

Outreach campaigns should be multichannel in nature with different intensity based on likelihood to enroll. Students that engage with the institution should have escalation to phone outreach to allow for intensive support. Campaign language is important with a strong need for acknowledgement of challenges in postsecondary education and desire for individuals to re-enroll.

- **Advisors**

Students that express interest in re-enrollment should be quickly connected to an enrollment advisor within 24 hours. These individuals should be trained to support the student through the re-enrollment process and should

have dedicated re-enrollment specific scripts for topics including various holds and Title IV eligibility issues.

- **Degree Mapping**

As part of the re-enrollment process students should quickly be connected to a degree mapping tool, and human support, to assist in understanding the various paths (including cost, time, and credit portability) to a credential.

- **Melt Support**

Even for institutions with frequent start dates, melt can be an issue for re-enrolled students. Frequent communication after confirmation of re-enrollment is essential to create a sense of belonging on campus.

- **Once Enrolled**

After students have decided to re-enroll on campus it is important for institutions to continue to support them throughout this journey. Campuses can provide things like cohort models, dedicated re-enrollment advisors, and specific course sections each term of highly enrolled courses.

STEP 5: PROVIDE ONGOING SUPPORT AFTER RE-ENROLLMENT

Students who stopped-out before are at risk of stopping out again. Create systems for monitoring the progress of re-enrolling students so they can continue to graduation.

- **Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)**
SAP presents a strong opportunity to engage students in tutoring and other resources through the warning system. Creating an individual that is responsible for SAP warning processes and the effective avoidance of SAP is essential to developing robust campaigns.
- **Payment Plans**
Payment plans are strong indicators of potential financial barriers for students. Proactively reviewing the accounts of students that are not making progress against their payment plans can provide insight into potential drop risk.
- **Non-Registered**
Institutions should have a regular process for pulling individuals that are registered in an existing term, but not registered for future terms. Institutions should conduct campus wide outreach to these individuals with supplemental campaigns occurring with advising staff and, if possible, current term faculty.
- **Faculty and Advisor Referral Channel**
Institutions are encouraged to create a visible referral channel for faculty and academic affairs staff to refer students to support services. This channel should allow the referring individual to briefly describe the students challenges and then be connected to appropriate referral resources which may be a triage student success counselor role.
- **Student Culture and Belonging**
Institutions are encouraged to create a culture of engagement for re-enrolled students through the development of targeted advising programs, faculty mentoring programs, and structured touchpoints with these staff members. Additionally, institutions can develop specific targeted motivational messaging campaigns, engage in specific student organizations or cohort groups, and host end of semester celebrations for completing students.

STEP 6: COMPLETE THE CHECKLIST

Students with some college, no credential represent a great opportunity to grow enrollment and fulfill your mission by serving students that have been encouraged by the promise of a postsecondary education but who have not yet completed what they started. These students have unique barriers that are different than those in your traditional enrollment process.

It is important to develop a robust support strategy that helps individuals navigate these barriers and successfully re-enroll in courses. The planning checklists that follow will

help your campus to greatly improve the lives of students, enhances the institutions' mission, and helps to restore trust in postsecondary education.

Assess your readiness to support students with some college, but no credential, to return to campus and graduate. Answer the questions below to help your campus develop a strong re-enrollment process.

STEP 7: COMPLETE THE OUTREACH CAMPAIGN PLANNING FORM

Use the campaign planning form to plan the outreach campaign. The form will help identify which students will be contacted, the timeframe for contact, the re-enrollment processes and any programs to deal with special

circumstances or challenges students have. The form is a useful tool to align all the departments that will have a stake in re-enrolling students.

Some College, No Credential Checklist

ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

The campus has:

Yes No

- Completed a study to understand the factors that contribute to student departure from campus
- Deployed an exit survey to better understand student perceptions
- Conducted an analysis of National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data to understand where students enroll after stopping out/dropping out
- Collected feedback from faculty and staff around reasons for student departures
- Collected feedback from faculty and staff on campus policies, procedures, and practice to prevent student departures
- Identified the primary reasons for student departure
- Created a map that showcases the contributing factors to those reasons for departure Partner Support

STUDENT FRIENDLY PROCESSES

The campus has:

Yes No

- Mapped an application flow for students that are re-applying to the institution
- Developed a specific web journey for students to re-engage with the institution
- Initiated a process to engage students with academic advisors during the application process
- Created a transcript review process to maximize the number of accepted credit hours and the various paths to degrees and credentials
- Developed scripts to assist with navigating financial barriers to re-enrollment
- Implemented a balance forgiveness program to help minimize the financial burden on those who left the institution because of unpaid charges
- Created staggered term start dates to assist with quickly enrolling students in credit experiences
- Developed opportunities for students to engage in non-credit activities prior to the start of credit activities
- Created a re-engagement communication strategy with segmented campaigns
(see the *Project Reconnect Outreach Planning Document* below)

PREVENTION PROCESSES

The campus has:

Yes No

- Audited the SAP process to develop new channels for early alert
- Audited the SAP process to develop new channels for stakeholder training
- Audited the SAP process to develop new channels for intervention promotion
- Developed a review process for students on a payment plan
- Created various interventions to serve students that are on a payment plan
- Implemented a process for reporting on students that have not registered for a future term and not applied for graduation
- Created outreach protocols to engage those students that have not registered for a future term and not applied for graduation
- Implemented a referral channel for faculty and staff to identify students at risk of dropping out
- Provided training for faculty and staff on how to engage with students that are discussing leaving the institution
- Created specific on-campus programming efforts targeted at students that have re-enrolled
- Offer academic support (tutoring/bridge program/prep-course session)
- Developed cohort opportunities for students to connect with other students that are re-enrolling at the institution

Project Reconnect Outreach Campaign Planning

Institution Name:

What term are you targeting your students to return?

- Summer Fall Spring Other

STUDENT INFORMATION

1. Who is your target audience for this campaign?
2. Are other campaigns being administered during the same term? Please list:
3. Does the target audience have any of the following?
 - Academic Holds
 - Financial Holds
 - Title IV Eligibility Block
 - Other
4. What would be an approximate volume of students?
5. What would be the first step for students to start the re-enrollment process?
 - Submit admissions application
 - Set up an appointment with academic advisor/admissions specialist
 - Register for classes

SEMESTER INFORMATION

6. When is the semester first class day?
7. When is the last day to register?

APPLICATION INFORMATION

8. When does the application open?
9. Application website:
10. Is there an application fee?
 - Yes Fee amount: \$
 - No
 - Yes, but we have a fee waiver. For fee waiver information contact/visit:

ADDITIONAL ENROLLMENT STEPS

11. In addition to re-applying and registering, what essential steps are required for students to re-enroll:

- Apply for financial aid
- Apply for housing
- Submit health records
- Submit transcripts
- Other
- Other
- Other

Are each of these steps clearly outlined with deadlines, required forms, and contact information for additional assistance?

- Yes No

ADMISSIONS INFORMATION

12. Admission website:

13. Admissions contact information:

Name: _____ Email: _____
Title: _____ Phone: _____

ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT INFORMATION

14. Is Academic Advisement Mandatory?

- Yes No

15. When does academic advisement open?

16. Academic advisement website:

17. Advising contact information:

Name: _____ Email: _____
Title: _____ Phone: _____

FINANCIAL AID

18. Do you want to include financial aid information in the communication to students?

- Yes No

If yes, do you have on-campus resources to assist with FAFSA completion?

- Yes No

If yes, please provide contact information including available times:

19. Financial Aid contact information:

Name: _____ Email: _____
Title: _____ Phone: _____

PERMISSION TO REFERENCE YOUR PARTICIPATION

Do you allow the use of the institution's name as a participant in Project Reconnect and the publishing of aggregated results of all participants, typically on a semester and/or annual basis.

Yes

No

If yes, please sign below.

Our institution agrees to participate in the above conditions for Project Reconnect.

Institution Name

Signature

Name

Title

Date

Evolving for the
modern learner.
