

# MAKING DELIBERATE PERSONAL CONNECTIONS BEFORE ENROLLMENT TO DECREASE “SUMMER MELT.”



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## Abstract:

“Summer melt” occurs when admitted students who enroll and deposit at a college lose their motivation to attend during the summer between the end of high school and beginning of college due to lack of understanding, resources, support, guidance, and engagement. Statistics show that roughly 10% to 15% of the Mason Gross incoming class will withdraw prior to starting, don’t show up the first day of classes or only attend for a few weeks (maybe a month) in their first semester before leaving their program permanently. Students most impacted by this phenomenon are those who come from underrepresented populations, low-income families, or are first generation college students. These students don’t “melt” because they no longer want to go to college, instead they “melt” because they don’t have the resources, support, or knowledge to follow through on their plans. Students at risk for melting over the summer would benefit from the implementation of this proposal most, and a positive impact will also be felt schoolwide and by the larger university community.

## Primary Stakeholders:

- Rutgers University
- Mason Gross School of the Arts
- Office of Admission
- Office for Advising and Students Success
- Community Arts
- Associate Dean of Equity
- Diversity and Equity Committee
- At risk students incoming students
- Department administration and faculty

## Key Steps/Activities:

- Data Collection of summer melt, retention, and graduation rates over the last 5 to 10 years.
- Measure the impact of the above on different populations noting race, ethnicity, socio-economic backgrounds, EFC, financial need, high school districts, family circumstance, etc.
- Identify educator and counselor contacts in target school districts to cultivate relationships with.
- Benchmark peer institution practices and speak with peer leaders in student success and admissions to develop new practices and initiatives.

## Effectiveness Measures:

- Collecting information in the following areas would provide sufficient data to measure the program’s effectiveness
- Enrollment and registration trends
  - Student feedback
  - Diversity of student population
  - Partnerships with educators and counselors outside of Rutgers
  - Retention vs. attrition
  - Graduation rates

## Communication/Engagement:

- Develop a SharePoint site to foster transparency and allow various stakeholders access to data.
- Create a project management site on Microsoft Teams.
- Recommendations communicated through the SharePoint site, newsletters (emails) and faculty/staff meetings.
- Regular meetings with various stakeholders to update them on progress would also be beneficial to this initiative.

## Proposed Timeline:

- January – April – collect data
- April/May – Present findings to key stakeholders
- May-August - Create and regularly meet with a steering committee of students, faculty, and staff to serve on the to develop and execute the project.

## Current Status/Future Directions:

Since I started my new role last year, some initiatives through partnerships with the Advising and Student Success office at MGSA have set the framework for thinking about how to combat this issue in a way which is effective and efficient. Also engaging and learning more from my sponsor about her work in first year experience task force, student success initiatives and student retention will help provide valuable insight on how to launch a project based on data which will help cultivate its success.