

Nudging Students to Success: The Integration of Academic Advising and Motivational Psychology

Presenters:

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Overview

In this webinar, presenters from highly-rated past NACADA conferences come together to address a dilemma that academic advisors from across the globe are all too familiar with: How do we effectively motivate students to take advantage of student success offices and academic planning tools? Despite the fact that most higher education institutions now offer a wealth of student success resources, survey data suggests that these offices are under-utilized by students. Our presenters will discuss the micro and macro factors that contribute to this issue, and will argue that academic advisors play an essential role in the solution. Utilizing techniques found in Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein's "Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness," advisors are able to nudge students into making good decisions by altering predictable behavior through incentives. Discussion will focus on nudging students via intentional acts of persuasion and guidance to produce outcomes while maintaining a student's agency.

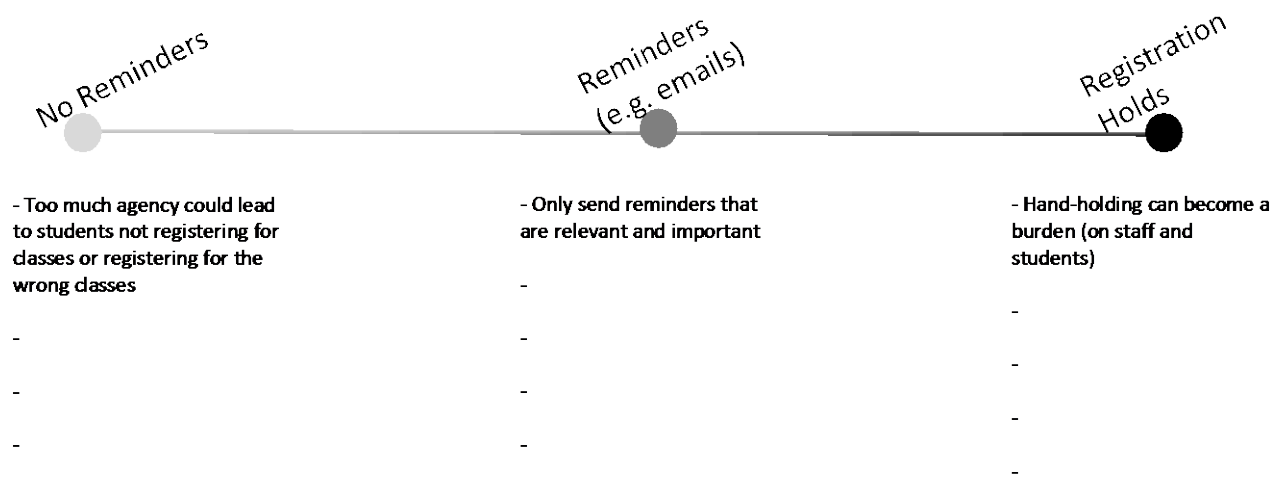
Pre-Webinar Activity Suggestions

Begin by brainstorming and discussing answers to the following questions:

- Why do students put off enrolling in courses? And what are reasons students have told you?
- How can advisors actively aid students with course registration?
- How can advisors passively aid students with course registration?

Then, work through and discuss this "Scale of Agency" activity on the following page. You'll see a description and instructions in the box below the scale itself.

Scale of Agency: Visualizing a relationship between advisors and students



A nudge should allow someone to make their own decision (use agency), while still framing or leading their action in the desired way.

Using the scale and open bullet points above, fill in examples of actions an advisor might take or outcomes students might have considering the following scenario: An Academic Advisor wants to increase the number of her/his students enrolling in courses as soon as they are able (rather than putting it off) while also instilling ownership of their degree requirements. The Advisor wants to create a balance between controlling the students and fostering ownership, so she/he charts the benefits of different possible options. That’s what the scale above is for. We’ve added one example per column to help start you off.

References and Recommended Resources

Thaler, Richard H. and Cass R. Sunstein. 2008. *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

“Nudge, The Animation: Helping People Make Better Choices.” *YouTube*. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jsy1E3ckxIM>

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Alexander Astin's Theory of Involvement

Involvement is Positively Correlated With:

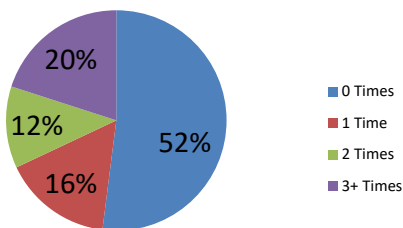
- General abilities and critical thinking
- Retention and persistence
- Academic Success

Sense of Belonging is Positively Correlated With:

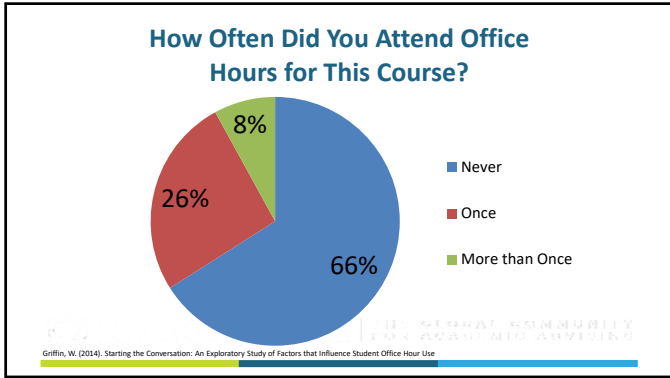
- Greater sense of self-worth
- Perceived professor caring
- Lower levels of externalizing problems

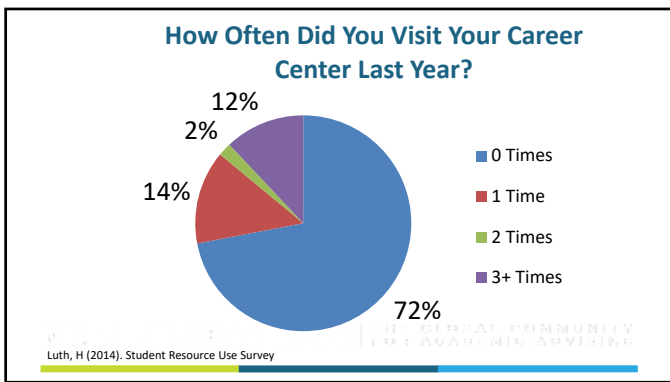
Astin, Alexander W. (1984). Student Involvement: A Developmental Theory for Higher Education.

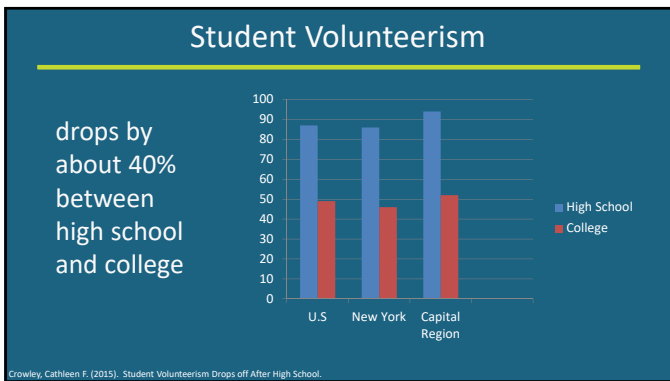
How Often Did You Visit the Academic Resource/Tutoring Center Last Year?

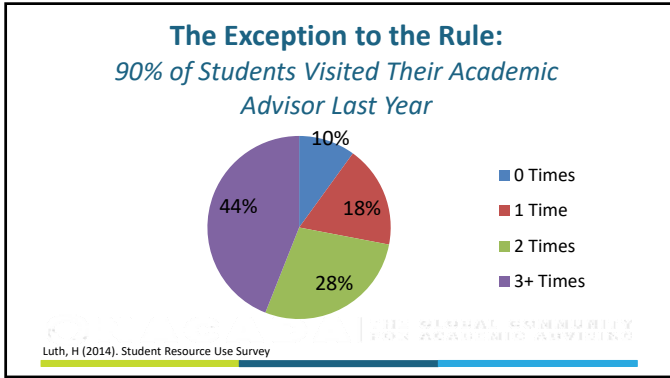


Luth, H (2014). Student Resource Use Survey









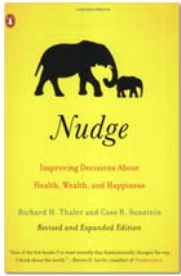
- ### Which Factor has the Greatest Influence on Student Engagement?
- Gender
 - Ethnicity
 - Entering Ability Levels
 - Size of Institution
 - Previous Record of Involvement in High School/CC
 - Institutional Policy ←
 - Mission of Institution
 - Advisor/Student Ratio
- ONACADA | THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY FOR ACADEMIC ADVISING

Nudging Students to Success

- Increasing engagement
- Empowering decision-making

ONACADA | THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY FOR ACADEMIC ADVISING

Systems of Thinking



Thaler, Richard H. & Sunstein, Cass R. (2009)
Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness

Systems of Thinking

- **Automatic System of Thinking:** rapid or instinctive (gut feelings)
 - *Uncontrolled, effortless, associative, fast, unconscious, skilled*
- **Reflective System of Thinking:** deliberate and self-conscious (thoughtful)
 - *Controlled, effortful, deductive, slow, self-aware, rule following*

Thaler, Richard H. & Sunstein, Cass R. (2009).
Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness

Systems of Thinking and Conditioning

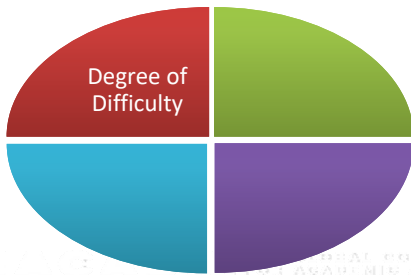


Graphic courtesy of [Quinn Dombrowski](#), Creative Commons

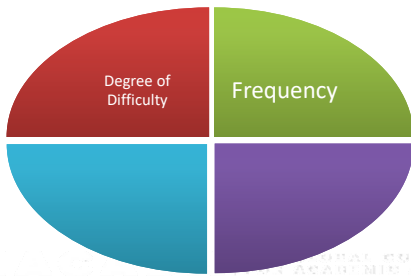
People are least likely to make good choices when:



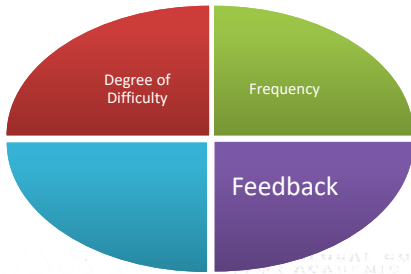
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Thaler, Richard H. & Sunstein, Cass R. (2009). *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness*

People are least likely to make good choices when:



Thaler, Richard H. & Sunstein, Cass R. (2009). *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness*

What are nudges?

Consider the following hypothetical example:

An Academic Advisor wants to increase the number of her/his students enrolling in courses as soon as they are able (rather than putting it off) while instilling ownership of their degree requirements. The Advisor wants to create a balance between reminding the student and fostering ownership, so he/she charts the benefits of different possible options.



Choice Architecture

The careful design of the environments in which people make choices that influence the way people choose. It's a balance between *libertarianism* and *paternalism*.

Example:

- With Gmail, if a user mentions the word *attachment* in the text of the email and the user doesn't include an attachment, it will prompt you.



Defaults

For reasons discussed previously (benefits later, difficulty, frequency, and feedback) many people take whatever option requires the least effort, or path of least resistance.



Examples:

- Course scheduling software enforces pre-requisites, but individuals can request overrides.
- Academic advising offices put holds on students on academic probation, requiring those individuals to meet with an advisor to be eligible to enroll.

Mandated Choices

People will often consider mandated choices as nuisances and might prefer a default. Mandated choices are more appropriate for simple (yes/no) decisions, not complex choices.

Example:

- Third party permission forms to allow family members access to a student's academic record



Mandates Choices: Anchoring and Adjusting



Graphic courtesy of Pixalbay

'anchor' refers to a person's perceived **reference point** in relation to a question for which the answer is not known and is to be deduced

Example:

- Providing advisees a "Common Course List" of popular general education courses for schedule planning

Expected Error

A well designed system expects its users to err and is as forgiving as possible.

Example:

- Colleges have appeal and exemption policies built in: students can appeal their dismissal and, if accepted, then be on probation



Graphic courtesy of Pixalbay

Post Completion Error

The idea that once the main task is finished, people tend to forget things relating to previous tasks.



Example:

- Checking students' schedules after they visit campus for summer orientation

Graphic courtesy of Pixalbay

Providing (Timely) Feedback

Best-designed systems tell people when they are making mistakes and doing well.



Example:

- Use technology to provide kudos (positive feedback) and flags (negative feedback/warnings) to students based on academic performance as the semester progresses



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Mappings

A good Choice Architect helps people improve their ability to map and select options that will make them better off

- Restructure complex choices
- Incentives



Examples:

- Help students with schedule or career planning: ask them to consider their priorities
- Adding pre-requisites to a course list

Academic Success Plan

Course: _____

Instructor & Office Hours: _____

Resource: _____

Resource: _____

New Approaches: _____

Academic Success Plan

Timely Feedback: students are required to go over their plan with their academic advisor for immediate feedback

Mandated Choices: requiring those students to match one or more listed resources to each individual class

Academic Success Plan

Mapping: simplify complex choices by providing the resource list / incentivize their behavior by removing their registration hold after discussing their plan

Expected Error: after filling out their Success Plan they will forget their plan (solution: keep one copy in their Advising Office file, give them another copy to reference)

Academic Success Plan

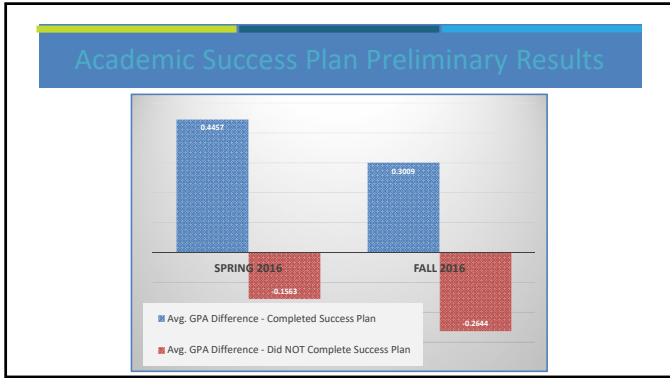
Course: *Introduction to Psychology*

Instructor & Office Hours: *Dr. Smith – Tue/Wed 1pm*

Resource: *Writing Lab*

Resource: *Weekly Help Sessions*

New Approaches: *Join a study group, make note cards*



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