



Take One Course to Stay on Course

COVID-19 Nudges

Driving Student Success Through Nudges

A **nudge campaign** built upon data-informed insight can connect the right student to the right resource at the right time, effectively leveraging institutional resources to increase students' persistence.

Nudges are small pushes in the right direction that do not require prescribed actions, but encourage certain behaviors. When students are presented with a nudge sent from a trusted person at your institution, they have the freedom to make their own choices with information about behaviors we know are more strongly associated with positive persistence and graduation outcomes.

– Kuh, George D., et al. *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter*. John Wiley & Sons, 2011.

About the Nudge Campaign

Opportunity

Even as your institution focuses on providing instruction and student services at a distance—and at scale—you must begin to plan for summer enrollment, when the disruption that you and your students are already experiencing is likely to continue. However the COVID-19 crisis continues to unfold, and however wide-ranging the economic impact turns out to be, it's clear that your institution must continue its mission to serve your students, and that your students—now more than ever—need your support in focusing on their academic careers.

While students may feel that this summer, in particular, should be a time to rest and recover, it may be better for them to continue to stay on course—by taking one or more summer courses. If you encourage your students to enroll for a summer term, you can help them stay on their chosen academic paths and make it more likely that they'll continue to enroll in the fall.

Goal

The purpose of this nudge campaign is to encourage students to enroll in one or more courses for the summer term, understanding that these summer courses are likely to be delivered online. As many institutions continue to address questions regarding fall courses and enrollments, this nudge campaign is focused on the near term: increasing summer enrollment.

Student Subpopulations

We suggest that you tailor your messaging to fit three distinct student subpopulations, based on students' academic progress as measured by the number of credits they have already earned toward graduation:

- Recent-Start Students (fewer than 25% of credits earned)
- Established Students (25–75% of credits earned)
- Near Completers (more than 75% of credits earned)

For each subpopulation, you can select a range in the Credits Earned filter in Illume (see illustration) to create categories appropriate for your institution. For recent-start students seeking an Associate's degree, for example, you might target students who have earned 15 credits or less. For near completers seeking a Bachelor's degree, you might target students who have earned 90 credits or greater.

| Credits Earned | Select All |
|--|------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No Credits | 1,918 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> >0 to 15 Credits | 3,074 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> >15 to 30 Credits | 1,932 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> >30 to 45 Credits | 1,603 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> >45 to 60 Credits | 1,611 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> >60 to 75 Credits | 960 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> >75 to 90 Credits | 685 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> >90 to 105 Credits | 516 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> >105 to 120 Credits | 422 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> >120 Credits | 2,127 |

Owner

The owner of a nudge campaign is responsible both for sending nudges to students and for receiving and acting upon their replies (or delegating responses to others). Because nudge campaigns are most effective when messages arrive from a single trusted individual, choose the most appropriate person at your institution to send them, keeping in mind that warm messages from trusted institutional leadership may be particularly important to students in these difficult times.

Strategy

The nudge campaign modeled in this document consists of an initial message to be sent in the next week (tailored to membership in one of the three subpopulations described above), and a second message—which can be the same for all students—to be sent near the end of the term.

Best practices

A nudge campaign is intended to encourage student behaviors that lead to an increased likelihood of success. To have an impact on students' likelihood to persist and graduate, nudges must elicit actions that increase the chances that students will meet their educational goals. Nudging communications should align with the following principles:

- **Mattering.** The nudge should communicate that the student's academic journey is important to the institution.
- **Belonging.** The nudge should affirm that the student is an important member of the community.
- **Mindset.** The nudge should promote a growth mindset and belief that the student can learn.
- **Empathy.** The nudge should convey the message that your faculty, staff, and administration understand the student's challenges.
- **Normalizing.** The nudge should express reassurance that the student's pains and frustrations are shared within the community.

Nudges that ask for a small number of actions are more likely to elicit desired behaviors than nudges that overwhelm with long lists of resources or choices. Effective nudges are brief, ask students to do something specific, and use authentic language. They speak to both the head and the heart, that is, they both share the proven benefits of engaging in recommended actions and address the mental and emotional barriers that may restrain students from participation.

Call to action

The recommended call to action for each of the customized nudges is to ask the student to enroll for at least one summer course. If students will need instructions on how to register or will need details on changes to the registration process due to the COVID-19 crisis, link to that information on your website rather than including it in the email. The next pages of this document contain templates for the suggested nudges.

Recent-Start Students Summer Enrollment Nudge

Initial messaging for students who have recently begun at your institution, those with fewer than 25% of credit hours earned toward degree: Focus on encouraging students just beginning their college journeys to continue with their studies, persisting into summer and fall.

Subject Line: Stay on course!

Dear [STUDENT'S FIRST NAME],

I hope you're doing well in these uncertain times. While we're all struggling with the unprecedented obstacles that COVID-19 has placed in our way, it may be particularly unsettling for new [MASCOT NAME]s. But in recent days I've been reminded of an old saying: "We can't direct the wind, but we can adjust our sails." And I would like to encourage you to do what you can to stay the course: don't let these disruptions interfere with your studies. Making progress toward your degree from [INSTITUTION NAME] is even more important as we all move into an unforeseeable future.

As you think about what's ahead for you in the next months, I encourage you to maintain momentum toward your goals. There's a lot for you to choose from in our course offerings for the summer. Check the [course schedule](#) <LINK> for your options. You can also [meet with an advisor](#) <LINK to appointment scheduler> to discuss the best classes for you.

Your success is important to the [INSTITUTION NAME] community. I encourage you to [register](#) <LINK> for at least one course to stay on course toward your goals—it's important.

[SIGNATURE]

[TITLE]

[CONTACT INFORMATION]

Established Students Summer Enrollment Nudge

Initial messaging for students who are well established in their academic progress, those with 25–75% of credit hours earned toward degree: Focus on encouraging mid-career students at the institution to persist into summer and fall.

Subject Line: Stay on course!

Dear [STUDENT'S FIRST NAME],

I hope you're doing well in these uncertain times—we're all struggling with the unprecedented obstacles that COVID-19 has placed in our way. For you, in the middle of your time as a [MASCOT], it may feel like everything has changed. But in recent days I've been reminded of an old saying: "We can't direct the wind, but we can adjust our sails." And I would like to encourage you to do what you can to stay the course: don't let these disruptions interfere with your studies. You've already accomplished so much, and making progress toward your degree from [INSTITUTION NAME] is even more important as we all move into an unforeseeable future.

As you think about what's ahead for you this summer, I encourage you to maintain momentum toward your goals. There's a lot for you to choose from in our course offerings for the summer. Check the [course schedule](#) <LINK> for your options. You can also [meet with an advisor](#) <LINK to appointment scheduler> to discuss the best classes for you.

Your success is important to the [INSTITUTION NAME] community. I encourage you to [register](#) <LINK> for at least one course to stay on course toward your goals—it's important.

[SIGNATURE]

[TITLE]

[CONTACT INFORMATION]

Near Completers

Summer Enrollment Nudge

Initial messaging for students who are close to earning their credential, those with 75% or greater of credit hours earned toward degree: Focus on encouraging students who have accrued a significant number of credits at the institution to persist into summer and fall.

Subject Line: Stay on course!

Dear [STUDENT'S FIRST NAME],

I hope you're doing well in these uncertain times—we're all struggling with the unprecedented obstacles that COVID-19 has placed in our way. For you, so close to earning your degree, it may feel like everything has changed. But in recent days I've been reminded of an old saying: "We can't direct the wind, but we can adjust our sails." And I would like to encourage you to do what you can to stay the course: don't let these disruptions interfere with your studies. You've already accomplished so much, and making progress toward your degree from [INSTITUTION NAME] is even more important as we all move into an unforeseeable future.

As you think about what's ahead for you in the next months, I encourage you to maintain momentum toward your goals. There's a lot for you to choose from in our course offerings for the summer. Check the [course schedule](#) <LINK> for your options. You can also [meet with an advisor](#) <LINK to appointment scheduler> to discuss the best classes for you.

Your success is important to the [INSTITUTION NAME] community, and we want to see you finish! I encourage you to [register](#) <LINK> for at least one course to stay on course toward your goals—it's important.

[SIGNATURE]

[TITLE]

[CONTACT INFORMATION]

All Students (Term End) Summer Enrollment Nudge

Subsequent messaging for all enrolled students (to be sent after the close of the current term): Focus on encouraging students to persist into summer and fall.

Subject Line: Congratulations!

Dear [STUDENT'S FIRST NAME],

You made it. You adapted to the challenges that the coronavirus threw at us all. You finished the term and the whole [MASCOT] community is very proud of you. Take a moment to enjoy this milestone—and to picture yourself graduating.

Already, you've accomplished so much. So don't stop now. We never know what life will throw our way, and a great way to keep moving toward your degree is to take a summer course. As you know, [INSTITUTION NAME] is offering many classes this summer. Please check the schedule to see what works for you and consult with your advisor as needed.

Congratulations again! Your success is important to the [INSTITUTION NAME] community. I encourage you to register <LINK> for at least one summer course to stay on course toward your goals—it's important.

[SIGNATURE]

[TITLE]

[CONTACT INFORMATION]