

## FORUM | Research in Brief

# The Impact of Advisor Outreach on Priority Registration

By Jennifer L. McClure

In 2015, Elgin Community College's Student Success Infrastructure used the book *Influencer: The New Science of Leading Change* (2013) by Joseph Grenny, Kerry Patterson, David Maxfield, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler to help frame conversations about improving student success. One of the book's main concepts is using data to identify and leverage key behaviors leading to desired outcomes. To this end, the Institutional Research Office has begun using regression analysis to identify key behaviors and characteristics that have an impact on student retention. The current project builds on this work and contributes to the general higher education literature by assessing the impact of additional personal contact/outreach on early registration.

## Problem

Elgin Community College (ECC) offers priority registration to all currently enrolled students for a one-week period prior to open registration, yet only approximately 25 percent of ECC students take advantage of this opportunity. The goal was to see if an increase in priority enrollments could be effected during this period.

## Intervention

The intervention was to determine if academic advisor outreach has a positive impact on students' registering during the priority registration time period. Data were disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, and program of

study to determine if there is evidence for differential impact of additional outreach by each subgroup.

## Determining the Participants

The college used enrollment, demographic, and program data pertaining to currently enrolled students in spring 2016 and affective data from an instrument used in its college success course to determine which groups of students historically have been least likely to take advantage of priority registration. One hundred (100) students were randomly selected to receive the intervention. Of the more than 4,000 students remaining, another 100 were randomly selected for inclusion in the comparison group.

The enrollment behaviors of fall 2014 and fall 2015 students were assessed and used to categorize students into two groups of registrants: those least likely to enroll during the priority registration period and those most likely to enroll during this period. Demographic data were used to predict which students would be least likely to enroll during the priority registration period later in the semester. Previous analyses indicated that returning African American students typically delayed registering for the following semester longer than other student groups. Program of study data were used as well because anecdotally, a majority of early registrants are enrolled in health profession programs. Finally, data from the Learning and Student Skills Inventory (LASSI) (which assesses will, skill, and self-regulation

for learning) were used to determine which scales, if any, have a significant association with registration during the priority period.

Table 1 shows the pre-intervention predicted probability of enrolling during priority registration week. The table compares the demographic characteristics of the intervention group with those of a random stratified sample from the control group. The experimental group is very similar to the random sample from the control group on all demographic factors. This suggests that any differences in registration rates are due to the contact by the advisor and another factor.

## Applying the Intervention

The intervention included having the twelve academic advisors reach out to a randomly selected portion of the subgroup of current students who match the criteria of those students who had the lowest likelihood of enroll-

ing during the priority registration period in fall 2014 and fall 2015. Advisors were to have e-mail or telephone conversations regarding continued registration and to influence the students to take action during the one-week (April 11–17, 2016) priority registration period for summer/fall 2016. Phone calls and e-mails were to be made individually without the assistance of autodial.

## Results

Outcomes for those students who received the academic advising call differed from those for students who did not.

The data indicate that contact by advisors had little impact on the preregistration behavior of those students who were predicted to be most likely to enroll during the priority registration period (37 percent vs. 36 percent). However, when the timeline is expanded by two months past the priority registration period, students

**Table 1. Comparing Demographic Characteristics of the Intervention Group (“Contacted by Advisors”) With Those of the Random Stratified Sample of the Control Group**

Priority Registration Intervention Group		Pre-Intervention Predicted Probability of Enrolling During Priority Registration Week											
		Contacted by Advisors					Not Contacted by Advisors						
		LOWEST QUARTILE		HIGHEST QUARTILE		TOTAL		LOWEST QUARTILE		HIGHEST QUARTILE		TOTAL	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
<b>Total Students</b>		50	100	49	100	99	100	50	100	50	100	100	100
<b>Gender</b>	Female	11	22	46	94	57	58	12	24	48	96	60	60
	Male	39	78	3	6	42	42	38	76	2	4	40	40
<b>Ethnicity</b>	African American	2	4	2	4	4	4	0	0	4	8	4	4
	Asian	1	2	4	8	5	5	0	0	1	2	1	1
	Latino	27	54	10	20	37	37	29	58	10	20	39	39
	Other	4	8	1	2	5	5	5	10	0	0	5	5
	White	16	32	32	65	48	48	16	32	35	70	51	51
<b>Major</b>	Career-Tech	9	18	9	18	18	18	10	20	13	26	23	23
	Health	1	2	4	8	5	5	0	0	2	4	2	2
	Transfer	40	80	36	73	76	77	40	80	35	70	75	75
<b>Received Financial Aid</b>	No	43	86	26	53	69	70	45	90	24	48	69	69
	Yes	7	14	23	47	30	30	5	10	26	52	31	31
<b>Took LASSI</b>	No	40	80	42	86	82	83	39	78	40	80	79	79
	Yes	10	20	7	14	17	17	11	2	10	20	21	21
<b>Average Number of Terms at ECC</b>		2.3		4.9		3.7		2.5		6.3		4.4	

## Elgin Community College: Institutional Profile

Since 1949, Elgin Community College (ECC) has been dedicated to improving lives through learning. Accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, ECC offers comprehensive degree and certificate programs, affordable tuition, small classes, and knowledgeable and caring faculty and staff. Affordability, accountability, and accessibility remain core foundations at ECC.

Students of all ages appreciate ECC's welcoming atmosphere, strong academic offerings, and helpful resources that include free tutoring and academic support, career guidance, academic advising, personalized college transfer assistance, and much more. These services—along with a vibrant campus culture rich with activities, events, and opportunities—has earned ECC a reputation for being an affordable two-year college

with all the experiences you would expect at a traditional, four-year university.

Located on Elgin's west side at 1700 Spartan Drive, ECC offers over 120 programs and certificates designed to help students transfer to the college of their choice or a rewarding career. ECC has received local and national recognition for its strong role in the community, ethical leadership and financial health, commitment to a quality education while minimizing student debt, and dedication to ensuring all students have the resources they need for success in college and beyond. ECC also provides valuable community support through its adult basic education programs including courses in high school equivalency, English as a second language, and citizenship preparation.

Along with its Spartan Drive Campus in Elgin, ECC offers courses and services at the following locations: the

Education and Work Center in Hanover Park, Streamwood Village Hall, and several public schools and libraries. In 2016, the college opened the Elgin Community College Center for Emergency Services in Burlington. The college's 360-square-mile district is home to 446,224 residents, 10,937 businesses, four school districts, and 33 communities.

ECC has been recognized by the Government Finance Officers Association with the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for fourteen years in a row as well as the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the past eight years. The national certificate acknowledges and encourages the college's efforts in making its reports transparent and accessible to the public. The college also maintains excellent credit ratings from Moody's Investor Service and Standard & Poor's. ECC has held an AAA credit

rating (the highest available) from Moody's since 2009 and an AA+ from Standard & Poor's (the second-highest available) since 2010.

The U.S. Department of Education has designated ECC a Hispanic-serving institution. The college has also been distinguished since 2012 as a Military Friendly® institution.

Additionally, ECC has earned many distinctions, most recently including: accolades for its financial literacy programs from the Obama Administration's President's Advisory Council on Financial Capability for Young Americans, renewed status as an Achieving the Dream™ Leader College, and being named a National Exemplar in Career Preparedness by ACT®.

ECC is a bright choice for savvy students who seek quality education, affordability, and excellent value. For more information, visit [elgin.edu](http://elgin.edu) today!

from this subgroup who were contacted by the advisors before the priority registration period actually enrolled at a much higher rate (71 percent vs. 52 percent) than did those who had not been contacted by advisors.

The impact is the opposite for those students predicted to be least likely to take advantage of the priority registration period: They were significantly more likely to enroll during the priority registration period than were those students who were not contacted by an advisor (16 percent vs. 4 percent). However, when the timeline was expanded again after the priority registration period, the control and experimental groups' preregistration behavior was more comparable (54 percent vs. 46 percent): Those contacted preregistered at a higher rate than did those who were not contacted by advisors. Thus, these data show that advisor outreach

does have a positive impact on the registration activity of students identified as least likely to register during priority registration.

There were a number of instances in which the advisor could not or did not e-mail a student but instead called—or e-mailed the student but the phone number had been changed. Some students in the experimental group were contacted by e-mail and phone, whereas others were contacted only via one of these means. The additional layer of the number of contacts by the advisor was reviewed to see if it had any significant impact.

The data show that students who were contacted by e-mail and phone call were more likely to enroll during the priority registration week. Students who were contacted by e-mail or phone call enrolled at approximately the same rates as the control group. The sample size is too

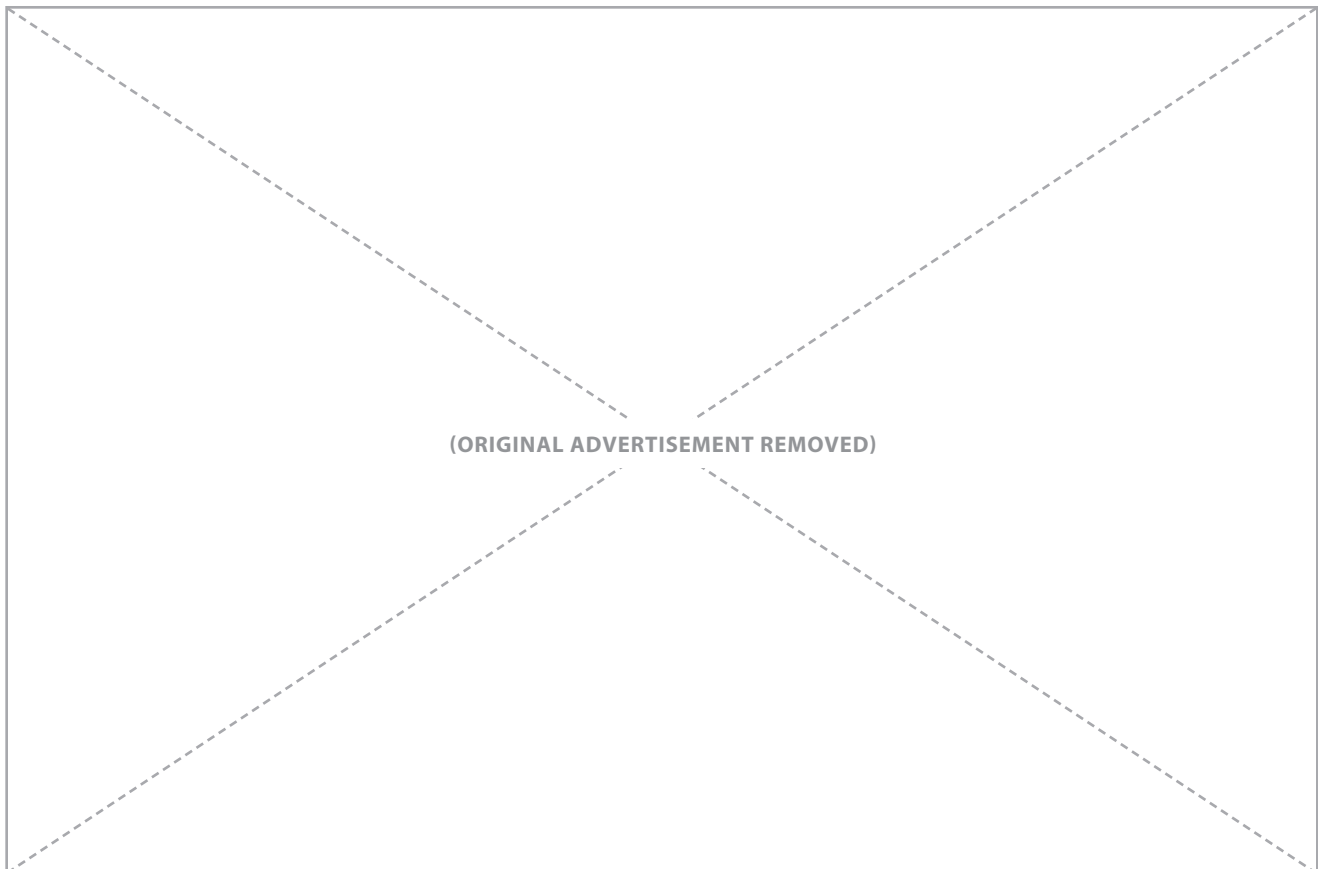
**Table 2. Comparison of Proportion of Students Who Registered During Priority Registration Week by Intervention Group**

Registration Period	Predicted Probability of Enrolling During Priority Registration Week	Priority Registration Intervention Group			
		Contacted by Advisor		Not Contacted by Advisor	
		N	%	N	%
During Priority Registration Week	Total	99	26	100	20
	Highest Quartile	49	37	50	36
	Lowest Quartile*	50	16	50	4
Anytime During First Two Months of Registration	Total	99	63	100	49
	Highest Quartile*	49	71	50	52
	Lowest Quartile	50	54	50	46

\* Note: The proportion of students represented in the green cell in a row is significantly higher than the proportion of students represented by the red cell in the same row.

small to make any meaningful comparisons by including high or low probability in this analysis. It is also impossible to say whether the number of contacts is important

or whether this particular combination of e-mails and phone calls is significant, but it does appear that just one contact alone does not have much of an impact.



**Table 3. Comparison of Proportion of Students Who Registered During Priority Registration Week by Intervention Group and Type of Contact**

Registration Period	Predicted Probability of Enrolling During Priority Registration Week	Priority Registration Intervention Group					
		Contacted by Advisor				Not Contacted by Advisor	
		E-MAIL AND PHONE CALL		E-MAIL OR PHONE CALL		n	%
n	%	n	%				
During Priority Registration Week	Total*	60	35	39	13	100	20
	Highest Quartile	37	43	12	17	50	36
	Lowest Quartile	23	22	25	8	50	4
Anytime During First Two Months of Registration	Total*	60	70	39	51	100	49
	Highest Quartile	37	73	12	67	50	52
	Lowest Quartile	23	65	25	40	50	46

\* **Note:** The proportion of students represented in the green cell in a row is significantly higher than the proportion of students represented by the red cells in the same row.

## Conclusion

The data clearly show that students who were contacted by an advisor enrolled at a higher rate than those who were not contacted. The students who received an e-mail and phone call also registered at a higher rate than those students who received only one contact. The

results also show that the impact of being contacted by an advisor extends two months beyond the priority registration week. Additional research with larger sample sizes is needed to determine if the type of contact makes any difference.

### About the Authors

**Jennifer L. McClure, Ph.D.**, has more than 20 years of higher education experience in public two-year and four-year private for-profit and non-profit institutions with leadership experience in organizational development, team building, facilitation, project implementation, interest based and modified traditional bargaining, and developing high functioning teams with an emphasis on process improvement. Her focus has been in registrar, admissions, and enrollment management functions. She is the managing director of enrollment services at Elgin Community College overseeing admissions, registration and records, testing services, and the first stop center. Her focus has been to create a superior customer service experience for students and empower staff to make decisions. Working collaboratively with financial aid and student accounts, Dr. McClure emphasizes opportunities for cross-departmental training for front line staff. She began working at ECC in 2006 as the registrar. She has varied experience leading college efforts related to branding, administrative policy, and student success initiatives through Achieving the Dream. McClure earned her Strategic Enrollment Management Endorsement from AACRAO in 2016.



Prior to ECC, Dr. McClure worked for nine years for DeVry Inc., the past five years of which she served as the director of licensing and government relations working with state boards of higher education to add additional locations and new programs. She is also a trained Systems Portfolio Appraiser and Team Chair for the AQIP accreditation process through The Higher Learning Commission. Dr. McClure earned a doctorate in Higher Education from Loyola University Chicago in 2006 and a bachelor's degree in Journalism and Master of Science in Education from the University of Kansas. She served as the Illinois Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers' (IACRAO) treasurer from 2011–2013 and President-Elect, President, and Past President 2015–2017.

McClure would like to acknowledge David Rudden, Managing Director of Institutional Research at Elgin Community College, who assisted with the charts and analysis for this article.