

7 WAYS TO CHILL

SUMMER MELT

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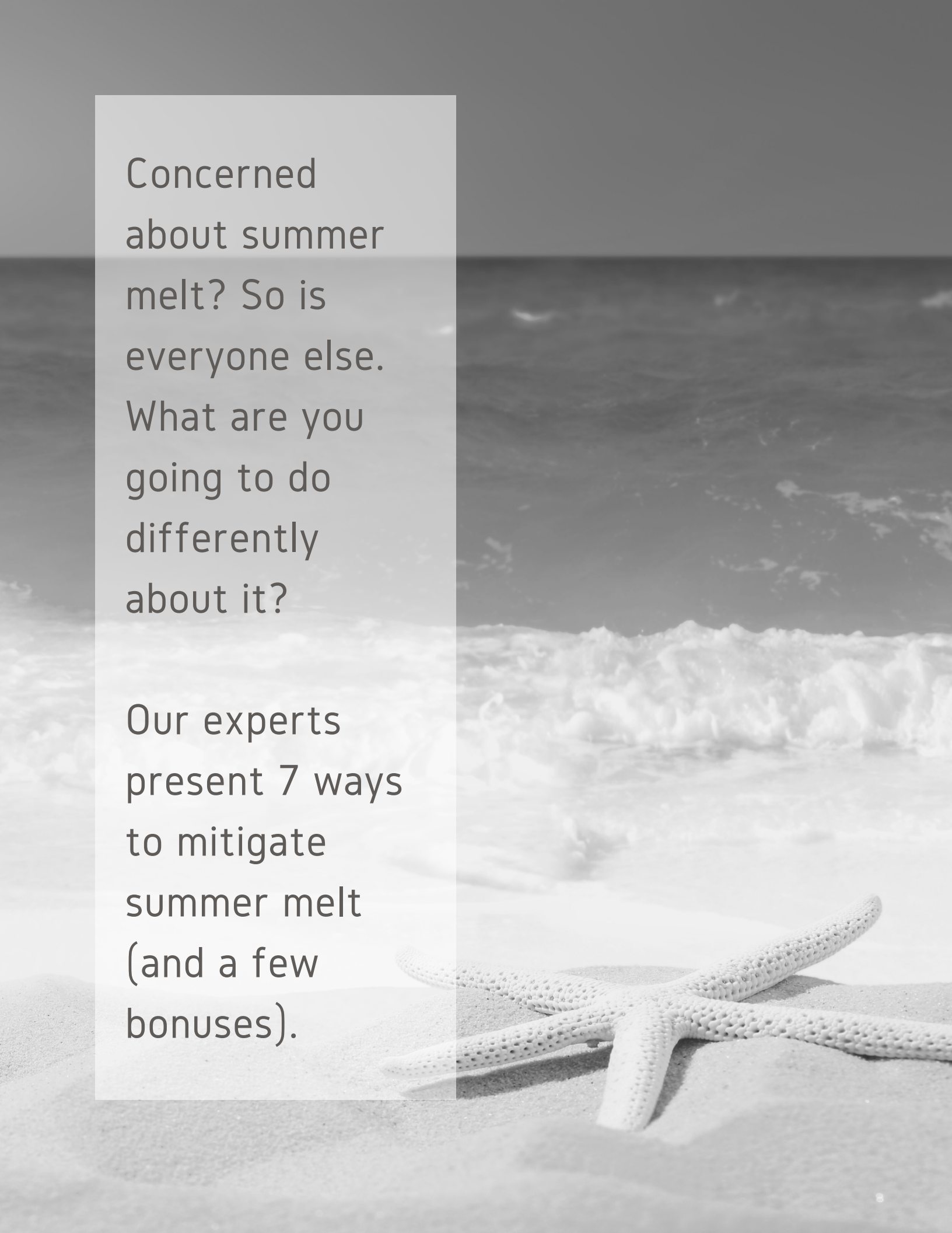
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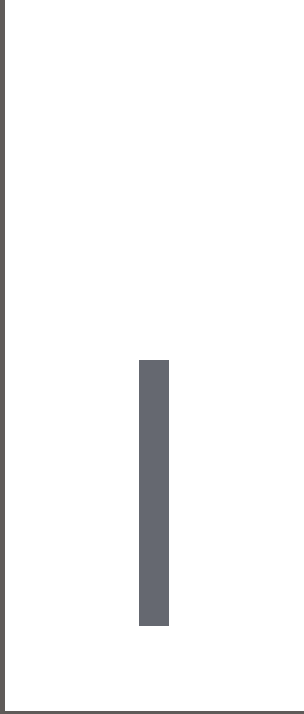
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Concerned
about summer
melt? So is
everyone else.
What are you
going to do
differently
about it?

Our experts
present 7 ways
to mitigate
summer melt
(and a few
bonuses).



WELCOME



WELCOME

This eBook presents the problem of summer melt—who is most likely to melt from your enrollment funnels, why they melt, why it matters—and seven proven actions enrollment teams can take to mitigate summer melt.

This eBook emphasizes the summer before fall enrollment which for most of us, can be a time when students and families experience “buyers remorse”. We explore ideas to keep our constituents engaged and excited about the decision they have made. Our goal is to keep them inside your funnel even when doubts come up.

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SECTION 1

WHAT IS SUMMER MELT?



DEFINITIONS

What is Summer Melt?

Admitted /Deposited Students
who choose another school

Or

Admitted/Deposited Students
who do not go to school
at all that year.

DEFINITIONS

If you're new to the term, summer melt refers to both students who go elsewhere and those who do not attend anywhere. Specifically, it refers to students who paid a deposit at an institution, only to attend a different college or university (usually of similar perceived quality) or high school graduates who seemingly intended to enroll in college in the fall but didn't follow through.

Research reveals many college-bound students encounter a range of obstacles during the post-high school summer that can lead them to change or abandon their college plans. During this period, prospective students are no longer members of a high school community and have yet to become integrated into a college community, leaving them isolated from professional guidance and support to address new challenges that may come up during the summer months.

As a result, a surprisingly high proportion of seemingly college-bound students fail to enroll in college in the fall following high school graduation.

Summer Melt:

6-40%

Of College students who intended to enroll by applying and gaining acceptance fail to do so.

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SECTION 2

WHO IS MOST LIKELY TO MELT?



4 TYPES



FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS

Students from families with parents who have not graduated from college are considered "first-generation." They represent 40% of the melt at community colleges and 20% at four-year institutions.

A large portion of the US population falls into this category: according to a 2019 study by the Department of Education, 59% of children under the age of 18 live in households with parents who do not have a bachelor's degree or higher.

When prospective students are unable to draw from the experiences of parents who have previously navigated these processes, **they're at a distinct disadvantage and can become overwhelmed**—the college search, application, and financial aid processes are complicated for prospects under the best of circumstances.



TO MITIGATE THE LOSS OF THESE STUDENTS,
SCHOOLS SHOULD INSTITUTE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT
SYSTEMS, SIMPLIFY PROCESSES, AND REMOVE AS
MANY BARRIERS TO ENTRY AS POSSIBLE.



4 TYPES



LOW-INCOME STUDENTS

Summer melt is estimated to be twice as high for students who come from low-income backgrounds. In the US, 18% of students under the age of 18 come from families living in poverty. Low-income students have more financial concerns and their college intentions are also more likely to be derailed by family or financial challenges. Examples are:

- Difficulty filling out the FAFSA
- Fees that might be considered nominal to others but are prohibitive to low-income families
- Families that require them to contribute financially

College counselors at under-resourced high schools may be handling up to 900 students at a time with little ability to spend concentrated time with a greater number of students who need it most, which results in less support in SAT preparation, college coaches, essay writing, and more. One of the few solutions for these students is a close relationship with college counselors to build trust and advise students through the rocky moments.



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4 TYPES



GENERATION Z SAVVY CONSUMERS

Generation Z, generally defined as those born in the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, they can be savvy consumers and are not known for brand loyalty. (81% are willing to switch from their favorite brand if they find a similar product at higher quality.)

With this mindset, a Generation Z student with credentials to get admitted into multiple quality institutions is likely to keep their options open until the very end.

Competitive students are known to hedge their bets and make deposits at multiple institutions, usually of similar perceived quality—making it difficult to predict true incoming enrollment numbers.

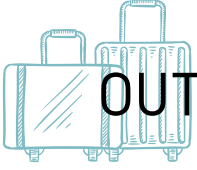
It is estimated that at larger institutions, an average of 75 prospective students have double-deposited.



TO MITIGATE THE LOSS OF THESE STUDENTS, AN
INSTITUTION HAS TO BE THE BRAND THAT
STANDS OUT.



4 TYPES



OUT OF AREA/OUT OF STATE STUDENTS

Prior to COVID-19, living away from home for the first time could be a daunting prospect for burgeoning adults—many of whom have never left their city or town before. The pandemic has only made things more difficult to navigate and places pressure on short term relationships.

Research has shown that if a student has connections with nine or more people after being admitted, they are 93% more likely to attend that institution. COVID has forced us to build relationships against the odds relying on digital media more than ever before.

Prior to COVID, many institutions included parents in relationship-building events and communications, knowing that if parents felt confident in an institution this would likely be communicated to the prospective student. The parent influence remains critical but they are more difficult to connect with adding further complexity to our communication strategies.



TO MITIGATE THE LOSS OF THESE STUDENTS, AN INSTITUTION SHOULD BUILD STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS. THEY SHOULD SPEND RESOURCES ON THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY WHILE REMEMBERING THAT SOME TIME PROVEN APPROACHES LIKE PHONE CALLS TO BOTH STUDENTS AND PARENTS STILL HAVE MERIT.



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SECTION 3

WHY DOES SUMMER MELT HAPPEN?



REASONS

Summer Melt happens for a host of reasons, but some good examples are:

- Loss of high school support network
- Diminished support network
- Non-existent support network
- Overwhelmed
 - By the process
 - By incurring debt
 - By familial needs
 - By outside pressures (summer job, etc.)
 - By moving out of area/state
 - By difficult decisions
- Unexpected financial fees
- Unexpected financial demands
- Competitive students applying to multiple locations
- Gen Z hedging their bets by applying to multiple locations
- Gen Z applying to multiple locations due to previous relationships
- Lack of relational connection to students and student life
- Anxiety
 - About leaving family/friends
 - About incurring debt
 - About "fitting in"
 - About larger class sizes
- Negative experiences
- Waitlist releases

REASONS

These reasons were shared by students directly labeling their reasons to not attend. Pay close attention to words like "anxiety" and "overwhelmed." Nothing gets people through moments of emotional stress like the feeling of not being alone. For many, we must fill that gap.

4

SECTION 4

WHY DOES SUMMER MELT MATTER?



BECAUSE...

As institutions take steps to recover to pre-pandemic enrollment levels, they will need to implement a strategy to curtail the loss of prospective students and appeal to non-traditional students. Generation Z is well-over 67 million in the US, comprising over 30% of the world's population. **Any successful enrollment recovery will need to include Generation Z, first-generation, low-income, and out-of-area students.**

On average, private institutions spend \$1,086 per recruit while public institutions spend \$214 per recruit. To succeed, institutions must spend their limited marketing and recruitment dollars on the right initiatives and in ways that maximize ROI to bring in the largest number of right-fit students bearing in mind that it costs less to keep them than to recruit a replacement.

Percentile	PRIVATE (overall median cost and median by enrollment size)				PUBLIC (overall median cost and median by enrollment size)			
	OVERALL	SMALLEST THIRD	MIDDLE THIRD	LARGEST THIRD	OVERALL	SMALLEST THIRD	MIDDLE THIRD	LARGEST THIRD
25th percentile	\$370	\$831	\$528	\$314	\$43	\$41	\$64	\$153
Median	\$1,086	\$1,200	\$1,234	\$828	\$214	\$592	\$249	\$171
75th percentile	\$1,664	\$1,764	\$1,849	\$1,331	\$614	\$743	\$665	\$235

BECAUSE...

Summer Melt matters:

- Because we are recovering from Covid
- Because the population is down and will continue to be down
- Because it costs less to retain than recruit:
 - \$214 Public
 - \$1086 Private
- Generation Z is both the problem and the solution

7 WAYS TO CHILL SUMMER MELT



Action 1: Create allies to combat summer melt.

In the spring, gather together all offices on campus and remind them of summer melt and share practical value statements to ensure everyone is on the same page—recognize that summer/post deposit is a time when students and families think differently about the decision they have made. The goals can be stated in different ways but two concepts should be made clear to all participants:

- 1) Until they arrive on campus, students are at risk to go elsewhere.
- 2) The goal is to reassure and combat buyers' remorse.

ON-CAMPUS INFLUENCERS

Admission Counselors - Can be a strong influence and in some cases take the place of a high school guidance counselor. Unfortunately, Admission Counselors are also perceived to have a bias.

Tangentials - Influencers who have connections to students because of an official role but may only have a short or one-time connection. Examples include Financial Aid counselors, Faculty representatives, Housing Deans (before students arrive on campus) Student health representatives, Bursar's office.

Hidden Influencers - Maintenance workers or cafeteria workers are usually considered trustworthy by students and families. Make them aware of the reality of the summer melt season. More importantly, make sure they feel welcome to engage and encourage those they meet. "I hope I get to see you here again," can be a powerful message when it comes from someone who is not perceived to have "skin in the game".

2

Action 2: Prior to high school graduation, distribute a general summary of key summer task checklists for college-going students to complete over the summer. Provide via the internet, mobile, and good old-fashioned paper.

- You get points if this can be automated and dynamic so students can check their process or get frequent reminders about what is next. Make sure that some of the checkpoints are fun/exciting or relationship-building like getting their dorm assignment or joining in on virtual or on-campus activities.

Take advantage of these moments to "micro celebrate" the fact that they have taken one more step. This is the moment that calls for a cheery phone call reminding them that someone on campus is looking forward to seeing them in person.

3

Action 3: Fully implement available technology:

- Use a text-messaging campaign to send students key reminders of single, important summer tasks and always include a link to take the action. Emphasize one issue at a time. (Some stats show text messaging can reduce summer melt by as much as 14%.)
- Utilize chat-bots and live chat tools—students can feel they need to ask a “dumb question” and won’t ask a human, but they will happily ask a chat-bot.

(Action 3 Continued)

- Use LMS-managed chat rooms and non-public communities to engage students with one another. This can work well for areas like housing, student life, clubs, and organizations (short of LMS chat rooms, there is a host of other options like Google or Yahoo that can easily be set up). 76% of incoming students will prefer to use communities managed and monitored by the school instead of Social Media/public communities.
- Flag and follow up with students who are not moving through the matriculation process—use software/CRMs/LMS/SIS, etc.

Side note: Even if you struggle with your CRM some simple reports comparing student movement through tasks week over week can tell you a lot. Reports like this can be generated from the SIS in spreadsheet format. Find the ones that have stopped moving and start calling!

4

Action 4: Assess and align across campus on all fees so families are not overwhelmed by the number of fees, notifications of fees coming from each department, etc. Make the deposit inclusive of all fees (and distribute later). On a case-by-case basis, empower Financial Aid to provide a waiver if needed.

Invoices, especially the first ones, should be accompanied by good, positive messages. Staff should be aware when they go out so they are ready for questions and ideally, a financial counselor should make a call after the bill is received.

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Action 5: Assess and align across campus on the real enrollment process with the goal of simplification so families are not overwhelmed by the number of steps and emails coming from each department. Map their journey: go through every step in the process and every piece of paperwork exactly as a student would. Streamline as much as possible. Are there steps in your process that you can accomplish after they arrive on campus?

6

Action 6: Use predictive analytics (Which may consist of a simple review of incoming students' academic and financial data) to identify students admitted to the fall freshman class who are academically/financially at-risk and invite them to attend a session before fall classes (e.g. Summer Success Academy). Students are able to plug into the student life, make use of the support of the university's tutoring, advising, financial literacy, and academic skills programs.

7

Action 7: Make phone calls matter.

Phone calls take extra effort and may seem to procure little ROI due to unanswered calls and voice-mails. However, leaving an impactful voicemail can be a powerful demonstration engagement. If permissions from students are procured, follow major waypoints with a phone call from a campus official:

- Upon admission - Initiate a call from a department faculty to offer congratulations.
- After sending an FA Award letter - A call from a financial aid officer can help ease concerns over new and often complex information.
- Upon Housing confirmation - A friendly introductory call from a Residence Dean can be an important reassurance.

Remember:

- Don't ask for questions—have something to say.
- Make two calls where possible: 1) student and 2) parents.
- Leave an upbeat message!
- Use text message instead if it gets better results.



Bonus: Offer online life-hack courses that are **FUN** and useful (microwave dorm-room recipes, laundry, budget, sew on a button, dorm room decorating, etc.). Use current students as hosts. Post for comments or offer a live Q/A. Reuse as drip content on SM and emails.

Additional Engagement Ideas:

- Host a zoom residence floor meetup
- Produce department videos to hype different majors



Bonus: Remind students **AND PARENTS** of the career pathways for the majors offered by sharing web content articles or by hosting program-specific meetups where faculty can address career opportunities.



Extend & Delay! Due to COVID, host campus events longer and later than you normally would.

Events like:

- Orientations
- Registration Deadlines
- Campus Visits
- Recognition Events/Award Ceremonies

NEXT STEPS

Reduce Your Institution's Melt

The team of experts at Value Based have helped dozens of Higher Ed institutions innovate to reduce Summer Melt. If you'd like to explore any of the following next steps, contact us at info@valuebased.com or call us at 800.597.1873.



Research & Recommendations

- Lost Student Analysis



Prescribe Preemptive Measures

- VP & Director of Enrollment



Rehearse Reactive Responses

- Admissions Team

SUMMARY

Institutions must address the numerous obstacles preventing at-risk prospective students from showing up in the fall: personal, financial, emotional, psychological, and academic.

In order to address these obstacles, first, they will need to fully understand the personas to which they market and be intimately aware of the real (and not imagined) pathway to college and its roadblocks. Second, they will need to ensure their value stands heads above cross-app institutions. Third, they will need to take action to remove these obstacles to make the transition to college life the natural next step. Remember, every step you take should be intended to keep them engaged and avoid buyers remorse.

RESOURCES

Resources:

Strategic Data Project, Harvard University,

<https://sdp.cepr.harvard.edu/files/cepr-sdp/files/sdp-summer-melt-handbook.pdf>

Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2020 Cost of Recruiting an Undergraduate Student

Report, [https://learn.ruffalonl.com/rs/395-EOG-](https://learn.ruffalonl.com/rs/395-EOG-977/images/2020_CostRecruiting_Report.pdf)

[977/images/2020_CostRecruiting_Report.pdf](https://learn.ruffalonl.com/rs/395-EOG-977/images/2020_CostRecruiting_Report.pdf)

