

Your Question:

You asked if we know of any states with policies specifically addressing summer melt.

Our Response:

The summer between high school graduation and college is a tricky time for educators and policymakers. Students are no longer accountable to their high school and have not yet stepped foot on their college campus. This uncertain time can be difficult to navigate for students with minimal college-going knowledge and can result in a failure to show up to college in the fall. Initiatives to prevent summer melt are often led by postsecondary institutions; accordingly, we found few examples of state policies that directly address summer melt. Below, we provide a brief review of research on summer melt, followed by relevant examples.

Background

Summer melt broadly describes the phenomenon where students who intend to go to college fail to enroll at a postsecondary institution in the fall semester after their high school graduation. Many of these students are either low income, first-generation or students of color. The full extent of summer melt is not well quantified; [academic research](#) estimates that 8 to 40 percent of college intending students fail to enroll in college.

Students fail to enroll in college for a variety of reasons; however, [research highlights](#) the complexity of administrative tasks as a primary obstacle. Students are expected to navigate financial aid and health insurance agreements, register for classes, find housing, take placement tests, etc. This process can be overwhelming, particularly because students may no longer have access to their college counselor and are not yet connected to important resources on their college campus.

Policy Examples

Solutions to summer melt have focused on two primary tools: [increased college counseling](#) and the use of [texting services](#), either through an automated system or from peers. Both solutions have been documented as having a positive impact on college enrollment and summer melt. When considering state policy solutions, state leaders may want to consider if these efforts will be led by high schools or postsecondary institutions. Below, we outline two initiatives – one led by high schools and the other by a postsecondary institution.

Kentucky

In 2012, Lt. Gov. Jerry Abramson [launched a state-wide pilot program, Close the Deal](#), to encourage high school juniors and seniors to pursue a college education. The Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority [published a guidebook](#) to help local partners (primarily schools) host Close the Deal events. Close the Deal events are intended to:

- Help students engage with college admissions and financial aid officers and plan out next steps for enrollment.
- Help high school counselors to more effectively advise students.
- Involve local community leaders, business, colleges and education professionals.

We were unable to find any outcomes data on Close the Deal events, and the last update to the website was in 2016.

Georgia

A few years ago, 18 percent of [Georgia State University's](#) incoming class failed to show up on the first day of class. To address this, Georgia State developed a student portal to assist students with the administrative tasks associated with enrollment.

Additionally, the university introduced a texting platform, Pounce, that holds over 2,000 answers to commonly asked questions. Students can access Pounce – and answers to any of their questions – at any time of the day. In the first three months of the project, Pounce answered over 200,000 questions from students. Georgia State posits that Pounce reduced summer melt by 22 percent. The Assistant Vice President of Undergraduate Admissions estimates that the university would have had to hire 10 full-time staff members to handle that volume of messaging. Pounce also acts as a [virtual assistant](#) for the admissions office, sending reminders about administrative tasks and collecting survey data.

Georgia State and Pounce in the News

[You Can Help Make Sure Freshman Show Up](#) (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*)

[How Georgia State University Used an Algorithm to Help Students Navigate the Road to College](#) (*Harvard Business Review*)

Summer Bridge Programs

Summer bridge programs are another tool designed to help students [transition from high school to college](#). These programs are hosted by postsecondary institutions, and last 2-4 weeks during the summer before college enrollment. More thorough than a college orientation, these programs help students develop relationships with peers and faculty and cover a wide variety of academic content. Summer bridge programs typically include:

- An orientation to college life and important resources/
- Academic advising.
- College success skills like time management.
- Accelerated or remedial coursework.

These programs have been found to have positive impacts on students' [enrollment](#) and subsequent [academic success](#). In 2013, the Pell Institute [published a report](#) on student access and success, which found that summer bridge programs assist students with academic and social transitions. Based on in-depth case studies of public and private institutions' programs, the report found several student benefits, including increased college opportunity, academic success and relationship building.

State Policy Examples

In 2018, Illinois considered [HB 5696](#), (sent to the governor) which would create the Bridge Program for Underrepresented Students Act. The bill provides that each public university may establish a summer bridge program for underrepresented students who are state residents.

In Texas, state statute [Tex. Educ. Code Ann. § 61.0762](#) establishes programs to enhance student success. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is required to develop higher education summer bridge programs in mathematics, science, social science or English to reduce the need for remediation. A [research study](#) on eight of the resulting summer bridge programs found that the programs had a modest positive effect on first college-level course completion, but did not have a statistically significant impact on long term success markers such as number of credits earned or persistence. The study did not attempt to measure impact on summer melt.