



FINISH LINE GRADUATION BY DESIGN

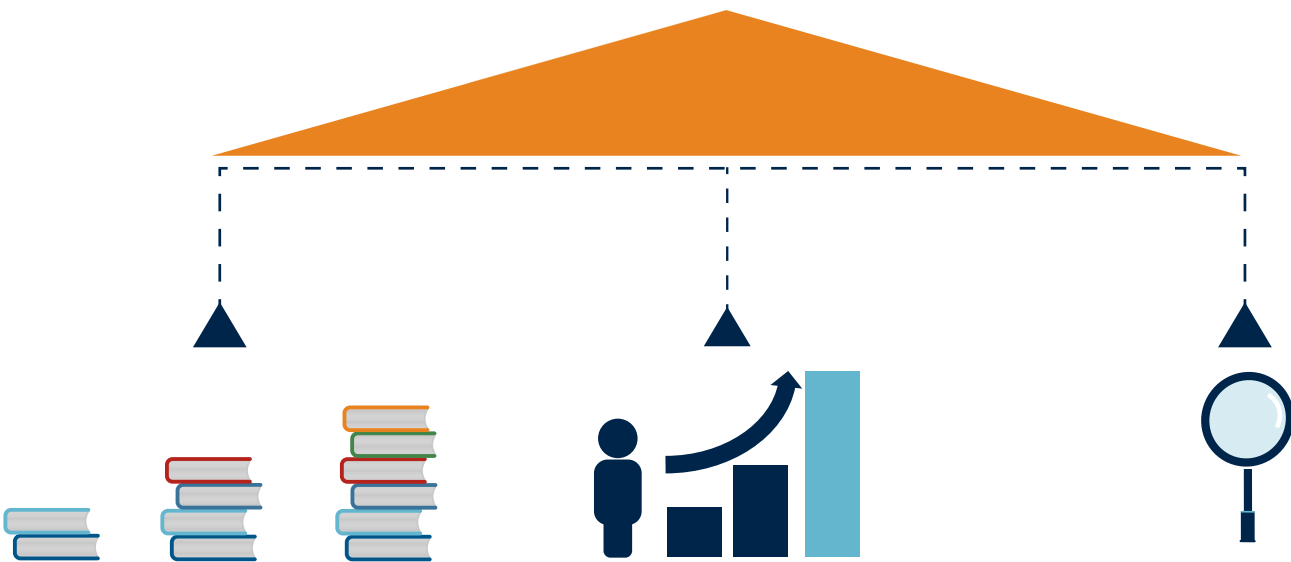
Can behavioral science improve college graduation rates?

Graduating from college is a challenge, particularly for low-income students and students who are older, have children, or have jobs. Such students often face personal, institutional, and structural barriers to success. Two of the most important factors that predict whether students will graduate from community college are the number of credits they attempt per semester and their academic performance in courses. However, most community college students enroll in fewer than 15 credits per semester, making it nearly impossible for them to graduate in two years. Many also struggle academically, failing to make satisfactory academic progress. As a result, their progress halts altogether and they lose financial aid. What can be done about these types of challenges?

PROJECT OBJECTIVES



IMPROVE GRADUATION RATES USING BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE



More Credits Per Semester

Students who enroll full time, generally 12 credits per semester, are more likely to graduate than students who enroll part time, and those who attempt 15 credits fare even better. Encouraging students to enroll in more credits may lead to improved academic outcomes.

More Students Maintaining Satisfactory Academic Progress

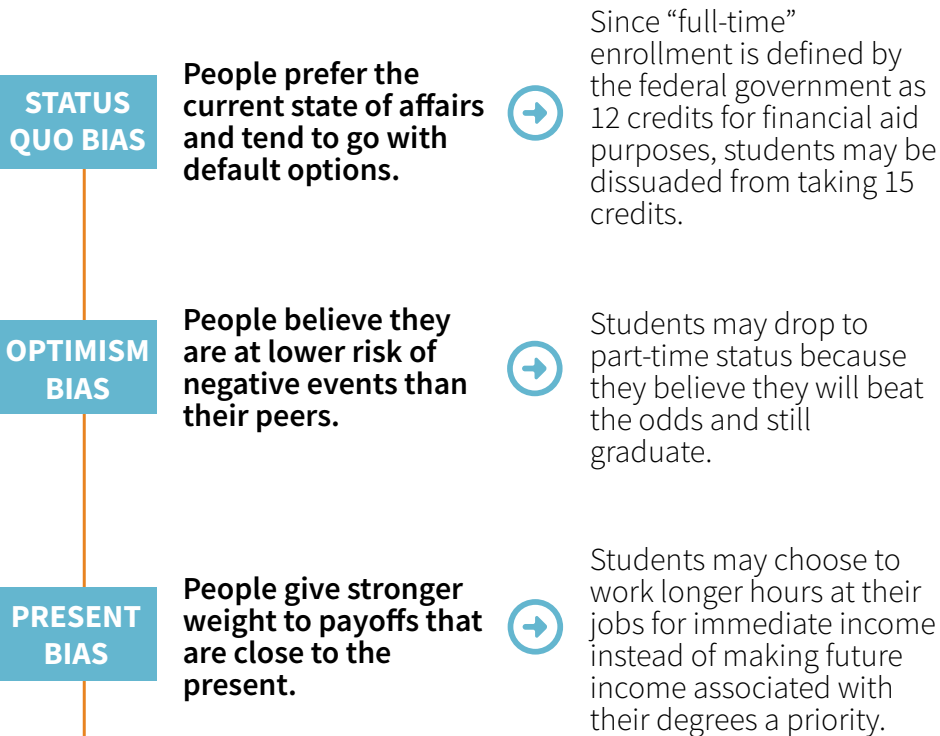
Federal regulations require colleges to establish standards to monitor students' progress. Students who fail to meet a college's satisfactory academic progress standards may be in jeopardy of losing their financial aid.

Additional Domain Identified During Diagnosis

The project will also tackle other challenges that stand in the way of students' graduation. These challenges will be defined in partnership with the colleges in the study through a behavioral diagnosis process.

HOW MIGHT INSIGHTS FROM BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE HELP IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION?

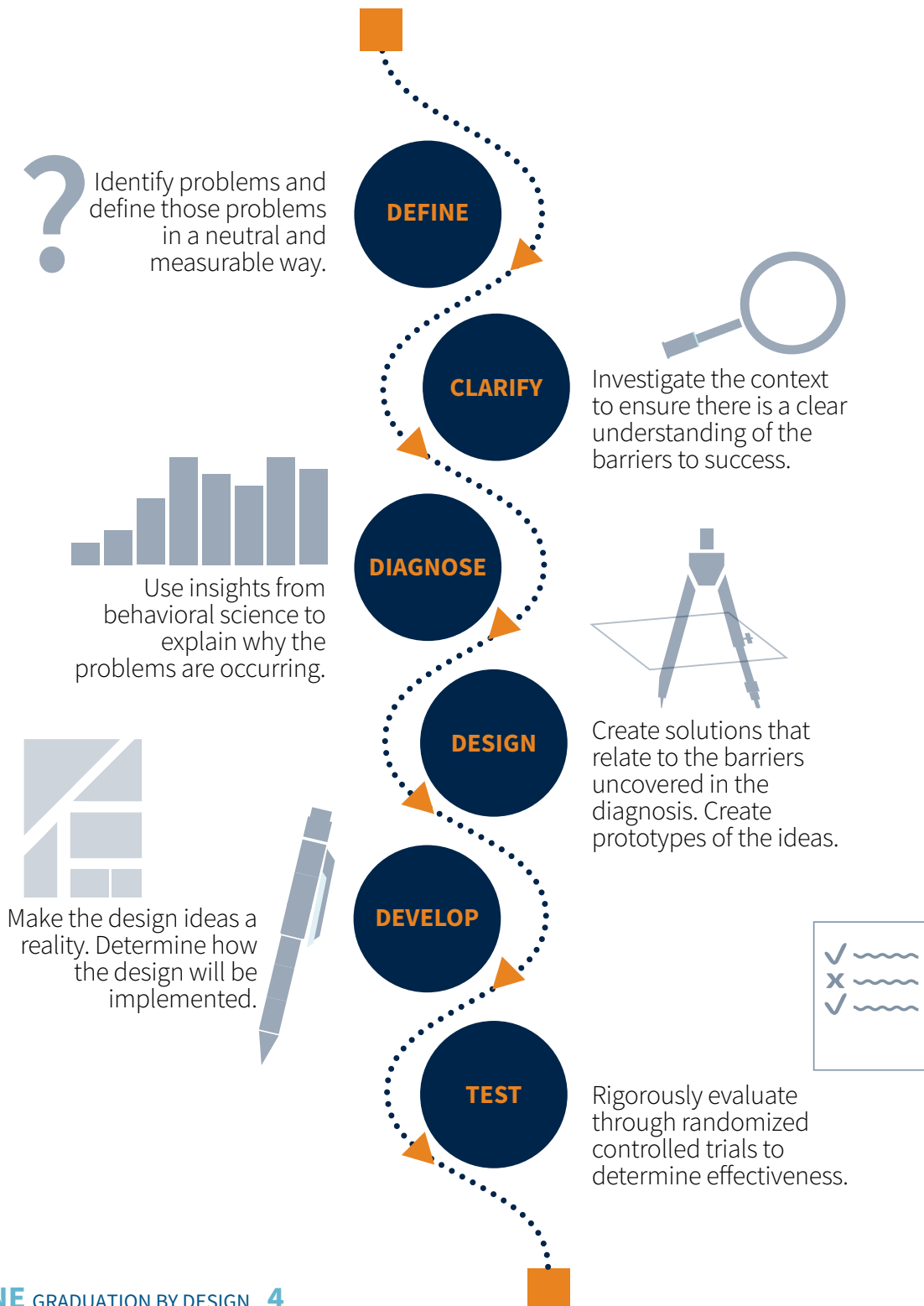
Rather than assuming people are purely rational, behavioral science offers a more realistic appreciation of human behavior. Behavioral science research has demonstrated that people's attention, self-control, and cognitive resources are limited and often overwhelmed, making it unlikely that they will use all available information to make decisions.



Insights from behavioral science help explain why some barriers to graduation are difficult to overcome. The Finish Line project will investigate what barriers may limit community college students' ability to graduate. Existing research suggests that the concepts depicted here may apply. The Finish Line project's diagnosis process will investigate these concepts and many others.

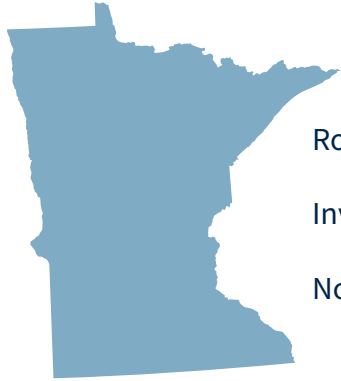
THE CENTER FOR APPLIED BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE (CABS) APPROACH

CABS uses a proven method to investigate problems and design solutions, which it will apply to refine its understanding of the barriers community college students face and to design innovative approaches to address them. MDRC is combining decades of research in postsecondary education with insights from behavioral science to generate promising solutions to the stubborn problem of low graduation rates.



PARTNER COLLEGES

We are partnering with three colleges in the Minnesota system to begin the diagnosis process.



Rochester Community and Technical College

Inver Hills Community College

Normandale Community College



MDRC's Center for Applied Behavioral Science (CABS) is an initiative that combines MDRC's expertise in social and education programs with insights from behavioral science. CABS develops innovative, lower-cost interventions, tests their impact through experimentation, and provides technical assistance to programs incorporating behavioral insights.



For more information about the Finish Line project, email Caitlin Anzelone, project director, at Caitlin.Anzelone@mdrc.org.

