

Sunstein and Thaler's book, *Nudge*, argues that by removing small obstacles, people can bring about huge changes. The book is filled with accounts of experiments that provide scientific evidence that supports their argument. One of these experiments provides insight into how universities can improve the percentage of college students who graduate in 4 years.

The experiment sought to discover if a university could increase the number of students who received a tetanus shot. The school gathered people who did not have a current tetanus shot, and school officials gave these students a lecture about the benefits of being vaccinated. After the lecture, almost all of the attendees thought getting a shot was a good idea and most even planned to do so. However, only 3% of these students actually got the shot.

Another group of students heard the same lecture and immediately, after the talk, they were asked to write down a time when getting the shot would fit into their schedules. The students were also given a map, and they were asked to draw the route they would follow to get to the Health Center so that they could get the shot. These extra activities removed some of the costs students would have to bear in order to get the shots. Now students no longer had to figure out when or where to get their vaccinations. Removing these small obstacles had a large impact, and 28% of the students in this group got a tetanus shot. Think about this: students were nine times more likely to get tetanus shots when they no longer had to worry about minor logistical problems.

Much like the students who think that getting a tetanus shot is a good idea, I expect that most UCA students believe that graduating in four years is a good idea. However, at UCA only 23% of the students, who take a full time load during the first semester of their freshman year, graduate in four years. Many of these students have trouble in some classes and drop them, which removes them from the road to finishing their degrees in four years. In order to get students back on track, UCA could remove some of the small obstacles that these students face. For instance, the Advising Center could send each student a letter outlining whether he or she is on track to graduate in four years. For those that are not, the letter could suggest summer school classes that these students could take to get back on track. The letter would mention the times and locations of the classes as well as directions for how to register for these classes.

My proposal removes small hurdles that students face on the path to graduating in four years. Much like removing some logistical costs in the experiment encouraged many more students to get a tetanus shot, UCA and other universities could remove some logistical costs to encourage more students to graduate in four years.

Now that the Arkansas state government is changing their funding formula to reward student graduation rates and retention, universities will be looking for ways to adapt their actions to capture more of the government funding. I hope that this proposal outlines a simple step for improving the four-year university graduation rates.

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