

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

JUNE 1, 2022

From: Goldie Blumenstyk

The science of text nudges is growing. That's a good thing.

Research on the value of sending students text-message “nudges” continues to hit my inbox. One new experiment, conducted at — you guessed it — Georgia State University, shows that such nudges can lead to higher grades.

Until recently, text nudges have been used primarily in nonacademic realms: to avert summer melt among first-year students, for example, or to issue reminders for administrative deadlines (think registering for courses or re-filing the FAFSA). And of course, results have shown that not all nudges are equal. Their success depends on their content, form, and timing, among other factors. These two new studies push our understanding of the science of nudges in higher ed a little further, toward academic progress.

Georgia State deployed chatbots powered by artificial intelligence to increase students' engagement in an introductory online course on government. Why there? It was the kind of high-enrollment course in which students nationally tend to struggle to connect with instructors and peers. The findings suggest that text messaging could directly influence a core academic experience.

I won't get deep into the particulars of each study, but [the Georgia State one](#) involved the company Mainstay and its AI chatbot technology.