



Timing is Everything: What we can learn from “survey procrastinators”

Presented by:

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Web-Based Surveys

- ◆ Tufts, like many institutions, relies heavily on online survey platforms to collect data.
- ◆ Online survey platforms have many advantages over paper-and-pencil surveys.
 - ◆ Inexpensive
 - ◆ Easy to use
 - ◆ Improved distribution
 - ◆ Bells-and-whistles

Web-Based Surveys

- ◆ A major advantage: busy respondents can complete surveys at their convenience.
 - ◆ More time = better data?
 - ◆ Comfy students = better data?
 - ◆ Tech-savvy = better data?
- ◆ A major disadvantage: Low response rates.

Response Rates

- ◆ Response rates are going down... everywhere. (e.g. Jans & Roman, 2007)
- ◆ Low response rates are ok if sample is representative...
...but most aren't.
- ◆ Nonresponse Error: When survey responders differ from nonresponders in key ways, leading us to draw erroneous conclusions.

Why Don't They Participate?

- ◆ Have we traded data quality in favor of ease and price?
- ◆ Why don't students take web surveys?

(Stay tuned, Tuesday at 10:30am)

Why Don't They Participate?

- ◆ Online non-response might be because...
 - ◆ Unread email routed to spam folder
 - ◆ Student temporarily too busy (e.g. exams)
 - ◆ Student forgot

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...Passive nonresponders.

We assume they want to take the survey.

Why Don't They Participate?

- ◆ Online non-response might be because...
 - ◆ **Student doesn't want to participate**
- ...Active nonresponders
- ◆ We hope they are a small fraction of our sample!

Survey Reminders

- ◆ We send reminders to intervene in passive nonresponding...
 - ◆ ...and maybe a little active nonresponding, too.
- ◆ We assume people who complete a survey after the reminder are similar to those who completed it before the reminder.
- ◆ Is that a valid assumption?

Late Responders

- ◆ Non-responders are different from responders
 - ◆ Male (McCabe, et al., 2002; Porter & Whitcomb, 2005b)
 - ◆ Nonwhite (Couper, Traugott, & Lamias, 2001)
 - ◆ Lower GPA (Porter, et al., 2004; Woosley, 2005)
- ◆ Could late responders – or “procrastinators” be different, too?

Late Responders

- ◆ Past research on this topic has found differences...
 - ◆ But most is based on mail surveys...
 - ◆ ...and findings are mixed.
- ◆ Some evidence that late responders display more problem behavior.

Late Responders

- ◆ Who is a survey procrastinator?
 - ◆ Most survey responses are submitted within 12-24 hours of an email.
 - ◆ Survey A: 89.5% within 24 hours of email
 - ◆ Survey B: 82.8%
 - ◆ Survey C: 87.6%
 - ◆ Survey D: 87%

Late Responders

- ◆ We send reminders to help the passive nonresponders
- ◆ Procrastinators: respondents who wait until a reminder is issued to start a survey.

Research Questions

- ◆ Are procrastinators different from “regular” responders?
 - ◆ Demographic, academic, and survey variables
- ◆ How does the survey incentive impact procrastination (and the procrastinators)?

- ◆ Analyzed data from two undergraduate surveys at Tufts
- ◆ Tufts University...
 - ◆ Private Research University – Very high activity
 - ◆ Entering class size ~1300
 - ◆ Competitive admissions
 - ◆ 4-year Liberal Arts & Engineering undergraduate schools

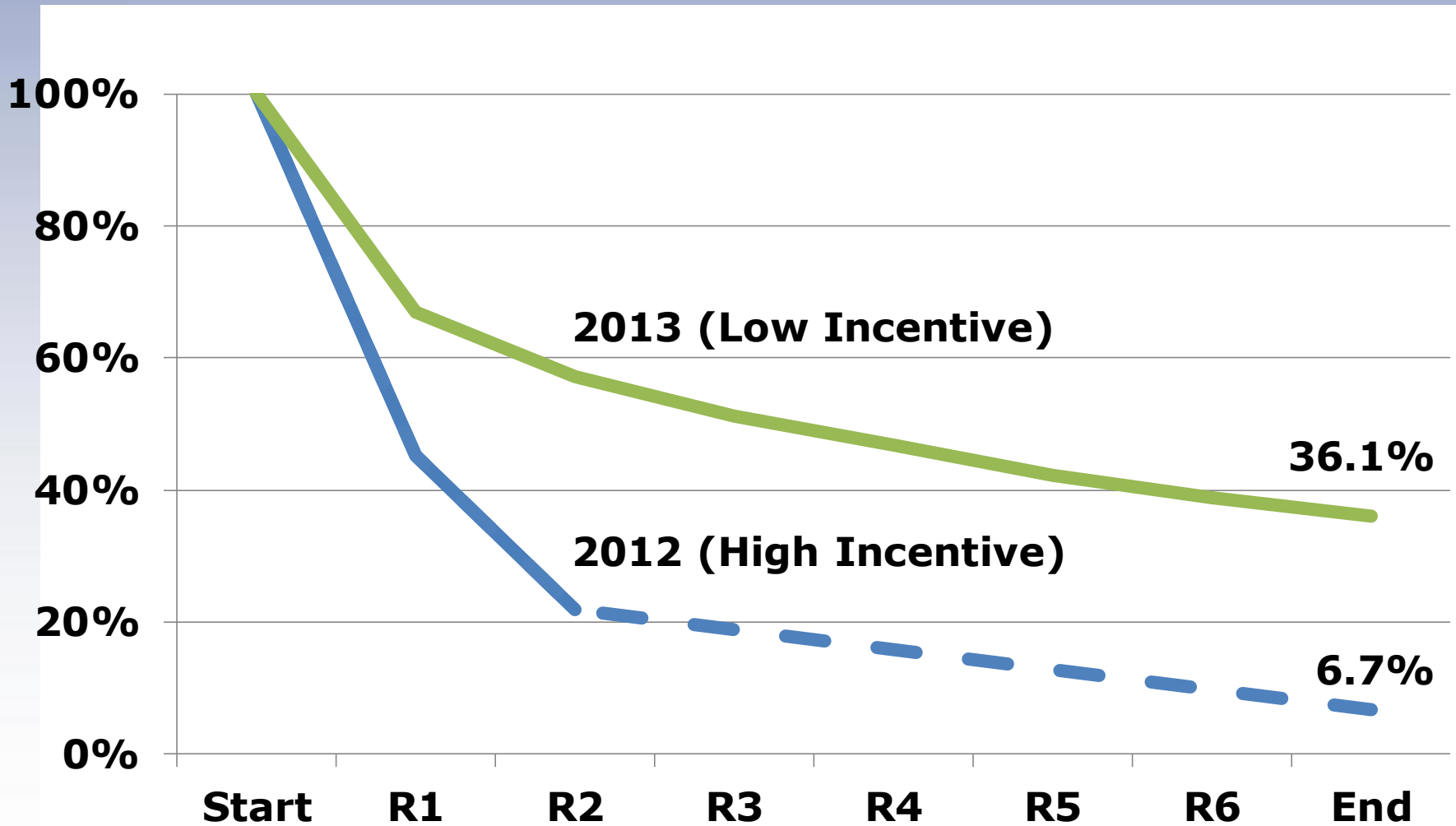
The Surveys

- ◆ Sophomore Survey
 - ◆ Administered sophomore spring
- ◆ 2012 Survey:
 - ◆ Highly incentivized
 - ◆ Initial email & 2 reminders
 - ◆ Advising, majors, student life, services, civic engagement
- ◆ 2013 Survey
 - ◆ Low incentive Initial email & 6 reminders
 - ◆ Added “flourishing scale”, removed advising questions

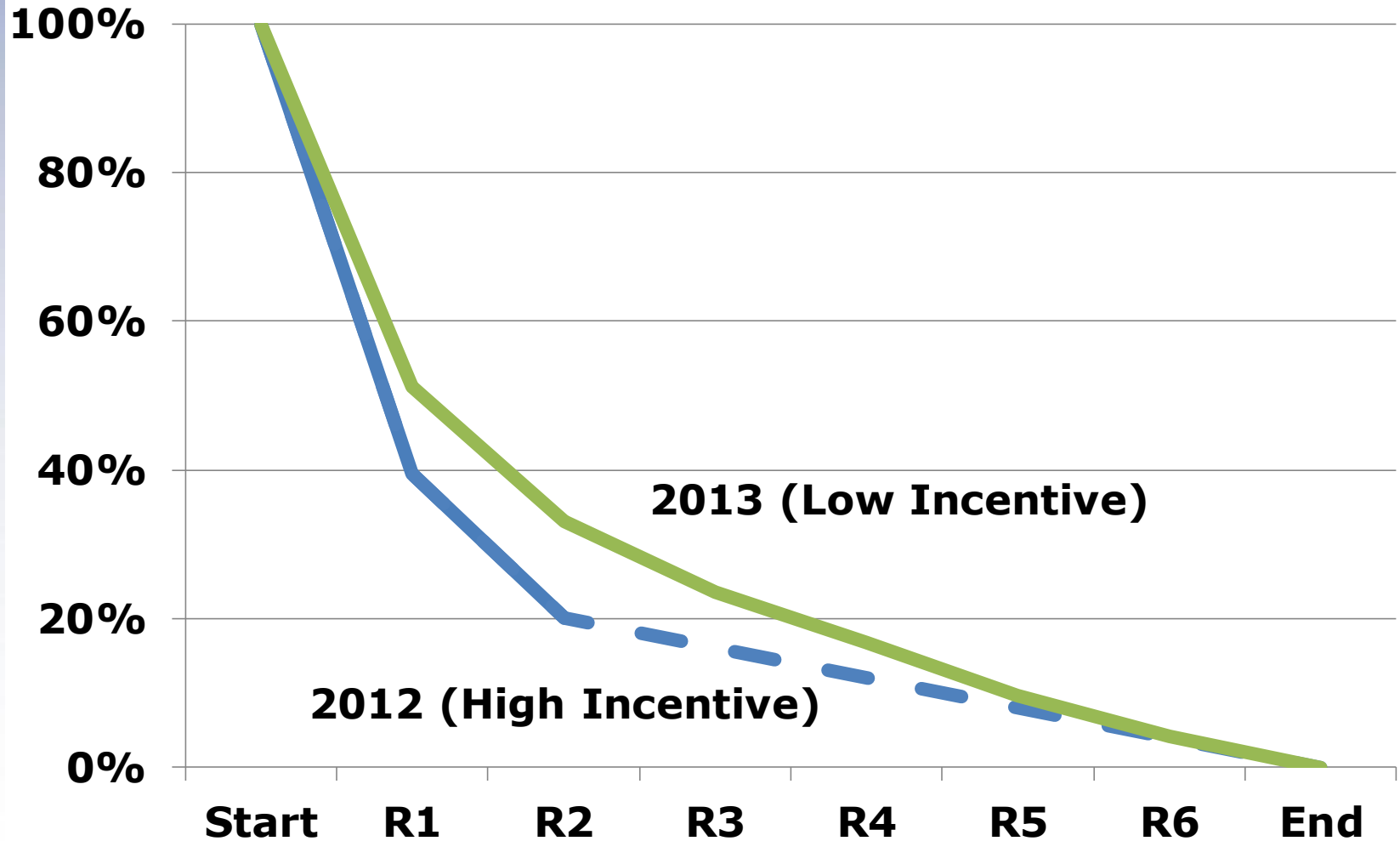
The Students

- ◆ 2012: 1073 Liberal Arts sophomores
 - ◆ 93.3% Response Rate (LA class size: 1151)
 - ◆ 54.5% female
 - ◆ Not different from population
 - ◆ GPA not significantly different
- ◆ 2013: 718 Liberal Arts sophomores
 - ◆ 64% Response Rate (LA class size: 1123)
 - ◆ 61% female
 - ◆ Different from population
 - ◆ Mean GPA higher than nonresponders

Percent of Class Nonresponding



Percent of Procrastinators



Results 2012 (High Incentive)

- ◆ Started before a reminder issued: 58.7%
- ◆ Procrastinators (41.3%):
 - ◆ More males ($t = 4.52, p < .01$)
 - ◆ More nonwhite students ($t = 3.80, p < .01$)
 - ◆ Lower GPA ($t = 7.35, p < .001$)

Results 2012 (High Incentive)

- ◆ Procrastinators:
 - ◆ Reported more difficulty choosing a major ($t = 2.06, p < .05$)
 - ◆ Less likely to make an appointment to see academic advisor... ($t = 2.22, p < .05$)
 - ◆ ...and more likely to drop in at the last minute. ($t = 6.81, p < .01$)
 - ◆ ...and more likely to feel the time spent with their advisor was inadequate. ($t = 2.21, p < .05$)

Results 2012 (High Incentive)

- ◆ Procrastinators:
 - ◆ Less likely to participate in community service ($t = 2.99, p < .01$)
 - ◆ Less likely to feel comfortable asking faculty for help
 - ◆ Rec letters ($t = 3.13, p < .01$)
 - ◆ Academic advising ($t = 2.13, p < .01$)

Results 2012 (High Incentive)

Procrastinators:

- ◆ Less likely to choose Tufts again ($t = 2.02$, $p < .05$)
- ◆ Took less time to complete survey ($t = 2.53$, $p < .01$)
 - ◆ Proxy of how engaged they were?

Results 2013 (Low Incentive)

- ◆ Started before first reminder issued: 48.7%
 - ◆ Six reminders to get the other 51.3%...
- ◆ Started before second reminder issued: 67%
- ◆ Explore procrastination in two ways:
 - ◆ After one reminder or after two
 - ◆ ...but they were the same.

(Stats presented will reflect one reminder)

Results 2013 (Low Incentive)

Procrastinators:

- ◆ Less likely to engage in academic discussions outside of class ($t = 2.11, p < .05$)
- ◆ Less likely to feel comfortable asking faculty for help
 - ◆ Rec letter ($t = 2.17, p < .05$)
 - ◆ Additional educational opportunities ($t = 2.14, p < .05$)
 - ◆ Advising ($t = 1.94, p < .05$)

Results 2013 (Low Incentive)

Procrastinators:

- ◆ Less likely to participate in student organizations and community service ($t = 2.05$, $p < .05$; $t = 1.99$, $p < .05$)
- ◆ Feel less able to contribute to the campus community ($t = 2.07$, $p < .05$)

Results 2013 (Low Incentive)

Procrastinators:

- ◆ Less satisfied with sense of community on campus ($t = 2.89, p < .01$)
- ◆ Perceived prejudice against students from different socioeconomic backgrounds as a campus problem ($t = 3.07, p < .01$)

Results 2013 (Low Incentive)

Procrastinators:

- ◆ Less time to complete survey ($t = 1.91, p < .05$)
- ◆ Less likely to have left a final comment ($t = 2.11, p < .05$)

("Please use this space below to provide any additional comments about your Tufts experience.")

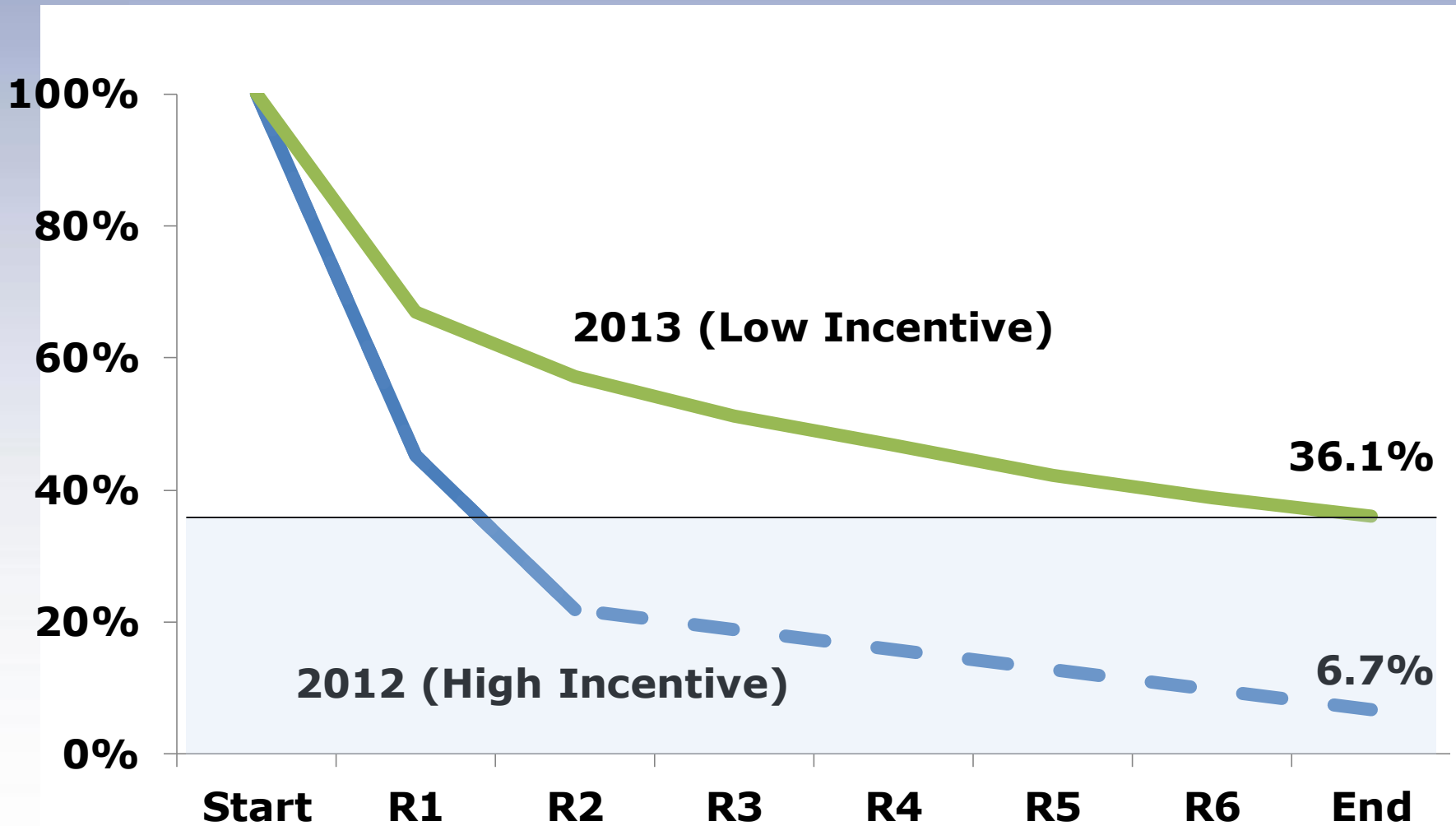
Results 2013 (Low Incentive)

- ◆ No differences:
 - ◆ Likelihood of choosing Tufts again
 - ◆ GPA
 - ◆ % Male
 - ◆ % nonwhite
 - ◆ Flourishing scale

2012 vs. 2013

Category	Early Responders 2012	Late Responders 2012	Early Responders 2013	Late Responders 2013	Non-responders 2013
GPA	3.48	3.31	3.45	3.43	3.35
% Male	39%	52%	37%	41%	57%
% Nonwhite	24%	35%	34%	32%	31%

Percent of Class Nonresponding



Take Home Points

- ◆ Procrastinators were different from non-procrastinators
 - ◆ More academically adrift
 - ◆ Less engaged on campus
 - ◆ More dissatisfied
- ◆ Those who waited for a reminder spent less time on the survey

Take Home Points

- ◆ Procrastinators different from non-responders
- ◆ Students who procrastinate in high-incentive situations participate because they have to.
 - ◆ They otherwise wouldn't be doing the survey.

Take Home Points

- ◆ Reminders are good! Send them.
- ◆ Dissatisfied and less engaged students procrastinate – wait for them!
- ◆ Plan your survey administration carefully.
 - ◆ Incentives?
 - ◆ When to send reminders? How many?

Limitations

- ◆ Homogenous sample
- ◆ Many other variables of interest
 - ◆ Qualitative data
 - ◆ Majors
 - ◆ Prematriculation data
- ◆ Why do students procrastinate? Why don't they take surveys?
 - ◆ We know a little, but not all...

That's all, folks...

Question Time!

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