



Institutional Determinants of Labor Market Outcomes for Community College Students in North Carolina

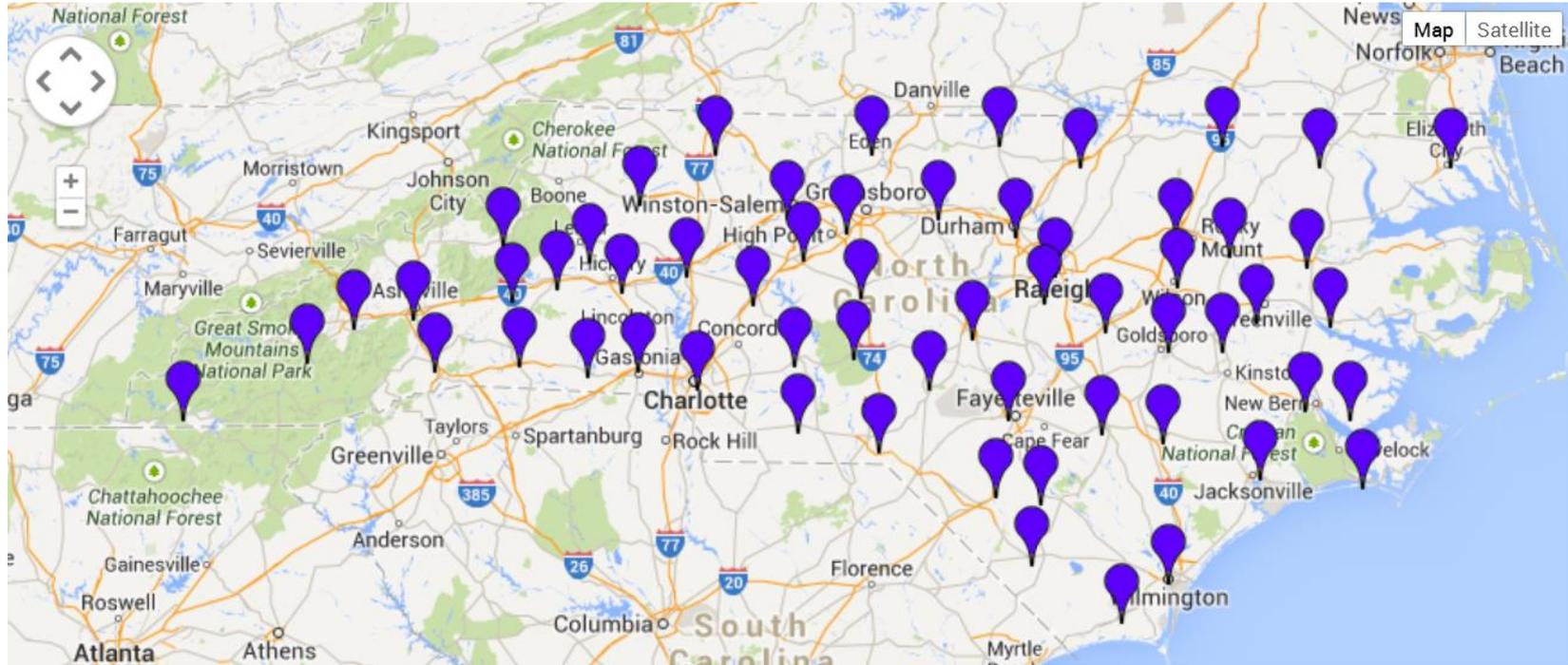
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North Carolina Community College System



- 58 community colleges
- 3rd largest system in the country (NC is 10th in population)
- 99% of NC residents are within a 30 minute drive from a college

Community College Characteristics

- 1 in 9 NC citizens (18 or older) are enrolled
 - 48% of higher education enrollments in NC
- Highly centralized budgeting and curricula
 - Budget allocated based on enrollment
 - Standardized curricula across entire system
- Characteristics make system ideal for study
 - Standardization of budget and curricula allow for more effective institutional-level comparison
 - Represent considerable percentage of higher education students in NC

Research Question and Design

- **Question** – How do institutional factors influence the labor market returns to college for community college students?
- **Design** – Created 15 institutional variables in six categories
 - General institutional characteristics
 - Student body composition characteristics
 - Community college service area characteristics
 - Labor market characteristics of community college service area
 - Institutional labor market focus
 - Student readiness for labor market opportunities
- **Design** – Qualitative analysis of two high-performing and two low-performing community colleges

Variable	Female		Male	
	Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE
General institutional characteristics				
<i>Student enrollment in 2002–2003 (log)</i>	0.142***	0.037	0.068	0.050
Proportion of full-time faculty	0.033	0.113	-0.027	0.152
Student body composition characteristics				
Proportion of students applying for financial aid	0.120	0.115	0.223	0.154
<i>Proportion of students entering to finish high school</i>	-0.225*	0.110	-0.240	0.148
Proportion of student body enrolled part-time	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Community college service area characteristics				
UNC campus in service area	-0.029	0.028	-0.060	0.037
<i>Single-county service area</i>	0.035*	0.016	0.093***	0.022
Labor market characteristics of community college service area				
Rural or urban service area	-0.083	0.061	-0.133	0.082
<i>Service area unemployment rate, 2008–2010</i>	-0.033*	0.017	-0.059**	0.022
Institutional labor market focus				
<i>Proportion of FTE enrollments in continuing education offerings</i>	-0.462*	0.198	-0.411	0.267
<i>Proportion of “applied” offerings in curriculum programs</i>	0.292**	0.114	0.230	0.153
<i>Rate of student transfer, 2002–2003 cohort</i>	0.087	0.125	-0.650***	0.168
Proportion of instructional budget allocated to continuing education	-0.029	0.099	-0.068	0.135
Student readiness for labor market opportunities				
First-time student licensure pass rate, 2002–2012	-0.006	0.258	-0.358	0.350
Proportion of student enrollment in customized industry programs	-0.154	0.257	-0.101	0.345
Constant	6.355***	0.324	7.736***	0.44

Findings and Results – Qualitative

Characteristics of High-Performing Community Colleges

- Urban
- Low local unemployment
- Serve single county
- Large enrollments
- Large program offerings
- Stable leadership
- Ambitious vision statement
- Abundant wrap-around services

Characteristics of Low-Performing Community Colleges

- Rural
- High local unemployment
- Serve multiple counties
- Small enrollments
- Small program offerings
- Transient leadership
- Narrow vision statement
- Limited wrap-around services

Policy Implications

- Social context is important to fully understand returns to schooling
- Certain characteristics negatively affecting labor market returns are not amenable to policy interventions
- Current measurements/rankings using labor market returns are systematically hurting colleges that already have geographic and structural disadvantages not under their control

Concluding Thoughts

- Institutional factors do matter, but **much** more variation is produced within colleges by individual attributes than there is between colleges
- Nevertheless, institutional characteristics are important variables to include in future research

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