Measuring Employment Outcomes at CUNY

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CUNY's Access to NYS Employment and Wage Data

- CUNY has new access to job outcomes for its graduates.
  - Employment in NYS
  - Wages
  - Employer name
  - Industry

- No data on occupation

- Wage and employment data have long been collected, but CUNY did not have access until this year.
  - New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL)
  - Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage record system (WRS)

The bad old days

- CUNY relied on surveys to understand labor market outcomes of graduates
  - Low response rates (18.1% for associate; 9.7% for baccalaureate)
  - Graduates only (no continuing students, drop outs, or transfers)
  - Snapshot at a single point in time
    - Associate: 6 months after graduation
    - Baccalaureate: 3 years after graduation

- National foundations expected CUNY to have access to NYSDOL wage and employment data
  - However, CUNY had no systematic access
  - Lack of access limited our colleges' ability to apply for grants and prizes (eg Aspen)

- NYS is not one of the 35 states participating in WRIS 2 (Wage Record Interchange System)
  - Minimum cell size is 3 for WRIS 2, but 10 for NYS

Breakthrough 1: Legal and policy framework

- New York State's first higher education performance funding system, called Job Linkage
  - Established in Governor Cuomo's executive budget in January 2013
  - Carrot, no stick: Incentive funds for CUNY and SUNY reward colleges with above average employment outcomes (% employed, wage gains) for AOS and AAS graduates (among other outcomes)
  - No base funding tied to college academic or employment performance
  - Even if extra funds are not renewed by the legislature next year, wage and employment outcome reporting remains compulsory

- Prompted CUNY's first access to NYSDOL's wage and employment data
  - However, NYSDOL provided to CUNY only aggregate results for AOS and AAS graduates

Breakthrough 2: Legal and policy framework

- The Job Linkage program prompted state executive-level interest in wage and employment outcomes for colleges and agencies across the state

- Legislation passed in 2013 gave government agencies, SUNY, and CUNY access to these data
  - Effective December 23, 2013
  - Access granted after completing a number of requirements, including confidentiality training
  - Data include quarterly wages, industry of employment, and employer information (name, EIN, address)

Successes: Some Early Findings

- 87.6% of associate/baccalaureate graduates from 2003-10 are employed in NYS
  - 86.3% of associate graduates were employed in NYS
  - 88.4% of baccalaureate graduates
  - Remaining 12% are not necessarily unemployed
    - Self-employed, working in other states, bad data/match with NYSDOL records

- Smaller employers very important: only one-third of CUNY graduates work for the top 50 employers

Successes, cont'd.

- CUNY's academic department chairs can now compare labor market outcomes for similar programs across 24 colleges.
  - What is the return on a student's investment?

- NYS is one of the few states that provides employer names, not just wages.
  - CUNY's department chairs can approach employers about aligning program and curricula to industry needs

Successes, cont'd.

- CUNY central and campus administrators can identify programs for expansion in important areas for future regional job growth
  - Working with LMIS at the CUNY Graduate Center to merge data on supply and demand for graduates by field in the NYC region

- Understand employment factors that may contribute to dropping out of college

- Quantify the extent to which students work while pursuing their education at CUNY

Challenges

- Limitations of the data: Covers NYS employers only
  - Not neighboring states: NJ, CT, PA, etc.
  - However, 86% of CUNY associate and baccalaureate graduates remain in NYS, so this is not a major limitation
  - If NYS participated in WRIS 2, we could access PA and NJ wage data (in aggregate form), but not CT.
    - NJ and PA participate in WRIS 2, but not CT

- Employer confidentiality
  - Revealing employer names and EINs
    - Department chairs would like to approach employers about curriculum alignment, but without the ability to reveal employer names, they cannot.
    - Computer science departments across CUNY colleges would be the first to undertake this work, if given the opportunity.

Challenges, cont'd.

- Matching records without SSN
  - NYSDOL merges college records using SSN only
    - No probability matching based on name, gender, address, or date of birth
  - A significant share of workforce training in the state occurs through Adult and Continuing Education (ACE) programs
    - These programs either do not collect or do not have the capacity to report student SSNs
  - Without SSN, CUNY's (and SUNY's) ACE programs effectively have no access to wage and employment data
  - However, these programs' staff want to understand their alignment with industry needs just like degree-granting institutions and departments
    - NYC Department of Education's (DOE) Career and Technical Education programs face the same limitation

Continuing collaboration with NYSDOL

- Working with NYSDOL to merge Tax and Finance records to WRS records
  - Occupation is available through Tax and Finance
    - Provides access to the responses tax payers fill in on their tax forms
  - Opportunity to merge other variables that would improve a probability match for students without an SSN (gender, DOB, address)

- Providing technical assistance to NYSDOL for conducting probability matches on records without SSN
  - CUNY has experience conducting probability matches with NYC DOE records and CUNY records

Even more collaboration with NYSDOL

- NYS Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)
  - NYSDOL is pursuing merging DMV records with wage records to improve matching results with CUNY records
  - Would allow for probability matches for students without an SSN
    - More limited results because population would be limited to those with a driver's license

- Drafting an amendment to CUNY's MOU with NYSDOL that would allow department chairs to see lists of employers if they:
  - Sign a confidentiality agreement
  - Do not redistribute lists, and
  - All lists have a watermark "Confidential"

- Wage data highlight that higher education is a means to an end, not an end in itself

- Allows for benchmarking against other states: how does this one measure of standard of living compare across states?

- ROI for higher education: Is higher education worth it (in your field of interest)?

- College accountability, performance funding
  - Base funding vs. "extra" incentive funding
  - Allocations within each system separately? (within CUNY only, within SUNY only)

More: Wage data, policy development, and policy makers

- New source of information for students when deciding program/major/college
  - Much better data than payscale.com (used in President's Scorecard)

- Internal accountability
  - Some departments say they have high drop out rates because their students are offered high paying jobs
    - WRS data can support their argument or disprove it

Potential stumbling blocks at the state level

- ○ Data quality
  - ✕ If the data are perceived as inaccurate, support declines for performance funding (or "soft" accountability measures such as public reporting of outcomes) that rely on those data.
    - ○ consistency of data and definitions over time

- ○ Unintended consequences
  - ✕ If a funding formula focuses too much on employment outcomes, colleges have an incentive to eliminate programs with no employment outcomes, such as post-incarceration transition/training programs.

- ○ How do you handle programs with good employment outcomes but low wages (eg, child care)?