

Improving Outcomes for Disadvantaged Postsecondary Students

Harry J. Holzer
Georgetown University
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The Focus of This Talk

- Public 2-Year (Lower-Tier 4-Year) Colleges
- Drawn from New Book: *Making College Work: Pathways to Success for Disadvantaged Students* – Brookings Press, Forthcoming in August 2017 (with Sandy Baum)

Facts about Public 2-Year Colleges

1. Large Concentration of Disadvantaged/First Generation College Students – Adults as well as Youth
2. Weak Outcomes
 - Low Completion Rates – Even adjusting for Transfers
 - Weak Labor Market Outcomes – High Concentration of AAs in Liberal Arts rather than Occupational AA/AS Degrees and Certificates with Stronger Labor Market Returns
3. Student Debt

What Explains Weak Outcomes at CCs?

- Following Bound, Lovenheim and Turner (2010): Personal and Institutional Effects
- Personal: Weak Academic Prep (Developmental Education), Costs/Liquidity Constraints on Families, Pressure to Work Full-Time, Too Little Information/Social Capital
- Institutions: Too Few Resources, Too Weak Incentives (Labor Market), Too Little Structure and Guidance – And Disconnect Between Student Aspirations (BAs) and Realities

Disconnect Between Aspirations and Realities

- Survey Data: 80% of youth enter CCs expecting to transfer and achieve BA
- Outcomes: About a fourth transfer and half of them complete BAs – about 12%
- Little Interest in Career-Oriented Certificate or AA/AS Programs and Little Capacity

Improving Outcomes: Supports and Services for Individual Students

- ASAP! CUNY and Ohio
- Reforms in Developmental Education, Financial Aid
- More and Better Counseling – Academic and Career
- Child Care, Emergency Cash...

Improving Outcomes: Institutional Changes

- Goal: More Workforce Program Capacity, More Guided Pathways – How to Get There?
- More Resources from State – More Equitably Distribution Across Public Institutions
- More External Accountability: Performance-Based Funding – More Emphasis on Earnings Outcomes, Disadvantaged Students (Warning: Unintended Consequences!)
- More Internal Accountability: More Decentralized Control Over Revenue
- Race to the Top for CCs? Targeted Resources and Accountability

Also: Heavy Dose of Reality Needed!

- Should Students Be Much Better Informed about Rates of Success with Transfer? Tracking v. Realism
- More Emphasis on Better Certificates and AS Programs
- Strong Pathways from High School CTE – High-Quality Models
- Should CCs Continue to Have Open Access in Admissions???