The Post-College Earnings of Part-Time Community College Students
Forthcoming in the Community College Journal of Research and Practice
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Funders

• Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
• Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation
Research Questions

• How do part-time students do in terms of post-college earnings compared to full-time students and mixed FT/PT students?

• What role do stopouts play?

• Many assume part-timers are disadvantaged on the labor market, but others have suggested that piecing together both work and academic experience during college may provide long-term benefits.

• Our study makes no causal claims about part-time study, but simply asks if PT students are doing as badly as many assume, or if they are in fact doing relatively well.
Key Definitions

- Full-Time = 12 credits or more attempted in a given semester (including remedial credits)
- Part-Time = less than 12 credits attempted in a given semester (including remedial credits)
- Stopout = 0 credits taken in a given semester (including remedial credits)
Potential harms of part-time enrollment

• PT students are less likely to graduate (degrees provide an economic boost)
• PT students are less likely to graduate on time, & delayed graduation may provide a wage penalty through human capital becoming obsolete (Fortin and Ragued 2017) or negative signaling (Aina & Pastore 2012)
• If PT students are less engaged socially and academically, this might have negative labor market repercussions, but evidence is mixed (Kalleberg and Dunn 2015, Hu and Wolniak 2010)
Potential benefits of part-time enrollment

• Part-time students often gain work experience which can benefit them on the labor market through:
  • Promotion up the career ladder (Fitzgerald 2006)
  • Acquisition of human capital including soft skills (Heckman and Kautz 2012)
  • Positive signaling (resume building, references, etc.)

• Prior research is inconclusive (Pascarella and Terenzini 2005), but various studies have found a positive relationship between work during college and post-college earnings (Stephenson 1982, Titus 2010, Molitor and Leigh 2005), including our research group!
Research Aims

• Determine the comparative post-college earnings for the following six groups of students pursuing an associate’s degree at entry at CUNY:
  • Entirely full-time & no stopouts in the first 4 semesters (FT “benchmark” student)
  • Entirely part-time & no stopouts in the first 4 semesters
  • Mixed FT/PT & no stopouts in the first 4 semesters
  • Entirely full-time & at least 1 stopout in the first 4 semesters
  • Entirely part-time & at least 1 stopout in the first 4 semesters
  • Mixed FT/PT & at least 1 stopout in the first 4 semesters

• Divide sample into students who earn a degree and/or 60 credits and those who do not (after 20 semesters) but also look at full sample
Data

• Wage data from state administrative records linked to Policy Tracking Cohort
• Any student starting community college at CUNY from Fall 1999 to Fall 2010
• Earned wages in every quarter from Q3 2015 – Q2 2016
• Stopped attending CUNY by Fall 2015
• Earned a degree and/or 60 credits (after 20 sem):
  • N = 58,054
• Did not earn a degree or 60 credits (after 20 sem):
  • N = 76,706
• Full sample
  • N = 134,760
Who is more likely to go entirely PT in the first 4 semesters?

• Black/Hispanic students
• Women
• U.S.-born
• Older students
• Lower SAT score
• Lower college GPA (through 20 semesters)
• Health majors most likely, social science majors least likely
## Descriptives - Grad/Credits & Earnings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Earned Degree or 60 Credits After 20 Semesters</th>
<th>Median Earnings</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pct.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FT 4 sem, no stop-outs</td>
<td>$42,833</td>
<td>41,736</td>
<td>30.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mix PT/FT, no stop-outs</td>
<td>$41,744</td>
<td>23,915</td>
<td>17.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT 4 sem, no stop-outs</td>
<td>$52,855</td>
<td>2,522</td>
<td>1.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FT 4 sem, at least 1 stop-out</td>
<td>$36,597</td>
<td>43,140</td>
<td>31.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mix PT/FT, at least 1 stop-out</td>
<td>$37,298</td>
<td>16,422</td>
<td>12.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT 4 sem, at least 1 stop-out</td>
<td>$43,373</td>
<td>8,195</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regression Analysis- Key Variables

• Dependent Variable
  • Total post-college earnings from Q3 2015 – Q2 2016 (1 year of earnings)

• Key Predictor
  • Categorical variable representing the 6 possible combinations of FT/PT/Stopout in the student’s first 4 semesters at CUNY
Regression Analysis- Controls

- Semester & year first enrolled
- Race/Ethnicity
- Gender
- Citizenship
- English ability
- Age entered CUNY
- Economic disadvantage flag + received Pell/TAP
- HS Info (NYC, NY State, out of state, out of country, GED)
- SAT (if taken)
- Time between HS grad & college entrance
- CUNY college attended first semester
- Cumulative GPA after 20 semesters
- Most recent major
Summary of Findings- Full sample

• Compared to the “benchmark” FT student with no stopouts:
  • PT 4 sem, no stop-outs earning 6% more
  • Mix FT/PT, no stop-outs and PT 4 sem, at least 1 stop-out doing about the same
  • FT 4 sem, at least 1 stop-out and Mix FT/PT, at least 1 stop-out earning 5-7% less
Summary of Findings - Degree/60 credit earners

• Compared to the “benchmark” FT student:
  • Similar to full sample
Summary of Findings - Did not earn degree/60 credits

• Compared to the “benchmark” FT student:
  • PT 4 sem, no stop-outs earning 11% more
  • PT 4 sem, at least 1 stop-out earning 6% more
  • Everyone else does about the same
Conclusion

• PT students are less likely to graduate or receive 60 credits at CUNY, but stopouts seem to be the bigger penalty.

• However, at CUNY, PT students are doing better than we might expect in terms of post-college earnings:
  • PT 4 sem, no stop-outs outperform everyone in every sample.
  • PT 4 sem, at least 1 stop-out do at least as well as “benchmark” FT student, better among non-degree/60 credit earners.
  • Mix FT/PT, no stop-outs do about as well as “benchmark” in every sample.
  • FT 4 sem, at least 1 stop-out and Mix FT/PT, at least 1 stop-out do worse than “benchmark” except among non-degree/60 credit earners.
Next Steps

- Replicate analyses across states
  - Do part-timers do relatively well in post-college earnings across states?
  - What is the role of stopouts?
- Share results with practitioners
  - Recognize the various pathways to student success when we focus on post-college earnings
  - Pay more attention to the importance of part-time students (nationally, 38% of undergrads at degree seeking institutions and 60% of community college students enroll part-time)