

Estimating the Net Benefits of Bachelor Degrees: Data Challenges and Importance

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Paper Abstract:

Now, as before, the available data show that those who earn at least a bachelor's level university degree have higher earnings on average, and multiple other sorts of better labor market outcomes on average, than those with community college, technical school, or high school educations but no university degree. Yet calls for diverting more of those seeking university educations to alternative education programs or for changing how bachelor's degrees are delivered are persistent and strong now. This paper explores the sorts of empirical evidence behind the calls for change, proposes an alternative explanation of the causes of the media reports and public attitudes toward research universities despite the evidence of job market success for graduates, and notes that the ways of dealing with this situation that could work differ depending on the causes. A list of types of initiatives that faculty members could take that might help is given.