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Postsecondary Education Impact on Intergenerational Income Mobility: Differences by Completion Status, Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Type of Major

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ABSTRACT

This study examined intergenerational mobility among former students of The University of Texas System (n = 98,199) by comparing parental household income while the students were in college to students' income five years after exiting the system. The proportion of students who experienced upward mobility relative to their parents were estimated, using a combination of rank-rank slopes, transition matrices, and logistic regression. The results indicated that parental income and college completion are the most important of the studied factors in determining upward mobility. The majority of completers from the bottom two parental income quintiles displayed upward mobility within a few years of graduation, and among students from the bottom quintile, over half of noncompleters also had higher incomes relative to their parents.

Differences in mobility rates on the basis of gender, race/ethnicity, type of major, institution type, and financial aid type were also explored.

KEYWORDS:

Intergenerational mobility | transition matrices | rank-rank | logistic regression | education | gender | race/ethnicity | major

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Correction Statement

This article has been republished with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.

Notes

1. Wage records for former students with a value of zero were also excluded, as the Texas Workforce Commission data did not allow determination of when these values represented true zero earnings versus missing data. Parental income did include zero adjusted gross income.

2. STEM majors were defined as programs in natural resources and conservation, engineering, biology and life sciences, health, physical sciences, computers, statistics, and mathematics.

3. Underrepresented minority (URM) students were defined as individuals who self-identified as African American (including multiracial), Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, or Native American. Non-underrepresented minority (Non-URM) students were self-identified as Asian or White.

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