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## Do Community Colleges Respond to Local Needs? Evidence from California

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34 contributors to this book were women who answered a “short note” sent by Emily Monosson to the Listserv for former fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. They are a varied and interesting group (albeit primarily from the United States), but it is not clear exactly how they were selected. One quality for which they do *not* appear to have been selected is their expression of strong or intellectually cogent views on the ways women manage in today’s American culture. We read, for example, that it was hard to find a part-time job or that success depends, to a great extent, on a supportive mentor—but there is no discussion of the way society could be changed so that men and women, together, could make careers and parenthood more easily compatible. Nor is there any discussion about whether other countries do this better than the United States.

Although it is hard to size up progress in societal matters as complex as those that are the subject of this book, it appears that not very much has changed, despite the many years over which dedicated scientists/mothers have tried to make the best of a difficult situation. Making science careers friendly to women who also wish to be mothers is a project as yet unaccomplished. As such, I believe this book would have been more useful if the contributors and the editor had dedicated more time to some thoughtful policy discussion. Still, the book is a pleasure to read and is valuable as a window into the lives of female scientists today and yesterday.

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*Do Community Colleges Respond to Local Needs? Evidence from California.* By Duane E. Leigh and Andrew M. Gill. Kalamazoo, Mich.: W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2007. 219 pp. ISBN 978-0-88099-328-9, \$40 (cloth); 978-0-88099-327-2, \$18 (paper).

Community colleges, established almost a century ago to fill a gap in worker training and also to give educationally, economically, or socially disadvantaged students a leg up, are an important part of American public higher education. They meet the needs of student populations that are diverse in terms of demographic characteristics, educational aspirations, economic backgrounds, and work experience. Duane Leigh and Andrew Gill’s *Do Community Colleges Respond to Local Needs?* explores the performance of the California Com-

munity College System (CCCS) in two areas: providing educational and training services to immigrants, and responding to local labor market conditions.

The introduction discusses the importance of the above two issues from a Californian perspective. California has the largest and most developed community college system in United States, and the degree to which it has contributed toward the making of an equitable society is a story worth telling. The second issue—adapting community college programs to labor market needs—has gained prominence as globalization-induced changes in the American economy have created a need for continuous improvement of workplace skills.

Following an excellent overview of the CCCS—including a clear explanation of the division of responsibilities and appropriation of funds among the three pillars of public higher education in California, the University of California, the California State University system, and CCCS—Chapters 3 and 4 provide reviews of the literature on the two research questions. These chapters also lay the groundwork for the analytical approaches the authors will presently take. Chapter 3 first cites research establishing a link between the immigrant/native white wage gap and an educational gap, then reviews studies that, using a combination of national-level and student-level data, appear to demonstrate favorable effects of community colleges on immigrants’ educational outcomes.

The difficulties involved in showing such a link are the subject of Chapter 4. The question of how responsive a community college is to local labor market conditions will have multiple answers depending on which definition of responsiveness is used. After considering various definitions, the authors settle on the one provided by the Department of Education (DoED) community college Labor Market Responsiveness Initiative: a responsive college is one having academic programs designed to align the demand and supply forces in the local labor market. Previous work by Louis Jacobson, Robert LaLonde, and Daniel G. Sullivan (“Estimating the Returns to Community College Schooling for Displaced Workers,” *Journal of Econometrics*, Vol. 125, 2005) has looked only at labor market outcomes of community college education, and has found them to be positive. Looking at the responsiveness of colleges to the local labor market is a new approach and one of the major contributions of this study.

Chapters 5–7 present the econometric results, analysis, and interpretations of the study. Chapter 5 introduces the CCCS’s First-Time-Freshman (FTF) dataset, a rich information source that is the basis for the authors’ attempt to transcend

previous studies. The parameters of student success, as identified by the CCCS, were transferring to four-year-college, receiving an associate degree, and earning credits. The authors use independent variables representing student educational background, academic goals, progress in college, citizenship status, financial need, and institutional factors. The purpose of the econometric exercise is to gauge the importance of institutional variables in determining immigrant student success. The authors present two probability models (examining the probability of getting a transfer or associate degree) and one OLS model (with credits earned as the dependent variable). The authors find that the factors most important for explaining differential success varied with the groups being compared. The most influential factor in the case of the Latino/white gap, for example, was the student's college progress, whereas for the Asian/white gap the ruling variables were educational background and financial condition (among men) and class progress (among women). The same kind of analysis is done for first-generation immigrants and high school dropouts. One finding is that first-generation immigrant status (versus non-immigrant status) was advantageous for Asian students but a disadvantage for Latinos. High school dropout students performed very poorly in all the outcome variables and were more interested in taking basic skill courses than in four-year degrees. The authors also sought to identify individual college effects on college performance of ethnic groups. They found that a college's transfer rates were negatively correlated with the Latino proportion of its students and positively correlated with the Asian proportion.

Chapter 6 extends Chapter 5's analysis to a more ethnically disaggregated level. The same regression analysis was done separately for students who were associated, by place of birth or by ancestral origin, with Central America, Mexico, South America, Cambodia, China, the Philippines, India, Japan, Korea, Laos, and Vietnam; other estimates pooled these groups into larger "Latino" and "Asian" groups. The results reported in the previous chapter continue to hold for each of the subsets of Latino students. The regression results could not, however, explain the gaps between whites and particular Asian groups. To try to explain these gaps in educational outcome, the authors consider three hypotheses from the immigration literature, based on differences in (a) family income, (b) immigrant status (political refugees have more of a stake in the United States than do other immigrants), and (c) clustering (peer effects and reinforcement of cultural norms). In the last section of the chapter, the

authors find evidence that clustering promoted academic success among Vietnamese students.

The main weakness of these two analytical chapters is the authors' choice of econometric techniques that are not up to the task. With such a rich dataset to exploit, it is disappointing that Leigh and Gill did not avail themselves of all applicable econometric packages. Chapters 5–6 would have been more enriching and illuminating had the authors added a section on partial effects (for the probability models) to show how disproportionate changes in explanatory variables affect the outcome variables.

The seventh chapter makes novel use of a new methodology to measure the responsiveness of colleges to the labor market's demand for new skills. Using DoED's definition of colleges' "success," the authors evaluate the fit between the vocational training programs offered by a college and college district with the projected employment opportunities in the county. They use the concept of a Duncan score to rank colleges and college districts according to their responsiveness. The procedure involves looking at two datasets: labor demand data, provided by the Labor Market Information Division of California's Employment Development Department, and labor supply data, culled from the FTF data. The score was calculated as the ratio of the percentage of credits offered by a college or college district to the percentage of jobs projected in that particular field in the county. These scores varied widely across colleges. OLS regression was run both to explain cross-college variation in scores (using enrollment, share of local revenue, and revenue per student) and to test the DoED's research initiative's conclusions about market responsiveness of colleges. The agency concluded that substantial enrollments and budgets and a larger share of local revenue in the community college budget made the college more labor market-responsive. The models had very low explanatory power and the tendency of their results was unresponsive of the agency's conclusions. The authors find strong evidence that colleges in a given district tended to be complementary in their vocational training course offerings, and conclude that multi-campus community college districts are more labor market responsive than single-campus districts. This Duncan score analysis adds an intriguing new dimension to the ways in which community colleges' responsiveness to their communities' needs can be evaluated, not only in California but across the nation.

In the final chapter, the authors briefly summarize the results, offer policy recommendations, and suggest subjects for further research. The recommendations are aimed at enabling com-

munity colleges to improve the lot of immigrant students and to be more responsive to their local communities' labor markets.

This book provides both a clear discussion of community colleges' mission and a penetrating analysis of the ways in which several factors—most notably, ethnic composition and the number of campuses per district—can affect their ability to fulfill that mission. It is well worth reading for anyone who wishes to understand the challenges facing these vitally important educational institutions.

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### International and Comparative

*Globalization and Labor Conditions: Working Conditions and Worker Rights in a Global Economy.* By Robert Flanagan. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. 272 pp. ISBN 0-19-530600-7, \$45.00 (cloth).

Robert Flanagan states that this book is concerned with “how the three main mechanisms of globalization—trade, international migration, and international capital flows—alter working conditions and labor rights,” and with “the role of national and international labor policies in improving labor conditions around the world” (p. 7).

Chapter 2 deals with such questions as whether labor conditions have improved over time and whether there has been a convergence of labor conditions around the world. Chapter 3 discusses specifically how economic growth influences labor conditions, as well as why some labor conditions are more responsive to economic growth than others and differ across countries at similar levels of development. Chapter 4 goes into more detail on whether free trade degrades labor conditions in industrialized or developing countries and whether poor labor conditions enhance export performance. Chapter 5 raises the very important issue of how international migration influences labor conditions in sending and receiving countries. Chapter 6 discusses international capital flows in terms of the operations of multinational companies. It explores whether multinational companies degrade local labor conditions and whether countries with poor labor conditions attract more foreign direct investment. The issue of voluntary codes of conduct to improve labor

practices of multinational companies is also raised.

The last section of the book deals with national and international policies. Chapter 7 examines whether national and international regulation of labor standards improves labor conditions and also whether incentives are superior to regulations for inducing changes in labor conditions. In Chapter 8 the author summarizes the book, draws conclusions, and discusses implications for future work on labor conditions.

The book contains a wealth of information, and Flanagan can be congratulated for constructing an extended database for the analysis presented in the book, one that can be of great value to all those interested in issues related to globalization and labor. There are also some excellent discussions. For example, in Chapter 5, “International Migration and Labor Conditions,” Flanagan balances a discussion of how migration can benefit receiving and sending countries with strong criticism of the way migration is currently managed; specifically, recognizing that migration is part of a growing global labor market, he deplores (quite rightly, in my opinion) the absence of international will to implement initiatives and solutions at the global level rather than through a myriad of bilateral agreements (p. 117).

Also well argued is the discussion of international labor regulation (Chap. 7, pp. 160–70). Flanagan posits the interesting thesis that each country tends to be willing to ratify just those international labor conventions that harmonize with or can be easily adapted to its own institutions. He disagrees, therefore, with the argument that a system of international labor standards stimulates or forces countries to go further than they otherwise would. I myself would not have drawn such an extreme conclusion, as one observes that indirect systems of peer pressure, which are not always measurable, do help; but Flanagan's case is well presented and may spur some interesting classroom discussions.

In his treatment of the theory of comparative advantage (p. 59), Flanagan cites the Stolper-Samuelson theorem (developed in 1941 by Wolfgang Stolper and Paul Samuelson, and still frequently invoked by authors in the basic economics literature) to argue that international trade brings benefits at the national level. He fails, however, to take into account Samuelson's much later qualifying conclusion that the new net gains created for some actors by dynamic comparative advantage do not always exceed the new net losses other participants incur. (“When Ricardo and Mill Rebut and Confirm Arguments of Mainstream Economists Supporting Globalization,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Summer 2004, p. 135.)