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Title

The Community College Pathway: An Analysis of the Costs Associated with Enrolling Initially at a Community College Before Transferring to a 4-Year Institution / Xiaodan Hu, Justin C, Ortagus and Dennis A. Kramer II

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Abstract

The study examines the direct and indirect costs of enrolling initially at a community college before transferring to a 4-year institution for baccalaureate-degree-seeking students in the USA. Using nationally generalizable data, this study employs propensity score weighting to identify the influence of initial community college enrollment on baccalaureate degree attainment, cumulative student loan debt, and time-to-degree. Our findings show that students who enrolled initially at a community college before transferring to a 4-year institution were less likely to obtain their baccalaureate degree, accrued \$2221 less in cumulative student loan debt, and took about three months longer to graduate than their peers who began at 4-year colleges and universities. We provide empirical evidence of the potential trade-off associated with direct savings in cumulative loan debt and indirect costs of community college enrollment related to decreases in the likelihood of baccalaureate degree attainment and increases in time-to-degree. Given these findings, we suggest that 4-year institutions

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should alter their institutional policies to better accommodate vertical transfer students and ensure that these historically underrepresented students are able to succeed academically. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)