

# Just the Facts, Ma'am: Postsecondary Education and Labor Market Outcomes in the US

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# Purpose of the Analysis

- Seeking Descriptive Evidence to Set Stage for CALDER analysis of postsecondary education and labor market outcomes using state administrative data
- Comprehensive, Up-to-date snapshot of recent trends and variation across groups

# The Issues

- Most recent trends in postsecondary education attainment in the US
- Differences by race, gender, family background
- Effects on labor market outcomes
- Role of achievement gaps and other causes
- Sub-BA as well as BA and above

# Data: SIPP and NELS

## SIPP

- Multiple Years: 1990, 2000/01, 2007, 2010
- Secular trends and cyclical changes
- Large Samples by Age, Race/Gender

## NELS

- One cohort analyzed in depth
- Achievement measures
- Family Background also

# Data (Cont'd)

## Outcomes

- Education: Attainment and Completion of Certificate, AA, BA and Above
- Education: Field of Study
- Employment and Wages, Annual Earnings  
For All Adults v. Ages 25-29

# Findings: Trends in Postsecondary Attainments

- 1990s: Growth of BAs
- 2000s: Growth of sub-BAs
- During the Great Recession: Rising attainment (sub-BA and BA)
- Emergence of Gender Gap in Higher Ed. Attainment
- Racial Gaps: Less at sub-BA, More at BA Levels

# Completion Rates

- At 2-yr. Schools: Generally Low (.34 for AA, .55 for AA or Certificate)
- At 4-Yr. Schools: Generally Higher (.63) but Wide Gaps by Race and Family Background

# Achievement Gaps

- Measured by Grades, Courses Taken and Test Scores
- Remain across Race and Family Background
- More Mixed by Gender: Favor Females but Math/Science v. Reading/English

# Fields of Study

- More Males in engineering/technical and natural sciences
- More Females in Health, Education
- Business: More Females at sub-BA and more Males at BA and above
- Engineering/Technical: Affected by Math/Science Achievement
- Male concentration where Labor Market Rewards are Strongest!

# Labor Market Returns

- Employment, Wage gains for each credential – including Certificates and AA
- Differences across Fields of Study

# Gaps in Employment Outcomes

- Male-Female Gap - despite higher educational attainment among young women
- Male-Female Gap – Related to Children, Field of Study interacted with Degree
- Race, Family Background Gaps – Somewhat accounted for by Education/Achievement