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