Non-degree Credentials Research Network

NCRN Request for Proposals (RFP) Results

We're pleased to report that eight outstanding projects have been selected after two RFPs for $10,000 research grants and contracts. Please see the abstracts of funded projects below, and feel free to reach out to the researchers involved for additional details.

1. Labor Market Returns Associated with Certificate Programs in the Arts

Christos Makridis, Arizona State University

There is an increasing recognition that arts graduates, as well as others within the broader "creative economy," have poor labor market outcomes, particularly after accounting for the debt they incur as a result of expensive college degree programs. This is especially unfortunate for minorities who bear a large debt burden, unable to borrow from parents to finance their college education, and that burden can tie graduates down for years following graduation. Despite these unsatisfactory education and employment outcomes, colleges have done little to reform their curriculum in the arts. This research seeks to create an entirely new dataset to measure the incidence and composition of arts certificate programs across major U.S. universities. For example, how many of the universities have arts certificates programs? Among these, are entrepreneurship and financial literacy skills emphasized? Furthermore, is there an experiential component? All these are critical questions given that artists increasingly are gig workers who need entrepreneurship skills in order to succeed in the labor market and experience to actually cultivate their innate talent. After developing such a list, my plan is to link the arts certificate information with the Post Secondary Education Outcomes data. How do arts graduates at colleges with such certificate programs nperform, relative to counterparts? I will use the funding to hire a research assistant to help take an inventory on these arts programs.

2. Using Canadian Data on Registered Apprenticeships to Inform U.S. Policy

Tingting Zhang, University of Illinois

Using a linked administrative data from Canada, I propose to look into how different training modalities affect apprenticeship program participants' labor market trajectories. Both the US and Canada anticipate a vast labor shortage of skilled trades in the next few years, so it is critical to provide timely evidence of the labor market effects of apprenticeship experience. There is very little evidence on to what extend different apprenticeship training modalities affect program participants' labor market outcomes. One key reason for the lack of evidence is that data linking education and the labor market is challenging to find. The Canadian ELMLP (Education and

Labour Market Longitudinal Linkage Platform) provides unique opportunities to examine such questions. The data link the Registered Apprenticeship Information System, the Post- Secondary Information System, and the longitudinal T1 Family File (tax records) of 20% Canadians between 2004 and the present. I intend to use the results to draw recommendations and provide supporting evidence to the US Department of Labor's plan to expand, modernize, and diversify the national apprenticeship models. The NCRN microgrant will be used to cover the data access housed at the Statistics Canada Research Data Center. The microgrant is sufficient to explore the data, so I can use the preliminary findings to apply for other external funding sources.

3. Survey of Postsecondary Institutions on the Integration of Work-Based Learning in Non-degree Credentials

Becky Klein-Collins, Council for Adult and Experiential Learning

First, we will conduct a literature review to identify the top industry-recognized credentials (e.g., professional licenses, certifications, and apprenticeships) in several industries (e.g., healthcare, construction, accounting/finance, transportation, mechanic/repair, computer science, and manufacturing) and the extent to which these credentials have historically incorporated work-based learning. We would also rely on several recent research reports on nondegree credentials, including from Strada Consumer Insights, Opportunity America, and National Skills Coalition. (Strada's research units may also be consulted - and datasets tapped - for this project. CAEL is an affiliate organization in the Strada Education Network.) CAEL has more than 600 members, most of which are postsecondary institutions, and more than 90 are community colleges. In addition, CAEL provides contracted technical assistance to community colleges and community college systems. We would survey a subgroup of CAEL member institutions/partners to ask about the types of nondegree credentials they offer in the industries listed above: whether they offer industry-recognized credentials, short-term educational certificates, or both; the data used to determine what credentials to offer; whether those programs incorporate work-based learning components (and what kind - such as apprenticeship models, paid internships, unpaid internships, co-ops, or clinicals); whether they train participants on general work readiness competencies (e.g., critical thinking, teamwork, etc.). If the response rate for the survey is low, we will supplement this research with individual interviews of up to 10 community colleges.

4. Survey of Employers' Attitudes on Non-degree Credentials

Jim Fong, University Professional and Continuing Education Association

UPCEA, in collaboration with some of its partners, wishes to survey employers on their perception toward new or alternative credentials and their needs for non-degree options. We have conducted extensive surveys on the adult and professional learner, but the decision-maker often times is the employer and their voice is missing. UPCEA conducted a survey of over 2,000 generational managers in 2018 and found significant differences in perception regarding the acceptance of alternative credential and online options. UPCEA would like to explore this further and measure how perceptions and attitudes have changed given that in 4-5 years, Millennials and Gen X leaders are making more of the decisions regarding employee training and education. We

believe that they will play a major role in reshaping higher education. We believe that employers view education and training more strategically in terms of employee retention and recruitment, as well as with organizational success. Depending on budgets, we hope to survey 1000-2000 employers using an Internet research panel and producing reports, whitepapers and other tools (releases, infographics, webinars) to release the findings. We are currently working with InsideTrack as one of our partners. InsideTrack is providing some funding, but not enough to cover the $20,000 to $30,000 outside costs of the panel. UPCEA is contributing 400-500 hours of labor to the effort.

5. Analysis of the Labor Market Outcomes of High-Tech Apprenticeships

Jason Jabbari, Washington University in St. Louis

We have a long-standing research-practice partnership with LaunchCode, a program that uniquely combine a free coding certificate program with a paid apprenticeship. We recently collected a large survey consisting of 1,000 individuals with 4 groups of people: (1) those who applied, but did not get in; (2) those who got in, but did not finish; (3) those that completed the course, but not the apprenticeship, and (4) those that completed the course and the apprenticeship. In addition to demographic, employment, and other financial information, we collected 4 geographic data points: (a) their current zip code and street intersection; (b) their zip code and intersection prior to applying to LaunchCode; (c) the current zip code and street intersection of their employer; and (d) the zip code and intersection of their employer prior to applying to LaunchCode. We will merge survey data with demographic and employment data from the American Community Survey. First, we will use a regression discontinuity design (based on application test scores) to ascertain the role of apprenticeships in predicting the likelihood of moving, as well as the likely hood of moving to higher opportunity areas. Next, we will use geospatial techniques to test how far individuals move (Euclidean distances), as well as clustering effects (e.g.; clustering around technology sectors). Finally, we will run subsample and interaction models to see if there differences differ by race/ethnicity, gender, and social class.

6. Exploring the Role of Graduate-level Non-degree Credentials

Enyu Zhou, Council of Graduate Schools

With funding from the Educational Testing Service, the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) recently launched a new project to explore the roles of graduate-level, non-degree credentials and master's degrees in the reskilling and upskilling of the post COVID-19 workforce. The project's activities will include meetings with an advisory panel of thought leaders, focused meetings with key stakeholders, a Survey of Graduate Programs, a Survey of Employers, and a final convening that will bring these groups together in spring 2023. The project is designed to illuminate the value and relevance of graduate-level, non-degree credentials to changing workforce needs.

CGS proposes a NCRN grant that would allow us to expand the scope of this work. The proposed project will collect additional data on graduate-level, non-degree credentials. Specifically, we will expand our analysis to address two research questions: 1) how graduate institutions define quality for non-degree credentials, and 2) what factors graduate institutions

consider in their decisions to launch new non-degree credentials. Project results will help inform a framework for program development and evaluation for graduate-level, non-degree credentials. Funding from the NCRN grant would be used to cover the cost of additional survey analysis and of developing and disseminating publication and other materials based on the results of the microgrant.

7. Analysis of Survey and Administrative Data on Construction Apprentices

Maura Kelly, Portland State University

Like other many NDCs, construction apprenticeships have minimum educational entry requirements and provide the ability to earn money and avoid student loan debt. Construction apprenticeships are generally high quality and offer participants relatively high wages and benefits. However, our research in Oregon shows that less than half of all apprentices who start an apprenticeship complete it; further, completion rates are much lower for men of color and all women because of the harassment and discrimination they experience. The audience for our research and advocacy to date has been stakeholders within the construction trades. However, with NCRN funds, we would like to share both the benefits and limitations of construction apprenticeship to a new audience: those interested in a broad range of non-degree credentials. We hope this will help scholars and stakeholders better assess construction apprenticeshiprelative to other NDCs available to potential job seekers.

We will draw on data we are currently gathering, which includes administrative data on apprenticeships in Oregon to assess recruitment and retention rates as well as a survey of apprentices to better understand their experiences. The funds will primarily be used to support a graduate student's time during summer 2022 (under my mentorship) to review the relevant literature on NDCs write up our findings for publication on the NCRN website (and other dissemination) as well as for a peer-reviewed journal.

8. Outcomes of American Apprenticeship Initiative Registered Apprenticeships

Daniel Kuehn, Urban Institute

This proposal is for an impact analysis to estimate the treatment effect of pre-apprenticeship training on apprentice outcomes (including program completion and post-exit wages) for American Apprenticeship Initiative (AAI) apprentices. It would use the restricted use AAI participantsurvey, which I would request from the US Department of Labor. The impact analysis would be quasi-experimental and match apprentices who went through a pre-apprenticeship to other similar apprentices who did not go through a pre-apprenticeship. Since applicants are non-randomly selected into pre-apprenticeship, a strong match on baseline characteristics is important. I would use inverse probability weighting to match as well as coarsened exact matching (in light of recent evidence that coarsened exact matching outperforms propensity-score based matching). I would also explore a difference in differences analysis using apprentices in grant programs that did not offer a pre-apprenticeship.