

Comparing College Attendance One Year After High School: The One Year Follow-up and the National Student Clearinghouse

One of the educational attainment indicators of great interest to educational researchers is college attainment. Enrollment in and completion of college is associated with increased earnings, social mobility, occupational prestige, and many other positive outcomes (Crissey, 2009; Day and Newburger, 2002; Sewell et. al., 1969, 1970). The UW-BHS data set is unique in that it contains multiple measures of college enrollment from different data sources—a one year follow-up interview with the student and the National Student Clearinghouse. This memo examines the two data sources and assesses the extent to which they provide a consistent report of student enrollment. Specifically, this memo will address: 1) the data in its unedited form, 2) the coding of the measures, and 3) a comparison of college attendance one year after high school completion using the UW-BHS data and the NSCH data.

Original Survey Items and College Attendance Information

One Year Follow Up

In the one year follow-up survey (Q3), students were asked to report the name (and city and state) of the college they have been attending since graduating from high school. The responses are included in variable f03a. (If students had attended multiple schools, at different points in time, the most recent school that they attended was recorded.) The follow-up survey item is reproduced below:

3) Where have you been attending school or college?

(a) Name _____ (b) City _____ (c) State _____

National Student Clearinghouse

The [National Student Clearinghouse](http://www.studentclearinghouse.org) (NSCH) (<http://www.studentclearinghouse.org>) is an organization that collects student degree and enrollment verification information from numerous colleges and universities in the United States. As of March, 2011, the NSCH obtains enrollment and completion data from 3,300 college and universities in the United States. The colleges that share data with the NSCH enroll 92% of all college students. Enrollment information from the enrolled post-secondary institutions is electronically relayed to the NSCH at multiple points through the year. Enrollment information is at least sent at the beginning and the end of each academic term. All students that are enrolled in a participating university or college are included in the NSCH database unless they opt out of having their information shared.

The UWBHS matched the senior survey respondents to the NSCH database based upon the student names and dates of birth. As name and date of birth is not a unique identifier there is the possibility that some of the records were incorrectly matched. However, in instances in which it seemed obvious that the information noted in the NSCH database did not match the respondent noted in the UWBHS database (e.g. completed college one year after the student attended college) the cases were not considered matches. The NSCH database contains the FICE codes for each of the schools attended by the students, which are easily matched to the rest of the Carnegie Codes.

For the purpose of this analysis we examined whether the respondents had enrolled in college from June 1st of the year that they graduated high school to June, 1st of the following year. We opted for this time frame as it roughly matches the time frame of the one year follow up, and it allows for a comparison. Obviously, the NSCH data, as it was requested in the fall of 2008, can be used to examine college enrollment and completion for all cohorts through 2008 (e.g. it is possible to examine

a four year college graduation for all cohorts, save the 2005 cohort). Additionally, the NSCH has information on post-BA enrollment as well.

Applying Carnegie Codes to the College Attendance (F03a) and the NSCH Data

In responding to questions F03a students noted the name and location of the college(s) that they were attending/had attended since graduating from high school. In an effort to protect the respondents' confidentiality the name, city, and state of college listed have been removed from the data file. However, the UWBHS team recoded the colleges listed in these items using the Carnegie Classifications. The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education™ is the most widely recognized reference work of all colleges and universities in the United States. (The Carnegie Classification codes included in the UWBHS file come from the Carnegie Classifications Data File, as prepared May 30, 2006). For more information on the Carnegie variables, click http://depts.washington.edu/uwbhs/webdocs/Carnegie_memo.pdf .

The major advantage of using the Carnegie Classifications is that they provide a systematic and detailed classification of nearly all of the post-secondary institutions in the United States along 15 important dimensions that help to classify post-secondary institutions. The college that the student reported in the follow up survey has a value as calculated by Carnegie Classification for Institutions of Higher Education for each of 15 attributes that describe the school (accreditation type, level of institution, degree of urbanization, control, etc). In order to recode the respondents text response (name of the school) into these specific numerical values, the name of the school that the student reported on question F03a or the name of the school noted by the NSCH is matched to those found in the Carnegie Classifications data file (see <http://depts.washington.edu/uwbhs/memos/carnALL05.xls>) and then the values given by the Carnegie Classifications data file are recorded into the new variable. Thus, for the school that a student listed in F03a or is listed by the NSCH, provided it is included in the Carnegie Classification, a host of variables that describe the specific school are available and included in the data file.

A small percentage of students were attending multiple schools at once. For example they would take one course at one school and the rest of their courses at another school. For the responses from the follow up, as we only coded one school, we would preference four year schools over two year schools. If both schools were of the same type (e.g. both two year or four year) we coded the school that was listed first.

For the data received from the NSCH, we examined all of the schools that the student had enrolled in (and attended for at least one day) during their first year after high school with a year defined as 6/1/year of senior survey to 6/1/one year post year of senior survey. The maximum number of schools that a student had enrolled in during this year was 3 schools (N=23). In the instances in which students had enrolled in more than one school in the year following high school (N=563) we gave preference to the school that they had most recently attended. Of the students that attended multiple schools in the NSCH data file, 44% attended the same level of institution (e.g. attended multiple two year schools), 42% transferred from a two year school to a four year school, and 14% transferred from a four year school to a two year school.

Comparison of Responses—the Follow-up and the NSCH

The cross-tabulation below illustrates the extent to which the student responses to the follow up and the results in the NSCH overlap. As you can see by examining the cross-tabulation, the two data sources provide complementary information. Specifically, for 82% of the cases (that have information from both sources) the data sources provide the same information in regards to college attendance and type of college attended (2 year, 4 year, none) during the year after high school. The dark blue boxes and circles indicate the 7,308 students ($37 + 2,236 + 2,218 + 2,854 = 7,308$) for whom the information from the two sources agree. Below is a discussion of the various groups for whom the data from the two sources is not in complete unison.

One of the reasons that the responses may vary across data sources is that the neither source is perfect—the follow up survey captured 92% of the original respondents, while the NSCH only covers 92% of the enrolled post-secondary population. Additionally, students, if they are not receiving financial aid, can request that their school records not be shared with the NSCH, so they would not show up in NSCH database.

maxf03 Max followup school attending, carn+NonCarn * CollType College Type from Clearinghouse Crosstabulation

				CollType College Type from Clearinghouse				
				-1 college in HS, none post	2	4	No coll	Total
maxf03 Max followup school attending, carn+NonCarn	-1.00 Not In follup	Count		8	150	70	542	770
		% of Total		.1%	1.6%	.7%	5.6%	8.0%
	.00 No Coll Rept	Count		37	197	37	2236	2507
		% of Total		.4%	2.0%	.4%	23.2%	26.0%
	2.00 2 year coll	Count		11	2218	39	503	2771
		% of Total		.1%	23.0%	.4%	5.2%	28.7%
	4.00 4 year coll	Count		41	109	2854	606	3610
		% of Total		.4%	1.1%	29.6%	6.3%	37.4%
Total		Count		97	2674	3000	3887	9658
		% of Total		1.0%	27.7%	31.1%	40.2%	100.0%

Red Box—One year follow-up non-respondents: This group includes the 770 respondents that did not complete the UW-BHS one year follow up survey. The NSCH data notes that 29% of these respondents were enrolled in college one year after high school. Clearly the college attendance rate for this group is much lower than it is for the students that completed the one year follow-up and the other respondents included in the NSCH sample. One benefit of using the NSCH measure is that it would include these students in the sample of valid response cases. As these cases were unable to be contacted for the follow-up there is no follow up data on college attendance, so they are considered missing in the follow-up measure.

Orange Boxes—Data sources agree on enrollment but differ on level: It is possible that both data sources may be correct in that the student was enrolled in both types of schools. This would be particularly possible amongst students that were enrolled in multiple locations and students that transferred schools. It is quite possible that the date of the follow up indicated the students enrollment at a given point in time, while the school noted in the NSCH data come from a later (or earlier) point in time.

Pink Box—Student enrolled in college during HS but not in year post-HS: These are students that reported attending college in the one year follow-up, however, the NSCH notes that the student attended college but they first enrolled while they were in high school. A review of the administrative records (for the students in district 1) indicates that virtually all of these respondents were in the Running Start program (Running Start is a program that allows high school kids to take courses at a local community college or university for high school and college credit—for more information click <http://www.k12.wa.us/runningstart/default.aspx>). Perhaps in answering the follow up survey these students misreported their college enrollment while they were in high school, as college enrollment in the year after high school. Possibly these students noted that they wanted to keep their enrollment information private which would prevent their college/university from sending the information to NSCH.

Aqua Box—Student enrolled in college in NSCH but not in the follow-up: In the follow-up survey the student does not report attending a post-secondary institution, but the NSCH notes enrollment for these students. One explanation is that the follow up occurred before the student enrolled in college (e.g. we interviewed the student in January or February and they enrolled in March/spring term which the NSCH notes). Additionally, it is possible that some of these were proxy responses that were incorrect or errors in matching the NSCH to the UWBHS data (we matched on student name and date of birth, as the combination of name and DOB is not a truly unique ID it is possible that we incorrectly matched a few cases).

Green Boxes—Student Reports Attendance in follow-up but none noted in the NSCH: These are cases in which the student notes enrollment in the one year follow-up but we are unable to find an enrollment record in the NSCH database. A couple of plausible explanations exist. Possibly these respondents are misreporting their college attendance in the follow up. Additionally, it is possible that these students noted that they wanted to keep their enrollment information private which would prevent their college/university from sending the information to NSCH. Alternate methods of enrollment verification for a subset of these students found that many of these students were enrolled.

Citations

Day, Jennifer C. and Eric C. Newburger. 2002. "The Big Payoff: Educational Attainment and Synthetic Estimates of Work-Life Earnings." *Current Population Reports* P23-210. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau.

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