

CHRISTINE MULHERN

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HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Contact Information

Taubman Bldg 431
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Undergraduate Studies:

B.A. in Mathematical Methods in the Social Sciences; Economics
Northwestern University, cum laude, 2013

Graduate Studies:

Harvard Kennedy School, 2015 to present
Ph.D. Candidate in Public Policy
Expected Completion Date: May 2020

References:

Professor Christopher Avery	Professor Joshua Goodman	Professor Amanda Pallais
Harvard Kennedy School	Brandeis University	Harvard University
617-495-4063	781-736-2283	617-495-2151
Christopher_Avery@hks.harvard.edu	JoshuaGoodman@Brandeis.edu	APallais@fas.harvard.edu

Research and Teaching Fields:

Labor Economics, Public Economics, Economics of Education

Research Papers:

“Changing College Choices with Personalized Admissions Information at Scale: Evidence on Naviance”
Accepted at the Journal of Labor Economics

“Beyond Teachers: Estimating Individual Guidance Counselors' Effects on Educational Attainment”
Job Market Paper

“O Brother, Where Start Thou? Sibling Spillovers in College Enrollment,”
with Joshua Goodman, Michael Hurwitz, and Jonathan Smith

Teaching Experience:

2017-2018 Markets and Market Failure, Harvard University
Teaching Fellow for Christopher Avery
Certificate of Distinction in Student Teaching

2018- 2019 Analyzing Education Policy, Harvard University
Teaching Fellow for Joshua Goodman
Certificate of Distinction in Teaching

Research Experience and Other Employment:

2013-2015 Ithaka S+R, Educational Transformation Team
Research Analyst

2011-2012 Northwestern University, Institute for Policy Research
Research Assistant to David Figlio and Jim Rosenbaum

Publications:

Chingos, Matthew, Rebecca Griffiths, & Christine Mulhern. (2017) “Can Low-Cost Online Summer Math Programs Improve Student Preparation for College-Level Math? Evidence from Randomized Control Trials at Three Universities.” *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 10(4): 794-816.

Chingos, Matthew, Rebecca Griffiths, Christine Mulhern, & Richard Spies. (2016). “Interactive Online Learning on Campus: Comparing Students Outcomes in Hybrid and Traditional Courses in the University System of Maryland.” *Journal of Higher Education*, 88(2): 210-233.

Professional Activities

Invited Talks:

Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, October 2019
Hobson’s Summer Institute, July 2019
University of Chicago Urban Labs (in New York), June 2019

Conference Presentations:

Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, November 2019
Association for Education Finance and Policy, March 2019
Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, November 2018
Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management Student Conference, April 2018
Association for Education Finance and Policy, March 2018
Association for Education Finance and Policy, March 2017

Referee Service:

Quarterly Journal of Economics; AEJ: Applied Economics; Economics of Education Review

University Service:

Organizer, Applied Microeconomics Seminar, Harvard Kennedy School (2018)
Vice President, Harvard Kennedy School Phd Student Association (2018)
Faculty Outreach Chair, Harvard Kennedy School PhD Student Association (2017)

Honors, Scholarships, and Fellowships:

2019-2020	Dissertation Completion Fellowship, Harvard University
2016-2019	Partnering in Education Research Fellowship, Institute for Education Sciences
2018	Certificate of Distinction in Student Teaching, Harvard Kennedy School
2018	Certificate of Distinction in Teaching, Harvard College

Personal Information: US Citizen

Research in Progress:

“Rural and Urban Gaps in Education: Evidence on their Magnitudes and Explanatory Factors”

“Scalable Technology for Personalized Student Support: The Impact of Nova Scotia’s Homework Hub on Students’ Academic Outcomes”

Dissertation Abstracts:

“Changing College Choices with Personalized Admissions Information at Scale: Evidence on Naviance”

Accepted at the Journal of Labor Economics

Choosing where to apply to college is a complex problem with long-term consequences, but many students lack the guidance necessary to make optimal choices. I show that a technology which provides low-cost personalized college admissions information to over forty percent of high schoolers significantly alters college choices. Students shift applications and attendance to colleges for which they can observe information on schoolmates' admissions experiences. Responses are largest when such information suggests a high admissions probability. Disadvantaged students respond the most, and information on in-state colleges increases their four-year college attendance. Data features and framing, however, deter students from selective colleges.

“Beyond Teachers: Estimating Individual Guidance Counselors' Effects on Educational Attainment”

Job Market Paper

Guidance counselors are a common school resource for students navigating complicated and consequential education choices. I provide the first causal estimates of individual counselors' effects on high schoolers, using quasi-random counselor assignment policies in Massachusetts. I find that counselors vary substantially in their effectiveness at increasing students' high school graduation rates and college attendance, selectivity and persistence. Counselors' effects on educational attainment are similar in magnitude to teachers' effects but they flow through improved information and direct assistance, rather than through improved cognitive or non-cognitive skills. Counselor effectiveness is most important for low-achieving and low-income students, perhaps because these students are most likely to lack other sources of information and assistance. Good counselors tend to improve all measures of educational attainment but some specialize in improving high school behavior while others specialize in increasing selective college attendance. Improving access to effective counseling may be a promising way to increase educational attainment and close socioeconomic gaps in education.

“O Brother, Where Start Thou? Sibling Spillovers in College Enrollment”

with Joshua Goodman, Michael Hurwitz, and Jonathan Smith

We study within-family spillovers in college enrollment to show college-going behavior is transmissible between peers. Because siblings' test scores are weakly correlated, we exploit college-specific admissions thresholds that directly affect older but not younger siblings' college options. Older siblings' admissibility substantially increases their own four-year college enrollment rate and quality of college attended. Their improved college choices in turn raise younger siblings' college enrollment rate and quality of college chosen, particularly for families with low predicted probabilities of college enrollment. Some younger siblings follow their older sibling to the same campus but many upgrade by choosing other colleges. The observed spillovers are not well-explained by price, income, proximity or legacy effects, but are most consistent with older siblings transmitting otherwise unavailable information about the college experience and its potential returns. The importance of such personally salient information may partly explain persistent differences in college-going rates by income, geography and other characteristics that define a community.

Additional Publications:

Mulhern, Christine, Richard R. Spies, Matthew P. Staiger, & D. Derek Wu. (2015). “The Effects of Rising Student Costs in Higher Education: Evidence from Public Institutions in Virginia.” *Ithaka S+R*.

Griffiths, Rebecca J., Matthew M. Chingos, Christine Mulhern & Richard R. Spies. (2014). “Interactive Online Learning on Campus: Testing MOOCs and Other Platforms in Hybrid Formats in the University System of Maryland.” *Ithaka S+R*.

- Marcum, Deanna, Christine Mulhern & Clara Samayoa. (2014). "Technology-Enhanced Education at Public Flagship Universities: Opportunities and Challenges." *Ithaka S+R*.
- Foster, Nancy Fried & Christine Mulhern. (2015). "Making a Place for Curricular Transformation at the University of Technology Sydney." *Ithaka S+R*.
- Griffiths, Rebecca J., Jessie Brown & Christine Mulhern. (2015). "CIC Consortium for Online Humanities Instruction: Evaluation Report for First Course Iteration." *Ithaka S+R*.
- Griffiths, Rebecca J., Matthew Chingos, & Christine Mulhern. (2015). "Can Online Learning Improve College Math Readiness: Randomized Trials Using Pearson's MyFoundationsLab in Summer Bridge Programs." *Ithaka S+R*.
- Guthrie, Kevin M., Christine Mulhern & Martin A. Kurzweil. (2015). "In Pursuit of Excellence and Inclusion: Managing Change at Arizona State University." *Ithaka S+R*.
- Nancy L. Maron, Christine Mulhern, Daniel Rossman, & Kimberly Schmelzinger (2016) "The Costs of Publishing Monographs: Toward a Transparent Methodology." *Ithaka S+R*.