

**Table 1: Description of Key Variables**

<i><b>Term</b></i>	<i><b>Definition</b></i>
College	College education includes junior colleges (2-3 years) and undergraduate universities (4-5 years).
Campus	A campus refers to all buildings of the same college in one municipality; see above for the definition of municipality. Each college has a main campus; some colleges may have campuses located in other municipalities.
Private college	Owned, operated, and financed by non-government organizations and individuals; private colleges require accreditation by the Ministry of Education to grant degrees.
Undergraduate university	Offers bachelor degrees or above; the usual study period is 4 to 5 years
Junior college	2-3 years of post-secondary education; does not offer a bachelor degree
College in technical fields	Primary fields of training are engineering, science, technology, and industry-specific production (e.g., construction, agriculture, forestry, mining, etc.)
College in humanities	Primary fields of training are humanities, economics, governance, and law
College in pedagogy and medicine	Primary fields of training are medicine, pedagogy, and sports
Comprehensive college	No clearly defined primary field of training; often provide education in both engineering and humanities
Ministry-level college	High-quality institutions of higher education under the direct supervision and special funding of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China.
985 Project college	Universities sponsored through the special government program "Project 985" that was introduced in 1998 to build world-class universities
Founding year	The year that starts to recruit students
Municipality	Municipality in China is defined by Chinese "State Bureau of Technological Supervision" in Beijing, are unique identification numbers assigned to the administrative divisions in the People's Republic of China (PRC). For municipality, this study uses Guobiao codes (GB codes). The GB Codes are arranged hierarchically to distinguish three major levels of administrative regions. In this study, the county level (AMD3) is applied. The county level includes counties, autonomous counties, districts (are included into urban core in this study), banners, and municipalities