A New Rationale for Assessment in Higher Education and Comments on a Proposed Method

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What Is The Question?

• If the postsecondary education sector reinforces social and economic inequality in advanced industrial societies, are there innovative ways to create a more level playing field from college to career for high ability students?
The Problem of Inequality From College to Career

• A small set of selective colleges form a positional good that blunts the opportunities of too many high ability college seniors in less selective colleges to obtain high value added jobs.

• The result is a mal-distribution of human capital and an unequal playing field for too many high ability students who graduate from less selective colleges.
What is the Market Failure in the Graduating Seniors to Career Space?

• They are impediments that impede the efficiency and effectiveness of buyer (employer) and seller (graduating college senior) exchanges.

• Students who attend the selective colleges are likely to be interviewed because employers will choose them based on institutional prestige.

• What about the other 90 percent of the student population, including high ability lower income students from diverse backgrounds?
The Employer Problem

- In the age of grade inflation and variation in grading across colleges how can hiring managers decide who to interview for positions?
- Since they do not know where high ability graduates in less selective colleges are, it is very difficult to find them.
- If they had the results of a reliable and valid pre-screening test, that might provide suitable information to enlarge the pool of potential hireable applicants.
# Table 1: The American Case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>Actual CLA Performance</th>
<th>Exiting Seniors at CLA Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selective Institutions</td>
<td>Less-selective Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 1400*</td>
<td>395 (24%)</td>
<td>2,631 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 1300</td>
<td>841 (52%)</td>
<td>8,001 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 1200</td>
<td>1,284 (79%)</td>
<td>17,956 (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>1,627 (100%)</td>
<td>43,352 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These scale points are based on the CLA scale, which like the “old” and upcoming SAT, ranges from 400 to 1600.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>Projected National CLA Performance</th>
<th>Bachelor’s Degree Recipients Nationally (2011-12) and Projected CLA Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selective Institutions</td>
<td>Less-selective Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 1400</td>
<td>53,307 (24%)</td>
<td>95,295 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 1300</td>
<td>113,497 (52%)</td>
<td>289,796 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 1200</td>
<td>173,282 (79%)</td>
<td>650,365 (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>219,572 (100%)</td>
<td>1,570,207 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note that the total national percentages differ somewhat from the percentages of students at all CLA institutions scoring at given levels, due to a slight underrepresentation of selective colleges taking the CLA.
Graph 1 captures this finding. A significant market failure exists in the college-to-career space.

Graph 1
Projected National CLA Performance

- Above 1200: 184,079 Students Attending Selective Institutions, 770,616 Students Attending Less-Selective Institutions
- Above 1300: 133,066 Students Attending Selective Institutions, 375,601 Students Attending Less-Selective Institutions
- Above 1400: 72,471 Students Attending Selective Institutions, 143,467 Students Attending Less-Selective Institutions
Geographic Distribution of Institutions, by Selectivity
The Map: Selective Colleges Are Isolated From Most Students In U.S.

• The 143 selective colleges, largely in the North East, form a positional good gatekeeper system that overly determines the life chances of all college graduates in the United States.

• We know most students attend college within commuting distance. The location of the selective colleges means there is a disconnect with large and growing under-represented groups throughout most of the United States.
Approaches to Market Failure Between College And Career
Work Readiness Assessments

• Are focused on Human Resource office requirements and are comprised of one or more of the following,
  – Personality measures, e.g., extrovert/introvert, degree of teamwork, persistence, well being
  – Content/knowledge tests
  – Aptitude tests, prediction of ability of candidate to succeed in specific fields---Work Keys
  – Ability tests, “hard and soft” cognitive measures
Evaluation of Work Readiness Tests Suggests Significant Problems

• The application of criteria to evaluate assessments, Reliability, Validity, Time, Cost, show,
  ---there is no consensus about ability of work readiness tests, alone or in combination, to meet the evaluation criteria.

• Work readiness tests do not deal with the market failure issue.
The CLA+ Career Connect Premise

• CLA+ is judged reliable and valid by measurement science community.

• Career connect is designed as a pre screening tool between college and career, upstream from Human Resource offices. This is the major part of the market failure problem.

• Department of Labor OBON data base demonstrates hundreds of fields require CLA+ metrics.

• The CLA+ and its career connect system meets Occam’s Razor requirements---metrics should deal with the most significant problem and not be multiplied unnecessarily to cover it.
Recommendation

• Offer CLA+ Career Connect to graduating seniors,
  ---Each participating senior taking CLA+ Career Connect can share their test results as they pursue career and postgraduate opportunities.

• Many graduating seniors will want to take the test and do well on it for their own benefit.
What Is The Career Connect System?

- Badges for students who take CLA+ and score in top 50%---proficient, accomplished, advanced.
- Virtual career fair that brings employers and students who qualify to participate together.
- Jobs board under discussion.
- Success measured by how many are hired by participating employers.
CLA+ Career Connect

CLA+ Result

Badge

Exclusive Virtual Job Fairs

LinkedIn and Social Networks

Job Boards and Employment Platforms

Electronic Transcripts/Resumes
Conclusion 1

• University leaders cannot deal with the college to career problem alone. This is an inflection point. Private sector active leadership is pivotal.

• A more level playing field encourages equal opportunity.

• Many graduating seniors will want to take the test and do well on it for their benefit.
Conclusion 2

• The population of the United States has grown from 75 million in 1900 when most of the 143 selective colleges existed to over 320 million in 2014. The population will increase to over 400 million over the next several decades.

• We need a reset to create a more level playing field for all college graduates in the United States. My intent here has been to suggest this is desirable and possible.
Conclusion 3

• Because numerous countries in the European Union may face similar market failures between college and career, evidence should be developed to refute and improve the points presented here. Equal opportunity and the mal-distribution of human capital are among the most significant issues we face globally.