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Abstract

Tertiary education is now accessible even to those who appear unlikely *ex ante* to succeed in jobs requiring post-high school education. Institutions that have broadened access to their programs must rely on two things to protect the quality of the degrees they award: selection mechanisms operating during students' tenure, and effective teaching. This paper explores the relative strength of these two forces in a broad-spectrum, first-year undergraduate course. Using detailed data from the University of South Australia on student background, tutors, performance, and enrollment across 15 weeks in a first-year core course, I explore the extent to which teachers impact upon the success of their students directly (through effective teaching) and indirectly (through facilitating the dropping out of more poorly-prepared students). Results indicate that teachers vary widely in their influence on attrition and performance, and that none is robustly effective in facilitating both the disproportionate out-selection of students with poor initial preparation, and the disproportionate achievement of this group. Performance at neither of these tasks is predictable based on teachers' formal university affiliation.

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