Nudges Along the Path from High School to College: Designing and Evaluating Informational Interventions

While nearly all American high school students aspire to college, large racial and class-based gaps in college access and persistence exist. Information inequalities may be partly to blame. Students encounter several important decision points as they move from the elementary school's relatively undifferentiated educational environment to the highly stratified postsecondary sector. A new generation of educational interventions attempts to help students navigate complex educational transitions by providing them with accurate and timely information about the choices they face and their likely consequences. In this symposium, we will consider three such "nudge" interventions designed to help students to make it to and through post-secondary education: (1) A pilot program that provides middle school students with personalized information about the competitive admissions high schools for which they may qualify; (2) a series of interventions that aim to support college-intending high school graduates to realize their postsecondary plans; and (3) a new pilot that provides college students with personalized information and encouragement from faculty in their first-year college coursework; specifically, strategies for seeking help and for college course success.