

2019 SKJ Pre-Dissertation Fellowship Report

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Thanks to the generous support of the Scott Kloeck-Jenson Pre-Dissertation Travel Fellowship, I was able to conduct my pre-dissertation fieldwork in Vitoria, Brazil. The fellowship made it possible for me to gather unique data to support my research on Affirmative Action in college in Brazil and to interact for two months with university staff, professors, and students.

My most valuable outcome was the unique experience to come back to my home country with a researcher's eye. To experience in such a different way an environment I thought to know well. Along the two months, I learned much about the history of social inclusion at the university. It was astonishing to see how diverse the universe has become. I dived into the history of inclusion at the university, as well as learned from the professors and administration's perceptions. I talked extensively to the university staff and professors to learn what is the university they dream of in terms of social inclusion and their views about the current affirmative action policies.

I listened to an extensively diverse set of opinions, diagnoses, and propositions on how to improve the contemporary policy design. I talked directly with professors and the administration working there at the time of the policy implementation, about the interactions with the federal government to build what is now the national federal policy. I had the opportunity to also discuss with professors that are currently engaged in research on affirmative action at the university, interactions with the potential to become future academic collaboration. Overall, these rich interactive experiences provided me with a detailed background and ideas on pathways to explore optimum policy design with my research.

To put in practice the ideas brought during the meetings and observation, I worked closely with data scientists at the university to put together a long-term panel on all students that applied to the university as well as detailed administrative information of enrolled students at university. The resulting data covers all applicants and admitted students from 2000 to 2016. To maintain individuals' anonymity, the university worked close to me to merge different datasets without sharing individual identifiers. The complexity and the amount of information extended the work across several weeks and continued with long-distance interactions between the data center at the

university and me. Most of the process is complete now. The resulting data allowed me to dive into several different research questions related to social inclusion in the context of Brazil.

The first question I have been working on refers to the effects of affirmative action on major choice. In this project, I study how admissions probabilities affect socioeconomic inequality in major choice and the extent to which affirmative action can close the socioeconomic gap between high and low-return majors. In typical contexts worldwide in which students apply jointly to college and major, admissions probability is likely to play an essential role in individuals' decisions. While affirmative action aims to redistribute college seats, indirect incentives for applicants to apply to higher-return majors might provide another channel through which these policies may affect social mobility.

I am confident that the accumulated information and data obtained will provide me with several pathways to conduct my dissertation. I intend to continue to explore the results of this fieldwork and engage in collaboration with other colleagues at UW. I hope this information and data will result in research that will contribute to both the scientific frontier of economics as well as to the needs of that local community.

I am genuinely thankful to the Jenson family for the opportunity.