

PUBLIC SELECTION BASED ON QUALIFICATIONS AND INTERVIEW FOR THE AWARDING OF NO. 1 GRANT LASTING 24 MONTHS FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN ACCORDANCE WITH ART. 22 OF LAW OF 30.12.2010 NO. 240 AT CENTRE FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DYNAMICS AND COOPERATION (CESC) OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BERGAMO (ACADEMIC RECRUITMENT FIELD 13/A1 ECONOMICS) ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE SECS-P/01 – ECONOMICS

announced with decree of the Rector Rep. no. 119/2018 of 09.02.2018 and posted on the official registry of the University on 09.02.2018

RESEARCH PROJECT

“Data Analysis and Policy Evaluation of University of Bergamo student population data”

To facilitate access to higher education, many countries have introduced various forms of students' support initially targeting aid towards students for whom such scholarship might improve the chance to invest in college (Goodman, 2008).

During the last decades, the use of merit-based scholarship in the higher education institutions has grown substantially and often replaced the traditional need-based aid. This fact has led a sizeable economic literature to explore the effects of these financial programs on several indicators, including enrolment decisions, completion studies and post-college outcomes. Until now, little attention has been devoted to the effects of the merit-based aids on the choice of college majors and to potential heterogeneity by different types of high-school and social background.

Understanding the effect of such a program at the university-level on the choice of major is of interest for several reasons. The economic literature (e.g. Arcidiacono 2004) has shown how the choice of college major has a relevant impact on student's post-college earnings and employment outcomes. Moreover, from a policy perspective, there is a significant concern about the traditional shortage of college graduates in STEM fields and therefore, evaluating to what extent these incentives can affect differently the enrolment in STEM and non-STEM majors could be relevant.

In this light, the purpose of the research project is to investigate the effects of a merit-based aid program, introduced since the academic year 2013/2014 at the University of Bergamo, on the students' enrolment decisions and students' performance.

Attention will be devoted to the problems of identification to recover a causal interpretation, dealing with potential reverse causality and omitted variables. Concretely, the identification will be based on the most advanced econometric techniques, concerning policy evaluation and exploiting a natural experiment setting, such as changes in the legal characteristics of the program and the staggered introduction over time. Exploiting the University of Bergamo administrative archives on the students' careers, the project aims to concretely identify the extent to which policy defined at the university level, related to merit-based scholarship, can influence several college outcomes and how this effect can be heterogeneous by high-school and social background. Accordingly, the results will be also relevant to the design of policy interventions at the University level.