

International Student Enrollments and Selectivity: Evidence from the Optional Practical Training Program

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Abstract

We examine how the 17 month extension of Optional Practical Training—a program that allows international Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) majors the opportunity to work in the United States for 1-2 years following graduation—affects the quantity and quality of international students. Extension benefits not only include extended work duration, but also an additional attempt at securing more permanent employment through an H-1B visa. We find sizable positive treatment effects on the number of students matriculating into U.S. higher education, and also increases in the quality of students, as captured by the selectivity of institutions they attend.