

Understanding transitions to college for career and technical education students

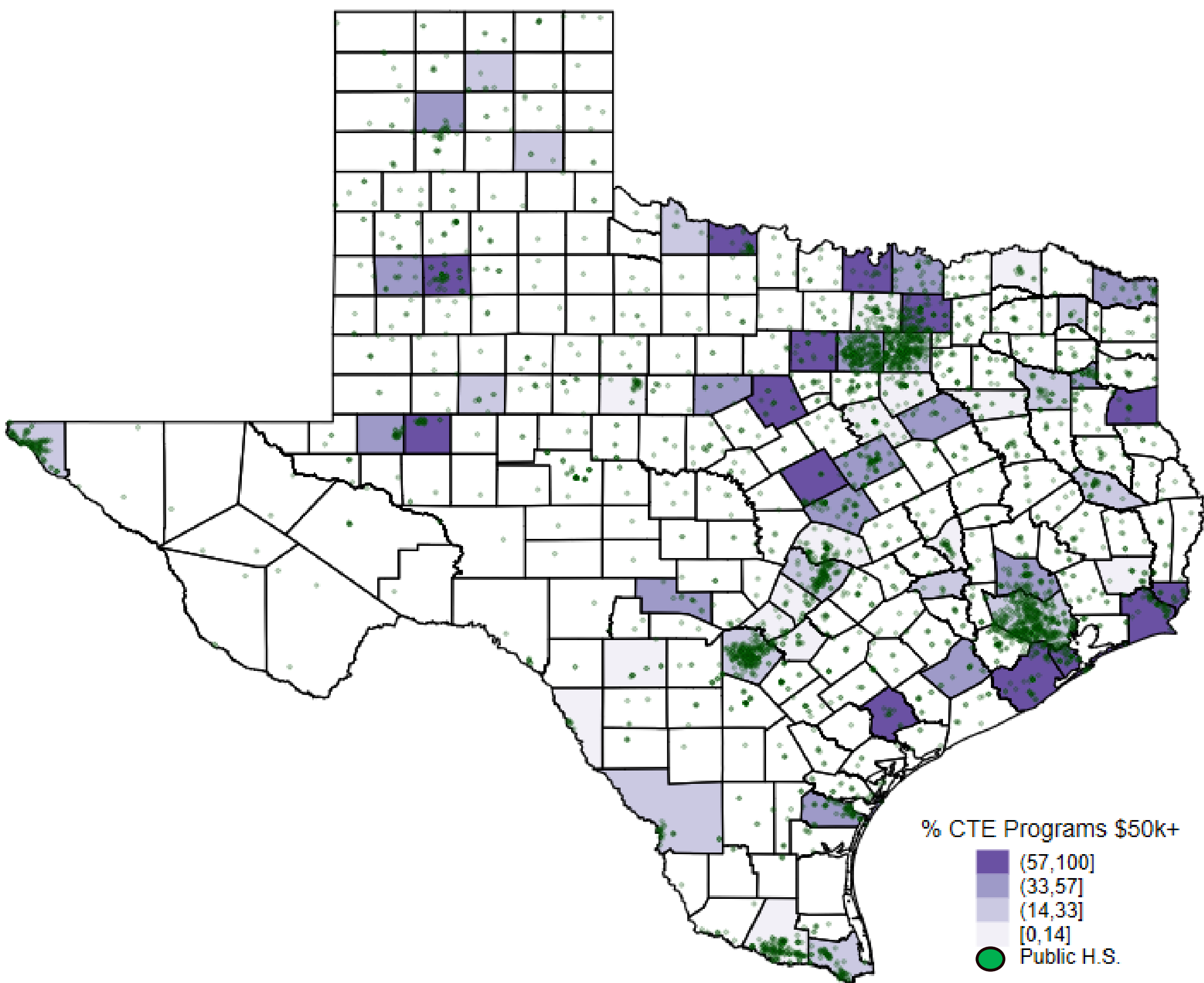
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Today’s CTE aims to prepare students for careers *and* college. But academic transitions are not well understood.

Background

CTE has generally positive impacts on high school graduation and post-high school earnings (for a review, see Brunner et. al., 2021) but more mixed outcomes on postsecondary enrollment. High school CTE participation has null or slightly positive effects on the probability that students attend college (Kemple, 2008; Hemelt, et. al., 2019; Bonilla, 2020). Emerging literature highlights considerable differences in outcomes by field of study (Plasman, et. al., 2017; Ecton & Dougherty, 2023). Some form of postsecondary education is critical for long-term economic mobility.

F1. Access to high-value secondary CTE programs varies by H.S. location



Notes: Gradient shows percent of secondary CTE programs offered that lead to average earnings of \$50,000 or greater by TX county (College Scorecard, 2019). Green points represent TX public high school location (NCES). Data from TX ERC is not yet cleared.

Research Questions

1. What role do secondary-to-postsecondary institutional connections play in CTE student college-going and workforce outcomes?
2. What are the most frequent transitions made between high school CTE programs and college degree programs?

Methodology & Early Findings

This study examines the college transitions of CTE students. I leverage student-level administrative microdata from the Texas Education Research Center. Postsecondary education outcomes are drawn from Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) data on public, private and for-profit college enrollments and graduation. Finally, earnings outcomes are retrieved from Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) data which cover all in-state employees.

Early evidence from public data reveals potential misalignment between secondary and postsecondary CTE offerings. I also find disparities in earnings returns to secondary CTE programs that will likely influence longer-term earnings outcomes for secondary CTE students.

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