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How State-Level Affirmative Action Bans Affect Underrepresented Students' Opportunities and Outcomes

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Table 1- Regression results

	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	Native American
4-yr grad rate	-0.0030903	-0.0042665	-0.0035932	-0.0042817	-0.0125096
4-yr institutions	[0.0240181]	[0.0064511]	[0.0098096]	[0.0084125]	[0.0173814]
6-yr grad rate	0.0105604	-0.0032652	-0.0006036	-0.0038432	-0.0121042
4-yr institutions	[0.0298471]	[0.0067144]	[0.0069728]	[0.0083103]	[0.0166952]

Introduction

This study replicates a study by Peter Hinrichs; which found affirmative action bans negatively affect within institution graduation rates for minorities and the fraction of minorities who graduate from selective institutions. Since then, five more states have implemented affirmative action bans. (Figure 1)

Although the effects of affirmative action bans are not clear, research suggests underrepresented minority students (black, Hispanic, and Native American) experience:

- Lower graduation rates overall
- Lower graduation rates from quantitative-intense degrees
- A higher likelihood of being first generation college student

Research supports the economic value of higher education for students, colleges, and society, and its ability to improve human capital acquisition and labor market discrimination.

Methods

I used the following linear regression model to estimate the effects on affirmative action bans:

$$y_{ist} = ban_{st}\alpha + \mu_s + \delta_t + \eta_{st} + \epsilon_{ist}$$

y_{ist}	outcome variable	μ_s	full set of state dummies
ban_{st}	dummy variable for whether or not an affirmative action ban is in place	δ_t	full set of year dummies
		η_{st}	dummy for state-specific linear time trends
		ϵ_{ist}	error term

I drop Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Georgia from the regression due to the effects of affirmative action related legislation.

Graduation rates are categorized by five distinct race categories, and data is sources from the Integrated Postsecondary Enrollment Data System (IPEDS)

Results

Regression results (Table 1) suggest affirmative action bans negatively affect graduation rates for all racial cohorts; however, these preliminary coefficients are not statistically significant at standard levels.

Figure 1 – Affirmative action bans by state and year

	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14
California	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Texas	x	x	x	x	x	x	x											
Washington			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Florida					x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Nebraska												x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Michigan											x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Arizona													x	x	x	x	x	x
New Hampshire														x	x	x	x	x
Oklahoma																x	x	x

Conclusion

Preliminary regression results are consistent with Hinrichs' original findings that affirmative action bans negatively affect the graduation rates of minority students; however, these results are not statistically significant and require further data cleaning for meaningful interpretation.

Despite the non-significant results in this study, literature on this topic suggest affirmative action bans and alternative affirmative action policies negatively affect graduation rates for minority students across all states.

