

## HIGHER EDUCATION CONCENTRATION: NEW STUDY AND INTERACTIVE MAP

A new interactive map shows U.S. higher education access, including enrollment, concentration, and schools by ZIP code, and indicates disparity in access by economic and geographic boundaries

### *Press Release*

New York, NY -- WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18th -- The Jain Family Institute (JFI) today released a first-of-its-kind study “Unequal & Uneven: The Geography of Higher Education Access,” that documents and maps access to post-secondary institutions across the U.S. and U.S. Territories, with significant implications for rural-urban divides and inequality in higher education access.

The report, released today, is the first of three studies to examine the role of market concentration in the American higher education industry. As over 50% of students attend post-secondary schools close to home, the map documents the acute impacts of higher education concentration on existing issues of inequality in access across class and geography. The report also highlights new directions for the national conversation around higher education and inequality in opportunity, as well as the role of for-profit colleges, and the impact of market power across many sectors.

The research team, led by Laura Beamer, JFI Higher Education Finance Project Lead, and Dr. Marshall Steinbaum, Assistant Professor of Economics at the University of Utah and JFI Senior Research Fellow, developed a novel index to map concentration in the higher education market across the country: the School Concentration Index (SCI). Using a unique dataset with data from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, the team has mapped the SCI across the US and US territories to create a detailed, interactive picture of access in every ZIP code, according to varying commuting distances from post-secondary institutions.

The second and third reports, coming out in the spring of 2020, will supplement this research with a new, nationally representative credit bureau dataset to give a comprehensive, geographic picture of the burdens and effects of student debt. The upcoming reports will include data on debt burdens and cost of attendance, showing the relationship, if any, between school concentration, debt burdens, and higher education costs for every locality in the U.S. and its territories.

This report indicates that 10.1 million individuals live in public education deserts in the U.S., and 30.7 million individuals have access to only one public school. In addition, regions with little to no access to public institutions see a higher number of for-profits.

Read the [preliminary report](#) in JFI's web publication, the Phenomenal World, and [view the map](#) on JFI's website. You can also learn more about the Jain Family Institute and our researchers at [jainfamilyinstitute.org](http://jainfamilyinstitute.org).

Laura Beamer, the project lead on Higher Education Finance at the Jain Family Institute, said: "This research comes at a time of great attention to higher education access, and in particular relative to the College Affordability Act debate. We think the report and map provide vital tools for understanding more deeply the landscape of access and inaccess in the U.S."

Marshall Steinbaum, Assistant Professor at the University of Utah and Jain Family Institute Fellow, added: "The most interesting single thing may be the difference between access to traditional and for-profit higher education, by geography. One policy implication is that, if free college is just leaving the existing public higher education system as-is, but better-funded, that won't address access issues for non-traditional populations. The map also shows that poorer zip codes systematically face fewer higher education options. As the labor market credentializes and more and more workers need to obtain degrees or certificates to land a job, for-profits have rushed in to serve this non-traditional population, but at great expense and providing little value."

**About the researchers:**

Lead researcher: Laura Beamer, JFI Higher Education Finance Project Lead

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**About JFI:**

Jain Family Institute is a nonpartisan applied research organization in the social sciences that works to bring research and policy from conception in theory to implementation in society. Founded in 2015 by Robert Jain, JFI focuses on building evidence around the most pressing social problems. In higher education finance, JFI develops pilots, studies, and research with the aim of gaining insight into the student debt crisis and finding the most high-impact interventions to alleviate debt and improve the higher education system. JFI primarily partners with policymakers, universities, college access organizations, foundations, and income share agreement providers.

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