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eCampus Course Offerings and Enrollments in the Technical College System of Georgia: How Well Does eCampus Serve Rural Students?

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eCampus Course Offerings and Enrollments in the Technical College System of Georgia

We examine the availability of and enrollments in eCampus, which allows students to take online courses and enroll in programs hosted by other system colleges through their own college. We find that most students, including rural students and students at rural-located and rural-serving institutions, attend colleges offering at least one eCampus course. However, the number and percentage of these courses have been lower at rural institutions, and rural student eCampus enrollments were often lower than those for other students.

What did we learn?

The number of eCampus courses and enrollments have grown over time but remain modest, averaging less than 3% of total enrollments.

eCampus enrollments are generally lower among rural students, but there is no difference in rural and non-rural students' enrollment rates once we take course availability into account. Rural students' enrollment in other online courses is 10 percentage points higher than non-rural students once we control for other group characteristics.

Older students, Pell Grant recipients, transfer students, and students in counties with high unemployment and a larger proportion of college-age residents are more likely to enroll in eCampus courses than other students.

What are the policy implications?

The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) could increase course availability—particularly for rural students—by promoting automatic approval for non-host courses not offered at a student's home campus and providing incentives for instructors and institutions to make additional eCampus courses available. Expanding student awareness of eCampus and gathering feedback to better understand demand for eCampus courses could help to increase enrollments.

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What questions did we answer?

1. How have the availability of and enrollments in eCampus courses changed over time?
2. How do the trends differ for rural students, rural-located colleges, and rural-serving colleges?

What data did we use?

We used administrative data on colleges, courses, enrollments, and students from TCSG's technical colleges for each fall, spring, and summer term from fall 2020 (when eCampus was initially piloted) until summer 2024, which we merged with county-level data on broadband availability, poverty and unemployment.

Why is this issue important?

Young people from rural areas enroll in postsecondary education at lower rates and obtain less postsecondary schooling, on average, than other students. Distance to postsecondary institutions in rural areas and smaller sets of course and program offerings at rural institutions contribute to these differentials. Access is particularly relevant for technical and community college students, who mostly commute to classes rather than live on campus. Limited postsecondary schooling opportunities can further contribute to career challenges for rural adults and compound economic challenges and workforce shortages in rural communities.

Want to learn more?

A report is available at
gpl.gsu.edu/gpl-publications

The **Georgia Policy Labs** is an interdisciplinary research center in the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University that works through a series of research-practice partnerships across the education pipeline to advance actionable, policy-relevant research to drive decision-making that best serves communities and ensure that all students, families, and communities thrive.

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