

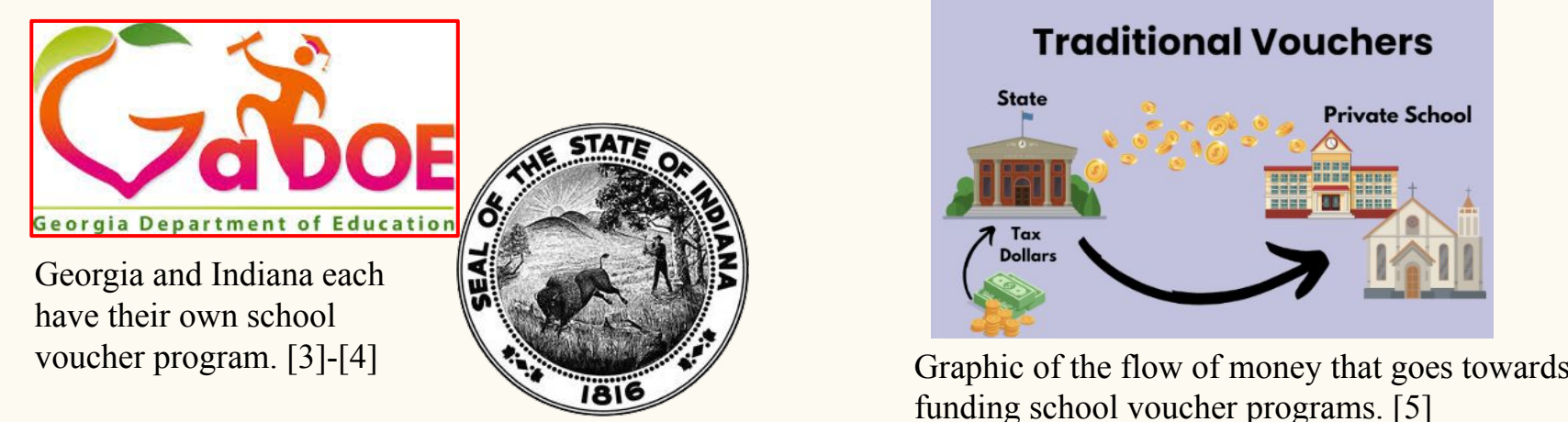
Abstract

Education voucher programs have been implemented to increase access to private schools for low-income or special-education students. In this paper, I present a comparative study to determine if voucher programs focused on these student populations are effective in improving college admission rates. I compare two different state programs in the United States—Georgia’s Special Needs Scholarship and Indiana’s Choice Scholarship Program—and the impact they have with participating private high schools’ four-year college admission rates. To perform this comparison, I extracted and combined features from the National Center for Education Statistics’ biannual Private School Universe Survey and program reports from the Indiana Department of Education and the Georgia Governor’s Office of Education and Workforce Strategy.

I use a fixed effects model with Linear Regression to identify trends and the impact of voucher participation, school demographics, and other school related characteristics including student/teacher ratio, students enrolled, and the time features, on the four-year college admission rate. Initial results show no correlation between voucher participation and four-year college-going rates in either of the states’ voucher programs. However, other characteristics such as student-teacher ratios and average daily instruction time show statistically significant effects on admission rates which can lead to other successful outcomes when compared to public education.

Introduction

- School vouchers: scholarships paid by state to enroll into a private school accepting such vouchers
 - They are a result of the School Choice movement
 - There have been an increase of these programs in recent years in the US
 - They are provided mostly to lower income students or students with disabilities
- **Research Question:** Do private school voucher program is correlated with an increase in four-year college-going rates?
 - There is limited evidence that vouchers contribute to significant academic improvement [1]
 - Students with disabilities have more testing and program accomodations at public schools [2]
- **Hypothesis:** There exist little to no correlation between four-year college admissions of private high school students and the school voucher participation.



Methods

- Two case-studies
 - Georgia Special Needs Scholarship
 - Only students with disabilities are eligible
 - Indiana Choice Scholarship Program
 - Eligibility and scholarship amounts depend on income (cut-off at a household income of 400% the income limit for reduced-price lunch programs)
- **Data Sources**
 - Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program Reports [6]
 - Indiana Choice Scholarship Program Reports [7]
 - Private School Universe Survey from the National Center for Education Statistics [8]
- **Linear Regression Model:**

$$admission_rate = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \times voucher_share + \beta_2 state + \beta_3 voucher_share * state + \beta_4 school_characteristics + \beta_5 year$$

- School characteristics:
 - log(total enrollment)
 - student-teacher ratio
 - average amount of daily instruction time
 - proportions of the student body who are Hispanic, Black, and Asian/Pacific Islander

Results

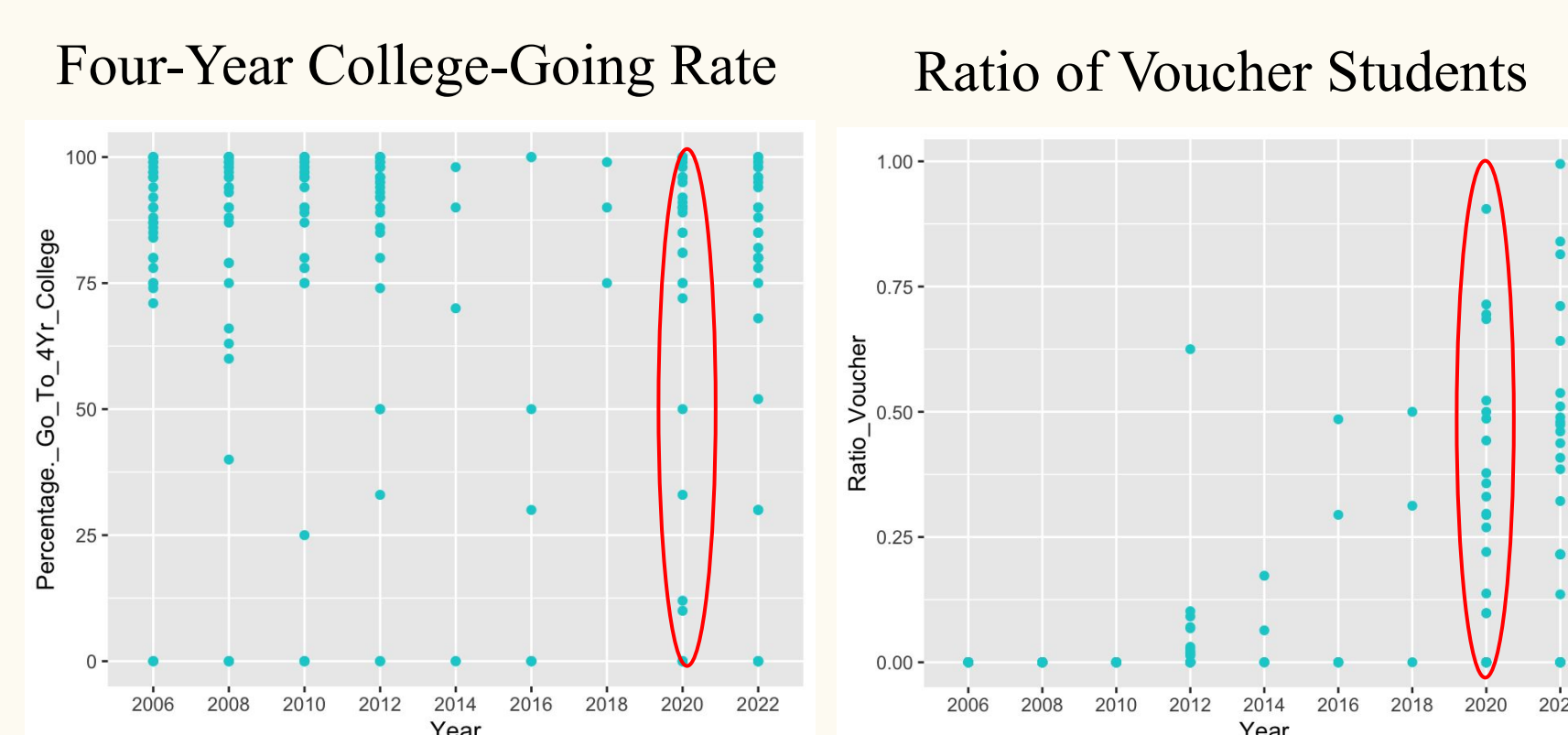
- No significant correlation between share of private schools student body who used a voucher and four-year college admission rates
 - Increase in voucher share did not meaningfully increase percentage of students who entered four-year colleges
 - Limited data introduced more variability
- Average time spent on daily instruction has a strong positive correlation with four-year college admission rates
- Student-teacher ratio has strong negative correlation with four-year college entrance rates.
 - Supports the idea that voucher recipients can benefit from smaller teacher-student ratios typical of private schools

Georgia Data Plots



Dot plot of each Georgia private high school’s percentage of students who later are admitted to a four-year college (left) and its ratio of students that are voucher students (right)

Indiana Data Plots



Dot plot of each Indiana private high school’s percentage of students who later are admitted to a four-year college (left) and its ratio of students that are voucher students (right)

Discussion

- School vouchers do not have an association with increased college admissions of a private school’s student body over time
 - Voucher students are a minority
 - School culture and academic rigor are more important
 - Goes beyond private vs. public school
- Can instead provide chances to better education to individual students
 - At cost of decreased funding to public schools
 - Leads to closures of schools in the worst cases
 - Greatly impacts neighborhoods with high poverty rates
- This study is limited in by lack of individual student data and data on public standardization methods applied in private schools
 - No data available on graduation rates or other post-secondary outcomes for private school students

Conclusion

- School vouchers can be a great equity tool to provide a private school education without exerting too much financial burden on the student and family.
 - The change in their four-year college admission is more associated with the school’s features.
 - More focus should be done on standardizing and improving school curriculum and maintaining smaller student-teacher ratios.
- More research should be done to study the transition of school voucher students from public school to private school. This will provide more insight on advancements a student’s learning journey can have from this transition

References

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- [3] *Georgia Department of Education Official Website: Gadoe*. Georgia Department of Education. (n.d.). <https://gadoe.org/>
- [4] Indiana Department of Education. (2026, July 23). *Home*. <https://www.in.gov/doe/>
- [5] *What are private school vouchers?*. Public Schools First NC. (n.d.). <https://publicschoolsfirstnc.org/resources/fact-sheets/what-are-private-school-vouchers/>
- [6] Governor’s Office of Education and Workforce Strategy. (2020, December 3). *Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program*. Governor’s Office of Education and Workforce Strategy. <https://goews.georgia.gov/georgia-special-needs-scholarship-program>
- [7] DOE. (2021, June 11). *Indiana Choice Scholarship Program*. DOE. <https://www.in.gov/doe/students/indiana-choice-scholarship-program/>
- [8] *Private School Universe Survey (PSS)*. (2023). Ed.Gov; National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/pssdata.asp>