
Mapping USA Prosperity: Is it In the Central Corridor States? A Case Study

Description

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The USA economy is still a debtor nation. It has been for nearly two decades and the economy has been described by popular news anchors on both sides of the political spectrum as “sluggish.” But there is another argument, one frequently mentioned by the political right and that is not all of the states that are doing poorly.

In Meredith Whitney’s book, [Fate of the States](#), she argues that the housing crisis and excessive borrowing of cities and states from the federal government are what has led to the massive budget cuts and tax hikes, which has ultimately led to a decline in state social services, like Public Assistance and Job Training. When a municipality owes unfunded pension liabilities and a host of other loans that date all the way back to the Great Recession, the taxpayers and citizens of a city-state feel it the most. And in this day and age, when that happens, people readily take the option to leave.

Whitney asserts that this is what is happening now with the sluggish “house bust states,” while the middle states—what Whitney refers to as the “central corridor states” — roughly defined as Texas, Colorado, The Dakotas, the Carolina’s, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Indiana, and Nebraska, are experiencing positive growth and development due to the discoveries of oil and expansion of corporate agriculture which equates to more jobs and a better quality of life for its citizens. Whitney, in her book, makes the argument that citizens are going to vote with their feet if politicians do not start to confront their reckless fiscally irresponsible spending.

It’s the central corridor states, Whitney asserts, that will be carrying the US economy for years and even decades to come. These central corridor states, or fly over states, appear to have the best economies and the most room to grow. Texas, for example, has invested in more tolls; North Dakota now has “man camps,” and “tent villages,” while the company Sykes, which Whitney mentions, had to actually close down a call center because there weren’t enough people living in North Dakota to cover all of the opportunity this company was offering. Indiana and Tennessee are mentioned in the book as well as being particularly enticing for business owners who want lower taxes. In contrast, states like California, New Jersey, Nevada, and Arizona are spurned for their reckless spending, tax hikes, and budget cuts for the pensioners and retired workers like firefighters and police officers who are quoted as having as high as \$200K per year in pensions!

The argument is salient and clear. Is this really the story unfolding before our very eyes? This is what we have set out to explore in our study of the geography of American prosperity.

In this qualitative study, we set out to test the theory that the “Central Corridor States,” were doing well when compared to their coastal and Sunbelt counterparts. We found 100 universities in the targeted central corridor states. We developed a template that we sent to the department heads of Sociology and Psychology departments in each of these schools. What about Urban Planning & Economics?

The email template is below:

To whom it may concern,

I am interested in being considered for a [Psychology/Sociology] adjunct position at [University Name].

I hold two master's degrees, one in Forensic Psychology and the other in Applied Sociology. I am finishing up a book on my experience teaching English in South Korea.

Any information would be great.

Thanks,

Todd Squitieri

After sending out this email, we waited for replies. A positive response would count as an invitation from the department head to send a resume or for a follow-up interview, an affirmation that an adjunct position was in fact available. A negative response would be defined as the department head saying that positions weren't available. With each submission, we kept track of the university, the department, and the response. Then we tallied our results and our findings as shown below.



Figure 1: Responses between Central Corridor and Non central Corridor Universities.

(Where + = Positive responses and – = Negative responses)

Figure 1, shows that majority of the Universities under Non-central Corridor returned our application and showed unfavorable responses. The percentage of negative responses was 75%. However, positive responses from Universities under Central Corridor State was 49%.

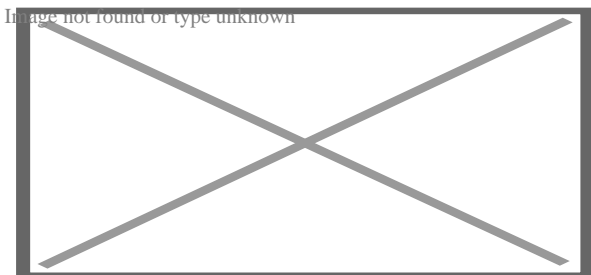


Figure 2: Determination of Positive responses by department

(Where CC=Central Corridor, NCC=Non central Corridor, +=positive responses, PSY= Psychology Department)

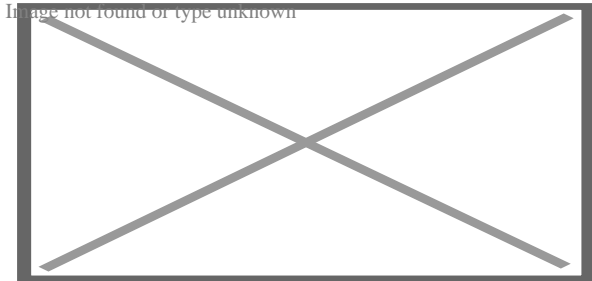


Figure 3: Determination of Positive responses by department

(Where CC=Central Corridor, NCC=Non central Corridor, +=positive responses, SOC= Sociology Department)

Figure 2 and 3, shows that an overwhelming majority of universities in both the psychology and sociology departments under Central Corridor State showed positive responses compared to Non-central Corridor Universities. 49% of the responses from psychology and sociology departments in Central corridor were more likely to say “Yes, while for Non-Central Corridor, the percentage was 33.33%.

Although this is a very limited sample. This suggests that the USA may be experiencing modest-job growth in academia. Clearly, there are issues with our preliminary qualitative study, randomly selected. The email inquiry was more casual than a formal email which could have impact the results. A resume wasn’t initially provided, which suggests that one should have been supplied. Finally, while our confederate and author of this piece, Todd Squitieri, had impressive credentials, they weren’t as recent and up-to-date as other competitors. Todd has applied for adjunct positions in Sociology and Psychology departments, positions in fields that may not be as “in-demand” as Engineering or Mathematics or the hard Sciences. Given the culturally conservative bent of some of these states, it’s possible that not much emphasis was allocated to departments in the humanities and Liberal Arts overall.

?A more rigorous study should be conducted to further explore these findings and to determine whether growth really is taking place in this region of the world, as Whitney and others are asserting.

?These anecdotal results are interesting and we are hopeful that they open up conversation and dialogue about the ecology and geography of prosperity in the United States, since questions surrounding this country are certain to impact many other countries that are intertwined with its economy.

We invite criticism and feedback of this article from all quarters of the world.

References

1. Whitney, M. (2013). Fate of the states: The new geography of American prosperity. New York:

Portfolio/Penguin.