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National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc.
NBER Productivity, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program

Dear Sir or Madam,

I wish to apply for the Post-Doctoral Fellowship position you advertised on the American Economic Association Job Openings for Economists website [JOE 2014-02_111451158].

I have a strong academic background in Development Economics, Labor Economics, and Applied Econometrics, as well as several years of professional experience leading survey research teams in Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, and Ghana. While at UC Berkeley, I taught at both the graduate (Development Economics) and undergraduate (Applied Econometrics) levels, sharpening my skills as a teacher and drawing on a natural capacity to explain complex concepts in a way that is both intuitive and accessible. My professional experiences in healthcare consulting and as a US Peace Corps Volunteer add breadth to my skill set and continue to inform my research agenda. I will complete my Ph.D. degree in Economics from the University of California, Berkeley in May 2015.

My main job market paper is titled "Are Small Firms Labor Constrained? Experimental Evidence from Ghana". This paper is the first to provide empirical evidence that small firms in developing countries face economically meaningful labor market search and screening costs. We report on a field experiment that provided worker recruitment services to small firms in Ghana. Treatment firms hired and retained workers through the program despite the fact that it included no monetary subsidy. In follow-up surveys at three and six months after worker placement, control firms had failed, on average, to hire workers outside the program. Intention to treat effects on revenues and profits are about seven to ten percent, implying that the marginal revenue product of unskilled labor in small firms is positive and quite large. Finally, we find that firms randomly treated with high cognitive ability workers experience larger revenue and profit gains, underlying the importance and difficulty of screening over worker ability. Together, these findings have implications for both theory and policy. In particular they overturn the conventional wisdom that small firms face a frictionless market for workers, and imply that high rates of youth unemployment in developing countries are the result, at least in part, of substantial labor market frictions.

The long-term impacts of the recruitment program on firm size and firm outcomes, as well as the labor market impacts of the program on workers will be the subject of future work. I also have ongoing fieldwork in Ghana that investigates the ways in which networks among small firms owners provide substitutes for missing institutions.

Enclosed please find my job market paper and my curriculum vitae. Letters of recommendation from Professors Edward Miguel, Fred Finan, and David Card will be forwarded under separate cover by the departmental placement service. I will be attending the ASSA Meetings in Boston, MA, and will be available for interviews there. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you at jamiem@econ.berkeley.edu or (805)-400-9329.

Sincerely,

Jamie McCasland