

NINE-YEAR FINDINGS FROM THE PROJECT QUEST EVALUATION

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Project QUEST

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- Nonprofit in San Antonio, TX established in 1992
- Helps residents access skills training needed to secure well-paying jobs while meeting employers' need for skilled workers
- QUEST services included:
 - ▣ Assistance with college enrollment (testing, program/course selection)
 - ▣ Remedial instruction to improve math and reading skills when needed
 - ▣ Financial assistance to cover tuition, books, tutoring, uniforms, licensing exam fees, and transportation
 - ▣ Support of a counselor: 1:1 and in required weekly group meetings to address personal and academic concerns
 - ▣ Job placement assistance

The Evaluation

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- Randomized controlled trial design
- 410 enrolled between April 2006 and October 2008; 207 assigned to the treatment group, 203 to the control group
- Contracted with the Ray Marshall Center at the University of Texas to access and analyze administrative data records
- Findings based on data from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) on participants' quarterly earnings as reported by employers to the state for the unemployment insurance (UI) program
- TWC UI earnings data does not include the self-employed, independent contractors paid on a 1099, most federal government employees, those in informal work, or those who worked out of state

James Heckman, Economist

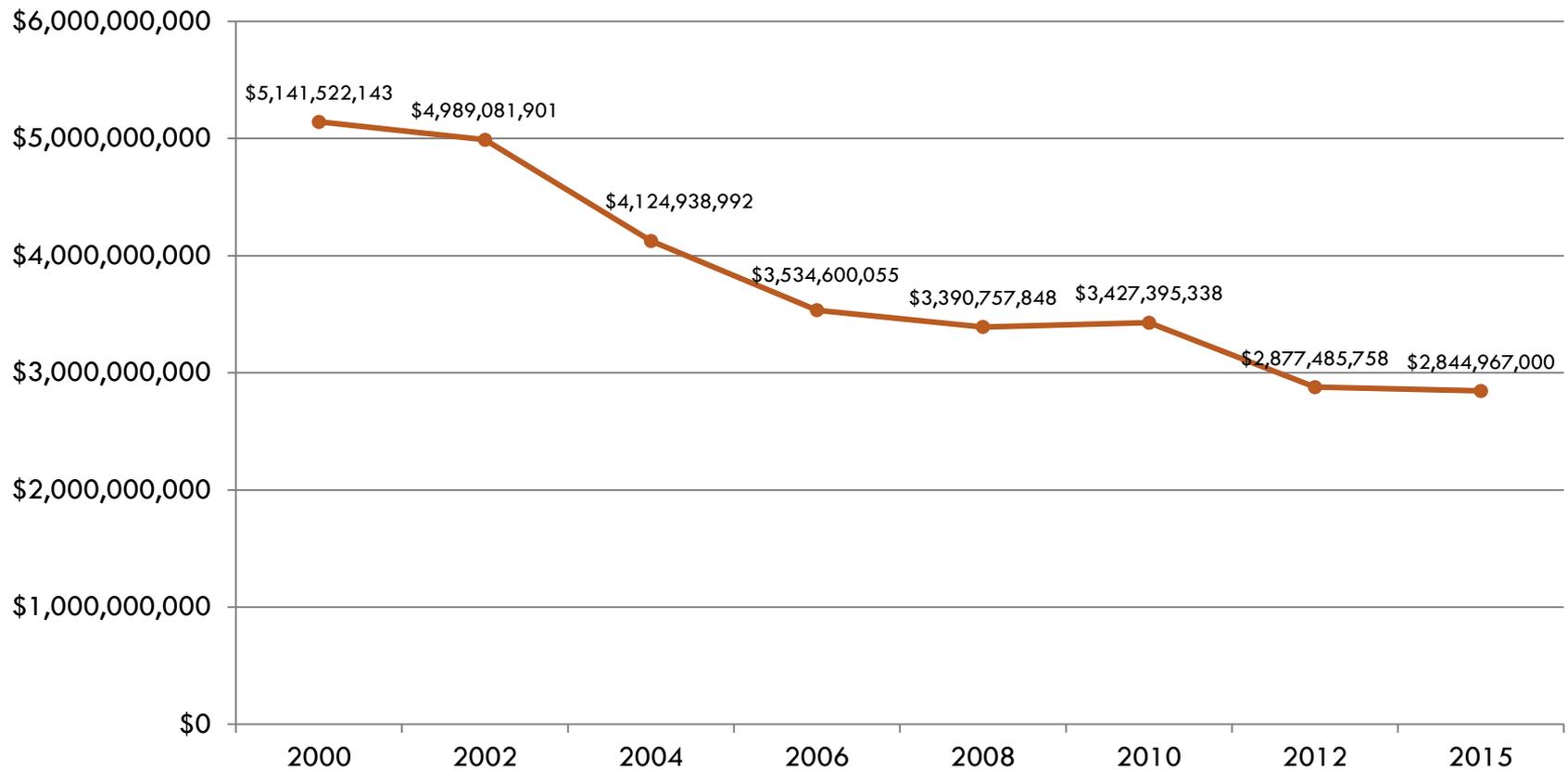
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- American society puts its faith in public training programs to make up for 17 years of neglect. It's nuts. The success rate is even worse for convict remediation.
- And what's the difference between GEDs and high school graduates? [Well, GEDs are just as smart as HS graduates.] But they lack something. They're missing motivation, self-control and forward-lookingness. (2005)

Federal WIA/WIOA funds have been cut nearly in half since 2000

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Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Funding by Year



Source: National Skills Coalition analysis at <https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/federal-policy/federal-funding-tool>

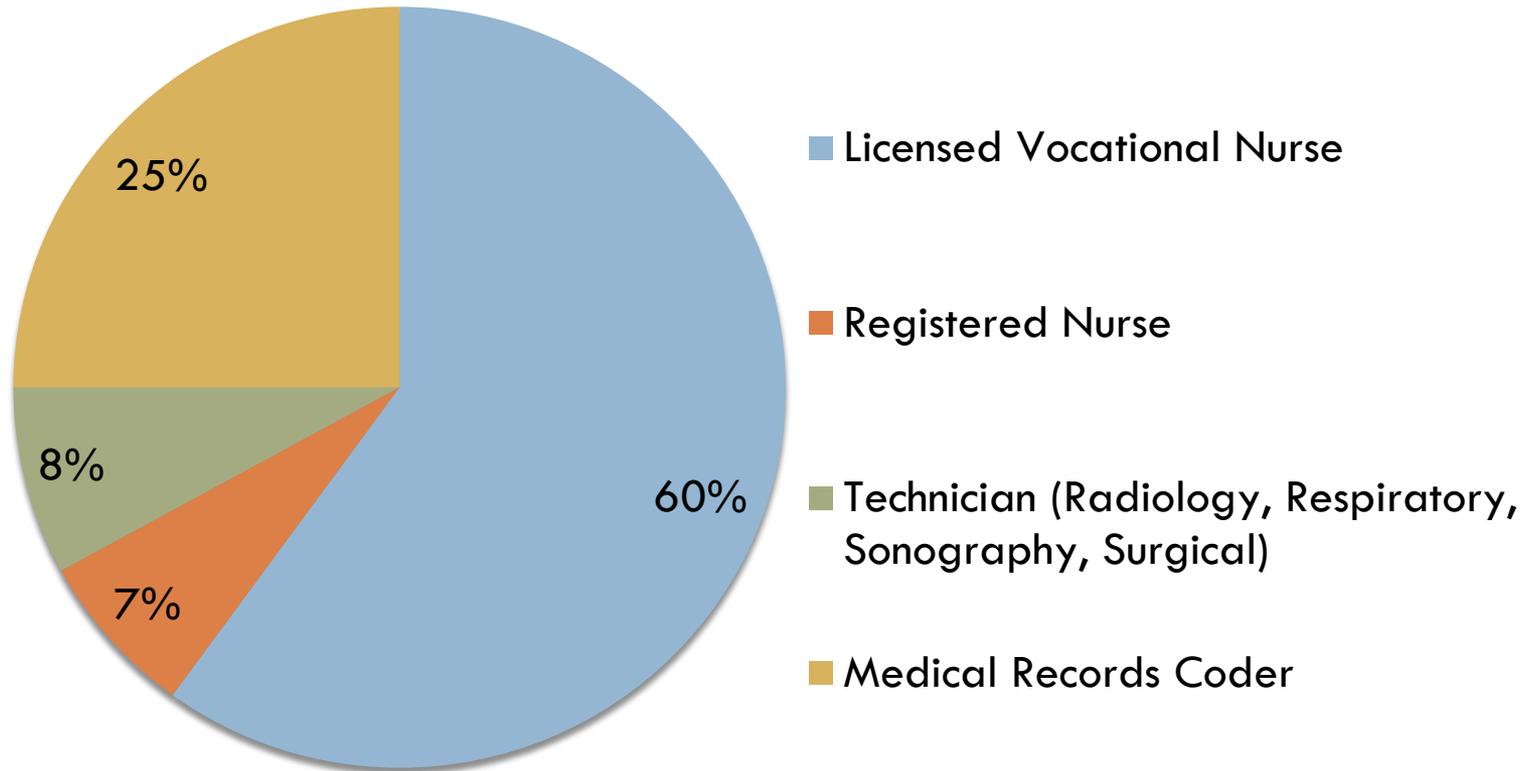
Target Population and Programs

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- During the study, QUEST targeted individuals who were not attending college, including those who needed remedial math or reading instruction before enrolling and those who were ready to enroll
- Most students attended programs at one of two community colleges: St. Philips College and San Antonio College
- The study focused on individuals seeking training in the health-care field
- The programs were expected to take a minimum of one to three years to complete; participants were expected to attend the career track programs full time

Most study participants were seeking to enroll in non-degree certificate programs

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Participants' characteristics at the time of study enrollment (N=410)

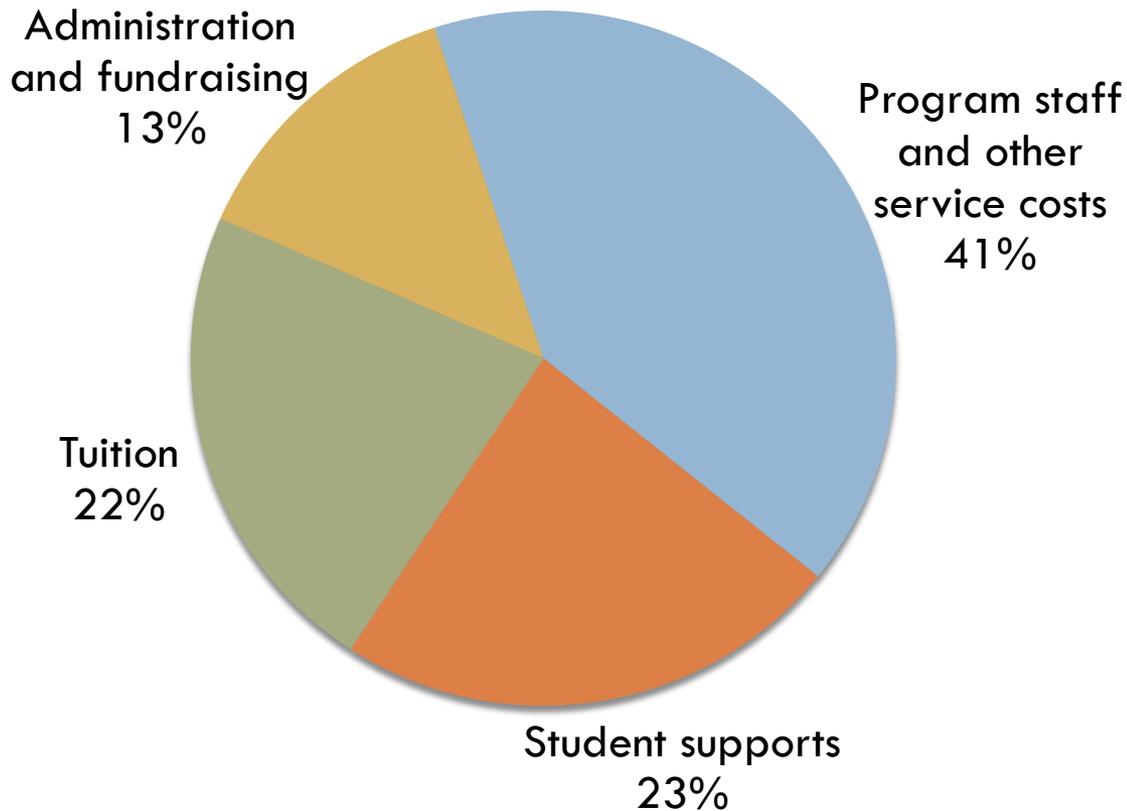
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Female	88.3%
Latino	74.1%
African American	13.9%
White	9.5%
Average age	30
Had any children under age 18	71.2%
Married	27.6%
Had a GED	25.1%
Graduated from high school	70.2%
Had a college degree	4.6%
Ever attended college but did not earn degree	44.9%
Employed at any time in past year	84.4%
Average annual earnings in past year	\$11,656

QUEST made a substantial investment in participants

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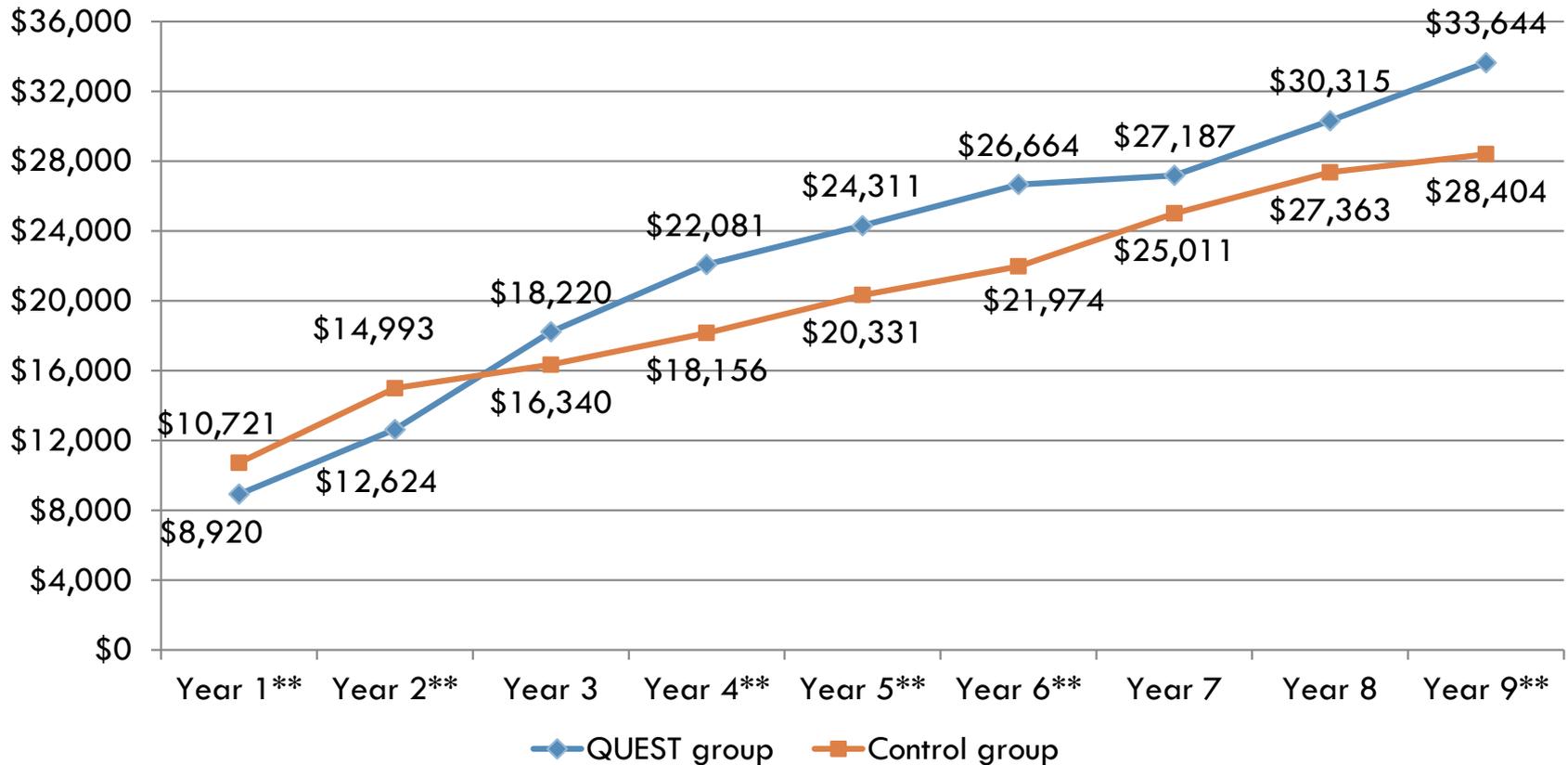
Project QUEST's costs averaged \$10,501 per participant



QUEST participants continued to earn more than control group members nine years after random assignment

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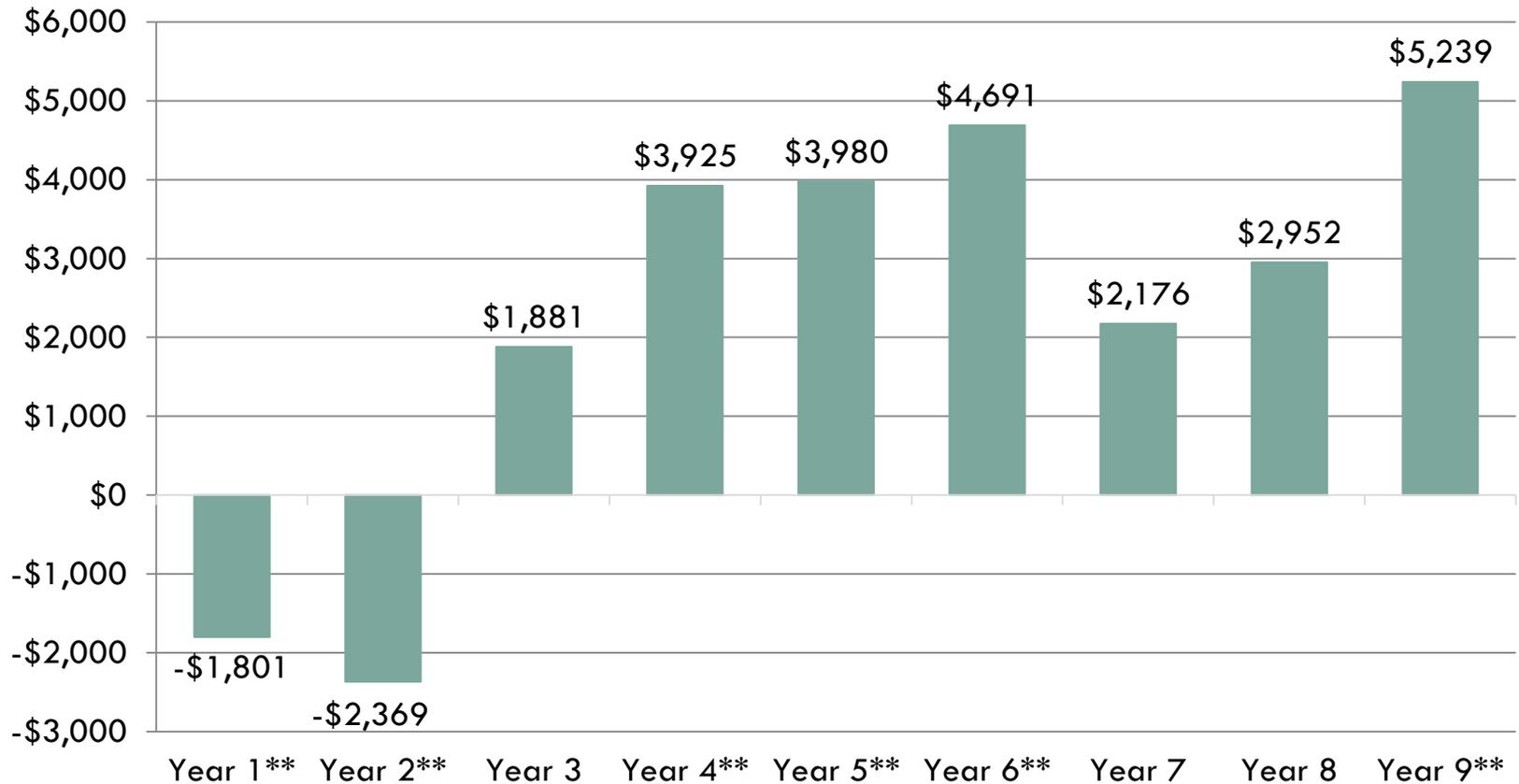
Average annual earnings



Earnings are reported in current dollars. Significance levels: *** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .10$

QUEST's impact grew to \$5,239 in year nine—a difference that was statistically significant and the largest of any year

Project QUEST's impact on average annual earnings (N=410)

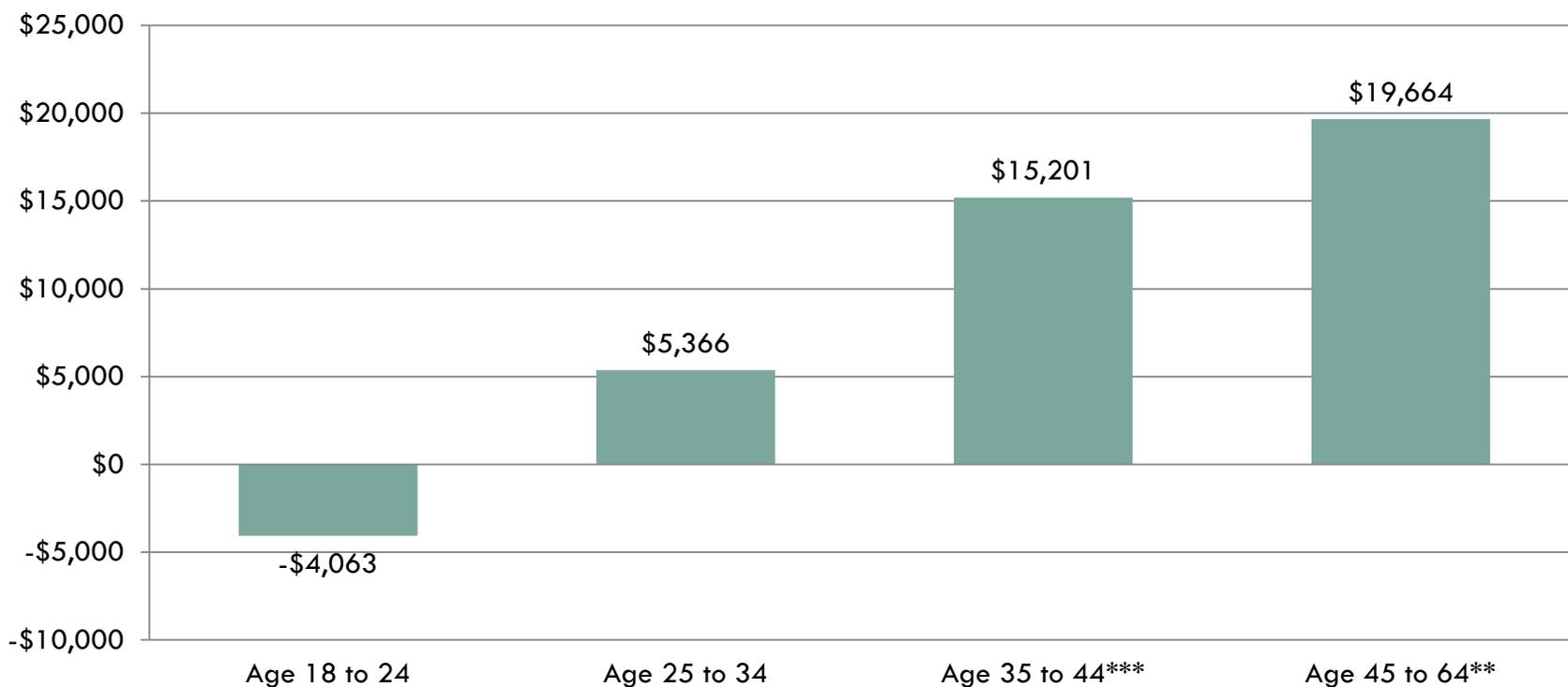


Earnings impacts are reported in current dollars. Significance levels: ***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.10

QUEST had significantly larger impacts on the earnings of older, nontraditional-aged college students

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**QUEST's impact on average annual earnings in year nine,
by age at program entry**



Within group significance levels: *** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$

Between group significance levels: *** $p < .01$ 35 to 44 and 45 to 64 vs 18 to 24, ** $p < .05$ 25 to 34 vs 18 to 24

QUEST's impacts on earnings were large for females and for those with either a GED or high school diploma at program entry

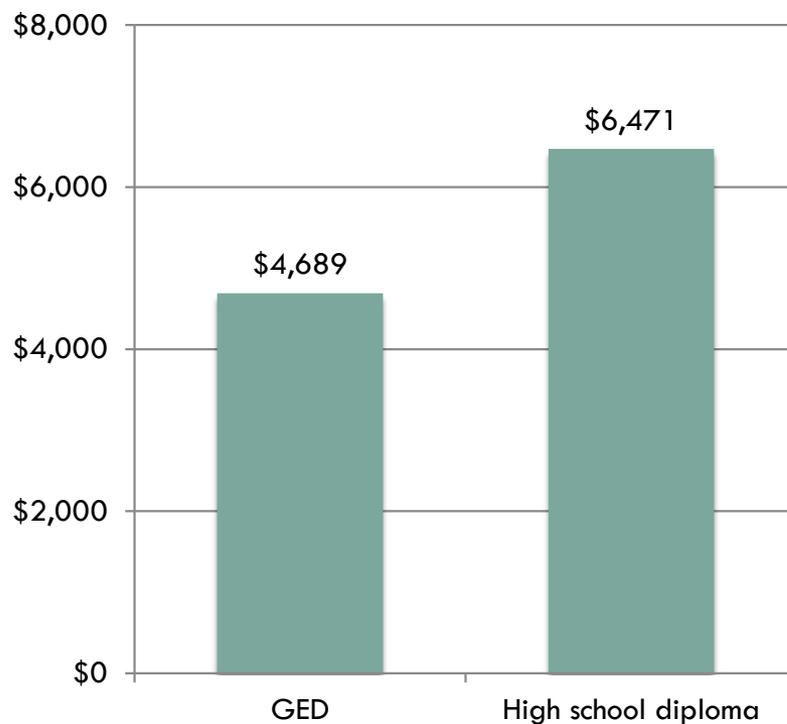
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Impact on average annual earnings in year nine, by gender



Within group difference: Females significant at $p < .05$

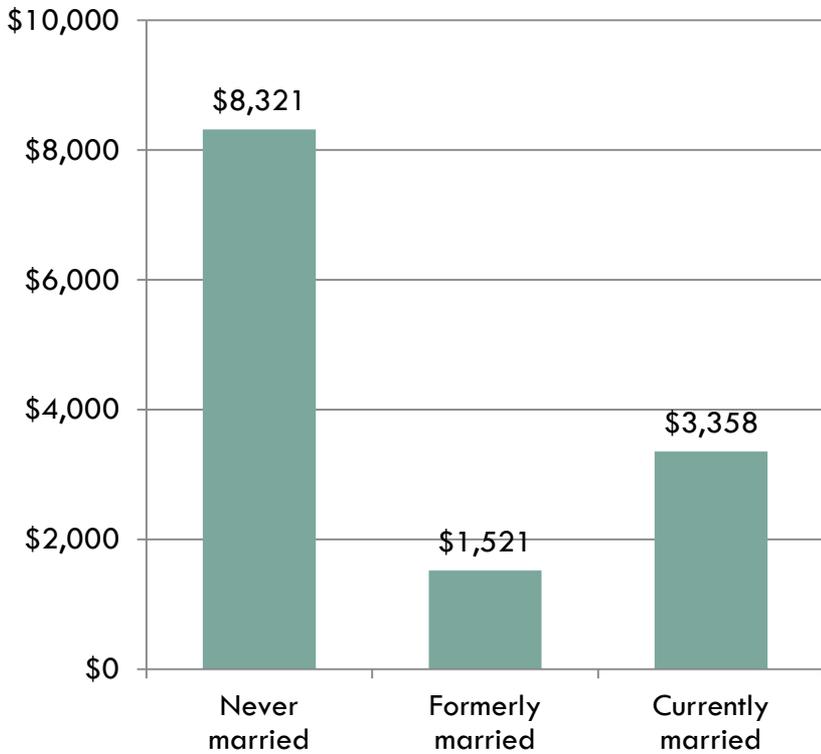
Impact on average annual earnings in year nine, by education level



Within group difference: High school significant at $p < .05$

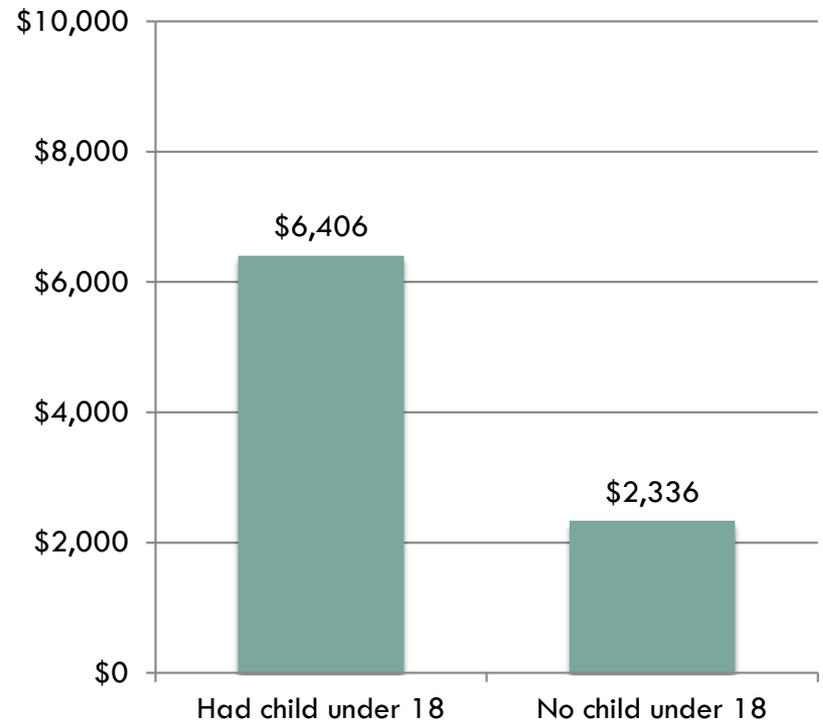
Differences in earnings were larger and statistically significant for those who were never married and those who had children under age 18 at program entry

Impact on average annual earnings in year nine, by marital status



Within group difference: Never married significant at $p < .05$

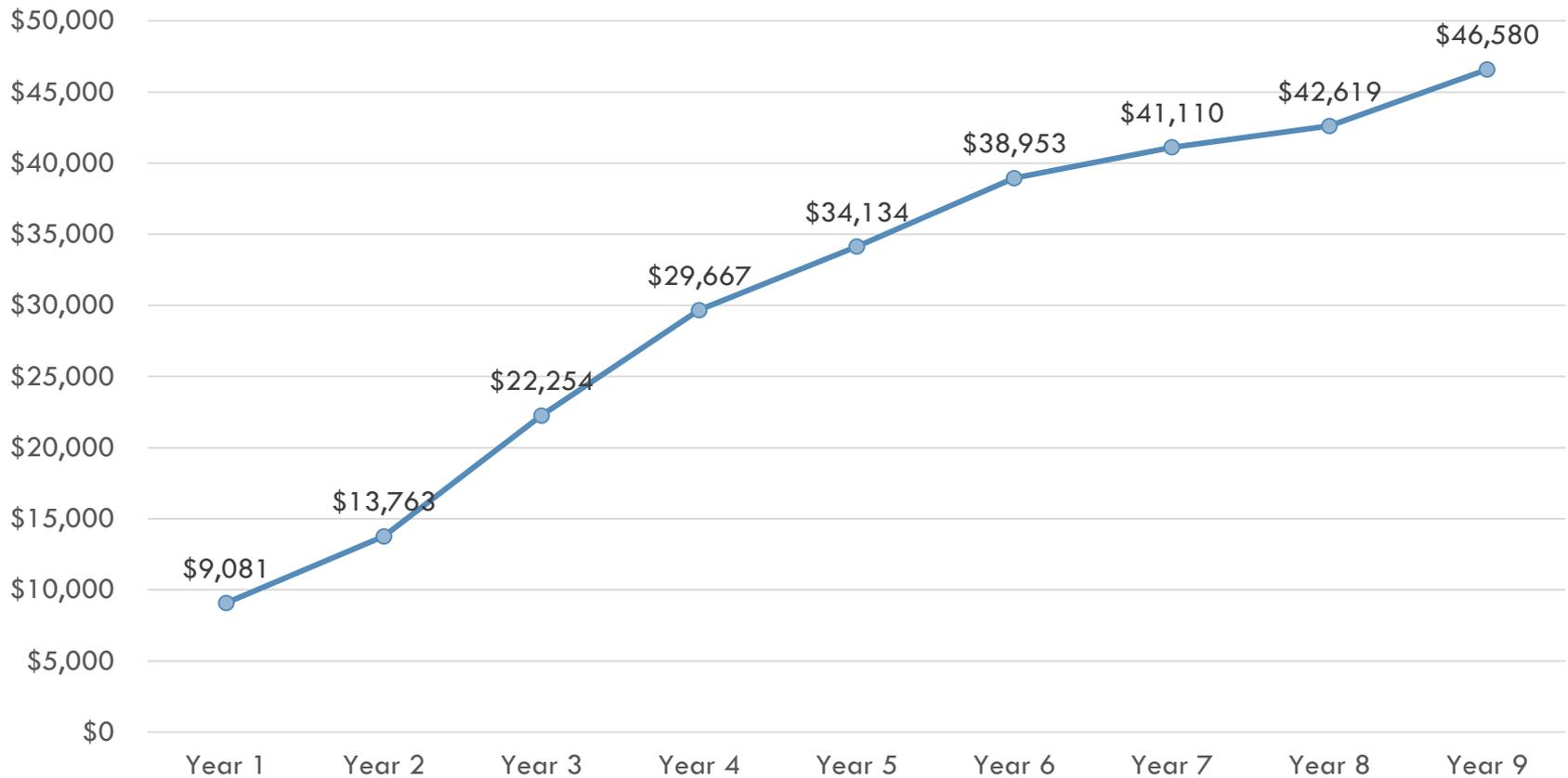
Impact on average annual earnings in year nine, by had child under age 18



Within group difference: Had child under age 18 significant at $p < .05$

The QUEST graduates demonstrated the largest earnings gains, propelling them out of poverty and into the middle class

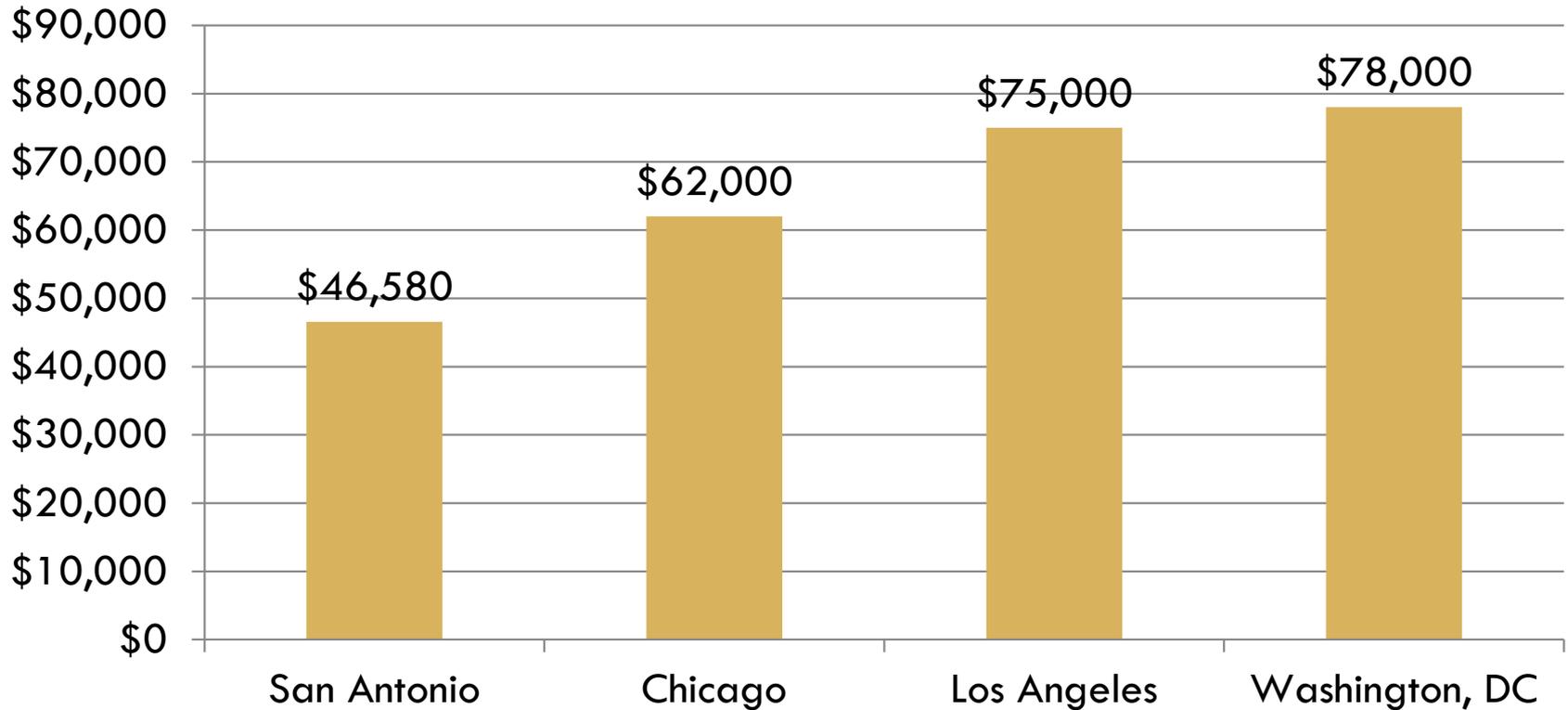
Average annual earnings of the Project QUEST completers (N=82)



Earnings are reported in current dollars. The Project QUEST completers are those who earned a health-care certification while receiving support from the program.

San Antonio is less costly than many cities

Salaries required to maintain the same standard of living across cities



In Sum

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- ❑ QUEST has demonstrated the largest sustained earnings gains ever in a rigorous evaluation
- ❑ People 'least likely to succeed' have in fact seen the largest benefits
- ❑ QUEST graduates are now firmly established in the middle class
- ❑ QUEST model is easily replicated in other communities