

Project QUEST 11-Year Evaluation Findings

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Project QUEST

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- Nonprofit in San Antonio, TX established in 1992 by two community-organizing groups, Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS) and Metro Alliance, to address residents' need for skills training to secure well-paying jobs in strong sectors of the local economy and employers' need for skilled workers
- Project 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

Project QUEST Evaluation Design and Data

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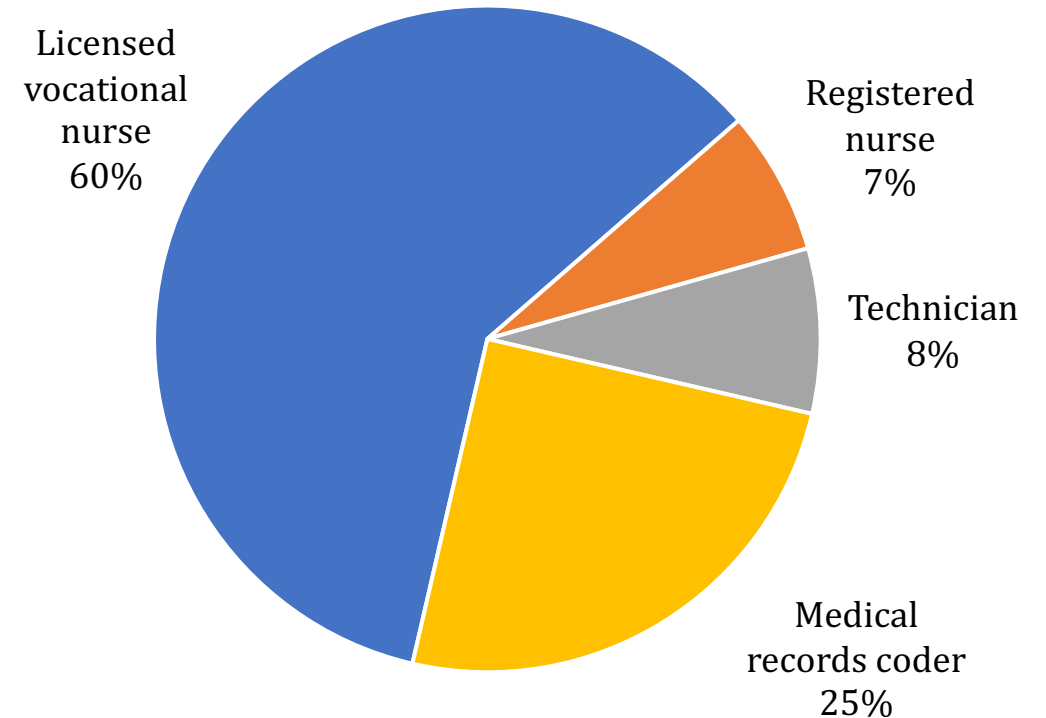
- Randomized controlled trial design
- 410 enrolled between April 2006 and October 2008; 207 assigned to the treatment group, 203 to the control group
- Contracted with the Ray Marshall Center at the University of Texas to access and analyze administrative data records
- Employment and earnings findings based on data from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) on quarterly earnings as reported by employers to the state
- Postsecondary education findings based on data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) on enrollment and completion of certificate and degree programs. NSC data did not capture the medical records coder program

The Study's Target Population and Programs

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- During the study, Project QUEST targeted individuals not attending college, including those who needed remedial math or reading instruction before enrolling and those who did not
- Most students attended programs at one of two community colleges: St. Philips College and San Antonio College
- The study focused on individuals seeking training for health-care jobs
- The programs were expected to take a minimum of one to three years to complete

Study Participants' Intended Health-Care Occupations at Program Entry (N=410)

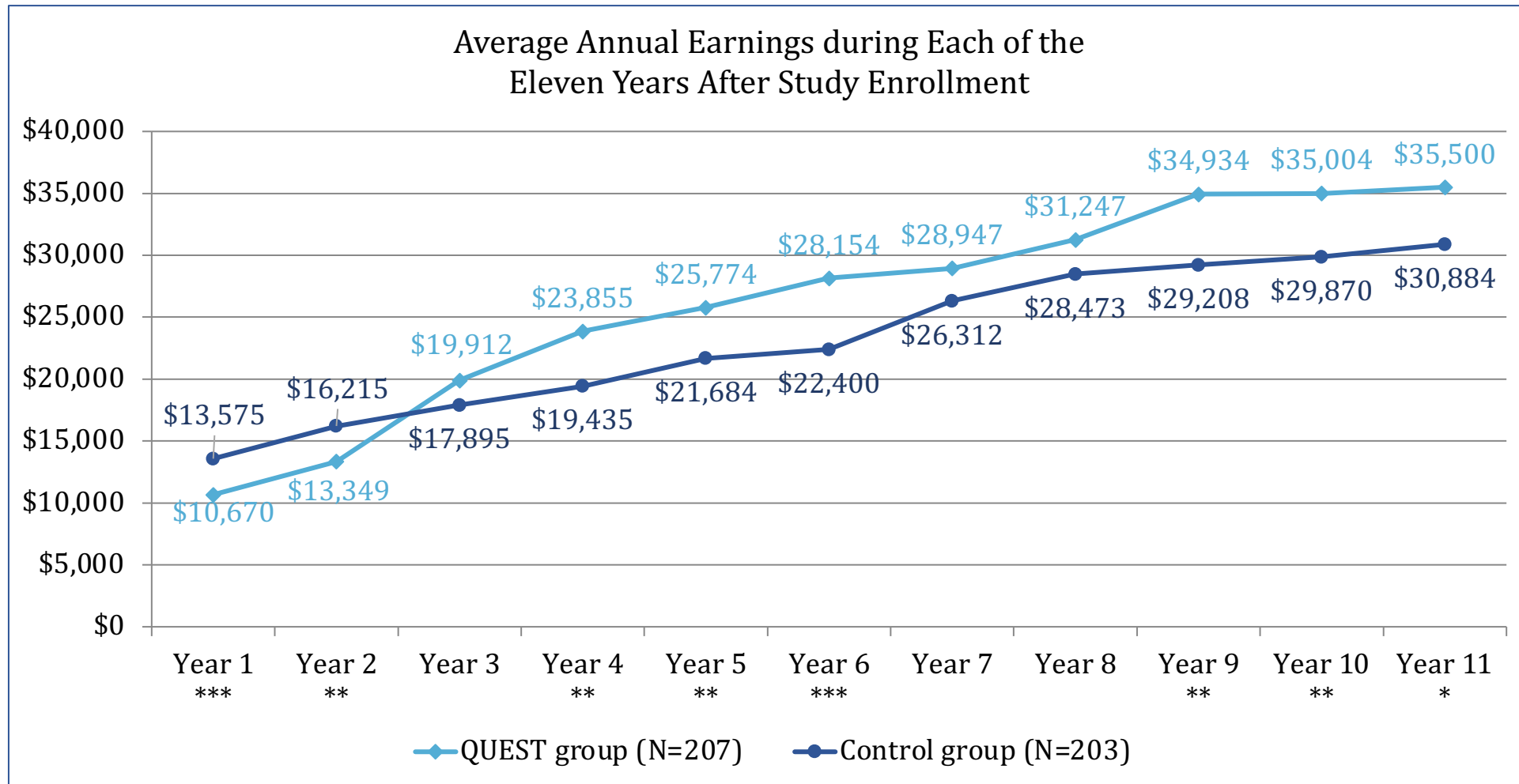


Study Participants' Characteristics at the Time of Study Enrollment (N=410)

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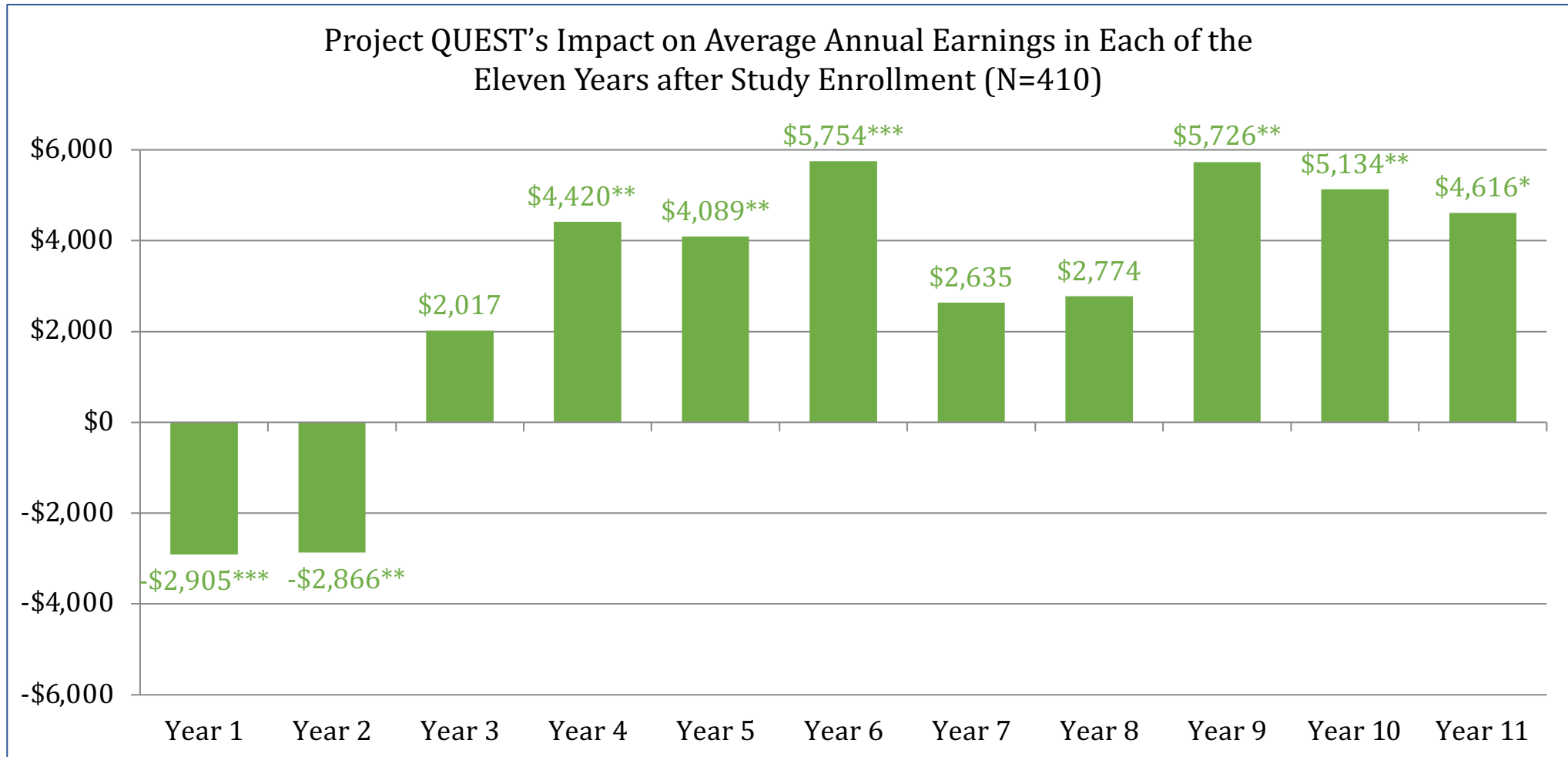
Female	88%
Hispanic/Latino	74%
African American	14%
White	10%
Age 18 to 24	31%
Age 25 to 64	69%
Had any children under age 18	71%
Married	28%
Had a GED	25%
Graduated from high school	70%
Had a college degree	5%
Ever attended college but did not earn degree	45%
Employed at any time in past year	84%
Average annual earnings in past year (in constant 2019 \$)	\$13,323

Across the eleven years after study enrollment, Project QUEST participants earned an average of \$31,395 more than control group members



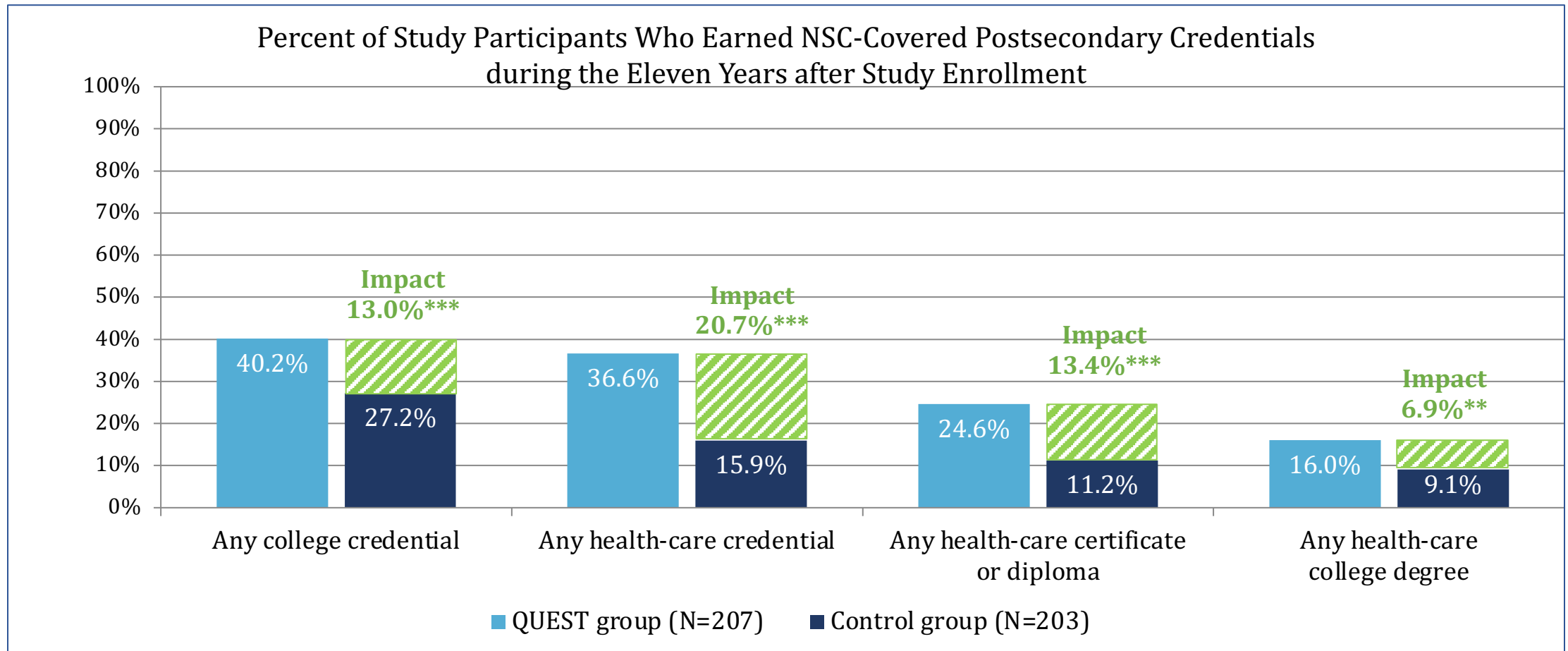
Notes: Figures are for all study participants, including those with zero earnings during each period. Earnings impacts are reported in constant 2019 dollars. Significance levels: ***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.10

Project QUEST's annual earnings impact was statistically significant and exceeded \$4,000 in six of the last eight years, including the last three



Notes: Earnings impacts are reported in constant 2019 dollars. Significance levels: ***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.10

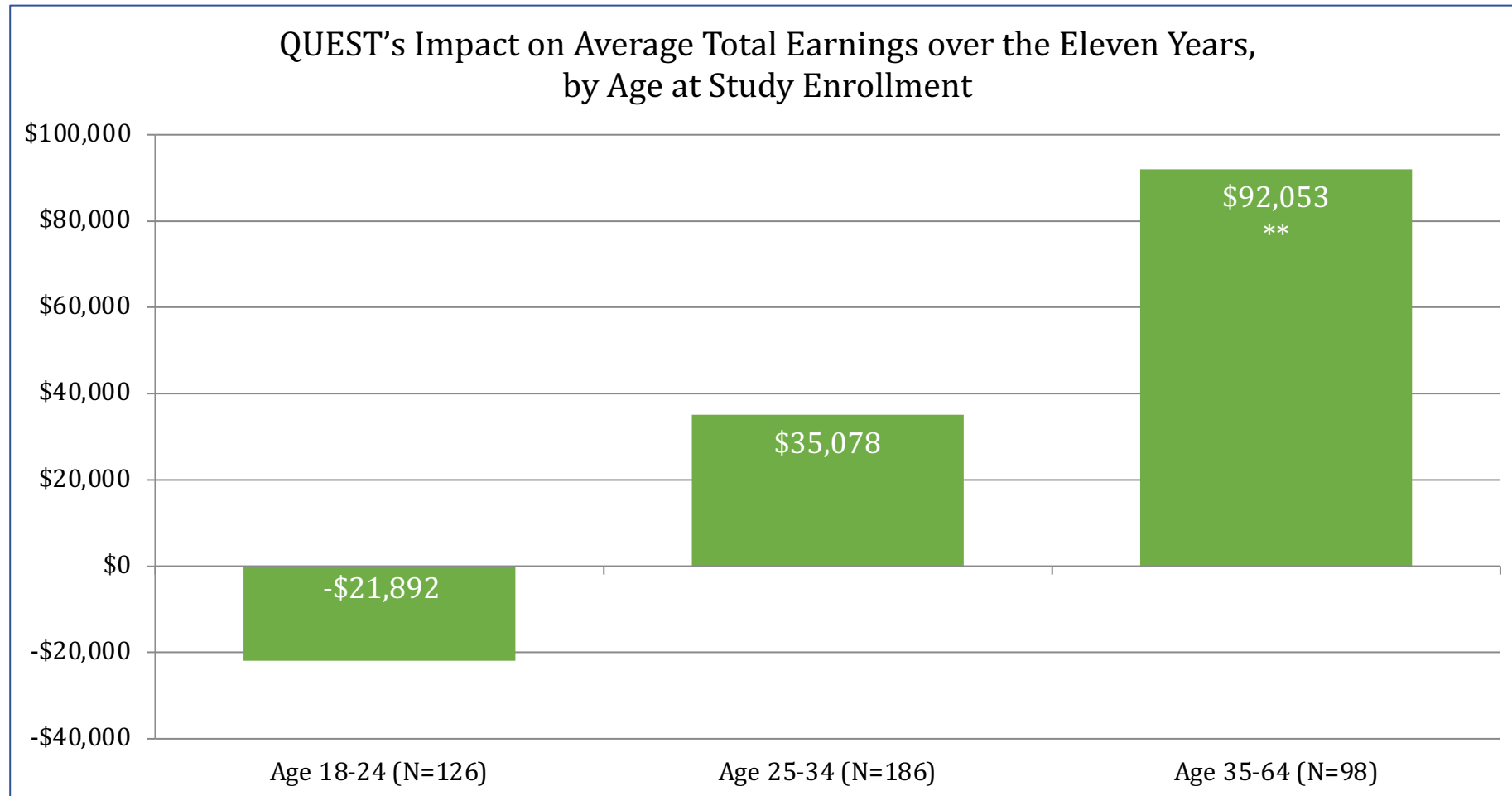
Project QUEST had a large, statistically significant impact on college credential attainment, more than doubling the percent who earned a health-care credential



Notes: Medical records coder program not captured in NSC data.

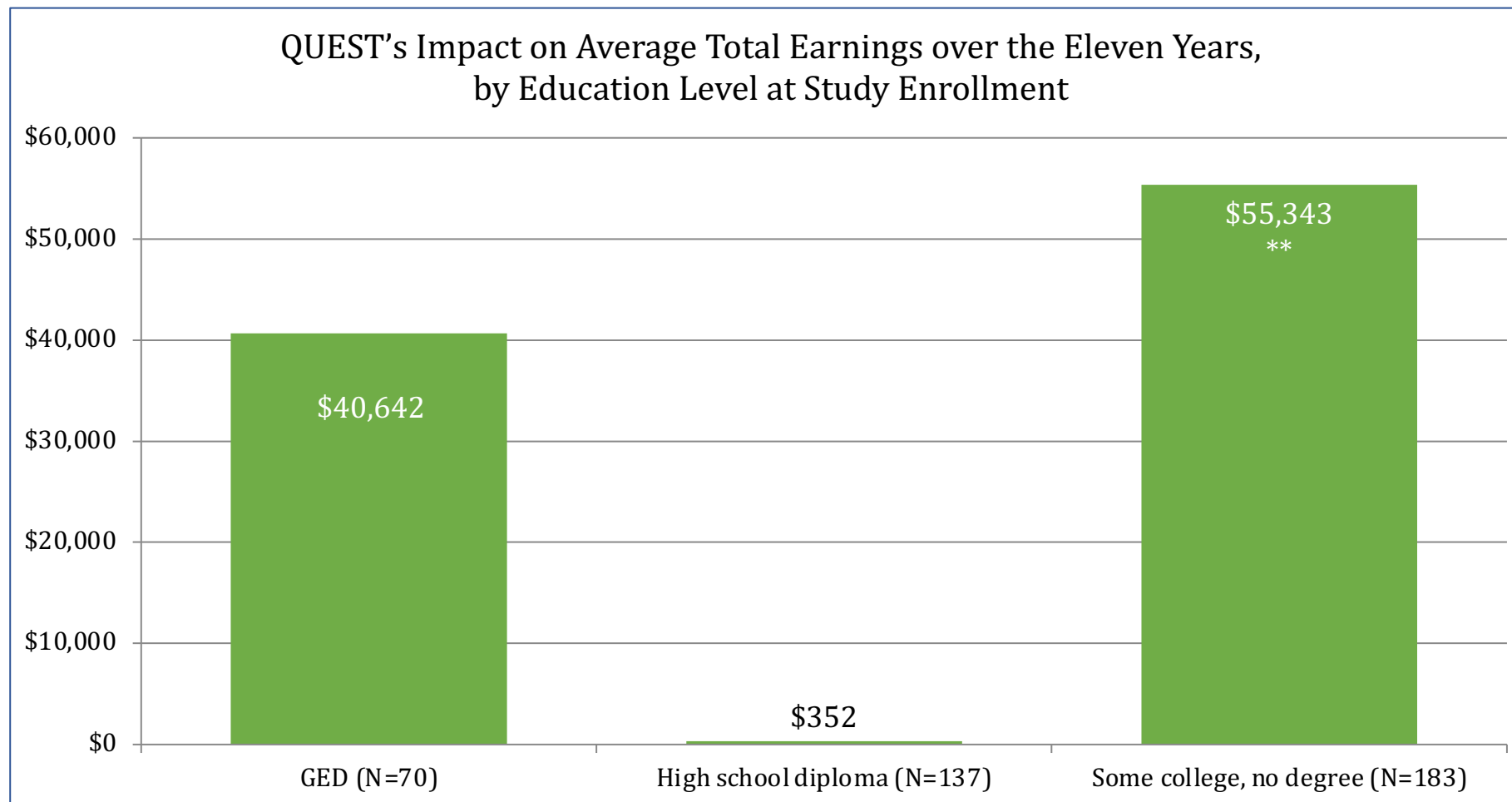
Statistical significance levels: ***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.10

Project QUEST's earnings impacts were greatest for participants who were older than traditional college students



Statistical significance level: Within group: **p<.05

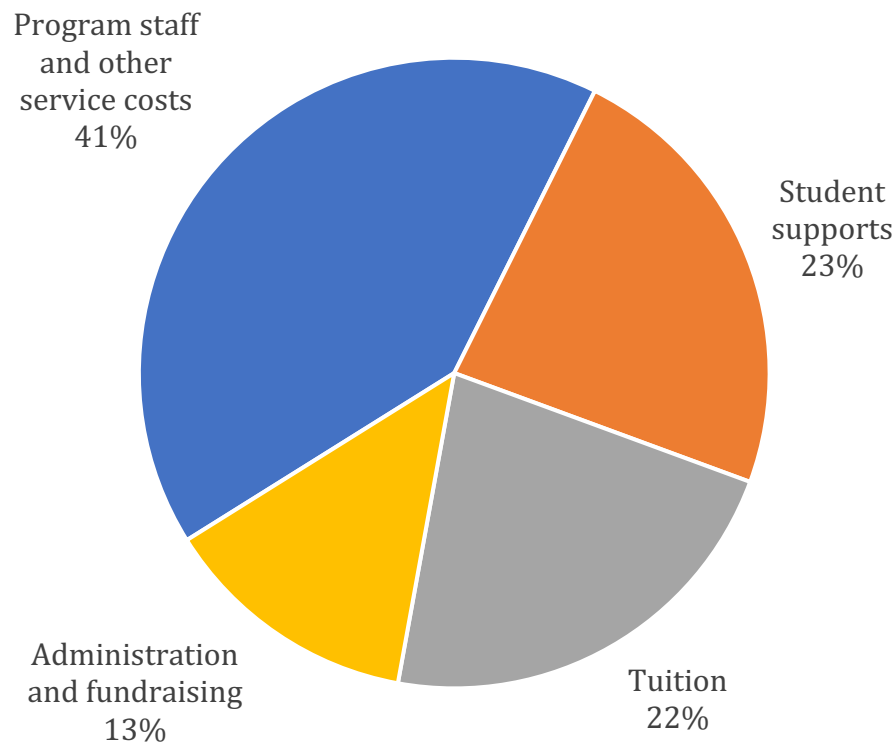
Project QUEST's earnings impacts were also greater for participants who had previously been unsuccessful in school



Statistical significance level: Within group: **p<.05

The earnings gains Project QUEST participants experienced far exceeded the costs of the program and participants' college attendance

Average cost per participant of Project QUEST during the study was \$12,464 (in 2019 \$)



Comparison of Average Net Earnings Benefits to Net Costs during the 11 Years after Study Enrollment (2019 \$)

Average net earnings benefit per participant	\$31,395
Average net cost per participant, including Project QUEST and college costs	\$13,979
Net earnings benefit minus net Project QUEST and college costs (average per participant)	\$17,416

Conclusion

- Project QUEST has achieved the longest sustained earnings impacts ever found in a U.S. workforce development program.
- The results demonstrate the potential value of investing in skills training for low-income job seekers.
- RCT design does not tell us which components were most important but participants credited both the financial assistance and counselor support in helping them persist through academic, family, and financial difficulties.
- Also key was that Project QUEST supported job seekers in earning health-care credentials that were highly valued by employers and required to obtain well-paying jobs in the field.