
APPENDIX: Comments on WWC Reports on Project Quest and Year Up

Comments on WWC Summaries of Studies

WWC claims that the evaluations they review on Year Up show impacts only on short-term earnings but not employment, and on no outcomes in the medium- and long-terms. They also suggest that Project Quest raises credit and credential attainment while possibly reducing degree attainment and generating no impacts on earnings or employment.

A closer look at the evaluations themselves suggests a more nuanced view and more positive impacts.

For instance, Fein and Hamadyk's study of Year Up's short-term impacts clearly notes positive impacts on short-term *employment* as well as earnings. Specifically, the treatment group has 3.4 more hours worked per week than the control group (as measured in the 18-month followup survey); and they find positive employment effects in Year 2 (as measured using quarterly data in the National Directory of New Hires).

Fein and Hamadyk also indicate positive and significant impacts on various signals of longer-term career progress, such as wages of \$15/hour or more (as noted by WWC), working in an occupation using mid-level skills, working in a Year Up target occupation, and reporting substantial career progress on a variety of measures.¹

It is somewhat harder to summarize Project Quest impacts, as WWC's summary of them is based on three somewhat different programs and three separate evaluations using different data sources, time periods (relative to random assignment) and methods. Nevertheless, a cursory reading of the underlying studies, along with WWC's report on Project Quest, suggests the following:

- Roder and Elliott (2018) report large and strongly significant positive impacts on annual earnings in years 5-6, with earnings impacts of \$4,000 and \$5,000 respectively; WWC corrections reduce the p-value for year 5 to .10, which WWC

¹ This study uses data from the National Directory of New Hires for its "confirmatory" findings and from an 18-month survey for its "exploratory" findings; and it notes some adjustments to outcome variables to make data from the two sources more comparable. In the survey, self-reported measures of career progress include perceived progress, confidence in career knowledge, and access to career networks.

labels insignificant, and ignores the impact for year 6.² In 2019 they report insignificant but sizable effects (of \$2,600-2,800) in years 7-8 and a large and significant one (of over \$5000) in year 9.

- They also report that full-time employment is 7 percentage points higher in the treatment group in year 5 and 15 points higher in year 6; WWC's corrections change the p-value for year 5 to .16, which they label insignificant, and ignore year 6 (as well as those in the last two quarters of year 9).
- Juniper et al., having estimated impacts only 2 years out, find quarterly employment rates about 4 percentage points higher in the treatment group (and a small and insignificant positive impact on earnings); WWC corrects the p-value on the former to .07 and labels the result insignificant.
- While Roder and Elliott show a negative impact on degree attainment (of 8 percentage points), Rolston et al. indicate a positive effect (of about 5 percentage points); WWC reports p-values of .10 on both and labels them insignificant, but still uses a larger difference in effect sizes to classify the impacts on degree attainment as negative. Rolston et al. also show clear positive impacts on full-time enrollment - a strong predictor of later degree attainment at community colleges (Baum and Holzer, 2017).

And it is important to note that, since Project Quest is a community-college based program, associate degree completion rates at community colleges tend to improve considerably when measured over a six-year window (Baum et al., 2021), and earnings impacts might take a bit longer to materialize (since degree attainers must often find new jobs that reward their credentials). So even the 6-year window used by Roder and Elliott in their 2018 report - and more so the 2- and 3-year windows used in the other evaluations - will likely understate the true positive impacts of Project Quest.³

Most Recent Studies WWC Missed

Three important reports have been released on these programs, beyond those summarized by WWC: Roder and Elliott (2021) on Project Quest, Rolston et al. (2021) on VIDA, and Fein et al. (2021) on Year Up.

Regarding Year Up, Fein et al. find large and persistent earnings impacts – about \$2,000 per quarter as much as five years after random assignment, which show no signs of fading out.

² Estimated impacts on earnings are about \$2-3,000 in years 3-4 and on employment they are negative in year 3 and positive in year 4, but none are significant.

³ WWC notes that it also uses a 6-year window to measure associate degree attainment for PQ, though it measures short- and medium-term earnings impacts at shorter intervals.

Regarding Project Quest: the more recent study by Roder and Elliott report 10-year and 11-year impacts on earnings and educational attainment respectively. The report shows:

- Significant impacts on annual earnings of \$4,600-5,100 in years 10-11;
- Significantly higher employment rates in year 10 (by about 7 percentage points) and especially in year 11 (15 percentage points); and
- Very strong positive impacts on certificate attainment and generally positive impacts on associate degree attainment, which are significant for those in the target field of health care.

Rolston et al. (2021) largely confirm the positive findings on postsecondary attainment that were apparent in their earlier report, with clearer evidence now of positive impacts on associate degrees (by 7-9 percentage points) as well as certificates and credits – which imply very likely impacts on earnings in the future.

Appendix Table 1A Summary of Impacts: WWC

Project Quest	SR Earn/Emp	MR/LR Earn/Emp	Any Credential	Degree
Roder and Elliott '18	0	0	+	(-)
Roder and Elliott '19	0	0	+	
Rolston et al. '17			+	0
Juniper et al. '20	0			
Year Up	SR Earn/Emp	MR/LR Earn/Emp	Any Credential	Degree
Roder and Elliott '14	+			
Fein and Hamadyck '18	+			

NOTE: Detailed findings are described in the text. SR, MR and LR denote short-, medium-, and long runs respectively; Earn or Emp denote earnings or employment; +, - and 0 denote positive, negative or no significant impacts when measured and tested; (-) denotes an insignificant negative impact that has a large enough effect size to possibly matter; and blank spaces indicate that the outcome was not measured or tested, or it was measured and tested in a way that WWC considers “not aligned” with their preferred measures.

Appendix Table 1B

Summary of Impacts: My Reading

Project Quest	SR Earn/Emp	MR/LR Earn/Emp	Any Credential	Degree	Earn Predictors
Roder and Elliott '18	0	+	+	(-)	+
Roder and Elliott '19	0	+	+		+
Rolston et al. '17			+	+	+
Juniper et al. '20	+				
Roder and Elliott '21		+	+	(+)	+
Rolston et al. '21		0	+	+	+
Year Up	SR Earn/Emp	MR/LR Earn/Emp	Any Credential	Degree	
Roder and Elliott '14	+	+			
Fein and Hamadyck '18	+				+
Fein et al. '21	+	+			+

NOTE: Detailed findings are described in the text. SR, MR and LR denote short-, medium-, and long- runs respectively; Earn or Emp denote earnings or employment; +, - and 0 denote positive, negative or no significant impacts when measured and tested; (+) denotes insignificant positive impacts in most cases but significant and positive in one case; and blank spaces indicate that the outcome was not measured or tested. Earn Predictors denote measured outcomes that are likely correlated with or predictive of long-run earnings.