

## Postsecondary Education and Employment Outcomes for 2008 and 2009 Central Texas High School Graduates

*Workforce Data Quality Initiative Research Brief 7*  
May 2014

### What We Studied

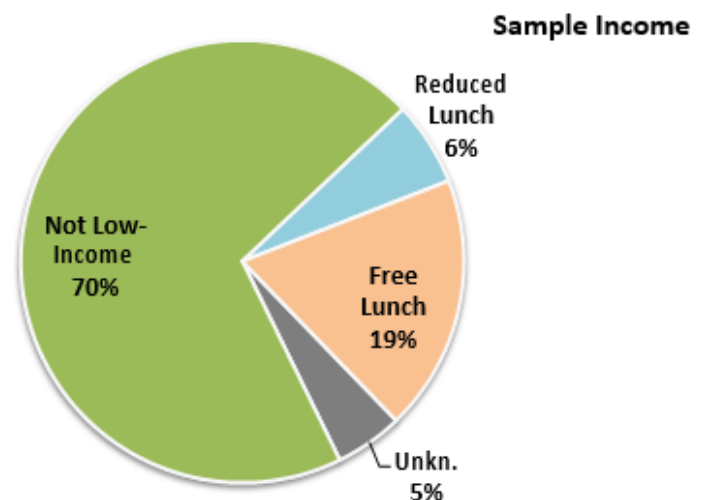
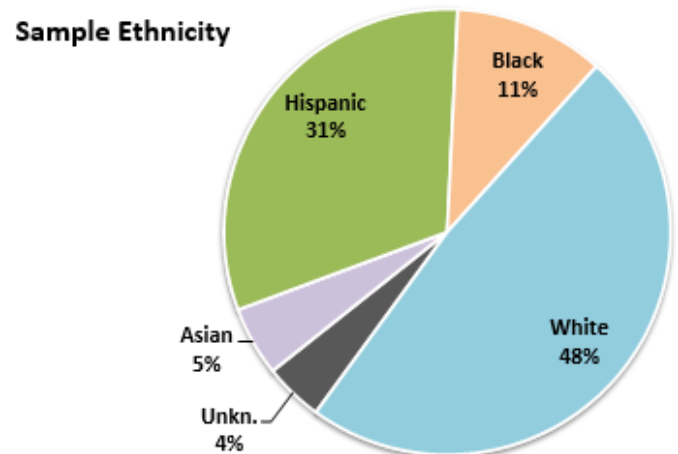
This research brief describes postsecondary education and employment outcomes for 2008 and 2009 Central Texas high school graduates.

As part of the Central Texas Student Futures project, the Ray Marshall Center developed partnerships with Central Texas independent school districts to document and analyze the postsecondary pathways and outcomes of the region's high school graduates. This work has been extended through the Texas Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) to examine the various paths that students take after high school and identify factors that are associated with them.

### How We Analyzed the Data

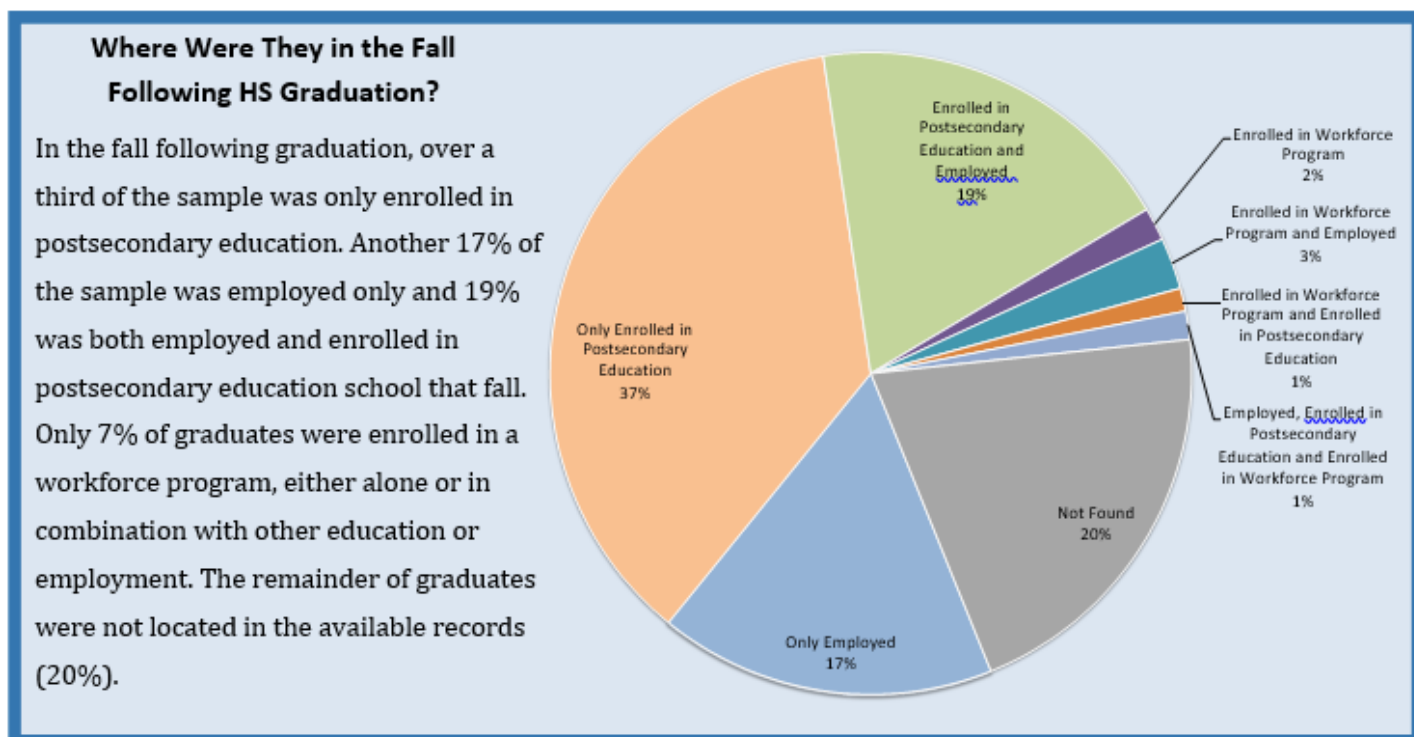
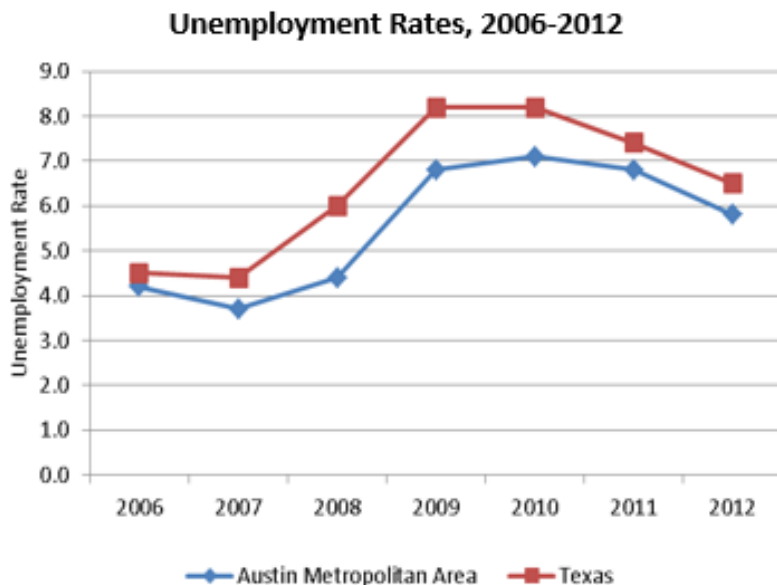
The sample (all graduates for whom data were available) includes a total of 23,809 graduates: 11,575 from the 2008 cohort and 12,234 from the 2009 cohort. The sample was predominantly White (48%), with smaller shares of Hispanic (31%), and Black (11%) students. Approximately 25% of the sample received free or reduced lunch in school (a proxy for low-income status).

Research data were drawn from secondary school records, the Student Futures Project Senior Exit Survey, National Student Clearinghouse records, Texas unemployment insurance wage records, and Texas death records. A graduate was considered employed in a particular quarter if he or she was found in the Texas unemployment insurance wage records; if a graduate was not found in the wage records, he or she could be unemployed, employed in another state, employed by an employer who does not report wages for unemployment purposes, or not in the labor force.



**Time Periods Examined:** Postsecondary data were examined through December 2012. This provided 4.5 years of follow-up for the 2008 cohort and 3.5 years for the 2009 cohort.

**Economic Environment:** When studying employment outcomes, it is important to consider the economic environment into which these cohorts graduated. The Classes of 2008 and 2009 faced, more than any other class in recent history, daunting challenges to obtaining employment. The chart to the right illustrates this fact: just as the first of the cohorts graduated, the unemployment rate in Texas and the Austin Metropolitan Area began to rise sharply and did not improve substantially during the studied timeframe.



## What We Discovered

The table below provides a summary of outcomes through December 2012 by graduating class. These categories are non-exclusive; a graduate could be counted in multiple categories over time (with the exception of those “not located”).

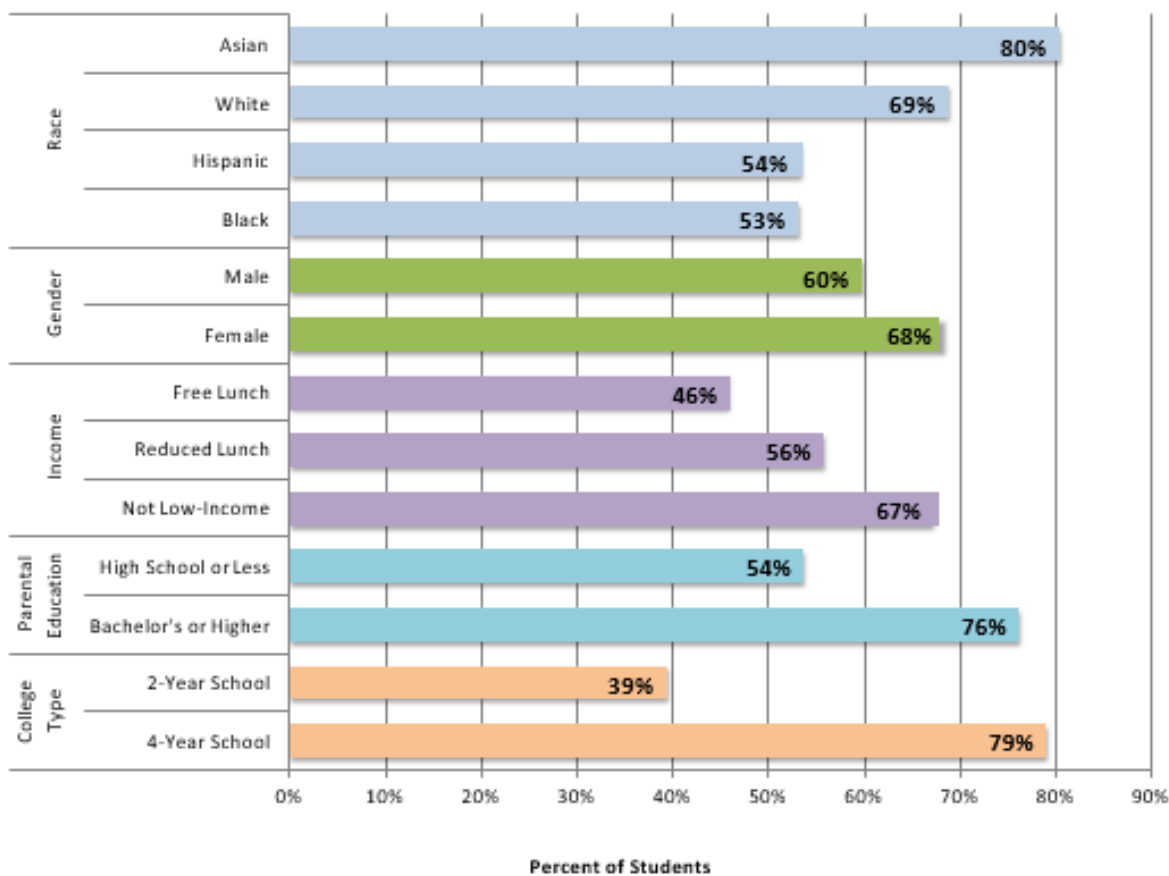
Three-quarters of graduates enrolled in postsecondary education in at least one semester since high school graduation. One-fifth of the 2008 cohort graduated from a postsecondary institution. Most were employed in at least one quarter. Only 7% participated in a workforce program, with most of them participating in ES or WIT services.  
*ES=Employment Services WIT=Work in Texas  
 TANF E&T=TANF Employment and Training  
 SNAP E&T=SNAP Employment and Training*

The chart below details the share of Class of 2008 graduates who, after enrolling in college in the first fall following high school graduation, either persisted in college for four years or graduated from college by December 2012. Students who initially enrolled in a 4- year institution were more likely to persist or graduate in the studied time period as compared to students who initially enrolled at a 2-year college.

**Postsecondary Outcomes for 2008 and 2009  
 Central Texas High School Graduates through December 2012**

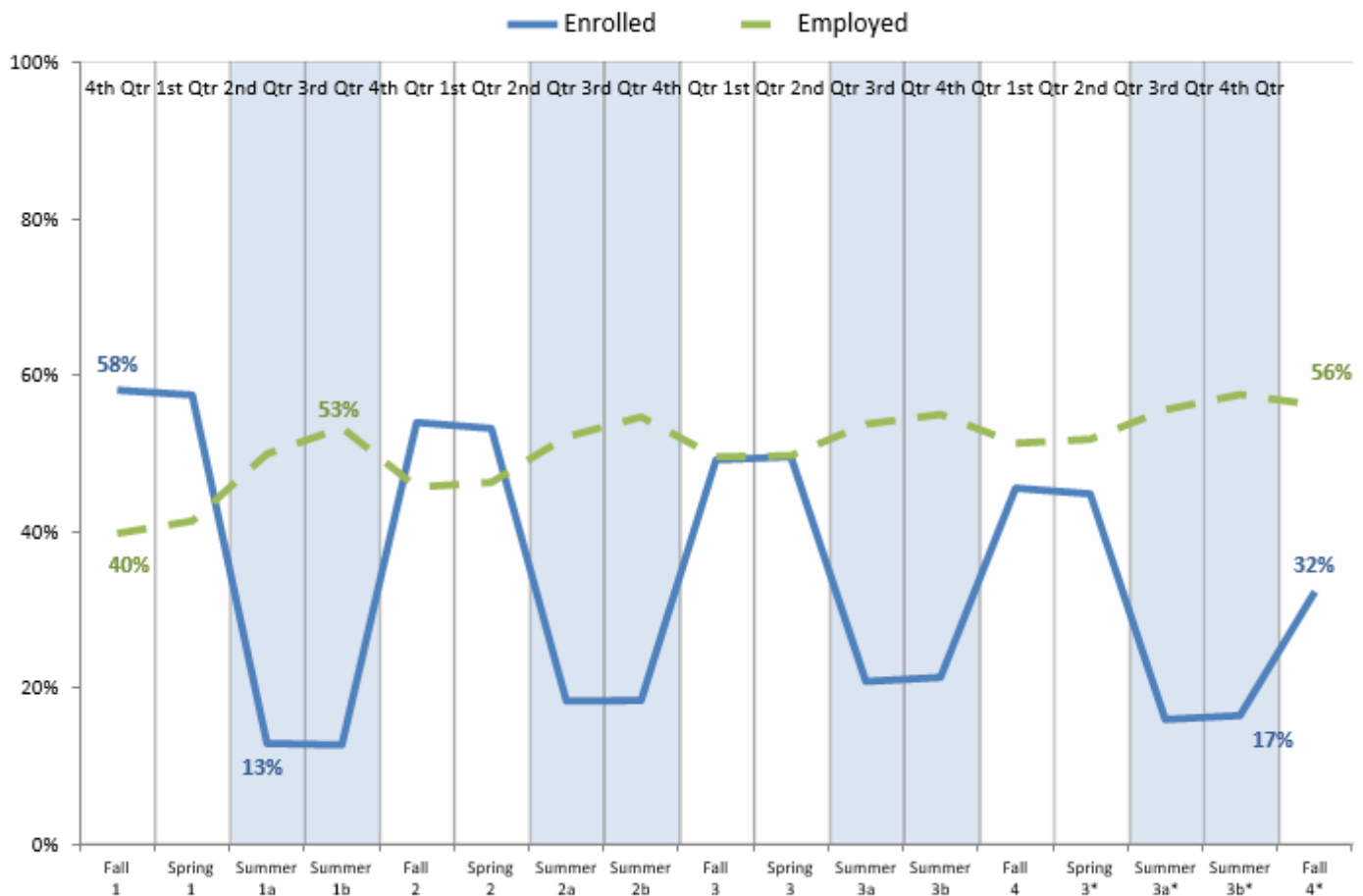
	Cohort	
	2008	2009
<b>Ever Enrolled in Postsecondary Education</b>	75%	74%
Enrolled In-State	68%	67%
Enrolled Out-of-State	14%	11%
Graduated from Postsecondary Education	20%	3%
<b>Ever Employed (in Texas)</b>	85%	83%
Ever enrolled <u>and</u> employed	54%	49%
<b>Ever Received UI Benefits</b>	7%	4%
<b>Ever Participated in Workforce Program<sup>1</sup></b>	7%	7%
ES or WIT	6%	6%
WIA	1%	1%
TANF E&T (Choices)	1%	1%
SNAP E&T	1%	0%
<b>Not Located</b>	5%	6%

**Share of Students who Persisted in College for Four Years or Graduated,  
 Among those Enrolled in Fall after 2008 HS Graduation**



The graph below illustrates the seasonal nature of attending school and working. The solid blue line in the graph shows the percent of graduates who were enrolled in postsecondary education in each semester, starting with the fall following high school graduation. That semester, over half of the graduates were enrolled, and a nearly equal share were enrolled in the spring semester. College enrollment numbers dropped sharply during the summer semesters to as few as 13%. Over time, the percent who were enrolled in the fall and spring semesters gradually decreased. The dotted green line in the graph shows the percent of graduates who were employed in each quarter. Less than half of the sample was employed in the fall following high school graduation with the share gradually increasing through the summer quarters. While the share who were employed continued to show seasonal fluctuations in contrast to college enrollment, those fluctuations appear to lessen over time.

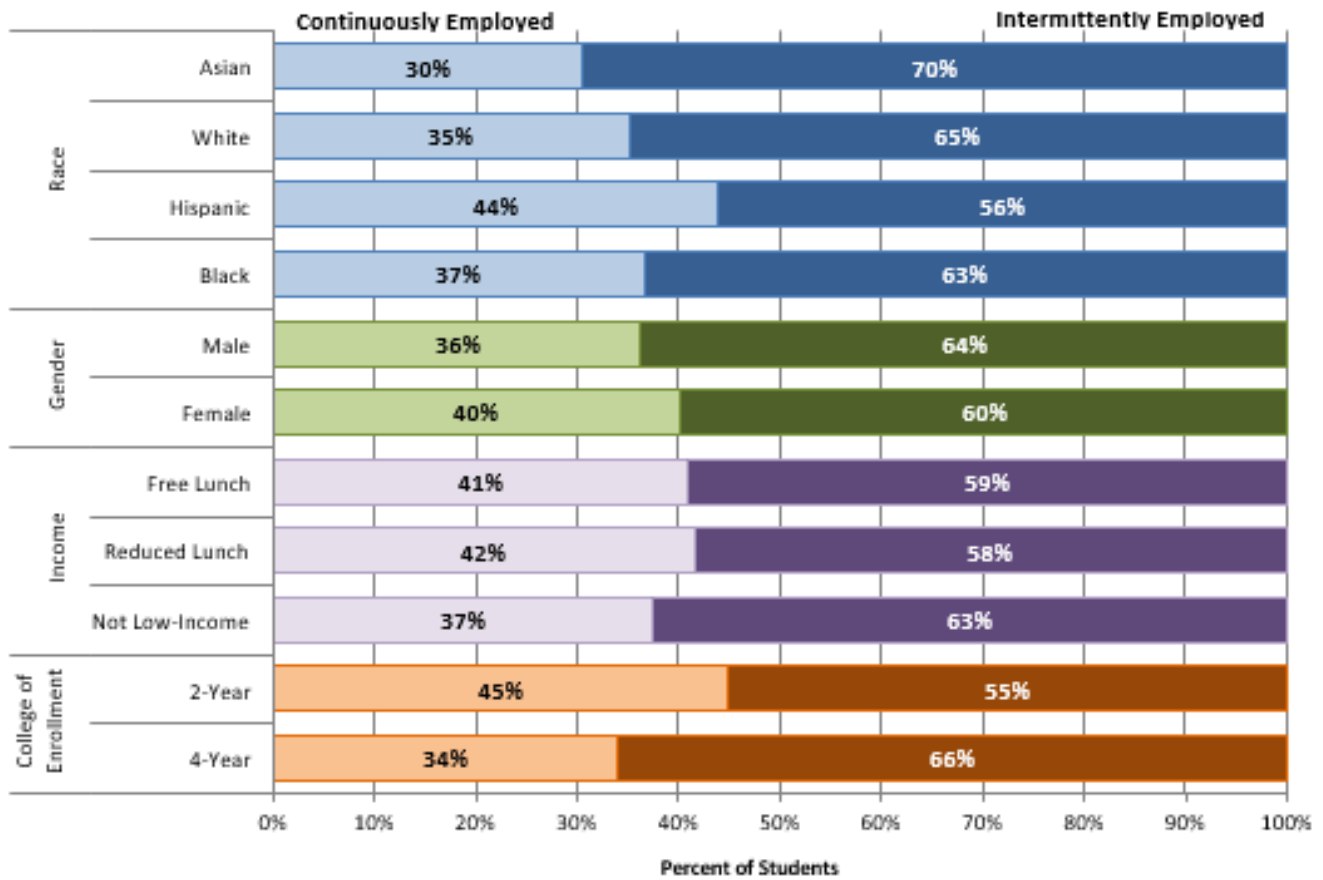
**Share of 2008 and 2009 Central Texas Students who were Employed and Enrolled in Postsecondary Education in Each Period Post-Graduation**



\* Data for 2008 graduates only.

The graph below shows the share of students who were employed in the fall following graduation and who were either continuously or intermittently employed in each subsequent quarter. Intermittent employment could be due to several factors, including unstable employment or seasonal employment in converse of college semesters. Regardless of demographic characteristic, all graduates were more likely to have intermittent employment than to work continuously throughout the year.

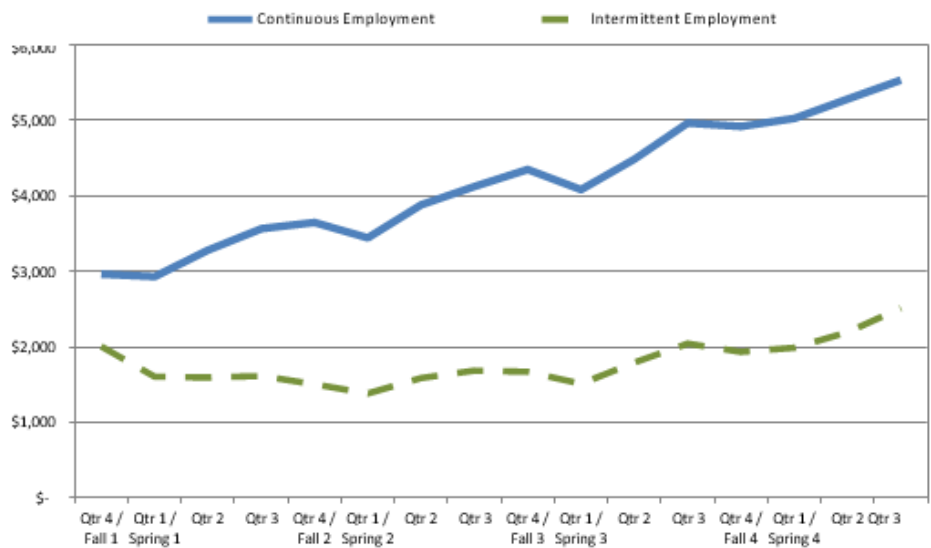
## Share of Students who were Continuously and Intermittently Employed, Among those Employed in Fall after 2008 HS Graduation



The effects of working intermittently rather than continuously can be seen in the average quarterly wages of the 2008 graduates who worked. Those who worked continuously throughout the year had higher average wages each quarter and also increased their wages over time. It is important to note that those working intermittently may or may not be students who expect to achieve higher wages upon completion of school.

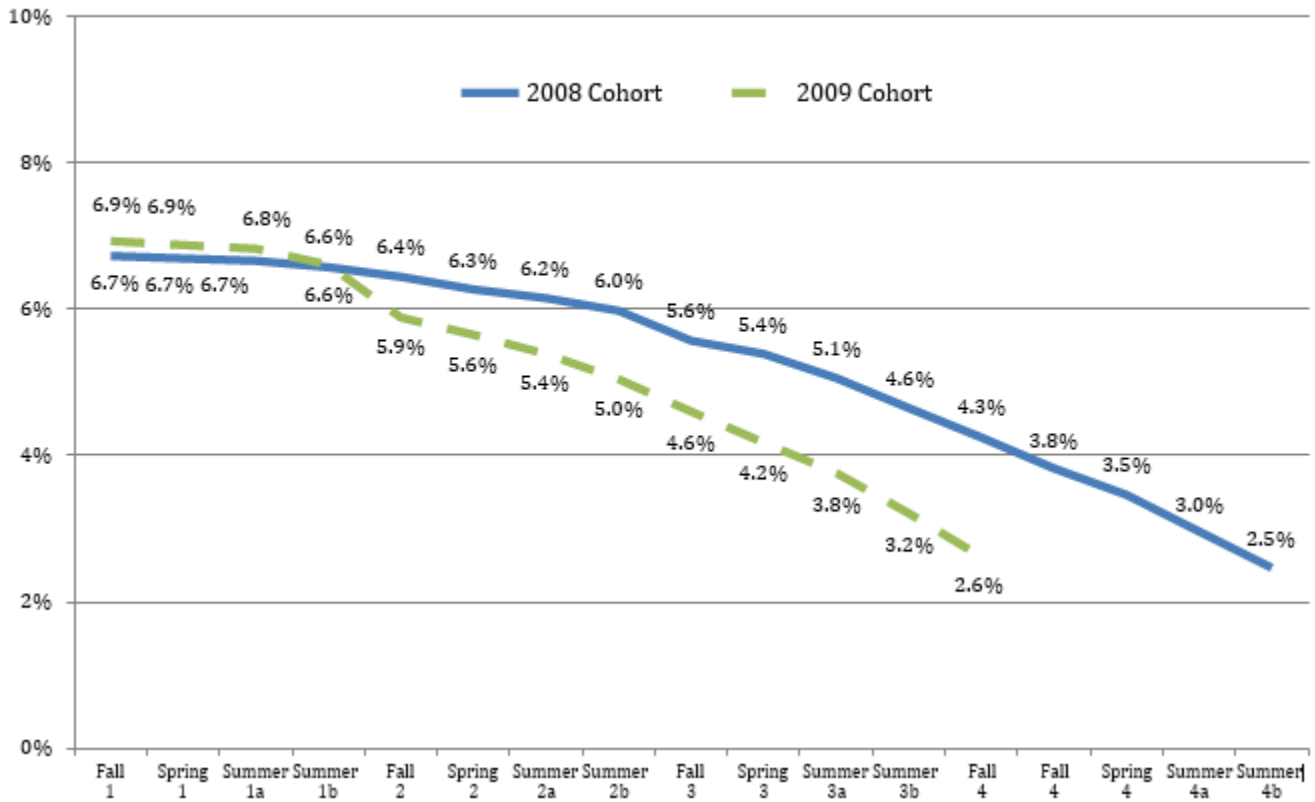
The share of students who participated in any workforce program can be seen in the graph below. The participation pattern of the Class of 2009 was similar to, though lower than, the Class of 2008. For both classes, participation was highest in the first fall quarter following graduation,

### Mean Quarterly Earnings of Those who were Employed in Fall After Graduation, by Continuous Employment or Intermittent Employment, Class of 2008



with about 7% of the sample participating, and then steadily declined to less than 3%.

**Workforce Program Participation by 2008 and 2009 Central Texas Graduates**



More information on the Student Futures Project at: [www.centexstudentfutures.org](http://www.centexstudentfutures.org)

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The University of Texas at Austin ERC is a research center and P-20/Workforce Repository site which provides access to longitudinal, student-level data for scientific inquiry and policymaking purposes. Since its inception in 2008, the Texas ERC’s goal is to bridge the gap between theory and policy by providing a cooperative research environment for study by both scholars and policy makers. As part of its mission, the ERC works with researchers, practitioners, state and federal agencies, and other policymakers to help inform upon critical issues relating to education today.

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