

PIAL Expansion Grant Objective 2: A Brief Evaluation of Fall 2022 Simulations

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OVERVIEW

PIAL Emerging Adult Edition (College Simulation) focuses on empowering 18- to 25-year-olds to be successful throughout critical life events. This program provides emerging adults an opportunity to gain knowledge and skills related to accessing important services to achieve economic mobility, develop responsible parenting practices, and be involved in healthy relationships, regardless of parenting status.

The goals of the College Sim are to inform students that...

it is possible to be a student and parent at the same time

and

your college and community have resources that can help student parents.

AIMS

The overarching purpose of this report was to expand on previous reports using Fall 2022 data and further PIAL's understanding of the impact of the College Sim on participants. Specifically, we examined data that indicated the following:

- 1) The baseline knowledge of participants,
- 2) Behavior/attitude trends of respondents prior to participation,
- 3) Knowledge gain and behavior/attitude changes after participation,
- 4) Demographic associations with knowledge or behavior/attitudes relating to the program,
- 5) Themes in response to open-ended questions,
- 6) Differences between the online and in-person debriefs after the simulation, and
- 7) Response differences over time.

PROCEDURE

Participants were enrolled at two Iowa community colleges with previous connections to PIAL and the College Sim. PIAL staff members facilitated ten simulations in about 90-minute sessions, with each student participating in one. Staff from Iowa State University and local community volunteers served as table monitors for some facilitations. Participants completed the pre-program survey at the beginning of the simulation, but time restrictions determined whether the debrief and post-program surveys were completed in-person or online at a later date.

RESULTS

Demographics

One hundred fifty-nine (159) participants completed pre- and post-program surveys. On average, participants were 18.9 years old, and most were enrolled in their first year of college (92.5%). Most participants identified as male (59.7%) and most were White (82.4%). Additionally, 19 participants (11.9%) confirmed they were of Hispanic or Latino origin. Most participants reported their sexuality as straight/heterosexual (89.3%). Finally, 42.1% of respondents were in a romantic relationship at the time of data collection; 40.3% of respondents had been in a romantic relationship prior to data collection, but not during data collection; and 17.6% of respondents had never been in a romantic relationship at the time of data collection.

Changes and Differences

Knowledge

Three survey items measured participant knowledge of resources. Each item demonstrated a significant change in how participants responded during the pre-program and post-program surveys, specifically that knowledge of resources increased after completing the College Simulation. See example in Figure 1.

Behavior/Attitude

Four survey items measured participant behavior/attitude toward attending school as a parent. Each item demonstrated a significant difference in how participants responded during the post-program survey. These results imply a good behavior/attitude towards school enrollment, in that participants were more likely to skip classes than withdraw from college entirely after completing the College Simulation. See example in Figure 2.

Belief

One survey item measured participant belief about the possibility of being a successful student and parent simultaneously. Results demonstrated a significant change in how participants responded to the item during the pre-program and post-program surveys, meaning that participants were less likely to strongly disagree and more likely to strongly agree after completing the program. See example in Figure 3.

Figure 1. I would know which specific community college resources and/or surrounding community resources to contact if I am or if I become a student parent. (n = 159)

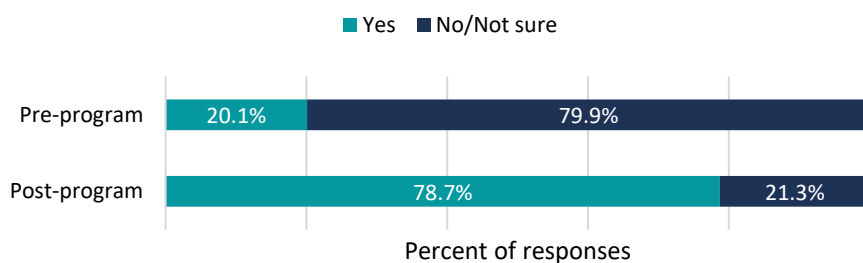


Figure 2. How likely is it that childcare problems would cause you to skip classes or withdraw from college entirely?

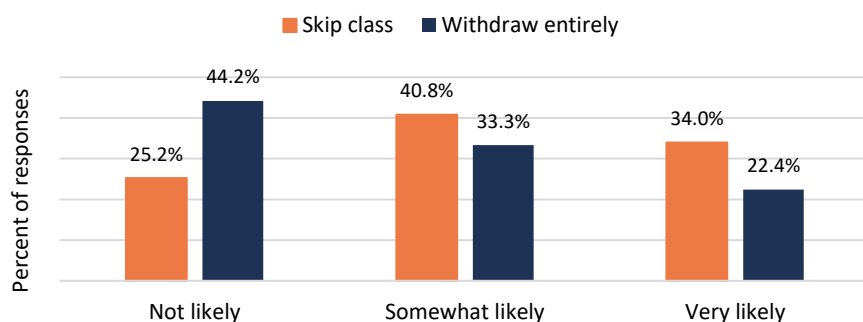
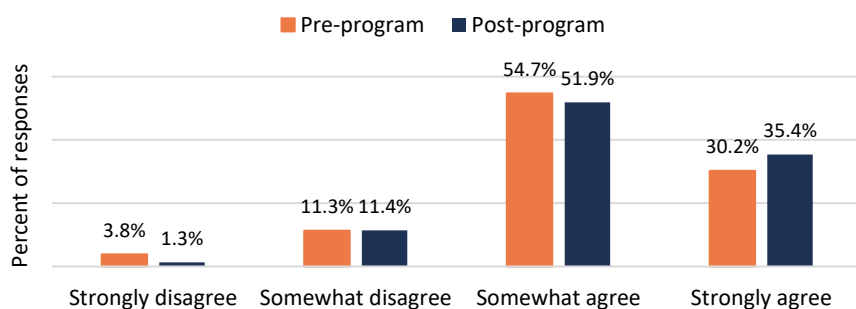


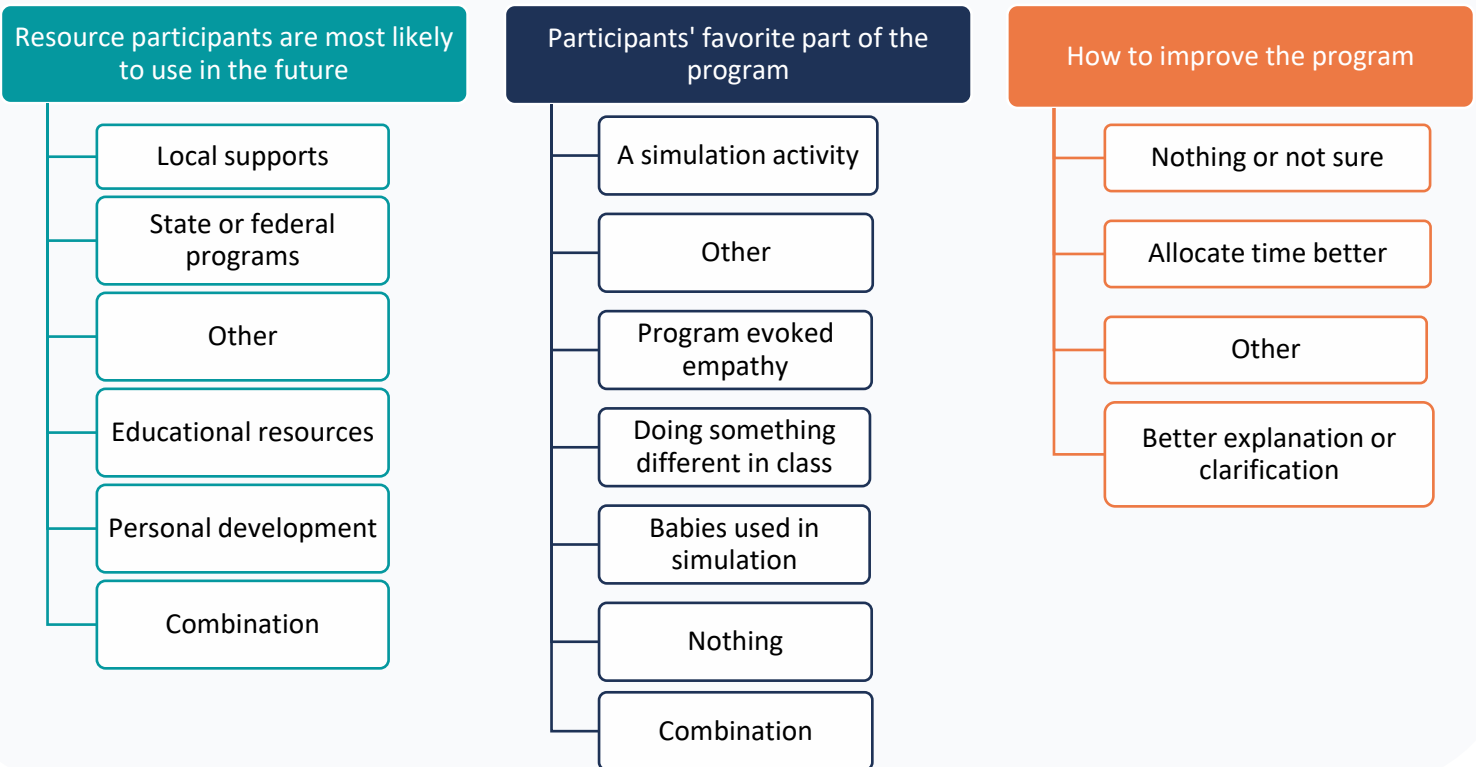
Figure 3. It is possible to be a student and a parent successfully at the same time. (n = 159)



Participant Reflection

Participants were prompted to respond to various open-ended survey items, three of which were specifically focused on feedback for the program. About 150 participants responded to each of the following items: (a) “Which resource did you learn about during the College Simulation that you are most likely to use in the future?”, (b) “What was your favorite part about the College Simulation?”, and (c) “What is one thing we can improve about the College Simulation?”. See Figure 4 for the emergent themes of each item. Emergent themes are ordered by frequency, with the most common themes at the top of the figure.

Figure 4. Emergent themes of open-ended survey item responses



SUMMARY

After participating in the College Simulation program, the Fall 2022 participants demonstrated a significant change in knowledge and behaviors/attitudes about the resources available to them and decisions they might make if they were to be students and parents simultaneously. Post-program survey responses indicated that participants have better knowledge of resources available to student-parents and demonstrated good behavior/attitudes towards school enrollment if they were to become a student-parent. These findings are similar to the results reported for the Fall 2021 participants.

It is important to note that students who participated in the simulation had a better baseline understanding of the concepts that are introduced in the College Simulation program. This may be because they knew someone who participated in the program previously or because the ideas introduced during the program have started to be more integrated within the community colleges that have agreed to participate in this program. However, there are plans to adjust the program with changes that will be implemented in future iterations of the College Simulation.

More information regarding data collection, analyses, and results are available in the full report for Fall 2022 and the prior report for Fall 2021.