

Make It Personal

How Pregnancy Planning and Prevention
Help Students Complete College

By Mary Prentice, Chelsey Storin, and Gail Robinson



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The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) is the primary advocacy organization for the nation's community colleges. The association represents 1,200 two-year, associate degree-granting institutions and more than 13 million students. AACC promotes community colleges through five strategic action areas: recognition and advocacy for community colleges; student access, learning, and success; community college leadership development; economic and workforce development; and global and intercultural education. Information about AACC and community colleges may be found at www.aacc.nche.edu.

This report is based upon work supported by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. The National Campaign is a research-based private, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that seeks to improve the lives and future prospects of children and families. Its specific strategy is to prevent teen pregnancy and unplanned pregnancy among single, young adults.



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Summary

Community colleges today are facing a difficult challenge: increase the number of graduates with ever-shrinking resources. One important, but often overlooked, way to help more students graduate is to address the impact that an unplanned pregnancy can have on their educational goals. Through Make It Personal: College Completion (MIPCC)—a project of the American Association of Community Colleges and The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy—several colleges have been trying new and innovative ways to address this issue on their campuses. This report highlights the MIPCC projects, feedback from the faculty who participated, the impact of the project on students, and tips for how others can replicate these efforts.

While there has been great progress in reducing the teen pregnancy rate in the United States, pregnancy among older teens ages 18-19 and unplanned pregnancy among women in their 20s remain stubbornly high. This should be of interest to those in higher education because an early or unplanned pregnancy has the potential to delay or derail a student's education.

Although the proportion of students experiencing a pregnancy or becoming a parent is relatively modest, it still affects a significant number of community college students and it has a significant impact on these students. Sixty-one percent of women who have children after enrolling in community college do not finish their education. This number is 65% higher than for women who do not have children while in college (Bradburn 2002).

Students themselves are interested in this topic. Three-quarters of students report that preventing unplanned pregnancy is very important to them, and eight in 10 say that having a child while still in school would make it harder to accomplish their goals. Research supports this belief. Students who are parents, particularly those who are single parents, often do not do as well in college as their peers without children. Much of the work in this area has been to help these students succeed once they already have children. But up until now very little has been done to help these students avoid subsequent pregnancies and help other students delay having their first child until they have completed their education.

Three-quarters of students report that preventing unplanned pregnancy is very important to them.

Many college faculty believe that by the time students enroll in college, they surely have the information they need to prevent unplanned pregnancy. Students and young adults themselves often report that they think they have all the information they need. However, there is evidence that they harbor myths, “magical thinking,” and misinformation that put them or their partners at risk. College provides students with an opportunity to learn more at a time when it is highly relevant for many of them. There are compelling reasons why this benefits not only the students, but also contributes to colleges' goals of improving retention and completion.

There are three main approaches that college faculty and staff can take to begin conversations about preventing unplanned pregnancy: through curricular content, college success courses, and online resources. Colleges that participated in MIPCC, as well as others, have used a combination of these approaches to engage their students and provide them with this important information.

Six colleges participated in the MIPCC project: Chattahoochee Technical College in Marietta, GA; Georgia Perimeter College in Clarkston, GA; Hennepin Technical College in Eden Prairie, MN; Mesa Community College in Mesa, AZ; Montgomery College in Takoma Park, MD; and Palo Alto College in San Antonio, TX. During two phases over nearly three years, these six colleges involved 43 faculty and 3,869 students as participants in MIPCC courses. They also reached 772 additional faculty, staff, and administrators along with more than 5,000 other college students and 4,500 community members through various on-campus events and activities.

MIPCC students completed pre- and post-course surveys that gauged the impact of providing them with information about unplanned pregnancy, as well as participating in service learning experiences focused on educating other students about unplanned pregnancy. At the end of their courses, students were considerably more aware of how to prevent pregnancy, more aware of how an unplanned pregnancy could make it harder to complete college, more committed to avoiding this situation, and better equipped with resources to help them do so. In addition, surveys were collected from faculty who included this material in their courses. Eighty percent said they would incorporate some MIPCC content in future courses.

These issues are very real in the lives of many community college students. Using course materials developed through the grant, students built broader awareness and knowledge of pregnancy planning and family stability, and how these relate to their personal and postsecondary education goals. Many of these materials and course templates are available for free to other faculty to use in their own courses. Through the MIPCC project and other initiatives, faculty have been able to address misgivings or perceived barriers to addressing the topic in the classroom or on their campus.

The purpose of this report is not only to share what was learned from this project, but to be a call to action for others to participate as well. If community colleges expect to close the gap in completion rates, they need to find creative and low-cost solutions to help students succeed in school and complete their educational goals. This report offers persuasive evidence for why colleges should provide students with information about preventing unplanned pregnancy, and shows how community colleges can address this issue as part of their completion agenda.

Introduction

Community college students face many hurdles on their way to earning a degree or certificate. One hurdle that is often not addressed is unplanned pregnancy. Approximately 15% of all community college students are single parents (Horn and Nevill 2006). Twenty-seven percent of female students with children report reducing their course hours or quitting school because they had problems with child care (The National Campaign 2008b), and nearly two-thirds of women who have children after enrolling in community college fail to finish their degrees (Bradburn 2002).

College budgets are tight. Less than half of community colleges have student health centers. Educating students about the impact that an unplanned pregnancy can have on their ability to complete their educational goals can be a low- or no-cost solution and would appear to be warranted in light of the national focus on college completion.

There are a number of ways that community colleges can address the issue of unplanned pregnancy with students. Faculty can integrate topical information into their courses. Students can use peer-to-peer education and activities. Service learning, with its emphasis on engaging students in real-world issues while augmenting academic achievement, provides another approach to address pregnancy planning, prevention, and healthy relationships.

These methodologies were combined in 2009 when the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) received a grant from The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (The National Campaign) to pilot the use of course-based peer education through service learning to help more students complete college. Faculty from six community colleges created and redesigned curricular content and materials to include on-campus, peer-to-peer service learning components addressing pregnancy planning, prevention, and healthy relationships.

This report describes AACC's Make It Personal: College Completion project. The colleges that participated between 2009 and 2012 received funding of \$10,000 to \$20,000 and participated in project-wide training and evaluation. The following chapters include evaluation results, tips, resources, and lessons learned from the MIPCC project, as well as The National Campaign's work with other colleges, that faculty and staff can use to benefit their students and help them attain their educational goals.

CHAPTER 1

The Case for Pregnancy Planning and Prevention Education in Community Colleges

With college completion on the national agenda, strategies to help students stay in school are in great demand. The focus of The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy is to help reduce teen and unplanned pregnancy, especially among unmarried young adults, which will in turn improve child and family well-being and mean more opportunities for young men and women to complete their education or achieve other life goals. Coupled with the American Association of Community Colleges' interest in supporting college completion efforts nationally, Make It Personal: College Completion—the joint project working with colleges to help students prevent unplanned pregnancy until they have completed their college degrees—addressed both organizations' goals.

Unplanned Pregnancy in the United States

Although there have been dramatic improvements in reducing teen pregnancy over the past two decades, progress is slower with older teens ages 18-19 and unplanned pregnancy among young adults in their twenties remains high (The National Campaign 2012a). In fact, the rates of unplanned pregnancy remain high and are actually increasing among 20-24-year-olds (Guttmacher Institute 2009).

Each year nearly one in 10 unmarried women ages 20-29 experiences an unplanned pregnancy. However, there are racial/ethnic disparities—this figure is one in seven for Hispanic women, and one in six for non-Hispanic black women (The National Campaign 2012a).

Sixty-one percent of women who have children after enrolling in community college do not finish their education.

There are also disparities when it comes to socioeconomic status. Women at or below poverty level account for 46% of unplanned pregnancies among unmarried women in their twenties (The National Campaign 2012a). Teen and unplanned pregnancy contribute to or can be the sources of poverty; while a disadvantaged mother may fare poorly regardless of when she becomes a parent, if an unmarried woman at or below poverty level has a child, it is more likely she will remain there (The National Campaign 2010a).

Early and unplanned pregnancy has intergenerational consequences. Children born as the result of a teen or unplanned pregnancy often suffer developmental and cognitive disadvantages, which means that children arrive at school less prepared and less able to be successful (Mollborn and Dennis 2011). Many of these children will not be ready for college if or when they enroll. Reducing unplanned pregnancy is one of the first steps toward a ready and capable student body.

Why Community Colleges?

Unplanned pregnancies among older teens account for two-thirds of all teen pregnancies, and nearly one-quarter of births to older teens are to those who already have a child (Suellentrop 2010). While most efforts to reduce teen pregnancy have focused

on high schools, many teens have already left high school by the age of 18. In addition, with 55% of unplanned pregnancies occurring among women in their twenties, it is important to reach this group as well. Because community colleges serve large numbers of diverse students in the 18-29 age range, it makes good sense to work with them to reduce unplanned pregnancies.

This issue resonates with and is important to college students. Even before participating in AACC's project activities, more than three-quarters of MIPCC students reported that preventing pregnancy was very important to them—only 4% reported it was not at all important. However, despite the importance of preventing pregnancy, one-third also said that it was likely they would have sex without using birth control in the next three months. (Other evaluation results from this project may be found in chapter 3.)

In another study, 82% of students reported that having a child while still in school would make it harder to accomplish their goals (The National Campaign 2011). In this same study, students, faculty, and staff agreed that, even with limited resources, there are ways that colleges can help students address this important issue.

The Completion Agenda and the Connection to Unplanned Pregnancy

The federal government has challenged community colleges to educate an additional five million students with degrees, certificates, or other credentials by 2020. As the Lumina Foundation for Education (2012) and others have pointed out, to reach this goal, the number and readiness of high school graduates—as well as the number of adults who never enrolled in college or have discontinued their studies—need to increase so that there is a larger pool of eligible students who are pursuing a college education.

There is no question that becoming a teen parent interferes with completing high school. Three in ten teen girls who have dropped out of high school cite pregnancy or parenthood as a key reason

(Shuger 2012). Overall, 51% of teen mothers get a high school diploma by age 22 compared to nearly 89% of women who did not have a teen birth (The National Campaign 2012c).

Eighty-two percent of students reported that having a child while still in school would make it harder to accomplish their goals.

A group that may be of interest to colleges for more targeted recruitment is those who do not enroll in college directly out of high school. Of the high school graduates who could, but have yet to, enroll in college, an estimated one-third experiences an unplanned pregnancy by the age of 22 (The National Campaign 2012b). This group represents a significant number of potential graduates.

As noted in a publication released by Achieving the Dream, students with children face unique challenges—such as child care, employment, student loans, and housing issues—that make persisting and completing their postsecondary goals more difficult (Clery and Harmon 2012). In a Public Agenda survey, of the students who did not complete their postsecondary education, 36% had at least one child under the age of 18 in their household, compared to 19% of those who did not have children (Johnson, Rochkind, Ott, and DuPont 2009).

These burdens are particularly pronounced for single parents, a group that accounts for approximately 15% of the average student body at community colleges (Horn and Nevill 2006). Students who are single parents often have less support to juggle their various roles and responsibilities. Without additional support from the college, such as child care and financial aid, it would be much less possible for them to receive a postsecondary degree. A number of colleges have initiatives specifically designed to assist students who are parents, with a particular focus on single parents (Clery and Harmon 2012).

However, little has been done at colleges to provide students with information about how to prevent this situation in the first place—either their

first or an additional unplanned pregnancy. Mary Ellen Duncan, an Achieving the Dream data coach and president emerita of Howard Community College (MD), observed that she raised funds for an on-campus child care center. But it was not until after her presidency had ended that she considered the benefits of providing students with information about how to prevent pregnancies, thus reducing the need for child care.

Unplanned Pregnancy among College Students

Many faculty members and administrators have witnessed students who had great potential but, when faced with a pregnancy, had to drop out to provide for a child financially, for medical reasons, or because they could not find or afford day care. Jim Walters, director of student life and MIPCC project director at Montgomery College (MD), recalled a student who showed great promise and wanted to study medicine. After not seeing him on campus for some time, Walters learned that this student had to drop out of school to work as a mechanic to support a child that he was not expecting to have until reaching a point in his education that was more conducive to providing for a family.

It is hard to pinpoint how prevalent unplanned pregnancy is among college students. Most surveys only capture students who are still on campus, which does not account for those students who got pregnant and then were no longer present to participate. In addition, surveys for students who have already left college often do not include specific questions about having children as being a reason for leaving school. While some surveys collect data about whether the former student has children, they often do not address when the student had children; in other words, their children may have been born before, during, or after they dropped out of college.

Nonetheless, when it is possible to determine the order in which the birth and the dropping out occurred, it appears that pregnancy or becoming a parent affects a significant number of community college students. One recent analysis estimates that

approximately 6% of male and female community college students have children while enrolled, and half of those students subsequently drop out (Child Trends 2010). Given the most recent nationwide estimates of 1.4 million beginning fall freshmen enrolling in two-year colleges (National Center for Education Statistics 2011), this would equate to nearly 50,000 fall freshmen in community colleges who would go on to have a child and then drop out over the next two years. These same analyses from Child Trends estimate that unplanned births account for nearly one in ten community college dropouts among female students and 7% of dropouts among community college students overall.

Unplanned births account for nearly one in ten community college dropouts among female students and 7% of dropouts among community college students overall.

A similar picture emerges when looking at more localized surveys. In the 2007 American College Health Association–National College Health Assessment a survey that included students ages 18-24 at 13 community colleges in California, 5.4% of those students reported that they had experienced an unplanned pregnancy in the last academic year, more than twice the percentage of students (2.4%) from a national cohort that included primarily four-year institutions (The National Campaign 2010b). And in a survey of students at the University of Wisconsin Colleges, a system of 13 two-year colleges in the state, 6.7% of the participating students reported having gotten pregnant since they started college; this figure includes both planned and unplanned pregnancies (Bartell, Roberts, and Wise 2009).

In a qualitative study of community college students in Maryland, in the six months between their initial and follow-up interviews, 6% of students reported that they or their partners had gotten pregnant and another 11% experienced a pregnancy scare—indicating that unplanned pregnancy is an all-too-common reality in students' lives (The National

Campaign 2011). Despite the majority of the students in this study having reported that using birth control is important and that an unplanned pregnancy would have a negative impact on their education, there was a gap between their goals and behavior, therefore putting themselves and their partners at risk of unplanned pregnancy.

In sum, although available data indicate that the proportion of students experiencing a pregnancy or becoming a parent is relatively modest, it still affects a significant number of community college students and it has a serious impact on these students' ability to achieve their educational goals. As colleges strive to improve student success and completion, helping students delay pregnancy and parenting is one less stress that can interfere with their college education.

Myths and Magical Thinking

As noted earlier, the majority of college students report that an unplanned pregnancy would make it harder to succeed in school, and that delaying parenting was very important to them. However, many students may not have adequate knowledge to keep pregnancy from occurring, and, in turn, not be able to achieve their educational goals.

Birth control is important for college students because most of them have had or are currently having sex. While not having sex is still an important option for college students, it is also essential that they know about the full range of birth control methods if they are having sex and not interested in getting pregnant. In one study, 51% of women reported that using birth control helped them stay in school or finish their education (Frost and Lindberg 2012).

Many college faculty and adults in general believe that when students enroll in college, they surely have learned all about sex, reproduction, how to protect themselves against sexually transmitted infections and diseases (STIs and STDs), and how to prevent unplanned pregnancy. However, as evidenced in the rates of unplanned pregnancy, this is far from a guarantee. Students and young adults often report in focus groups, surveys, and interviews that they think

they have all the information they need to prevent pregnancy, but in fact they harbor myths, “magical thinking,” and misinformation that puts them or their partners at risk.

As colleges strive to improve student success and completion, helping students delay pregnancy and parenting is one less stress that can interfere with their college education.

For example, 94% of unmarried young adults ages 18-29 say they have all the information they need to avoid having or causing an unplanned pregnancy; however, 11% say they know “little or nothing” about condoms, 42% say they know “little or nothing” about birth control pills, and 73% say they know “little or nothing” about intrauterine devices (IUDs) (Albert 2012). Students' low levels of knowledge about long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs), such as IUDs and implants, have been confirmed throughout the MIPCC project: in a pre-course survey, 34% of students reported they were not at all familiar with IUDs, and 49% were not at all familiar with implants. This is particularly unfortunate given that these are the most effective methods of birth control and have been linked to a significant reduction in unplanned pregnancy (Peipert, Madden, Allsworth, and Secura 2012).

Even when young adults do think they know about methods of birth control, they may be relying on misinformation. Among those who have used birth control pills, nearly half (44%) incorrectly believe that it is necessary to take a break from the pill every few years (Kaye, Suellentrop, and Sloup 2009). Furthermore, in an 11-question survey about basic knowledge of pregnancy prevention, women averaged only six correct answers, and men averaged fewer than five correct answers (The National Campaign 2008a).

At the same time, there is a false perception that birth control methods are less effective than they really are. Four in ten single young adults 18-29 agree with the statement, “It doesn't matter whether you use birth control or not, when it's your time to get pregnant it will happen” (Kaye, Suellentrop, and Sloup 2009).

Although research indicates that the birth control pill is 92% effective, more than four in ten young adults believe there is a 50-50 chance of getting pregnant within a year when using the pill (Kaye, Suellentrop, and Sloup 2009). This overestimate of side effects and underestimate of effectiveness often leads to a decreased motivation to use birth control. In fact, almost two-thirds (64%) of community college students have reported that their concerns about side effects are significant enough to limit the birth control options they are willing to consider for themselves or their partners (The National Campaign 2011).

Back to Basics

How is it possible that students could make it to college without a basic understanding of how to prevent pregnancy? It may be that the sex education students received in middle or high school was inadequate. In an interview, one student said, “We took sex education, but I don’t even remember what they taught us...I wasn’t having sex in high school, so I wasn’t interested” (The National Campaign 2011).

Another reason for a lack of awareness of effective birth control is that there have been significant advances in medicine and public health in recent years. With an increased number of reliable birth control methods now available, women have more options than they may have learned about in high school.

More fundamentally, students may not have had helpful conversations at home. While young people consistently report that parents most influence teens’ decisions about sex (Albert 2012), some parents are unable or unwilling to provide their children with the information they need about how to prevent pregnancy. In other words, they may make their expectations and moral positions clear, but may not be comfortable providing their children—even when they have reached college—with information about the most effective methods of birth control or how to obtain them.

Regardless of the reasons why students may come to college without knowledge about how to delay pregnancy effectively until they say they are ready to

become parents, college provides students with an opportunity to learn more at a time when it is highly relevant for many of them. And there are compelling reasons why this benefits not only the students, but also college faculty.

How Colleges Can Incorporate Prevention Strategies

There are three main approaches that college faculty and staff can take to begin conversations about preventing unplanned pregnancy. All are low or no cost, so college personnel may wish to incorporate one or more of these strategies to reach the largest number of students more effectively.

Curricular Content

Faculty can incorporate material about preventing unplanned pregnancy, building healthy relationships, and other relevant topics into credit courses such as English, graphic design, political science, sociology, statistics, and many others.

College Success Courses

Many colleges offer, and some require, orientation and/or first-year experience or “College 101” courses for new students that cover finances, creating a schedule to accommodate time to study, available resources on campus, and many other topics that are important to help students succeed in college. The topic of preventing unplanned pregnancy can be integrated into these courses as well.

Online Resources

Colleges can provide online resources to students by posting them on the institution’s website along with other student services links or in instructors’ syllabi, so that students seeking information about preventing pregnancy will know which sites are accurate and most relevant.

The following chapters focus on these strategies by highlighting how faculty have used these resources and how their efforts can be replicated.

CHAPTER 2

College Projects

In the fall of 2009, AACCC and The National Campaign selected three community colleges in a national competition to participate in the first phase of the MIPCC project: Chattahoochee Technical College in Marietta, GA; Hennepin Technical College in Eden Prairie, MN; and Mesa Community College in Mesa, AZ. The colleges' joint objective was to help improve student retention and success by addressing pregnancy planning, prevention, and healthy relationships. Each MIPCC college team redesigned course curricula to incorporate content about unplanned pregnancy and used peer-to-peer service learning activities to address the issue.

MIPCC faculty and staff developed course content and materials in spring 2010, which were then embedded in courses in fall 2010. Some of the courses were extensively revised, while others simply included a few new activities or projects.

Table 1: Common pregnancy planning and prevention objectives in MIPCC courses

After completing the assigned lesson, students will

1. Understand how unplanned pregnancy can affect college completion
 2. Understand the importance of healthy relationships
 3. Know what campus and community resources are available to pregnant and parenting college students and their partners
 4. Be familiar with a variety of birth control options and where to get them in the community
 5. Be exposed to various electronic information sources regarding pregnancy planning, prevention, and healthy relationships
-

Twenty-five faculty at the three colleges created templates for each redesigned course that were intended to be adaptable by instructors at any institution. Each template shared five common pregnancy planning and prevention objectives (see table 1) that complemented the instructors' discipline-specific learning objectives. (Select MIPCC course templates are available at www.aacc.nche.edu/mipcc and www.thenationalcampaign.org/colleges.)

To build on the success of the first phase, AACCC and The National Campaign added three new colleges to Phase II of the MIPCC project in spring 2011: Georgia Perimeter College in Clarkston, GA; Montgomery College in Takoma Park, MD; and Palo Alto College in San Antonio, TX. Two of the Phase I colleges, Chattahoochee Technical College and Mesa Community College, continued their participation in the project by refining the redesigned curriculum of the courses used in Phase I. The three new colleges used the course template structure to begin their own course redesign for the 2011-2012 academic year.

Over nearly three years, the six MIPCC colleges involved 43 faculty and 3,869 students as participants in MIPCC courses (see table 2). They also reached 772 additional faculty, staff, and administrators along with more than 5,000 other college students and 4,500 community members through various on-campus events and activities.

Using course materials developed through the grant projects, students built broader awareness and knowledge of pregnancy planning and family stability, and how these relate to all students' personal and postsecondary education goals.

Table 2: Disciplines integrating MIPCC content

Anatomy and Physiology
Biology
Business Management
College 101/College Success
Communications
Counseling
Education
English
English as a Second Language
Ethics
Health and Wellness
Kinesiology
Mental Health
Philosophy
Political Science
Psychology
Reading
Science
Social Work
Sociology
Speech
Statistics
Women's History

Project Highlights

Chattahoochee Technical College

Chattahoochee Technical College held two annual campus-wide events that were planned and implemented by sociology students. Local community partners that work with youth and in health fields distributed information at booths, while students participated in games and watched videos created by their peers.

MIPCC faculty and students created a Facebook page that topped more than 1,500 individual hits in less than a year.

Project director and sociology professor Jodie Vangrov said, “The greatest lesson learned was that students enjoy learning about this information and are very appreciative. [The topic of pregnancy planning and prevention] is not looked down upon as harshly as some adults anticipate in educational settings. Not one student in all the courses backed out or refused to participate.”

Georgia Perimeter College

Faculty development workshops were held on campus to showcase MIPCC instructors’ work and encourage non-MIPCC faculty to begin using the curriculum in their courses. English, health, history, and political science faculty participating at Georgia Perimeter College indicated that student achievement of academic learning outcomes was greater in MIPCC courses than in non-MIPCC courses that they taught.

A group of student leaders hosted a series of discussions about unplanned pregnancy while watching videos of MTV’s “16 and Pregnant.” The college’s new student health center is working with MIPCC faculty to provide pregnancy planning and prevention materials in the center.

Hennepin Technical College

Instructor Tawnda Bickford completely restructured her online and on-campus developmental psychology courses to include multigenerational perspectives on the effects of unplanned pregnancy. Her students followed the general outlines of her course but worked in small groups during the semester to look at the impact of an unplanned pregnancy on the child, the young parents, and the grandparents.

The Hennepin Technical College students showcased what they learned at an evening all-campus event that featured skits, videos, activities, and an interactive quiz based on The National Campaign’s publication *The*



Chattahoochee Technical College sociology students worked in groups to create public service posters, interactive games, and brochures for an annual campus-wide MIPCC event.

Fog Zone. The evening concluded with an informational fair where local and campus organizations shared resources about preventing unplanned pregnancy. Nearly 700 people from the college and surrounding community attended the event.

Mesa Community College

Mesa Community College's MIPCC project paired curriculum efforts with student leadership through its Phi Theta Kappa chapter. PTK student leaders launched Project HOPE (Healthy Outcomes through Prevention and Education) to increase outreach to students through multiple campus-wide events. Project HOPE was led by then-chapter vice president Heather Thomas, a student in her mid-30s who had

experienced an unplanned pregnancy as a teenager (see sidebar on page 14).

While a wide variety of disciplines were represented among Mesa's MIPCC courses, one of the most effective projects occurred in a statistics class. Students received institutional approval to survey their peers on campus using some of The National Campaign's *The Fog Zone* survey questions.



Psychology students from Hennepin Technical College created posters about the impact of unplanned pregnancy and presented them to their classmates.

Juan's Story

The following is an excerpt from a Community College Times article.

Hours after his daughter was born, Juan Betancur left the hospital to attend a college orientation program. The incongruity of being a new father and a new college student fresh out of high school was one of the many challenges he faced as a teen parent. Eventually the strain of working six days a week and sharing in the care of an infant overwhelmed his first attempt at college.

Despite having to put off college for eight years, Betancur was surprised to learn in his Introduction to Public Administration class at Georgia Perimeter College that 61% of women who have children while enrolled in community college drop out and do not return to school. Although the dropout rate was higher than he expected, he understands why.

"It's extremely difficult. I don't sleep much," says Betancur, who will be taking eight credit hours, working full time, and serving as the custodial parent of his now 10-year-old daughter. He plans to complete his associate degree in December 2012 and then transfer to Georgia State University. "I'm just more motivated than ever and more determined to succeed and get my degree and to get myself and my daughter a better life, so I just push through."

Betancur's personal story and his advice "to be smart" about sex is the subject of *Nine Months*, one of three public service videos that he and his classmates created in spring 2012. In addition to the videos made by groups of students,



Student Juan Betancur (foreground) worked with Jonathan Harris, digital media coordinator at Georgia Perimeter College, to produce his public service iMovie project in the college's MediaSpot.

every student in the class wrote a research paper on the policy issues of unplanned pregnancy, participated in attitude and behavior surveys, and wrote online journals reflecting on the financial and personal costs of unplanned pregnancies.

Instructor Tamra Ortgies-Young found that pregnancy prevention was personally relevant to students. "As a class they were very cohesive and it certainly built camaraderie," she said, adding, "By the end of the semester there was such an awareness [of pregnancy prevention] it seemed that there would be a lot of serious planning going on.

"One of [the] most important things I've learned about teaching political science is that efforts to build civic engagement into course design (including service learning projects) significantly increase retention. Both kinds! Student learning outcomes and student retention to course completion as well. Since incorporating these high-impact practices in all of my classes, retention and outcomes have increased," Ortgies-Young said. (Patton 2012)

Analyzing data they collected themselves had a much greater impact on the statistics students.

“I found that having a topic to work toward enhanced my class and was well worth any extra time on my part,” said Kari Taylor, the MCC statistics instructor. “My goals for this project were for students to learn the pitfalls and benefits of survey research. Each student contributed to our knowledge base. I could not have asked for better collaboration. I would strongly suggest to all stats instructors to incorporate service learning into your course. It brings the course to life so much more than having students gather data on random topics.”



Mesa Community College students developed activities, surveys, and information to share with their peers as part of a Project HOPE fair.

Montgomery College

In 2007, Montgomery College hosted a forum in which students discussed the impact of unplanned pregnancy on their ability to succeed in school. Seeing the importance of the issue, college faculty determined they could support students in making smart choices when it came to sex and birth control, both in the classroom and through student life activities. The college began this work with a grant provided by The National Campaign, and it joined the MIPCC project in Phase II. Faculty incorporated information about planning and postponing pregnancies into more than 20 different courses.

College staff collaborated with a local clinic interested in young adult health and awareness to host information sessions at the college’s three campuses, providing contraceptive information, materials, and referrals. They coordinated a faculty development forum with the college’s center for teaching and learning.

According to project director Jim Walters, “Like

Back Off Baby



In his graphic design course at Montgomery College, professor Robert Helsley made preventing unplanned pregnancy the topic for a public service project. His students designed imagery and slogans that would appeal to

college students, and then defended

their pieces to their classmates. Students in the course were able to learn more about the importance of preventing unplanned pregnancy or delaying parenting until they had finished their educational goals, as well as spreading their messages through their posters to other students on campus.

The Back Off Baby image was developed by one of the students in this class, Jackie Imirie. She has since graduated from Montgomery College and from the Savannah College of Art and Design. About the project, Imirie said, “This topic was very personal to me, as I have watched teen and unplanned pregnancy affect my associates, classmates, friends, co-workers, and family struggle with the reality of their choices. But it soon became a heartfelt design project that the whole class was touched by. This project not only allowed us to raise awareness to other students about preventing unplanned pregnancy, but also gave me the tools to excel and conquer in the graphic design field.”

all innovative programs, significant time and energy is required to develop a sustainable initiative. From faculty observation, [the MIPCC project] is a success in multiple ways. Students are conversing deeply about a topic that by their own admission is rarely spoken about in a meaningful way. Students are more engaged in their class work and interested in incorporating their learning into the choices they make.”

Palo Alto College

Palo Alto College is a Hispanic-serving institution in San Antonio, in an area where poverty and teen pregnancy rates are significantly higher than the national average. President Mike Flores agreed with local leaders in referring to unplanned pregnancy as “a pressing issue in our community” (Fain 2012).

The MIPCC project was a perfect fit for students at this college.

Communications instructor Denise Richter divided her students into teams to explore The National Campaign's many websites and online resources. They wrote sample press releases promoting the resources and engaged in peer review for constructive criticism. Students voted on the best press release, which was sent to local high school newspapers for distribution. Students were able to make better decisions for themselves as well as

learning how to communicate this information to others.

MIPCC content was also included in Yolanda Reyna's student development course, in which incorporating personal stories and cultural values helped students understand the impact of unplanned pregnancy on their college education. Discussions about using birth control and online resources were important for these students. Four additional counseling faculty have exposed more than 200 students to resources from The National Campaign.

Heather's Story

The following is an excerpt from a Community College Journal article written by Mesa Community College student Heather Thomas.

I am a nontraditional student and proud to say that, after a twenty-year hiatus, I found my way back to school. I was pregnant at fifteen, and instead of working toward graduating high school, I struggled as a single mother working two jobs to support myself. It is because of my own story that I chose to get involved with one of the largest college completion projects our campus has ever seen.

When I first heard about Mesa's Project HOPE, I was eager to learn more about it and how I could get involved. Project HOPE was an ideal way for me to share my story, and by telling my story, if I could impact one person, then I knew I would be making a difference.

Along with fellow students, I researched needs in our community and on campus. We found that Arizona had the third highest unplanned pregnancy rates in the U.S. These statistics were alarming to many of us, so we chose to tackle this issue head on.

I began by filming my own personal story, *Biography of a Teenage Mother: 15 and Pregnant*, and designing a website for students to share stories, view upcoming Project HOPE events, and check out local resources on family planning and birth control. My goal was to have a place where students who did not know where or how to find resources could get necessary information. Students in the nursing program on campus researched and found clinics and other services that were available throughout Arizona. Members of Phi Theta Kappa talked to staff at local clinics to find out what their needs were and what services they could provide to our students.

We organized events on and off campus, trying to reach as many students and community members as possible, and educating many on how the decisions they make in terms of sex education and relationships could alter their lifelong goals and education.

In just one semester, Project HOPE reached 1,700 students and more than 700 community members. The website I created received over 600 hits in only a few months. Our Project HOPE fair was a big success. More than a dozen classes set up table displays sharing their semester-long work, while four community partners and four student organizations joined them. The event was held outside in a high-traffic area where we were able to reach many students on their way between classes, the library, or the student union.

Mesa students and faculty have been excited to work on this project because we have seen the relevance to student success. In addition to curriculum-based work, both students and faculty have requested a health center on campus to aid in this issue.

The leadership roles I have taken on through Project HOPE have made me more aware of community issues that affect my family. Besides educating my fellow students, I want to educate my children on the importance of responsible decision making. I also want them to understand the impact that unplanned pregnancies have on society. With this knowledge, they may become part of the solution rather than another statistic. (Thomas 2011)



Heather Thomas signed the Mesa Community College Completion Corps (C4) wall at a PTK event.

CHAPTER 3

Student Outcomes

AACC and The National Campaign created student and faculty surveys to gauge the impact of the MIPCC project. This chapter addresses the results of those surveys.

Methodology

To assess the project's success, pre-and post-course surveys were given to students who were exposed to the redesigned and service learning-infused curriculum. The surveys assessed changes in three areas: knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral intent. By the end of Phase I in fall 2010, 143 students completed both pre-and post-course surveys. Within just one semester of course work, students showed statistically significant gains in knowledge and changes in behavioral intent around the use of contraception.

The Phase II pre- and post-course surveys were modified somewhat based on the colleges' experience in Phase I. Surveys were administered in fall 2011 and spring 2012. By the end of Phase II, 367 additional students completed the pre- and post-course surveys, for a total of 510 students surveyed over two years.

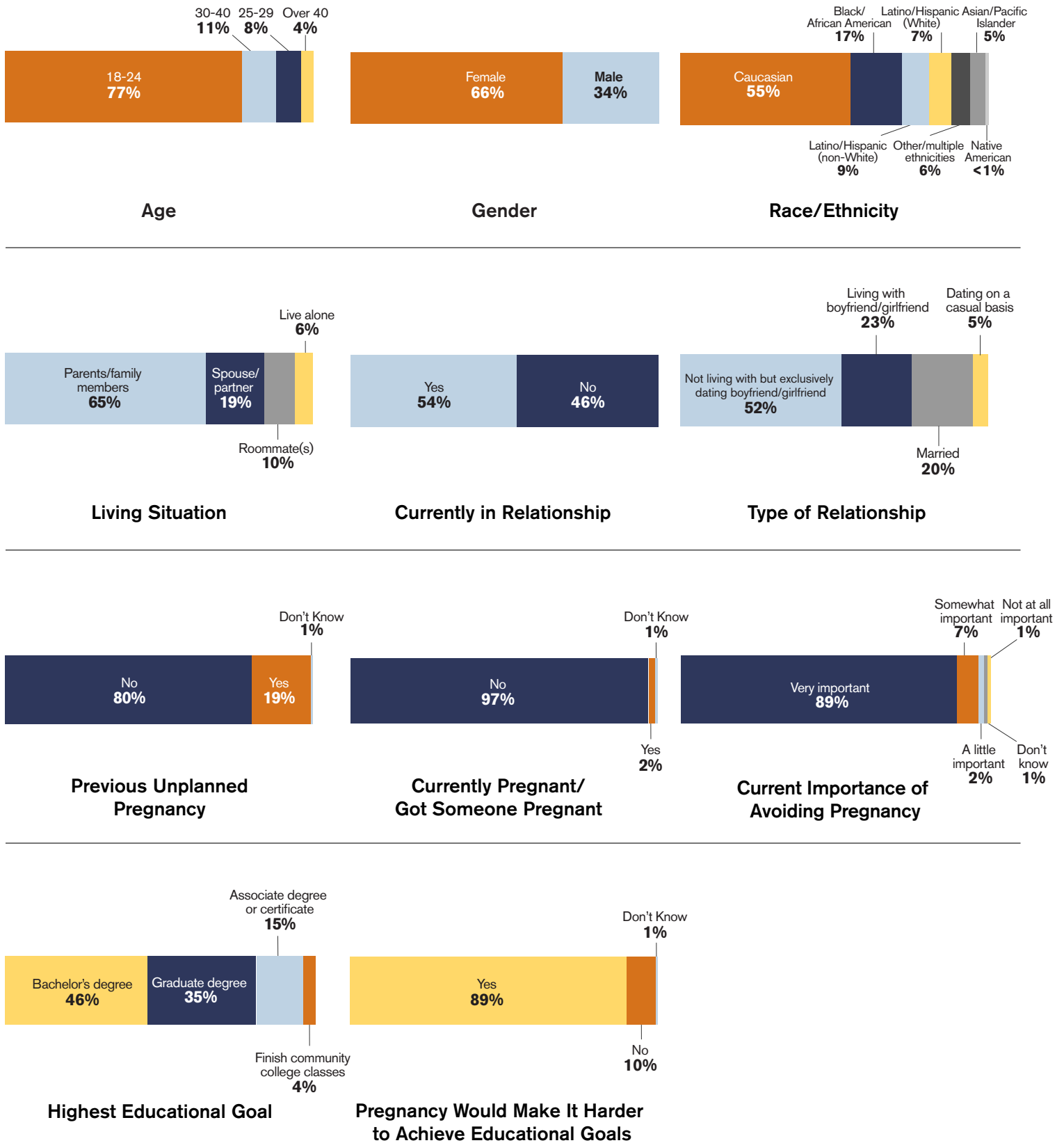
A demographic profile devised from post-course survey answers revealed that the largest number of survey participants were young, straight, white women who lived with their parents or family

members, were in an exclusive relationship, and had as their academic goal either to earn their bachelor's degree or graduate degree. The vast majority reported that it was very important to avoid a pregnancy "right now" and that a pregnancy would make it harder for them to achieve their educational goals (see figure 1). Survey responses from lesbian and gay students, along with those who reported being unable to conceive or get someone pregnant, were not included in further survey analysis.

The vast majority of students reported that it was very important to avoid a pregnancy "right now" and that a pregnancy would make it harder for them to achieve their educational goals.

Previous AACC research indicates that students tend to accrue greater academic benefits and are more committed to obtaining their educational goals when they participate in service learning (Prentice and Robinson 2010; Prentice, Robinson, and Patton 2012). These benefits increase with greater duration and frequency of service learning, which combines classroom instruction with community service and focuses on critical, reflective thinking as well as personal and civic responsibility.

Figure 1: Percentage breakdown of student demographics



To understand more about MIPCC students' level of involvement in service learning, they were asked about the number of hours they participated in pregnancy prevention activities as part of their course-based service learning. The majority of students reported participating for five or fewer hours, once or twice during the semester (see figures 2 and 3).

Figure 2: Hours spent participating in service learning activities

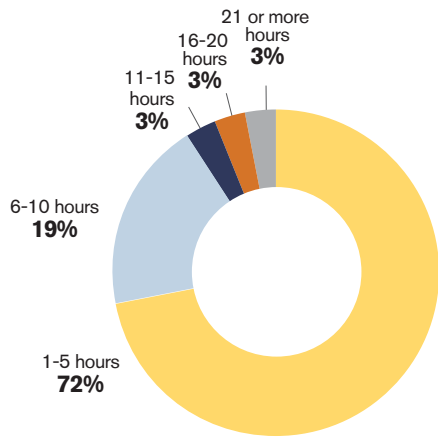
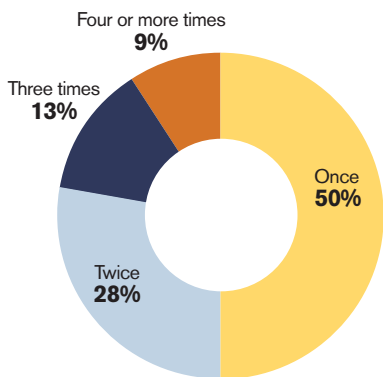


Figure 3: Frequency of participation in service learning



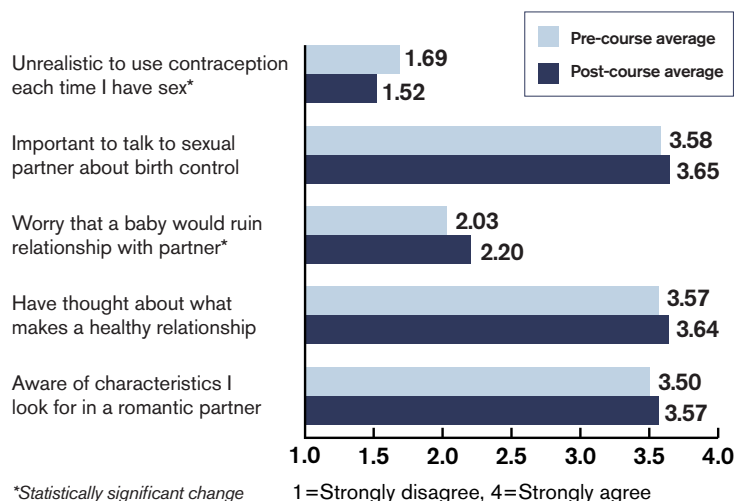
Student Survey Results

To ascertain the impact of MIPCC project activities, 28 questions about knowledge and beliefs concerning pregnancy planning, prevention, and healthy relationships were analyzed. Students scored statistically higher on 24 of the 28 questions by the end of their courses.

Sixteen of these questions focused on knowledge about specific types of pregnancy prevention options. Combined, the pre-course survey average score for these 16 questions was 2.55 out of 4.0 points; the post-course survey average was 2.89—a statistically significant increase in their degree of knowledge about methods for preventing pregnancy. Students who know about more options of birth control may be more likely to obtain and use the one or two options that will work best for them.

While there were positive outcomes in five questions regarding students' beliefs about pregnancy and healthy relationships, there was a significant change in two of these questions (see figure 4). Both questions asked students to rate on a scale of 1 to 4 (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree) the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement.

Figure 4: Change in student beliefs about pregnancy and healthy relationships



The first statement presented to students was, “It is unrealistic to use contraception each time I have sex.” In students’ response to this question, a lower score indicates more disagreement, which indicates a positive change regarding pregnancy planning and prevention awareness. By the end of the semester, students increased their disagreement that using contraceptives every time they have sex is unrealistic. In other words, in the post-course survey, students were more likely to report that using contraception every time they have sex is realistic.

Students also increased their agreement with the statement, “I worry that a baby would ruin my relationship with my partner.” This change may indicate that students—by the end of the course—had more deeply considered the effects of a pregnancy on their relationships.

There were also significant changes from pre- to post-course in response to six statements about students’ knowledge about birth control (see figure 5). Again, the students were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 4 the degree to which each statement was true for them. Results from the post-course survey indicated that students felt more confident in their knowledge about unplanned pregnancy and birth

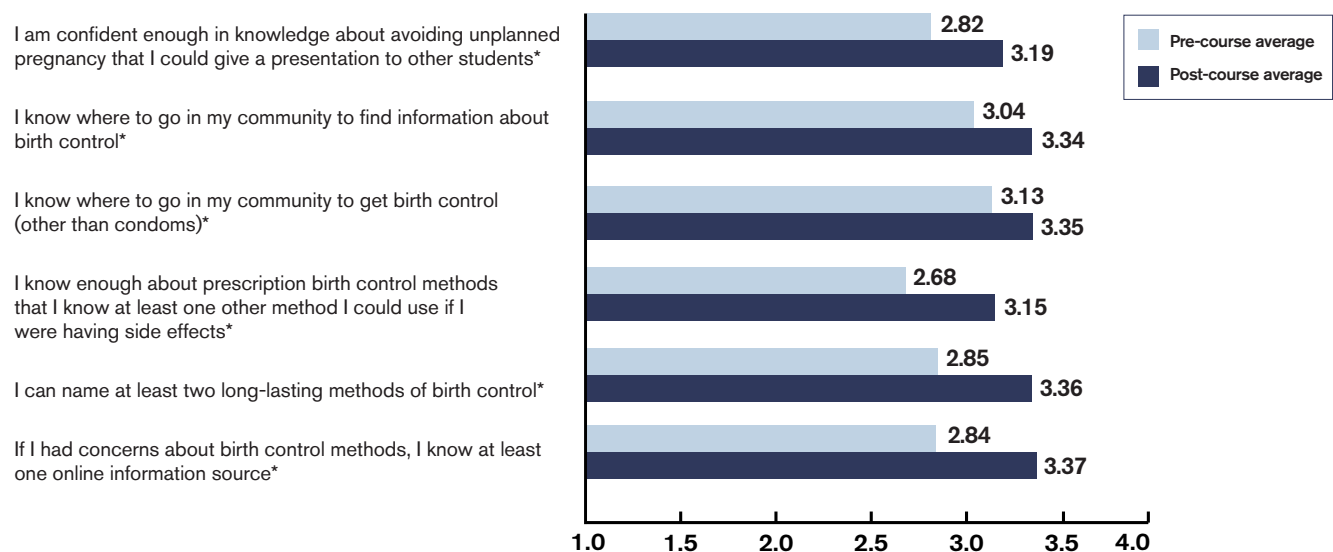
control methods. They were also more likely to know where to go for information and services.

Students felt more confident in their knowledge about unplanned pregnancy and birth control methods and were more likely to know where to go for information and services.

To examine how the increase in knowledge influenced behavioral intent, students were also asked four questions on both the pre- and post-course surveys about past and future use of birth control. Two of these questions showed statistical gains. After the course, students reported they would be much less likely to have unprotected sex. Similarly, students reported changing from “somewhat comfortable” to “very comfortable” when asked about their comfort regarding talking to a sexual partner about using contraception. A higher degree of comfort may indicate a greater likelihood to have such a discussion.

The percentage of students reporting they were not at all likely to have unprotected sex in the next

Figure 5: Change in student knowledge about birth control



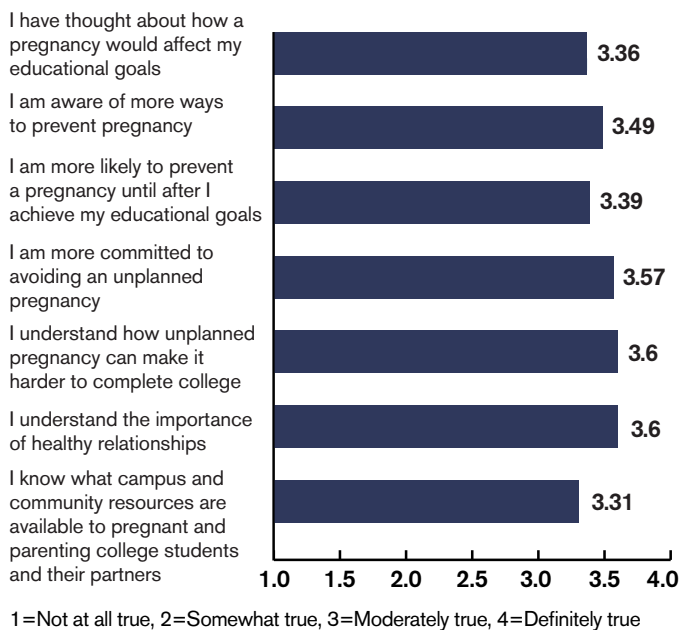
*Statistically significant change

1=Not at all true, 2=Somewhat true, 3=Moderately true, 4=Definitely true

three months increased 15% (from 62% to 71%). At the same time, the percentage reporting they were likely to have unprotected sex declined.

To further ascertain change, seven questions were included on the post-course survey only. Students were again asked to indicate, using a 1-to-4 scale in which 1 indicated the lowest amount of agreement and 4 indicated the highest amount of agreement, the degree to which each statement was true for them (see figure 6).

Figure 6: Average scores on post-course questions that each began with, “As a result of taking this course . . .”



The extent to which students said that they had thought about how a pregnancy would affect their educational goals remained similar before (3.35 on a 4-point scale) and after the course. However, their responses clearly indicated that, as a result of the course, they were considerably more aware of how to prevent pregnancy, more aware of how an unplanned pregnancy could make it harder to complete college, more committed to avoiding this situation, and better equipped with resources to help them do so.

Students also responded to open-ended questions at the end of the survey. Through these

comments, students described outcomes that participation in the MIPCC project had produced. In general, students commented that the information provided to them was valuable in helping them prevent unplanned pregnancies so that they could complete their educational goals.

One student said, “I really appreciate all the information I received throughout this course. I commit to be more careful. I will contact my doctor for effective birth control. School is my main priority now!” Another student stated, “After taking this course I am more aware of how unplanned pregnancies can alter someone’s educational duties.”

“I really appreciate all the information I received throughout this course. I commit to be more careful. I will contact my doctor for effective birth control. School is my main priority now!”

Students also commented on the benefits of information about making careful choices about sex. As one student explained, “This course has fully educated me about the risk, contraceptives, and anything involved with sex.” Another student described the effects of not having such information earlier: “I have two children, and although I do not regret having them, they were the result of erroneous use of birth control. Hard lessons to learn, so moving forward I have made it my absolute responsibility that I do not encounter an issue of that sort again.” More simply, other students said, “I like this survey because it reminds me once again to be careful,” and “Thank you for bringing up my awareness!”

Faculty Survey Results

To contextualize the student results, faculty at each of the Phase II colleges were asked to complete a brief survey about how much of their courses included MIPCC-related content, and how frequently

students were exposed to MIPCC-related content in the course. Fifteen of the 34 Phase II faculty completed the survey.

The majority of instructors did not have to spend a large amount of time on MIPCC-related content to make an impact on their students. More than three-quarters included MIPCC-related content in up to 40% of class sessions, and up to 40% of course content focused on MIPCC-related material. Half the faculty presented MIPCC-related content throughout the semester, while the other half did so during a few segments or portions of the semester. Faculty reported that the majority of students spent 10 hours or fewer doing MIPCC-related service learning in their courses.

Forty-two percent of faculty reported that they moderately increased the time they spent on MIPCC-related content between Phase I and Phase II, while 27% reported that they had decreased the amount of time spent on MIPCC-related content the second time around. Eighty percent said they would incorporate some MIPCC content in future courses.

Several faculty provided comments regarding their sense of the project's effectiveness in promoting students' retention and persistence toward their college goals. All comments were positive. One faculty member stated, "For my student population, it was significant!" Another instructor said, "I think it gave students more information than they had previously and certainly they felt it was important to make better decisions than they had in the past."

Pointing to specific reasons for the importance of this project, a faculty member explained, "I have the sense that it very much encourages students to think critically about how their decision-making will impact their success."

Similarly, an instructor who had focused much of the class on MIPCC-related content reported that it "was a great success. Because the students' major course project was MIPCC-related, they focused on the material throughout the term. In addition, because the project required group work, students were more likely to have critical interaction with classmates to deepen learning opportunities."

Faculty also provided general thoughts about participating in MIPCC. Again, all the comments were positive. One faculty member said the project provided "valuable information and learning process for students. [MIPCC] also inspires them to educate their peers, which is perhaps the best way to spread this type of information." One instructor simply commented, "Continue the program."

Limitations

It is important to recognize several limitations of the study. First, not every course in the project is represented in the survey evaluation, since not every instructor administered surveys to their students. Those courses that are in the findings, therefore, should not be interpreted as representing the experience of all students.

Second, not all students in the participating courses responded to the survey. Those that did respond may be different from the non-responders. Therefore, the results only represent the students who were willing to answer survey questions that, at times, were personal and very specific about knowledge and behavior related to pregnancy prevention.

Third, it was not possible to track whether students actually changed their behavior over time. The study was limited to assessing whether students were better equipped to take steps to avoid unplanned pregnancy in the future and their intent to do so.

Finally, there was no measure in this study about the degree to which participating faculty were comfortable or experienced with using service learning as a teaching and learning tool. It is possible that if faculty were new to service learning, they may have been less skilled in linking course content to the experiential side of service learning.

Analysis

Infusing education about pregnancy and relationships into general community college courses through service learning helps improve

students' knowledge. A key step to changing behavior is becoming educated about what contraceptive options are available. In this study, students said that they learned more about various methods of contraception, where to go in their community to get contraception, and, if they need additional information, what educational resources are available to them online.

Additionally, students reported some change in behavioral intent. By the end of the project, students reported they were less likely to have sex without using birth control, and they were more comfortable talking to sexual partners about contraception.

Students spent relatively few hours on MIPCC-related peer-to-peer service learning. While research shows that service learning has the greatest impact when students participate between 15 and 20 hours per semester, in this study, the majority of students reported only one to five hours of participation. The results may also reflect the slightly different definition of service learning for this project, with an on-campus focus. Nonetheless, improvements from the pre- to post-course surveys are encouraging, given that the time spent on this topic was relatively modest.

Faculty surveys also provided helpful information to understand students' responses. Faculty reported that up to 40% of total class sessions were devoted to MIPCC content, and up to 40% of their course content included MIPCC material.

Faculty had mixed feelings about including

MIPCC material in their courses. Although almost half of them moderately increased the time spent on MIPCC content in the final Phase II semester, a few of the faculty said they would not incorporate MIPCC content into future courses. Even so, the responding instructors believed that students benefited from the MIPCC project.

It may be, therefore, that faculty experienced some push-pull influences that caused the mixed responses. The topics of sex, pregnancy, and contraception were viewed as very personal by a few instructors, thus leading to some discomfort in using the material in class. In contrast, based on survey comments, students wanted the information and appreciated gaining the knowledge about pregnancy planning and prevention. Most students were positive about the project and saw its value in helping them to plan consciously about pregnancy in light of the difficulty such a pregnancy would mean for them in completing their education.

For many students, due to the lack of available resources and opportunities on campus to participate in conversations about sex, birth control, and other issues, one of the few ways they can gain such information is in an academic setting. These issues are very real in the lives of many community college students. By incorporating these topics into regular course content, coupled with service learning, faculty can help students address an important issue while also meeting their learning objectives in a meaningful way.

CHAPTER 4

Related Initiatives and Lessons Learned

Integrating content about preventing unplanned pregnancy offers real potential to engage students and help them complete college. In addition to the MIPCC colleges, lessons can be learned from other community colleges that have started similar initiatives

Early in its work with community colleges, The National Campaign awarded funding to three institutions to pursue projects that fit with the colleges' existing needs. As mentioned in chapter 2, Montgomery College began its work from a grant directly from The National Campaign before becoming part of MIPCC. Delaware Technical Community College and the University of Wisconsin Colleges (a multi-campus two-year institution within the University of Wisconsin system) also received funding to start projects.

Following are examples of what these and other colleges have done, either by developing their own strategies or by using resources made available by AACC and The National Campaign.

- Delaware Technical Community College partnered with Christiana Care Health System, the largest health care provider in Delaware, to open a clinic on campus to provide students with counseling, referrals, and selected medical services, including some methods of birth control and pregnancy and STI testing.
- The University of Wisconsin Colleges developed a website using evidence-informed resources about sexuality, relationship dynamics, and alcohol education, for its Wisconsin Intimate Relationship Education (UWiRE) project.
- Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College incorporated information about preventing pregnancy into orientation and College 101.
- West Virginia University at Parkersburg has hosted seminars about healthy relationships for students.
- Richland College (TX) has incorporated information about preventing unplanned pregnancy into its orientation and athletic programs, and has added to its website a link about birth control and other resources relevant for students. Since posting the link to www.StudentSexLife.org, more than 1,750 Richland students have visited the site.
- The South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy has worked with colleges in its state to train instructors to use *Making Smart Decisions to Improve Success in College and Life*, a curriculum guide developed in partnership between The National Campaign and the National Council on Student Development, which emphasizes making healthy decisions about sexual behavior and increasing college success for community college students.

The MIPCC colleges and others involved in this groundbreaking work have revealed some perceived challenges to incorporating this topic on campus. Following are some potential barriers and concerns that faculty and staff anticipated and how they dismissed or addressed them.

Students themselves sometimes do not realize how much they do not know.

As discussed in chapter 1, although students may think they have all the information they need to prevent pregnancy effectively, they are often surprised by how much they have yet to learn. One way instructors have introduced the topic of preventing unplanned pregnancy is to provide students with a brief quiz about sex and birth control. Instructors have reported that this helps students realize that they may not know as much as they thought, and opens the door to learn more on the topic.

Lauralyn McWilliams teaches English as a second language (ESL) at Montgomery College. She reported that providing students with publications about surveys, such as The National Campaign's publication, *Magical Thinking: Young Adults' Attitudes and Beliefs About Sex, Contraception, and Unplanned Pregnancy*, allowed them to depersonalize the topic and view it objectively. As a result they could see how preventing unplanned pregnancy related to themselves and their lives.

Another option is to survey students on campus. While students may be content to receive national survey data to illustrate what is common among people like them around the country, having data that are specific to one's own college may help build support among peers and colleagues to address this issue on a larger scale.

Pregnancy prevention and other sexual and reproductive health issues are personal, but still can be addressed on a college campus.

Some may view preventing pregnancy as a personal issue, particularly because it is inherently tied to the topic of sex—a very personal act. However, colleges often give students information and support on a variety of topics, such as finances (particularly

regarding financial aid), work-life balance, and counseling. Even if a campus lacks a student health clinic, it can provide information and resources through the student services office or allied health programs.

In cases where college faculty had additional concerns of particular interest or risk to their students, some have incorporated preventing unplanned pregnancy alongside other topics. For example, at Delaware Technical Community College, HIV/AIDS was a prevalent concern, so the project addressed both preventing unplanned pregnancy and STIs, including HIV/AIDS. At the University of Wisconsin Colleges, it was a high priority to address how binge drinking can be connected to unplanned pregnancy.

The Office of the Attorney General in Texas developed the p.a.p.a. (Parenting and Paternity Awareness) program, which presents college students with information about the legal, financial, and emotional consequences of becoming a young parent, with a heavy emphasis on child support.

It is possible to address the topic of preventing unplanned pregnancy in a variety of communities.

Many of the colleges in the MIPCC project are located in fairly conservative areas, including Marietta, GA; Mesa, AZ; and San Antonio, TX. The project directors reported that they were successful because they made the focus about education, not pushing a particular view onto the students. For example, at both Mesa Community College and Hennepin Technical College, when students organized campus events about unplanned pregnancy, they invited a wide range of community groups to participate and present a variety of perspectives.

Duane Oakes, MIPCC project director at Mesa Community College, reported that it was helpful to be respectful of diverse student viewpoints and not to discuss or pass any judgments about abortion, since many people have deeply held opinions on the topic. Just as The National Campaign does not address abortion, the project focused on preventing unplanned pregnancy in the first place.



Students at Chattahoochee Technical College educated their peers about different methods of birth control with fun, eye-catching activities.

Another key aspect to remember is that, for the most part, students on a college campus are adults. While parents still play an important role in the lives of many community college students, and while many students live with their parents, almost all are legally adults. Because of this, the topic is less controversial than it would be if the students were in high school.

Finally, although discussing sex, pregnancy, relationships, and contraception may feel controversial or uncomfortable to some administrators, faculty, and staff, these topics are very much part of students' lives. Students have expressed a desire to discuss them. Listening to students has been eye-opening for the faculty and staff involved in this work. Letting students set the tone for activities and discussions has ensured that their needs are met.

Faculty can incorporate this topic into a class without having to skip other content.

Many instructors reported that they were able to teach students their objectives more effectively because they included a topic that students cared about. Tawnda Bickford, the psychology instructor at Hennepin Technical College, reported that because her students focused on unplanned pregnancy as it related to the child, the parents, and the grandparents, it was easier for them to grasp the meaning of the biopsychosocial framework, a concept that her students had struggled with in previous semesters.

Similarly, Kari Taylor's students at Mesa Community College learned statistics much more readily by working with survey data they had collected themselves.

The topic can enhance, not distract from, the learning objectives.

For many, unplanned pregnancy and having a family are topics that often elicit strong feelings and passionate reactions. For this very reason, having this conversation in a college classroom is an opportunity to develop a well-informed position that students need to clearly articulate to their fellow classmates. Jim Walters of Montgomery College worked with many instructors to embed MIPCC content. He reported that learning and growth truly occurred when students were forced to defend their positions. In this project, students' personal opinions did not matter as much as whether they were able to provide the background and research necessary to substantiate them.

In some situations, where students are from a family or culture in which the topic of unplanned pregnancy is not discussed, classroom conversations may not only be particularly important, but also rewarding and effective. In Lauralyn McWilliams's ESL course, for example, many students were from other parts of the world where the topic was so taboo that, when students arrived at college, they lacked very basic knowledge about sex and reproduction. After participating in her class, one student admitted he "knew babies didn't grow on trees," but did not know how babies actually came into being. As a writing assignment, the ESL students wrote a letter about unplanned pregnancy to a loved one back home. Although just an assignment to show their proficiency in vocabulary and communication, some students actually sent the letters to their friends and family members.

Modifying academic courses to include this topic does not have to be a significant amount of work.

Some instructors started out with concerns that embedding content related to preventing unplanned pregnancy would be a great deal of work, only to find later that the little they had to adjust was well worth the outcomes they achieved.

As a result of the MIPCC project, course templates are available that describe not only how

to incorporate the topic into a variety of courses, but also how the instructors' students reacted and why the technique was successful. The course templates are free, and the materials that instructors have used in their curricula can be provided to students at little or no cost. (See www.aacc.nche.edu/mipcc and www.thenationalcampaign.org/colleges.)

The techniques provided in the templates can be adapted in a number of ways. For example, one statistics instructor included data sets about unplanned pregnancy in the state. Other math instructors could modify the templates to provide students with questions that focus on methods of birth control, including the effectiveness of each method, what failure rates mean, and how to interpret the negative side effects that are listed in television and print advertisements.

The National Campaign has also published online lessons to provide faculty with an easy way to incorporate the topic into a course or to supplement in-class activities. The three lessons in *Preventing Unplanned Pregnancy and Completing College* are available to college faculty for free on The National Campaign's website. Topics in the lessons include why students should care about preventing unplanned pregnancy, increase their knowledge about how to prevent pregnancy, and form an action plan to obtain and use birth control effectively. Although created with first-year-experience courses in mind, they can be used in a variety of other classes. One instructor at Georgia Perimeter College used them in her political science course to supplement the service learning content.

There are many ways faculty can provide students with resources, even if their expertise is in a different discipline.

If pregnancy planning and prevention are outside an instructor's area of expertise, there are still ways to embed this topic without having to learn everything there is to know about preventing pregnancy. One of the most important things students can learn is where to go in their community to obtain birth control, and where they can go online to receive accurate, unbiased information about birth control.

As part of the course objectives, instructors participating in MIPCC informed students about how to locate nearby clinics and resources so students knew where to go to obtain birth control. While most community colleges do not have full-service health centers on campus, they can form partnerships with community providers. In addition to making sure students know about these resources, staff from local health departments and other clinics can serve as experts to present information and answer student or faculty questions.

The MIPCC colleges also made students aware of two websites that provide accurate, up-to-date information about birth control: www.Bedsider.org and www.StudentSexLife.org.

Bedsider is a website developed for 18-29-year-old women by The National Campaign. The information has been fully vetted by medical providers and is presented in a tone that is appealing to young adults without being judgmental. In addition to providing information about various methods of birth control and allowing individuals to set up reminders to take their birth control, Bedsider has videos of real men and women talking about their preferred methods, as well as animated videos that dispel myths about sex and birth control in humorous and engaging ways. By sharing this website, instructors can help ensure that if students have any questions about birth control, they will be able to find answers long after the semester has ended.

Bedsider also provides a tool for women to find out if they might be eligible for reduced-cost birth control in their area, and shows where they can obtain these services, as well as emergency contraception that can be obtained without a prescription should they need it.

Most students and instructors agree that context matters, and it is important that students know why they are being given this information. In a course such as first-year experience, it may be easier to make the connection between planning their families and planning other parts of their lives, such as creating a schedule for studying, working, obtaining financial aid, and other health services. For other academic courses, it may be helpful to

MIPCC Replication Tips and Suggestions

- ✓ Use popular culture to get students excited about the topic of pregnancy planning, prevention, and healthy relationships in their course work.
- ✓ Encourage students to present their results or reflections in a variety of formats (e.g., posters, videos, music, blogs, skits).
- ✓ Don't reinvent the wheel—use The National Campaign's websites for videos, contraception information, and links to local resources.
- ✓ Plan a college-wide event to disseminate information, including students sharing their own stories.
- ✓ Know the facts and data about why colleges should be interested in this topic, to present accurate information to potentially skeptical administrators, faculty, and students.
- ✓ Start a similar service learning project with faculty who already use this pedagogy in their courses; expand to other faculty later.
- ✓ Pair students with existing service learning partners; expand to new partners after a pilot period.
- ✓ Be prepared to get embarrassed occasionally.

direct students to a website that more clearly makes the connection between preventing pregnancy and completing college. For this reason, The National Campaign worked with college faculty to develop www.StudentSexLife.org.

Student Sex Life is an online gateway to information for students that not only provides information about sex and birth control in a way that incorporates the broader education-based frame, but also provides links to other relevant topics, such as healthy relationships and a “man cave” with resources specifically for young men. It also has a fun, interactive quiz about sex and birth control, and a quiz-based checklist about whether a student's relationship has healthy or unhealthy aspects. The website is perfect for instructors who may not have time in the classroom, but still can provide students with this important information by posting it in their syllabi, in orientation materials, or on the college website without the need for extensive background or explanation.

Conclusion

The purpose of this report is not only to share what was learned from the MIPCC project, but to be a call to action for others to participate as well. If community colleges expect to close the gap in completion rates, they need to find creative and low-cost solutions to help students succeed in college and complete their educational goals.

This report offers compelling reasons for why colleges should provide students with information about preventing unplanned pregnancy, and that it is possible and practical to discuss how parenting or having additional children can affect students' ability to succeed in school. Addressing this topic can both engage students in the classroom and help them avoid one more barrier to completing their education.

Focusing on the topic of preventing unplanned pregnancy has the potential to benefit a significant number of students and help community colleges address this issue as part of their completion agenda.

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AACC Grantee Colleges

Chattahoochee Technical College

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Marietta, GA 30060

www.chattahoocheetech.edu

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Georgia Perimeter College

555 North Indian Creek Drive

Clarkston, GA 30021

www.gpc.edu

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Hennepin Technical College

13100 College View Drive

Eden Prairie, MN 55347

www.hennepintech.edu

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Mesa Community College

1830 West Southern Avenue

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Montgomery College

7600 Takoma Avenue

Takoma Park, MD 20912

www.montgomerycollege.edu

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Resources

Online Resources

The following resources about health insurance may be helpful to students who are not familiar with the types of services that are covered in their policies.

Young Invincibles (younginvincibles.org)
 Young Adult Outreach and the ACA: Educating Young Americans
 Dependent Coverage Expansion: Frequently Asked Questions

National Women's Law Center (www.nwlc.org)
 Health Insurance Resources
 What the Medicaid Eligibility Expansion Means for Women

The following resources may be helpful in both understanding and working with college students to prevent unplanned pregnancy. For the most up-to-date resources, visit www.thenationalcampaign.org/colleges.

Make It Personal: College Completion Course Templates
 The templates from AACC's project, Make It Personal: College Completion, are intended for adaptation and use by community college faculty. Each template includes standard features such as academic objectives, pregnancy planning/prevention objectives, preparation, materials, assessment, and service learning activities.

Online Lessons: Preventing Unplanned Pregnancy and Completing College
 The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy has published free online lessons that will help students prevent unplanned pregnancy. College faculty and staff can use the lessons in first-year experience, college success, and other courses.

Briefly: What Community Colleges Can Do to Reduce Unplanned Pregnancy and Improve Completion
 This brief highlights low- or no-cost ways to address the issue of unplanned pregnancy among both young women and young men in community colleges, which will in turn contribute to the goal of improving student success and completion.

Getting Started at Community Colleges: Reducing Unplanned Pregnancy and Strengthening Academic Achievement
 This booklet provides information about projects at Delaware Technical Community College, Montgomery College, and the University of Wisconsin Colleges, and provides guidance to community college faculty and staff members who are starting initiatives on unplanned pregnancy prevention.

Briefly: Unplanned Pregnancy and Community Colleges
 This brief paper summarizes data and research about unplanned pregnancy and why it matters for community colleges.

Briefly: Relationships and Contraceptive Use Among Community College Students

This fact sheet provides insights based on qualitative research into why students who say they want to postpone parenting are not always using birth control consistently or effectively.

Science Says #46: The Sexual Behavior of California Community College Students

This research brief summarizes findings from a large survey about contraceptive use, unintended pregnancy, and other sexual behaviors of 18–24-year-old community college students in California, and makes recommendations for how community colleges can address these issues.

The Odyssey Years: Preventing Teen Pregnancy Among Older Teens

This report provides data on older teens, exposes commonly held myths about older teens, and provides real-world examples of how groups are reaching these young adults.

The Changing Twenties

William A. Galston, Ph.D., senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, explores how today's twenty-somethings compare to those of previous decades.

The Fog Zone: How Misperceptions, Magical Thinking, and Ambivalence Put Young Adults at Risk for Unplanned Pregnancy

This research is based on a nationally representative survey of 1,800 unmarried young adults ages 18–29 and is the first of its kind to focus in depth on the attitudes and behavior of unmarried young adults—both men and women—regarding pregnancy planning, contraception, and related issues.

Organizations

American Association of Community Colleges
www.aacc.nche.edu/mipcc

Community-Campus Partnerships for Health
www.ccpf.info

Community College National Center for Community Engagement
www.mesacc.edu/engagement

International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement
www.researchslce.org

National Service-Learning Clearinghouse
www.servicelearning.org

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy
www.thenationalcampaign.org

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