



Roots in Hawaiian Gardens, CA 90716

Action Con Corazon Presents From Dreams to Degrees



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INTRODUCTION

Project Purpose & Description

The Action Con Corazón project was designed to empower youth in Hawaiian Gardens, CA 90716, a community often overlooked in conversations about post-secondary success. Through a structured workshop, the project's goal was to increase participants' confidence, knowledge, and preparedness in key post-high school areas, including career planning, handling life challenges, and navigating financial aid. The purpose of this project was both descriptive and exploratory, using a quasi-experimental design with pre- and post-surveys to evaluate its impact. The intervention aimed to bridge informational and motivational gaps often found in underserved communities, providing not just education but hope and direction for the future.

Social Problem & Target Population

Youth in Hawaiian Gardens face multiple systemic barriers, including limited access to college and career readiness resources, low financial aid literacy, and a lack of support in navigating life after high school. These limitations can reduce their confidence, diminish goal clarity, and perpetuate cycles of poverty and underachievement. The primary target population for this intervention was high school-aged youth residing in Hawaiian Gardens, primarily of Latino/Hispanic backgrounds, who are at risk of being underserved in their post-secondary transitions.

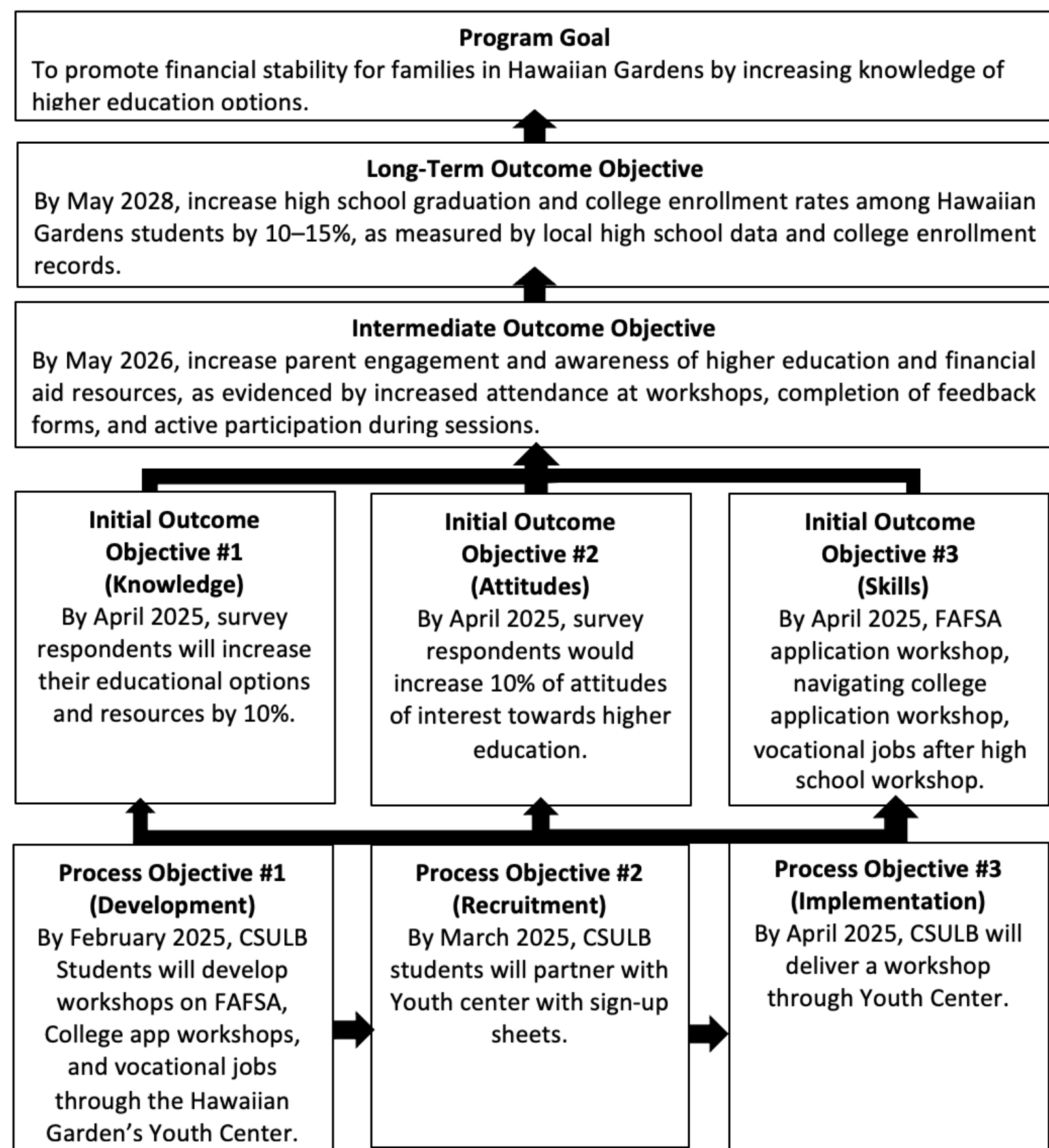
Scope of Social Problem

Hawaiian Gardens students often face significant barriers to pursuing post-secondary education, including limited guidance and financial hardship. Residents highlighted the impact of recent funding cuts, stating, "The city has cut back on funding due to unknown reasons, and as a result, it has impacted participation among residents." These resource cuts affect community programs that serve as a support system for low-income students. 77.2% of residents aged 25 and over have graduated from high school, but only 8.1% hold a bachelor's degree or higher. Currently, 18% of families in Hawaiian Gardens live in poverty. The economic strain faced by families contributes to low enrollment in higher education, which could lead to long-term consequences, including limited career opportunities, lower earning potential, and increased income inequality. Access to essential resources, like internet access, is a major challenge for families in Hawaiian Gardens. Currently, 17.1 % of households lack adequate internet access. This lack of access can create obstacles for students, limiting their ability to complete schoolwork, access online learning tools, and stay informed about educational opportunities.

Alignment to Specialization

This project aligns with Integrated Health specialization by addressing the systemic barriers faced by first-generation, low-income students in Hawaiian Gardens. It focuses on educational equity, community development, and social justice, using social work principles to advocate for increased resources, support systems, and interventions that enhance educational opportunities for underserved youth.

PROJECT OVERVIEW, OBJECTIVES & OUTCOMES



METHODS

Our workshop aimed to measure changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes, and preparedness after high school and it also sought to understand the impact on participants' confidence regarding post-high school plans, career goals, and financial aid. The **purpose** of the evaluation was **descriptive and exploratory**, and the **design** used was **quasi-experimental**.

Methods: Quantitative approach. The data collected consisted of numerical responses regarding participants' confidence in various areas (career goals, preparedness for post-high school, financial aid knowledge, etc.).

Sampling Methods: 4 participants

• **Recruitment:** Participants were recruited through collaboration with **Astrid's Heart Foundation** and promotion within the Iglesia Cuadrangular Palabra de Vida church in Hawaiian Gardens. Recruitment strategies included: Word of mouth through community networks, Flyers distributed at community locations such as the library and teen center, and an **Eventbrite** RSVP system for registration. The sampling strategy is **convenience sampling**, as participants were selected based on availability and willingness to participate rather than through random selection.

Analysis Plan: Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, while inferential statistics (paired t-test) were used to determine if the changes between pre- and post-test scores were statistically significant. This was followed by calculating the **effect size** to gauge the strength of the intervention's impact.

• **Descriptive Statistics** were used to summarize the data. The **mean**, **standard deviation**, and **range** were calculated for both pre and post-test scores for various variables such as *confidence in career goals*, *knowledge of financial aid*, etc. For example, the **mean score** for confidence in career goals increased from 12.25 (pre) to 17 (post), and the standard deviation was reported to capture the variation in the responses.

• **Inferential Statistics:** The paired samples t-test was used to compare the **pre-test** and **post-test** scores. This test helped assess whether the differences in scores were statistically significant. The result showed that the post-test scores were significantly higher, indicating that the workshop had a positive impact. The **p-value** (0.034) confirmed this significance.

• The **effect size** (Cohen's d) was also calculated, indicating the magnitude of the impact of the workshop. A Cohen's d of 1.396 suggests a large effect.

• **Software Used:** **SPSS**, a statistical software tool commonly used for analyzing quantitative data.



RESULTS

Confidence in career goals, preparedness for life after high school, and knowledge of financial assistance for higher education.

Table 1 Pre-Test and Post-Test Results

Measure	N	Pre-Test M	Post-Test M	SD (Pre)	SD (Post)
Confidence in career goals	4	3.5	4.25	0.577	0.5
Preparedness after high school	3	4	4	0	1
Handling future challenges	4	3.75	4.25	0.5	0.957
Knowledge of financial aid	4	2	4.25	1.155	0.957

Table 2 Demographic Information

Variable	Category	N
Age	15	1
	18	1
	19	1
	20	1
Gender	Female	3
	Male	1
Education level of parents	Some high school, no diploma	3
	Some college/ no degree	1
	Access to resources	
	Valid	4

Table 3 T-Test Significant Results

Measure	Pre-Test Mean (SD)	Post-Test Mean (SD)	t(df)	p-value
Total Knowledge/Skills	12.25 (1.5)	17.00 (3.16)	2.79 (3)	< .05
Knowledge of Financial Assistance	2.00 (1.2)	4.25 (0.96)	9.00 (3)	< .001

CONCLUSION

Analysis of Findings

The findings suggest the workshop was meaningful and empowering for participants. The substantial increase in confidence around navigating financial aid reflects how the interactive and culturally relevant format helped participants connect personally with the material. The use of peer testimonies likely contributed to this impact, as participants were able to see themselves reflected in the stories shared. Despite the small sample size, the magnitude of change indicates that even a short, focused intervention can significantly influence how youth perceive their future educational opportunities.

Limitations & Improvements

- Small sample size (N = 4) limits generalizability.
- Lack of ethnic diversity among participants reduces broader applicability.

Improvement Strategy:

Future evaluations should expand recruitment to include more participants from varied backgrounds, which would enhance both statistical power and representation.

Recommendations & Implications

Practice

•**Implication:** Youth benefit from relatable, practical guidance on higher education.

•**Recommendation:** Integrate similar workshops into schools or community centers, particularly in underserved areas.

Policy

•**Implication:** Existing school-based support may not be sufficient in preparing students for postsecondary planning.

•**Recommendation:** Advocate for mandatory financial literacy and college access education within high school curricula.

Research

•**Implication:** Initial data shows promise, but long-term impact remains unknown.

•**Recommendation:** Conduct longitudinal studies to evaluate retention of knowledge and confidence over time, and test the intervention with larger, more diverse groups to validate effectiveness.

COMMUNITY PARTNER(S)

Name of Community Partner 1: Astrid's Heart Foundation (AHF)



The Astrid's Heart Foundation is an effective means to educate, empower, and serve by reaching people who are underserved recapture possibilities to live with purpose, and passion through interactive experiences in the Fine Arts to improve their lives spiritually, personally, professionally, and academically.

Name of Collaborator	Contributions
Astrid Sandoval Executive Director of AHF astrid@astridshheartfoundation.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Assisted with setting up location, recruitment of participants, parking spacesProvided refreshments, audio/video/internet connection and gave swag bag to participantsContributed by setting up date/location and constant communication throughout the process.
Jack King Project Manager of AHF Jacktking@astridshheartfoundation.org	

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RESOURCES

Mehr-Muska, T. W. (2017). Building resilience: Helping college students at Wesleyan University discover and cultivate inner strength and peace. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.