

OPERATION CONVERSATION:

Using a peer-led roleplay course to help pre-clinical medical students improve interpersonal skills and navigate difficult patient conversations

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INTRODUCTION

- Despite its proven importance, interpersonal skills training is underutilized within the pre-clinical years of medical school.
- A preliminary inquiry revealed that MCW medical students felt they would benefit from additional training in improving communication skills.
- Our program, Operation Conversation (OC), allows pre-clinical students to develop critical conversation skills outside of the currently available curriculum.

Notable components of Operation Conversation:

- Low stress environment
- Not-for-grade participation
- Immediate, personalized, face-to-face feedback
- Spaced, repetitive practice
- Active participation

HYPOTHESIS

We hypothesized that student performance would improve across the three workshops and student self-reflections would show satisfaction with the program.

STUDY AIMS

Analyze Operation Conversation Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 programs to:

- (1) assess the efficacy of student-led role play exercises in improving basic communication skills for medical students in their pre-clinical years and
- (2) review student self-reflections regarding individual progress & attitude toward the program.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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RESULTS

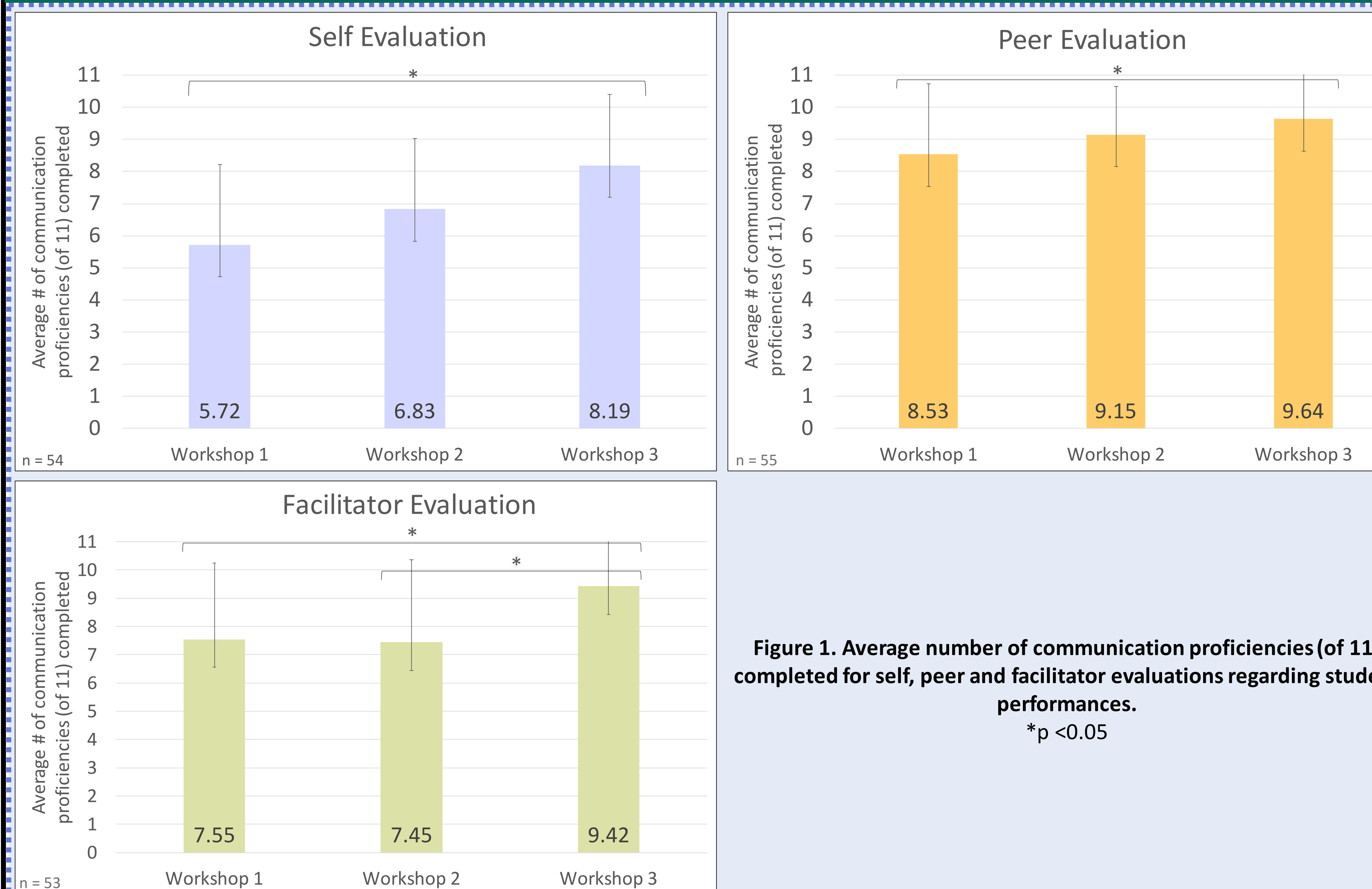


Figure 1. Average number of communication proficiencies (of 11) completed for self, peer and facilitator evaluations regarding student performances. *p <0.05



Figure 2. Word cloud of student responses to the self-reflection question, "What noteworthy feedback was provided to you? How are you going to incorporate this feedback for next time?". Qualitative analysis of student reflections identified 25 themes, or codes. Of the 184 student responses, most frequent feedback themes identified among learners included showing empathy and concern for the patient (50), checking patient understanding and using intentional language (35).

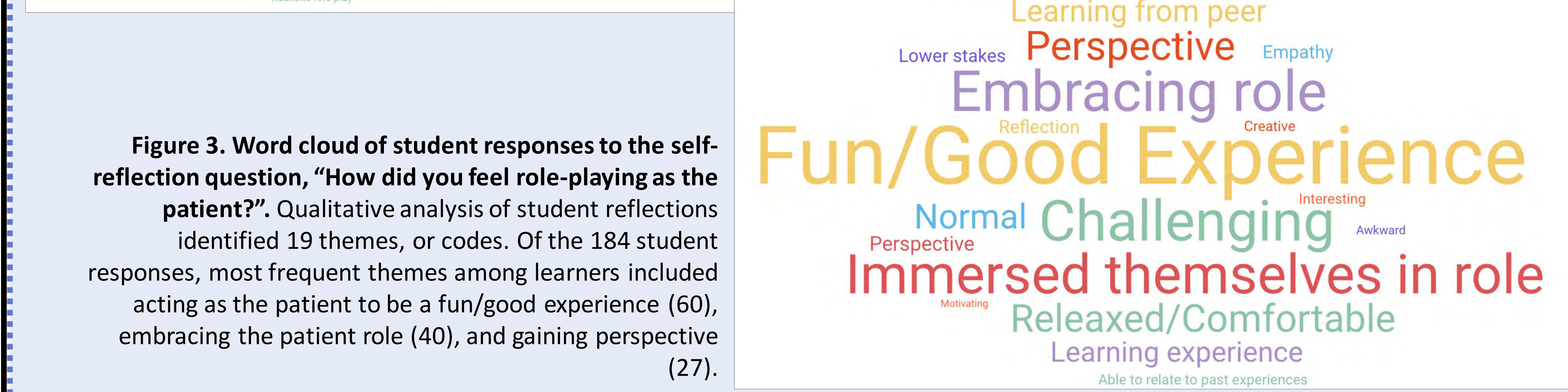
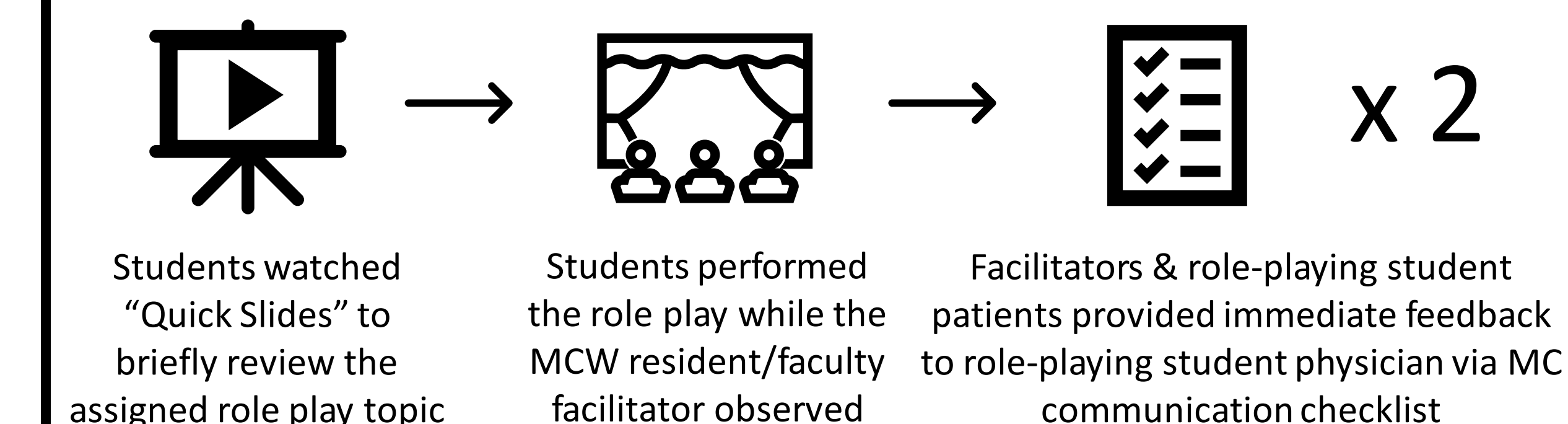


Figure 3. Word cloud of student responses to the self-reflection question, "How did you feel role-playing as the patient?". Qualitative analysis of student reflections identified 19 themes, or codes. Of the 184 student responses, most frequent themes among learners included acting as the patient to be a fun/good experience (60), embracing the patient role (40), and gaining perspective (27).

METHODS

In AY 21/22, two cohorts of pre-clinical MCW medical students (n = 28/36) and resident + faculty facilitators (n = 14/18) voluntarily participated in our semester-long extracurricular program, Operation Conversation (OC).

During each workshop:



After each workshop:

Students completed a free response self-reflection about their performance

After the final workshop:

All participants were asked to complete a Program Evaluation

Following completion of the program:

All data was de-identified and viewed in aggregate. Data analysis included a mixed methods approach.

DISCUSSION

- Student communication skills increased over time as rated by self, peer, and facilitator evaluators
- Results are being applied to improve the next iteration of the extracurricular program at MCW.
- Strengths: virtual format, small group cohesion, & opportunity for immediate feedback
- Analysis limited by response bias, small sample size, and imperfect participant attendance.

CONCLUSIONS

- Operation Conversation is an effective extracurricular tool that positively supplements ongoing MCW curriculum efforts.
- Student participants acknowledged their performances and subsequent feedback within Operation Conversation to be both a positive, low-stress experience and an avenue to hone skills and gain perspective.

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