

**Saint Francis University**  
**School of Health Science**  
**Health Care Team Challenge**

The “*Saint Francis University School of Health Sciences Health Care Team Challenge*” was initiated by the Interprofessional Education Committee to improve safe patient care, enhance team-based care, and improve health outcomes. This interprofessional collaboration within our small university includes all health science disciplines and is very cost effective. We believe that this initiative meets the criteria for Innovation in Professional Nursing Education Award in the small school category. Attached is a narrative of the components of this initiative as exemplars.

**Catalyst for Change:** Three years ago the School of Health Sciences (SHS) established an Interprofessional Education (IPE) Committee, comprised of all health science disciplines: exercise physiology; occupational therapy, nursing, public health, physician assistant, physical therapy, and public health. Following the guidelines for *Core Competencies for Interprofessional Collaborative Practice*, the committee sought to find ways to have an all-inclusive enduring educational initiative to meet the needs of interprofessional education within each of these disciplines. Several challenges were overcome: how to involve all health science disciplines; how to avoid use of scheduled class time, as everyone is on a different schedule; how to address the IPE Core competencies; how to be cost efficient.

**Introduction:** Interprofessional care is one of the foundations of the health care system. However, many health care workers lack awareness of how to work effectively in interprofessional teams, and as a result fail to fully benefit from this approach to patient care. To improve competency in collaboration, the Saint Francis University IPE Committee presented the Health Care Team Challenge (HCTC) concept as a process to address the scarcity of interprofessional education and collaboration among the students in the School of Health Sciences. The HCTC, an interdisciplinary case competition, is an innovative and low cost interprofessional learning activity that is used to simulate “real-life” team based problem solving. In addition, it is adaptable and can be adjusted to meet core competencies for collaborative care in all health professions programs.

As the delivery of healthcare becomes more interrelated, coordinating care between and among all health care disciplines has become progressively more imperative and the Saint Francis University IPE Committee recognized the important role IPE plays in the development of future health care professionals. The IPE Committee also acknowledged the impact that healthcare simulation combined with online IPE can have on the training and education of health care students in aiding to better address the needs of their patients. Therefore, the committee combined IPE and a case study in an online simulation venue to present and model best health care practices; increase competencies and coordinate care; and improve knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Utilizing this method provided an opportunity for students in the School of Health Sciences to learn about IPE, and the use of the online simulated case supported the goals of health care integration by reinforcing the importance of collaboration and cooperation among disciplines to improve patient care.

**Methods:** For the HCTC, a case describing a student athlete with measles and comorbid conditions was developed and housed in a central Google document and revised by faculty from all six departments (nursing, occupational therapy, physical therapy, physician assistant, exercise physiology and public health) within the School of Health Sciences. Scripts were then developed for the “actors” (student athlete, exercise physiologist, nurses, physician assistants, occupational therapist, physical therapist, public health personnel) who would be working collaboratively to treat the patient. Actors were then recruited to play the roles in the case study simulations, and the simulations were video recorded in the University’s Exercise Physiology Lab, Student Health Office and the Clinical Simulation Lab. A web site was then created by the IPE Committee’s instructional designer that included the videos, the case study, HCTC overview information and student instructions.

Two weeks prior to the HCTC each student participant was provided online access to the patient case information and the video recorded simulation scenarios, with the goal of preparing them to develop a collaborative interprofessional patient-centered plan of care on the night of the event. At the event, students were assigned to an interdisciplinary team and were given time to develop a comprehensive care plan for the patient. Faculty was available during this time to answer questions related to patient care. Six teams consisting of one student from each Health Sciences Program participated in the event.

Students were instructed to:

1. Listen actively, and encourage ideas and opinions of other team members
2. Engage members in shared patient centered problem solving
3. Demonstrate high standards of ethical conduct and quality of care in one’s contribution to team-based care.
4. Use unique and complementary abilities of all members of the team to optimize patient care.
5. Present their collaborative care plan to the patient during the main challenge event in front of a panel of judges.

Each team then presented to a panel of faculty judges, from each of the six disciplines in the School of Health Sciences, and were evaluated on the quality of their care management plan and the degree of collaborative teamwork they exhibited. Following the presentations, while the judges tabulated the scores, IPE committee members conducted a debriefing of the activity. The Challenge Champions were announced at the event and presented with Championship Certificates. Also, the team member names are engraved on a perpetual plaque that hangs in the DiSepio Institute for Rural Health and Wellness and the Champions were recognized at the School of Health Sciences Student Recognition Ceremony. Furthermore a “People’s Choice” recipient was selected by the audience via an electronic poll and presented to the team they would “most like to care for them” if they were a patient. All HCTC participants received Certificates of Participation and participation gift bags.

**Discussion:** The ultimate goal of the HCTC was for participants to gain an understanding of each team member’s role, to develop an appreciation of how interprofessional practice contributes to patient care, and to cultivate attitudes and skills for effective teamwork. The

challenge encouraged team unification and led to collaborative leadership when developing treatment plans for the patient. The intent of interprofessional education is to expose health professional students to the core competencies (communication, role clarifications, values and ethics, and teamwork) that are necessary for collaborative interprofessional practice. Feedback from students and faculty alike indicates that the HCTC provided students the opportunity to engage in “real-life” patient-centered collaborative practice. As a result, students learned with, from, and about one another, while also practicing skills and acquiring knowledge that will enable them to be truly collaborative and “workforce ready” health care professionals. For instance, the occupational therapy and physical therapy students consulted with the medical and nursing students to determine whether the patient would be medically stable enough to participate in rehabilitation interventions. These types of discussions spur students to learn more about different interprofessional roles, which helped team members recognize strengths of different professions and empower members to take ownership of their areas of expertise. This development helped foster mature attitudes.

**Evidence of Sustainability:** The SHS has conducted two HCTC since 2017. The overwhelmingly positive response to the HCTC from students and faculty alike reinforce our intentions to move forward with assimilating IPE into our health care curriculum. Planning has already begun for the next HCTC and preparations are being made to expand the IPE presence beyond the Challenge to include faculty education and exploration of integration of IPE into current programs of study. In doing so the University recognizes the importance of teamwork and collaborative practice to providing the safest and highest quality care to patients.

The Dean of the School of Health Science (SHS) is committed to goals of the IPE Committee and to the Health Care Team Challenge. The IPE Committee is a standing committee within the SHS. The Dean has paid out of his budget—and will continue to pay for the following:

**Potential for replication and dissemination:** This project lends itself for replication and dissemination. Costs are minimal. Planning takes effort, but the results are remarkable! This concept is easily replicable to other institutions. The IPE group has already begun dissemination of the outcomes, with a presentation at a conference in Florida this past March, and plans for an article and other presentations with other disciplines.

**Consistency with AACN’s Mission and Vision:** This HCTC supports AACN’s vision for: nursing leading efforts to transform health care and improve health; excellence and innovation in nursing education, research and practice, as well as the value of collaboration. A nurse chairs the committee and was the catalyst for bringing all of the other health care disciplines on this committee. All of the disciplines—faculty and students alike-- are uniquely involved as a members of the team and collaborate and communicate to develop the best care plan.

**Demonstration of Advancement of Nursing Education:** The Health Care Team Challenge advances nursing education through interprofessional collaborative practice. This project has broaden the competencies of nursing and other health science disciplines in improving individual and population health outcomes.