

The Health System Simulation



As the pace of change in healthcare continues to accelerate, executives must be leaders, adept at navigating these changes/new pathways/new approaches as well as being able to respond to crises. HPM's Health System Simulation provides an opportunity to experience the challenges of executive leadership and strategic decision-making in a competitive multi-hospital marketplace. This is a realistic exercise that effectively simulates the complexity and intensity of the evolving healthcare environment.

HOW IT WORKS

Participants collaborate in this comprehensive strategic exercise as the senior leadership team of a hospital. They must analyze their institution's overall planned direction and make all decisions central to its successful operation including mission/vision, service line mix, capacity, investment in quality (professional/clinical, systems, etc.), insurer relations, marketing, staffing, financial structure, and so on.

A typical "run" of the simulation involves four to six teams (comprised of four to seven members each) strategically guiding their respective hospitals through a competitive marketplace. Teams submit decisions for each operating cycle simultaneously and receive prompt feedback on their hospital's performance in the context of its competitors. They then proceed to prepare decisions for the next operating cycle. The simulation exercise involves six full operating cycles and takes roughly an evening and two days (often with an additional session), including supporting instructional modules, strategic financial analysis, feedback/discussion sessions and senior faculty consultants available for each team. Along the way, the teams create a mission statement, benchmark their progress, respond to topical news and develop a public service element.

WHY A SIMULATION?

Simulations are a well-tested and effective means of instruction that have been employed in management education within business schools and industry since the late 1950s. They range from simple exercises to comprehensive problems in functional areas including marketing, finance and operations to complex total organizational models such as the Health System Simulation.

The Health System Simulation, which involves developing and implementing overall institutional strategy, is a key component of the Mailman School of Public Health. Participant evaluations reflect a consensus that this exercise is a highly powerful learning activity. Follow-up studies and surveys reinforce this, particularly with regard to improved and thoughtful decision-making "on-the-job" and teamwork and leadership competencies.

THE SIMULATION EVOLVES TO MATCH THE TIMES

“We have witnessed the devastating impact of the COVID-19 crisis on healthcare systems across the globe. Going forward, all hospital executives and providers need to be adept at navigating an unsettled marketplace, through a host of legal, regulatory and clinical challenges,” says John S. Winkleman, Director, Health System Simulation program, Columbia Mailman School of Public Health, the Department of Health Policy and Management.

The first simulation, developed by Mailman Professor Thomas P. Ference, highlighted the complexities of modern hospital management. This new version of the simulation helps healthcare executives face numerous challenges, such as preventing supply chain disruptions, managing lost revenues as healthcare workers redeploy to other areas and addressing the mental health stressors experienced by frontline workers. The exercise also includes elements to help leaders seize on opportunities, including the chance to participate in developing public service programs and rebounding from a major recession.

HOW IS IT USED AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY?

The Health System Simulation is a valuable instructional component of the Department of Health Policy and Management, an integral part of the full-time, executive, and part-time curricula. In addition, it is a component of the department’s Professional & Executive Education initiatives, either as a stand-alone activity or as a component of a larger program.

The Mailman School also offers the simulation at the New York Presbyterian LEAD Academy and REACH, NYC H+H, Bocconi University (Milan) and for the members of the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE).

CAN ANYONE ENROLL IN THE SIMULATION?

The Health System Simulation is available as a stand-alone workshop, a component of a larger program for individuals and groups working in health systems internationally or as a custom program. It has been used as a module in leadership development programs and as training for department chairs, hospital management teams, other providers and as a public or open workshop program for individual professionals. Please see contact information in order to learn more about the simulation.

PRESS

Featured in *Crain’s Health Pulse* and *Becker’s Hospital Review*



“This simulation training exercise is as close to real life as I’ve ever seen. It replicates the implications and complexities associated with managing a complex hospital environment. In addition to the intricate lessons of decision-making and resource allocation, participants are enveloped into the competitiveness and team interaction aspects of human behavior that are also essential elements of success in this ever changing and dynamic system of healthcare delivery.”

“The complex decision making was probably the best part of the simulation for me. In the past I have engaged in problem solving by looking at each issue in isolation instead of thinking about factor analysis—analyzing how each decision will impact all the other areas of operation.”

“This program is the perfect mix of team-building, management strategy and competition. With its high instructor-to-participant ratio, and real-world data, the experience is singular in the field. It puts traditional case-study learning to shame. This is how all management education should look.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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