Healthcare Lab (H-Lab) Overview

Over the last decade, healthcare spending in the U.S. has been continuously rising at a rate far exceeding that of inflation. Annual healthcare spending, which topped $3 trillion last year, currently accounts for more than 18% of our national GDP, which outstrips the total healthcare spending of any other developed country. This overspending has not led to superior outcomes, and in fact the U.S. lags behind most other developed countries in providing appropriate access to care and in many other leading quality indicators.

We at MIT Sloan believe that national and global healthcare and health management-related challenges provide unique opportunities for Sloan and for MIT faculty and students to make an important and positive impact on the world through innovative research and educational activities. There is increasing interest among MIT students in career paths within the health and healthcare industries, and the number of Sloan students with health-related experience has increased significantly over the last several years. This has created a vibrant community of students and faculty who are passionate about various aspects of healthcare and health management.

To formalize the activities around health and healthcare management, Sloan launched the Initiative for Health Systems Innovation (HSI) in July 2014. HSI brings together into one organization all of Sloan’s academic and research activities. As part of this Initiative, Sloan offers a Healthcare Certificate for students enrolled in degree programs in any of MIT’s five schools. The certificate is designed to prepare students for careers within the health industry, e.g., healthcare IT and delivery innovation, healthcare delivery management, consulting positions, and positions in global health organizations. Students pursuing the certificate will take three core courses on the U.S. health industry and health economics and will then be able to choose from a portfolio of courses. Certificate students are required to take a Healthcare Lab as one of the core courses.

MIT’s Sloan School of Management is the leader in Action Learning in management education and has been for several decades. Our approach to Action Learning integrates theory, real-world practice, and personal reflection to develop principled, innovative leaders who solve complex problems and produce systemic changes. Our Action Learning programs are life changing—for the students who participate, the organizations with whom they work, and the people across the world who are influenced by the groundbreaking project work that is part of every Action Learning endeavor. A critical component of successful Action Learning projects are the organizations that support and work with our students. We partner with health and healthcare organizations with challenges that our students can tackle with their knowledge and expertise. Organizations typically find our students to be highly innovative, creative, skillful, passionate, and resourceful, and there are many examples of projects that have made lasting impact. Healthcare projects may focus on operations management, analytics, IT, marketing, organizational change, etc., with an emphasis on improving healthcare delivery.
Some recent projects include:

Creating a marketing plan for a startup company that uses a new device to support the communications needs of autistic children.
Designing and implementing a systematic and efficient patient allocation system for multiple surgical rooms across a local medical center.
Working with a local community to design a social media campaign for their drug-abuse prevention program specifically targeted to teens.
Designing an automated scheduling system to allocate staff and resources for a local hospital’s interventional radiology practice, including creating new policies for addressing delays and optimizing end-of-day activities.
Creating a communications and marketing strategy for a local obesity-prevention campaign.
Building a scheduling model to predict and smooth demand at a nationwide retail clinic and revising the menu of services to focus on wellness and chronic diseases.

Healthcare Lab (H-Lab) has three phases:

1. Students attend class on campus beginning in September, form teams, and jointly develop their proposal and workplan with host organizations.
2. Students spend one week in October, up to three weeks in January, or various times during the semester at the host organization site to refine their project plan and develop recommendations.
3. Students return to campus and present their final projects and create a poster summarizing their work.

The Lab requires a substantial time commitment from the hosting organization, the students, and the faculty who guide the project. The critical milestones for hosts include:

- August 10 – project application deadline. Please submit applications via the website link below.
- September, first and second weeks of semester – students are matched with accepted projects.
- End of September – begin conversations with student teams about project design and proposal or workplan.
- October through December – student teams actively engage host (usually via phone or Skype) to follow workplan. Some teams will be on-site at the host’s facility for one week in October or at various times throughout the semester.
- January – some teams spend up to three weeks at the host organization advancing the project and making presentations to senior leaders for those organizations outside of the Boston area.

If you are interested in supporting a student project, please visit our website for more information and an application, H-Lab Application, or contact the H-Lab faculty, hlab-faculty@mit.edu.