Healthcare Lab (H-Lab) Overview

Over the last decade, healthcare spending in the U.S. has been continuously rising at a rate far exceeding inflation. With over $2.9 trillion last year, healthcare spending currently amounts for more than 17.9% of the national GDP, far exceeding any other developed country. The overspending has not led to superior outcomes, and in fact the U.S. stands behind most other developed countries on providing appropriate access to care as well as many other leading quality indicators.

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

In order to formalize the activities around health and healthcare management, the Sloan School launched the Initiative for Health Systems Innovation in December of 2013. This Initiative brings together the Sloan academic and research activities related to health into one organization. As part of this Initiative, the School offers a Healthcare Certificate for all interested students enrolled in degree programs in all of the MIT Schools and Departments. The certificate aims at preparing students for career paths within the health industry, such as healthcare IT and delivery innovation, healthcare delivery management, consulting positions, and positions in global health organizations. Students pursuing the certificate will take core courses on the health industry in the U.S. and health economics, and then will be able to choose from a portfolio of courses. In addition, all students taking the certificate are required to take an Action Learning Lab such as Healthcare Lab.

MIT's Sloan School of Management is the leader in Action Learning in management education, and has held that esteemed position for several decades. Our approach to Action Learning integrates theory, real-world practice, and personal reflection in order 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 look for health or healthcare organizations and companies with challenges that can be tackled by our students who contribute their knowledge and expertise. Companies and organizations usually find our students to be highly innovative, creative, skillful, passionate and resourceful. There are many examples of projects that have made long lasting impact on the respective organizations. Healthcare projects may focus on operations management, analytics, IT, marketing, organizational dynamics etc. with an emphasis on healthcare delivery.
Some recent projects include:

- Defining the unmet IT needs of cardiologists, and developing a go-to-market strategy for a new product for a medical equipment company.
- 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 optimizing delays and the 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.

The **Healthcare Lab (H-Lab)** has three phases:

1. Students attend a class on the MIT campus beginning in September, form teams, and develop their proposal with host organizations by jointly developing a work plan.
2. Students spend one week in October and/or up to three weeks in January 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 commitment of time on the part of the hosting organization, the students, and the faculty who guide the project. The critical milestones for hosts include:

- September 1 – application for a project due. Submit application (questionnaire) via the website below.
- September, first and second week of semester – students will be matched with accepted projects.
- End of September and early October – begin conversations with student team 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.
- January – some teams spend up to three weeks at the host’s site advancing the project and making presentations to senior leaders.

If you find supporting a student project would be of interest to you, please go to our website for more information and the questionnaire, [H-Lab Questionnaire](#) or contact the H-Lab faculty, [hlab-faculty@mit.edu](mailto:hlab-faculty@mit.edu).