

Evidence-Based Management and Research Information
University of Washington Masters in Health Administration (MHA) Program
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Vehicle: Capstone Projects – 10 weeks, Spring Quarter (Mar – Jun)

Overview: Learn more about how your organization can benefit from working collaboratively with UW faculty and graduate students to enhance problem-solving capability through evidence-based management inquiry. Our purpose is to develop organizational and student competence in evidence-based management research modalities. Hence, organizations interested in fostering analytical capacity and disseminating outcomes by publishing and presenting findings nationally and internationally will benefit the most.

Background: A series of studies following the Flexner Report of 1910 led to a groundbreaking revolution in healthcare education, which resulted in the integration of scientific reforms that doubled life expectancy within the United States. However, conspicuous gaps in cost, quality, and access have persisted, serving to underscore our collective failure to deliver effective preventive measures and treatment modalities equitably (Frenk et al, 2010). Moreover, health systems worldwide face fresh challenges that threaten the health security of all: socio-demographic and epidemiological shifts, as well as emerging infectious, environmental, and behavioral threats (Frenk et al, 2010). Healthcare management education has not kept pace, owing in large part to heavily theoretical, quantitative curricula ill equipped to address the increasingly complex needs of the environment and its effects on the healthcare delivery system (Herzlinger, Kumar, Schulman, & Staman, 2015). Required is the development of instructional strategies to produce executives who apply a systems approach to innovative problem solving that features contextual understanding and mutual learning, and who draw upon global perspectives in health and healing. We propose to establish a basis for the integration of scientific inquiry and education through action research that will lead to a competency framework capable of developing explicitly the next generation of entrepreneurial problem-solvers who will have a lasting, positive effect on the U.S. healthcare delivery system.

Through a series of targeted initiatives, we seek to achieve the following specific objectives:

- (1) To gain a fundamental understanding of factors which promote or impede innovative problem solving in the field of healthcare delivery;
- (2) To describe the role of action research in developing student competence in graduate management education;
- (3) To inform health services research (theory and practice) by developing innovative solutions to problems presented from the field;
- (4) To integrate both action research and entrepreneurial approaches into graduate healthcare management curricula at the masters and doctorate levels;
- (5) To realize the shared benefit of aligning healthcare executives, practitioners, faculty, and graduate students in this research; and
- (6) To enhance the breadth and depth of applied projects through outreach activities that result in community based and culturally relevant solutions to modern healthcare demands.

Using an evidence-based problem solving approach, a team of established executives, skilled academics, and graduate students could extend and enhance organizational capability to leverage opportunities, mitigate threats, and boost innovation. **The Process:** (1) The course instructor will contact you with interest in collaborating on a project. (2) You consider initiatives based on your desires to improve cost, quality, or access and the likelihood the student team could deliver a suitable product in the ten-week quarter, and then you develop a project proposal using the tool provided. (3) The course instructor will review all incoming proposals to vet project structure and content to ensure they are sufficiently challenging yet manageable in the time frame allowed. (4) Students will have an opportunity to review all proposals and rank order their top three choices. (Student teams naturally form around the proposals.) (5) Lastly, the course instructor will formalize project teams and contact sponsors to inform them of selection and to introduce them to their team. * Note: Students will coordinate with you and the appropriate organizational representatives to

confirm they will have timely access to personnel and/or data and ensure they can complete a quality project by early June.

This project initiative will contribute to the scientific literature by testing theoretical constructs in the field of practice through action research. This framed research protocol seeks also to inform problem solving in the field through a theoretical lens. The purpose of action research is to engage germane stakeholders in a process of collaborative, contextually relevant problem-solving activities to achieve sustainable results. These results will enable researchers and/or practitioners to predict likely outcomes when applying specific conceptual tools a set of management, operational, or procedural challenges.

Secondarily, but no less important, student participation in action research projects and applied practice will inform pedagogical development of graduate healthcare management curricula. Therefore, a second contribution will be related to the exploration of pedagogical development with specific attention to competency development in the areas of management innovation, multi-professional learning and collaboration, as well as contextual problem solving techniques of relevance to the field. Special consideration will be given to the interface between entrepreneurial approaches and the taking of informed, calculated risks in problem solving activities.

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