



NEWS RELEASE

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NASPAA Names the National Capital Region as Winner of its Inaugural Student Simulation Competition

Washington, D.C. – This past weekend, students competed across the U.S. at five regional sites, for NASPAA’s Student Simulation Competition. The teams were asked to provide a locally led “bottom up” approach to health care reform.

Nationally, 45 teams—representing 93 participating schools—explored more than 4,400 different health care futures. Each health care future compared the team’s policy to a business-as-usual base run that predicts what would happen if no changes are made in the current health care system.

The national winner of the 2015 NASPAA Student Simulation Competition is the team from the National Capital Region site hosted at the University of Maryland’s School of Public Policy.

The winning team included graduate students at the following institutions:

- Nomzana Augustin, Zanvyl Krieger School of Arts and Sciences at the Johns Hopkins University
- Zachary Blackburn, Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy at the University of Virginia
- Christophe Combemale, Heinz College at Carnegie Mellon University
- Mark Rucci, School of Public Policy and Administration at the University of Delaware

These teammates showed exemplary understanding of health care challenges and current policy concerns and showed a mastery of the technical simulation. They also displayed sophisticated reasoning to craft composite policies that substantially benefit health care for the long-term which have maximum potential to be implemented in a politically charged world.

Additionally, the team understood the technical model, but instead of trying to obtain the highest score on the model, they aligned their thought process with stakeholder concerns and the current policy environment to affect actual change. They made sophisticated tradeoffs that would allow their policies to be organizationally and politically feasible.

To be considered for the national winner, each of the 5 regional winners showed mastery of the technical simulation, but this team combined their understanding of the model, with their knowledge of systems, organizational dynamics, and political will. This confluence of factors created a scenario that fixed bottlenecks in the system, balanced public and private funding and created solvent hospitals.

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This team used a technical model to view the universe of the health care challenges and identify a realistic and possible solution to the problem. The winning team designed a carefully-sequenced strategy that included a shift to pay health care providers based on value (as opposed to volume of services), coupled with investments to support self care, establish medical homes, coordinate care to cut costs, and reinvest some of the gains in wider efforts to enable healthier behaviors and create pathways to advantage for those in poverty.

If their strategy were scaled and implemented in regions across the country, it could save the U.S. \$640 billion dollars annually in 2040. The cumulative savings would be approximately \$8.6 trillion U.S. dollars between 2015 and 2040. In addition, the team's solution yielded \$743 billion U.S. dollars in increased productivity in 2040 in the economy due to fewer sick days taken. All of this took place while the population became healthier: death rates dropped by 20.2 percent, emergency room visits dropped by 22.1 percent and high risk behaviors such as obesity, smoking and drug abuse dropped by 50 percent at the end of the simulation in 2040.

The five regional teams provided an equally outstanding effort. Members of the winning regional teams included graduate students from the following institutions:

Midwest Region: Indianapolis, Ind., hosted by the Indiana University - Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) School of Public and Environmental Affairs:

- Western Michigan University, Emma Powell
- The Ohio State University, Robert Simeral
- IUPUI, Zachary Smith

National Capital Region: College Park, Md. hosted by University of Maryland School of Public Policy:

- Johns Hopkins University, Nomzana Augustin
- University of Virginia, Zachary Blackburn
- Carnegie Mellon University, Christophe Combemale
- University of Delaware, Mark Rucci

Northeast Region: Albany, N.Y. hosted by Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy, University at Albany, State University of New York:

- Carnegie Mellon University, Tamara Alkhattar
- Post University, Michael Judson

Southeast Region: Athens, Ga. hosted by The University of Georgia School of Public and International Affairs

- University of Alabama at Birmingham, Victoria Roberts
- Georgia State University, Angela Smith
- University of South Florida, Geoffrey West

West Region: Los Angeles, Calif. hosted by University of Southern California Sol Price School of Public Policy

- Pardee RAND Graduate School, Benjamin Batorsky
- California State University Los Angeles, Alexander Harwood
- University of Colorado Denver, Johanna Jamison
- University of Southern California, Kharaam Sharifpour

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A sixth site had been set in Dallas for the competition's South Region which was to be hosted by The University of Texas at Dallas, School of Economics, Political and Policy Sciences, but it was cancelled do to the severe weather conditions. The association is grateful to those who worked at this site and regret that the students were not able to participate.

According to Laurel McFarland, NASPAA Executive Director, "This competition demonstrates the tremendous learning opportunities gained by using simulations to immerse students in situations where they are able to immediately see the complexities and systemic aspects of public policy and management challenges," said McFarland.

"The public spiritedness and enthusiasm of the teams was astounding, and judges found it really rewarding to work on this project. NASPAA is also in tremendous debt to the simulation visionaries David Andersen, professor in the department of Public Administration and Policy at the University at Albany, State University of New York, Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy, and Anand Desai, professor in the John Glenn School of Public Affairs at The Ohio State University, who were not only visionaries for this project, but also served as the leads on this project from start to finish. We are also grateful to NASPAA's staff, especially Emily Reineke, conference and strategic projects manager; and Elizabeth McCabe Deal, student competition team lead," added McFarland.

"Having participated on the national jury, along with such distinguished leaders as Sherry Glied, dean of Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at the New York University, and David Andersen, professor in the department of Public Administration and Policy at the University at Albany, State University of New York, Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy, I saw first-hand just how much creativity, teamwork and sheer intelligence is emerging among America's future policy leaders," said Bobby Milstein, director of ReThink Health. "These teams displayed a mix of curiosity, skill and moral clarity that bodes well for effective action on this critical national challenge. In addition, I was amazed that students from different schools could instantly work so well together and accomplish so much in a single day! This is a credit both to their professionalism and to the outstanding educational design by NASPAA and ReThink Health organizers."

The simulator was developed by the Rippel Foundation as part of their collaborative initiative called ReThink Health, founded in 2007 by a group of the nation's most influential change-makers in health, economics, politics, business and energy. The simulator is a state-of -the-art policy planning tool based on extensive research and widespread engagement with communities to help them foster catalytic leadership and test innovative ideas for bridging and redesigning their health and health care systems. The ReThink Health Model has been used to support ambitious health reform efforts in cities such as Atlanta, Cincinnati, Pueblo, Colorado and several other locations throughout the U.S.

NASPAA, the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration, is the global standard in public service education with a twofold mission to ensure excellence in education and training for public service and to promote the ideal of public service. It is the membership organization of graduate education programs in public policy, public affairs, public administration, and public and nonprofit management. NASPAA is also the recognized accreditor of master's degree programs in these fields. Its nearly 300 members are located across the U.S. and in 14 countries around the globe.

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