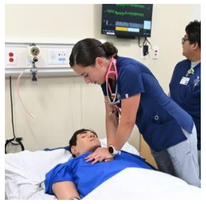
The Power of Exposure: How Simulation Sparks Healthcare Interest in High School Students

Abby Hammack, DNP, MSN-NI. RN, MEDSURG-BC, CNL & Sarah Firmin, DNP, RN, MEDSURG-BC
University of North Florida, Academic College

Background

The nursing workforce continues to face significant shortages, with projected demand for registered nurses remaining high over the coming decade. Early exposure to healthcare careers may help students make informed educational decisions, develop career goals, and increase interest in healthcare professions. Healthcare simulation provides an engaging, hands-on learning environment that allows students to experience realistic clinical situations in a safe setting.





Purpose

To increase awareness of nursing and healthcare careers among high school students through an interactive simulation center experience led by university faculty, admissions staff, and senior nursing students.



Methods

A community outreach initiative was developed at the University of North Florida (UNF) Simulation Center for local high school students interested in healthcare careers. Students rotated through three educational stations:

- **Simulation Experience**- Hands-on CPR practice using a high-fidelity mannequin with real-time performance feedback. Students received immediate feedback regarding compression rate, depth, recoil, and hand placement.



- **College and Admissions Information-** Admissions personnel provided information regarding nursing programs, application requirements, scholarships, and financial aid opportunities.

- **Peer-Led Learning and Teamwork Activity-** Senior nursing students facilitated an interactive clinical reasoning and teamwork activity while answering questions about nursing school and career pathways.

Implementation

The program was developed through collaboration among nursing faculty, senior undergraduate nursing students, simulation center personnel, and university admissions representatives.

High school students participated in guided tours of the simulation center and rotated through each learning station. Senior nursing students served as mentors, sharing their educational experiences and providing encouragement while facilitating activities.

The experience was designed to:

- Increase healthcare career awareness
- Provide authentic exposure to nursing practice
- Promote college readiness
- Foster engagement through active participation





Results/Outcomes

High School Student Outcomes:

- Increased understanding of the nursing profession and healthcare education pathways.
- Enhanced engagement through hands-on simulation activities.
- Improved awareness of college admissions requirements, scholarships, and financial aid opportunities.
- Students demonstrated curiosity and interest through active participation and question-asking during sessions.

Nursing Student Outcomes:

- Developed leadership, communication, mentoring, and teaching skills.
- Gained experience serving as role models for future healthcare professionals.

Institutional Outcomes:

- Strengthened partnerships with local high schools.
- Expanded community engagement efforts.
- Increased visibility of nursing education programs within the region.

When high school students are given the opportunity to experience healthcare through hands-on simulation, they begin to envision themselves as future healthcare professionals. Early exposure can spark interest, strengthen educational aspirations, and help build the next generation of nurses.

References Provided Upon Request