

2020/2021

# HEaRT Annual Report



snhu

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Overview

Since its inception in 2018, HEaRT has connected 15 employer partners with over 1,039 learners around the world. The award-winning Higher Education and Real-World Training model (HEaRT) provides learners with real-world problems that represent the skills needed to support the health profession, particularly during the pandemic where staffing, policies, and processes have created new challenges. The experiential learning opportunities offered by HEaRT provide students with badges that serve as evidence of the just-in-time 21st century skills which they have developed. Working in teams, networking with employers, and solving problems in HEaRT prepare learners to "stand-out" from the field of applicants in a competitive market. A **HEaRT promotional video** was created this year to describe experiential learning and the value-added for learners as they enter or advance in the workplace. Enrollments for HEaRT have increased by 50% with a high fall enrollment of over 100 students per challenge. When you consider that HEaRT is non-credit bearing and an optional opportunity, those numbers during a pandemic are significant and indicate learners' desire for these types of learning experiences.

In March of 2021, HEaRT launched the innovative HEaRT Solutions Lab (HSL), which was created to support the needs of our undergraduate nursing and health professions learners. HSL has a real-world short-term project focus where learners are supported by a Lab Facilitator compared to HEaRT challenge where learners are assigned a Mentor. The Solutions Lab environment is more flexible in nature with learners electing to enroll in a variety of four-week, employer-based projects that align with the learner's interest, skills, and career goals. The Solutions Lab offerings have covered an array of topics including learning activity development to increase Parkinson's Disease awareness for Scout troops, evidence-based strategy identification to reduce social isolation in the elderly, and social media marketing to heighten mental health service awareness. Similar to HEaRT, HSL is non-credit bearing and optional with qualified learners able to stack labs to earn prior learning assessment (PLA) credit.



**Dr. Toni Clayton**  
Executive Director,  
Health Professions, SNHU

**HEaRT is  
breaking  
the barrier  
of traditional  
education again...  
introducing the  
HEaRT Solutions  
Lab**

Breaking the barriers of traditional learning describes HEaRT as members of this team continue to provide timely learning challenges for both SNHU online learners and Global Education Movement (GEM) learners---refugees from Kenya, Rwanda, Malawi, Lebanon, and South Africa. HEaRT assists GEM learners in a low-cost pathway to bachelor's degrees while Global Campus learners gain new perspectives while collaborating with peers around the world. Additionally, the HEaRT model framework was used to create alternative practicum experiences when employers could no longer support learners with on-site options. Nursing and Health Professions practicum content, approved by our accrediting bodies, helped learners in reaching their goals of graduating on-time. HEaRT helped fill the voids created in the workplace by the pandemic in supporting learners to graduation so needed healthcare positions could be filled.

*Toni Clayton PhD*

Toni Clayton PhD

## BACKGROUND

The Higher Education and Real-World Training (HEaRT) is an online, asynchronous experiential learning model that is based on the continual collaboration between the Nursing and Health Professions department (NHP), Career Services, and employer-partners across various industries. The HEaRT model was designed to give learners experience applying what they have learned in their coursework to the real-world challenges being faced by healthcare leaders. HEaRT also provides learners with a connection through collaboration in an online community called SNHUconnect. Further, HEaRT builds a learner's soft skills, technical skills, networking, and resume building.

### Soft Skills

- Problem solving
- Critical thinking
- Communication
- Team-building
- Self-motivation
- Leadership
- Adaptability

### Technical Skills

- Project Management
- Data Analysis
- Writing executive summary
- Creating PPT presentations
- Technology

### Networking

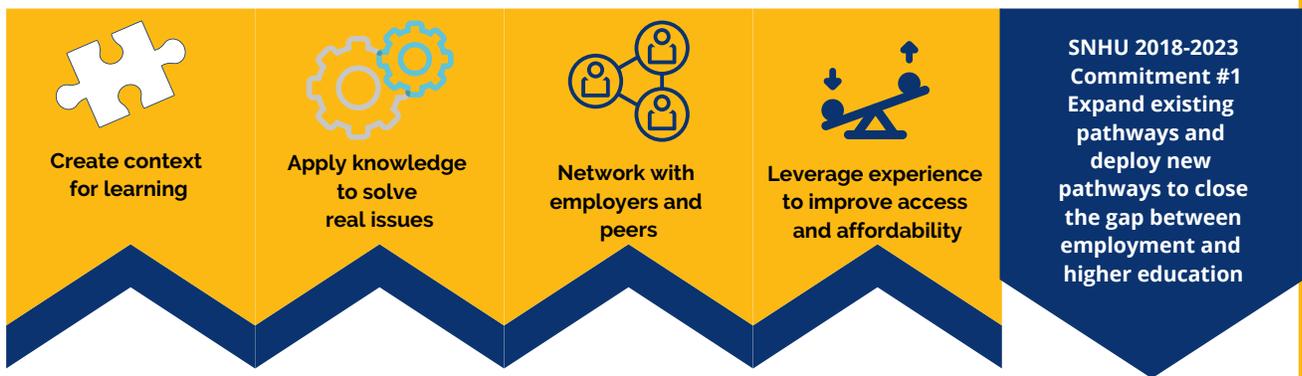
- Collaboration with industry leaders
- Collaboration with peers and Deans
- Developing business relationships

### Resume Building

- Team-work experience
- Consulting experience
- Project management experience
- Presentation experience

# SNHU COMMITMENT

This initiative aligns with the SNHU Commitment #1 to deliver a broad portfolio of high-demand credentials leading to meaningful work and purposeful lives. The HEaRT model supports this by providing learning which occurs over a short duration, offering options for credit to stack into degree programs. Partnerships with employers are a key component to closing the gap between employment and higher education.



The operationalization of the HEaRT model provides the framework, processes, and standard operating procedures to handle the evolution and growth of HEaRT. Career team members in collaboration with academics ensure that learners are able to connect with employers and peers. Learners not only gain real-world knowledge, but are able to articulate in a meaningful way the value to future employers.

## STRATEGIC PLAN

The HEaRT program is an integral part of the Nursing and Health Professionals 2021 to 2025 strategic plan. As part of our delivery strategy, we will continue to create experiential learning opportunities for SNHU and non-SNHU learners nationally and internationally to improve achievement through application of theory, while earning academic and professional credentials.

# REFRESHING HEART CHALLENGES

In our commitment to bring new and fresh content to learners, all six HEaRT challenges were updated this year with new topics from our existing employer partner, Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital. Spaulding Rehabilitation, with 34 locations across Massachusetts, has been a HEaRT employer partner for two years. We added a new employer partner in the challenges, from the Edmond J. Safra Visiting Nurse Faculty Program at the Parkinson's Foundation, a national non-profit organization that serves to improve the care of the Parkinson's disease patients and advance research.

Employer	Topic	Details
Spaulding Nursing and Therapy Center Brighton	Reimbursement	Teams develop a strategic proposal for the justification of the conversion of skilled nursing beds to care for chronic ventilator patients.
Edmond J. Safra Visiting Nurse Faculty Program at the Parkinson's Foundation	Communication	Learners, working as consultants, develop a marketing and communications plan to Parkinson's Foundation alumni who teach Parkinson's disease education.
Spaulding Network	Financial Practices	Teams assess how the network can continue to offer a viable telemedicine service for physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy post-COVID-19.
Edmond J. Safra Visiting Nurse Faculty Program at the Parkinson's Foundation	Marketing	Learners research best practices and create a marketing plan for communicating and growing alumni groups for direct participation in the work of the foundation.
Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital	Policy	Learners research the current state of provider credentialing within the state of Massachusetts and propose a state-wide credentialing model.
Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital Cape Cod	Regulations	Learners research possible models of care using mid-level providers in a hospital rehabilitation setting exploring costs, reimbursement, and regulations.

# HEART SOLUTIONS LAB

The most exciting HEaRT expansion opportunity this year is the development of the HEaRT Solutions Lab (HSL)! Building on the existing HEaRT experiential learning model, the HSL was created in four months from concept to implementation and is designed to reach and develop learners earlier in their academic career. The HSL is open only to undergraduate healthcare learners with a minimum GPA of 2.5 and 60 credits if they have completed one course in their major. The HEaRT Solutions Lab is a flexible four-week opportunity where learners can join and participate as much as they are able. Learners self-select and register for the projects in which they want to work and then teams are formed to complete the project under the auspices of a HSL facilitator. The pilot ran from March to May 2021 with six labs, with 78% of the pilot teams completing a lab. HSL has led to several exciting employer partnerships. The Edmond J. Safra Visiting Nurse Program at the Parkinson's Foundation participated in the pilot HSL along with Beacon Coding, an independent minority owned coding and healthcare consultation company. Watermark Retirement Communities, an organization with 28 retirement communities in 21 states, has been an employer partner for the HEaRT challenges and has rejoined us for HSL. Additionally, Quintessential Health, a premier provider in comprehensive telehealth mental health services for adults and children serving 23 states, has also joined as an employer partner for HSL.

**Designed to  
provide  
experiential  
learning for  
undergraduates**

**Watch the  
New HSL  
Promotional  
Video**

# HEART PROJECT LABS

Employer	Topic	Details
Edmond J. Safra Visiting Nurse Faculty Program at the Parkinson's Foundation	Creating Parkinson's Disease Awareness for Scout Troops	Learners edited a draft scout troop packet for language and appearance, developed instructions for the troop leaders, and developed a third activity for each of the five age groups.
Beacon Coding	Learning Management System Identification	Learners researched a low-cost learning management system, identifying benefits and challenges. Teams submitted a written report with a persuasive recommendation.
Watermark Retirement Communities	Artwork for Seniors with Memory Deficits	Teams researched and developed a two-page summary of findings describing artwork suggested by the literature and what artwork to avoid.
Watermark Retirement Communities	Social Isolation in the Eldery	Teams provided evidence-based recommendations to address the effects of loneliness and presented the actionable solutions in an executive summary or presentation.
Quintessential Health	Marketing Telehealth Mental Health Services	Learners developed a marketing plan using social media and other marketing tools to promote the mental health programs and services to communities with limited access to care.
Quintessential Health	Mental Health Awareness and Advocacy	Learners developed in their teams a strategy for increasing mental health awareness in general using budget-friendly media and created one example of a social media ad.

# COMPARING HEART CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS LABS

## Challenges

8 weeks

2 Challenges every 8 Weeks

Challenge Mentor

Undergraduate & Graduate Healthcare Majors

Option for Credit to IHP-510, IHP-610, IHP-630

Deliverable: Executive Summary and PPT

Digital Badges

## Solutions Labs

4 weeks

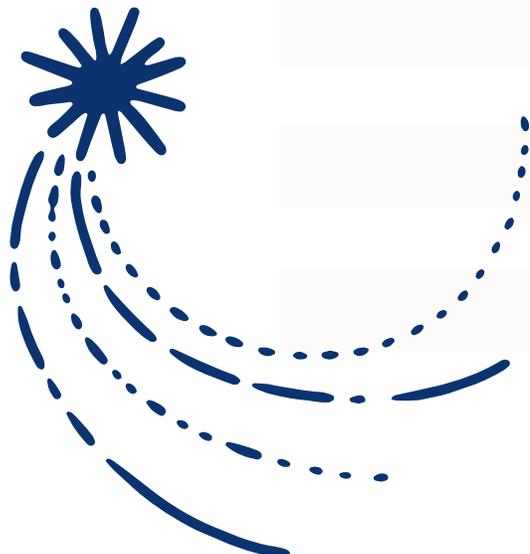
Option for Credit to SNHU-290

Deliverable has Greater Flexibility

Digital Badges

Undergraduate Healthcare Majors

Challenge Facilitator who Answers Questions



# PARTICIPANTS

Online learners who are in HEaRT eligible programs, and who meet the participation requirements of a 3.0 GPA and either 90+ undergraduate credits or 6+ graduate credits are invited to participate in HEaRT. HEaRT is non-credit bearing and does not require learners to go through the registrar's office to sign up for challenges. Financial aid is not impacted and therefore not applied to HEaRT. Requirements are subject to change based on new development in alignment to content specific competencies and learner population. Learner survey data revealed Nursing and Health Professions learners were in need of an experience which could not be found in the traditional classroom.

Similarly, Global Education Movement (GEM) learners were seeking a way to connect to employers to complete internship requirements. Therefore, a partnership was formed in 2018 which included GEM learners who reside in camps in Rwanda, Malawi, South Africa, Kenya, and Lebanon. Global Education Movement (GEM) students who were limited previously in ways to fulfill internship requirements towards their bachelor's degree, participate in HEaRT every term. To date, 404 GEM learners have successfully completed the challenges over six terms.

**“404 Badges Awarded to GEM Students”**

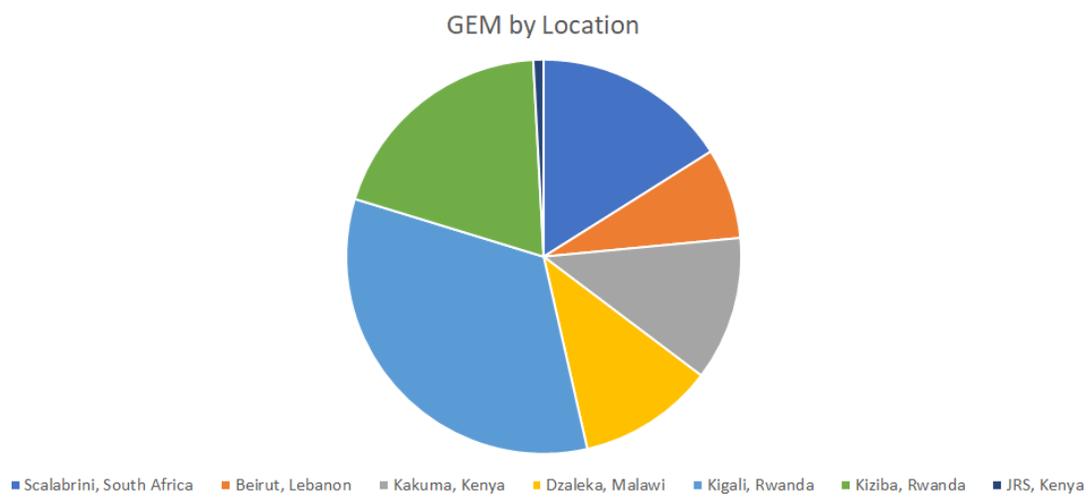


# GEM PARTICIPANTS

For GEM learners, the challenge is filling an important need, as GEM learners prior to HEaRT had very limited opportunities or no opportunity at all for internships. As a result, the challenge acts as a bridge to move from the associate degree to obtaining their bachelor's degree. As many of the GEM learners are unable to leave their geographical locations, the ability to attain an additional degree furthers their ability to attain better employment. The challenge assists in their educational development at no cost and in turn assists in the development of their communities. This global approach to learning is unique in that both groups have the opportunity to share their individual worldviews with each other while networking and building their resumes.

## GEM Learners Badges Awarded by Location

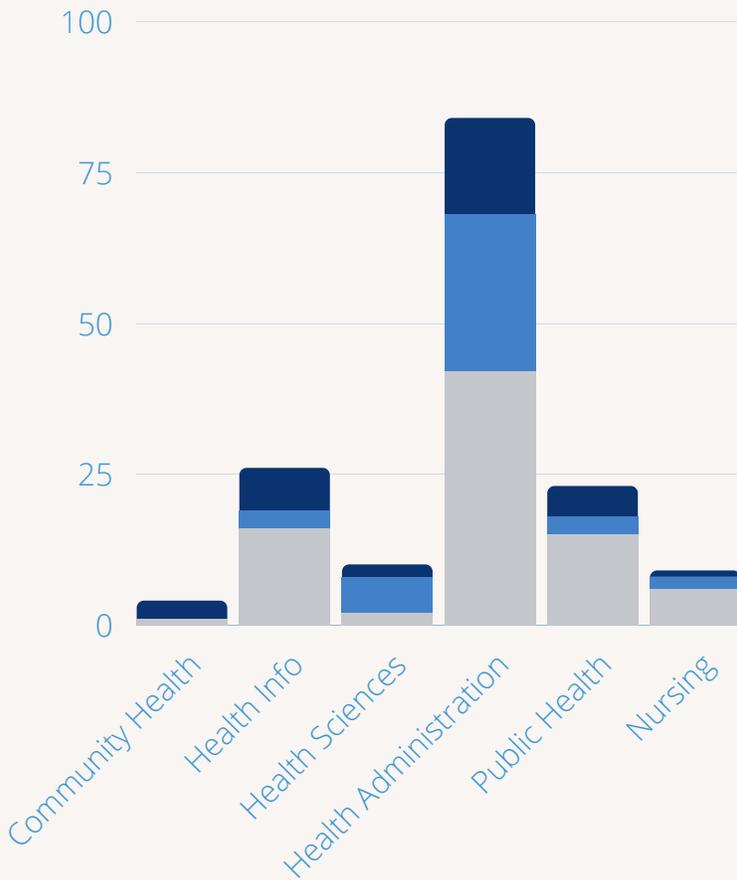
GEM learners who participate in the HEaRT challenges span across 7 locations, with the greatest number of learners coming from Kigali, Rwanda. Kigali had the highest number of badges awarded with 197, followed by Kiziba with 115.



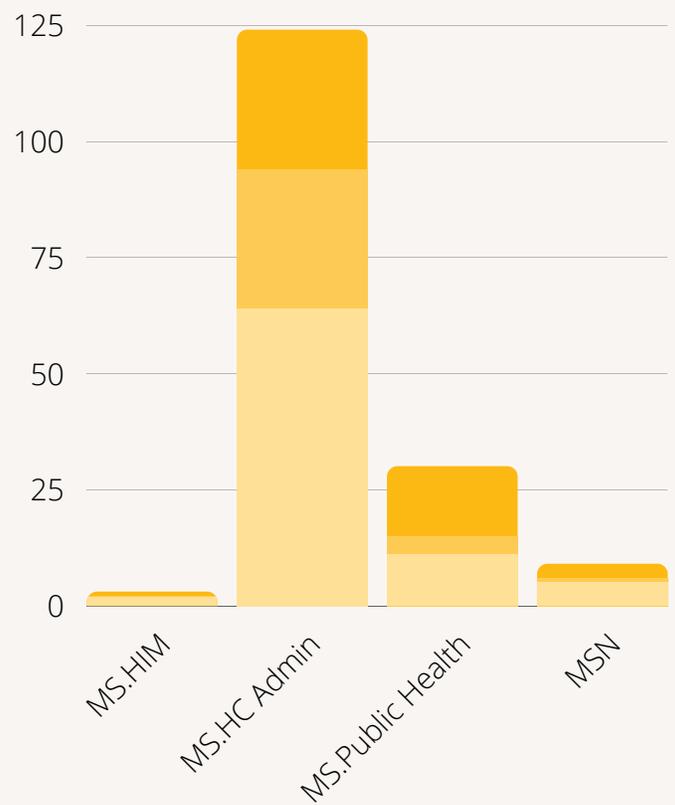
# GLOBAL CAMPUS PARTICIPANTS

HEaRT undergraduate Global Campus learners come from many backgrounds, ranging from healthcare administration, health information management, and public health to nursing.

Graduate Global Campus learners vary in their learning pathways, including healthcare administration, public health, health information management, business with a healthcare concentration and nursing.



HEaRT Participants by Undergraduate Degree Program



HEaRT Participants by Graduate Degree Program

## WHAT GEM LEARNERS SAY ABOUT HEART CHALLENGES

"I would recommend a classmate to participate in the HEaRT challenge, as this internship will help a student gain experience of what companies experience as real world problems and how they solve those problems. In addition, this challenge gives the intern the opportunity to work in a team with international students, which is a valuable experience for future career development."

**"I like how collaborative my team was, and how we managed to work while we were far from each other. It has shown me that everything is possible with a plan."**

**What did you like about the challenge? "The magical experience of dealing and interacting with people from different countries and cultures to achieve the same purpose. This is exceptional for me"**

"I liked the way we shared ideas and have commitment about how we could complete all assignment on time. For example, we were able to have different meetings in which we organized and divided tasks so as to accomplish all tasks on time."

# WHAT GLOBAL CAMPUS LEARNERS SAID

“

“The HEaRT Challenge helped me to develop new skills that I am grateful for. It also helped me to get accustomed to team collaboration. I enjoyed this challenge, and I would recommend other students to take this opportunity to see what their strengths and weaknesses are.”

”

“

“The skills used in a HEaRT challenge are vital for successfully navigating a career in healthcare. Problem solving, critical thinking, research, collaboration/teamwork, are all common soft skills that are utilized in healthcare and not understanding how to work in a team will hinder students from enjoying their career to the fullest of its potential.”

”

## **MORE THOUGHTS FROM GLOBAL CAMPUS CHALLENGE LEARNERS**

**“It is a great opportunity to learn, save money, and get real world experience...I plan to use this experience to enhance team engagement and continue to work on professional development.”**

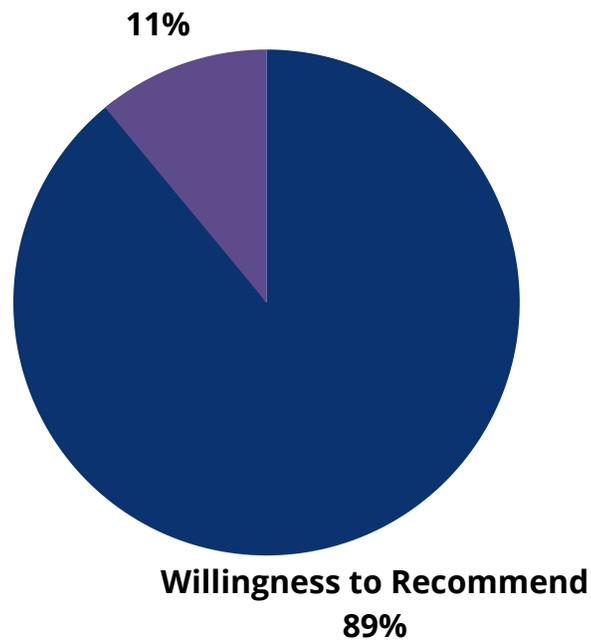
**“I think the structure is really great. We had a mentor that is helpful and the challenges are very flexible to allow us to still work on our school work, but also collaborate with our team at our own pace....I plan to apply these skills learned in my current career as a supervisor.”**

## **AND WHAT AN HSL LEARNER SAID**

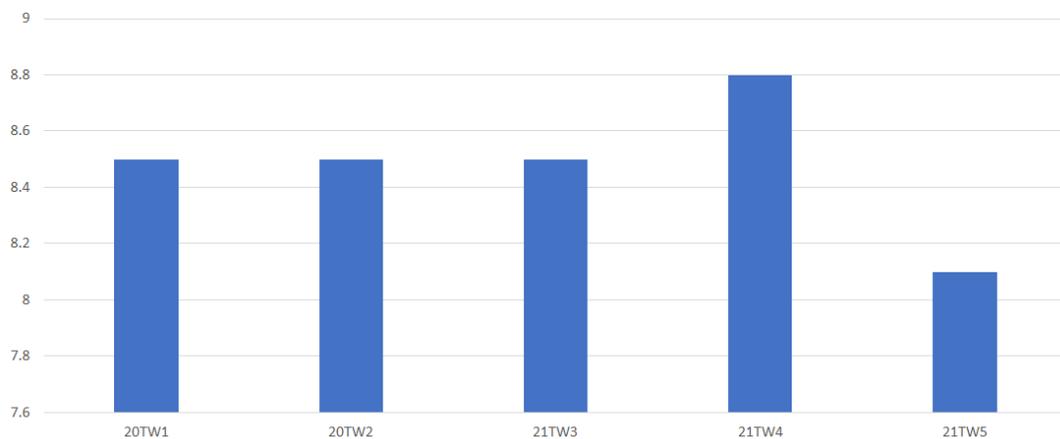
**“I learned that I can still be a leader and allow others to use their strengths to lead in different ways.”**

# STUDENT SATISFACTION

Student satisfaction remains very high, at 89% willing to recommend the HEaRT challenge to a classmate.



On a scale of one to ten, students consistently score the challenges high with the most recent term scoring at 8.1 with a five term average of 8.48.



# EMPLOYER PARTICIPANTS

To date, 15 employers have worked with SNHU learners, and below is an example of feedback from one of the employers.

"We can't express enough our gratitude for partnering with SNHU for the HEaRT program. We will certainly be incorporating suggestions and recommendations based on the outcome of the project to further increase our diversity and inclusion with clientele and employees. We are so grateful we had this this opportunity."

Will La Valle Psy.D  
President and Co-Founder  
Quintessential Health



"We value the research and insights provided by the students as we are always looking to move beyond the stereotypes associated with senior living. The SNHU projects have provided new ideas and fresh approaches to common challenges in our industry."

Kelly Ording MA, CDP, CADDCT  
Regional Director of Resident Programming  
Watermark Retirement Industries



# MODEL OF INSTRUCTION

The HEaRT challenges do not use a traditional instructor but instead the faculty work in the capacity of a mentor or guide. The mentor facilitates team development and team problem solving to simulate the work world. Because much of the work is team-based, the mentor model succeeds with a learner- to-mentor ratio of 1:100 without detriment to the learner or mentor experience.

Faculty fully embrace their role as a mentor, coaching groups to form quickly and create their deliverables in eight weeks. Mentors encourage teams to critically analyze the challenge through mentor guidance and reviewing the teams' work, while not being tied to grading multiple assignments per week per person. Some groups request more feedback than others in the challenge process; other groups truly take command of their own learning and create amazing results.

**“High Faculty and Student Satisfaction With 1:100 Ratio”**



**“**

**Dr. Michelle O'Neal, mentor, notes that "mentoring for the HEaRT Challenges is purposeful work. As a mentor, I facilitate and guide diverse participants and teams. Ultimately a mentor will help the team achieve their best work products by reviewing work and making substantive suggestions to the team. We are ever-present but blend into the background as not to interfere with group process. Being a mentor has been a rewarding and meaningful experience."**

**”**

# DIGITAL BADGES

HEaRT has since included digital badges as part of the student experience so students can demonstrate what they have accomplished on their digital resume or social media accounts. Six non-credit bearing badges and badge content, 3 credit-bearing meta badges, and a non-credit bearing completion badge have been developed.

When a student successfully masters a challenge, they will receive the corresponding digital badge. If the student completes the companion challenge successfully, they will receive an additional badge for that challenge as well as a meta badge, which can be converted to receive credit for the course. The photos to the right illustrate the challenges and badges that correspond for IHP-620 Healthcare Reimbursement and Finance.



**Badge**



**Badge**



**Meta Badge**



## SUMMIT BADGE

When a student completes all six challenges, they receive the Summit Badge entitled Graduate Healthcare Administration Professional I, four students have received the Summit Badge.

# HSL BADGES

Similarly, as learners complete each Solutions Lab, they receive a badge to validate their learning which can be shared on social media sites such as LinkedIn. If the learner completes three labs, they will receive a meta badge and can apply for credit.



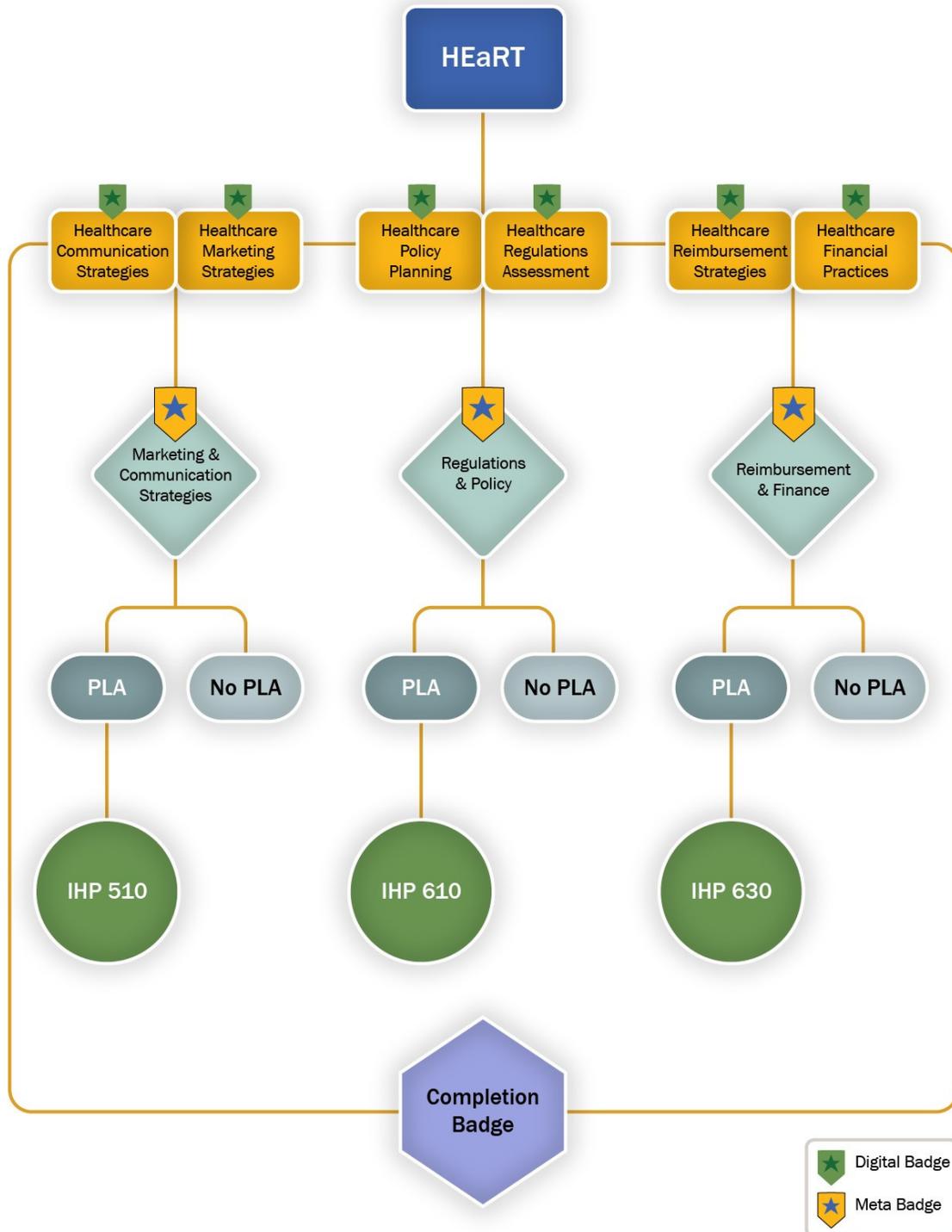
**Challenge and  
HSL Badges:  
538 Minor  
Badges  
39 Meta  
Badges  
awarded to  
date**

**COST  
SAVINGS**

In addition digital badges, having 'real world' experience with actual employers and working in teams, students experience a significant cost savings. When an online learner completes two corresponding challenges and receives the meta badge, the learner has the option to apply for Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) credits for a \$100 fee. That fee is for a 3 credit graduate course, in comparison to taking the traditional course online which is nearly \$2,000. A SNHU learner could earn up to nine graduate credit hours through the successful completion of all six challenges, a cost savings of \$5,343. To date, 22 learners have used the Prior Learning Assessment option to save \$39,182.

**“ \$39,182  
COST  
SAVINGS  
TO DATE ”**

# MAPPING THE PROCESS



In developing the first internal PLA option for Global Campus students, HEaRT mapped a new process for experiential learning, badging, and prior learning assessment as depicted above.

# HEART'S ADAPTATIONS

The flexibility of the HEaRT model allows for its use in a partnership with Social Sciences and Business learners where participants learn about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Learners working in teams analyzed the various types of diversity in a health care setting and developed a training plan for a health care employer partner, Quintessential Health. Those learners who successfully finish the DEI challenge earn a digital badge. Most recently, this HEaRT challenge had a live small group session with the employer, Will La Valle, providing a unique networking opportunity for our learners.



## HEaRT Answers the Call: COVID-19 Response



The COVID-19 pandemic affected learners' abilities to secure professional practice experiences. Both the Bachelor's of Science program in Health Information Management (HIM) and the Masters of Science in Nursing used an adaptation of the HEaRT model to provide learners with an alternative experience that met all accreditation guidelines. Without HEaRT, 87 HIM students and 51 MSN students would have experienced a delay in their ability to graduate on-time. The alternate experiences will be continued in 2022.

**138**  
**On-Time**  
**Graduations**

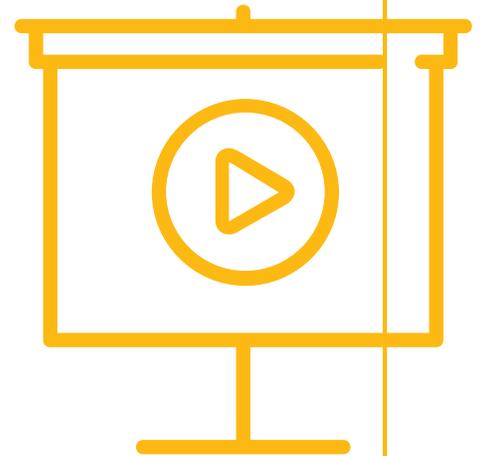


## HEaRT Publication

The HEaRT team has worked to showcase the beauty of the model in the past year through publication and shared with the academic community [Higher Education and Real-World Training \(HEaRT\): A New Ecosystem for Learning](#) in the Journal of Online Higher Education in May of 2021.

## Presentations include:

- Global Learning Consortium regarding our use of digital credentials.
- International Webinar on Nursing Education and Practice in March 2021 to showcase the flexibility of the model to assist nursing students with on-time graduation during COVID-19 pandemic.
- University Professional Continuing Education Regions Conference poster presentation in the fall of 2021 on the HEaRT model adaptations made to support nursing and health information management clinical practice experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.



## Awards

The HEaRT team was honored with the D2L Excellence Award in 2021

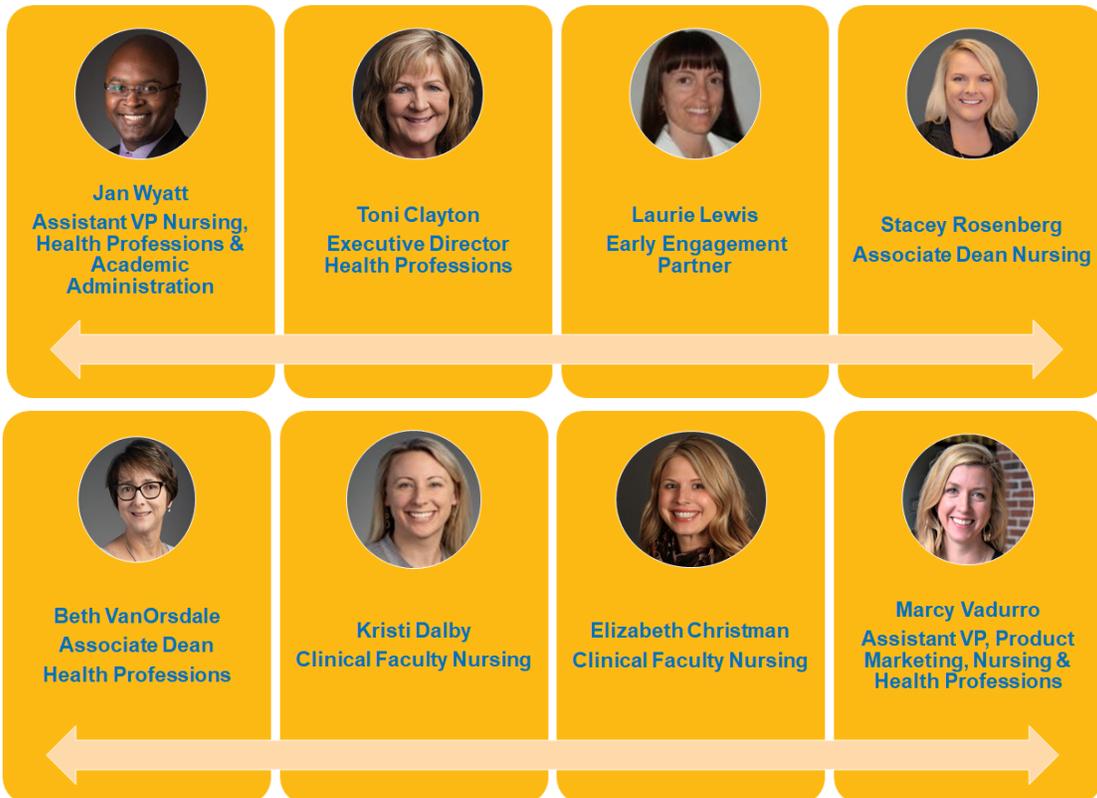
- A national award which recognizes educators, trainers, and leaders in employee engagement who have used the Brightspace platform to deliver learning experiences that are innovative, collaborative, or have made an extraordinary impact on learning outcomes.
- At the time of the awards announcement, HEaRT received international attention from the D2L Senior Leadership team with a feature on their website and our success story shared during a strategic presentation to their board.
- Outreach from D2L to the HEaRT team to assist a D2L customer in Singapore on logistics and details of model delivery.

In addition, the team received the Association of Continuing Higher Education (ACHE) Distinguished Program for Non-Credit Award in 2021.

- A national award which recognizes outstanding contributions to the advancement of continuing higher education.



# HEART TEAM MEMBERS



## Future of HEaRT

The HEaRT model has progressed tremendously in four short years, serving both undergraduate and graduate learners to develop real-world skills that will enable job placement and enhance their 21st century skills and careers. Research from the National Association of Colleges and Employers from 2017 indicates that approximately 40% of all undergraduate students do not have the opportunity to engage with companies through internships or experiential learning.

While HEaRT is meeting the need for experiential learning, the future goal for the HEaRT model is to expand our reach to students outside of SNHU and our GEM partners to create additional course work and programming based on the HEaRT model.

