

Cura Personalis: Fueling the Whole Person

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Mentor: Donna Hutchinson-Smith

As an educator and practitioner in the field of Exercise Science, I am always interested in how to best take care of individuals in my care in a variety of ways, but with the whole person in mind. This presents itself in my field as you can't just tell people what to do, but you have to understand their why, learning what motivates or demotivates them, what other barriers or priorities they have in their life, and work to support them toward living their best life. Upon joining our department at Xavier University, I was given many opportunities to grow and develop, most notably finding ways to identify and embody the gifts of the Ignatian heritage. *Cura Personalis*, which is translated to mean "caring for the whole person," is something I see great relevance within my field of work, and what I chose to focus upon for the Ignatian Mentoring Program.

In the Spring 2022, I taught our Exercise Science course Nutrition for Sport, which helps students to learn about food as fuel, how to identify the macro- and micro-nutrient needs of individuals they may work with, the common issues or struggles faced as people work to improve or modify their diet, and the unique challenges faced by athletes trying to enhance their performance. While this course has always had a project included, focusing on *Cura Personalis* as the underlying theme for the project helped to elevate the content and provide a much deeper dive and conversation with presentations.

To initiate a conversation and level set on what exactly we were setting out to do, I shared the following about what *Cura Personalis* means with our students:

Cura personalis - each person as a unique creation of God

Demonstrate care for the whole person: mind, body and spirit

Respect the dignity of every individual, valuing diversity and difference

Allow empathy and compassion to guide our decisions

Practice active listening, building trust through open communication

Seek balance in our professional and personal lives

We discussed in class what this could mean, and how we might see any of these statements reflected within conversations with clients, participants or patients we may work with. Next, I shared the details of the project with our students. They were to work in teams to discuss issues related to food, but specific to scenarios that demonstrated individuals who may not have their needs met. Their goal was to see the whole person, not just the nutritional needs, and consider how and why they may be in that position, and what supports may be needed beyond nutritional advice.

To help the students get started, I presented a series of questions to consider, and we used some class time to discuss:

- What are the recommended amounts of food/water for the individual(s) you're learning about?
- What deficiencies may exist due to the situation you've encountered? What are the concerns or implications (short and long term) if they are not addressed in a proper fashion?
- What issues may the individual(s) face/why might they NOT want to talk about this with others (stigma, discrimination, humiliation)?
- What other professionals may be aware of the issue/have some input or means of helping with the solution (who could you partner with)?
- Resources that you can seek out/learn from or about to aid in the situation & educational resources you could share
- What are big problems that could be addressed in an administrative/legislative/systemic way vs. on the individual level to limit issues like discrimination/stigma/financial concerns?

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The cases that were selected by the student groups were:



Case 1: College athlete who utilizes SNAP and struggles to afford foods team Dietitian is telling them to eat. Wants to improve performance but struggling to do so on the foods within budget and looking for options.



Case 2: Single active mom is sick often as she prioritizes her children's health/food over her own. Skipping meals, eating less than healthy options and undernourished while maintaining a workout schedule 3-5 days per week- needs support and advice for making changes.



Case 3: A town has found they have contaminated water and needs to determine how best to hydrate its students, but as an added challenge, it's student athletes.



Case 4: College students wish to live a healthy style, yet their college campus is designated a food desert as it is in an urban setting and more than 1 mile from a supermarket. What can be done about this?

To get a better understanding of the process, I did a brief check in with the students at the start of the student project work. I first asked them to share how familiar they were with the Jesuit value of Cura Personalis. The results were interesting, as I was expecting our students to have a bit more experience with the Jesuit heritage, being that this class was offered in the Spring of their 2nd year. Most surprising was that there were 35% of respondents who were not familiar at all or only slightly familiar with what Cura Personalis was.

Next, I asked how challenging it was to incorporate Cura Personalis and keep it in mind as they worked with their group. This question demonstrated how easily this Jesuit value translated into the classroom and specifically into this course. Over 70% of students indicated it was not challenging or only slightly challenging.

Students were also asked to share how they felt Cura Personalis was related to Exercise Science/Nutrition, and some of the key words, phrases and comments included:

- *"You have to think about their lives overall because those factors influence nutrition and exercise."*
- *"Nutrition is related to Cura Personalis through the well-being that nutrition can bring to an individual. Proper nutrition can benefit an individual's physical, psychological, and spiritual being."*
- *"In the exercise science field, we must care for or treat anyone no matter their background. We must work with open arms to anyone who walks through the door and treat everyone to our best ability. For nutrition in*

Question 1:

Not familiar at all	1	7.1%
Slightly familiar	4	28.57%
Moderately familiar	5	35.71%
Very familiar	4	28.57%
Extremely familiar	0	0%

Question 2:

Not challenging at all	3	21.43%
Slightly challenging	7	50%
Moderately challenging	4	28.57%
Very challenging	0	0%
Extremely challenging	0	0%

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particular, giving nutritional advice to people requires us to acknowledge their background, research the best options for the individual, and advise them to our best ability."

A rubric was offered to students as they completed their projects, which helped to identify key areas of learning to look at the whole person and their needs, using not only their insights, but also gain interprofessional insights from individuals working in the fields in a variety of organizations that work to address the needs they'd identified.

Expectation	10 points	8 points	5 points	Up to 5 points	YOUR POINTS:
Research: Learn about the individuals, systems, options, etc. that your case study is focused upon	Has at least 10 sources that are appropriate to the topic at hand and has shared content from each within project	Has at least 8 sources that are appropriate to the topic at hand and has shared content from each within project	Has at least 5 sources that are appropriate to the topic at hand and has shared content from each within project	Missing sources or not understood within content of project	
Professional insight: Find at least 3 people to reach out to (email/phone) who could provide personal perspective on the issue at hand.	3 individuals were reached & insights were shared within the project	2 individuals were reached & insights were shared within the project	1 individual was reached & insights were shared within the project	0 points – no professional insights were obtained	
Case presentation: Set the stage about who your case is about, from the whole person perspective	Exemplary case overview with details that allow the rest of class to fully understand the needs being addressed	Case overview provided with some details that allow the rest of class to mostly understand the needs being addressed	Case overview provided with many details missing that takes away from understand the needs being addressed	Minimal to no effort spent discussing the needs of the case	
Nutritional needs: Specific food and water needs of the population provided in detail	Detailed nutritional needs were shared	Nutritional needs were shared, but lacking some detail	Nutritional needs were shared, but lacking a lot of detail	Minimal to no effort spent discussing the nutritional needs	
Solutions explored: Share with us the solutions you explored and researched and prioritize them	3 solutions were shared and explained in the project	2 solutions were shared and explained in the project	1 solution was shared and explained in the project	0 points – solutions were not shared and explained in the project	
Partners: Identify other professionals or fields who may be engaged with this case and opportunities for partnership	3 partners were shared and explained in the project	2 partners were shared and explained in the project	1 partner was shared and explained in the project	0 points – partners were not shared and explained in the project	
Systemic changes: explain if there are/could be any changes in an administrative or systemic way to address this issue	3 systemic, administrative or legislative changes were shared and explained in the project	2 systemic, administrative and/or legislative changes were shared and explained in the project	1 systemic, administrative or legislative changes were shared and explained in the project	0 points – systemic, administrative or legislative changes were not provided	
Presentation: Points reflect what is presented in class	Exemplary job presenting what's been learned with all group members actively engaged	Good job with presenting what's been learned with all group members mostly engaged/some challenges with organization/flow of material	Presentation was given to overview what's been learned with some members not as engaged/some big challenges with organization/flow of material	Presentation was not done well/seemed unprepared to share what's been learned	
Professionalism of materials: Whatever format chosen is done in a clear and easy to follow format	Exemplary materials are provided to class – easy to follow/read	Materials were pretty good with some errors, but still easy to follow/read	Materials had issues that impacted ability to follow/read	Major issues with materials provided	

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Peer evaluation	Peer eval form to be completed with a 0-10 scale and comments	
		FINAL GRADE (OUT OF 100):

Upon completion of the project, and even the course, many students reflected upon the project and the impact it had on them. Students noticed how understanding the content they were learning in an applied, real-life scenario, with the Jesuit value of Cura Personalis was a useful tool that was meaningful and practical. Through the presentations of their projects, students were able to see how looking at the whole person as we consider how to help them fuel to meet the physical demands of their day was *required* if we were to be successful. I intend to continue to teach this course with this project in the future, as I felt it was a successful way of bringing to life the content being covered and further connecting our students to our Jesuit heritage.