

Advancing the Science of Team Science

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Abstract

The First Annual International Science of Team Science (SciTS) Conference was held in Chicago, IL April 22–24, 2010. This article presents a summary of the Conference proceedings. Clin Trans Sci 2010; Volume 3: 263–266

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The public health, social, technological, and environmental problems that impact our world are complex, but increasingly we are able to address them through scientific pursuit.¹ The sophistication of these challenges necessitates cross-disciplinary engagement and collaboration, and the longer-term interaction of groups of investigators—what is termed *team science*.^{2–9} Such team-based research collaborations are also an essential feature of a robust translational research enterprise.^{10,11}

The emerging field of the *Science of Team Science* (SciTS) encompasses both conceptual and methodological strategies aimed at understanding and enhancing the processes and outcomes of collaborative, team-based research.^{12,13,28} SciTS is concerned with understanding and managing circumstances that facilitate or hinder the effectiveness of collaborative cross-disciplinary science,^{14–19,28} and the evaluation of collaborative science outcomes.^{20–27} Its principal units of analysis are the research, training, and community-based translational initiatives implemented by both public and private sector organizations. SciTS focuses on understanding and enhancing the antecedent conditions, collaborative processes, and outcomes associated with initiatives rooted in team science, including scientific discoveries, educational outcomes, and translations of research findings into new practices, patents, products, technical advances, and policies.^{18,21}

In an effort to enhance the understanding of how best to engage in team science to promote collaborative translational research and meet society's needs, the First Annual International SciTS Conference was convened on April 22–24, 2010 in Chicago, Illinois. The event was produced by Research Team Support (RTS) of the Northwestern University Clinical and Translational Sciences (NUCATS) Institute, in partnership with the NIH National Cancer Institute, Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences and the Lambert Family Communication Conference of the School of Communication at Northwestern University. A Program Conference Committee of twelve renowned investigators in SciTS served as advisors.

The 3-day conference marked the first international, multi-agency forum dedicated to the emerging empirical field of SciTS, bringing together thought leaders from a broad range of disciplines, including: translational research, evaluation, communications, social and behavioral sciences,

complex systems, technology, and management. The goals of the conference were to serve as a point of convergence for team science practitioners and investigators studying science teams, to engage funding agency program staff to provide guidance on developing and managing team science initiatives, and to afford data providers and analytics developers insight into team tracking and analysis needs. Because of the diverse participation, the conference served as an important conduit for translating empirical findings about team science into evidence-based effective practices for scientific teams and funders of team science—a bridge between the *praxis* of team science and the *science* of team science.²⁸

More than 200 team science leaders/practitioners, research development officers, team science researchers, tool developers, and funding agency program officers attended this event, which included a keynote address, six panel discussions, and a research poster session. In addition, the agenda included a workshop on social network analysis (SNA) of teams. Each panel session was followed by a lively question and answer session, and the first 2 days of the conference concluded with an open discussion of the topics and ideas presented by the 24 panelists.

Setting the Stage: Science of Team Science Concept Mapping Project

In a keynote presentation, William Trochim (Cornell University) presented the results of an empirical exercise undertaken in preparation for the conference. Conference registrants and other interested parties were invited to participate in a web-based concept mapping project^{29,30} designed to provide a comprehensive taxonomy of issues in the SciTS that would help guide both the conference and this field of inquiry in the long term. The conceptual maps derived from the concept mapping study, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods by integrating an online brainstorming exercise with multivariate analysis, provided a programmatic foundation for future research in this field. A visual map of the SciTS field and its directions include: Definitions and Models of Team Science; Measurement and Evaluation of Team Science; Disciplinary Dynamics and Team Science; Structure and Context for Teams; Institutional Support and Professional Development for Teams; Management and Organization for Teams; and Characteristics and Dynamics of Teams (*Figure 1*).

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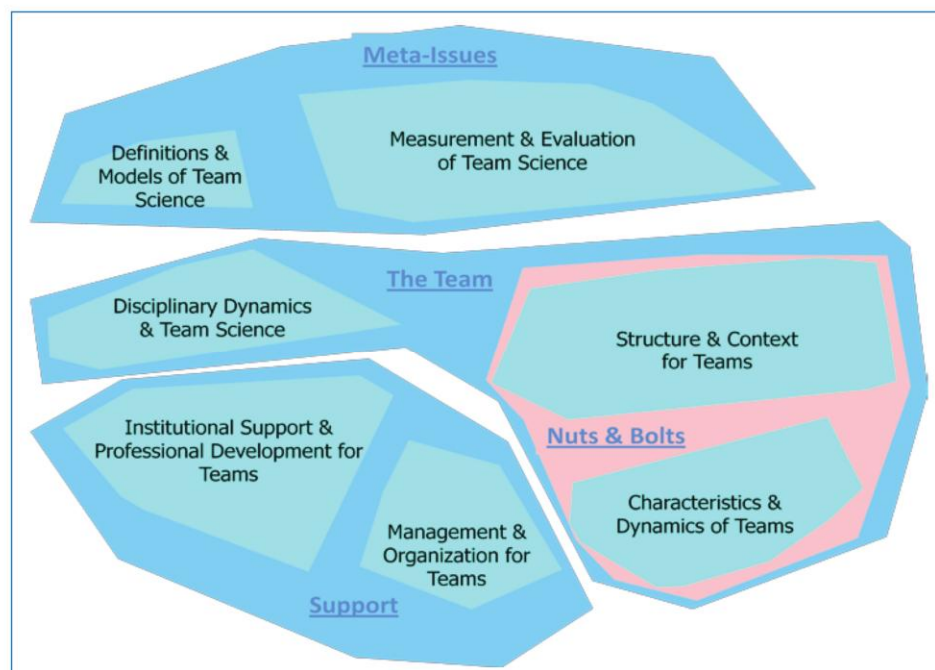


Figure 1. Science of Team Science Concept Map. This final interpreted map summarizes clusters and regions of topics identified as important parts of a comprehensive research agenda for the SciTS.

A Perspective on Challenges Related to the Science of Team Science

The lead session examined current developments and emerging directions in the SciTS. Stephen M. Fiore (University of Central Florida) summarized recent developments in scientific studies of team-based collaborative processes and outcomes, and how findings from this research will help guide future conceptual and empirical work in the SciTS. Julie Klein (Wayne State University) offered alternative conceptualizations of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary teams and their implications for understanding and facilitating intellectual integration and collaboration, as well as translation of scientific knowledge into effective research and educational programs, community interventions, and public policies. Dan Stokols (University of California, Irvine) introduced the concept of strategic team science and provided perspective on the changing ecology and structure of interdisciplinary research teams. He also noted new multimethod strategies for gauging scientific and societal impacts of team science (e.g., combining bibliometric assessments of team productivity, scientometric visualizations of collaborative networks, and domain experts' appraisals of the scientific innovation and impact of team science outcomes) and presented guidelines for strategically matching team structures and processes with intended collaborative goals.

Collaborative Dynamics of Teams: Content and Connection

This panel covered the processes and collaborative dynamics of interdisciplinary teams across the hierarchy of team-to-institutional connections. Joann Keyton (North Carolina State University) focused directly on the interdisciplinary team in lab and meeting settings. Using observational and interview data from scientists who work in interdisciplinary teams, she made distinctions between the task and relational activities that comprise team science. M. Scott Poole (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) examined the multiteam systems through

which science discovery occurs. He explored conditions under which effective multiteam systems are likely to form and conditions that militate against their formation. Linus Dahlander (Stanford University) reported on an NSF-supported study evaluating the impact, effectiveness, and consequences of interdisciplinary centers, citing key differences between interdisciplinary and disciplinary-based research, especially institutional reward structures. Jonathon Cummings (Duke University) offered a broad view of team science dynamics. Using data from 500 NSF projects, he described the institutional characteristics that inhibit interdisciplinary collaboration and detailed the coordinating and inhibiting mechanisms.

Network Perspectives of Teams

The panelists in this session presented different perspectives of network views of scientific teams. Noshir Contractor (Northwestern University) described the criticality of network

perspective in understanding and enabling team science from a multitheoretical and multilevel perspective. Benjamin Jones (Northwestern University) discussed the origin and motives of team science, why it is increasing across virtually all fields of science and social science, and why team authored work increasingly tends to produce higher impact work. Luis Amaral (Northwestern University) reported on a unique study of mentorship outcomes for 7000+ mathematicians whose careers span a 100 years period with interesting findings. Brian Uzzi (Northwestern University) reported findings on the relationship between a scientist's collaboration network and research impact with a focus on how network assembly rules stifle or stimulate the production of highly cited work. Finally, Katy Börner (Indiana University) presented studies that aim to understand and communicate how scholarly network structures evolve over time in geographic and topic space at the individual (micro), institutional/research field (meso), and (inter)national/global science (macro) level.

Praxis of Team Science

Panelists in this session discussed their experience leading, training, and fostering scientific teams in diverse situations and settings. Holly Falk-Krzesinski (Northwestern University) described her institutional role in research development and team science and experience catalyzing new federally-funded research centers. Teresa Woodruff (Northwestern University) presented her experience leading the NIH Interdisciplinary Research Consortium-(U54) funded Oncofertility Consortium, an interdisciplinary, multi-institutional collaborative team aimed at solutions to intractable problems using team-based science. Michael Wasieleski (Northwestern University) discussed leading the DOE Energy Frontier Research Center-funded Argonne-Northwestern Solar Energy Research (ANSER) Center and efforts to develop a team and proposal in response to the recent DOE

Hub center program. Howard Gadlin (National Institutes of Health) described working with investigators engaged in team science and recommendation for team science training, especially for early career investigators.

Strategies for Facilitating Team Science

Panelists in this session shared resources and described tools to support team science in practice. Michael Conlon (University of Florida), PI of the ARRA funded VIVO Consortium³¹ on research networking, described how the VIVO networking tool can be used to establish and facilitate team science collaboration. Kara Hall (National Institutes of Health) introduced an online “Team Science Toolkit” developed by her team at the National Cancer Institute. The Toolkit creates a dynamic community-driven repository of resources to support the practice and study of team science. Gary Olson (University of California, Irvine) demonstrated a new web-based tool that distills expertise drawn from his long experience of facilitating team science; the Collaboration Success Wizard can be used by researchers at various stages in the team science process to glean feedback and advice. Bonnie Spring (Northwestern University) previewed a series of web learning modules that she and her colleagues are developing. The first module introduces a wide audience to team science core concepts, incentives and challenges, team assembly and management skills, and evaluation.

Emerging Directions for the Science of Team Science and Science Policy

The panelists in this session discussed emerging directions in the SciTS as it relates to the impact on team science and science policy more broadly. Janie Fouke (University of Florida) highlighted approaches to overcome current practices at universities and funding agencies that hinder scientists working in teams. Sara Kiesler (Carnegie Mellon University) discussed the implications of team science for science policy, in particular, the tradeoffs between meritocracy and other criteria of team success. Nancy Jones (National Institutes of Health) discussed emerging themes for the SciTS policy and some key stakeholders and their needs. Julia Lane (National Science Foundation) presented an overview of the new NIH-NSF-OSTP data infrastructure initiative and STAR METRICS, which will be used to measure the effect of research on innovation, competitiveness and science, in the context of team science. And finally, Jack Tebes (Yale University) examined the challenges and opportunities for scholarly publication in interdisciplinary team science.

Workshop on Basic Methods of Social Network Analysis for Team Science

The workshop presented by John Skvoretz (University of South Florida) was designed to introduce team science researchers to basic concepts of SNA and orient participants to the available software packages for SNA. Special attention was given to methods that are most relevant to the research concerns of participants culled from the literature on team science and the abstracts to be presented at the conference.

A full summary of the Conference is available at <http://scienceofteamspace.northwestern.edu/2010-conference/2010-panels>. Next year's Second Annual International SciTS Conference will be held again in Chicago, IL April 11–14, 2011. An expanded conference program will include a full day workshop on Leadership and Team Science, keynote speakers, and an extended research

poster session. Additional information is available at <http://scienceofteamspace.northwestern.edu/annual-SciTS-conference>.

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