GOAL OF THE COMPETITION: This annual essay competition intends to help raise awareness of today’s urgent ethical issues confronting the health care industry and providers. This annual competition aims to initiate and facilitate a dialogue across the university that helps to cultivate skills in students that promote the key Bellarmine values of civic engagement, critical reflection, moral courage and leadership.

ELIGIBILITY: Registered full- or part-time undergraduate or graduate students enrolled in the College of Health Professions at Bellarmine University during the fall 2018 semester. This includes all College of Health Professions major programs, minors and the Health Care minor.

ESSAY TOPIC: Miguel is a 12-year-old Mexican citizen who has lived his entire life in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico with his parents, Maria and Juan. After being diagnosed with dilated cardiomyopathy, a condition that will require Miguel to receive a heart transplant in the next one to two years, a family member advised Maria and Juan to find a way across the border to seek treatment—and a transplant—in the United States. Upon entering the U.S., Miguel's parents successfully placed him on the United Network Organ Sharing (UNOS) waiting list for patients seeking a heart transplant. For the past six months, Miguel and his family have been living in the U.S. waiting for a donor. A donor heart has become available that is nearly a perfect match for Miguel. However, there is another candidate on the waiting list, Jimmy, a 14-year-old U.S. citizen, who is a match for the donor heart. Jimmy has been on the waiting list for a heart for nearly three years. In spite of this, the likelihood of a transplant that is successful long-term is about 20% lower for Jimmy than for Miguel. Nevertheless, the medical urgency of the situation for both Miguel and Jimmy is the same.

The controversy surrounding transplantation and immigration is hotly debated. One group of patient rights advocates argues that it is the medical community’s duty to help whoever is in the greatest need and has the greatest potential medical benefit, regardless of that person's country of origin or immigration status. This is the essential moral duty of the health care community. Another group argues that the medical community should give preference to U.S. citizens because to do otherwise would create an unpredictable supply and demand of organs and medical resources. They argue that governments of other countries might encourage their citizens to go to the U.S. for treatment, rather than developing organ transplant networks of their own.

ESSAY TOPIC QUESTION: Should immigration status affect someone’s access to medical treatment? Take a position and defend your claim.