



# Unprecedented Times Call for Revamped Leadership Skills

MARTIN SCHREIBER, EdD

Vice President, Providence Mission Leadership Institute, Providence St. Joseph Health

*“A health care organization that is efficient and capable of addressing inequalities cannot forget that its raison d’être ... is compassion ...”<sup>1</sup>*

— Pope Francis

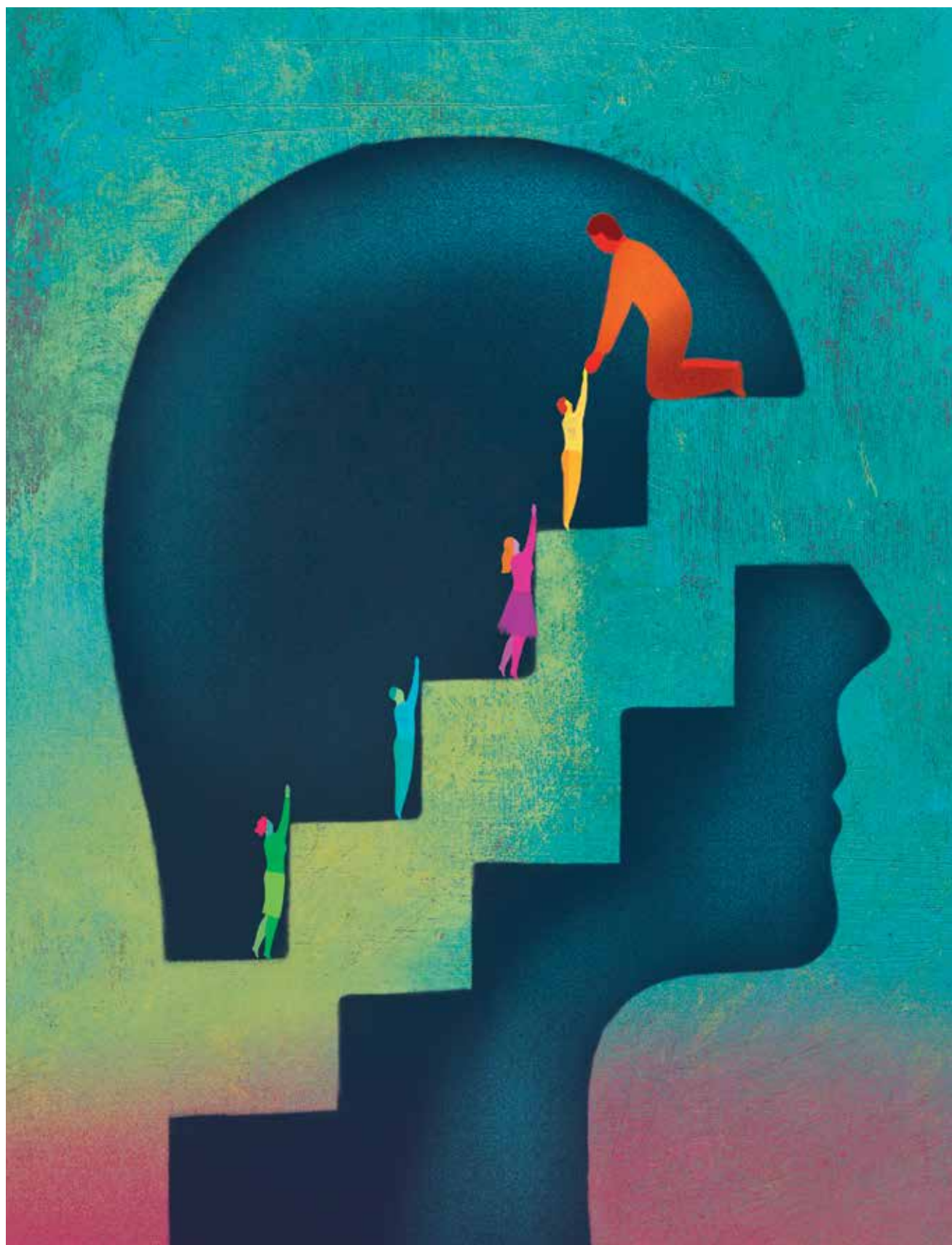
**T**he COVID-19 pandemic accelerated a reimagination of our current models of health care and intensified the focus on health equity for those who are poor and vulnerable, while bringing with it a cadre of additional and complex leadership challenges. Successful leadership in this age of health care requires a renewed leadership focus on mission, purpose and vision, along with updated strengths and skills to best advance the healing ministry of Jesus.

In response to these challenges, Providence is preparing leaders in new ways, beginning with a commitment to individual self-discovery, compassion and whole-person leadership. As noted by author and psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, “People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within.”<sup>2</sup> Advancing Catholic health care’s mission will require us to think differently. At Providence’s Mission Leadership Institute, we think of individuals on a pilgrimage with caregivers walking a path to self-discovery. To support leaders’ introspection, this work toward personal growth takes some non-traditional approaches to break down the walls that protect our weaknesses and fears, to recognize our own biases and to confront our vulner-

abilities. This extraordinary time in health care has made us realize that an honest examination by leaders of their internal inventory can help build their personal resilience. We believe in aiding them as they develop a wealth of resources. By drawing upon these helpful tools, our leaders can be better equipped to support and motivate others.

## SHAPING LEADERS FOR HEALTH CARE’S FUTURE

During the volatile period triggered by the pandemic, Catholic health care systems experienced a variety of unprecedented events: the need to rapidly and skillfully care for unusually high volumes of patients; to adapt to immediate technological changes; and to coordinate rapid responses to urgent health inequities. A level of “mission fragility,” a genuine concern about being





able to meet needs and to respond to patients and other care providers in the way we are called to do, was introduced. It warranted an urgent redesign of leader preparedness. Leadership success demanded quicker responses, broader communication skills, engagement of an entire campus and a whole-person sensory awareness. This work included approaches developed as a result of the ongoing overstimulation and burnout experienced by health care professionals during the pandemic. One way to protect against that overstimulation was to bring back the necessary focus on one's five basic senses and intuition like never before (what we call "5S + leadership").

Based on the changing circumstances of health care, we began to reimagine how we train leaders, pivotal to securing the future of Catholic health care. A new style of leadership became necessary: one that is more agile, more connected and responsive to constant fluctuations in health care environments, and better facilitated by reimagined strategy and leadership training centered on the mission.

#### TRANSFORMING LEADERSHIP TRAINING AT PROVIDENCE

The leadership training redesign at Providence was initiated in June 2020, drawing from the vision of Dougal Hewitt, chief mission and sponsorship officer, and Rod Hochman, MD, president and CEO. The Providence Mission Leadership Institute launched in November 2021 as an accredited program in mission-centered leadership. It guides individuals through accelerated leadership development in three main areas: immersive learning, mindfulness in practice and activating one's purpose.

After reviewing several global leadership approaches, it became clear to fulfill the mission, purpose and vision, created by the Providence legacy congregations, that this curriculum focus — supplemented with renowned speakers from across the U.S. — was the best option.

Much of our institute's curriculum is based on CHA's Shared Statement of Identity for the Catholic Health Ministry. Of utmost importance today for the nation's health care system are the values that respect human dignity and protect

human life. This includes respecting the principle of subsidiarity — which calls us to empower decision-making to those most directly impacted — and meeting the needs of those who are poor or uninsured, especially children, pregnant women, immigrants and other vulnerable populations.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the Catholic tradition of health care connects social justice with the delivery of care. Carolyn Woo, PhD, who holds the role of Distinguished President's Fellow for Global Development at Purdue University, was one of the institute's keynote speakers on the topic of the whole

### Leadership success demanded quicker responses, broader communication skills, engagement of an entire campus and a whole-person sensory awareness.

person. She said: "What I say and what I do must align."<sup>4</sup> She motivated us to look beyond our current crisis and rise toward a new dawning.

The institute is using a hybrid learning format that connects caregivers virtually and in person with graduate-level academic rigor. A distinct feature of the institute is the mission-centered leader platform that offers curated modules for education and inspiration: embracing art; specifically crafted music playlists for each of the seven core commitments of Catholic health care; LinkedIn learning posts; podcasts; and a library of session videos. The modules explain the principles and language of Catholic health care as it relates to the pandemic and the intensifying need to care for the poor and vulnerable with a health equity lens.

The first cohort of the Mission Leadership Institute offered whole-person development to 300 caregivers, all receiving an advanced certificate of 12 graduate credits from the University of Providence for completing the program. The cohort has its final session in March 2023. A Catholic university and the academic ministry of Providence, the University of Providence is located in Great Falls, Montana, and is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

In one of the sessions, Hochman summarizes how the Mission Leadership Institute prepares

## FORMATION AND MISSION LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

The Mission Leadership Institute is designed to facilitate development across several diverse health care campus disciplines and leaders.



leaders to sustain Providence's mission. "If you think about the three words 'Mission Leadership Institute,' what is more core to any organization? We know that if your compass isn't right on your mission, nothing else is going to happen. And then it is all about leadership. .... It's not about who is the CEO, it is leadership all the way through. ... The concept of institute codifies that it is part of who you are. To me, when you hear the word institute, I think about learning ... In the Mission Leadership Institute, while we don't have all the answers, we do know that our common commitment is that we are going to learn how to do this the right way."<sup>5</sup>

The Mission Leadership Institute was designed so caregivers throughout the campus can take part in varying levels of education and skill building to enhance their leadership career development. Three pathways feed into the framework of the Mission Leadership Institute: 1) Discerning Mission Leaders, 2) Mission Leadership Academy

and the 3) Mission Leader Platform (as previously described), which includes a course called Mission Integration Masterclass.

In the initial Discerning Mission Leaders program, which started in November 2021, about 30 caregivers from various disciplines were selected to take part in a graduate certificate program. It focuses on needed skills for new and aspiring mission leaders who want to explore a calling in mission integration.

The Mission Leadership Academy is an advanced certificate program that involves mission-centered leadership development for those early in their careers. In addition to Providence's formation opportunities, the academy fosters mission development at many different points in a person's career and encourages the entry of candidates who do not fit the traditional formation profile.

We also offer a special reorientation series called Mission Integration Masterclass. Targeted



to our current and aspiring mission leaders, the class uses a case study method for ongoing learning based on Providence's CARES (counsel, advocate, renew, ethically discern and spiritually support) model.

### COMPETENCIES IN LEADERSHIP FOR FUTURE TRANSFORMATION

In one of the institute's recent sessions on the poor and vulnerable, keynote speaker Maureen Bisognano, president emerita and senior fellow of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, discussed the importance of curiosity as an essential skill for leaders in Catholic health care. During her presentation, she asked participants a simple yet pivotal self-discovery question: What matters to you?<sup>6</sup>

**While our values remain, we need leaders responsive to greater diversity, equity and inclusion. We need thoughtful ways to preserve Catholic identity while also respecting the beliefs of others.**

The capacity for renewal — continued learning and reenergizing — is an important trait for today's leaders. Individuals need strategies for how to replenish their inner resources, and their organizations need structures to support them in this area. Woo, in laying the groundwork for mission-centered leaders, spoke on how those who are resilient have the capacity to reflect and to appreciate beauty. Fostering renewal needs to be one of the skills ingrained in all future leaders, and part of that relates to an understanding of the culture of encounter in Catholic health care. As Pope Francis noted, a culture of encounter involves "not just seeing, but looking; not just hearing, but listening; not just passing people by, but stopping with them ... allowing yourself to be moved with compassion ..."<sup>7</sup>

Effective leaders take a personal interest in the long-term development of their employees, and they use tact and other social skills to encourage them to achieve their best. It is not about being "nice" or "understanding"— it is about tapping into individual motivations in the interest of

allowing a person to flourish and further an organization's goal. A great leader's unique achievement is a human and social one that stems from one's understanding of their fellow workers.

At the institute, we have released the leadership models that Catholic health care has relied on in the past. While our values remain, we need leaders responsive to greater diversity, equity and inclusion. We need thoughtful ways to preserve Catholic identity while also respecting the beliefs of others. The new curriculum of leadership development programs within Catholic health care at Providence focuses on skills in addition to religiosity. These include the curiosity and capacity for renewal previously explained, and further aptitudes needed for future health care leaders, including empowerment and flexibility.

In addition to fully developing all skills needed for current and future health care leaders, program evaluation plays an important role in understanding how leadership development takes place and how it contributes to improving health outcomes.<sup>8</sup> While the Mission Leadership Institute has developed 300 leaders across the Providence

health system, ongoing evaluations have demonstrated the impact of this development through pre- and post-course surveys, course completion tracking, podcast listener metrics and e-portfolio assessments.

The training of mission-centered leaders for tomorrow will no doubt undergo frequent adjustment as we respond to ongoing health care delivery changes. Through this ongoing work, we will continue to stay focused on the core mission of Catholic health care, which encompasses health equity and an awareness of all people's needs.

### CONCLUSION

In the future, every health care system should be asking: Are we ready for what's new today and what lies ahead? Are our leaders prepared for the future, and how can we continually ensure that they have the right tools for success?

As we continue to focus on flexibility, empowerment, renewal and curiosity, the capacity for hope still remains as the sometimes flickering light that illuminates the path ahead. We are

light bearers for those we encounter in our work, particularly those on the margins.

**MARTIN SCHREIBER** is vice president of Providence's Mission Leadership Institute in Irvine, California. He hosts the "Providence Walk With Me" podcast. He authored two chapters on resilience and storytelling in the book *Physician Well-Being During Sustained Crisis*.

#### NOTES

1. Pope Francis, "Message of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Participants in the 32nd International Conference on the Theme: 'Addressing Global Health Inequalities,'" Vatican, November 2017, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2017/documents/papa-francesco\\_20171118\\_conferenza-disparita-salute.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2017/documents/papa-francesco_20171118_conferenza-disparita-salute.html).
2. Jim Clemmer, *The Leader's Digest: Timeless Principles for Team and Organization Success* (Toronto, Canada: ECW Press, 2003).
3. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States* (Washington, DC: 2007).
4. Carolyn Woo, "Whole Person" (Providence Mission Leadership Institute Whole-Person Session, Sonoma, California, March 17, 2022).
5. Dr. Rod Hochman, "Welcome and Introduction to the Mission Leadership Institute" (Providence Mission Leadership Institute Whole-Person Session, Sonoma, California, March 17, 2022).
6. Maureen Bisognano, "Leading with Compassion and Kindness" (Mission Leadership Institute Justice Session, Portland, Oregon, July 14, 2022).
7. Pope Francis, "For a Culture of Encounter," The Holy See, September 13, 2016, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2016/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie\\_20160913\\_for-a-culture-of-encounter.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2016/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie_20160913_for-a-culture-of-encounter.html).
8. Joel Njah et al., "Measuring for Success: Evaluating Leadership Training Programs for Sustainable Impact," *Annals of Global Health* 87, no. 1 (July 2021): 63, <http://doi.org/10.5334/aogh.3221>.

## Upcoming Events

*from* The Catholic Health Association

**Virtual Series: Ministry Formation Workshop**  
Tuesdays | From Jan. 24 to June 20 | 1 – 3 p.m. ET

**Virtual Dialogue: Honoring the Religious Diversity of Our Staff — Leveraging the Expertise of Chaplains**  
Jan. 26 | 1 – 2:15 p.m. ET

**Virtual Program: Foundations of Catholic Leadership Orientation: Jan. 31 | 1 – 2 p.m. ET**  
Sessions: Thursdays | From Feb. 2 to March 23 | 1 – 3:30 p.m. ET

**United Against Human Trafficking Networking Zoom Call**  
Feb. 7 | Noon – 1 p.m. ET

**Faith Community Nurse Networking Zoom Call**  
Feb. 27 | 1 – 2 p.m. ET



[chausa.org/calendar](https://chausa.org/calendar)

JOURNAL OF THE CATHOLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES

[www.chausa.org](http://www.chausa.org)

# HEALTH PROGRESS®

---

Reprinted from *Health Progress*, Winter 2023, Vol. 104, No. 1  
Copyright © 2023 by The Catholic Health Association of the United States

---