

# Health System Creates Academy to Change Culture & Strengthen Leadership

CASE STUDY



## CLIENT PROFILE & CHALLENGE

Mercy Health grew through mergers and acquisitions over a long period. The mindset across much of the organization was more competitive than collaborative, with individual operating units valuing their independence and autonomy over the larger organizational mission.

With the number of religious sisters in the organization declining and financial pressures on healthcare providers increasing, Mercy’s locally focused culture was preventing it from adapting. As it grappled with how to strategically and successfully handle the succession planning required for long-term sustainability, the organization concluded that it needed to develop the next generation of leaders in a way that would encourage and support systemwide, collaborative leadership.

These leaders needed to be prepared to carry forth Mercy’s mission and values, work across organizational boundaries, and tackle strategic, complex, and critical issues.

**CLIENT:** Mercy Health, a religious-based, mission-driven health system

**LOCATIONS:** 100+ corporations spread across 9 regions and 5 states in the Midwest

**SIZE:** 38,000 associates



*The idea of looking at talent across the system was still foreign. The instinct at the local level was to develop talent — and then protect it. It was clear that to implement succession planning in a meaningful way, we needed to change our vision. We had no way to create meaning around systemwide succession planning when our culture was in many ways locally focused.*

- Jon Abeles, Mercy Health Senior VP of Talent Management and Diversity

## SOLUTION & RESULTS

Mercy Health and CCL partnered to create the Mercy Health Leadership Academy, a 14-month-long learning and development experience. Mercy selected 28-person cohorts from among its high-potential, C-level executives in different regions. Each cohort went through an intensive process that included extensive evaluation, classroom sessions, team-based action projects, and coaching.

**The Leadership Academy aimed to align the organization's strategic priorities with 5 critical leadership factors:**

- A passion for Mercy's mission and values
- A commitment to servant leadership
- The ability to handle complex mental processes
- A bias for action
- The ability to develop others

**The program aimed to achieve specific organizational outcomes:**

- A stronger organizational culture
- A greater commitment to the organization's mission and values
- A deeper pool of leaders grown within the organization
- A greater number of promotions from within the organization, indicating more retention of good leaders
- More emphasis on innovation

Participants improved in all 18 competencies in our leadership development assessment. They also made significant advances in their readiness for leadership responsibilities, leadership effectiveness, confidence, ability to work across organizational boundaries, and effectiveness on collaborative projects.

The action learning projects that participants carried out helped them improve their ability to work in teams. They reported learning how to enact leadership with a group of peers (versus a group of subordinates), building relationships that led to more creative processes and more meaningful work, and other team outcomes.



## SUCCESS OF ACTION LEARNING PROJECTS

Some of the action learning projects by participants focused on reducing medical errors, improving performance measures, chronic care, and product standardization. These led to improvements in clinical effectiveness, patient safety, and patient satisfaction.

Another action learning project led to a systemwide strategic plan for diversity and inclusion, dramatically increasing the diversity in Mercy Health's leadership ranks.

## PARTICIPANTS SAY

*We have created a critical mass of leaders who are connected, collaborative, and committed to our mission. We are working in more system-focused ways and leveraging our strengths in ways we never anticipated.*

—Jon Abeles, Mercy Health Senior VP of Talent Management and Diversity

## IMPROVEMENT INDICATORS

15

Number of key initiatives advanced through action learning team projects

2.5% → 10%

Increase in diversity of strategic leadership team over a 5-year period

## PARTNER WITH US

We can partner with you to identify your organization's high-potential talent and help them develop their skills in critical leadership areas. We'll work with you to design a talent development solution tailored to your unique needs to help grow your organization into the future. **Learn more:** [ccl.org/talent-development](https://ccl.org/talent-development)

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