

Founding Head of School: A New Health Pathways High School, Sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

A Time for Mercy and Justice, A Time for You

The times in which we live call for *mercy and justice*.

The devastating path of COVID-19 – with health and economic impacts far crueler in breadth and intensity in marginalized communities - has elevated the need for an educated and diverse public health workforce. It has laid bare the need for jobs that can meaningfully contribute to better health outcomes in these communities, and flourish in a rapidly changing COVID-19/post-COVID-19 economy.

The recent series of tragic deaths at the hands of law enforcement intensifies the need to dismantle systems of racial oppression, and give rise to a more inclusive vision for America, one which finally applies the original ideals of this nation to all people. The need for systems-level reform to undo centuries of brutal racist actions and policies in all facets of our lives – from education to health care to housing to policing to countless others – will demand that our country is led by an educated and activated populace. We need more young people capable – at the most basic and the most human level – of persuading others’ hearts and minds to believe in and to act upon anti-racism.

The Mercy Education System of the Americas (MESA) now seeks a founding head of school who aspires to forge a **new high school model** to help give our world more of what it so desperately needs: *mercy and justice*.

A Time for Mercy Health Pathways, A Time for You

MESA is now looking for an extraordinary leader – like **you** - who shares our same resolve to respond to these uncertain times by creating a place of hope for historically marginalized students and families. We need a founding head of school who will turn the dream of **Mercy Health Pathways Junior/Senior High School** into a reality.

MESA has spent the past year engaged in an intensive planning and design process for the establishment of Mercy Health Pathways Junior/Senior High School (or “Mercy Health Pathways” as working title) – a grades 7-12 model anchored in sequenced health sciences pathways – that would help reset the life trajectories of students and families who need this school the most. Mercy Health Pathways is guided by both the *spiritual* (shaping students to hear and to live the call of the Gospel), and the *practical* (providing students with a clear path to a living wage upon graduation). To that end, the school will prepare historically marginalized students for both the health sciences workforce and post-secondary educational success, with an innovative programmatic arc of the student experience. Furthermore, Mercy Health Pathways will launch in a state – Ohio or Florida – with a robust public voucher program to make this education both accessible for students and sustainable for the new institution.

You – as founding head of school of Mercy Health Pathways – will provide a Catholic education and a comprehensive, academic, career and technical school experience aligned to career pathways in the health sciences. In the Mercy tradition, the school that **you** found will live the Gospel in word and action and promote service to others. By harnessing the support of a diverse and collaborative group of school stakeholders – including students, families, educators, the community, industry and institutes of higher education – **your leadership** will ensure that a Mercy Pathways graduate has an ethical and moral compass, exhibiting dignity and respect for all people, ready to not only face life’s challenges with confidence but to contribute to the betterment of society.

A Time for Extraordinary Leadership, A Time for You

A. Your Role

To operationalize the school design plan for Mercy Health Pathways, MESA knows full well that finding an extraordinary founding head of school is the single most important step that we can now take. A resolute individual - willing to roll-up their sleeves and engage in the hard work of creating a new school – is the fulcrum on which this new school will turn.

Indeed, as founding head of school, **you** will be assisted by a roadmap, as much preparation has already gone into the planning of this new entity (modeling of financials and staffing, securing of philanthropic commitments, project work plan for 2021-22 pre-launch year, etc.). In actuality, however, **you** will be guided more by grace and the collective wisdom of the Mercy tradition in education: you are venturing to create a new Catholic high school model that does not currently exist. To this latter point, **you** will need to be comfortable with uncertainties, as – for example – the site location (in or around Cleveland, Ohio or the Palm Beach/Treasure Coast Region of Florida) will not be finalized until March 2021, likely a few months after **you** apply.

If hired, your initial accountability will be to the MESA Board of Directors and then later to a local school board of trustees. **You** - as the founding head of school for Mercy Health Pathways - will have important work in the 2021-22 pre-launch year, with goals to include:

- Mercy Charism and Catholic Identity: Understanding deeply - at a personal level first - the charism of Mercy which includes Catholic Identity in the Mercy Tradition which will animate your leadership, and ultimately, serve as the lifeblood of Mercy Health Pathways
- Community Engagement: Ensuring that community members and community leaders are welcoming of and advocate for the mission and vision of Mercy Health Pathways
- Family Engagement: Securing support – and tangible “intent to enrolls” – from families of future students for the 2022-23 launch of Mercy Health Pathways
- Facility: Readying a facility to be tailored to the programmatic needs of this dynamic health sciences-oriented approach
- Founding Team: Selecting the key personnel – leadership and staff - who will be tasked with teaching the values and the content of Mercy Health Pathways
- Founding Board: Identifying the crucial founding board members who will govern Mercy Health Pathways
- Diocesan Relationship: Strengthening relationship and liaising with the respective diocese (either the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland or the Catholic Diocese of Palm Beach) in which this independent Catholic school, sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, will be located
- State Approval: Navigating the state specific approval process, so that the students and families of Mercy Health Pathways can benefit from the state’s public voucher program
- Philanthropy: Securing additional financial resources to ensure that Mercy Health Pathways has the requisite funding for early years capacity-building and longer-term endowment-building
- Industry and Higher Education Partnerships: Defining the core health-related industry partners and – if applicable – higher education partners most aligned to the health sciences programs ultimately pursued

Through the generosity of the [Drexel Fund](#), **you** will receive salary and benefits in this pre-launch year - all to ensure that your full, undivided attention can be placed on meeting these aggressive goals. Having met all of the above goals, **you** and your team will welcome students and their families into Mercy Health Pathways in the fall of 2022, with the eyes of both your community and potentially other communities in need of this type of innovative Catholic school on you.

B. Your Background

Mercy Health Pathways will be led by a head of school who evidences three traits:

1. Deep alignment with both the charism of Mercy and the programmatic architecture of Mercy Health Pathways.
 - The founding head of school must lead in congruence with the values and beliefs of the Sisters of Mercy, and with courage to root a multi-layered program (replete with internships, classes off campus, and a dramatically different definition of student success) in a new community. The successful candidate for the head of school position, therefore, must be able to articulate both their aligned beliefs toward Mercy and their capacity to see a complex, health career-inspired model flourish.
2. A desire to better your personal and professional self, driven by creativity, passion, and humility.
 - The founding head of school must face the daily challenges of starting a new school with grace and not kid themselves about what they do not know. They must endeavor to grow – in mindset and in action – just as the school itself grows, showing that an organization committed to continuous improvement starts with a leader committed to that principle. The successful candidate for the head of school position, therefore, must be a learner first and a servant leader second.
3. A capacity to clearly communicate and generate buy-in from a wide array of stakeholders.
 - The founding head of school must build broad and deep relationships – predicated on trust and of rightly placed hope - with a diverse group of diverse stakeholders. They must make staff, students, families, partners and the broader community feel the welcome and warmth of the new flame of Mercy Health Pathways. The successful candidate for the head of school position, therefore, must communicate with ease and purpose.

C. Your Next Steps

This opportunity is not for everyone. However, if you can see your own life experiences in each of these three traits, believe in your ability to take on the extraordinary task and opportunity of starting a school, are Catholic, and possess a bachelor's degree, then we invite you to take the following steps to apply for this position:

1. Read the Executive Summary of the School Design Plan for Mercy Health Pathways Junior/Senior High School [linked here](#).
2. After reading, please submit a statement of interest (750 words maximum) along with a résumé to founders@sistersofmercy.org. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis, with a priority application deadline of January 22, 2021. Serious candidates should submit an application today. The statement of interest should articulate:
 - What interests you about the mission and vision of Mercy Health Pathways, and
 - What specifically in your background (experiences, roles, opportunities) correspond with the three traits sought in our founding head of school.

In congruence with MESA's vision for a more equitable and inclusive future, candidates whose personal background and understanding of the students and families that Mercy Health Pathways Junior/Senior High School intends to reach are encouraged to apply.