

Values Driven

An Interview with Cathy Fraser,
Chief Human Resources Officer, Mayo Clinic

EDITORS' NOTE *Cathy Fraser is responsible for the people strategies and services that ensure Mayo Clinic's current and future workforce delivers its patient-centric mission in alignment with the organization's primary value – the needs of the patients come first. Before joining Mayo Clinic in 2016, she led HR at Tenet Healthcare, a large national healthcare services company. Earlier in her career, she served as a management consultant at McKinsey & Company, helping clients with organization and human capital opportunities primarily in the retail and consumer industries. Fraser also worked in various finance roles at American Airlines, Sabre and General Motors. She earned her bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Washington and an M.B.A. from the University of Michigan. Fraser currently serves on the board of trustees of the American Association of Cancer Research Foundation and is a member of Women's Corporate Directors and Women's Business Leaders.*



Cathy Fraser

INSTITUTION BRIEF *Mayo Clinic (mayoclinic.org) is a not-for-profit organization committed to clinical practice, education and research, and providing expert, comprehensive care to patients with serious and complex illnesses. Mayo Clinic has major campuses in Rochester, Minnesota; Scottsdale and Phoenix, Arizona; and Jacksonville, Florida. The Mayo Clinic Health System serves more than 60 communities in Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Mayo Clinic cares for more than one million people a year.*

How critical are Mayo Clinic's values to the consistent strength and leadership of the organization?

We have very long tenure at Mayo Clinic which allows us to pass along expected norms and behaviors quite effectively over time, and that consistency allows us to keep our actions very aligned with our values. I have never worked with an organization that lives its values as palpably as Mayo Clinic does. Every one of our 65,000 people will tell you that the primary value of Mayo Clinic is that the needs of the patient come first.

This is not just a catch-phrase. I've actually seen it in how we make decisions. The top leadership of this organization will always ask how

a decision aligns with our values and serves the needs of the patient. This is refreshing because our values are not just words on a poster on the wall. They are actually lived and breathed every day.

Will you discuss Mayo Clinic's focus around diversity and inclusion and, with such a diverse patient base, is it important that the workforce mirrors that population?

Absolutely. We have a very international patient mix. Most of our customers are not from Rochester, Minnesota, where we have about half of our workforce.

The international world looks really different, so we have to be quite intentional around ensuring that we are bringing people in and recruiting physicians from around the world. Our allied health staff are primarily local, so we have to be very deliberate about ensuring that we achieve as good a representation as we can.

This is challenging, but it is doable. We have to look for different sources for talent. It means we go into high schools and start influencing programs at that level to inspire people that have an ethnic background that more closely matches our patient population. We do this very deliberately starting with a few core programs.

Mayo Clinic is known to attract and hire the best talent. Does this ensure a certain level of diversity or do you need to have programs in place in your hiring process to make sure that you are reaching diverse talent pools?

We absolutely need to have processes in place. We are a very career focused organization. In fact, our people strategy is "lifelong careers for talented people who share our values." We want people to stay a long time.

We know they will not be successful, nor will we be successful with getting great people, unless we are all aligned around our values. We assess for values fit first. Then, hopefully, we are able to reach a big enough pool that we are able to attract a very diverse and qualified set of people.

How broadly do you define diversity at Mayo Clinic?

At Mayo, it is more about inclusion than diversity. Every individual must have a voice. No one should feel marginalized, regardless of what their demographics or psychographics are,

so we measure this. We ask the question, "Do you feel like you can speak up?"

We have to address this issue of inclusion everywhere. We have affinity groups as well as employee resource groups that focus on fostering this. We have about 30 Mayo employee resource groups. These represent not only ethnic groups or gender groups, but also other kinds of interest groups. For instance, we have a group for people who are aspiring to become leaders. We have well-being champions who address physical fitness, nutrition, social challenges and any other issues that affect a person's well-being.

We also have virtual affinity groups where people can share tips and ideas. These help drive connection and broaden the definition of diversity beyond the classic areas such as gender and ethnicity.

With the long tenure of Mayo's employees, is it challenging to maintain a culture of innovation?

One of our values is innovation and we actually have many reinforcing mechanisms here that effectively set an expectation of innovation. For instance, many of our people, particularly our physicians, have attended either our graduate school or our school of medicine. They have had this concept of what innovation means peppered into their earliest lessons.

Physicians create an expectation that all of our people contribute time to either our education, our research, or our administration areas. They are also expected to keep advancing their education or research portfolios, so rarely will you find a physician who says, "All I do is practice."

Another interesting part of the innovation concept is based on our compensation model. Mayo Clinic employees are paid base salary based upon market and experience. This means that the need to take on extra patients to accumulate more compensation is off the table. People here are paid very fairly, but they are also paid to contribute in a way that goes beyond just the practice through research. If we don't do research and innovate, future patients are not going to receive the care that we would want for them at Mayo Clinic.

Taking that pay piece off the table is an amazing motivator for people to innovate because they have the time to do it. They are no longer held hostage to having to see more and more patients in order to make more money. ●