

# Mount Sinai's Values

An Interview with Gary C. Butts, M.D.,  
Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Mount Sinai Health System

**EDITORS' NOTE** Dr. Gary Butts is also Dean for Diversity Programs, Policy and Community Affairs for the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. Dr. Butts holds joint appointments as Professor with tenure in the Departments of Pediatrics, Medical Education, and Environmental Medicine and Public Health, and has been an integral member of the senior leadership team at the Icahn School of Medicine since 1998. Since 2004, he has directed the Center for



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Multicultural and Community Affairs (CMCA), which has been recognized as a Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Center of Excellence for Minority Health. Under his leadership, the student body at the Icahn School of Medicine has become one of the most diverse among U.S. private medical schools, and the school has doubled the percentage of black and Latino faculty, residents and fellows. In his role as Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Dr. Butts has directed the Mount Sinai Office for Diversity and Inclusion since 2014, leading systemwide efforts which have positioned Mount Sinai Health System to be ranked #1 for two consecutive years by DiversityInc for hospitals and healthcare systems in the U.S. Dr. Butts completed his premedical studies at Columbia College before attending Cornell Medical College. Dr. Butts completed his clinical training in pediatrics at The Mount Sinai Hospital and has been part of Mount Sinai since 1980. He was also a Deputy Commissioner for the New York City Department of Health from 1993 to 1998.

**INSTITUTION BRIEF** The Mount Sinai Health System ([mountsinai.org](http://mountsinai.org)) encompasses the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai and seven hospitals, as well as a large and expanding ambulatory care network. The seven hospitals – Mount Sinai Beth Israel, Mount Sinai Brooklyn, The Mount Sinai Hospital, Mount Sinai Queens, Mount Sinai St. Luke's, Mount Sinai West, and the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary of Mount Sinai – have a vast geographic footprint throughout New York City. In 2017, Mount Sinai Health System hospitals received roughly 3.8 million patient visits, including inpatients, outpatients and the emergency department.

The Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai opened in 1968 and has more than 6,300 faculty members in 33 academic departments and 38 clinical and research institutes. A renowned medical school, it is ranked

number two in the nation among medical schools for overall research funding per principal investigator. The Mount Sinai Hospital is ranked number 18 in the nation by U.S. News & World Report and ranked in the top 20 nationally in six medical specialties in the 2017-18 "Best Hospitals" guidebook. The New York Eye and Ear Infirmary of Mount Sinai was also ranked nationally in Ophthalmology and Ear, Nose and Throat.

**Would you discuss the importance of diversity and inclusion within Mount Sinai and how ingrained is it within the culture of the organization?**

Diversity and inclusion and addressing issues of equality and equity have been part of Mount Sinai's values since its inception.

The focus and ways in which we have organized and do this work have changed. Today, we are uniquely organized for success in this space, which is important because it's not just about improving numbers but, more importantly, continuing to advance diversity and inclusion and to sustain the impact of this work across our growing institution.

**How critical is it that senior leadership is highly committed to these efforts?**

No one can do this work alone nor do it without practical and genuine support from the most senior leadership. This includes helping to define systemwide priorities and a consistent strategy. One needs both the approval and support of the most senior leaders as well as those within each of our hospitals and the medical school. We also need the accountability of the leadership of the various units.

**How important is internal communication to ensure employee engagement?**

It's very important. If our staff doesn't hear this message or engage in it, then we have missed the mark.

We take advantage of events that allow staff to appreciate our efforts. Also, employees come together as part of our Employee Resource Groups.

Every hospital has a diversity council and the hospital presidents and C-suite leadership sit on our Executive Diversity Leadership Board.

Not only are employees hearing directly from leadership, but they're participating in activities that are often run by leadership.

**How important are metrics to measure the results of your diversity and inclusion efforts?**

Metrics are important, but it is equally important to know what we're looking for. Not all of the impact of good diversity and inclusion efforts is easily measured. That said, we've aimed to develop metrics that relate to the work people routinely do. This applies to HR recruitment as well as medical school admissions and residency recruitment.

We're currently working to stratify our healthcare performance metrics by race, ethnicity and gender. This will allow us to understand whether variations in healthcare and outcomes exist.

When we are addressing issues that are important to senior leadership, then it's easier to appreciate how our work is important to supporting institutional priorities.

**What has made Mount Sinai such a special place for you to work?**

Mount Sinai has been my professional home for almost 40 years. It has always been a place for opportunity and to make a difference. It is also a place for driving innovation but, then again, innovation cannot happen optimally without diverse perspectives to push the conversation beyond one type of thought.

When we include different voices and perspectives in defining solutions, it strengthens what we are and makes a great institution even better.

**Would you highlight the success that Mount Sinai has had with its diversity efforts?**

We have done well in achieving a robust level of diversity across most levels of our medical school and health system. We are particularly intentional in how we approach outreach and recruitment for the medical school, an important pool for our next generation of leaders. We have maintained black and Latino participation of close to 20 percent in our medical student body for more than 15 years. Asian students represent another 20 percent of our student body and a substantial percent of the student body are first generation college graduates.

What we've done with gender diversity in the medical school is also impressive. We have ensured that women apply and matriculate to our medical school in comparable numbers to those in the national pool of applicants. We are also inclusive of LGBTQ individuals as well. Though metrics are important, we don't screen solely on the basis of them – we are looking to get a diverse group of exciting, interesting and talented individuals to make up our student body.

We also want to keep much of this talent in our system. This is the pool from which we can more easily draw our residents and faculty. ●