



March 16, 2023

Road Map Bulletin: Q&A with Valerie Orellana – Exploring Equitable Hiring Practices for Marginalized Communities

Happy Thursday, Mount Sinai Community –

As you know, the Road Map was established to ensure Mount Sinai is an anti-racist learning and health care institution. To achieve this, our workforce must reflect the patients we serve, the clinicians we train, and the communities in which we live—which is one of [the Road Map goals](#).

While many institutions focus on increasing diversity only at highly visible executive levels, Mount Sinai is going one step further, placing an emphasis on diversity in all roles across the Health System. As part of this effort, Mount Sinai has developed and implemented talent acquisition initiatives that ensure marginalized communities have the opportunity to find their place in the Health System.



To share more about the importance of a diverse workforce and explain the ways Mount Sinai is continuously working to expand opportunity, we spoke with **Valerie Orellana, RN, MS**, Vice President of Human Resources and Chief Human Resources Operations Officer at the Mount Sinai Health System.

Q: Can you tell us about what Mount Sinai is doing to drive diversity in Talent Acquisition?

A: We do a tremendous amount of hiring each year, especially in East Harlem in partnership with a job training and career development nonprofit called [STRIVE](#), which started in the 1980s to tackle the chronic unemployment and poverty that plagued disenfranchised communities across New York City. Their local community members include immigrants, Black and Indigenous people, returning citizens with past convictions, and those trying to move from public assistance to financial independence. We first started working with them to help us with hard-to-fill vacancies. We collaborated with STRIVE to develop a 12-week training and certificate program to educate their pool of talent and eventually matched these individuals with our vacancies. Additionally, the pandemic made a hard situation even worse for those who face multiple societal barriers to economic stability and hurt many families' financial security. Today, we continue to partner with STRIVE to hone a unique workforce model that creates career pathways and upward mobility opportunities across the Health System.

Q: Is this initiative unique to Mount Sinai Health System?

A: While nonprofits like STRIVE have tried to connect with other New York hospitals, we are the only Health System to remain committed to their mission and prioritize matching vacancies with their candidates. For instance, if we have difficulty filling a role, I'll connect with STRIVE or another local community partner to develop a curriculum and training to meet the job description and necessary competencies. From there, we narrow down applicants based on the individual's competencies, and we ensure their background is never shared outside of the hiring committee. Through these partnerships, we're able to serve the community, while finding and onboarding staff who, in many cases, can relate to our patients and improve their care.

Q: How does your work with programs for underrepresented minority groups fit into the larger goal of building and creating equity at MSHS?

At the core of Mount Sinai, we are here to help the community. From entry level to leadership roles, we must have staff that reflect the community we care for. It's the local communities that bring their care to Mount Sinai. They have a connection with our patients. Recently, one of our housekeepers told me how she sat with a patient and listened to them share their experience — small moments like that foster positive relationships and drastically impact the effectiveness of our care.

Q: Can you speak to the need for initiatives that support people with complex backgrounds?

A: The question is "who else is going to give them a chance?" If not an organization like Mount Sinai, where we're taking care of people, who better to extend a helping hand? It is our responsibility, especially in our community, to provide people with the opportunity for sustained employment with benefits and networking opportunities—it is life-changing. I'm really proud of my team—every day, we offer jobs to people with complex, and sometimes tragic backgrounds, who are then afforded the opportunity to develop a career, find a place to call home, and even go on to leadership positions within MSHS.

Q: What other initiatives are in place at Mount Sinai to address inclusion in talent acquisition?

A: We attend recruitment events and career fairs like the TranslatinX Network Career Fair, Transgender Day of Visibility Virtual Job Fair, and Black MBA Career Fair. From there, we can connect with potential candidates that would typically not be found through traditional acquisition methods. We also post on diversity job boards and direct employer platforms including Black Career Women's Network, VeteranJobListings, and TechLadies. We have partnerships with various nonprofits such as STRIVE, FedCap, Jericho Project, the Urban Resource Institute, and more.

For more information on Mount Sinai's work to increase diversity across leadership levels, check out our *Bulletin* on [Increasing Diversity in Mount Sinai's Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention Efforts](#).

All the best,

Angela and Shawn

Join Us for an Upcoming Event

The Asian Resource Network (ARN) ERG, The Islamic Community of Mount Sinai (ICMS) ERG, and The Interfaith ERG | The Sweetness of the Fast: The Significance of Ramadan Panel — Join the ARN ERG, the ICMS ERG, and the Interfaith ERG on **Monday, March 20, 2023, 1 – 2 pm** for a panel on the significance of Ramadan. Panelists will engage in meaningful conversation surrounding the significance of Ramadan and what Ramadan means to them while sharing their own personal experiences and traditions. Register [here](#) to attend this virtual event.

Chats for Change: Black and Jewish Solidarity Through the Years — Chats for Change is a production of the Icahn School of Medicine's Racism and Bias Initiative. Join facilitators Nasseef Quasim and Daniella Nevid, RBI x CAP Fellows, on **Tuesday, March 21 from noon-1 pm**. Throughout modern American history, the Black and Jewish communities have often supported one another through mutual activism. As threats to this ongoing partnership grow today, join us to discuss how these communities came together in a shared fight and what history teaches us about successful templates for future collaboration across communities, affinity groups, and faiths. Register [here](#).

The Importance of Building Relationships Panel — The Black Women Leaders Connect Employee Resource Group will be hosting a panel on **Tuesday, March 23, 1-2 pm** on the importance of building relationships in the workplace by sharing experiences and offering tips. The Panel will be moderated by Lyndia Hayden, MS, PMP, Senior Director of Data Integrity and Equity Analytics in the Office for Diversity and Inclusion, and will feature LeWanza Harris, MD, MPH, MBA, MS, Vice President of Quality and Regulatory Affairs, Wendy O'Brien, Vice President and Chief Nursing Finance Officer and Kimberley Ennis, DNP, APRN-BC, Senior Director of Nursing at Mount Sinai Queens. [Register here](#) to attend this virtual event.

***Clarification on Bulletin 3/9:** Only one person at a time can access "Rest is Resistance: A Manifesto" from the Levy Library for both e-reading and download. Once a person closes their browser tab, another will immediately be able to access it. We recommend downloading the book as this will shorten the access time for any individual person.

[Road Map for Action](#)

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