Introduction

In the fall 2005, the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation launched the Massachusetts Institute for Community Health Leadership (MICHL) to help build the leadership capacity of dynamic senior and middle management professionals in Massachusetts health care organizations that serve or advocate for the needs of low-income, vulnerable and uninsured residents. MICHL is an 18-day educational program that takes place over the course of nine months. The goal of MICHL is to help you increase your own personal impact, strengthen your effectiveness in your organization and enhance your organization's influence in addressing challenges and opportunities in today's increasingly complex health care system. Being a leader in the United States in the 21st century means understanding the impact of racism on health, health care and public health. Health care and public health improvement strategies often target the symptoms of structural racism, without naming racism, and without the needed effort to change systems that continue to incur advantage and disadvantage based on race. Some health funding opportunities commonly focus on behavioral interventions such as increasing exercise and healthy eating. However when little is done, to address policies and environments, individual behavior changes are not sustainable, and the profound racial health inequities in the United States persist. Despite progress in addressing explicit discrimination, racial inequities continue to be deep, pervasive and persistent across the country. Racial inequities exist across all indicators for success, including in education, criminal justice, jobs, housing, public infrastructure and health, regardless of region.

In 2014, we made a conscious choice to address racism directly during this program. In the feedback from the participants of MICHL 8 what we heard was that despite it being hard work, and a challenging process, along the way, they could not imagine this program without this lens.

The MICHL experience is designed to transform your perception of yourself as leader, inspiring you to even higher levels of motivation, learning, steadfastness and efficacy, and to develop practical, hands-on leadership capacities and skills. In addition, the experience is designed to build a network of colleagues from across the Commonwealth who are dedicated to addressing the health care needs of low income and uninsured people.

Curriculum and Faculty Overview

The MICHL experience is organized around four tracks of activity that are woven across nine two-day workshops with individual and group assignments in between:

- Cultivating Presence and the Inner Side of Leadership
- Exploring Leadership Practices Seeing health and public health through a Systems thinking lens
- Leading explicitly, but not exclusively with race: understanding oppression, privilege, and health
- Action Learning Practicum

The content and learning objectives associated with each track are described below in detail. Content from each of these tracks will be featured in an integrated way in each MICHL workshop and the homework assignments between sessions. The MICHL Program Director, Michael McCormack is present for every session. Other faculty are professionals with diverse backgrounds from a variety of

community-based health care organizations, public health, academia, organizational development, diversity and inclusion, and experiential learning.

Curriculum

The *Massachusetts Institute for Community Health Leadership* (MICHL) is an 18-day educational program that takes place over the course of nine months, with a curriculum that includes classroom work, experiential activities, peer-to-peer exchanges, and collaborative learning. During the program, students develop and implement a project that addresses a significant health care issue in their own organization, or an issue affecting the state's uninsured and vulnerable population.

The MICHL experience is designed to help participants develop practical, hands-on leadership capacities and skills that will enhance their personal effectiveness, and that of their organization, in addressing challenges and opportunities in today's increasingly complex health care system. In addition, the experience is designed to build a network of colleagues from across the Commonwealth who are dedicated to addressing the health care needs of vulnerable and uninsured people. Learning about structural and institutional –isms (race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.), and strategies to name and address them is an important part of this leadership experience.

Learning Track: The Inner Side of Leadership

"Leadership Presence" is a way of being and a practice that we cultivate in every aspect of our lives. This state of being is an absolute key, though often overlooked, quality for effective leadership. The inner reflective work that we do as human beings is, consciously or unconsciously, communicated outwardly in the form of an authentic leadership presence. In this track you will experience a combination of intensive personal and group activities with time for reflection and learning that are meant to cultivate your ability to trust yourself to speak and lead with clarity, authenticity and confidence. These lessons will be viscerally grounded in experience rather than learned only through traditional classroom teaching. Leading from the inside out, you will set out to uncover a broad range of possibilities for your own leadership in order to maximize your strengths as a leader, while also developing complementary roles for others. You will survey traditional and evolving paradigms of leadership as you seek to re-imagine the role of leader for yourself and your community. You will be invited to create your own theory of leadership in a way that responds directly to health care challenges and the work of serving low income and uninsured communities. We will use a variety of methods to explore the inner side of leadership, including:

- Workshop presentations and discussions,
- Experiential and interactive exercises,
- Readings,
- Journaling,
- Peer coaching,
- Self-reflection and planning for personal growth and development.

By coming together to explore and examine the inner side of leadership you will build a community that supports your own development while strengthening your capacity to engage your organizations and communities.

➢ **Learning Objectives**

Through the year, you will learn to:

- Demonstrate leadership presence by slowing down, connecting with your own deepest sense of purpose and creating deeper access to your own thinking, physical presence, emotions, values and aspirations. Notice the impact of your cultural identity on your leadership practice.
- Engage in self-reflection that yields deeper self-knowledge and strategies for "getting out of the box" and "getting out of your own way."
- Integrate concepts and practices learned in workshop settings through hands-on leadership activities.

Particularly during the Outward Bound Professional programs, you will have opportunities to integrate leadership concepts and practices through a variety of challenging and engaging experiences to:

- raise to a level of awareness your strengths and areas for development as a leader and a follower
- become aware of your and others' contributions and hindrances to the processes of finding collaborative solutions
- give and receive feedback to gain understanding of your roles and those of your colleagues.

Learning Track: Exploring Leadership Practices

Collaboration is more than simply bringing people together, or even bringing the right people together. It's also about creating safe and constructive environments in which all can participate and thus generate the synergy necessary for resourceful thought and action. Strong collaborative leaders know when to go beyond getting input from others and actually engage them in the deeper work of defining problems and solutions collaboratively.

At the same time, being a leader is often described as a lonely role. One example is having confidential information about a personnel decision but not being able to reveal all of what you know to explain an action taken. Being a woman who leads has its own version of being lonely when in male-dominated organizations, as does being a man or woman of color and trying to fit the typical organizational norm of leaders. Exploring how to stay present in rocky times is an ability demanded of highly effective leaders.

Many of you are trained as experts in specific fields and your roles frequently call on you to analyze problems and provide answers. Facilitating the thinking and work of others requires different skills and leadership capacities. You will explore a set of leadership skills for working with others—both within and beyond your organizations—to convene, catalyze and facilitate collaborative efforts to understand and

address the challenges you face in health care. These leadership practices will be learned and practiced in workshop settings, practicum project groups and Outward Bound Professional programs.

➢ **Learning Objectives**

As you explore leadership practices, you will learn to:

- Nurture the development of groups and foster a collective sense of shared responsibility for the whole, devoting conscious attention to the process of how people come together and the quality of relationships.
- Recognize the difference between adaptive and technical challenges and design processes that are appropriate for addressing different types of challenges; balance the desire to find quick solutions with the need to first explore the issues more deeply.
- Utilize and model for others seven practices of Facilitative Leadership.

Facilitative Leadership will enable you to a) share an inspiring vision and stimulate the creation of a shared vision; b) balance dimensions of team success -- results, process and relationship; c) identify stakeholders and involve them in decision making; d) facilitate meetings that lead to understanding and agreement; e) design collaborative planning processes and effective meetings; f) coach others to deepen their capacity and commitment, and g) celebrate accomplishments.

Learning Track: Exploring the Health Care System

The challenges and opportunities inherent in health care take place within a context. Most of the challenges you face are characterized by layers of complexity that tend not to respond to technical fixes. You will take a systems-thinking approach to gain a better understanding of that complexity and how it affects your field, identifying adaptive shifts that are necessary to make significant change. These approaches directly challenge modes of leadership that place too much value on the role of the expert. You will explore the health care field in a ways that strengthen your capacity to see patterns, make connections and value ongoing inquiry.

The health care field also will be explored through a structural lens to deepen your understanding of power and privilege, structural and institutional racism. . There is a need for leaders with the commitment, energy, knowledge and skills to do the difficult work of advancing and sustaining cultural and linguistic competence in systems and organizations that develop policy, provide services and supports, conduct research and/or advocate with and on behalf of culturally diverse populations that are underserved, vulnerable and disenfranchised.

➢ **Learning Objectives**

- As you explore these issues, you will learn to:

- Take a systems thinking approach to understanding health care system by applying principles from adaptive leadership and network theory to enrich your understanding of the health care system and strategies for catalyzing change
- Identify adaptive challenges within the system and use those challenges as a starting point for your practicum project
- Articulate the importance of and the role of leadership in pursuing cultural and linguistic competence for achieving significant changes to the health care system through
- Describe cultural influences on the beliefs and practices of individuals and groups seeking or needing mental and physical health care, as well as systems and providers, citing four root causes of health care disparities and inequities.

Learning Track: Action Learning Practicum

On an individual basis, you will each be expected to practice and apply what you are learning in the context of your ongoing work. Through practice between each monthly session you will learn to adapt the tools and models in this program to fit your style in the context of organization culture. In addition, you will have the opportunity to work in learning teams to apply the principles and practices learned during this program to 'real-world' issues through a small group practicum project. These projects will provide a laboratory for you to incorporate the collaborative leadership skills you are learning with an opportunity to respond creatively to a real and challenging health care issue affecting low income and uninsured people in Massachusetts.

The practicum experience will provide opportunities for you to practice your skills in framing issues, facilitating dialogue among "not-the-usual suspects," and reaching consensus. In the spirit of creating a learning laboratory, team members will share feedback and support throughout the process. The practicum will involve identifying an issue and working with a small team of peers to:

- Analyze the organizational and community context and the challenges and opportunities the issue presents
- Frame an inquiry or series of questions about the issue that could, if addressed creatively, yield important new insights about the problem and how to address it
- Design and facilitate a process for engaging and involving a wide range of stakeholders in an inquiry about the issue
- Capture the insights and learnings from this shared inquiry and disseminate them to participants
- Identify potential next steps, including disseminating the insights to others whose work might benefit from them

Time will be devoted to work on your practicum projects during the monthly workshops. You can also expect to work on your projects with your team for an average of four to six hours per month between sessions. If your group chooses to spend more time, due to the nature of your project, you may need to seek approval from your sponsoring organization.

➢ **Learning Objectives**

Through the work of the practicum project teams, you will learn to:

- Apply systems thinking, complexity theory, and network theory to frame and analyze health care challenges and the context in which they are embedded
- Use collaborative planning and facilitation frameworks and skills to design and facilitate dialogue and planning with multiple stakeholders
- Sharpen your use of the frameworks and tools you are learning learned about leadership, feedback, diversity, dialogue, problem analysis, and stakeholder involvement
- Hone your ability to make useful observations and share insightful, actionable feedback with your colleagues
- Expand your capacity to reflect on your own thinking and leadership practice, hear and make use of feedback, and pursue your ongoing learning and development

Throughout the MICHL experience, you will learn at least as much from one another as you learn from the faculty. So you are invited – and encouraged -- to enter MICHL with open minds, open hearts, and open eyes for a wonderful and unique learning journey!