Academic Practice Strategy

2025–2028

Sinai Health

A Message from Leadership

Advancing care through innovation, compassion and academic practice

At Sinai Health, our commitment to discovering and delivering life-changing care is at the heart of everything we do. As a leading academic health sciences centre, we know that transforming care begins with a person-centred approach and by creating a culture of scholarship and excellence that empowers our nurses and health disciplines to meaningfully engage in education, research, quality improvement and innovation.

In 2018, we launched our first Academic Practice Strategy — a multi-year vision to embed evidence-based care, professional development and research excellence across the organization. This strategy has been a powerful catalyst for innovation in care delivery and a key enabler of Sinai Health's mission to improve health for patients, their caregivers and the communities we serve.

Under our first strategic plan, we've achieved several milestones across the key dimensions of academic practice. We also saw incredible adaptability and innovation during the COVID-19 pandemic, from team-based models in our Intensive Care Unit to evolving infection prevention protocols and support for caregivers, demonstrating our ability to lead through adversity and change.

As a founding member of the International Learning Collaborative, we are leaders in Canada in advancing and advocating for fundamental care as an evidence-informed solution to address challenges we face in health care. We are leveraging its Leadership and Mentorship Program (LAMP) framework to further strengthen fundamental care practices across our teams as a key enabler of compassionate care.

Our refreshed Academic Practice Strategy will serve as an enabler of Sinai Health's vision and strategic priorities. Academic practice remains essential to developing a resilient workforce, scaling innovation led by nurses and health disciplines, and ensuring that every patient experience is grounded in safe, high-quality and compassionate care.

We are incredibly proud of our progress and excited for what lies ahead.

Jane Merkley

Jane Merkley
Executive Vice President, Chief Nurse Executive
and Chief Operating Officer, Sinai Health

Academic Practice Accomplishments
Strategy in Action: 2018–2023

First introduced in 2018, our Academic Practice Strategy reflects Sinai Health's commitment, as an academic health sciences centre, to advancing safe, high-quality care, accelerating discovery, driving solutions and applying innovation. Our multi-year plan centres on the connection between the care our clinicians provide and a dynamic practice environment — one that fosters evidence-based care, clinical education and professional development, research and innovation, and healthy workplaces that support exemplary practice. Here are some of the ways we've delivered on the strategy since the initial rollout:

- ✔ **Commitment to academic practice:** Established academic practice governance structures to ensure accountability, transparency, effective decision-making, and knowledge sharing, while fostering transformational leadership to support the successful and sustainable implementation of academic practice.

- ✔ **Evidence-informed care:** Harmonized key clinical practice standards and care processes across Sinai Health to support consistent implementation of evidence and best practices in alignment with our Quality Aims.

- ✔ **Innovation of care:** Launched the Science of Care Institute to strengthen research and innovation capacity, build capability and create opportunities for clinicians to lead research, innovation and quality improvement initiatives. We also established practice-based and clinical research infrastructure, along with a strategic roadmap to advance nursing and health disciplines scholarship and innovation.

- ✔ **Fundamentals of Care:** Led international and local initiatives to embed the Fundamentals of Care Framework, which underscores the importance of relationships and the integration of care within the context of both the patient and the health-care provider.

- ✔ **Strategic collaboration:** Navigated unprecedented health human resources pressures and supported provincial efforts to ensure the best possible care delivery during a global pandemic through the creation of innovative team-based models of care and new standards for the provision of care.

- ✔ **Technology adoption:** Leveraged technology to enhance the safe delivery of care through initiatives such as pharmacy automation to enable a closed-loop medication system, enhanced respiratory monitoring, remote patient monitoring, and the implementation and optimization of smart pumps and smart beds.

- ✔ **Magnet® re-designation:** Successfully achieved Magnet re-designation, reaffirming Sinai Health's commitment to empowering nurses and recognizing their success in surpassing international benchmarks for quality, patient experience and nurse experience.

✔ **Academic leadership:** Demonstrated an unwavering commitment to learners by advocating for and sustaining student volumes over the course of the pandemic, while also improving learning oversight through the implementation of centralized processes and technology.

✔ **Capacity building:** Provided system-level leadership and support within Sinai Health and externally by rapidly developing and implementing new practice standards and guidance in response to evolving clinical evidence and unprecedented surges in critical-care patients.

✔ **Transition to practice:** Successfully achieved the ANCC Practice Transition Accreditation Program (PTAP) in the NICU, establishing a model for ongoing transition-to-practice improvements across the organization.

✔ **Sustainable care:** Launched our Professional Care Delivery Model initiative with a concentrated effort on developing a sustainable model of care that will meet the needs of patients, caregivers and health-care providers now and in the future.

✔ **Advocacy:** Identified and advocated for essential health human resource supports, leading to the implementation of innovative initiatives such as the Enhanced Extern Program, the Clinical Scholars Program and increased Ministry of Health investment in our organization.

✔ **Recognizing excellence:** Celebrated the academic practice contributions of our nurses and health disciplines professionals with opportunities for recognition through awards and scholarships.
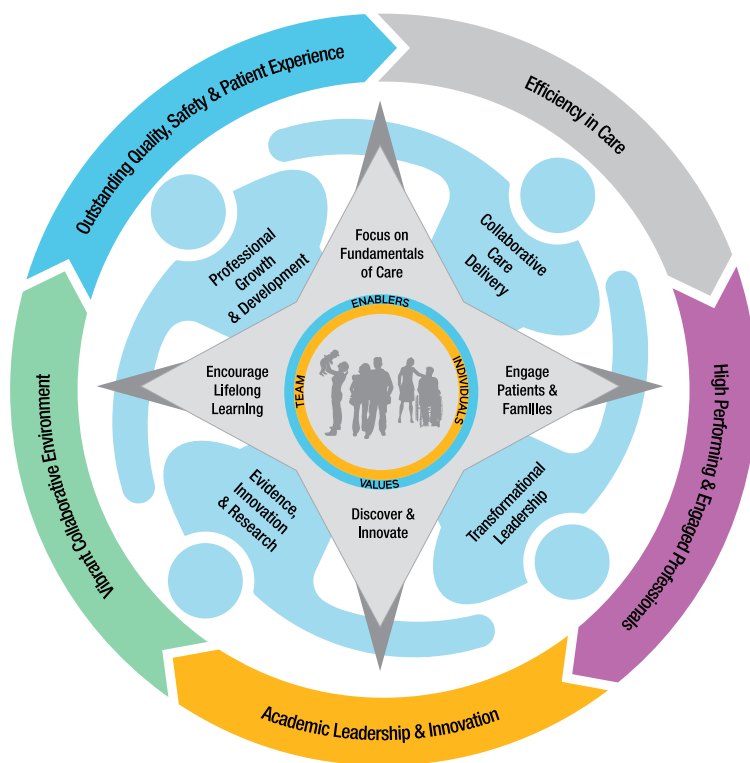
Academic Practice Outcomes

Academic practice defined

"Academic practice is the intentional application of evidence-informed knowledge and ongoing scholarly inquiry to optimize health outcomes, patient experience, resilient work environments and the development of health professionals, educators, researchers and leaders."

— Toronto Academic Health Sciences Network

Academic Practice Professional Practice Model

Our Professional Practice Model is the guiding framework for clinical practice and academic advancement. It illustrates the connection between practice, research, professional growth and transformational leadership to achieve exemplary outcomes. By fostering lifelong learning, scholarship, knowledge integration and discovery, it enables high-performing teams to deliver outstanding quality, safety and patient experience.

A successfully implemented Academic Practice Strategy will lead to the achievement of the five important outcomes that are embedded in our Professional Practice Model:

1. **Outstanding quality, safety and patient experience**

2. **Efficiency in care**

3. **A vibrant, collaborative practice environment**

4. **High-performing and engaged professionals**

5. **Academic leadership and innovation with impact**

Academic Practice Dimensions

Leveraging the foundational elements of professional practice models, there are five dimensions of Academic Practice. Each dimension describes essential processes and structures required to:

- Facilitate the delivery of person-centred, equitable and compassionate care
- Foster a culture of respect, dignity and inclusivity
- Create an environment that facilitates the health and well-being of health-care providers

Together, these five dimensions bring academic practice to life and enable Sinai Health to fulfill our Purpose and achieve our Vision and Mission.

Exemplary Professional Practice
- Excellence in clinical competence ethics and compassionate care
- Integration of evidence-informed and team-based practices
- Commitment to continuous learning, self-reflection and quality improvement

Learning and Development
- Expanding knowledge and skills for high-quality care
- Teaching and mentoring students and peers
- Inspiring lifelong learning to lead change and adapt to evolving health-care practices

New Knowledge, Innovation and Improvement
- Advancing ideas, research and technology to improve clinical outcomes and provider experiences
- Embedding Science of Care research and critical thinking into the development of sustainable models of fundamental care
- Translating evidence into practice and innovation

Workplace Wellness and Workforce Sustainability
- Supporting physical, emotional and mental well-being
- Fostering diversity, equity and inclusion
- Building a resilient, compassionate workforce

Transformational Leadership and Empowerment
- Inspiring shared decision-making
- Empowering professionals through collaboration and co-design

Science of Care
Building capacity and capabilities for research and innovation

The Science of Care Institute at Sinai Health, established in 2022, is a pioneering clinician- and employee-driven research and innovation institute dedicated to enhancing patient experiences and health outcomes. It uniquely integrates compassionate care with scientific research, positioning itself as the sole institute in Canada focused on fundamental care, which addresses the psychosocial, physical and relational needs of individuals.

Central to the Institute is the Centre for Nursing Excellence, emphasizing nurse-led research and innovation. This centre explores new approaches to patient care, including symptom management, complex illness responses, patient and staff safety, and the overall enhancement of patient experiences and outcomes.
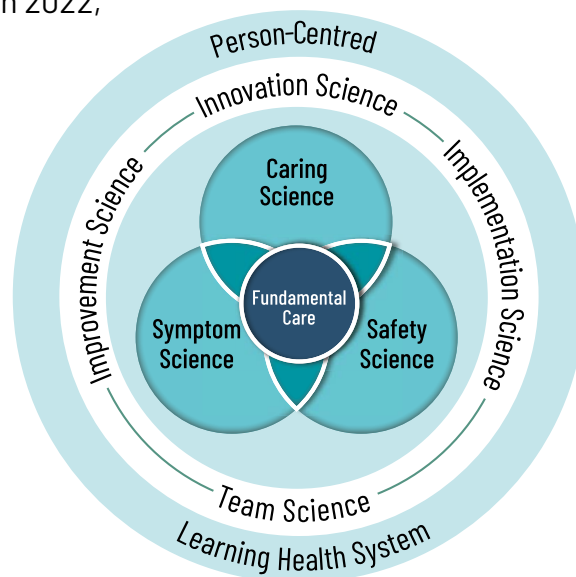
Strategic spheres

The Institute operates within four strategic spheres that work together to define our pathway to excellence. They represent the commitment and daily action to enhance interprofessional and transdisciplinary collaboration, nurture talent and drive forward groundbreaking discoveries in compassionate care.
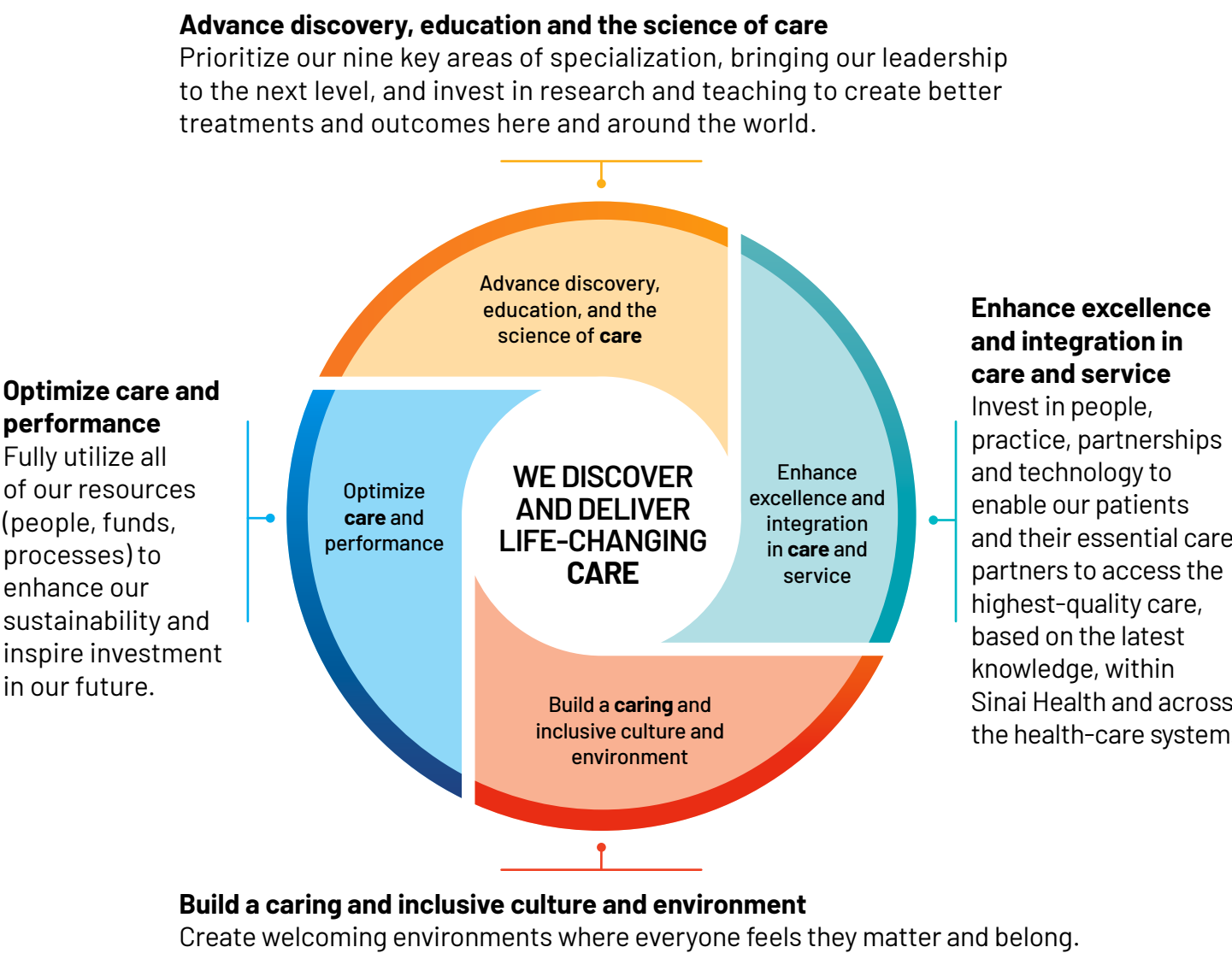
1. Agile and Equitable Innovation
2. Workforce Magnetism and Nursing Excellence
3. Organizational and System Learning
4. Collaborative Practice and Partnership

Since its inception, the Institute has funded 30 projects with an investment of $250,000, conducted 16 learning series sessions and featured 17 presenters at its nurse-led Research and Innovation Showcase.

Academic Practice: Enabling Success

Our Academic Practice Strategy was developed to integrate academic practice into Sinai Health's culture and to guide our approach to designing and delivering care. Academic practice serves as a key enabler to achieving our corporate strategy. The academic practice priorities outlined in the following pages are fully aligned with the dimensions of our corporate Strategic Plan, our People and Culture Plan, and our Quality Aims.

Sinai Health's Strategic Priorities 2023–2028

Advance discovery, education and the science of care
Prioritize our nine key areas of specialization, bringing our leadership to the next level, and invest in research and teaching to create better treatments and outcomes here and around the world.

Optimize care and performance
Fully utilize all of our resources (people, funds, processes) to enhance our sustainability and inspire investment in our future.

Enhance excellence and integration in care and service
Invest in people, practice, partnerships and technology to enable our patients and their essential care partners to access the highest-quality care, based on the latest knowledge, within Sinai Health and across the health-care system.

Advance discovery, education, and the science of **care**

Enhance excellence and integration in **care** and service

WE DISCOVER AND DELIVER LIFE-CHANGING CARE

Optimize **care** and performance

Build a **caring** and inclusive culture and environment

Build a caring and inclusive culture and environment
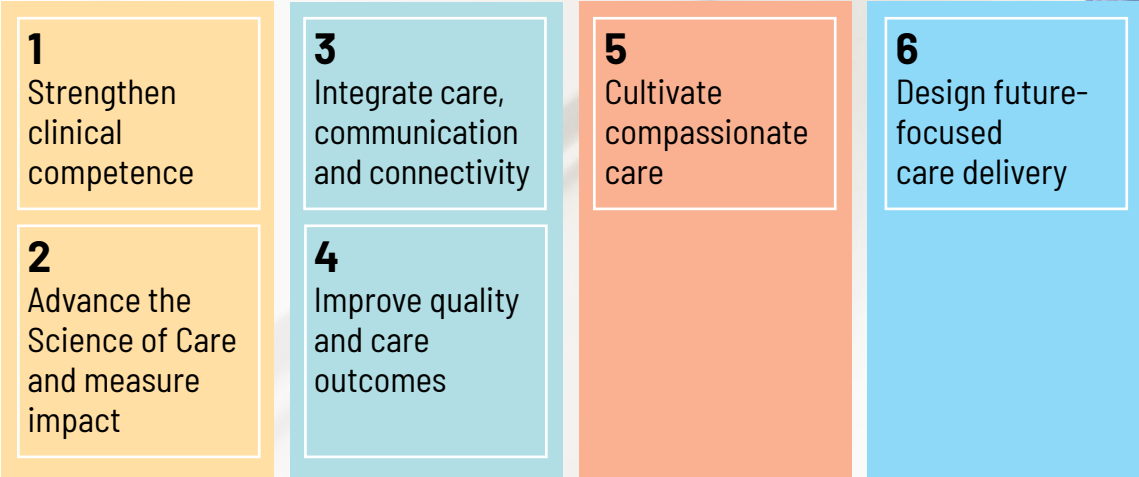Create welcoming environments where everyone feels they matter and belong.

Academic Practice Priorities 2025–2028

Our Academic Practice priorities align with our Sinai Health Corporate Strategic framework and promote the achievement of our Quality Aims and People Plan. Alignment of goals across the organization emphasizes what's most important to living our Purpose, upholding our Values and achieving our Vision. Academic Practice Priority Goals and Key Initiatives define the actions and activities that will contribute to shared success.

Sinai Health Strategic Priorities

Advance discovery, education and the science of care

Enhance excellence and integration in care and service

Build a caring and inclusive culture and environment

Optimize care and performance

Academic Practice Priorities

1 Strengthen clinical competence

2 Advance the Science of Care and measure impact

3 Integrate care, communication and connectivity

4 Improve quality and care outcomes

5 Cultivate compassionate care

6 Design future-focused care delivery

1 Academic Practice Priority
Strengthen Clinical Competence

What does success look like?

Clinicians have the requisite skills, abilities and attitudes to confidently provide the best possible care supported by robust orientation and transition-to-practice programs, and education and training options to enhance their competence and pursue their career goals.

Goals

- Enable and empower health-care professionals to provide safe, effective, ethical, high-quality patient care though the application of sound critical thinking, clinical judgment and strong interprofessional collaboration.

- Promote consistent implementation of evidence-informed standards and professional accountability to optimize patient outcomes while minimizing risk of errors and adverse outcomes.

- Facilitate health-care professional reflection, self-assessment and continuous improvement.

- Foster an environment of learning, development and adaption to proactively enable health-care professionals to effectively respond to changing patient-care needs, new technology and the evolving health-care system.

- Monitor and regularly assess clinical competence to identity learning needs and opportunities for feedback, growth and development.

- Provide access to evidence-informed resources, education and training to sustain and advance clinical competence.

Sample Key Initiative:

- Spread knowledge and leading practices from our successful achievement of the Practice Transition and Accreditation Program (PTAP) to other areas across Sinai Health.

2 Academic Practice Priority
Advance the Science of Care and Measure Impact

What does success look like?

Sinai Health clinicians foster a culture of improvement and innovation, share knowledge through publications, presentations, and impact stories, and are recognized by regional, national and international partners for their accomplishments.

Goals

- Improve patient experience and health outcomes through a focus on fundamental care implementation, research and innovation.

- Achieve and exceed standards of care and quality targets, resulting in successful accreditation and recognition with awards of distinction.

- Create a learning organization by building research and innovation capacity, and fostering a culture of lifelong learning and career development.

- Drive innovation through research and quality improvement (QI) methodologies and design thinking.

- Lead research and discovery to build upon the growing body of evidence-informed recruitment and retention strategies to design a sustainable retention framework for Sinai Health.

- Optimize workforce planning through the adoption of innovative retention strategies.

Sample Key Initiatives:

- Achieve Magnet re-designation.

- Grow excitement and engagement in the Science of Care through access to grants and mentorship for clinicians who have clinical questions they want to explore.

- Explore novel approaches to care delivery and collaborate with partners on co-designing and evaluating innovative and sustainable models of care.

3 Academic Practice Priority
Integrate Care, Communication and Connectivity
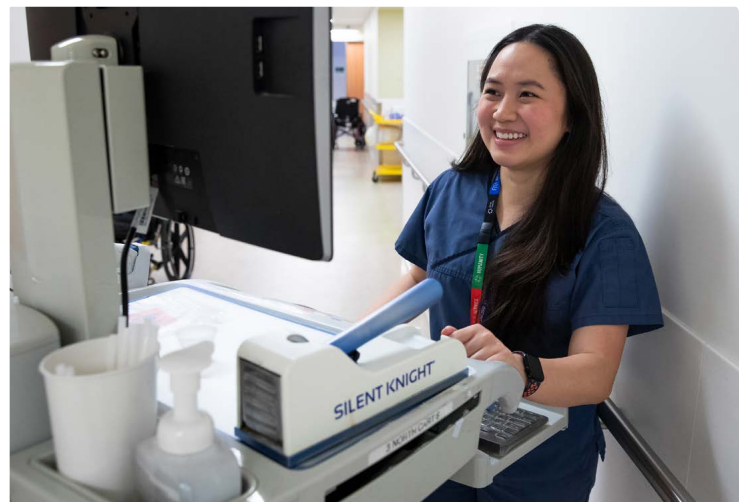
What does success look like?

Patients and caregivers experience seamless, collaborative care by interprofessional teams through the creation and implementation of leading clinical informatics practices, technological advances in clinical decision-making, artificial intelligence and digital innovation.

Goals

- Harmonize and standardize leading practices in clinical documentation and communication, enabled through technology innovation and integration.

- Develop EPR Champions to facilitate current and future change readiness, engage with colleagues, and support the creation of clinical documentation learning resources and training programs that meet the specific needs of end users.

- Leverage implementation science and team science to effectively lead change management and clinical practice change adoption, ensuring the EPR is effectively integrated, used consistently, sustained and optimized over time.

- Reduce administrative burden associated with use of the EPR to enable health-care professionals to focus on the care they are uniquely skilled to provide: People before paperwork.

- Embrace transformational leadership and clinical empowerment in the development of clinical information system governance, enabling health-care providers to have a core role in the decision-making required to drive the development of our shared EPR.

Sample Key Initiative:

- Review high-risk, high-volume clinical workflows to ensure compliance with legislation and regulation, identify opportunities to embed best practices and streamline processes.

4 Academic Practice Priority
Improve Quality and Care Outcomes

What does success look like?

Patients and caregivers experience the best possible outcomes through the co-design and standardized adoption of proven approaches, best practices and evolving evidence into care, with a commitment to continuous quality improvement through research and evaluation to facilitate effective, efficient, sustainable and reliable results.

Goals

- Expand understanding of quality improvement science and the impact of adopting best practice in quality to strengthen clinical practice and interdisciplinary collaboration for improved patient outcomes.

- Engage health professionals in the identification of quality improvement opportunities and the co-designing of solutions.

- Deliver data-driven quality improvement (QI) outcomes through access to meaningful data and opportunities for innovation.

- Embed equity, diversity and inclusion into all quality initiatives to foster a positive and inclusive environment for our people and patients to reduce burnout and improve patient outcomes.

- Promote shared investment and accountability for care outcomes.

Sample Key Initiative:

- Achieve annual quality targets by successfully identifying primary drivers for improvement and developing specific, evidence-informed change ideas to optimize performance.

5 Academic Practice Priority
Cultivate Compassionate Care

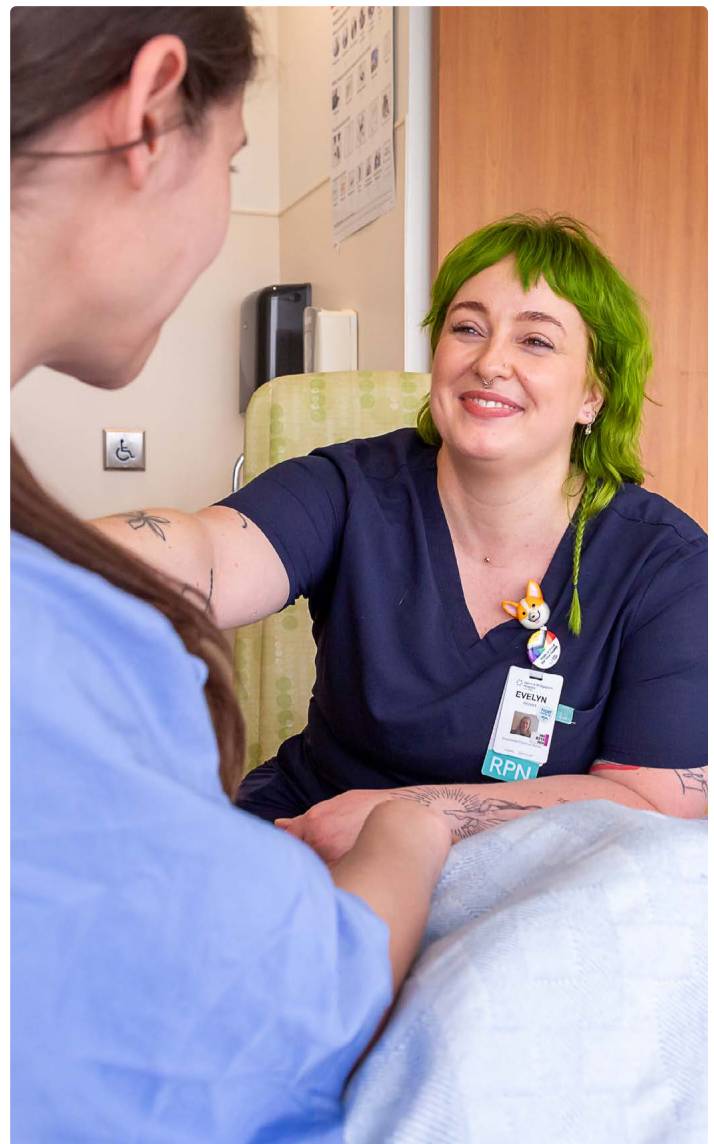## What does success look like?

Compassionate care will be the hallmark of service delivery and collaborative practice by implementing an evidence-informed strategy with targeted, customized intervention bundles that focus on the fundamental care needs of patients and caregivers while supporting clinician well-being and prioritizing patient needs over paperwork.

Goals

- Establish a Compassionate Care Strategy using a co-design approach to engage patients, care partners and health-care providers in the identification of strategic priorities and the development of evidence-informed interventions that ensure patients' fundamental care needs are met.

- Leverage Science of Care expertise in implementation and team science to support standardized adoption and sustainability of leading compassionate care interventions.

- Evaluate the impact and sustainability of the Compassionate Care Strategy on patient and health-care provider experience and patient outcomes.

- Foster and sustain a compassionate workforce focused on addressing "what matters" most to patients and caregivers.

- Provide opportunities for clinician-led compassionate care intervention development and implementation to support ownership and sustainability.

Sample Key initiative:

- Using evidence and leading practice, identify and prioritize interventions that enable delivery of compassionate care.

6 Academic Practice Priority
Design Future-focused Care Delivery

What does success look like?

Patients and care partners will have access to the right care at the right time, by the right health-care providers, who are enabled to work to their optimal scope of practice within an environment that supports health-care provider health and well-being and system sustainability.

Goals

- Develop and implement an interprofessional care delivery model based on an evidence-informed safe staffing framework that enables health-care professionals to work to their full scope of practice.
- Support health-care professionals to transition successfully to practice and to enhance clinical knowledge, skills and abilities by fostering psychological safety and development of clinical and leadership competencies.
- Partner with peers to share knowledge and experience, reduce duplication of efforts and contribute to a growing body of person-centred, team-based models of care evidence.
- Embed drivers of workplace wellness and sustainability, along with validated strategies for recruitment and retention, into development of the model.
- Engage direct care, advance practice and leadership roles in the co-design of the new model of care.
- Leverage evidence and the expertise of the Science of Care Institute to develop an evaluation framework to measure the impact of changes to service-delivery models on patient outcomes and staff experience
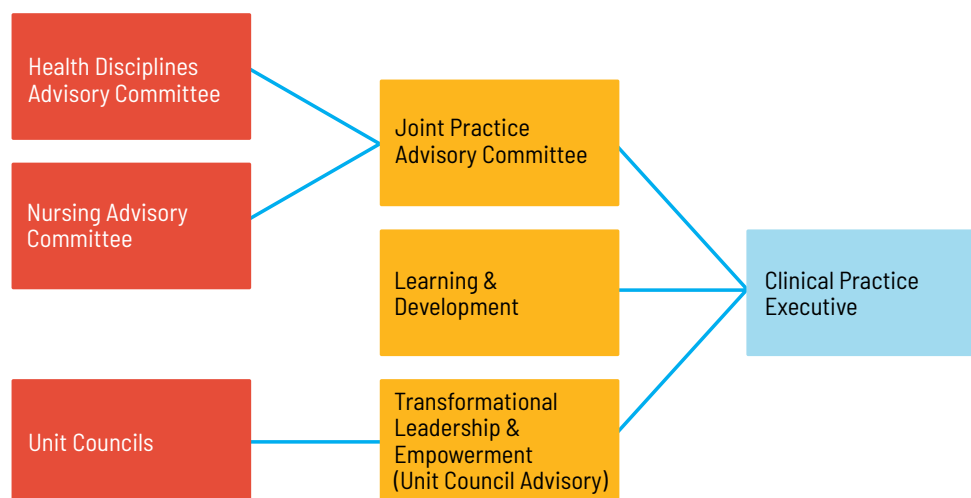
Sample Key Initiative:

- Review scopes of practice, responsibilities and distribution of organizational roles that support the delivery of care to promote optimum scope of practice and team composition. This supports the consistent implementation of sustainable models of care that foster effective, efficient care and the best possible patient outcomes.

Academic Practice Governance
Living Academic Practice

The governance structure is a key component of the strategy, providing oversight and guidance for academic practice. Committees are empowered to make decisions, engage stakeholders in the co-design and implementation of priorities, and demonstrate a sustained commitment to academic practice.

Health Disciplines Advisory Committee

Nursing Advisory Committee

Joint Practice Advisory Committee

Learning & Development

Unit Councils

Transformational Leadership & Empowerment (Unit Council Advisory)

Clinical Practice Executive

Academic Practice Committees are designed to have the right people recommend, review and approve evidence-informed changes to practice. The structure considers who and how many people are impacted by a proposed change, and how much risk is associated with the change.

The Academic Practice Structure

Empowers health-care professionals to make decisions about their profession-specific practices.

Provides opportunities for engagement and participation in academic practice.

Creates forums for collaborative decision-making on practices that impact multiple professions and programs across Sinai Health.

Safeguards care by ensuring compliance with regulation and legislation.

Mitigates risk by assessing the impact of practice change and ensuring there is comprehensive education and training strategy to support successful implementation and sustainability of practice changes.