OHSU CENTER FOR ETHICS IN HEALTH CARE

Impact Report 2026

"The Center for Ethics plays a unique role in health science education by fostering the character traits and skills essential to compassionate, equitable care and responsible biomedical research."

FABRICE JOTTERAND, PH.D., M.A.
DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR ETHICS IN HEALTH CARE
CORNELIA HAYES STEVENS CHAIR

OHSU

At the end of June, I completed my first year as Director of the OHSU Center for Ethics in Health Care, and the words that best describe this enriching experience are “fast and furious.” The past year has gone by in the blink of an eye. But as a former long-distance triathlete, I understand the importance of pacing myself, pausing when necessary, pushing hard when circumstances demand it and digging deep to tap into strengths I did not know I had. I approached the first year of my tenure at OHSU with this mindset. I recognized that leading the Center would be both a tremendous privilege and an exciting challenge.

One year into this role, I could not be more encouraged by all we have accomplished in a relatively short time. Outstanding work has been achieved because of the continuous support of our donors and champions, as well as the commitment to excellence from our faculty, staff, and volunteers. To our donors, I extend my deepest gratitude for your generosity and commitment to the Center. Your partnership is essential to moving this work forward. Across our programs in compassionate communication, ethics education, and the Oregon POLST Program, we continue to increase our impact and extend our reach. Together, we are advancing the Center’s mission to promote ethical clinical practice and improve how people experience healthcare throughout Oregon and beyond. The future is bright for the Center, and I am excited to lead it into its next phase of development and partner with you all along the way.

Fabrice

Fabrice Jotterand, Ph.D., M.A.

Director, OHSU Center for Ethics in Health Care
Cornelia Hayes Stevens Chair

Program in Compassionate Communication

The Program in Compassionate Communication consists of the Ronald W. Naito Directorship in Serious Illness Education and the Doris and Mark Storms Chair in Compassionate Communication. These programs work side-by-side as part of a cohesive team to demonstrate the essential role of compassionate communication in the healthcare experience.

Health Literacy

Cliff Coleman, M.D., M.P.H., Doris and Mark Storms Chair in Compassionate Communication

Funded by the Doris and Mark Storms Chair in Compassionate Communication

- Coordinated the second annual OHSU Health Literacy Symposium, which drew more than 130 registrants across all three OHSU mission areas, community-based organizations, statewide health systems and an out-of-state college student.
- Awarded a $25,000 grant from the Institute for Healthcare Advancement to convene a panel of experts to develop a national health literacy educational research agenda.
- Developed a first-ever health literacy and clear communication training section for the annual Quality and Safety Booster online training module required of all 2,800 clinicians at OHSU.
- Developed new health literacy and clear communication graduation requirements for OHSU medical students, including avoiding medical jargon, responding to patients with empathy and using teach-back to ensure patients’ understanding.
- Presented at one international conference, four national conferences, and co-authored two peer-reviewed journal articles.

Building a Case for Clear Communication

Above: Banning Hendriks, VP of Patient Experience and Relations at OHSU and Vice Chair of the Center’s Health Literacy Workgroup, leads a breakout session at the 2026 OHSU Health Literacy Symposium teaching attendees how to build a quick proposal to prioritize health literacy and clear communication in their work units.

Students Put Their Communication Skills to the Test

Above: Students line up at their stations in the Mark Richardson Interprofessional Simulation Center in preparation to test their communication skills in delivering serious news. This two-day event is required of all graduating medical students. Students role-play scenarios with simulated patients to test their ability to use plain language, recognize emotion and respond with empathy.

Serious Illness Education

Katie H. Stowers, D.O., Ronald W. Naito Directorship in Serious Illness Education

Funded by the Ronald W. Naito MD Foundation
Funded by the Page Evans Impact Fund for the Program in Compassionate Communication

- Led the annual testing of medical students in compassionate communication skills. The Center has tested more than 1,250 students since the start of testing nine years ago.
- Led 29 workshops teaching serious illness communication skills for 323 medical residents, fellows and practicing clinicians.
- Gave five national, regional and institutional presentations on serious illness communication.
- With grant support from The Kinsman Foundation, built a partnership with Samaritan Health Services to mentor Emily Looney, M.D., and Kelsey Terland, M.D., to become communication skills educators to help create sustainable communication skills training for their programs. Throughout the year, Stowers assisted Looney and Terland in leading workshops for cardiology fellows in Corvallis, hospice and palliative care teams in Albany and family medicine residents in Newport.

Oregon POLST Program

Directed by Christine Mullowney, M.D., Medical Director of the Oregon POLST Program

- The Oregon POLST Program, along with the support of POLST Coalition members, collaborated with the Oregon Department of Human Services' Safety, Oversight and Quality to create an educational card about appropriate POLST use in nursing facilities. These cards are being distributed by state surveyors to all 128 Oregon-based nursing facilities.
- Created a new webpage for Nursing Facilities under the *Health Professionals* section of the Oregon POLST website (www.oregonpolst.org). The webpage includes ODHS policies and alerts, state laws and regulation, the educational card on POLST use in nursing facilities, multi-cultural factsheets for free download, videos, FAQs and other guidance for appropriate POLST use in long-term care settings.
- Gave five regional and statewide presentations to over 180 multidisciplinary professionals at various events, including OHSU's 57th Annual Primary Care Review, Oregon Office of Rural Health's 2026 Forum on Rural Population Health, the Oregon Bar Association and the 2026 Kinsman Bioethics Conference.

The following programs fall under chair positions that have remained unfilled for the 2025-2026 academic year. With support from all Center for Ethics faculty, staff and many volunteers, the Center has remained dedicated to advancing the mission of each one through established programming.

We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the following individuals who have helped keep these programs running:

- **Living with Life Threatening Illness Course:** Sara Taub, M.D., M.B.E., FAAP; Robin Brown, M.D.; Ladawna Gievers, M.D. and Susan Hedlund, M.S.W., LCSW, OSW-C
- **Oregon Bioethics and Humanities Colloquium (OBHC):** Cliff Coleman, M.D., M.P.H. and Dave Hoyt
- **Annual Kinsman Bioethics Conference:** Christine Mullowney, M.D. and Sara Kolmes, Ph.D., M.A., HEC-C
- **Pain Intersession Elective Course:** Cliff Coleman, M.D., M.P.H.
- **Madeline Brill Nelson Speaker Series:** Fabrice Jotterand, Ph.D., M.A.

Professionalism and Comfort Care

Funded by the Miles J. Edwards Chair in Professionalism and Comfort Care Endowment

- The 35th annual Kinsman Bioethics Conference was held on May 1 in Hillsboro with 105 registered attendees from across the state. It featured three plenary talks, one panel discussion and six breakout sessions. This year, the conference had its first international keynote speaker, Tenzin Wangmo, Ph.D., from the University of Basel in Switzerland.
- Directed the Living with Life-Threatening Illness elective course and coordinated 14 patient-teachers to partner with students. Every student this year noted the powerful stories from guest speakers and their patient-teachers, expressing their gratitude toward those who made the course possible.
- Hosted seven guest speakers for the fourth annual Oregon Bioethics and Humanities Colloquium (OBHC). Mary Ann Abrams, M.D., M.P.H., from The Ohio State University College of Medicine, came to OHSU for two days to kick off OBHC, meet with faculty and students and give the keynote presentation at the 2025 OHSU Health Literacy Symposium. OBHC is funded by the Educate Future Health Care Ethics Leaders Endowed Fund.

Connecting with Our Communities for Ethics Education

Left: Mary Ann Abrams, M.D., stands at the podium giving a presentation during her visit to OHSU in October. While visiting OHSU, Abrams gave the kick-off presentation for OBHC and Grand Rounds for the Department of Pediatrics, was the keynote speaker and led a breakout session at the Health Literacy Symposium.

Connecting with Our Communities for Ethics Education

Left: Sara Kolmes, Ph.D.; Fabrice Jotterand, Ph.D., M.A.; Tenzin Wangmo, Ph.D. and Christine Mullowney, M.D., stand for a photo at the 2026 Kinsman Bioethics Conference. The conference was co-chaired by Mullowney and Kolmes, and Jotterand helped connect Wangmo as the keynote speaker.

Welcoming the New Madeline Brill Nelson Chair in Ethics Education:

Left: Daniel T. Kim, Ph.D., M.P.H., was appointed as the new Madeline Brill Nelson Chair in Ethics Education on June 1, 2026. "The Center has long been a national leader in the field, advancing our healthcare practices toward ever greater justice, compassion, and respect. I could not be happier to join in on the Center's venerable history and shared mission. I'm excited about its many opportunities for collaborative research and innovative programming in ethics education," Kim said.

Ethics Education

Funded by the Madeline Brill Nelson Chair in Ethics Education

- Led two Pain Intersession elective courses, attended by 45 students, focusing on ethics and inequities in pain treatment.
- Coordinated the Madeline Brill Nelson Speaker Series in Medical Ethics. This year's speaker was James Woodruff, M.D., Dean for Students for Pritzker School of Medicine and Vice Chair of Education for the Department of Medicine at the University of Chicago. Woodruff is a nationally recognized expert on medical education. His presentation focused on critical thinking and flourishing in medicine through the humanities.

Leadership

Fabrice Jotterand, Ph.D., M.A., Director and Cornelia Hayes Stevens Chair

- Gave nine presentations on ethics-related topics, including professional identity formation, character development, the ethics of AI in clinical practice, human flourishing, and surgical practice and humanism.
- Presented at OHSU Neurology, Surgery, and Psychiatry Grand Rounds.
- Recruited Daniel T. Kim, Ph.D., M.P.H., as the new Madeline Brill Nelson Chair in Ethics Education. Kim joined the Center for Ethics on June 1, 2026, from Albany Medical College. Kim brings experience in medical education, mentorship, scholarship and clinical ethics.

Since its inception, the OHSU Center for Ethics in Health Care has played an important role in shaping how care is delivered. The Center's faculty, advocates, volunteers and donors have greatly influenced end-of-life care and policy, and developed innovative curriculum for students and trainees in the health profession. In addition, they have helped prioritize connection with rural communities to enhance both ethics and communication skills education and training, and have engaged in academic research and publishing. Across all these dimensions, the Center has had a lasting impact on learners, clinicians and communities across the state and beyond.

However, our healthcare systems, clinical practice and training for health professionals are at a pivotal moment. One that calls for an expanded vision and innovation. In addition to familiar challenges such as moral distress, moral injury, burnout and disillusionment with the health professions, novel and powerful technologies, notably artificial intelligence (AI), are rapidly transforming and reshaping the delivery of care. Many of these innovations offer substantial benefits, including reducing administrative burdens, improving diagnostic accuracy and enabling the development of more effective and cost-efficient treatments.

Despite this optimism, a critical evaluation of these technologies is needed. These essential questions need answers: how they might undermine the human side of healthcare and challenge traditional approaches to the education of health professionals?

The idea that more technology will automatically make the delivery of healthcare more caring or more human is not clear. Without the strong influence of the humanities and social sciences, healthcare can become too focused on science and technology, while overlooking other kinds of knowledge and skills that are fundamental for developing compassionate, ethical and thoughtful health professionals. Topics such as meaning, purpose, values, empathy, communication, moral formation and critical thinking cannot be answered by science or technology alone. They require us to deal with uncertainty, different perspectives, difficult ethical questions and the complexity of human life. These are the skills that help health professionals make sound judgments, connect with patients and provide truly person-centered care.

I am still early in my tenure as Director of the OHSU Center for Ethics. But after a year of listening, learning and making meaningful connections with wonderful colleagues across the institution and the Portland area, I can say without hesitation we are on the right path towards tackling these challenges. We will continue to advance educational initiatives, policy development and community engagement, as well as engage in publications and research to guide initiatives that transform of our healthcare system and the education of our trainees and health professionals. Together, we are building upon the Center's strong foundation to expand its vision as a catalyst for meaningful and impactful change.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

MARGARET MEAD

Fabrice Jotterand, Ph.D., M.A.

Director, Center for Ethics in Health Care

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Katie H. Stowers, D.O.

Ronald W. Naito Directorship in Serious Illness Education

Cliff Coleman, M.D., M.P.H.

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Christine Mullowney, M.D.

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