



Sojourns Scholar Leadership Program

2025 PROGRAM EVALUATION EXECUTIVE BRIEF



The Sojourns Scholar Leadership Program (SSLP) was created to transform care for people with serious illnesses by cultivating the next generation of palliative care leaders. Over the past decade, Cambia Health Foundation (CHF) has invested more than \$25 million to support 108 scholars across the United States—including physicians, nurses, social workers, chaplains and other health professionals—whose collective efforts have advanced the field and improved care for patients and families.

In 2025, CHF commissioned a program evaluation to look back over the program's 10 year history to understand how the SSLP has shaped scholars' careers, strengthened the field of palliative care and contributed to health care transformation. This evaluation aimed to capture what has made this program uniquely impactful, as well as lessons that can inform the design of future leadership development efforts. Overall, the evaluation highlights the remarkable and enduring impact of the SSLP on its participants and the broader palliative care field.



The executive brief shares the results of four key evaluation goals. To learn more about the evaluation approach, program and its scholars, or to download the comprehensive report, please visit: www.cambiahealthfoundation.org/focus-areas/sojourns-scholar-leadership-program.html

EVALUATION GOAL

Did the program achieve its goals to:



NO.01A

Advance the next generation of leaders

CONCLUSION

Yes.

91% of the Sojourns community agreed that the program created a next generation of palliative care leaders that can transform care delivery.

The SSLP effectively **identified** and supported emerging palliative care leaders in **research** and **academia**. However, it was less effective in reaching frontline clinicians—particularly those in community and rural settings—due to limited awareness of the program and eligibility requirements (such as dedicated time and mentorship) that were less accessible to clinicians.

The program cultivated 108 emerging palliative care leaders by building confidence and fostering skills in communication, public speaking and cross-disciplinary collaboration.

It contributed to the advancement of those leaders by opening doors through its network and reputation. A significant number of scholars advanced in their careers and broadened their influence because of the program.

85% of scholars reported that the SSLP had a lot or a great deal of influence on their achievements.



NO.01B

Improve the care of people with serious illness

Yes.

84% of scholars reported their project had or will have a significant impact on improving the care of people with serious illness.

The SSLP seeded innovative work that, collectively, is improving care.

Demonstrated areas of innovation include:

- Reaching underserved groups
- Person-centered stakeholder engagement
- Integrated approaches that support patients, families and care teams

As is typical of innovation, project reach varied widely—from small pilots directly touching fewer than 25 people to expansive implementations reaching 10,000+. The pathway from research to results was often indirect, making consistent, comparable impact metrics hard to capture. Despite the measurement gap, **impact is compounding over time** as projects persist, attract follow-on funding and are adopted by other organizations.



NO.01C

Create a community of palliative care leaders to influence and accelerate broader system change

Yes.

The Sojourns community identified the following as top outcomes of the program:

- Elevated non-physician professionals as leaders in the field
- Strengthened and promoted the value of inter-professional care teams
- Catalyzed multidisciplinary collaboration in research and publications
- Increased visibility and understanding of palliative care nationally

We also saw evidence of systems change through scholars collaborations. Together, they converted their insights into broader impact by shaping standards of practice, informing policy and amplifying their work through speaking engagements—ultimately improving care for people with serious illness.

85% of scholars reported that they sometimes, usually or always collaborate with scholars on leadership activities.

EVALUATION GOAL

What value did key components of the SSLP program design deliver?

CONCLUSION

The SSLP was highly effective at building a community that delivered connection, inspiration and collaboration among scholars.

The SSLP stood apart for integrating substantial project funding with structured leadership development and a sustained community of practice.

The scholars' most valued program components were:

1. The annual summit which became the backbone for the community
2. Smaller format cohorts which provided peer support
3. The project grant which provided dedicated time for scholars to advance their work

The Sojourns community identified the following as top defining features of the program:

1. Investment in the individual
2. Interprofessional nature
3. Dedication and commitment of mentors
4. Continued community experience post project



“The recognition of interprofessional leadership through the Sojourns Scholars Program has allowed me to finally be seen in my career.”

2021 SCHOLAR

EVALUATION GOAL

How might the SSLP or a similar leadership development program be improved in the future?

CONCLUSION

Overall, scholars rated their experience extraordinarily high: **4.9 out of 5.**

A core driver of SSLP's success was its intentional, long-term investment in scholars as individuals. Unlike programs that focus chiefly on project outputs, SSLP emphasized learning, growth and the relational infrastructure that enables leaders to flourish. Dedicated mentors and a supportive, enduring community elevated scholars across their careers. This person-centered, relationship-driven model offers valuable lessons for the field.

Key opportunities for improvement include:



Creating pathways to follow-on phase 2 funding for high-potential projects



Making access to external opportunities transparent and equitable



Ensuring consistent mentorship and feedback across disciplines



More structured leadership, business and finance content

"I felt deeply cared for and understood as part of the program. Cambia invested in me as a person and as a leader. That felt different than other programs which were more tied to the project or institution."

2017 SCHOLAR



EVALUATION GOAL

What lessons does the SSLP community have for palliative care, philanthropy and health care?

CONCLUSION

Palliative care has made great progress in becoming the standard of care for helping people with serious illness, and yet the field faces significant ongoing challenges.

The Sojourns community consistently called for action to address critical needs in the field:



Expanding access and care settings
+ addressing disparities



Advancing research and evidence



Policy reform



Workforce development and advocacy within
health care systems

We look to the palliative care field, health care partners and funders to sustain momentum through **policy advocacy, ongoing innovation in models of care** and investments in **leadership development**.



"Palliative care leaders are the solution to today's health care problems"

PALLIATIVE CARE EXPERT