

**A Welcome from the President  
Student Orientation, July 2007  
By President Stan Liberty**

**Good afternoon, everyone.**

**It is my pleasure, on behalf of the entire university community, to welcome both new students and accompanying family members to Kettering University. This is a very special occasion as you can tell from the way we are dressed. No, we don't dress this way every day at Kettering. In fact, the next time you will probably see us in this medieval looking garb is when we are celebrating the graduation of the new students joining us today!**

**Parents – how many of you are having this experience for the first time – the experience of bringing a son or daughter to college and going home without them? Both you and your sons and daughters will always recall this experience. I know you are apprehensive about it, but I want to assure you that**

**everything is going to be okay. Students at Kettering mature more rapidly than any I've ever observed elsewhere in higher education. If you've laid a solid foundation of personal development, then you have very little to worry about; and you will marvel at the rate of personal development of your sons and daughters over the next few years.**

**Most of my remarks today are directed to your sons and daughters, but there's a lot in them for you too. So listen carefully.**

**New Students – I am extremely pleased that you selected Kettering as the place where you will prepare to enter the new global economy, known as the knowledge economy, armed with the distinct advantages of personal and professional development only Kettering can provide. Indeed, Kettering's value proposition consists of low student-faculty ratios, with accompanying personal attention throughout its engineering,**

**science, and business programs, a unique professional cooperative education program, a unique culminating thesis requirement, and undergraduate access to laboratory equipment that most institutions provide only to graduate students. The collective and individual professional and career successes of Kettering's alumni, and the ability of students to obtain excellent jobs immediately after graduation, or gain entry into graduate or professional schools, attest to the value of what we do here.**

**You are undoubtedly aware that Kettering had its beginnings 88 years ago and for about 60 years was a division of General Motors known as General Motors Institute or GMI. In 1983 GMI became an independent institution and was renamed Kettering University in 1998.**

**I became this institution's sixth president exactly two years ago. I too was attracted to Kettering for some of the same**

**reasons that you were. I was extremely impressed with the incredible professional success that the graduates of this institution have achieved. Ultimately this is the litmus test for any institution – the success of its graduates – and Kettering’s alumni are a most impressive lot. Any institution in the United States would love to be able to claim Kettering alumni as theirs. And, I was equally impressed by what these successful alumni said about the unique educational experience this institution provided for them. Individually and collectively they credited the cooperative educational experience provided by Kettering as a key to their professional success. This supported what I already knew about Kettering’s excellent national reputation as a technologically focused institution with a unique commitment to work-integrated learning.**

**I was also impressed by the commitment this institution has demonstrated to undergraduate education. And, although Kettering is more than just a teaching institution, its research**

**and outreach missions are frequently tied to the intellectual development of its undergraduate students. Each faculty member has their own specific creative interest and, because Kettering is not a doctoral degree granting institution there are many opportunities for faculty and undergraduate student creative collaboration. These opportunities plus those provided by the existing centers of applied research and others that will be formed in the future will allow many of you to gain additional experience in an applied research setting as a supplement to your classroom, laboratory and co-op employment experiences.**

**Interestingly, at 10:00PM tonight on the Science Channel, a specific research interest of Dr. Dan Russell, an associate professor of Physics at Kettering, will be featured in the program “How Do They Do it?” The roughly 10 minute segment features Dr. Russell explaining the physics of wood and aluminum baseball bats. Dr. Russell frequently involves**

**undergraduate students in his research work. That program will be repeated several times over the next few days on the Science Channel.**

**Most institutions of higher education in this country are presently grappling with a variety of challenges. Public institutions are feeling the impact of weakening tax-based financial support and they are rapidly increasing tuition and fees. In fact, today, decisions will be made on significant tuition increases at some Michigan public universities.**

**Student-faculty ratios are also increasing in many publics as they deal with budget challenges. Both private and public higher educational institutions are struggling with the issue of affordable access to higher education. And, although the cost of a private education is still higher than that in public institutions, the value of the educational experience in private institutions resulting from small class sizes and personal attention by faculty and staff makes the investment extremely**

**worthwhile. In Kettering's case the added value is even greater because of the cooperative educational and thesis experiences we provide. I assure you that your return on the investment you are making here will be excellent.**

**I would now like to share with you just a few thoughts – seven of them in fact - that I hope you will recall and reflect on as you begin and move through your Kettering experience.**

**First: You are about to experience a new rate of learning unlike anything you have experienced before. At times the challenges may seem severe, but you need to know that we know that every one of you is capable of success here. If you encounter difficulties, make sure you don't procrastinate getting the assistance you may need and is available here.**

**Academic or personal problems are rarely as big as they may seem - especially if dealt with quickly. But, problems that are**

**left unattended can lead to major set backs and sometimes most unfortunate results.**

**I recommend that you periodically assess your rate of learning by looking back. Every so often compare where you are in your intellectual and personal development with where you were a few months or a year ago. You should have a tremendous sense of accomplishment, and that sense of accomplishment will boost your confidence as you face the challenges ahead. But, if you find, under periodic assessment, that your knowledge and cognitive capabilities are not growing, then you need to seek help and take corrective action.**

**The academic and student affairs divisions of the University contain most of the support systems that you may need to draw upon from time to time. These two divisions lie under the administrative oversight of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Student Affairs is administered by the**

**Associate Provost for Student Affairs. Both students and parents should know that when there may be bumps in the road or a sense that help is needed (and you don't know exactly where to turn for help) these two administrative offices have the ability to direct you efficiently to the appropriate support functions within the university. The two administrators with oversight of these areas Drs. Shotick and Harris have already been introduced to you.**

**My Second Thought is This: When you set a direction and goals, be mindful that they will probably change in the future. We all encounter opportunities that we cannot anticipate. So, as you move down that corridor with the goal being to reach and open the door at its end, be mindful of all of the doors along both walls of that corridor. Open as many of those as you can to see what is inside, and if it's something that will broaden your experience in a positive way – even though you can't see how it fits into your future – sample it. It is very**

**unlikely that you will move through life without drawing on nearly all of those experiences, and each of them will enhance your ability to contribute. I call this “preparing for unexpected opportunity.” One such experience to consider is an international or study abroad experience. You will see the number of such opportunities at Kettering grow while you are here.**

**Even if you have a very clear picture of what your goals are now, don't be at all surprised or concerned if your goals change in the next couple of years. Also, take advantage of the local and regional opportunities to develop your cultural background and appreciation of the fine and performing arts. And, also give serious consideration to participating in intramural and club sports available at Kettering. At a minimum use the excellent recreational facilities here to get fit and stay fit.**

**Third: Make a concerted effort to become a better person. Constantly challenge the status quo of your moral and ethical frameworks and continue to strengthen them. You will make some mistakes as you move forward. While at Kettering there will be some safety nets for you so you can occasionally stumble without breaking your neck – although you might occasionally have a bloody nose. Hopefully you will avoid serious mistakes and any mistakes you make will only be a foundation for change in direction and more appropriate decision making. The bottom line is this: don't deal with dilemmas without forcing yourself to apply a check list for ethical and moral decision making. And, part of that check list should be to test your self-interest in the decision-outcome against a greater interest – that of your organization (such as the university, a Greek organization, student government, or some other organization), your family, the community, or society in general.**

**You can begin with academic honesty. A large portion of young people coming to higher education today have participated in academic dishonesty and nearly all have observed it. Make a commitment to be honest in all that you do in the future. Remember – we are helping you prepare to be future leaders. And, leadership requires integrity. Integrity flows from honesty, a commitment to ethical and moral decision making and consistency in communication and decision making. As you move from stage to stage in your life, think about how you want to be remembered after you leave the next stage and act accordingly. At a minimum I suggest that you wish to be remembered as a person of integrity.**

**Fourth: Don't underestimate the power of networking.**

**Establish as many positive relationships with as many people and as many entities as you can over the next few years and beyond – especially relationships that are collaborative or hold the potential to be collaborative. Your ability to make a**

**difference in the world and your individual and organizational success will be significantly amplified by collaborative networking. Again, build these relationships and nurture them in anticipation of new opportunities. Things happen very quickly in today's world and you won't have time to start from scratch. The flip side of this is that networking will work against you if you establish negative relationships. So don't be a jerk! A bad reputation will grow rapidly and will precede you.**

**Fifth: Family is critically important not only to you but to society as a whole. When family relations and units break down there is a cost for everyone. I believe the last thing you should ever do is give up on family members or the family unit. As you embark on this new chapter in your life, commit to maintaining strong family ties and relationships.**

**Sixth: Be philanthropic. Look for good causes to support.**

**Provide your talent, not because someone tells you it will make you feel good, but because you know it is the right thing to do.**

**Here at Kettering you will have ample opportunity to make positive contributions to the local community, and even more broadly.**

**Finally: While at Kettering and into the future, on your work assignment and as a member of society, always strive to produce more than you consume. If you don't satisfy this inequality (with some margin to spare) then you probably won't be able to hold a job and the world will NOT be a better place because of you. Periodically assess how well you are doing at this. This will require that you be able to describe the value of what you do and how it will be measured.**

**Again, welcome to Kettering. You are joining Kettering at a very interesting time in which you will see several positive**

**changes, and you will have ample opportunities to help make the University even better than it is today. I wish you the very best of success in this most exciting time in your life. Make the most of it!**