



PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

BY STAN LIBERTY

President, Kettering University

When my appointment as Kettering's sixth president was announced last March, my e-mail in-box was immediately flooded with congratulatory notes from colleagues across the country and "welcome to Kettering" messages from Kettering employees, trustees and alumni. In the weeks that followed, similar messages arrived by regular mail. In nearly every case, these messages either contained expressions of pride in the University or expressions of respect for Kettering's quality and awareness of how special this institution is. Thank you for wishing me well and thank you for confirming my instincts about Kettering. Since then, many have asked me to share with them some of the reasons why I decided to join Kettering. The primary goal of any university president should be to lead their institution to a higher level of excellence and relevance in all that it does. This requires developing even greater strength in the institutional human, fiscal and physical resource bases. Achieving this goal requires a solid foundation to build on.

As I did my homework on the University, I was extremely impressed with the incredible professional success that the graduates of Kettering/GMI have achieved. Ultimately this is the litmus test for any institution—the success of its graduates—and the Kettering/GMI alumni constitute a most impressive lot. Any institution in the United States would love to be able to claim Kettering/GMI alumni as theirs. 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 unique professional 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. This alumni success also reflects very well on the quality and dedication of the University's faculty and staff to the University's mission.

I was also impressed by the significant number of corporate partnerships that the University has and I see these as providing unique opportunities for expanding and strengthening Kettering's mission, and contribution to societal needs in this country. I see tremendous opportunities for Kettering to make substantial contributions to the economic development of Southeastern Michigan and other specific areas where we have a strong alumni and corporate partner presence. I also believe these opportunities and the challenges surrounding them are well matched to my background and experiences. So, I am thrilled to be here and I am most enthusiastic about working with all of you as we tackle current and future challenges, exploit opportunities we will both create and inherit, and continue to move Kettering in a positive direction—a direction in which the value of a Kettering degree will continually increase.

Many are asking what my vision is for Kettering. The development of a new vision for Kettering is something that will unfold during the current academic year and I can't respond in detail to that question, because my vision will be an integrated vision of the institution. However, I expect that in addition to providing the nation's preeminent work-integrated learning programs in science and engineering, Kettering's future will include: significantly expanded student life including more on-campus student

housing and co-curricular programming focused on the social and cultural development of our students; the development of a substantial applied research capability with a more significant resident graduate student population; and the development of new collaborative relationships with other entities focusing on making a substantial contribution to science and technology-based economic development. In all of this I see a richer set of developmental experiences for undergraduate students with more programmatic offerings and flexibility.

The institution now known as Kettering University will celebrate its centennial year in 2019 and I am challenging the University community to envision Kettering at that point in the future. We won't get it exactly right of course—it's impossible to anticipate all of the changes that will occur in a 14-year period—but we should be able to get a sense of new strategic direction for the University. Once that new direction is determined, the nearer term steps along that path will be taken.

Kettering has its own unique challenges of course, but it shares some challenges with all of U.S. higher education, other private institutions and scientific and technological focused institutions in particular. Access to higher education is a major national issue, due to escalating costs and increasing numbers of college bound students with limited ability to afford these costs. Academic preparation of college bound students, especially in fields requiring strong math and science foundations, is generally deficient. Also, interest in science and engineering among our nation's youth has been declining for some time now. At the same time, concerns about jobs moving off shore—first manufacturing jobs and then service jobs—are beginning to be overshadowed by the growing amount of global competition in the arena of innovation and the large numbers of engineers and scientists being educated in other countries—engineers and scientists who are now motivated to raise the standard of living in their own countries using the innovation model that has worked so well in this country. Again, these challenges come hand-in-hand with multiple opportunities, especially for Kettering, an institution that is well positioned to build on its strengths and further develop and apply its capabilities in new ways to these and future societal needs.

Sincerely,

