

Dear Kettering LEADERS:

I'm writing to let you know of a major strategic transition in our organization. I have decided to step down as President of Kettering LEADERS after Deese Weekend 2024 on January 22nd, 2024. It has been almost 4 years since I started in 2020, and the amount we've accomplished together has been significant:

1. **Alumni-Volunteering.** We became Kettering University's **largest** producer of alumni-volunteering hours which is extraordinarily helpful to the university's US News and World Report rankings. Alumni-volunteering is measured as one of the best proxies of a university's efficacy according to the US News and World Report (i.e., if alumni are volunteering back to their university, the thinking goes that it likely means that they got a lot from their alma mater and want to give back because of it).
2. **Development Hours.** We generated **~1,320** development **hours** (!) to date, and this number is an underestimate. That is the equivalent of **55 days** (!!!) and 5 hours of developing fellows (e.g., mentoring, coaching, training, etc.), or **165 traditional American workdays** (!!!). These hours are documented and can be audited by future boards of the organization.
3. **New Fellows.** We accepted **~35** (!) new fellows since April 2020 and developed a streamlined-yet-rigorous acceptance process that requires minimizing and documenting conflicts-of-interest while also reducing biases such as groupthink. We use Z-scores and other statistical methods against a Likert scale of our organization's leadership values to help us evaluate whether interviewees have reached our organization's quality bar, and our decision archives allows our organization to learn from past acceptance and rejection decisions.
4. **Quarterly Recruitment and Applicant Coaching.** Our new recruitment, application, and interview process has become quarterly to allow reapplicants more chances to grow via applicant coaching and get accepted. Many reapplicants who have been accepted have cited that they were glad that they were rejected the first time because of how much it pushed them to grow in ways they wouldn't have otherwise.
5. **Professional Coaching.** We sponsored several fellows and recent graduates to do International Coaching Federation (ICF) accredited professional coaching training which some fellows said was the most impactful experience of their undergraduate career thus far.
6. **Lean Processes.** We developed lean processes to not only reduce the effort required to successfully run the organization, but to serve many archival purposes for future generations to learn from and build on.
7. **Dispelling Myths.** We dispelled – and documented – multiple apocryphal myths about how the organization runs (e.g., the university *cannot* take away or reallocate the endowment to other university purposes; we know the exact process in which donations to the endowment's corpus and market gains translate to the organization's annual budget).
8. **Endowment Growth.** Our endowment has grown to **\$415,887.28** (!) from \$362,873.06 since 2020.
9. **LeaderShape.** After LeaderShape's hiatus during COVID-19 shutdowns, the organization is sponsoring 6 fellows to attend LeaderShape in 2024 for the first time since 2019! Deese Weekend has been reorganized at the university's beautiful new Learning Commons to enable these sponsorships.

10. Kettering LEADERS Continues. It was not obvious whether the fellowship would survive or not in 2020 when it only had 3 B-section fellows and 1 A-section fellow remaining, but this now feels like a distant memory.

After taking over Kettering LEADERS in April 2020, I became apprehensive about whether it was even worth continuing the organization. In October 2020, I met with my professional coach at the time, Walt Hastings, MCC, about my concerns. I shared that I felt like spending my time volunteering was a mistake; others unencumbered by volunteering would surely be able to grow faster in their careers.

Walt drew upon his background as a pastor and shared Matthew 16:25 with me:

“He who would save his own life will lose it, but he who would lose his life for my sake will find it.”

Walt confidently declared to me:

“Giving back is nothing to be ashamed of. Giving back to others is like a garden: you have so much more than you had before.”

He smiled and then said,

“Eddie, I get the feeling that you are exactly where you need to be right now.”

Looking back with my perspective in November 2023 of how much I’ve grown because of you all, my dilemma in October 2020 now seems laughable. But it’s a common dilemma all of us high achievers in this community have when weighing whether to give back. Some of the most important growth in my life thus far has happened explicitly because I was involved with Kettering LEADERS.

Another equally true aphorism has become especially relevant for me in the context of our organization:

“Only the wealthy can be charitable.”

Wealth is much more intangible than strictly finances: time, energy, love, appreciation, perspective.

I am confident that the next generation is now coming from a much wealthier place to charitably lead Kettering LEADERS into the future. After recruiting so many of them, the quantity of how many can help give back is substantial. With Deese Weekend 2024 and LeaderShape sponsorships on the horizon, the large scope of goals I had when I joined are nearly complete.

We will work through a transition plan and collaborate on aspects of it at Deese Weekend 2024. I promise to prioritize coaching and mentoring our successors at their request.

It has been a privilege serving you all; thank you for being in my life!

Eddie Schodowski

President, Kettering University LEADERS Endowment

Friday, November 10th, 2023