

# Kettering University

1700 University Avenue • Flint, Michigan 48504-6214

Tuesday, May 5, 2020

*To:* The Kettering University Community of all Faculty, Staff and Students

*Subject:* Professor Henry (Doc K) Kowalski

It is with great sadness and with the deepest sorrow that I must inform you that Mechanical Engineering Professor Emeritus Henry (Hank) Kowalski, affectionately known by all as “Doc K,” passed away earlier this week at the age of 83.

One cannot overstate Doc K’s impact on the Kettering community in his more than 51 years on our faculty. He joined the University in 1964, and “retired” in 2015, although retirement really wasn’t in his nature and he continued to teach and mentor students long after that. Indeed, even well into his 80’s, he could often be seen on campus, holding court with students and always with “Cookie,” his canine companion of his later years, by his side.

He was unwavering in his commitment to our students and their success. One of his great passions was FIRST, and he was the lead mentor for the Metal Muscle, Team 1506, for many years. He was a passionate advocate for the team as well as a tireless and devoted mentor, always pushing it to innovate and excel, but also always deeply devoted to all of its members and their personal success. He understood innately that FIRST taught lessons beyond those that students simply needed to be successful in the competition. He knew that what it – and he – was really doing was helping to shape their lives, and to provide for them a glimpse into a future-that-could-be.

We will miss him. We will miss his “direct” style – he never minced words, but behind that veneer of obstinacy was an ever-so-subtle grin and one of the biggest hearts I have ever known. We will miss his passionate and uncompromising advocacy for the University and for our students. Doc K has shaped so many lives over so many generations. In recognition of this, it was a special honor for me in 2015 to induct him as a member of the inaugural class of faculty represented on the University’s Honor Wall in the Great Court.

We all have many fond memories of him. Long ago, he asked me for permission to use the old Gymnasium in the AB as a practice space for Metal Muscle. From that simple request and his passion for Metal Muscle came the FIRST Community Center, a nationally recognized model of the power of FIRST on a college campus and in a community.

Words cannot express how much he has meant to this University and how much he will be missed. We ask that you please keep Doc K’s family and the many people whose lives he touched in your thoughts and prayers.

Be well,



Dr. Robert K. McMahan  
*President and Professor of Physics*

Additional Information:

We are currently awaiting details on future memorial services for Doc K and we will continue to share updates as we receive them. These services will, of course, take place after restrictions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic are lifted.

Grief counselors are available to students, faculty and staff through the Wellness Center. Wellness (810-762-9650) can provide counseling to students, faculty, and staff during regular business office hours. Grief counseling is also available through our student and employee assistance programs, 24/7/365: Student Assistance Program: 855-774-4700; Employee Assistance Program: 800-448-8326.