



Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
Kettering University
Flint, Michigan

THE SEARCH

Kettering University (Kettering), a distinctive STEM-focused institution and an exemplar in cooperative education, seeks a forward-thinking, entrepreneurial, and innovative leader to serve as its next Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost (Provost). The Kettering community - faculty, students, staff, Board, and industry partners - agrees that the University is different from other institutions, deliberately so. Emphasizing innovation in fields such as engineering, computer science, technology, and emerging industries, Kettering positions itself in developing leaders, problem solvers, and entrepreneurs equipped at graduation to address complex global challenges and achieve strong career outcomes. The next Provost will help guide the University to its next level of academic distinction, market relevance, and national prominence.

Kettering is a private institution enrolling 1,500 students, including 1,300 undergraduates and 200 graduate students, from 35 states and 27 countries. Through academically rigorous programs in engineering, computer science, and business management, combined with Kettering's industry-embedded, mandatory cooperative education model, students graduate with market-competitive degrees and 2.5 years of real-world industry experience. Nearly 600 employers partner with Kettering, providing high-impact opportunities in which students spend two 12-week terms in the classroom and two terms in industry each year.

Kettering's President, Dr. Robert K. McMahan, has consistently emphasized that higher education must understand itself as a "critical link in the modern talent supply chain," and must evolve accordingly. At Kettering, this translates into continuous program alignment with workforce demand, the integration of academic and co-op experiences into a seamless student experience, and a disciplined focus on outcomes as the ultimate measure of institutional success. The result is a university that is both highly focused and deliberately differentiated. Kettering does not attempt to be all things to all students. Instead, it has defined a [clear identity](#) as a leader in experiential STEM education, a trusted partner to industry, and a driver of innovation and economic development, preparing students for lives of extraordinary leadership and service.

The University has a strong president with a non-traditional background who is not looking for the "usual provost". The provost will bring a corporate mindset, mental agility, and must share with the president a

strong vision and sense of the University's mission. An industry-savvy leader, the Provost will help position Kettering to stay ahead of the curve in a rapidly changing higher education and economic landscape—driving strategic enrollment growth, expanding financial support, shaping a distinctive and market-responsive graduate portfolio, and building, strengthening, and sustaining the industry partnerships that are core to Kettering's success. Reporting to and making up a complementary team with the President, the Provost will work in close partnership with leadership, deans, faculty, and staff. The next Provost will play a central role in advancing academic innovation and institutional growth in step with evolving industry demands.

The University is served by a Board of Trustees that is highly positioned and eager to leverage its connections and expertise, and that shares an excellent working relationship with the president.

Kettering University has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in recruiting the new Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost. All inquiries, applications, and nominations should be directed in confidence as noted at the end of this profile.

ABOUT KETTERING UNIVERSITY

Kettering University stands apart in American higher education because of its intentionally designed educational structure: a fully embedded education-workforce model aimed at producing career-ready engineers and business leaders. From its origins as General Motors Institute to its present role as America's Co-op College, Kettering has aligned its academic model with the evolving demands of industry, technology, and society. At the center of this alignment is a clear and demanding premise: Kettering delivers mastery as an outcome versus simply an education, with half of the students' education, by design, occurring outside of the university environment. That distinction is not rhetorical. This model is reflected in the University's structure, including 79 full-time and 43 part-time faculty, 114 staff, and an alumni base of approximately 34,000.

History and Evolution

Kettering University was founded in 1919 in Flint, Michigan, by a group of industrial visionaries who recognized that the future of American industry would depend on a new kind of talent—engineers and leaders educated not only in theory, but in practice. Under the leadership of Major Albert Sobey, the institution, then known as The School of Automobile Trades, was established to meet the workforce needs of a rapidly growing automotive sector, and from its earliest days, it embedded a close alignment between education and industry.

The institution quickly established a cooperative education model that integrated rigorous classroom study with paid professional experience. Shaped in part by the influence of inventor and industrialist Charles F. Kettering, the University evolved into one of the nation's most distinctive producers of leaders in engineering and business. Since becoming an independent institution in 1982 and adopting the Kettering University name in 1998, it has continued to grow in scope, partnerships, and impact while

remaining true to its founding purpose: preparing students to contribute, lead, and innovate through the full integration of academic rigor and immersive professional experience.

University Leadership

[Dr. Robert K. McMahan](#) became the seventh President of Kettering University in August 2011. Before joining Kettering, Dr. McMahan was the Founding Dean and Professor of Engineering at Western Carolina University's College of Engineering and Technology. He received dual bachelor's degrees in physics and in the history of art from Duke University, and a PhD in Physics from Dartmouth. He completed postdoctoral studies at Harvard University's Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory Center for Astrophysics, where he also held an appointment as an Astrophysicist at the Smithsonian Institution. He has completed executive leadership programs at the Harvard Kennedy School and the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

The President works in close partnership with the [University Cabinet](#) to advance the University's strategic priorities.

Academics

Kettering University offers bachelor's degrees, post-bachelor's certificates, and master's degrees. Through the [College of Engineering and Computer Science](#), the [School of Management](#), and the [Graduate School](#), the University offers 9 undergraduate and 17 master's programs. The [School of Foundational Studies](#) is one of the centers for Kettering's university-wide Core Curriculum, fostering cross-disciplinary collaboration and equipping students with the critical thinking, communication, and analytical skills required for leadership in every industry. For a complete list of programs, visit [Kettering's academic programs](#).

Each major is complemented by a core curriculum in math, science, and liberal arts from Kettering's new School of Foundational Studies. In addition, Kettering's students are also supported by Kettering's School of Management business courses. As cognitive abilities deepen throughout their four-and-a-half years, the benefits of core courses are realized. The Senior Leadership seminar allows seniors to discuss core issues of leadership and ethics, drawing upon both academic and work experiences. The Senior Thesis, most often completed in partnership with a student's Co-op employer, demonstrates the full breadth of the student's impact and underscores the benefit to the employer. Kettering fully prepares its students for their roles as leaders of their professions and their communities. For more information, visit [Academics and Research at Kettering](#).

Co-op and Career Design

Kettering University's [cooperative education model](#) reflects the integrated experiential learning philosophy in its most complete form. Students move in continuous, 12-week rotations between the classroom and full-time, paid professional roles, graduating with approximately 2.5 years of substantive work experience, earning on average \$55,000-\$75,000, often more, over the course of their degree program. In this model, employment is not a supplement to education; it is inseparable from it. Work

functions as a second classroom, with employers as co-educators, ensuring that theory is continually tested against the realities of practice. As President McMahan has written, many institutions attempt to layer experience onto traditional academic structures. Kettering, by contrast, has intentionally maintained its original structure to empower such a rigorous model.

The outcomes are clear and measurable:

- 100% of students complete a minimum of five Co-op terms before graduation. That is every student, every major, every year.
- Nearly universal employment or graduate school placement for graduates.
- Strong starting salaries reflecting immediate workforce readiness.
- Deep employer partnerships with nearly 600 leading companies nationwide, many of which have international opportunities.
- Graduates begin their careers beyond the entry level, equipped to contribute on day one and with a clear understanding of the business environment and their role within it.

These results are reinforced by a deep and longstanding network of employer partners across advanced manufacturing, mobility, technology, and emerging sectors, all of whom rely on Kettering as a source of highly prepared talent.

Momentum and Institutional Strength

Recent years have further underscored the University's institutional strength and momentum. Kettering successfully concluded the \$155 million [Boldly Forward](#) capital campaign in 2022, enabling significant investments in facilities, scholarships, and academic programming, including the opening of the Learning Commons. In 2024, the University achieved full ten-year reaccreditation with no findings or interim reporting requirements, an outcome reserved for high-performing institutions, and launched a new brand that more clearly articulates its distinctive value proposition. This momentum has also been reflected in enrollment, with incoming student growth increasing by 50% between 2023 and 2025. At the same time, the University continues to expand its global and industry partnerships, including collaborations that advance next-generation mobility and sustainable engineering solutions.

Together, these accomplishments reflect both disciplined execution and a forward-looking investment strategy. For prospective leaders, this coherence is particularly significant. It signals an institution that understands its purpose, aligns its resources accordingly, and is positioned to navigate the changing landscape of higher education and define its future.

Facilities

Kettering supports its students with [cutting-edge facilities](#). Kettering's [General Motors Mobility Research Center](#) puts them at the forefront of the autonomous vehicle industry. This 21-acre, state-of-the-art autonomous vehicle testing track—the only one of its kind on a college campus in the country—provides

students, faculty, and industry partners the opportunity to conduct research and development on autonomous vehicles, vehicle safety standards, and hybrid and electric vehicle technologies. [Additional industry-aligned research facilities can be explored.](#)

[The Learning Commons](#) at Kettering represents a new model for university buildings and has already gained national attention for enhancing and inspiring learning through collaboration, ideation, socialization, and fun. This technology-rich building, with no classrooms or offices, has transformed the learning experience of students and the teaching experience of faculty through open spaces that encourage spontaneous interactions among students and Faculty.

The building earned the Grand Prize for higher education projects over 100,000 square feet at *Learning By Design* magazine's Fall 2023 Architecture and Interior Design Awards of Excellence program. An accompanying article in the magazine stated, "The Learning Commons marries technology and craft, academics and social, education and industry together within a facility that makes a statement for where higher education must go." The building was further recognized when President McMahan gave a presentation about the Learning Commons at the 2022 Society for College and University Planners Annual Conference in Long Beach, California.

Student Life

At Kettering University, [student life](#) reflects the same intentional design that defines the academic and Co-op experience. While the rigor of the classroom and the demands of work are central, Kettering recognizes that leadership, collaboration, and personal growth are developed meaningfully beyond them. The student experience is further supported by institutional leadership, including the appointment of a Chief Student Experience Officer, and is a key component of Kettering's philosophy of educating students.

Kettering's relatively small student body fosters a close-knit, highly engaged community in which students can form meaningful connections quickly and take an active role in shaping campus life. The breadth of over 40 student organizations, spanning technical, cultural, social, and service-oriented interests, ensures that students can pursue experiences that complement and extend their academic and professional development.

This engagement often reflects the applied, hands-on ethos of a Kettering education. Students may contribute to competition teams such as Formula SAE, become leaders in Kettering's Student Government, participate in organizations like the Society of Women Engineers, or engage with affinity groups. Others explore creative and social interests through organizations such as the Dance Club or intramural athletics. Esports hold a particularly distinctive place within campus life: Kettering's nationally recognized program includes both a National Championship-caliber varsity team and broad opportunities for participation, welcoming students ranging from elite competitors to those newly exploring the field.

Points of Pride

Recognition of Kettering’s effectiveness is reflected in national rankings and external validation. The University is consistently ranked among the top engineering institutions by U.S. News & World Report and has earned distinction for career preparation, reflecting the strength of its outcomes-oriented model. At the same time, Kettering has remained committed to expanding access and opportunity, with a growing population of Pell-eligible students and a demonstrated ability to translate educational experience into upward mobility across socioeconomic backgrounds.

Top-ranked for career preparation in national assessments, reflecting the strength of its co-op model and employer alignment.

- No. 1 College by [Launchpad Rankings](#), with continued recognition for academic quality, cooperative learning, and student success
- Top 10 in the Nation for Career Preparation – [The Wall Street Journal](#)
- No. 18 Best Undergraduate Engineering Programs (non-doctoral) – [U.S. News & World Report](#)
- No. 20 Best for Co-ops/Internships - [U.S. News & World Report](#)
- Top 20 National Ranking for Best Graduate Salaries – [The Wall Street Journal](#)
- No. 21 in the Top 50 Private Colleges in the Nation for Return on Investment - [Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce](#)
- Top College for Launching Your Career - [Forbes](#)

LOCATION

Flint, the largest city in Genesee County, located about 66 miles northwest of Detroit, holds a distinctive place in the history and future of American industry. Founded in 1819 and later transformed by lumber and carriage production, and by the rise of the automotive sector, Flint became the birthplace of General Motors in 1908 and earned its enduring nickname, “Vehicle City.” Today, that legacy continues to shape a city defined by resilience, reinvention, and innovation.

Flint and the surrounding region pair industrial heritage with fresh momentum. Signature events such as “Back to the Bricks,” the Flint Jazz Festival, Alley Fest, and the HAP Crim Festival of Races animate a vibrant community. At the same time, institutions including the Flint Institute of Arts, Flint Symphony Orchestra, Flint Institute of Music, and the Sloan Museum enrich the city’s cultural life. Add in the Flint Farmers’ Market, a walkable downtown, and Kettering’s Historic Atwood Stadium, and Flint offers a dynamic, accessible setting with a strong sense of place. Visit [Explore Flint and Genesee](#) for additional information.

ROLE OF THE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND PROVOST

The Provost serves as Kettering University’s chief academic officer and principal partner to the President in advancing the institution’s mission, strategic goals, values, and the academic enterprise. In this role, the Provost articulates and implements a clear vision for academic affairs aligned with the President’s

vision for the University, defines institutional academic priorities, and ensures their execution across the University. In addition to overseeing the deans, direct reports include the director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, the director of the Office of International Programs, the interim director of Library Services, and the Registrar. As a central member of the University's executive leadership team, the Provost also advises the President and Board of Trustees on academic matters and helps shape Kettering's long-term academic strategy, and serves on the Board of Trustees Academic Affairs Committee. The Provost oversees a budget of \$20 million.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND PROVOST

Kettering University has identified opportunities and challenges that are fundamental to its continued success. It seeks a Provost with experience and commitment to academic excellence who can work with the President, the university leadership team, the deans, faculty, and staff to further elevate the University's academic distinction and recognition as a premier leader in STEM and industry-embedded education with a unique Co-op model that produces mastery as the ultimate outcome.

Establish a Strategic Vision to Lead a Market-Responsive Academic Enterprise and Elevate Kettering's Visibility

Kettering's next Provost will need to guide an academic enterprise in a rapidly shifting higher education market, where student demand, employer expectations, and competitive pressures require ongoing recalibration of programs, structures, and delivery models. At the same time, Kettering's distinctive, outcomes-oriented educational model calls for leadership willing to move beyond traditional academic assumptions, ensure agility without sacrificing coherence, and navigate the structural complexity of serving two alternating student cohorts whose academic and Co-op schedules rotate throughout the year. This is a significant opportunity to position the University to anticipate and respond proactively to workforce and industry trends while strengthening Kettering's differentiation and serving as a close strategic partner to the President in advancing a vision that is market-aligned, outcomes-driven academic model that is clearly understood, consistently delivered, and continuously improved.

The Provost will elevate Kettering's academic profile and sharpen its external narrative as a result, amplifying the university's outcomes-driven education, employer-embedded learning model, and professional readiness of graduates. Clear, consistent academic storytelling and visible external engagement will strengthen recruitment, deepen employer and alumni confidence, and position Kettering more prominently as a national leader in experiential, workforce-aligned education.

Steward Institutional Agility and Sustainable Enrollment and Financial Growth

Kettering University is operating in a context that demands both academic agility and organizational clarity. The University has moved away from traditional departmental structures and continues to evolve interdisciplinary degree pathways and nontraditional delivery models, increasing flexibility while also

introducing complexity. The next Provost will be responsible for strengthening the coherence and effectiveness of these academic structures; advancing industry-embedded partnerships that are central to Kettering's educational model; aligning research activity with institutional priorities and capacity; and ensuring that shared governance processes support timely, transparent, and well-informed decision-making. This role requires greater consistency and discipline in academic planning while sustaining Kettering's distinctive model of applied, industry-connected education. The opportunity is to stabilize and integrate recent changes while positioning the academic enterprise to remain responsive, collaborative, and mission-aligned. The Provost will inspire faculty and encourage ongoing collaboration between the Deans to yield new programmatic offerings and research.

The Provost plays a pivotal role in cultivating and sustaining industry partnerships at home and abroad, diversifying revenue streams, and advancing the University's fundraising efforts. The Provost will build on recent successes in revenue-generating initiatives, including General Motors' professional development programs and a unique partnership with Saudi Arabia's first electric vehicle brand, Ceer, which provides training for graduate engineers. Additionally, Kettering is engaged with Michigan state initiatives to create student pipelines for transfer students and degree completions.

Build and Scale a Distinctive Graduate Education Portfolio

Kettering's graduate programs operate within a different strategic context than its undergraduate offerings, as they do not follow the Co-op model and are primarily professional, career-enhancing rather than Co-op-intensive. This reality calls for a deliberate, differentiated graduate strategy designed to meet the needs, expectations, and trajectories of experienced professional learners. Kettering University is currently working with 3Enrollment on a comprehensive market research project to align on market realities, optimal portfolio and structural designs, and positioning strategy. The Provost has the opportunity to design and scale a cohesive, employer-aligned graduate portfolio that responds directly to workforce demand, while advancing curricula and teaching models that reflect applied learning, flexibility, and real-world relevance. This work can strengthen Kettering's value proposition to employers and adult learners alike, extend the university's impact, and contribute meaningfully to institutional sustainability and growth.

Strengthen and Sustain Industry Partnerships that Anchor the Co-op Model

Kettering's Co-op model is central to its identity and outcomes, relying on deep, long-standing relationships with nearly 600 industry partners who provide experiential learning opportunities across the nation. Maintaining and expanding this ecosystem requires a superb communicator, sustained leadership attention, particularly as employer needs evolve and competition for high-quality placements intensifies. The Provost has the opportunity to work closely with institutional leadership, deans, faculty, and external partners to strengthen and grow industry relationships in ways that enhance alignment between curriculum and practice, reinforce program quality and consistency, and extend Kettering's value proposition to employers. Thoughtful stewardship of these partnerships can further differentiate the

university, ensure the continued vitality of the Co-op experience, and support strong student outcomes and institutional reputation.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While no one person will embody all of them, the successful candidate will exemplify many of the following qualifications and attributes:

- An earned doctorate or equivalent terminal degree and a record of distinguished scholarship and teaching requisite for an appointment as a tenured full professor within an academic department at Kettering University.
- Ability to articulate the nature of the University's mission to all stakeholders and to translate that mission into practice;
- Experience with regional and national specialty accrediting associations;
- Demonstrated experience with and deep commitment to cooperative education and other experiential learning models that are embedded in and essential to professional education:
- Demonstrated support for the centrality of a broad education in preparing students to be well-informed, socially responsible citizens as well as leaders in their professions;
- A track record of successfully engaging with industry partners to build mutually beneficial relationships that advance academic innovation, experiential learning, and workforce alignment;
- Evidence of activities supportive of faculty and staff development;
- An inspirational and visible leader with demonstrative strategic thinking, outstanding communication skills, and the capacity to champion Kettering's distinctive model of experiential, workforce-aligned education;
- Demonstrated ability to work effectively with constituencies outside the University (e.g. business leaders, civic leaders, professional societies):
- Experience with implementing and advancing programs, services, and supports that strengthen student success and improve social mobility in a rigorous applied educational environment; and
- Success in procuring and managing external funding for instructional, research, and/or student development projects.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the [Kettering University Provost Search](#).

Jacqueline Mildner, Partner
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Kettering University is deeply committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation including gender identity or expression, disability, religion, height, weight, genetic information, or veteran status in employment, educational programs and activities, and admissions except where religion, sex, or age are bona fide job related employment requirements.

Discrimination on the basis of race/ethnicity, color, ancestry, religion, national origin, sex, including marital status, age, disability, or status as a Vietnam-era veteran, special disabled veteran, recently separated veteran or other protected veteran is prohibited by federal and state statutes as amended, including Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1978, the Vietnam Era Veteran's Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the Civil Rights Act of 1991. Inquiries or grievances may be addressed to the Director of Human Resources, Office of Human Resources, 1700 University Avenue, Flint, MI 48504, 810-762-9500.

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