



The Future Begins Now

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Greetings from the Kean University Foundation!

We are excited to share with you the latest edition of our eNewsletter. In keeping with previous publications, this eNewsletter is sent out quarterly to friends and members of the Kean Community, including content related to the many ways we can all support Kean University, as well as options available for making a gift to the Foundation. We look forward to keeping you updated on the Foundation's activities and the tremendous impact of our valued supporters!



Kean University Medallion Society Member Dr. Valerie Leeds Honors Her Mother's Legacy at Kean University

Dr. Valerie Leeds recently made a lasting commitment to honor her mother's legacy at Kean University, where Dr. Norma S. Leeds served as a pioneering chemistry professor and became the first woman to chair the Chemistry-Physics Department.

Through a charitable bequest in her will, Valerie established the Norma S. Leeds Memorial Endowed Scholarship, a gift that will fund an annual full-tuition scholarship for Kean undergraduates studying the natural sciences, especially those pursuing degrees in chemistry or biochemistry.

"It is only through private philanthropy that transformative scholarships such as this one can become a reality," said Bill Miller, president and CEO of the Kean University Foundation.

This transformative endowment ensures that Dr. Norma Leeds' remarkable contributions to Kean will continue to inspire future generations of scientists.

"There is no doubt that Dr. Norma Leeds left a profound impact on the lives of her students over the course of 30 years," said Dr. George Chang, dean of the Dorothy and George Hennings College of

“This scholarship will ensure that my mother’s dedication to higher education and her passion for science will never be forgotten. It is my hope that this scholarship serves as a beacon of hope for aspiring scientists.”

-Dr. Valerie Leeds

Science, Mathematics and Technology. “She was a pioneer as a woman scholar in science and has left an indelible mark on the academic community. This scholarship will serve as a permanent legacy to Dr. Leeds while having a significant impact on our students.”

The scholarship will provide crucial support to students who demonstrate excellence in science and financial need, extending Dr. Leeds’ legacy of dedication to her students.

“This scholarship will not only provide deserving students with full tuition but will ensure that Dr. Norma Leeds’ unwavering dedication to education continues to inspire and support future scientists in a tangible and very meaningful way,” said Lori Funicello, director of planned giving at the Kean University Foundation.

Dr. Norma Leeds, a trailblazer in science, grew up in New York City and, defying the norms of her time, earned a biology degree from Hunter College at age 16. She became the first woman to earn a Ph.D. in chemistry from Rutgers University in 1952.

After joining Kean as its first female chemistry professor, she led the Chemistry-Physics Department, and upon her retirement, Kean honored her with the title of Professor Emeritus, a distinction for faculty who make extraordinary contributions to their fields.

“My mother was a trailblazer, and an example of what women can do when they set their minds to it,” Valerie said. Throughout her career, my mother had a significant impact on hundreds of students, and it is only fitting that her legacy should live on at Kean University.”

Beyond her academic achievements, Dr. Norma Leeds enjoyed a range of passions, including gardening, bridge and the culinary arts.

Her husband, Dr. Morton W. Leeds, a fellow chemist with over 30 patents in the pharmaceutical industry, shared her devotion to education and taught as an adjunct chemistry professor at Kean in the 1970s. Their shared commitment to science and education spanned over 66 years of marriage until Morton’s passing in 2011.

“Education was of the utmost importance to both of my parents, and I believe it is my responsibility to honor their legacies through gifts in my estate,” Valerie said. “This scholarship will ensure that my mother’s dedication to higher education and her passion for science will never be forgotten. It is my hope that this scholarship serves as a beacon of hope for aspiring scientists.”



Kean University alumnus Kevin Herget '15 Celebrated His Jersey Retirement at the Jim Hynes '63 Baseball Stadium on October 11, 2024



Kean University honored alumnus and former star pitcher Kevin Herget by retiring his number 16 jersey at the Jim Hynes '63 Baseball Stadium in October.

This momentous occasion marked the first time a number from the Kean Baseball program was retired. Herget, one of the most decorated student-athletes in Kean Athletics history, became only the third person to have their number retired at Kean.

Family, friends and former teammates gathered to celebrate, and Cougar pride filled the stadium as Herget threw the ceremonial first pitch before Kean's current baseball team squared off against Wagner College.

"I'm forever grateful to have my number retired from Kean," Herget said. "Playing for Kean started and really peaked my interest in baseball and performing at the highest level I could."

Herget's legacy at Kean is cemented by his record-breaking achievements. As Kean's all-time leader in innings pitched with over 345 innings, he also holds records for strikeouts at 356 and career wins with 31. During his senior year in 2013, Herget posted a 10-2 record with a 1.62 ERA and recorded 106 strikeouts, the second-highest in Division III that season.

"The foundation was started here for me to learn how to perform at my best, achieve at a high level and progress my career as far as I could to eventually make it to the big leagues," Herget said. "It's a really cool accomplishment to have, but also the friends and relationships I made at Kean was amazing."



Herget's leadership and skill played a critical role in elevating Kean Baseball, helping the team win three New Jersey Athletic Conference Championships, three NCAA Regional Championships and advance to the Division III World Series three consecutive years (2011-2013).

After earning a B.A. in Mathematical Sciences in 2015, Herget was inducted into the Kean University Benisch Athletic Hall of Fame in 2021. Drafted by the St. Louis Cardinals in 2013, he has since played for five Major League Baseball organizations, including the Cincinnati Reds, Tampa Bay Rays and the Milwaukee Brewers, who reached the playoffs in 2024.

Kean Athletics hosted a private reception in Herget's honor, where Ed Ahart, chief development officer at the Kean University Foundation, addressed the guests. "Usually at Kean we say 'Cougars Climb Higher,' but today we are saying 'Cougars pitch faster,'" Ahart said. "On behalf of the Kean University Foundation and our entire Cougar community, thank you, Kevin, and to your friends, family and loved ones, for coming today as we celebrate you and all your accomplishments. Remember, Kean University will always be home."

In November, the New York Mets claimed Herget off waivers from the Milwaukee Brewers. Fans across New Jersey look forward to seeing Herget take the mound at Citi Field just across the Hudson River as he continues his Major League Baseball journey.



Kean University Board Room Dedicated in Honor of Alumnus Joseph M. Sheridan '80

On Friday, September 6, Kean University and the Kean University Foundation hosted a dedication ceremony to officially name the Joseph M. Sheridan Board Room, located on the sixth floor of Hynes Hall, home to Kean's College of Business and Public Management.

This meaningful event was made possible by the generous gift from the Wakefern Food Corporation to honor the company's recently retired president, Kean alumnus Joe Sheridan '80.

Those in attendance included Joe Sheridan, members of his family, executives from the Wakefern Food Corporation, Kean President Lamont O. Repollet, Ed.D., Kean leadership and representatives from the Kean University Foundation.

Jin Wang, Ph.D., dean of Kean's College of Business and Public Management; Bill Miller, president and CEO of the Kean University Foundation; and Ed Ahart, chief development officer at the Kean University Foundation, each offered remarks in recognition of Sheridan and Wakefern's generosity.

Thank you to the team at Wakefern Food Corp. for the continued support of Kean University and its students.



Liberty Hall Celebrates 250th Anniversary with “Housewarming” Event

The Kean University Foundation was proud to sponsor “Governor Livingston’s Housewarming” this fall at Liberty Hall Museum, a celebration marking 250 years since New Jersey’s first elected governor, William Livingston, moved into the colonial mansion.

As a former home to Livingston and a symbol of American heritage, Liberty Hall has witnessed the nation’s history unfold over centuries. The event raised essential funds for the museum’s preservation efforts and educational programs, supporting the mission to bring this rich history to life for future generations.

The celebration invited guests to explore rare documents signed by America’s founding fathers and taste colonial-era wines, transporting them to a different era.

Foundation Board members, corporate and individual sponsors and Kean University officials joined Museum leaders in honoring the mansion’s legacy and ensuring its continued impact on the community.

“Liberty Hall’s 250th anniversary is an important milestone. It is also a kick-off event,” said Museum Trustee John Kean Jr. “In two years, our nation will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. We anticipate more 250th celebrations to come.”

Kean University President Lamont O. Repollet, Ed.D., joined in congratulating Liberty Hall on this milestone.

“We gather tonight, surrounded by centuries of stories that remind us of the triumphs and the struggles that have shaped our nation’s history,” Repollet said. “As we celebrate this anniversary, let’s remember that Liberty Hall’s story is still being written. Together, we ensure its legacy endures, inspiring us to learn from our past as we build a brighter future.”

Kean thanked the audience for their shared belief in the importance of the national landmark site, noting in particular the generosity of event sponsors, which along with the Foundation included the Kean Family, BCB Bank, Orloff, Lowenbach Stifelman & Siegal, PA, BNC Telecom, the Kean University Alumni Association, The Glenmede Trust Company and Grace Photography.



In a moment that bridged past and present, Kean took on the persona of William Livingston, bringing the spirit of the estate's history to life.

Liberty Hall's history is entwined with the birth and growth of America. Livingston, who served as a representative to the First Continental Congress and later as a Brigadier General of the New Jersey Militia during the Revolutionary War, was elected New Jersey's first governor. Since his time, Liberty Hall has been home to senators, congressmen and captains of industry, and has hosted nine U.S. Presidents. Converted into a museum in 2000, it now serves as an educational center with community-focused programs welcoming thousands of visitors each year.

For more information on programs and events at Liberty Hall, visit libertyhall.kean.edu.



Student Spotlight: Ryan Marino



“I couldn’t be happier with my decision. Kean is home to such a tight-knit and welcoming faculty, campus and community.”

Ryan Marino, a junior Music Education major who resides in Roselle Park, has found a welcoming community that inspires his academic and musical journey at Kean.

Inspired by family ties -- his mother, brother and uncle are all proud Kean alumni -- and encouraged by a high school friend in the music program, Ryan joined Kean for its strong sense of community and warm environment.

“I couldn’t be happier with my decision,” Ryan said. “Kean is home to such a tight-knit and welcoming faculty, campus and community.”

In his two years at Kean, Ryan has built lasting friendships, both old and new, forming a supportive network he describes as a “family of friends.” Ryan’s peers and professors have created a space where he feels valued and included.

“My professors are not just mentors but friends I can rely on,” he said. “They see the best in me, even when I’m struggling.”

A key part of Ryan’s journey has been his involvement with the Saxsations, a saxophone quartet he plays in with friends. Playing a mix of jazz, pop and rock, the Saxsations have performed at local events and on-campus functions, including Kean’s Jazz and Roots Music Festival.

Ryan and the group were also invited to play at President Dr. Lamont O. Repollet’s residence for a faculty event, a proud moment that allowed him to represent the growing music department he loves. “Being part of this community has become such a big part of who I am,” he said.

Ryan credits his saxophone instructor, Kenneth Ellison, for helping him grow as a musician. A self-taught saxophonist before college, Ryan notes that Professor Ellison’s personalized guidance has been transformative. “Our weekly lessons allow him to push me in ways that I need, and I’ve progressed faster than I ever thought possible,” he said.

Ryan is also a member of Kappa Kappa Psi, the national honors band fraternity. Last year, he and his fraternity brothers hosted a concert with Community Access Unlimited, a nonprofit that supports people with disabilities.

“Helping others showcase their talent is an amazing feeling,” he said.

Reflecting on his time at Kean, Ryan feels assured he made the right choice. He values Kean’s vibrant campus life and friendly atmosphere, from events at the Miron Student Center to gatherings at Wilkins Theatre. “Every day, I’m satisfied knowing I made the right choice coming to Kean,” he said.



Meet One of the Newest Members of the Kean University Foundation's Board of Directors



The Kean University Foundation is proud to announce that Michael Milazzo '11, a distinguished alumnus and accomplished attorney, has joined its Board of Directors. Milazzo brings extensive professional expertise and a deep commitment to giving back to his alma mater. His appointment exemplifies the Foundation's mission to advance the University's goals of equity, inclusion and academic excellence.

Raised in North Brunswick, New Jersey, Milazzo's academic journey began at Rutgers University. After taking time off to reflect on his aspirations, he enrolled at Middlesex College and later transferred

to Kean University in 2009. Milazzo graduated in 2011 with a Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies. He continued his education at Cornell University, earning his Juris Doctor in 2014.

Today, Milazzo is a partner at Latham & Watkins LLP in New York, where he advises clients on the tax aspects of private equity funds across the U.S. and Europe. His areas of focus include infrastructure, real estate and ESG/energy transition funds, as well as federal income tax matters related to mergers and acquisitions. Prior to joining Latham & Watkins, Mike was an associate at Debevoise & Plimpton Professionals and a partner at Kirkland & Ellis, respectively.

Beyond his professional achievements, Milazzo is a steadfast supporter of Kean University. In 2023, he created the Martha Gillen and Budd Milazzo Endowed Scholarship in honor of his parents and two professors who played pivotal roles in his education—Jack Sargent, Ph.D., and Fred Fitch, Ph.D., of the Department of Communication, Media and Journalism. The \$50,000 scholarship supports CMJ students who have completed between 60 and 95 credits.

"I enjoyed my time at Kean University immensely," Milazzo said. "Everything I have today can be attributed to my parents and professors. I am especially grateful to Jack Sargent and Fred Fitch for their friendship and help along the way. If not for them, I don't think I would have ever found my confidence or my footing to go on to become a partner at an international law firm."

Sargent remembers Milazzo as a highly engaged and motivated student who made the most of his time at Kean.

Milazzo hopes his scholarship will inspire future generations of Kean students and serve as a tribute to the people who helped shape his path. He encourages other alumni to consider how they can make a difference.

John S. Watson Institute at Kean University Celebrates the 100th Birthday of the Late John S. Watson, Sr.

Kean University's John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research celebrated the 100th birthday of its namesake, the late John S. Watson Sr. this past August and kicked off a year of programs and events continuing the visionary leader's legacy.

A six-term New Jersey assemblyman and father of U.S. Representative Bonnie Watson Coleman, Watson was born on August 14, 1924. Throughout his life until his death in 1996, he exhibited the dedication to service and drive for excellence that inspired naming of the Watson Institute in his honor.



“John S. Watson Sr.’s legacy of public service has set the standard for New Jersey,” said Kean President Lamont O. Repollet, Ed.D. “His legacy lives on today in his daughter, Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman, and all community activists and public servants working to improve the lives of New Jersey residents. Kean is dedicated to continuing his mission through the Watson Institute, Kean University, and to fostering positive difference in all communities we serve.”

The Watson Institute serves as a vital, non-partisan resource for New Jersey lawmakers that enables them to make informed public policy decisions supporting state residents. Since 2003, the Institute has managed the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association (NJUMA), providing policy research for 32 municipalities, managing a comprehensive policy agenda, and linking NJUMA members with state and federal agencies.

“John S. Watson Sr.’s life is a testament to hard work, integrity and public service. His impact is felt through his accomplishments, the continued work of his descendants and the Institute named in his honor,” said Kean University Senior Vice President for Transformational Learning and External Affairs Joseph Youngblood II, Ph.D.

The Institute’s notable projects include the nation’s first urban-focused Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy supported by the U.S. Economic Development Administration; the Trenton-Based Maternal Infant and Health Innovation Project; contributions to significant environmental justice legislation impacting urban communities; and organizing community conversations on issues ranging from pre-k through 12th grade public education policy to public safety.

“Today the Institute continues to link people to policy by leveraging academic resources and creating new strategic partnerships at Kean University,” said Barbara George Johnson, vice president of the Institute. “It is an honor and a privilege to lead the work of this Institute which embodies the life work of John S. Watson through the intentional centering of community voices in the policy making process.”

As Kean and the Watson Institute celebrate the centennial of John S. Watson Sr.'s birth, the Kean University Foundation invites everyone to continue Watson's legacy of service by [supporting the John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research](#), ensuring his contributions to public policy endure for generations to come.

Watson was born in Camden, moving with his family to Moorestown, then Ewing in the 1950s.

He was a businessman who turned to community action after witnessing injustices against his customers. He then launched a political career and was elected as a Mercer County freeholder, and then, a New Jersey assemblyman for the state's 15th Legislative District. In 1977 he became the first Black state legislator in the nation to chair an appropriations committee. He stood in solidarity with union organizers, always responsive to his constituents' needs.

Family values and honesty underpinned Watson's success as well. He and his wife, Marie, had four children, eight grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren and raised them to believe the family should give back to the community.

His daughter, Watson Coleman, the first Black woman elected to Congress from New Jersey, said her father believed "that to whom much is given, much is expected." "We may not have a lot, but whatever we have, we must share with others in need," she recalled her father saying.

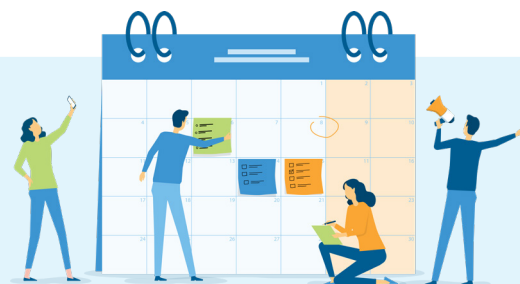
Watson encouraged his children to be active in politics and gave them experience in addressing disparities in the treatment of African Americans in their community. He was ahead of his time in recognizing the growing importance and potential benefits of technology. He was proud to support legislation that created the Minority Opportunity Skills Training program at Mercer County Community College, which taught technological skills to minority students.

Throughout his lifetime, Watson Sr. was also active in the Trenton community as a member of Shiloh Baptist Church.

To support the John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research visit the [Kean University Foundation](#).

Mark Your Calendars!

Save-the-Dates for exciting events and celebrations happening in the coming months!



Founders 5K

WHEN: Sunday, April 13, 2025



KEAN UNIVERSITY
Founders Day
April 14, 1855

Founders Day of Giving

WHEN: Monday, April 14, 2025

More details to follow!

Extra! Extra! Kean University in the News!



Former U.S. Sen. Al Franken
Kicks Off Impressive Lineup
of President's Distinguished
Lecture Series Speakers

[CLICK HERE](#)

President Repollet Delivers
Keynote on Advancing
Equity Through Artificial
Intelligence at International
Conference in Beijing

[CLICK HERE](#)

New Cougar Career
Collaborative Initiative
Boosts Student Career
Opportunities

[CLICK HERE](#)

Vice President for Enrollment
Services La Toro Yates,
Ph.D., Builds on Kean's
Enrollment Growth

[CLICK HERE](#)

Kean University Gets a Major
Energy Efficiency Upgrade

[CLICK HERE](#)

Lawmakers Highlight
Tutoring Initiatives to
Address Post-Pandemic
Learning Loss During
Visit to Kean University

[CLICK HERE](#)

The Power of Gift Planning and Legacy Gifts



KEAN UNIVERSITY
MEDALLION
SOCIETY

“No one has ever become poor by giving.”

– Anne Frank

7 Planned Giving Strategies to Consider...

Gifts from a Will or Trust

Including a charitable bequest in your will or trust to support the Kean University Foundation is a simple way to have a big impact on the University's future that will cost you nothing during your lifetime.

Beneficiary Designations

Naming the Kean University Foundation as a beneficiary of your retirement fund, an investment or bank account, or a life insurance policy is a simple way to support Kean without making any changes to your will or trust.

Life Insurance

If you have a life insurance policy that has outlasted its original purpose, you may consider donating it to the Kean University Foundation. If you transfer ownership of the policy, you will qualify for an immediate tax deduction.

Appreciated Stock and Real Property

If you own highly appreciated securities or real estate that you no longer need or wish to sell, you can donate it to the Kean University Foundation. You will receive an immediate tax deduction for the full market value and avoid capital gain taxes.

Tangible Personal Property

If you have valuable artwork, collectibles, jewelry, etc., that you no longer want or need, you can donate these assets to the Kean University Foundation and claim an income tax deduction for the fair market value of the items.

Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA)

You can donate cash or appreciated securities to the Kean University Foundation in exchange for an immediate tax deduction and guaranteed fixed annuity payments for the rest of your life.

IRA Charitable Rollover/Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)

If you are age 70 ½ or older, you can make a tax-free gift directly from your IRA to the Kean University Foundation. For donors who are age 73 or older, you may count this transfer toward your required minimum distribution (RMD) for the year.

Please contact Lori Funicello, CFRE, Director of Planned Giving at the Kean University Foundation, at (908) 481-5336 or lfunicel@keanfoundation.org to learn more tax-smart ways to support the Kean University Foundation.



Show Your Support for Kean Students Today!

As we welcome the new year, it is an ideal time to embrace the opportunity to make a lasting impact on the lives of Kean University students.

Your generosity can help provide scholarships, strengthen academic and athletic programs, enhance student life, improve our facilities, and address unforeseen challenges.

Every contribution, regardless of size, plays a vital role in enriching the daily experiences of our current and future Cougars. As you embark on this new year, we encourage you to join us in making a meaningful difference by clicking the link below to make your gift.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to Kean University. Together, we can help our Kean Cougars Climb Higher!

[MAKE YOUR GIFT TODAY!](#)

click here 

Questions? Comments?

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