

**EDWARD "ED" KELLY**

President & CEO
Milford Regional Medical Center

Edward "Ed" Kelly, president & CEO of Milford Regional Medical Center, began his career as a Chief Financial Officer and, admittedly, never envisioned transitioning into administration. He had heard from colleagues that the Leadership College helped their transition into the CEO seat and was intrigued. Kelly enrolled in the third cohort, joined by 14 other fellows, and recalls the experience fondly.

"By meeting all of these other individuals we learned about ourselves, learning to be ourselves, and learning to use our strengths while trying to learn from each other and the curriculum," he says. While he learned many lessons throughout his time in the Leadership College through casework, group work, class exercises, Kelly reported that one of the most valuable takeaways from the program was the focus on introspection. Through self-assessment, Kelly and some of his peers in the class learned that they were introverts and how to play to their personality profiles.

Transitioning from his previous financial role into a chief executive role would bring significant changes—for example, a CEO would likely require more strategy and the role would have more daily interaction with hospital personnel. As an introvert, that increased interaction with the hospital population in the CEO role presented a learning curve for Kelly. However, the leadership college helped him to refine his skill set to successfully make the transition.

I was comfortable making presentations about more technical matters, about the financials," he says. "I felt I always had a decent skill of taking something complicated and simplifying it. Transitioning into a CEO role is always more 'touchy-feely,' and I was really fearful to move out of my comfort zone.

Another challenge was that I had been at Milford Regional for 27 years, working under one individual. He was an extrovert and really comfortable in front of people and I am more of an introvert. Working alongside him, combined with my time in the college where I learned to harness my skills, was tremendously helpful in my transition into the CEO position."

The Leadership College has a strong focus on leadership skills, as well as communication skills. As Kelly noted, "One thing along the way that I learned from the college is that it's not about you – it's often about your audience. You have to think about them. Some audiences are your employees, community, board member. Take the focus off of yourself and look at your audience, what they need to know, and put yourself in their shoes in terms of what information they're asking for and what you can provide to them." This focus on communication skills boosted Kelly's confidence during his transition to the CEO role.

When asked what advice he would give to incoming fellows, Kelly advises that newcomers to the program get excited about their upcoming course. "It's like going back to school. I'd recommend that you dedicate the time and commitment – what you put into it is what you get out of it. It really helped me to continue with my transition out of finance and into general hospital administration. I'm grateful for my experience and would recommend it."

One of the highlights of the program for Kelly was the contacts he made and the network he built while in the college, as well as his expanded confidence. He says, "I would really encourage anyone looking to become a CEO or looking to move into senior management to participate in a course like this and it will pay off dividends in the future."





AMY HOEY

Executive Vice President/Chief
Operating Officer
Lowell General Hospital

Amy Hoey, R.N., BSN, MS, Executive Vice President/Chief Operating Officer at Lowell General Hospital, matriculated in the first cohort of the Leadership College 10 years ago. She recalls the group gathered for a team outing with a guest speaker, a common practice for students in the program, but this dinner was special. Why? The guest speaker was none other than Charlie Baker, who at the time was working with Harvard Pilgrim Health Care and would, of course, later be elected Governor of Massachusetts. Baker addressed the fellows on the topic of work/life balance and the experience really stuck with Hoey. That evening she called her mentor to thank him for sponsoring her for the program and realized that the Leadership College was going to be a career-changing experience.

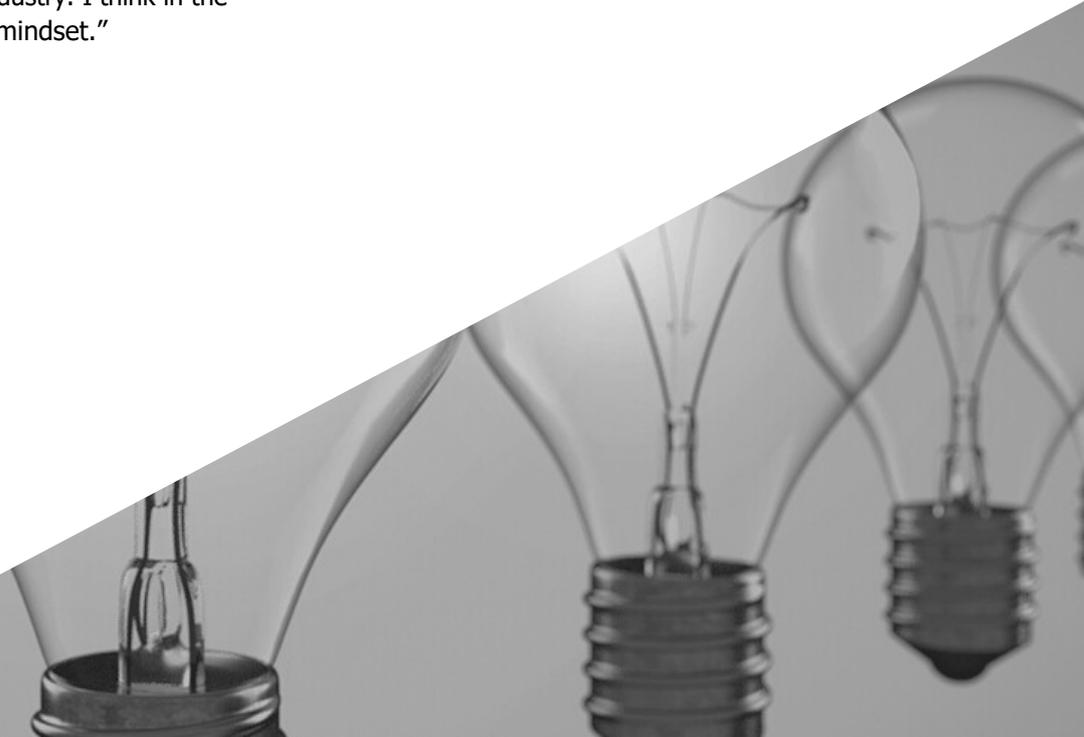
According to Amy, the program provided leadership skills, along with enhanced confidence within one's leadership style. Through the Leadership College, students are given the opportunity to discuss and build on their leadership style, enhance their effectiveness, and identify strengths and weaknesses. This introspection allowed Hoey, along with many other graduates, to come out of the program as stronger, more confident leaders. She calls this "an incredible gift."

Hoey says that while the Leadership College covered budgets, reimbursements, and strategy, there was also an underlying feeling from faculty through fellows about the gratitude of working in healthcare. "It's a privilege to work in healthcare, its complex and challenging work," she says. "It's my job to ensure that caregivers have the tools they need. I'm grateful to be a leader in healthcare versus any other industry. I think in the Leadership College everyone has that mindset."

For Hoey, and for many other healthcare leaders, COVID-19 has been a really powerful leadership experience. "It has been a privilege to be COO of our organization [Lowell General Hospital] during the pandemic," she says. "During this incredibly challenging time, the Leadership College has equipped me with confidence and compassionate leadership, even in an incredibly unpredictable period in our history. We did not know how many patients we would be asked to care for or how high the peak would be, but I felt equipped with compassionate leadership thanks to the College."

The program was an especially powerful experience for the nurse executive, as it provided great exposure to other like-minded executives across the state and a place where colleagues could share insights about leadership, best practices, and strategies for effectiveness.

"As my class was a cohort of Massachusetts healthcare leaders, it was great exposure to the common challenges all healthcare leaders face in the state," Hoey says. "Since Massachusetts is a unique healthcare environment, to go through the program with this cohort and establish a group of colleagues in the state is really profound. We looked at strategic leadership issues of healthcare in the state but also on a broad, national level. As a CNO or COO, you tend to interface most regularly with your counterparts, but this program brings together a great cross-section of job functions."





DENISE SCHEPICI

President & CEO
Martha's Vineyard Hospital

Denise Schepici was happily enjoying retirement on Martha's Vineyard after a rich 30-plus-year career in healthcare when she got a phone call in 2017 asking, "Why don't you apply for the job of Martha's Vineyard Hospital CEO? They need you."

Earlier in her career, even after years of leadership positions running hospital lines of business and coordinating staff across divisions, Schepici might have scoffed at the suggestion that she could take the CEO reins. But in 2017, contemplating the phone call, Schepici confidently said to herself, "Why not?" "I was always a good Number 2, fortunate in that I had very smart mentors and sponsors who I would say 'exploited' me in the right way for the talents I had and for the good of the organization," Schepici says. "But I always felt that I could do more. And while I never really thought that I would be a CEO, I thought I had the qualities to be one."

What helped instill in her the confidence to lead was the Massachusetts Health Leadership College, which she attended with the sponsorship of Ellen Zane, who was then leading Tufts Medical Center where Schepici eventually rose to the position of Senior Vice President of Clinical Services.

"When I read the program for the Leadership College, it resonated with me," she says. "It calls on you to examine yourself – what are the qualities within yourself that make you feel leadership is important and that drives you? And then you're asked to view those values and see how they align with others – and that resonated with me. And then leading with vision and commitment and authenticity is something that appealed to me as an aspiration. I read and talked to a few other people that went through the course and I said to myself, 'I need this right now. I'm missing something in my own personal development.' It struck me that the Leadership College could be it."

Schepici began her career in healthcare as a cardiac catheterization technician at Salem Hospital, which later became part of North Shore Medical Center.

She harbored thoughts of getting an M.D., but says, "I kept getting promoted, which happens a lot in healthcare. You take healthcare people and turn them into managers – or so you think – but you're really throwing them into the fire." Schepici thrived rather than faltered, taking on increasing responsibilities and earning a master's in healthcare administration from the Boston University School of Public Health while working full time. She moved to Tufts Medical Center, moving up the career ladder and eventually reporting to both the hospital CEO and physician organization CEO in a true clinical integration arrangement. After 13 years at Tufts, she became administrative officer at the MetroWest Medical Center, where she served for three years before retiring to the Vineyard.

"There are some people who are driven to lead and others who have natural-born abilities," Schepici says. "The Leadership College really helps you to dissect leadership and what it means to be a leader. Many of us come to leadership as managers, but in my view management and leadership are two very different things. Management is more tactical, more task-oriented. And in many ways for us who are trained in healthcare, it's a very safe space to be. You do a plan, you check off the boxes, and you get things done – you fix things. Leadership requires vision and passion and a center of energy that you can direct and create some clarity of purpose around. You're only a leader if you have followers. So learning to lead is also about getting others to follow. And it's not about just saying, 'Get this done.' How do you take that amorphous leadership notion and create clarity, vision, and action-oriented values, and turn your own value system about leadership into an actionable plan? These are the questions the Leadership College helped me address – and it really assisted my career in doing so."

At Martha's Vineyard Hospital, Schepici has sponsored one of her staff to attend the college and was considering other nominations until COVID-19 made her laser-focused on responding to the pandemic.



"Usually when you're getting called to the CEO position it's been a long time since you've been in academia," he says. "And you really need to step back, take a deep breath and add another academic component to your experience." He says some of the leadership college's training resembled what he experienced in law school or what an MBA candidate may be familiar with. You have a fact pattern prepared in a set amount of time on a controversial issue, and then you must get up in front of your colleagues and present it.

"I've found that every time a CEO has to deal with an issue, it's a 'controversial' issue, so that experience of thinking critically and differently from what you may be familiar with was tremendously helpful," Ramos.

"And you can never consider yourselves the smartest one in the room," he adds. "You better reach out to folks and know how to make those connections with people – and that's another thing the leadership college teaches you," he says. "Every job – no matter if it's a Chief Administrative Officer or CEO – it's a people job. You need people to help you carry out your vision and agenda for your institution. And if you are unable to either convince people to join your vision, or to be open to hearing their ideas and suggestions and being able to collaborate with them, I don't think you can be successful in a high-level position."

Ramos says that in the healthcare field, it's all about mission and that his personal mission throughout his life has "always been about low-income, vulnerable folks and giving them the best quality of life you can." But even if you have noble personal goals and a solid resume, the uniqueness of the CEO position can trip you up as easily as it can help pave the way to fulfillment.

"I can guarantee you that every CEO in their first years will make mistakes more so than they will in the later part of their career," Ramos says. "But if you walk into that first position without the proper guidance and a refresher course to assist you, then the mistake you make could be the one that ends your career as CEO. It's worth the effort and the time to say, 'I don't want to step on that land mine and if I do, I want to know how to recover.' The Massachusetts Health Leadership College can help you in that regard."



"It is important for all organizations to grow leaders that are well adapted to the organizational culture. To do that requires teaching certain key skills, as well as providing insight into the students' unique qualities as influencers of others. For both of those developmental challenges, we have been happy to partner with the Mass Health & Hospital Association's Leadership College for many years. Today there are dozens of established and successful leaders in our organization that trace the start of their leadership journey to what they learned during their time at the College. I would recommend it to all for whom internal leadership development is a priority."

Mark A. Keroack, M.D., MPH, President and CEO, Baystate Health



LEADERSHIP COLLEGE QUICK FACTS

01

120 GRADUATES

02

41 ORGANIZATIONS
REPRESENTED

03

8 FELLOWS HAVE
MOVED ON TO
PRESIDENT/CEO ROLES

04

18 PHYSICIANS AND 22
NURSES/CHIEF NURSES
HAVE COMPLETED THE
PROGRAM