Iowa State University Debbie and Jerry Ivy College of Business innovationENTREPRENUER

1. Originality & impact of innovation: What are the major accomplishments of this individual? What innovative idea, product, or process, or series of innovations, are they best known for? Was it something brand new or an improvement on an existing product, process, etc.?

Kent Lehr, Vice President, Strategy and Business Development, has a long list of accomplishments in his relatively short time at UnityPoint Health. Since 2010, the 33 year old has held various leadership roles with the Midwest health system. Some of his accomplishments include helping create a new insurance company through a joint venture between UnityPoint Health and HealthPartners, increasing efficiencies for front line staff and patients through online patient scheduling, streamlining the physician recruitment process to improve time-to-fill rates, facilitating the rollout of afterhours triage and next-day appointment scheduling in all primary care clinics and designing, implementing and leading an organization-wide referral management solution to improve coordination of care for patients. Lehr also reorganized telehealth resources and created a single, system-wide team focused on delivering new behavioral health, neurology and direct-to-consumer virtual programs in 2017. That work included a revamped UnityPoint Health Virtual Care program that has grown to nearly 7,000 customers in the first eight months and is adding 1,000 new accounts per month. Additionally, in Lehr’s current role leading strategy for UnityPoint Health, he co-authored, and is accountable for, the organization’s strategic plan.

Throughout 2017, Lehr guided the development of an Innovation Center and dedicated Innovation Team aimed at creating a culture of innovation focused on driving a better health care experience. In 2018, UnityPoint Health will be making a significant investment to bring the Innovation Center to life. The team he’s assembling will help turn UnityPoint Health team members’ ideas, at all levels, into a reality. Lehr’s goal is to lift up ideas and/or develop innovative partnerships that grow revenue, improve patient experience, reduce waste and cost and drive market advantage, employee engagement and better clinical outcomes.

2. Impact of innovation: What impact did that innovation have on processes and efficiencies of their organization, their industry or the public at large? Is it for commercial release? If so, please detail the commercial success of the innovation.

All of Lehr’s accomplishments and innovative changes come with proof of success. The joint venture with HealthPartners gave UnityPoint Health the ability to launch a new Medicare Advantage plan in Iowa and parts of Illinois. When it comes to improving patient experience, online appointment scheduling and optimization has led to a 115 percent increase in pediatric access in the system’s largest market, with the number of patients self-scheduling appointments online doubling since April 2017. Additionally, patients now find it easier and more efficient to access their provider in all UnityPoint Health markets both in-person and virtually, due to more provider capacity. Patients are also receiving improved coordination of care between their primary care provider and specialists, due to Lehr’s leadership around the organization-wide referral management program. In addition to a more seamless patient experience, this work resulted in an estimated $20 million revenue enhancement in 2013 and $10 million in 2014.

Lehr believes UnityPoint Health can embrace innovation at all levels of the organization to be a leading force for solutions that make health care easier and more personal. Lehr plans to create a culture of innovation by engaging all 32,000 UnityPoint Health team members, unlocking their creativity, thoughts and ideas by giving them a platform to share their creative solutions. The primary focus for the Innovation Team in 2018 will be empowering team members in all nine regions to be part of the health care solution. Lehr has identified that great ideas grow through every day experiences with the people and the world around our team members. The Innovation Center Incubator process will funnel and assess all ideas generated and submitted by team members against a select set of criteria. The ideas that stand out among the rest and will result in the greatest impact on the people we serve will get backing and investment from UnityPoint Health. Lehr is initially focusing the innovation process on identifying ideas focused on making health care easier and more personal, so our people and communities will know how much they matter to this world, which directly aligns with the new UnityPoint Health brand promise.

3. Culture of innovation: Does this individual have a proven track record of innovative ideas and promoting innovation in others? Are they seen as a leader in their field? Do they have a history of pushing limits, and thinking outside of the box?

Lehr was recently named to Becker Hospital Review’s list of Rising Stars in Health Care due to his willingness to push the envelope on innovative solutions to long-standing problems. He takes every opportunity to learn and forecast what health care could look like five, 10, 15, or even 50 years from now and position UnityPoint Health to be on the leading edge of change. For example, he is a member of a group of about 20 leaders from other top health care companies across the country focused on health care strategy. He is using this platform to encourage health care leaders to expand beyond traditional business relationships and look at how other industries could help the health care industry evolve. This work is leading UnityPoint Health into several new and exciting partnership discussions all aimed at improving the team member and consumer experience. For example, in June 2017, UnityPoint Health entered into a new partnership with the Advisory Board Company, a best-practices company focused on using research, technology and innovation to improve performance of health care organizations across the world. This partnership focuses on driving innovation, care experience and best-practice operational performance to improve care for who UnityPoint Health serves.

Lehr’s background proves he likes challenges in all forms. His undergraduate degree is in biochemistry and molecular biology, and he has two masters’ degrees: Master of Business Administration and Master of Health Administration. He uses all of his educational experience to think outside the box as a leader for UnityPoint Health.

Lehr pushes limits to help our health system perform better as one, cohesive unit to improve health care delivery, as well as drive industry change. He is breaking down geographic barriers by building, and then executing, a system-wide strategic plan that incorporates all nine regions in three Midwest states. When asked to come up with a system-wide strategic plan for the first time, he gladly accepted the task. Lehr positions himself as a leader with an open door and a listening ear.

4. Personal/professional reputation: Does the individual have a reputation for high personal and professional ethics? Are they looked to as a leader or mentor in their chosen field?

Lehr is seen as a strong ethical leader in the health care industry. He’s a role model for students hoping to follow in his footsteps, as evidenced by his desire to bring interns and fellows onto his team. Since graduating his masters’ programs at the University of Iowa, he has been sought after and served as a guest lecturer. He was also asked, and accepted, to serve on the Board of Trustees for his alma mater, Cornell College, immediately upon graduation.

While he’s helping develop college and graduate students, he’s also personally invested in helping advance opportunities for even the youngest learners. Lehr believes in mentoring today’s youth in order to inspire them to be tomorrow’s leaders. He is on the Executive Committee of the Board for Junior Achievement (JA) of Central Iowa and enjoys volunteering with student programs that foster work-readiness, entrepreneurship and financial literacy. Specifically, Lehr has enjoyed his involvement with JA’s BizTown, a program that combines in-class lessons, hands-on activities and experiential learning in a fully interactive, simulated community designed to support different learning styles, providing exposure to a variety of careers and developing an understanding of successful participation in a worldwide economy. His passion for this work led the creation of a business relationship between UnityPoint Health and Junior Achievement, resulting in a UnityPoint Health opening a “clinic” in JA’s BizTown. This has allowed thousands of students who attend BizTown to become more familiar with health care and all of the opportunities in the industry.