To dsm Magazine and Sage Over 70 Committee:

It can be said of few other leaders that their influence has spanned decades and continents, from moderating uncivil discussions on the campus of Drake University during the Vietnam War, to helping inspire Drake students to build medical clinics that will connect the 21st century in Uganda, Dr. Donald V. Adams has been the spark.  Dr. Adams has been the source of guidance, strength and passion for thousands of students, community leaders and friends.  Few leaders have listened and touched so many lives, and shaped the next generation of leaders.

The students he impacted over his tenure as the Dean of Students at Drake University came together to permanently enshrine the leadership institute that now bears his name. The Donald V. Adams Leadership Institute at Drake University has grown under his principled leadership.  It started as a one year seminar series for students to develop their leadership skills.  Today, the program encompasses; a specialty designed program for First Year Students to focus on getting engaged on campus, two weekend conferences focused on different leadership subject areas, a January Term class focused on developing leadership talent through sailing techniques that culminates in a sailing voyage through the Bahamas, a co-curricular concentration/minor in leadership, a series of seminars for upperclassmen on leadership, and a reflection program for senior students to help them transition from campus leaders to community leaders.

Since I have known Dr. Adams I have witnessed him counsel presidents of universities, governors and business executives doing business around the globe.  His time and talent is in high demand, but you would never know that if you stopped to see him on campus.  Rather you would find a welcoming and humble gentleman willing to assist people in becoming their best selves.  Dr. Adams has helped me become a stronger leader through his words and his actions.

The single greatest lesson I have taken from Dr. Adams is his humility.  Through his actions and guidance he taught me that there is more joy in service than in anything else.  That focusing on others, rather than yourself is the single greatest action we can take.  He showed me this by getting me involved in the Donald V. Adams Leadership Institute national advisory board.  He connected me with people who had similar passions and challenged us to continue to grow leadership at Drake.  Dr. Adams put me in a place where I could focus my energy on others and help continue to foster a culture of leadership at Drake University.  I know of no greater act of humility than letting other champion your vision.

That message of selflessness and courage to a generation of leaders at Drake University does more than make a difference, it creates a generation shift.  A shift towards leaders that value better ideas, inclusion and a culture that supports and fosters the best ideas.  I am confident you will review a number of qualified nominees to be featured as this years’ Sages over 70, and I can assure you that Dr. Donald V. Adams is absolutely the kind of person you are looking for.

Sincerely,

Adam J. Kaduce