9th Annual Hesselbein Summit Urges Students to Live Consciously, Lead Ethically

Student leaders from across the globe convened on the University of Pittsburgh campus for the ninth annual Hesselbein Lecture on Monday, July 24, 2017, the marquee event of the Hesselbein Global Academy for Student Leadership and Civic Engagement Summit.

The event celebrated 41 student leaders in attendance, who have spent the past three days working alongside distinguished mentors to develop and strengthen values and skills that will help them become impactful and inclusive leaders of tomorrow. The lecture featured special remarks from the namesake of the program, Frances Hesselbein, Pitt Chancellor Patrick Gallagher, and a keynote address from Michael Radparvar, co-founder of Holstee, a lifestyle company that helps people live a more meaningful life.

“This generation is where I get my hope and my energy from,” said Hesselbein, who attended Pitt Johnstown in the 1930s, received the 1998 Presidential Medal of Freedom, and was named by Forbes as one of the Top 50 Greatest Leaders. “The student leaders here today demonstrate the values of diversity and inclusion, and I feel very comfortable putting my trust in you.”

During his keynote address, Radparvar cautioned students that their leadership journeys will be filled with highs and lows, and he advised them to actively define their own definitions of success, so as not to fall into the “trap” of pursuing someone else’s definition.

“It doesn’t matter where you live or how old you are, it is impossible to go a day without being confronted by someone else’s idea of success—whether it’s on Instagram, television, or among your peers,” said Radparvar. “Your definition of success will change—and it should, because you are growing. But if you don’t define it for yourself, someone else will.”

Radparvar added that, when he and his brother first set out to establish their company, Holstee, they were inspired to “infuse their values and culture to create a company we wish existed, but could not find.” Indeed, Holstee seeks to help other people define success in non-monetary terms.

“Pop culture images of success go through trends, but they are just that—images,” said Radparvar. “To chase that idea of success is to chase something that’s not real. Making the time to define success for yourself is the most important step to living a meaningful life.”

Following the keynote, student leaders and their mentors were honored for their work over the course of the Summit. In closing, Hesselbein Global Academy Board member, Keith Schaefer, offered words of advice to the student leaders, who had traveled to Pitt from such places as India, South Korea, Denmark, Bangladesh, and the United Kingdom.

“There is a call right now—more than ever—for principled, ethical leadership,” said Schaefer. “This Hesselbein Summit has given you the tools to get there, and we are so excited to see where you will take us.”