

# Eddie Gordon the PodCAST mixdown

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Medical Laboratory Science, Eddie Gordon, Illinois State University, non-traditional student, time management, career progression, blood banking certification, leadership style, resilience, mentorship, networking, healthcare, student involvement, career advice, professional development.

## SPEAKERS

Speaker 1, Kara Snyder, Eddie Gordon

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Kara Snyder 00:17

Hello and welcome to the podcast, a podcast produced by the College of Applied Science and Technology at Illinois State University. I'm your host, Kara Snyder, and I serve as the assistant dean of marketing communications and constituent relations for the College. Each episode, we're sitting down with an alum of the college, and today, we have a chance to talk to Eddie Gordon. Eddie is a Medical Laboratory Science alum from the Department of Health Sciences, and he currently serves as the customer relations coordinator for impact life. Welcome and thank you for being here.



Speaker 1 00:50

Thanks for having me. I definitely appreciate being able to talk about some experiences.



Kara Snyder 00:55

Well, this is going to be fun, so I want us to start at the beginning, because I think even the beginning of your story is so interesting. You have a bachelor's in biological sciences, and then you came back to campus to get a bachelor's in Medical Laboratory Science. So tell us about that decision.

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Speaker 1 01:13

So honestly, when I got my first bachelor's degree, I had this plan of, you know, I wanted to be in health care. I wanted to be an optometrist. I'm just going to go get a regular, you know, a bio degree, and then, knowing that, after that, I'll sit for an exam and then go off to some sort of graduate, slash medical school afterwards. So when that sort of happened during my first time, it was a little bit different, you know, I think it was being a little shell shock being out there, you know, I had a couple of setbacks, and it kind of had to recalibrate me as a person. And once I graduated, it was like, Okay, what am I going to do now, and someone introduced me to the medical, laboratory science realm of things. And you know, the rest is sort of history with it well.

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Kara Snyder 02:12

And not all of us find our passion right off the bat right. And I think that's important to remember. Sometimes it can take some twists and turns along the path to really find that correct fit. So I just think it's great that you recognize it and we're able to find that fit for you.

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Speaker 1 02:29

It definitely, you know, when you look back, it's just like, Yeah, this might not have been what I originally wanted, but I love what I do, where I am, and you know the experiences that you experience, you know you I would never trade those for anything with it so and

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Kara Snyder 02:48

so tell us you come back to campus. And obviously some time has passed. So what was it like to be a non traditional student on campus?

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**Speaker 1 02:57**

I, you know, I must say I loved it when I came back for that second degree, it was a totally different experience than my first time. I felt like I knew exactly what I needed to do and needed to become as involved as possible with my major and also with things that were on campus. You know, at the time, I was working as a lab assistant in a hospital, so I already been exposed to a lot of, like, the day to day goings of what I was going to learn in my major. I just didn't have any of the technical background yet with it. You know, I was working Monday through Friday, and then coming to ISU Tuesday mornings, and I would stay through Thursday for classes. And I actually lucked out, because both my cousin and my sister were also attending ISU at this time, so I was able to, you know, crash on their couch that Tuesday night and Wednesday night, and then drive back home on Thursday. So it kind of made that part of it so much more manageable for me, too. And you know, because of my lab experience, I was able to get involved quickly, and, you know, ended up being elected as the President of the Illinois State Medical Laboratory Science Society, which then that also gave me a chance to be a resource to not only my classmates, but it really plugged me into the program to make those connections. You know, day to day, I think

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**Kara Snyder 04:32**

about your schedule then, and the packing and the forethought and all of the planning that would have had to go into every week. What can you tell our students about what you learned about time management and prioritization during that time in your life?

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**Eddie Gordon 04:48**

I think it helps to get support. And you know, at the time, it was kind of funny. We we actually got married. My wife and I got married. I want to say it was two weeks before. Before school started. And I think we got back from the honeymoon on Monday, and I started school on Tuesday. So I think I only had a little bit of time in between those two from when I got back. But it really just makes you know, hey, you know, putting it in the phone, putting those days in there and knowing, okay, I have this to do this day, you know? I think it makes you jump in there, because so much of it is when you go off to school, you know you're adult, you know you're you're out of high school, kind of the hand holding, sort of stops and it becomes on you to sort of manage your own life with it.

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**Kara Snyder 05:40**

And tell us, when you think about that time in your life and that time on campus, what do you miss the most about that time?

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Speaker 1 05:48

Yeah, I'm gonna say, and I know it's gonna be cliché, but I think I feel like I missed the sense of the possibility, you know, like college isn't just about an education, it's all about the experiences that you have there too. You know, there's so many things to explore, like intramural sports, the student run organizations. You know, whether or not you like Greek life, you know, whatever you're interested in, there's probably a chance for you to try it out when you're there in college. I also feel like I do miss the support that you get from the professors. You know, I really do feel that they're not just looking at your best interests in the program, but also in life. I mean, should I still keep in touch with one of my professors as a mentor and reach out to her with guidance on tough decisions? And you know, I truly do feel that they want you to succeed and keep in touch with you. Even after you graduate, they still want to know how you're representing not only ISU, but you know yourself in the field.

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Kara Snyder 06:53

That's so true. So tell us then you're on campus, you're graduating with your degree in Medical, laboratory science. Give us the cliffs notes of what happened after that and what led you to your current position.

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**Speaker 1 07:07**

So, you know, as I kind of said before my first go around with my bachelor's degree, you know, taught me a lot about resilience. Transferred in after Junior College. After that first semester, had those setbacks, but I also met my wife at that time, so it kind of helped me have the second go around is a little bit easier. So while I was there, afterwards, I started working as a QA let in the lab, which then led me to working in the hospital laboratory. And then, you know, all the success that I had there. But when I finished that MLS degree, you know, it transformed me into already having sort of the confidence of, not only what a like a new graduate would have, but I also had sort of the experience of the lab assistant, which then made it so I kind of felt like, not, I wouldn't say a grizzly vet yet, but, you know, someone that wasn't as as a rookie in there, you kind of have that experience and that confidence to go in. I remember there was times even my first, I would say, six months being into my position, you know, I was already sort of mentoring the next batch of students that came in. And I was laughing. I go, I was just in your shoes, you know, six months ago. And so I think that made it so you can connect with them a little bit better. You know, I worked as a generalist, meaning I was in all the departments, but I always felt something special when it came to the blood bank, which then, after a couple of years working, you know, as the generalist, I eventually moved into a level one trauma center, where, while I was there, I sort of coordinated the blood drives and became co chair of the associate board for where I currently work now, for impact life. You know, it's a community Blood Center. We advocate for blood donation and the importance of it, so definitely tying into that blood bank experience. And while I was at that trauma center, you know, one of my own personal goals that I had was to earn my specialist in blood banking certification. And so while I was working, I applied to a program. I connected with their program director they had, and if I'm going to be honest with you, reminded me a lot of my mentor that I talked about earlier. She reminded me, just like one of my old Transfusion Medicine professors from Illinois State. And so it's like, Oh, it's coming back again, and now I feel that connection ports there. After I got that certification, it opened the door for me to join impact life as an employee. You know, through working and you know all that advocacy that's happening, I've become involved with our state organization known as. The Illinois Association of blood banks, and I am first star. Served as a you know, member at large, but now it's sort of springboarded me to be president elect and sort of going to take over as president next year. So so many things open up in such a small amount of time. It's It's pretty crazy when you look back at things,

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**Kara Snyder 10:19**

and when you think through your career progression, what stands out as being your biggest challenge so far,

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Speaker 1 10:27

you know, I will have to say the most nerve wracking moments for me was sitting for the certification exam. But I think one of the biggest challenges I had was being furloughed during covid, you know, at that time, it sort of made me feel like I wasn't wanted as an employee, you know, or that I did something wrong that made my name go to the top of the list. You know, when they were picking who was going to stay on and who had to kind of take some time off. But, you know, I got called back a week later, but it was a moment for me to sort of think, Okay, well, if this happened, is there something else that I can do that will make me more desirable, or is it time to maybe, you know, I wouldn't say like that seven year itch that some People get in some careers, but one of those things of, is there something else I can explore to maybe strengthen me as a worker, or strengthen my, you know, professional resume, and that's what really pushed me to fully commit into earning my specialist in blood banking certification, and, heck, I look back and now it's, it's a hard thing to do, but it kind of springboarded me into where I am today.

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Kara Snyder 11:44

And what's interesting about that is, I think, you know, when we look back at covid, which, gosh, I cannot wrap my head around the fact that that was almost six years ago. That's so wild. I guess it feels like yesterday in a lifetime ago, all at once.

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Speaker 1 11:59

It is, it's, it's definitely was one of those things, of like, I don't think a lot of people, including myself, knew the magnitude when it first happened. And then you're still sort of finally seeing some places bounce back with not only work or budget, like, they're finally starting to have that ability to maybe let some of these programs happen again. So yeah, it's been quite the stretch.

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Kara Snyder 12:28

And what's interesting to me is hearing you talk about this, I guess I would assume that anybody in health care was fine, but jobs were secure, and that we needed you all more than ever. So the fact that you were not immune to that is really eye opening to me, and I appreciate you sharing that challenge with us, because that's that's very unique, and that provides some much needed perspective, I think so, how would you describe, as you look at, you know, the time you spent on campus and now where you're At in your career. How would you describe your leadership style, and have you seen it change as your career has progressed?

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**Speaker 1 13:06**

See, and I it's actually kind of interesting. And one of the master's classes that I took, it was about leadership, and it, it was kind of funny, because it made me think of, you know, when I think of who a leader is, it makes you see the qualities behind it. It's not necessarily the loudest in the room or the one that wants to be the person that everyone looks to. There's so many different attributes that kind of link to a good leader. And you know, I think I probably describe my leadership style as collaborative and practical. I'm not someone that likes to just give direction and step away. I like to stay involved, keep communication open and make sure everyone understands what we're trying to accomplish, and you know why we're actually doing it and why it matters. I think a lot of my work in Transfusion Medicine currently is working with hospitals, so building relationships, and you know, the trust they have in me are a big part of how I lead. If people feel supported and know that you're willing to work through the problems with them, I totally believe that things tend to run a lot smoother. I try to be as approachable as possible and keep things realistic. Because, you know, health care gets complicated quickly. Clear communication and straightforward expectations go a long way in our field. But I would also say that I'm very processed and data driven. It's kind of an, you know, I feel like an oxymoron. You know, with me, having ADHD structure is like a no no, but having structure and figuring out how we can make systems work together and having them understand it definitely helps with improving workflows, utilization and the communication. You know, at the end of the day, my goal is to support the team and keep everything aligned with patient care. And if the team is supported and the process makes sense, then generally, what tends to happen is those positive outcomes afterwards.

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**Kara Snyder 14:59**

That makes perfect sense. I am curious if you were to be talking to, you know, a high school junior or senior, or maybe a student getting ready to transfer to Illinois State. What would you say to someone considering a degree in Medical Laboratory Science?

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**Speaker 1 15:15**

I definitely say go for it. There are so many different paths within Medical Laboratory Science, you know, in our field, is it's definitely changing and evolving. You know, as technology grows, so do the opportunities in our profession, and it's definitely a great way to make a difference behind the scenes in health care. You know, medical laboratory scientists provide that data that the physician used to diagnose and treat patients, and there's a lot of responsibility there on you as to be able to provide that information to them. No two days are the same. You know, one day you might be running just regular, routine labs. The next minute, you could be looking at a sample that leads to a leukemia diagnosis. It's meaningful work, and it gives you the chance to make an impact every day of your career.

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Kara Snyder 16:03

Oh, thank you for sharing. Well, Eddie, we are going to finish with a speed round, so just go with your first instinct on these questions, texting or talking.

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Speaker 1 16:12

I'm definitely a texting person. What is your morning routine like? Man, I'm gonna tell you, that's my me time, you know, with three kids and starting work, I get up, I go to the gym, I do some running, and then I come back to the hornet's nest of trying to get all three of the kids ready and out the door with help from my wife. Then once they all leave and I get some personal quiet time, it's time to come down and start the day at work.

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Kara Snyder 16:37

So what are you currently reading or listening to anything we should add to our list.

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Speaker 1 16:43

Well, you know, with three kids, I'm definitely reading those literary cornerstones of Piggy and elephant, the Hungry Caterpillar and the dog man series as well. So if you haven't been involved in those, I would definitely suggest getting none to them.

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Kara Snyder 16:59

You know, I tell you, I will take Piggy and elephant any day over dog man, what is something that is always on your desk?

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Speaker 1 17:09

It's not just one thing. I feel like I have a collection of things from different people in my life. I have a My pretty pony sitting on my desk, from my daughter. I have, you know, notes from my son that he wrote before I took my exam. I have something, you know, from my dad on my desk, something from my wife. So, you know, it's a collection of tchotchkes. I feel like just sitting on here,

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Kara Snyder 17:35

if you're grocery shopping, what is something that is always in your cart?

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Speaker 1 17:40

I feel like milk is always in the cart because the kids are always drinking it all the time. But traditionally, now it's been, you know, salads a lot more, you know, something quick and easy that you can just kind of throw together.

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Kara Snyder 17:53

What is the best concert that you have ever been to?

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Speaker 1 17:56

Hmm, I the concert I remember the most when I was younger, we got to see three doors down. That was, like, my first big one at or they were, they ended up playing at one of the NASCAR races we were at. But I think the best concert recently, we saw Brad Paisley at the State Fair, and we were like four rows from the stage. So I definitely feel like I remember that experience a lot Nice.

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Kara Snyder 18:20

Well, Eddie, I ask everyone that comes on the podcast Avantis gondola or pub, two cheese balls.

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Speaker 1 18:26

Definitely the cheese ball person. They are delicious. And when we come back into town, we stop there and we get a burger basket from brujas. So they are definitely worth going to get.

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Kara Snyder 18:37

And one last question, if you could give one piece of advice to a college student, what would you say?

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Speaker 1 18:42

I would say to be as involved as possible. I say that because my my first go around, I just kind of went with the motions. And what really surprised me is on graduation day, you know, you see some of those professors talking with some of those other students that maybe they had that time to connect with throughout the semester, but I will remember I had one class, even that first time, that I was very interested in. And when I graduate, I walked past, she pulled me aside and was like, hey, congratulations. And that made me stick to know if I was to ever go back again, anywhere I needed to do more to connect with my teachers, and the second time I went through I I definitely tried to be as involved as possible. I talked with as many people as I could. Those networking and relationships you make in the very beginning, they will resonate with you throughout your career. And there's always going to be, you know, I know the world's huge, but you know fellow Redbirds are going to be around everywhere, and they know who you are. You know it'll come up. And they know the the values you're taught, everything like that. And it's a. Amazing to be able to be a part of that experience. Well, what I

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Kara Snyder 20:04

love about your advice, Eddie is I think it really applies to anybody at any stage in life, because quite frankly, we could all do well to make more connections, right? I mean, that's really just the building block and that makes life what it is. So I really appreciate you sharing that idea and sharing that perspective, because I think that's something that everybody, everywhere can take to heart. So thank you.

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Speaker 1 20:27

Oh, no problem. It is. It's definitely something that feel like you get told a lot, but then the number of doors, I think that open up, or how many people at some point might they might not know who you are specifically, but the path is not too far for some common ground, I think always so.

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Kara Snyder 20:54

Yes, I think that's fantastic. Well, thank you so much, and thanks again for being here. I really appreciate your time.

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Speaker 1 21:00

Yep, thank you for having me. I hope that anyone that's considering anywhere or has questions, they just need to stick with it, because the more you push through the hard times, the good times are even better from it.



Kara Snyder 21:14

That's great perspective. Well, thanks again for being here. That was Eddie Gordon, Customer Relations Coordinator for impact life. Join us next time on the podcast for more stories from our cast, alumni, foreign.