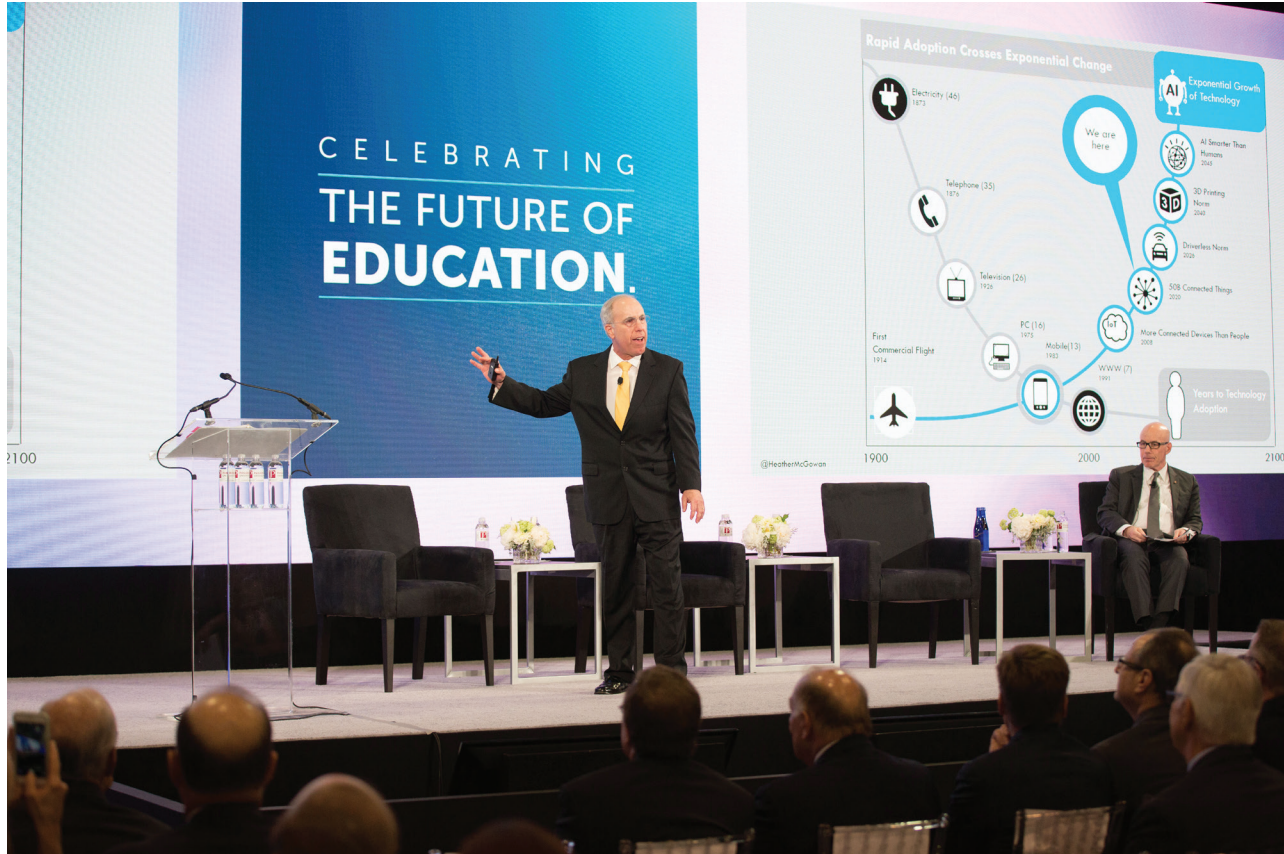


## From Jiffy Lube to Jefferson Q&A with Jefferson's New Chancellor



Stephen Spinelli, Jr., PhD, previously president of Philadelphia University, is chancellor of the newly merged Jefferson University. He is a widely respected leader in academia and business and a renowned expert on entrepreneurship. When he was 24 years old, Spinelli co-founded Jiffy Lube International, pioneering the quick-lube industry and making Jiffy Lube the dominant competitor. He went on to become the chain's largest franchise holder. Spinelli was vice provost for entrepreneurship and global management, chair of the entrepreneurship division, and director of the Arthur M. Blank Center for Entrepreneurship at Babson College. He is co-author of several books, including *New Venture Creation: Entrepreneurship for the 21st Century* and *Disrupt Together: How Teams Consistently Innovate*.

**How does somebody go from being a founder of Jiffy Lube to president of Philadelphia University, and now chancellor of Thomas Jefferson University?**

When we were building Jiffy Lube, I got my MBA at the same time, going to class every Thursday night.

Friday morning, I was back in the pits, figuring out how to survive and grow this company. I focused my studies around the problems and opportunities we faced. That direct correlation of turning thought into action became the framework for how I saw value creation in higher education.

I fell in love with the whole process of thought-into-action and the direct effect education could have on individuals and organizations, and therefore on communities and society. I appreciated the system and wanted to change it, so I decided to become fully credentialed with a PhD in economics.

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**When you met Steve Klasko, what clicked?**

We both saw completely that the marketplace for higher ed is changing rapidly, and if we didn't get our oars in the water, we were going to get swept away. It was clear, he was clear, I was clear, and frankly, we had the courage to do it. Everyone I talked to agreed with me but didn't know what to do or couldn't find a way to get it done. Where most people saw the problems and fretted and became paralyzed, we saw a route to a conclusion. Since we've done the deal, I've talked to trustees and presidents at lots of colleges. They're saying, "We're all trying to figure out what the future is, but you're the first ones to pull the trigger. We're watching."

**Did your willingness to act have anything to do with your background in business?**

No doubt about it. More than just business, I think it was entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is about seeing the opportunity, putting the resources together, creating the business model, making sure it's economically sound, and creating value. That holistic approach—from idea to value creation—drives you to take action.

**You say the merger creates “a university like no other.” What does that mean?**

It's about the value proposition. Ninety-nine-point-nine percent of the population says, "Higher education is broken, but we need it and it's got to get fixed." We're focused like a laser on the professions, and we're creating an ecosystem that's going to allow you to curate your own education across an entire lifetime. You want to be in teaching or textiles? We've got you covered. You need an MBA or credentialing around an emerging technology? We can do that. You want it online or face to face? We could do it as a hybrid. You decide. We're building a flexible system that's going to allow all of those iterations to be delivered to you in a credential that empowers you to have a wonderful career or several careers over a lifetime.

**What's the most exciting thing about the merger to you?**

We're taking action, changing lives, and disrupting an industry that needs to be disrupted. It's creating huge opportunities. Not many are doing this. Jefferson will be a case study for this global phenomenon that's changing the nature of higher education. I'm playing a role in that,

and I find it personally invigorating.

**When you look into the future, what do you see?**

I think higher education will be smaller in terms of the number of units delivering education, but it'll be bigger in the amount of education it delivers. Jefferson will be the model for this. Our education ecosystem will be fully functioning, allowing some 25,000 students to learn to do and do to learn for their entire life. It's going to be a lifestyle, inseparable from who they are. A Jefferson graduate will be a lifetime learner, and they'll think it's normal.

We're focused on improving the human condition through learning and creating value. Who gets to define value? You do for you. You do for your family. You do for your society, and we will have the mechanisms for all of that to happen.