

So You Want to Combat Viruses

Career Exploration Podcast

- Music: [00:06](#) [inaudible].
- Dr. Kestler: [00:06](#) Well, I'll tell you something. I made a discovery, I have discovered two vaccines for HIV and that's great. I demonstrated that HIV was the cause of AIDS, but my most important discovery that I've ever made was at Lorain County Community College and that was that young people, uninitiated, young people could do quality research and that was really the most important thing that I ever discovered.
- Janet Maltbie: [00:37](#) ` Welcome to the career exploration podcast on college radio, heard round the world LCCCradio.com the Boom. My name is Janet Maltbie. We explore careers, college majors, and more so you can be a success here on the LCCC campus and beyond. I believe completing a degree, pursuing passionate work and debt free living is key to your future. I'm here to help you on your journey and so are my guests today in our program. My special guest is Dr. Harry Kesler, professor of microbiology here at Lorain County Community College. Prior to teaching at LCCC, Dr. Kessler taught at the Learner Medical College of the Cleveland Clinic and held a faculty position in the department of microbiology and molecular genetics at Harvard Medical School. For the past three decades. Dr. Kessler has studied infectious diseases. He's a worldwide leader on HIV AIDS and is credited with discovering the first live attenuated vaccine for the AIDS virus. In his spare time. He also regularly posts and informative video on our LCCC website, which updates our community on the Corona virus and answers many questions people have about the pandemic. Welcome to the program, Dr. Kessler. Thank you.
- Janet Maltbie: [01:51](#) So you really engage your students by having them doing lab experiments in the lab first.
- Dr. Kestler: [01:58](#) Yeah, lab first, lecture second. That's my philosophy. You put them into the laboratory and then you teach them how to do things. I made that discovery. I started letting kids into the lab reluctantly at first and they started doing really good stuff. They started doing really good research and I said, damn, I discovered something here. This is a, this is something that's worthwhile. So I, I started the early scientists program and that is where I

take kids from early college or high school and I start them on research projects and we learn science, we present science, we do experiments and they are accomplishing good things and they are engaged. Lots of people leave science because of the bubbles, because of the memorizing of facts. And that's really not what science is. Science is not what you know, it is what you don't know and learning how to get it, what you don't know and far more exciting. That is far more interesting. We teach science raw in this country. First of all, children, babies from the highchair, a baby learns science, baby drops his binky. Mom makes a big deal about it. Oh baby, you've dropped your binky, let me, let me clean it off for you and get it back to you. And the kid realizes, Hey, that was something and that happens again. And he starts testing or she starts testing a principle. There's a scientific principle there. We're born as scientists and we crushed that in our, our education system.

Janet Maltbie: [03:38](#) You know, I read an article and it's quoted to you saying that I went to see my guidance counselor about going to college and he didn't seem to think that you were college material. You said he thought I was more likely to become somebody who would pump gas. And that you said, I remember that day very well. What was that day like?

Dr. Kestler: [03:59](#) Well, you know, it was one of those days where you kind of get a, I think a little bit angry, you know, we owe a lot in the world to the people who cheer us on, but we also owe a lot seriously to the people who put roadblocks in front of us and are critical of us because I intended to prove him wrong. And that's not the first time in my life that that had happened. We can go way, way back. I was in kindergarten and my kindergarten teacher said to my mother, who is the same way I am, um, said that, that she thought, I'm not going to say the word because it begins with an R. And she said, I thought, I think Harry might be the R word. And her response to that was like my response to the guidance counselor and it's no, Oh, no way.

Dr. Kestler: [04:47](#) Oh, no way. I am not going to allow that. And it turned out, you know, I am, uh, I don't think I've shared this before, but I might as well share it with you right now. I'm dyslexic. And that was what it was. It was that was the developmental disability that I had. Um, and I tend to get things, especially small things mixed up, three letters or three number combinations seem to be the thing, but my mother, uh, they really mess with me and my mother was determined to work through that and, it was her effort that, you know, kind of turn things around. So now all my successes are for her.

- Speaker 3: [05:24](#) Yeah. She really had a big impact on you. I, also read in the same article that you think about her in your classroom. You said, I imagine her in my classroom all the time and I like to tell jokes and, and and things, and my audience is always her.
- Dr. Kestler: [05:42](#) I see my students, I see her. We had a lot of problems. So one of the problems was, was and I'll be quite honest with you. My father was a, um, had also some problems. His issue was a mental and a, um, and that made things really, um, Cray. If you can use that word for the, uh, our, our growing up and we ended up eventually, uh, separating ourselves from him. It was a very destructive kind of, uh, um, abusive kind of a thing that was going on. And you know, then she was, uh, she had to carry on, um, on her own. She had to, uh, you know, uh, be the head of the family.
- Janet Maltbie: [06:25](#) And on top of all of that year, your brother got ill.
- Dr. Kestler: [06:31](#) Yeah, he got, um, he got rheumatic fever. It is a disease that is caused by a bacteria called streptococcus pyogenes. Streptococcus causes all sorts of things. Like it can cause a beta strep infection in birth. It can cause strep throat, Scarlet fever, necrotizing fasciitis and romantic fever. And he had rheumatic fever. And I still to this day tell my students about my observation as a young kid about my brother.
- Janet Maltbie: [07:03](#) and I'm assuming that that was the reason why you got interested in, in science.
- Speaker 2: [07:08](#) Yes, because I'm also interested in psychiatry and psychology. I think you kind of got that a reasoning why as well from the conversation. But I'm also interested this, this impacted our family. A mental disease and infectious disease greatly impacted our family. And this is, there's a lot of emotion in there. There's a lot of attention was paid to this and it changed our lives dramatically.
- Janet Maltbie: [07:37](#) Before we go, can you, if you can, can you think of a student that maybe came into your classroom? Probably was kinda hesitant, didn't know if they could do it, but they got engaged and then they went on to other things. Does any student come to your mind?
- Speaker 2: [07:57](#) Well, I like to say this about, about kids. You find people all over the place. When I was at Harvard, I knew smart people. Yeah, they're smart people at Harvard. I think that everybody kind of understands that. There's also stupid people and that is true

everywhere. At Lorain County Community College, there's brilliant people and there is also, you know, not so brilliant people. The fact of the matter is, the difference between the two is the kid at Harvard who's smart is really already made it, but the kid at Lorain County Community College, like this, this one student I'm thinking of, um, is not necessarily gonna have a lot of opportunities. You know, there's the children of aunt Becky had a mother who was willing to spend, you know, thousands of dollars on their children to give them as, uh, an extra special, uh, opportunity. My job is to, is to try to do the same for our kids, for the students at Lorain County Community College and tell you that it's a tremendous payoff. It's a tremendous payoff when you can help somebody who was, you know, going to be a, is going to be brilliant. But you know, if they didn't get that opportunity, they didn't have somebody standing up for them, they'd be, um, well they'd be pumping gas.

Janet Maltbie:

[09:14](#)

Dr. Kessler, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today. If you'd like more information on becoming a science major, or if you'd like to take a class with Dr. Kessler through Lorain County Community College, please call (440) 366-4033 and ask to make an appointment to see an academic advisor today. This program has been brought to you by the generous support of enrollment, financial, and career services, who reminds you, it's not too late or too early to begin your career journey at Lorain County Community College, you've been listening to the career exploration podcast on LCCRadio.com the Boom. I'm Janet Maltbie. Thanks for listening.