

The Gift That Changed a Region Greenfield Community College

Access to an excellent college education, for all who are looking to create a better life for themselves and their families, is at the core of Greenfield Community College's mission. A gift of this magnitude will not only elevate access and academic excellence, it will increase students' success as well. Beyond the gift's impact on our students, families will grow stronger and so to our community. This gift will impact students, families and our community in most significant ways. The following is a list of desirable outcomes for students, the College and the community along with specific action strategies. GCC would act on strategies 1-10 in the first year and roll out the remainder over the course of 10 years.

Outcomes

Outcomes for our Students

Affordability is key to increasing our students' success. Although GCC student success data is currently strong, this gift will have major impact on our students' ability to succeed. Our completion numbers will increase, our retention numbers will increase, our transfer numbers will increase and the debt load on our students will decrease. Attending full time also increases our students' ability to succeed. Workforce readiness will increase with paid internships and a stronger career center. Overall, the needle will move on every major student success indicator. The bottom line is that more students' lives would change for the better.

Outcomes for the College

Investing in the infrastructure of GCC will ensure its relevancy for generations to come. As a result of this gift, GCC will have attended to the maintenance of the College that has been deferred for so long. We will have created a zero net energy envelope, a new outdoor learning classroom, a performing arts facility in the center of the city and elevated our technological infrastructure. Most significantly, our college will have invested in our most important resource, our faculty and staff.

Outcomes for the Community

Specific outcomes will include an increase in population, educational attainment, educated workforce, median income, homeownership rates, and small business start-ups, number of jobs, population health and quality of life index. There would be a decline in the unemployment rates, number below poverty line, "hot spot" health care costs, asthma rates of children, number of children in poverty and the recidivism rates of those released from jail/prison. It will be significant for our community and for small rural communities around the nation to have established a center to learn about, grow and sustain small rural communities.

Action Strategies

1. *Invest.* Our first step will be to invest the \$400 million dollar gift, which will be generating \$20 million annually, for many generations to come, at a 5% return rate. We will match the Commonwealth with \$2 for every dollar invested in GCC. Of course, if the gift were “only” \$200 million it would yield \$10 million annually and we would then match the state \$1/\$1.
2. *Freeze Tuition and Fees.* GCC would freeze all tuition and fees to students for 10 years at which point the Board of Trustees will review the impact and outcomes.
3. *All Students Pay at Their Own Level of Affordability.* All students will have full need met by the College. Every student will have the opportunity to attend full time and graduate debt-free. Low-income, working students struggle the most to succeed at GCC because their income levels disqualify them from receiving significant financial aid, yet their income is too small to adequately support all of their expenses, and their time at work intrudes on the time they need to study and attend classes. These circumstances force students to take on loan debt as the only way to cover their expenses and continue in college. By funding the direct costs of college—tuition and fees and books and supplies—GCC would help to stabilize their financial status and allow them to achieve their full academic potential.

The population this proposal would most benefit is low-income working students who are struggling to be successful in college while at the same time holding jobs that pay slightly over minimum wage. These students may be earning as much as 200% of the federal poverty guidelines, which in 2015 is just under \$12,000 per individual. They qualify for the federal Pell grant but just barely. Most are eligible for a Pell grant amount of \$300 to \$500 but they must attend college full-time in order to receive it. As state support for programs like the (Massachusetts) Access Grant declines, most of these students are forced to rely on student loans to fill the gap between a small amount of financial (aid) assistance and the actual costs of their education. Many will try to reduce their work hours only to find that the additional financial burden leaves them at risk for successfully completing their term; it places them in a precarious situation where if just one thing happens everything falls apart. It could be as simple as a pricey car repair, an unforeseen medical or dental expense, a change in childcare, or an increase in rent—something that strains an already tight budget.

When students don't succeed, the most common reason provided on the Financial Aid Satisfactory Progress appeal forms is tied to either not earning enough money (while in school) or not being able to afford the tuition and fees. A larger percentage of these students are demoralized to learn that they must accrue debt in order to attend community college and fear the financial situation that this will leave them with in the near future. Some may decide to postpone or even forego attaining a college education, which negatively impacts their lives, the lives of their families and our community.

On average, there are 280 students at GCC every year that fall into this category. (This only takes financial aid applicants into consideration.) We estimate the level of their need to be just over one million dollars per academic year, with a projected annual cost of \$1,297,245. If GCC could help support their direct education costs, any accrued student loan debt would go toward supporting their household, placing them in a more stable financial status while in school. The impact would be powerful and immediate. Our working students are the students who want to succeed; they're coming to GCC for the promise and opportunity that an education gives them. They're willing to put in the time and effort and they need the support. (\$1.3 million annually)

4. *Establish the Western Massachusetts Promise.* In collaboration with all Public Colleges and Universities in Western Massachusetts, all residents of the four counties of western Massachusetts will have full need met for all students transferring from GCC to MCLA, WSU and UMass Amherst. (\$750k annually)
5. *Paid Internships are a Game-changer for Franklin County.* Both college students and employers increasingly value internship experiences as a means of preparing students for future career pathways. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers' (NACE) 2009 Experiential Education Survey: 67.7% of 2007-08 interns were offered full-time positions, 83.6% of these offers were accepted, 35.3% of employers' full-time, entry-level college hires came from their internship programs. At Greenfield Community College, however, the luxury of an unpaid internship pursued for the purpose of gaining experience and job opportunities is not consistent with our students' economic reality. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Franklin County has the lowest household income among all counties in the state of Massachusetts, \$53,663 vs. \$66,866. Therefore, as one might expect the county is less likely to see individuals attain a 4-year degree, 15% vs. 20% for the state of Massachusetts (city-data.com<<http://city-data.com>>), and more likely to see students pursue public vs. private, undergraduate colleges, 11.4% vs. 48.2% for the state respectively. In addition, the average GCC student works 25-30 hours per week to put themselves through school. "I can't take that class because it meets three times per week and I can't afford the gas," is not an uncommon sentiment during course registration period.

A paid internship program would be an economic game-changer for both students and Franklin County businesses, alike. Students would clearly benefit from resume building, job connections, and the opportunity to apply classroom instruction to real-world contexts while meeting their financial obligations. But in a county in which only two employers have over 1,000 employees, the percentage of small businesses that cannot afford internship programs is disproportionately high. Matching students to paid positions in small businesses hungry for student initiatives guided by faculty mentors allows businesses to grow, creating the very positions GCC students could fill. Win. Win. (\$500k annually)

6. *Increase Advising, Counseling and Mentorship.* The College has several successful components of a holistic coaching and counseling model for first year students which expedites proactive interventions for students in need, and is

designed to improve retention, academic performance, persistence, graduation rates and time to degree already in place. However, GCC does not have sufficient resources to tie these activities into a more structured experience that follows students, especially those who are particularly at-risk of attrition – first-generation, low-income, undeclared major – throughout their enrollment at the College. The key lies in having a team of advisors/student success coaches working with students to provide the comprehensive engagement and support services that will impact students' academic performance, retention and graduation from certificate and degree programs and transfer. A proposed superstructure of proactive student success coaching will integrate several existing college student success approaches into an intensive process for students from the first point of contact with the College through to graduation.

To ensure that all students new to college would receive the initial support they need to succeed, the College would hire a cadre of advisors each of whom would have a background in career development to provide intensive coaching for students to identify career interests, programs of study and transfer options. Together these steps would compose career pathways for students to follow and clear goals for their achievement. These advisors would maintain this intensive intervention through students' first year at GCC and then students would transition to faculty advisors in their chosen programs of study. (\$500k annually)

7. *Better Public Transportation for GCC Students.* We would work with the FRTA to increase service and reduce costs to students by subsidizing the transportation system's expenses. Many students at the college struggle with finding adequate transportation to and from the campus. Current bus routes run on limited schedules, making it difficult for students to attend and participate in evening and weekend activities. Support for the FRTA designed to expand its scheduled routes would enable more students to participate fully in campus activities and to make greater use of the services available on campus. Students should not be deprived of the benefit of full participation in campus life for a lack of adequate transportation. (\$5k annually)
8. *Increase Support for Disability Services Office.* The college enrolls increasing numbers of students with learning, psychiatric and physical disabilities, even as total enrollment declines. In the past year alone, students relying on the Disability Services Office have increased 20 percent. In order to more effectively address the needs of these students, the College would hire a full-time learning specialist to work in collaboration with counseling and peer tutoring services to provide a coordinated array of services to these students leading to greater retention and graduation rates. (\$80k annually)
9. *Develop a Career Center.* Continue our collaborations with the Regional Employment Board to establish an even stronger Career Center that will better serve the students and community at large. This collaborative will need one additional career counselor. (\$75k annually)

10. *College Connections with Area High Schools.* To strengthen the “bridge” between our local high schools and GCC, we would increase the number of dually enrolled and at-risk high school students. We would also strengthen an existing workshop series started at Greenfield High School called College Connections. The workshop series works with juniors in high school to discuss topics that include creating a college support team, financial aid awareness, assessing personal strengths and interests and connecting with current college students. The series is designed to develop relationships with students and enhance the college guidance process. The high schools are also interested in offering annual Accuplacer diagnostic testing for sophomores in their spring term to assess college readiness and to allow time for skill development prior to graduation. (\$225K annually)
11. *The GCC Library.* The following is a list of ideas, acquisitions and developments that would take an already outstanding library to new heights.
 - MAKERSPACE – Spaces where people can gather, create, invent and learn. Collaborate with Science Department, particularly Engineering, Art Department, etc.
 - SPARC – Alliance of academic and research libraries working to create a more open system of scholarly communication. Includes OER content and open access online periodicals. Annual membership (\$6,095)
 - PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT – Collaborate with ENG 090 and COL 090 faculty in developing curriculum embedding information literacy concepts and librarians into the course and classroom providing students a skill set for academic success. Expand HUD 131 – Intro to Information Literacy to a 3 credit course to be taken in the first or second semester for matriculated students.
 - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY – Collaborate with IT Department to allow those students who cannot afford their own laptops, tablets, Chrome Books, etc. to be able to check them out on a semester-to-semester basis.
 - RESOURCES – Purchase and expand resources that are currently too expensive to be included in the Library materials budget including online periodicals in specific subject areas (particularly science and nursing), academic e-book content, subject specific streaming video and subject specific databases. These resources would benefit all students regardless if they are distance education or face-to-face students.
 - PROJECTION UNIT/SCREEN for the Library Solarium to enhance programming.
 - STAFF – Additional library staff to support, develop and access Information Literacy Frameworks and Standards. Each student would leave GCC with a strong skill set of critical thinking that is applicable to lifelong learning in their chosen field. Technology Librarian to support ever increasing technological requirements for the 21st Century student.
 - ERM – Reinstitute the Educational Resource Materials (ERM) line item to allow resources to be allocated to libraries in public higher education providing additional funding to support student learning and academic success (\$750k annually)

12. *Technology Infrastructure.* Strengthen the technology infrastructure of the College. Our capacity of our educational offerings, the ability to seek efficiencies in communication and the quality of our education is to a large degree enhanced and/or harnessed by our technology infrastructure. We take incremental steps in a world that takes giant ones. In order to ensure both access and excellence, GCC must continue to invest in that infrastructure. It will take an infusion of \$5 million over two years to get us where we want to be with regard to hardware and software acquisitions. (\$5 million over two years)
13. *Increase Faculty, Staff and Professional Development.* There is a Chinese proverb that reads, “Teachers open the door, you enter it by yourself.” Of the many things expected at a college, having talented professionals present, engaged and ready to open doors for students is paramount among them. In a perfect world, each of us has someone opening doors for us from birth through our last moment on this side of the mortal divide. Be it a parent, a pastor, or a perfect stranger who somehow ignites a desire in us to explore a new or different aspect of our world, it happens in the context of a relationship that we have had the opportunity to form. That we live in an imperfect world is, however, all too clear and that fact is no less apparent in the world of higher education. Time and again we see references to how many colleges rely on part-time faculty and staff in pursuit of their mission. The reasons for doing so are many and most if not all are sound given the reality of limited resources that constrain operational decisions at most public institutions. Regardless of the reasons, the consequence is the same in that there are fewer professionals available to build relationships with students and open the doors that surround them. The time and attention allowed individuals could, therefore, be limited. This can change given additional resources. Given that personnel costs are one of the most significant operational cost, a college is always engaged in a delicate balancing act to allocate the payroll resources. With additional resources, that balance can shift toward the deliberate hiring and development of more faculty, tutors, coaches, advisors, and mentors - those who develop relationships and are the catalyst of those critical moments when doors open. Across a wide spectrum of measures of success, data clearly illustrates the power inherent to a meaningful relationship. Whether in early childhood development or in a higher educational setting, we do better as people when our activity is in the context of a deliberate, meaningful relationship. At every phase in the collegiate experience, from considering the application and the often daunting prospect of financing the endeavor through walking across a stage with a degree in hand, moving toward another threshold, students young and old benefit from having a human resource to work with as they face the myriad challenges that accompany passage through the door.

Making the investment for attracting and hiring such professionals, however, is not enough. For the faculty, advisor, tutor, or any other staff member to be in the best position to open doors for a diverse student body, an investment must also be made in continually developing that educator. Our diverse student body means that we must be prepared to open doors in a variety of ways if we are to be successful. Because of this, it is essential that professional development opportunities are an integral part of the educator’s career. In addition to being

better able to serve students, professional development opportunities are tied to several of the key factors associated with engaged and productive employees. Providing professional development opportunities make employees feel valued and respected; they create opportunities for growth and advancement; they can expose employees to others with influence inside and outside of the organization and they can help create an environment where employees feel better aligned with the college mission. Beyond compensation, these are the factors most often cited as important to keeping existing talent and attracting new talent. The individual employee can never make a student learn, but by investing in the education and development of that faculty or staff member, we better position them to open the door in a way that compels a student to enter while at the same time attracting other professionals who have a desire to do the same.

The return on such an investment in our educators is exponential. Whether through the direct education of our community members or through the indirect influence in the form of community involvement, our faculty and staff contribute to the growth and development of our service area. Additionally, the increased investment in our faculty allows for an increase in the number, depth, and duration of the relationships that are both fundamental and essential to our existence. During the discussion of any enterprise one often hears the phrase, “our people are our most important asset.” This holds true, not only for our college, but for our community as well. One of the most significant factors influencing the development of this human asset is our educator. (\$500k annually)

14. *Deferred Maintenance.* The continued deferral of needed facilities maintenance places a greater strain on already limited budgets and results in a number of critical projects being left uncompleted. As of this date there are approximately 16 different deferred maintenance projects totaling \$7,000,000. Examples of these deferred maintenance projects are parking lot resurfacing, walkway replacements, envelope improvements of the service building and courtyard masonry surface repairs. Continued deferral increases the likelihood of further failure and the eventual cost of the necessary repairs. (\$7 million total)
15. *Net Zero Energy.* At Greenfield Community College the importance of sustainability goes far beyond environmental issues. Environmental responsibility influences the way our courses are taught, the way our buildings are designed and operate and the way we live in them. Our approach to moving toward net zero energy includes reducing energy use by incorporating energy-efficient strategies into the operation of our buildings, our building design and construction practices, and by performing retrofits which improve the efficiency of our existing buildings. As a result of advances in construction technologies, renewable energy systems, and academic research, creating a Net Zero Energy campus is becoming more and more feasible with every project we undertake. (\$4 million one-time cost)

16. *Build an Outdoor Classroom.* The SAGE (Sustainable Agriculture and Green Energy) Education Center at GCC was established with a sense of urgency to promote environmental health by leading our community in environmental education, centered on programs in sustainable agriculture and renewable energy, a mission consistent with Cedar Tree Foundation Goals. SAGE at GCC envisions the building of thriving communities characterized by resilient energy and food systems as the key to sustainable environmental solutions. One of the key planned activities for SAGE is the development of the Sustainable Studies Outdoor Learning Laboratory/Interactive Botanical Garden that will feature accessible pathways woven through the various sections of the steeply contoured plot that is contiguous to the greenhouse, with plantings of native species picked to provide students experiential laboratory lessons in botany, horticulture, soil science, environmental science and ecology. The gardens will emphasize habitat-based plantings, include a micro-orchard as Phase II of the student designed permaculture initiative, and provide significantly expanded space for the existing organic garden.

It is our vision for the outdoor learning laboratory that a stronger integration and confluence of disciplines can come together in a beautiful, sustainable, diverse, rich, and inspirational space. We think of the writing student sitting inside the botanical garden watching a bee pollinate the Joe Pie Weed flowers or noticing the Monarch as it sits on the common milkweed and the rousing artist looking for a color palate. We think of the horticulture student studying the cultivation practices necessary for the diversity of plant species, the geology student examining the formation types or area elementary schools visiting class after class to excite future scientists in STEM fields. This living, learning laboratory is a key priority for SAGE and for the GCC Science Department as a whole. (\$50k one-time expense)

17. *Create the Center for Baccalaureate Degree Attainment.* Working with colleges and universities from throughout the Commonwealth, GCC would create the Center for Baccalaureate Degree Attainment to provide access for all students in our community who are place bound because of economic, work or family issues but have the desire to continue their education. (\$50k annually)
18. *Create a Performing Arts Center for College and Community.* In 2008, GCC convened a group of college and community leaders to participate in a performing arts facility development and funding feasibility study. The study found wide community support for the College, students, arts programs, development of a facility to house theatre and gallery components and confirmed the importance of such a facility in the economic revitalization of the region. A GCC Performing Arts Center is envisioned as a large-scale multiuse academic/civic building, viewed as a means to expand education of the arts, an economic generator for the region and a magnet for the arts in Franklin County.

The primary purpose of the Center is to provide students with a top-notch facility to enhance their academic experience and create a foundation for future study. Through the development of a Performing Arts Center, the College intends to increase the quality and scope of its academic programs by providing a state-of-

the-art facility for students studying theatre, music, dance and art. In addition, as a regional destination, the GCC Performing Arts Center will also play a leading role in downtown revitalization and the region's economic development. In the short-term, the funds invested in the project will enhance the region's construction industry. Long-term, the facility will provide employment opportunities as well as enhance the region's travel and tourism economy.

When Greenfield Community College purchases the theater downtown and restores it to a performance and classroom space for the arts, the College is creating the opportunity to expose residents in Franklin County to possibility by bringing cultural diversity in the forms of theater, music, dance and other performing arts. By exposing our community members to possibility, we are enabling the next generation of playwrights, dancers, musicians, composers, actors and directors to discover their calling and refine their craft. We are making a bold proclamation that, in America, in Massachusetts, in Franklin County, the arts are a valuable form of community development. This is development, not in the form of block grants or new buildings and bridges, but the kind of development that happens to individuals who learn a little more about themselves, a little more about other people and a little more about the world every time they watch or participate in the performing arts. This individual development is the kind of life-long investment that accrues with every installment and matures with a community that values other cultures, multiple forms of creative expression and can empathize with other people through various modes of communication. This kind of transformative investment creates a community that, beyond the performing arts, seeks to know more, to learn about what else is possible and, perhaps, to create something where nothing existed before—to fill blank pages, empty storefronts, darkened stages, with something new. (\$20 million over 20 years)

19. *Center for Rural Sustainable Development.* Core to the mission of the Center for Rural Sustainable Development is the relationship between people and the environment. The most valuable asset to any rural region is its rural identity, therefore the greatest way to strengthen a rural community is to discover ways that people can work together with an ethical bottom line; one that values environment and community just as much as profit. The Center for Rural Sustainable Development would serve three functions. First, to hold an annual symposium that draws together a national audience of academics, civil servants, and engaged community members to share research, best practices and innovations in rural communities. Second, to serve as a knowledge base and research hub from which knowledge shared in the annual symposium is collected and shared freely through an accessible database of narratives, research and data. Third, to create a community, economy-focused educational pathway where residents could come to the center to learn about cooperative principles, ethical bottom lines, and cooperative business models, develop a business plan, and upon completion of the Community Economy Certificate, receive a small startup grant to launch their entrepreneurial endeavor. After five years, each successful business would then donate 5% of their profits back into the Center for Rural Sustainability to help fund subsequent cohorts of entrepreneurs. These three initiatives will create a network of innovators that can demonstrate how rural economies are actually rich

resources of talent, innovation and ethical practices that value and respect a sustainable balance of people's needs within a fragile environment. (\$150k annually)

20. *Jail Collaborative.* Strengthen our work with Franklin and Hampshire County Sheriffs to provide courses in county jails for prisoners and a bridge to GCC upon release. We will need one person to oversee this project. (\$10k annually)
21. *Hampshire County Access.* Work with Smith Vocational & Agricultural High School, the Amherst Schools and community partners to enhance community college access in Hampshire County. We will need one person to lead this endeavor. (\$50k annually)