**Institution Name:** Grand Rapids Community College  

**Project Title:** Education / Lab Preschool Facility

**Project Focus:**  
- ☑ Academic  
- ☐ Research  
- ☐ Administrative/Support

**Type of Project:**  
- ☐ Renovation  
- ☑ Addition  
- ☑ New Construction

**Program Focus of Occupants:** Education, Childhood Development & Lab Preschool

**Approximate Square Footage:** 25,600 SF

**Total Estimated Cost:** $7,200,000

**Estimated Start/Completion Dates:** Spring 2015 - Fall 2016

**Is the Five-Year Plan posted on the institution’s public internet site?** ☑ Yes  ☐ No  

**Is the requested project the top priority in the Five-Year Capital Outlay Plan?**  
- ☑ Yes  
- ☐ No

**Is the requested project focused on a single, stand-alone facility?**  
- ☑ Yes  
- ☐ No

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**Describe the project purpose.**

The goal of the Laboratory Preschool construction project is to enhance early childhood education and preschool programming and the services we provide to;  
- GRCC Early Childhood Education Students – a new facility will include teaching and learning spaces that allow for observation and engagement opportunities, room for faculty and student conferencing, and evaluation and feedback.  
- Infants, Toddlers and Pre-school Children – a new facility would allow us to improve the learning environment and expand the number of at-risk children and their families being served.  
- Regional Early Childhood service providers and partners – new spaces will allow for us to continue to promote best practices in early childhood education and caregiving, providing continuing education for educators and child care providers throughout West Michigan.

**Describe the scope of the project.**

Plans call for a 25,600 square foot building to be constructed behind and adjacent to the Applied Technology Center Building on GRCC’s Main Campus. The College currently leases space in the First United Methodist Church for the year-round program. GRCC executive leadership, faculty and staff are working together with community members to enhance and expand the services of the Lab Preschool through the new construction of a state-of-the-art facility. Due to the growth of the program, the church facility is bursting at its seams which will limit the growth and effectiveness of the program now and into the future if no changes are made. The need for more space in a modern, technologically advanced, and accessible facility is pressing. Having the classrooms and the lab in the same building will provide enhanced opportunities for student learning through observation rooms and shared space to document learning—both the children’s learning and the college students’ learning.

With this awareness, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation graciously supported a grant for GRCC to partner with planners and designers to facilitate to facilitate a community engagement process of inquiry, visioning, and conceptualization for a state-of-the-art lab preschool. The envisioned facility would provide state of the art preschool demonstration classrooms and observation areas that are accessible for college students, early childhood educators, and family. This new building would also provide space for increasing community
collaboration efforts and would function as a research and demonstration center on the best practices in preparing professionals who can better meet the increasingly complex needs of children and families.

Please provide detailed, yet appropriately concise responses to the following questions that will enhance our understanding of the requested project:

1. **How does the project enhance Michigan’s job creation, talent enhancement and economic growth initiatives on a local, regional and/or statewide basis?**

In President Obama’s State of the Union Address and Governor Rick Snyder’s State of the State address, both leaders highlighted the goal of providing all low- and moderate-income four year old children with high-quality preschool, so that all children enter kindergarten prepared for academic success. This goal would be supported by an expanded GRCC Lab Preschool facility that will support the development of skilled early childhood teachers throughout the region and serve more children and families in a high-quality program.

As with any new construction project, the project itself will generate dozens of direct and indirect employment opportunities. Economic models vary from 8 – 24 jobs per million dollars of expenditures. The expansion of services as a result of the new facility will also create employment opportunities. Most importantly, the programs, training and professional development offerings that will be provided from this facility will provide individuals with the required skills, experience and credentials to enter employment in a variety of early childhood educational opportunities.

2. **How does the project enhance the core academic and/or research mission of the institution?**

Grand Rapids Community College is a college of choice. We are an open-access institution that transforms students through experiences that blend rigor with relationship, safety with risk, independence with support, community with individual, and theory with practice. We are committed to promoting freedom of inquiry through a broad range of programs providing students with both breadth and depth in their learning experiences. We are an integral community partner within the educational system of our region and share responsibility for its effectiveness.

GRCC has created an Education Program that serves students pursuing degrees related to Child Development, Paraprofessional Education, and Pre-Professional K-12 Education. Over the last two and a half years, an average of 878 students per year express a desire to pursue careers in Child Development, Elementary Education, or Secondary Education. The Preschool Laboratory is an integral part of the Child Development Associate degree program. Students enrolled in the program will benefit from exposure to a best-practice learning environment. As the program is expanded, these students will also benefit from working with a more diverse population of young children and families.

As a leader in promoting quality, the GRCC Lab Preschool was one of the first to receive a five STAR rating, the highest possible, in the newly implemented state of Michigan Total Quality Rating and Improvement Scale. The program is also accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The GRCC Laboratory Preschool engages each child’s interests and personal gifts in a carefully planned environment with opportunities to explore language arts, music and movement, creative arts, science, and math activities. The program serves children from 6 weeks to 6 years of age from 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., five days a week. The children who currently attend the Lab Preschool and their families will greatly benefit from expansion of Lab Preschool facilities as adequate security, outdoor space, meeting rooms, and access to early childhood education materials and training would be enhanced.
Early childhood educators and family, friend, and neighborhood caregivers will also be beneficiaries as space will be designed to accommodate professional development activities in a state-of-the-art facility. In order to reach this goal, the project will achieve the following proposed objectives:

- Provide state of the art preschool demonstration classrooms and observation areas that are accessible for college students, early childhood educators, and family, friend and neighborhood care providers for professional development.
- Increase the number of vulnerable children whose parents attend GRCC and those who live in the Grand Rapids community and Believe 2 Become Hope Zones that will benefit from attending the GRCC Preschool.
- Increase the cultural competency of students who attend the GRCC Child Development and Education program through exposure to diverse populations of preschool age children both in the Lab Preschool and in the community.
- Work in partnership with local initiatives to increase cultural competence training and integration of concepts into curriculum for early childhood educators.
- Enhance the civic engagement of parents and child care providers in low-income communities through collaboration with neighborhood-based initiatives.

3. **How does the project support investment in or adaptive re-purposing of existing facilities and infrastructure?**

The College currently leases space in the First United Methodist Church for the year-round program. The need for more space in a modern, technologically advanced, and accessible facility is pressing. Having the classrooms and the lab in the same building will provide enhanced opportunities for student learning through observation rooms and shared space to document learning—both the children’s learning and the college students’ learning. The adjacency to the ATC and other buildings on the Main Campus will allow for use of existing spaces, such as kitchens, large meeting areas, auditoriums and parking. The location will also allow for tie-in to campus network infrastructure, electrical and HVAC control systems.

4. **Does the project address or mitigate any current health/safety deficiencies relative to existing facilities? If yes, please explain.**

Bringing the classrooms and lab preschool on to the main campus enhance security to keep children, families, students and staff safe. The rental facility the GRCC Lab Preschool is located in poses barriers for accessibility. The church is an older building not built to new construction ADA regulations.

5. **How does the institution measure utilization of its existing facilities, and how does it compare relative to established benchmarks for educational facilities? How does the project help to improve the utilization of existing space and infrastructure, or conversely how does current utilization support the need for additional space and infrastructure?**

GRCC uses a suite of CollegeNet products to schedule campus space resources and monitor utilization. Academic leadership also closely monitors the schedule of offerings and seat utilization through the enrollment and section management process. Through renovation and the installation of instructional technology across campus, the college has been able to maximize utilization of general purpose classrooms. Specialty labs, required for particular curriculum areas (example: cadaver lab) are utilized as needed.

The Laboratory Preschool is currently operating out of the First United Methodist Church located just off the GRCC Main campus. Due to the growth of the program, the church facility is bursting at its seams which will limit the growth and effectiveness of the program now and into the future if no changes are made. The Lab Preschool operates from 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., five days a week and uses four levels of the church for programming. The space is also used by the church every weekend and many times throughout the week (both day and evening) for church functions. This requires staff to plan programs or community events around the
church’s schedule. Classroom materials must be moved in and out of shared spaces each Friday and back again on Monday morning, a task that is very time-consuming.

6. How does the institution intend to integrate sustainable design principles to enhance the efficiency and operations of the facility?

GRCC incorporates LEED standards in all building and renovation projects. In addition to employing LEED standards, we incorporate energy efficient systems and automated controls, lighting sensors, recyclable materials used in furnishings, carpeting, etc.

7. Are match resources currently available for the project? If yes, what is the source of the match resources? If no, identify the intended source and the estimated timeline for securing said resources?

Existing plant fund resources will be allocated, and the college is actively working with numerous external funding partners to assist with the funding for this project. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation, together with the Frey Foundation, PNC Bank, The Jandernoa family and Kate Pew Wolters have all committed support to this critical project. Currently, proposals are also under consideration by the Sebastian Foundation and the Doug and Maria DeVos Family Foundation. Through the support presently committed we have obtained the necessary match for the project. All planning and construction resources will be on hand prior to the desired start of construction in spring of 2015.

8. If authorized for construction, the state typically provides a maximum of 75% of the total cost for university projects and 50% of the total cost for community college projects. Does the institution intend to commit additional resources that would reduce the state share from the amounts indicated? If so, by what amount?

At this time, our total request is $3.6 million, which is approximately 50% of the total estimated project cost.

9. Will the completed project increase operating costs to the institution? If yes, please provide an estimated cost (annually, and over a five-year period) and indicate whether the institution has identified available funds to support the additional cost.

Funds currently allocated for rental and existing operations will be redirected to support this facility. The projected annual net increase in operating costs equals $32,767.60. (5 year increase equals $163,838.) This increase would be supported, in part, through the increase in program revenue as a result of being able to expand the program. Remaining costs would be identified through annual budget development processes.

10. What impact, if any, will the project have on tuition costs?

The increase in operational cost is not projected to have any impact on GRCC tuition costs.

11. If this project is not authorized, what are the impacts to the institution and its students?

The Lab Preschool is crowded with very little room for offices and meeting spaces for instructors mentoring students. Opportunities are therefore limited to expand services to the GRCC students who participate at the Preschool as part of their Child Development curriculum and to our community’s children and their parents. In addition, preschool educators and caregivers throughout the community would not benefit from additional
professional development opportunities that could be provided in an expanded facility that is connected to the GRCC campus.

Specific needs include:
o Observation areas for GRCC Child Development students and private meeting spaces for lab instructors to provide feedback to students.
o Classroom space for Child Development courses in the same location as the Lab Preschool to best utilize materials and demonstrate techniques in an authentic setting.
o Quality curriculum offerings delivered in an environment that is designed to support the most effective experiential learning experiences for Education students.
o Enhanced security to keep children, families, staff and students safe.
o Access to outdoor space that is adjacent to the facility to model and engage college students in physical development experiences that are critical in promoting physical fitness and fighting childhood obesity. A new area could be very intentionally designed to be barrier free modeling playground accessibility for all students, but particularly those in the CD 230 Young Children with Special Needs course.
o Expansion of services to children in low-income families. This is a critical community need. Expanded facilities could better serve families referred by the Kent County Department of Human Services, Head Start, Grand Rapids Public Schools, and other community agencies. The Lab Preschool has consistently had an extensive wait list for over 15 years. Working with at-risk children is a vital part of the educational experience for GRCC students.
o Professional development opportunities for preschool educators and Education students. Community events are severely limited in the current facility. Given the innovations developed by GRCC Child Development faculty and staff through programs such as the Early Reading First preschool literacy project and curriculum delivery of The Project Approach, State Standards for Early Childhood, and the Classroom Literacy Enrichment Model, the Lab Preschool could offer extensive opportunities for educators in the field.
o Provision of best-practice early childhood education support to parents and family, friend and neighborhood caregivers.
o An easily accessible resource room and library with child development materials to be used by faculty, teachers, students, community, and parents.

12. What alternatives to this project were considered? Why is the requested project preferable to those alternatives?

As stated, the lab pre-school currently operates from leased space at a local church. Remaining at the church will not allow for planned program expansion and workforce professional development efforts. The facility currently being used lacks required space, has inadequate restrooms, meeting and office areas, and laboratories to perform the required course initiatives. It is not ideal for all the reasons stated above.

In the past five years, we have considered two alternate locations. The first, an historic facility on the DeVos (formerly Davenport) campus, located in the historic Heritage Hill district. The facility is located adjacent to a parking area used by students, faculty and staff. There is no adjacent area to build the required pre-school playground. The building itself would require a major renovation ranging from ADA accessibility issues to the removal of asbestos. The HVAC system, windows, doors, roof, plumbing, electrical, etc., would require complete replacement.

The second property considered was a separate facility, in relatively close proximity to the Main Campus. The building was formerly used by architects and engineers and was located on a busy street. The location would have required students to cross this street daily. The building itself would have required major renovations, such as, asbestos and lead paint removal; restructuring numerous interior walls, replacement of windows, technology enhancements, asphalt removal for a playground, and additional parking for facility users.

Neither of these options would have allowed the college to gain the efficiencies that locating the facility on the Main Campus will provide.