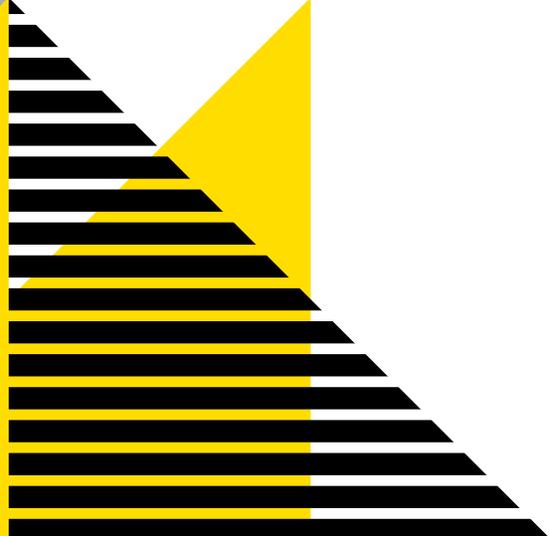


GRAND RAPIDS
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE
FOUNDATION
ANNUAL
REPORT



\$40

MILLION IN
ASSETS

537

TOTAL
FUNDS

\$595,566

TOTAL
CONTRIBUTIONS

661

DONORS

1,571

STUDENTS
AWARDED

\$1

MILLION IN
SCHOLARSHIPS
AWARDED



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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND FOUNDATION BOARD CHAIR

We are excited to share with you the hard work the Grand Rapids Community College Foundation has done this past year.

The numbers are compelling: \$1 million in scholarships distributed to 1,571 students during the 2022-2023 fiscal and academic year. Our scholarships are the result of an enduring collaboration that results in a better West Michigan for all of us.

Our generous donors are the first part of this success story. Without your contributions, we couldn't do what we do as a college: meeting students where they are and helping them achieve their dreams. We both consider it an honor to work for a college and in a community with such strong support for the opportunities provided by higher education.

Foundation staff members not only match up scholarships and students, but they create opportunities for donors and recipients to build a relationship. Through events such as scholarship recipient workshops, Scholarfest and Creating Connections, they ensure that the bonds between our donors and students go beyond financial help. Our students tell us repeatedly that while they are grateful for the money, the encouragement they feel through knowing that someone they've never met supports their goals is just as important to them.

Our students are the final part of the success that is the GRCC Foundation. Their persistence in overcoming obstacles inspires and humbles us. They leave our campus with excitement and a sense of accomplishment, ready to take that next step into a bachelor's degree or a career. Many of these alumni become donors themselves because they've experienced the life-changing power of a scholarship.

Stories from our donors, the GRCC community and students fill the pages of this annual report. They are stories of generosity, gratitude and success. We thank you for the part you've played in them and for your support of our foundation and our college.

Be well. Be Kind. Take care of each other.

Charles W. Lepper, Ph.D., GRCC president

Kristine R. Babcock,
GRCC Foundation board chair



Dr. Jim Buzzitta is stepping aside as GRCC Foundation board chair after a four-year term in the leadership role.

Buzzitta, a Grand Rapids Junior College alumnus, joined the board in 2010 and became its chair in 2019.

During his time as head of the board, the foundation:

- Raised almost \$23 million – well above the \$15 million goal – for scholarships and facility improvements through its

THANK YOU FOR YOUR LEADERSHIP, DR. BUZZITTA!

- capital campaign, A Broader Vision.
- Eased student hardships during the COVID-19 pandemic with its Student Food Pantry and Student Emergency Assistance funds.
- Assembled donor support for construction of the GRCC Lakeshore Campus, which created easier access to classes and resources for Ottawa County residents.
- Received its largest single donation ever of almost \$10 million.
- Created the Board of Directors Excellence Scholarship, allowing one student each from Kent and Ottawa counties to attend GRCC tuition-free.
- Moved its offices into the renovated Custer Alumni House.
- Completed the Secchia Piazza, an event space in the Wisner-Bottrall Applied Technology Center.
- Debuted the Armen Oumedian Consecutive Giving Award.

Kristine Babcock, a member of the foundation board since 2015, was elected to succeed Buzzitta as chair. But she delayed the move – and temporarily resigned from the board in January – in order to serve as the interim executive director for College Advancement. She led the foundation for six months until Mary Slafkosky was hired as vice president of College Advancement and then returned to the board as chair.



STAKEHOLDERS MEET GRCC'S NEW PRESIDENT AT EVENTS ON THE MAIN AND LAKESHORE CAMPUSES

Faculty, students and stakeholders turned out to welcome Dr. Charles W. Lepper, the college's 11th president, at GRCC Foundation-sponsored gatherings on the Main and Lakeshore campuses.

Lepper, who started at the beginning of 2023, brings more than 25 years of experience at universities and community colleges to his new role. Before coming to GRCC, he served as vice president for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management at Salt Lake Community College, which has more than 60,000 students across 10 campuses. During his time there,

he developed the SLCC Promise, which has provided more than \$5 million in free tuition since 2016. He helped lead SLCC's Guided Pathways program; reworked admissions, advising and financial aid processes; and expanded the dual enrollment program. Prior to his time at SLCC, he served in leadership roles at Tidewater Community College in Virginia and Ivy Tech Community College in Indiana. Lepper is already active with area agencies and organizations, serving on the boards of the Michigan Community College Association, The Right Place, and West Michigan Works! He also works with the National

Academic Advising Association as a consultant to two-year institutions. He has a bachelor's degree in human resources and personnel management from Ball State University; a master's in secondary, higher and adult education from Grand Valley State University; and a doctorate in educational leadership, administration and foundations from Indiana State University. He also completed Harvard University's Institute for Educational Management in 2017 and earned a professional development certificate in trauma and resilience from Florida State University in 2021.

TRIBUTE



Alumna Janice Maggini served as founding trustee, foundation board member

- GRANDMA O SCHOLARSHIP**
- > Established by the Maggini family in memory of Erma Ostapowicz.
 - > Awarded to students who have faced adversity and are enrolled part time at GRCC.

Janice Maggini's connection to GRCC started in the classroom and continued into the board room. Maggini, a founding member of the GRCC board of trustees, died in September 2022 at the age of 85.

"Jan was a wonderful person who, for decades, had a tremendous impact on GRCC and its students," said President Emeritus Juan Olivarez. "She was a leader in policy governance to help the college run effectively. She always kept the focus on our students, tirelessly advocating for them, and making sure that all students, credit and noncredit, had access to the same support and benefits."

Maggini graduated from what was then Grand Rapids Junior College in 1956 and earned bachelor's and master's degrees at Michigan State University. She taught in the Wyoming Public Schools, retiring in 1997 as assistant principal at Jackson Park Middle School.

"My passion for education began here in the fall of 1954," Maggini said of her time as a GRJC student. Her commitment to GRCC was lifelong: She served as a trustee from 1991 to 2011 and was named board chair in 2003. She served on the foundation's board of directors from 2011 to 2018 and was a trustee-director to the Michigan Community College Association.

She was named GRCC's Distinguished Alumna in 2011 and received a Salute to Women Award in 2005.

TRIBUTE



David Frey's vision made GRCC, Grand Rapids a better place

- FREY FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP**
- > Two scholarships awarded annually.
 - > Awards based on GPA.
 - > Recipients must attend GRCC full time.

David Frey generously shared his time and resources with GRCC for almost 50 years. Frey, a banking executive and leader of his family's Frey Foundation, died in June at the age of 81.

"David Frey and the Frey Foundation have touched the lives of GRCC students for decades, making a life-changing college education more accessible for them," said Erin Van Egmond, executive director of the GRCC Foundation. "Our college – and our city, as a whole – is a stronger, better place because of his kindness and generosity."

The Frey Foundation was founded in 1974 – and made its first donation to what was then Grand Rapids Junior College that same year, supporting the newly created preschool program and assisting students who needed child care while they attended classes. The foundation's support since then includes donations to the Phyllis Fratzke Early Childhood Learning Laboratory and the Alfred P. Smith Music Center, and to the Open Door, GRCC Works and A Broader Vision capital campaigns.

The Frey Foundation was recognized at the 2015 Scholarfest.

David Frey was born in Grand Rapids and earned bachelor's and Juris Doctor degrees from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. After serving with the Navy during the Vietnam War, he entered the banking industry, working in New York before succeeding his father, Edward Frey, as chairman of Union Bank & Trust.



GIVING EVERYONE A CHANCE

As a teacher, then GRCC trustee, Olivia Margo Anderson worked to ensure access to education.

Life sometimes moves forward before shifting back to the beginning. Former trustee Olivia Margo Anderson passed away in July at the age of 81, but not without knowing how much her years of dedication to education, diversity, inclusion and Grand Rapids Community College were appreciated. Teaching was a career goal from early childhood. Anderson's parents didn't attend college but instilled in her a lifelong passion for education. After graduating from South High School in 1959, she enrolled at GRJC. "My memory of being at Grand Rapids Junior College was the excitement, the beginning, the foundation," she said. "It was the most rewarding, particularly – and I'm speaking as an African American female – because it gives everyone a chance. And that's what I like so much about it." From GRJC, she transferred to Western

Michigan University, where she would later earn master's degrees in elementary education, counseling and personnel, and educational leadership. She worked in Grand Rapids Public Schools for 32 years as a teacher, counselor and principal at Creston High School and Buchanan, Alger and Jefferson elementary schools. "Kids have an uncanny way of knowing if you are genuine or not," she said. "Kids know if you really mean what you say and whether you really like them, or you're really trying. They can see through people who are fake. I think if you're genuine and you're there for the right reason, kids know." After retiring from K-12 education, she turned her attention to her alma mater, winning election to GRCC's board of trustees in 2001. "I was approached to consider running for the board, and then, after my first term, I loved it so much I ran my own campaign," she said. Anderson served until 2014, serving as board chairperson and in several other

leadership roles. "Margo Anderson changed generations of lives by working to ensure that education was within reach of all students," current board Chair David Koetje said upon hearing of her death. "She was determined to increase access to life-changing education and making a difference in her community." She also served on the boards of the YWCA, Women's History Council and Grand Rapids Urban League. She received a YWCA Tribute Award in 2006 and the Phyllis Scott Activist GIANT Award in 1991. She was honored at the Kent County Black Caucus "Community Legends" lunch in 2021. At the 2023 GRCC commencement, she accepted the Distinguished Alumni Award to thunderous applause. "The people you meet, the experiences you have – all of them build on a better life," she said. "And so for me to be the Distinguished Alumna is just the epitome of an honor."

Honor an alum!

The Distinguished Alumni Award is the highest honor bestowed upon former GRJC and GRCC students. Recipients are recognized for career achievements, public service and dedication to the college. While the winner is announced in January, nominations are accepted all year long.

We honor our graduates who are 40 and younger with the Young Alumni Award, which recognizes former students for their community or civic contributions, service in support of GRCC, and exceptional accomplishments in their profession.

For more information, or to nominate someone, go to grcc.edu/Alumni, where you'll find links to both applications. You can receive a paper copy of the applications by contacting Jenna Mencarelli, the foundation's development manager, at jennamencarelli@grcc.edu.

PAST AWARD RECIPIENTS ADD TO 'DISTINGUISHED' CELEBRATION

The GRCC Alumni Association saluted 2023 Distinguished Alumna Olivia Margo Anderson with a special reception in June. Family and friends turned out to celebrate the former GRCC trustee, including many of her Alpha Kappa Alpha sisters. Previous recipients of the Distinguished Alumni Award – David Cope (1984), John Selmon (2002), Judge Sara Smolenski (2003) and Gary Schenk (2009) – attended and welcomed the newest member to their ranks.



To see a full list of Distinguished Alumni Award recipients, or to nominate someone for the Distinguished Alumni or Young Alumni awards, head to grcc.edu/AlumniRelations.

I BELONG HERE

“Receiving the Grand Rapids Community College Foundation Scholarship gave me a feeling of relief. This has been a huge plus in my life. I feel powerful and able to achieve everything I want in life.”

— Joel Reyes Hernandez



Scholarship helps Joel Reyes Hernandez build a new future in the United States.

Joel Reyes Hernandez was studying and working hard, with no plans to leave his native Dominican Republic. But a vicious late-night assault by two men on a motorcycle changed everything.

“I was knocked to the ground, and I couldn’t understand why this was happening to me,” he said. “It was the worst day of my life. I felt so vulnerable, so fragile, so unprotected, just for being gay.”

Hernandez, deciding he was no longer safe in the country he’d lived in for almost three decades, arrived in the United States in August 2020 seeking asylum. After more than a year of hard work adjusting to a different language and culture, he decided he was ready to return to the classroom.

“I decided to continue my education, even though I knew it would not be easy for me,” he said. “I started the process, and from the first time I walked into GRCC, I felt I belong here.”

Hernandez’s new start meant challenges in the classroom and hard work the rest of the time – all without any family guidance or support.

“I knew the experience could be a little bit more complicated for me because I was not eligible for financial assistance due to my immigration status,” he said. “So I started to work more hours, and there was a moment when I was working three part-time jobs and attending school full time.”

But just as he wondered whether he could keep going, help arrived. Sarah Rose, director of the college’s Occupational Support program, told him about scholarship opportunities with the GRCC Foundation.

“Receiving the Grand Rapids Community College Foundation Scholarship gave me a feeling of relief,” Hernandez said. “This has been a huge plus in my life. I feel powerful and able to achieve everything I want in life.”

After receiving his associate degree, Hernandez plans to transfer to the University of Michigan and pursue a bachelor’s degree in sociology. Serving on GRCC’s Student Advisory Council increased an interest in mental health.

“We’re so excited to work together and develop programs and tools to create awareness about mental health,” Hernandez said of the council. “It’s OK to not feel OK, but sometimes we can’t solve the situation by ourselves, and it is time to ask for help.”

“I want to be supportive to anyone who is struggling in life and let them know that hope is at the end of the way.”

CREATING CONNECTIONS SPEAKERS SHARE HOW SCHOLARSHIPS GAVE THEM FRESH STARTS

New college leaders added to the excitement of the GRCC Foundation’s Creating Connections breakfast this year.

Erin Van Egmond, named the foundation’s new executive director in March, led the event, which allows students to meet the donors who make their scholarships possible. New GRCC President Charles Lepper welcomed the more than 170 guests, saying: “It’s not lost on me that without your support, we couldn’t do what we do as a college: supporting our students and helping them achieve their dreams.”

The foundation honored Phyllis Fratzke, an alumna who joined GRJC’s faculty in 1968. She started the Child Development program and the preschool in the early 1970s to support women re-entering the workplace after starting families. The Phyllis Fratzke Early Childhood Learning Laboratory was named for her in 2015.

Students Jamila Williams and Joel Reyes Hernandez shared how foundation scholarships have helped them make a fresh start after their lives were thrown off track. Williams earned an associate degree this spring with help from the Plastic and GRCC Foundation scholarships, which will assist in her new career at Cascade Engineering. Hernandez, who also received a GRCC Foundation Scholarship, plans to transfer to the University of Michigan to study sociology.

PHYLLIS FRATZKE CHILD DEVELOPMENT SCHOLARSHIP

- Started in 1986.
- Part of Million Dollar Faculty Club, a faculty fund-raising campaign.
- Supports students pursuing a degree in early childhood development and students with children enrolled in GRCC’s laboratory preschool.

PLASTIC SCHOLARSHIP

- Supports enhancements to the Plastics Manufacturing Technology program and financial awards to students pursuing a degree or certificate in plastics.
- 2.0 GPA required.
- Full- and part-time students are eligible.

scholarship spotlight

Deb Bailey Memorial Scholarship

• Endowed in 2021. • Honors Deb Bailey, who served as a GRCC trustee from 2013 until her death in 2020. • Supports first-generation students.

Ms. Ellen James Trailblazer Scholarship

• Endowed in 2019. • Honors retired trustee and current foundation board member Ellen James. • Supports Grand Rapids high school graduates who will be the first in their family to attend college.



EXPANDING THE REACH

Departing board Treasurer Doug Klein steers asset growth for more scholarships

For 15 years, board Treasurer Doug Klein has kept careful oversight of the GRCC Foundation's assets.

It's a staggering responsibility: Growth in foundation funds means more scholarships, and a scholarship is often the difference between a student completing a degree or certificate or dropping out. Under Klein's leadership, the foundation's cash and investments increased by more than \$15 million.

Klein, who stepped down from the board this year, is quick to share any praise, crediting previous treasurers Barb DeMoor and Jim LaFeur with putting the foundation on a firm financial footing.

"My responsibility, along with the investment committee, was maintaining and enhancing the foundation's assets," he said. "Those assets have grown over the past decade and a half from approximately \$12 million to over \$40 million currently."

He brought an impressive breadth of experience when he took his board seat in 2008.

"There are many organizations in West Michigan worthy of our time and treasure. Grand Rapids Community College is at the top of the list for Pat and me."

– Doug Klein

His most recent position was as senior portfolio manager of Northern Trust Co. from 1999 to his retirement in 2014. He previously served as vice president and senior portfolio manager for Bank One and also worked in portfolio management for Union Bank Trust Co., NBD Bank, First Chicago, and Old Kent Financial Corp.

While he isn't a GRCC alumnus – he earned his bachelor's degree in business from Michigan State University and is certified as a

Chartered Financial Analyst – he supports the college as a linchpin in the community.

"Pat and I have many friends and former co-workers who attended either GRJC or GRCC," he said.

While the Kleins do not yet have a designated scholarship fund – "it is on our radar," he said – they have contributed to other funds, including those honoring fellow foundation board member Ellen James and GRCC trustee Deb Bailey. They are especially strong advocates for the foundation's unrestricted fund.

"I have the highest regard for the administrative leadership, faculty and staff," Doug Klein said. "Everyone is dedicated to the success of students, whether they are entering as freshmen, directly from high school, or if they are matriculating for adult career enhancement opportunities."

"There are many organizations in West Michigan worthy of our time and treasure. Grand Rapids Community College is at the top of the list for Pat and me."

MAKE A LASTING IMPACT FOR OUR STUDENTS

The GRCC Foundation can coordinate with you and your professional advisors to create a lasting impact for our students:

Bequests

This is one of the easiest and most flexible ways that you can leave a gift to the GRCC Foundation.

Options include:

- Percentage bequest – make a gift of a percentage of your estate.
- Specific bequest – make a gift of a specific dollar amount or asset.
- Residuary bequest – make a gift from the balance, or residue, of your estate.

Retirement Assets

You can donate a part or all of your unused retirement assets, such as your IRA, 401(k), 403(b), pension or other tax-deferred plan.

If you designate the GRCC Foundation as a beneficiary, our students will benefit from the full value of your gift because your retirement assets will not be taxed at your death. Your estate will benefit from an estate tax charitable deduction for the gift.

To name the GRCC Foundation as a beneficiary, update your beneficiary designation form through your plan administrator.

Options for designation include:

- Primary beneficiary – GRCC Foundation will receive a percentage or specific amount.
- Contingent beneficiary – GRCC Foundation will receive the balance of your plan if your primary beneficiary doesn't survive you.

Life Insurance

You can designate the GRCC Foundation as the full, partial or contingent beneficiary of your life insurance policy, while still retaining ownership. To make a gift of life insurance, contact your life insurance provider to update your beneficiary designation form.

IRA Charitable Rollover

If you are 70½ years or older, you can make a difference now with an IRA Charitable Rollover. You can give up to \$100,000 annually, income tax-free, from your IRA directly to a qualified charity. If you are considering an IRA Charitable Rollover, consult with your professional advisors to ensure that your transfer qualifies.

Contact GRCC Foundation

After creating or updating your will or trust, please contact us to inform us of your plans. We would love to recognize you. **For more information, please visit grcc.edu/PlannedGiving.**

Website helps with creating wills

FreeWill, a GRCC Foundation partner, makes creating a will simple, quick and free!

Almost two-thirds of Americans do not have an estate plan. Protect yourself and your loved ones by going to freewill.com/GRCCFoundation and letting the experts there walk you through creating a will in about 20 minutes.

FreeWill can also help you plan beneficiaries for assets not included in your will – like a 401(k), IRA or life insurance policy. These "non-probate" assets must be planned separately from your will.

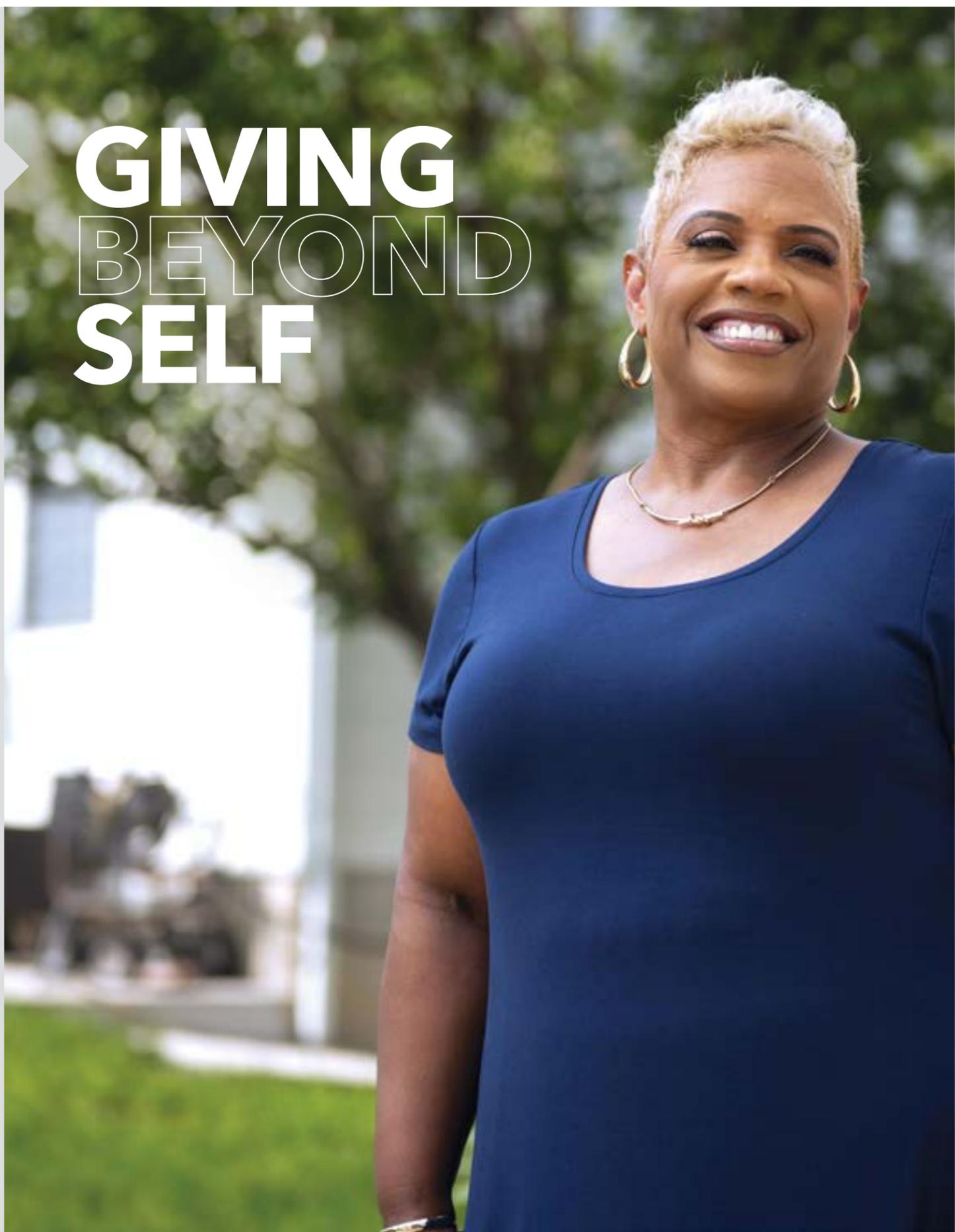
As you create your will, you can choose to create a legacy gift by naming the GRCC Foundation in your plan. FreeWill allows you to specify your gift amount and how you'd like us to allocate it. Non-probate assets can also be donated to the foundation.



Protect yourself and your loved ones by going to freewill.com/GRCCFoundation



GIVING BEYOND SELF



Professor Nikki Smith sees foundation donations as part of her work in transforming students' lives.

Why do donors support the GRCC Foundation?

For some people, it's part of a family tradition.

Others are motivated by their gratitude for their GRJC or GRCC education.

Many faculty and staff see first-hand the need for scholarships in their encounters with students.

Dr. Nikki Smith gives for all three of those reasons.

She graduated from GRJC in 1989 and has been a full-time professor in the Criminal Justice Department for 18 years.

"My parents instilled in me early in life the core values of living and giving beyond self," said Smith, whose father was also a GRJC alumnus.

In fact, her parents encouraged her to enroll at GRJC after she graduated from Central High School. She then enrolled at Grand Valley State University, earning a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and a master's in social work. This past May, she received her doctorate in education, organizational leadership and development from Cornerstone University.

"I enjoyed every moment of my time at GRJC," she said. "I was a member of the women's nationally ranked tennis team for two years, the debate team and a member of the Black Student Union."

In addition to regular contributions to the foundation, Smith has a

scholarship designated for students majoring in Criminal Justice.

"I hope to alleviate some of the financial burdens that students often face, allowing them to focus on the overall care of their minds, bodies and souls as they prepare to move into a career of service," she said. "My three- to five-year goal is endowment."

"Because I believe in what we do at GRCC – and those it impacts – my decision to contribute needed no prompts. It is my great pleasure to give."

– Dr. Nikki Smith

Smith, who received a GRCC Excellence in Education Award in 2015, believes the benefits of her donations to the foundation go beyond the scholarship recipients.

"I often think about the mission, vision, values and strategic plan of GRCC," she said. "These core tenants of our college provide scholars who teach and the staff who support our students the opportunity, through education, to help transform students' lives. Contributing financially to student scholarships allows others to become conduits of this powerful transformation."

"Because I believe in what we do at GRCC – and those it impacts – my decision to contribute needed no prompts. It is my great pleasure to give."

WAYS TO GIVE

The GRCC Foundation can help you plan your donation – using whichever method makes you most comfortable.

Your first stop: grcc.edu/GRCCFoundation to see the different ways you can give. Feel free to call us at (616) 234-3939, and we'll answer any questions and help you set up your donation. Or stop by in person at the Custer Alumni House, 473 E. Fulton St.

 **MAIL OR IN PERSON**
check or cash

 **ONLINE**
at grcc.edu/Donate
Pay via credit or debit card; PayPal or Venmo

 **AUTOMATED**
monthly donations from your bank or credit card

 **MATCHING GIFTS**
contact your employer

 **PLANNED GIVING**
a lasting legacy



Scholarfest Celebrates Olivarezes' work to improve education access

Scholarfest 2022 paid tribute to the efforts of President Emeritus Juan and Mary Olivarez to improve access to a life-changing education while serving as the debut of the new Secchia Piazza.

Dr. Werner Absenger, director of the Secchia Institute for Culinary Education, and Dr. Kathryn Mullins, at that time vice president of College Advancement and executive director of the GRCC Foundation, brought Joan Secchia to the stage first to accept the college's gratitude for the piazza, the final project by her husband, Peter, before his death in 2020.

Friends and former colleagues spoke of Juan Olivarez's GRCC accomplishments, which include leading the Open Door capital campaign, creating the Cesar Chavez Hispanic Scholarship, and establishing the Academic Governing Council. Many noted that his devotion to GRCC was evident in his return as its interim leader after his retirement as the eighth president in 2008.

Olivarez himself paid tribute to his wife and her 24-year career with Grand Rapids Public Schools, teaching kindergarten, early childhood special education, and working with students with multiple impairments.

The Olivarezes' Hispanic and Ukrainian heritages were reflected in a menu created by GRCC's culinary students, in a special beer developed in the Craft Brewing program, and entertainment by a mariachi band.

The event raised more than \$126,000 for scholarships – a cause supported by the Olivarezes for decades.

"Keep supporting GRCC," Juan Olivarez told Scholarfest guests. "And become a donor if you're not, because it goes a long way here."

SCHOLARSHIP SPOTLIGHT

Olivarez Scholarship Fund

Awarded to a second-year student.

Preference given to students planning to transfer to Aquinas College.

2.5 GPA or higher required.

NEW MURAL CELEBRATES TRAILBLAZING PRESIDENT

President Emeritus Juan Olivarez agreed to allow a mural and a GRCC plaza to be named in his honor for one reason: students.

"It really isn't about me," he said at the mural unveiling in June. "It's about having a Latino name on a landmark to inspire other students of color to reach high in their endeavors and to be proud of who they are."

Alumnus Raymond Trujillo created the

mural, depicting a Mexican courtyard, in celebration of Olivarez's heritage and trailblazing role as the first Hispanic person to serve as a Michigan college or university president.

"The butterflies represent the students here on campus," Trujillo said. "I was one of those monarch butterflies."

The mural can be found near the Student Center, along the Dr. Juan R. Olivarez Student Plaza. The plaza, formerly known as Bostwick Commons, was renamed for GRCC's eighth president in 2013.



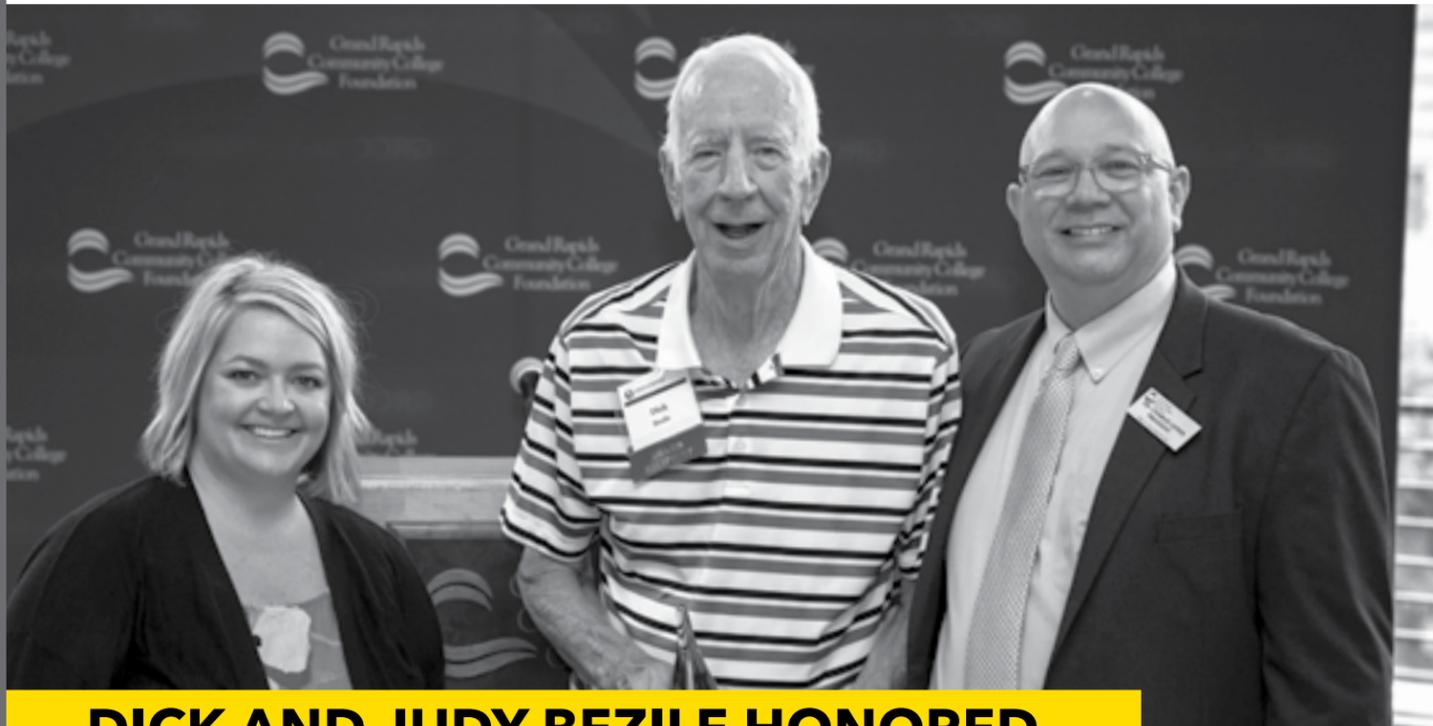
COLORFUL PIAZZA REFLECTS PETER SECCHIA'S LEGACY

GRCC's Secchia Piazza has cemented the legacy of a longtime philanthropist and permanently changed the Grand Rapids skyline.

The piazza was the last project personally supervised by Peter Secchia before his death in 2020. An outdoor patio at the Wisner-Bottrall Applied Technology Center was transformed into an indoor, multi-use space.

A 31-foot-wide, 15-foot-tall SkyCone serves as the space's centerpiece. The skylight feature includes 20 colorful panels with laminated glass that produce a kaleidoscope of light visible from downtown. It also highlights a tondo, a 30-foot polished concrete floor with steel inlays.

The project earned statewide honors for Granger Construction, the company that built the event space. The Washtenaw Contractors Association gave it a 2023 Pyramid Award in the category of Best Project Team for projects costing \$3 million to \$25 million. WOOD TV listed it among its top 10 projects changing the Grand Rapids area in 2022.



DICK AND JUDY BEZILE HONORED FOR 43 YEARS OF GENEROSITY

DICK AND JUDY BEZILE GRANT FUND

- > Established in 1994.
- > Provides emergency loans and grants to full- and part-time students based on financial need.
- > Preference is given to students enrolled in computer graphics communications.

The recipients of the 2023 Armen Oumedian Consecutive Giving Award spent a combined 91 years in service to GRCC and its students.

And they're not done yet.

Dick and Judy Bezile were recognized for their 43 years of donations to the GRCC Foundation during a club get-together in September. Dick Bezile worked for the college for 35 years, retiring in 2001 as dean

of Educational Services. Judy Bezile stepped down in December 2022 after 56 years as a professor in the Computer Information Systems Department.

In addition to creating the Dick & Judy Bezile Grant Fund, Dick Bezile founded the Michael Flanagan Golf Outing, which raised money for student scholarships for more than three decades.

"You can go anywhere on this campus and get help. That's what we're here for – to help students reach their goals and get through."

– Dick Bezile

Dick Bezile shared memories and his GRCC pride in accepting the award.

"You can go anywhere on this campus and get help," he said. "That's what we're here for – to help students reach their goals and get through."

Club members who reached giving milestones of three, five, 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30 years were also recognized. Erin Van Egmond, executive director of the GRCC Foundation, noted that when combined, these donors had 432 consecutive years of giving.

President Charles Lepper spoke to club members about the importance of consistency.

"Your continued support and belief in GRCC allows us to offer the very best in education, facilities and resources to our students," he said.

During 2022, 45 people joined the Consecutive Giving Club, and the 255 active donors gave more than \$1.1 million to the foundation, supporting 102 funds.

WOMEN IN PHILANTHROPY MARKS SCHOLARSHIP ENDOWMENT BY EXPANDING MISSION

GRCC's Women in Philanthropy group formed in 2019 with the goal of endowing a scholarship. Despite a two-year hiatus, when members were unable to meet in person because of the pandemic, the scholarship reached endowment status in 2022.

During an Aug. 9 celebration at the Custer Alumni House, group members decided to continue their work, pooling their charitable dollars to support projects that help GRCC students, faculty, staff, departments and organizations.

Quarterly meetings have included presentations on GRCC Cares, a network that addresses students' basic needs, and plans for a space on campus where faculty, staff and the community can learn about artificial intelligence.

To learn more about this giving circle, go to grcc.edu/WomenInPhilanthropy.



NEW SCHOLARSHIP FOR 2022-2023

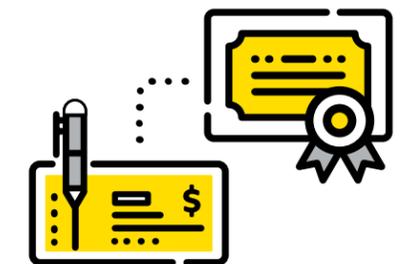
Schwanda Family Scholarship

NEWLY ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIPS FOR 2022-2023

Many donors choose to name their endowed scholarship after a person they love or to establish a permanent legacy. We are so thankful for our newly endowed scholarship funds, which will help countless students for years to come.

Margaret Bowles Scholarship

Women in Philanthropy Scholarship



SHARING OUR STORIES



PAOLA R. MENDIVIL

Alumna

Vice president of Catering at El Granjero Mexican Grill

"I donate because I want to give back so that other women, hopefully Latinas, receive the same support and good education at GRCC that can open doors for their careers. I'm a proud Raider!"



DANIEL C. EGGERDING

Alumnus

988 LGBTQ+ digital counselor at The Trevor Project

"As a first-generation college graduate, GRCC was the most sound and practical choice for me and my family. I received a world-class education, had personal and professional support from GRCC staff, and built lifelong relationships that helped me connect with our broader community and beyond."



JAWANZA EVANS

Alumnus

Recent graduate of Grace Christian University

"My time at GRCC brought me opportunities that exposed me to a lot of friends, connections and mentors who I am still in contact with to this very day. I recently received my bachelor's degree in psychology, and I look to one day serve our community as a licensed counselor with a mission to change lives."



JOSEPH DERUSHA

Current student, Supply Chain Operation Management

GRCC Foundation Scholarship

"My scholarship helped reduce the financial burden of higher education during a time of personal hardship. My wife unexpectedly lost her vision in the spring of 2021. Finding normalcy after this major life event – while coming out of a pandemic – was the most difficult thing I have done in my life."



ALLAYA OFFUTT

Current student, Nursing

GRCC Foundation Scholarship

"Receiving this scholarship at a time while I was fleeing a very unhealthy relationship has helped me tremendously. It helps me realize that asking for help is nothing to be ashamed of, and I appreciate the help more than I could ever express."



AMARILYS MERCADO

Current student, Accounting

GRCC Foundation Scholarship

"This scholarship relieves a big part of financial stress on me and my family. It's allowing me to continue to work part time while I take classes and care for my children. If it wasn't for this assistance, I wouldn't be able to accomplish this dream of mine."



KHAI PHUOC THANH TRUONG

Current student; Art, Architecture and Mechanical Design

GRCC Foundation Scholarship

"The scholarship has not only alleviated the financial burden that often accompanies pursuing higher education, but it has also enabled me to focus wholeheartedly on my studies and personal growth. Your belief in the power of education has been instrumental in shaping my experience at GRCC and paving the way for a brighter future."



HOPE FIDDLER

Current student, Interior Design

GRCC Foundation Scholarship

"The scholarships that I have received were the push I needed to go back to school. I had been thinking of doing so for awhile, but was having trouble justifying spending the money on my own education when we have three kids to provide for. The scholarships gave me peace of mind to know that I wasn't taking anything away from my kids in order to pursue my own dreams."



AARON PEOPLES

Comstock Park High School teacher

Donor

"I give to GRCC because it is the largest landing spot for my students once they leave high school. I know that education can help students change the trajectory of their life. GRCC is an excellent way for them to get a start toward a bachelor's degree as well as being a wonderful spot to earn an associate degree."



PENNI WENINGER

GRCC retiree

Donor

"Over the years, instead of sending greeting cards, I have made small donations to various scholarships in honor of GRCC people. I also contribute to the Golden Raider Scholarship at our retiree happy hours. I believe that every dollar invested in GRCC students has a direct positive impact on our community."



LUNCHEON CELEBRATES 50 YEARS OF SISTERHOOD

A group of GRCC alumnae has put time and effort into keeping memories fresh and the ties of friendship strong for five decades.

When Laurie Cope Grand visits Michigan from her California home, she often organizes a lunch or dinner with her Kappa Sigma Phi sisters. GRCC's Custer Alumni House hosted this year's reunion.

Sororities and fraternities were officially recognized at GRCC from the mid-1950s to 1975. Members ran benefit car washes and rummage sales, organized dances and other social activities, and volunteered in the community.

"My friend Ginny Schmit dragged me to a sorority rush tea at the beginning of second semester, and I pledged Kappa Sigma Phi," Grand said. "That changed everything for me. I never planned to be a sorority member, but I was desperate for a connection."

Grand, who was voted president her sophomore year, credits the sorority for building her leadership skills and self-confidence.

Guests at the luncheon in May were part of Kappa Sigma Phi from 1966 through 1970. Grand noted that all had gone on to earn bachelor's degrees, and many had a master's.

"Many of us live in other states; a few have passed away, and those who are local have lunch or dinner more often," she said. "We always laugh and recall our Kappa memories and share photos of our 19-year-old selves."

Pro tips from culinary alumna add sparkle to holiday cookie kits

GRCC Alumni Relations sweetened the holiday season by offering a holiday cookie kit that included expert decorating advice from a Secchia Institute for Culinary Education graduate.

The kit, offered at a special discounted rate, included eight holiday-themed cookies, three colors of royal icing, different kinds of sprinkles and piping bags. In the video that came with the purchase, Rachel Baas, owner of Equinox Pastries and Pops, shared professional tips on "flooding," outlining and creating patterns with frosting.

Baas earned her Associate in Culinary Arts in 2019 and then completed the joint program in Hospitality Management that GRCC has with Ferris State University. In addition to her custom dessert business, she works part time in the Gun Lake Casino kitchens.

"I absolutely love creating people's dessert visions into delicious realities while also being able to use my business and work as a creative outlet," she said.



INVESTING IN COMMUNITY

University of Michigan Health-West creates scholarship to strengthen pipeline of nursing talent.

Medical experts will tell you that it's better to prevent an emergency than treat an emergency. With that in mind, the University of Michigan Health-West is taking steps now to ensure a well-trained and diverse nursing workforce.

The health system teamed up with the Grand Rapids Community College Foundation to provide scholarship support and paid-on-the-job professional experience for nursing students through the Amy Van Andel Nursing Scholars Program.

"We know that GRCC nursing students are especially committed to their community," said Kate Veenstra, associate chief nursing officer at UMH-West. "They also bring diverse backgrounds and experiences. These are values we share at UMH-West, and we're really looking forward to building these mutually beneficial relationships."

The program, launched in December, is open to students who have completed one semester of GRCC's Nursing program. UMH-West will pay up to three semesters of their GRCC tuition, and they, in turn, will commit to working in the health system for two years after they become licensed registered nurses.

But UMH-West's support doesn't stop there: The health system has partnerships and tuition reimbursement programs to support their nurses as they work toward their bachelor's degrees.

"We know that GRCC nursing students are especially committed to their community. They also bring diverse backgrounds and experiences. These are values we share at UMH-West, and we're really looking forward to building these mutually beneficial relationships."

— Kate Veenstra, associate chief nursing officer at U of M Health-West

"GRCC has a great program, and they put out some outstanding nurses," said Steve Polega, the health system's chief nursing officer – and a GRCC alumnus. "Once they have that two-year degree, they will have a chance to put their skills to work, explore their career passion and advance toward their

BSN, which opens a whole new level of opportunity for nurses."

The UMH-W partnership with GRCC addresses an urgent need amid warnings of a nationwide shortage of nurses. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics forecasts that more than 275,000 additional nurses will be needed annually from now through 2030.

The first group of students in the Amy Van Andel Nursing Scholars Program graduated in April. Plans call for 10 more students to graduate in each of the next three semesters: December 2023, April 2024 and December 2024.

Michelle Richter, GRCC Nursing program director, said the scholarship program is a great extension of the school's approach to nursing education, which combines classroom instruction with clinical applications.

"We are proud of the success rate of our students, and this should help open doors to more of them," she said. "Assisting students with tuition allows them to focus on completing their education and, ultimately, enter the workplace more quickly and better prepared. The opportunity for employment upon graduation allows students to be able to serve the community in a rewarding career and continue adding skills and advancing their education."



HOMECOMING CELEBRATES 2012 NATIONAL CHAMPION VOLLEYBALL TEAM

Members of GRCC’s first national champion women’s team returned to their home court for Homecoming.

Alumnae from the 2012 volleyball team were recognized between the sets of the current team’s 3-0 victory against North Central Michigan College. They won the NJCAA Division II title after defeating 12 nationally ranked teams, finishing with a 39-1 record. The 39 wins remain a team record for the volleyball program.

The week leading up to the Homecoming game was filled with a photo contest, chili cookoff and a game show for students. The public was invited to the tailgate held right before the game on the Dr. Juan R. Olivarez Student Plaza, and the Golden Raiders retiree group hosted a happy hour at The Commons bar and restaurant.

Kaitlyn Wolters, now Kaitlyn Bergman, led the 2012 team. Now a recreational therapist in Indiana, she said the national championship will always be a great GRCC memory: “From the sweat and tears poured into each practice and game, all the way ‘til the final championship.”

Other team members are Nicole Czehowski, Karleigh Strazisar, Taylor Meyer, Kendall Wolffis, Tayler Friend, Molly Maynard, Hannah Geelhoed, Emily Johnson, Kourtney Wolters and Amy Vander Wal.

Party brings GRCC, GRJC alumni home

2010 Distinguished Alumnus Dave Custer led the renovations to the Lettinga House with a definite purpose in mind.

Homecoming included the ultimate realization of his dream, with the refurbished (and renamed) Custer Alumni House hosting a large gathering of former GRJC and GRCC students. Those attending the Alumni Night Out event shared memories and food catered by Four Chefs – owned by 2009 Secchia Institute for Culinary Education graduate Andrew Schultz.

In addition to Alumni Relations, the house, at 473 E. Fulton St., also serves as headquarters for the GRCC Foundation.



EVENT PLANNER SHARES SUCCESS BY SUPPORTING BIPOC VENDORS

Phalesha Kyes faced many challenges along the way to establishing her event-planning business. Now she works to bring attention to organizations and entrepreneurs from underrepresented populations.

Kyes and her sisters were removed from their home and grew up in the foster care system. After many placements, she graduated from Lowell High School in 2009.

“I was the first one in my family to attend college,” she said. “I didn’t know anything about student aid or scholarships, but because I was a ward of the state, I was able to attend GRCC for free. And so, I did.”

“It was one of the best choices I ever made.”

After graduating with her associate degree, Kyes worked in insurance and foster care before starting By Phalesha Events in 2021.

“I pulled my favorite things from all of my prior jobs, including customer service, event planning and public relations, and formed my own,” she said.

She does nonprofit, corporate, community engagement and even personal party planning. She enjoys working on all kinds of events but takes special joy in supporting entrepreneurs who, like herself, are Black, Indigenous and people of color.

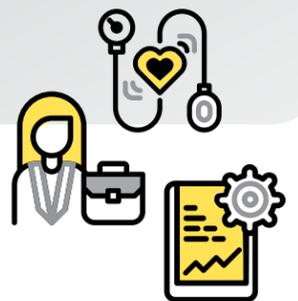
“My mission is to empower and collaborate with as many BIPOC and female vendors as possible for every event,” she said. “And it’s important for me to represent organizations that don’t have the resources to host events or grow their brand due to barriers.”

For more information about By Phalesha Events, contact events@byphalesha.events or (616) 292-1208.

RAIDERS GET DOWN TO BUSINESS

Photography, catering, marketing – GRCC alumni are helping a wide variety of businesses.

We support them, and we’ve set up a way so you can, too. Head to grcc.edu/Alumni and you’ll see the link to alumni-owned businesses in the menu. Once on that webpage, there’s a link if you want to add your business to the list.



STAYING CONNECTED

GRCC ALUMNI CAN BE FOUND IN ALL 50 STATES LIKE THESE STANDOUTS » AND IN MANY COUNTRIES!

No matter where you are, you can keep up with the latest news on our social media:

 GRCC Facebook page
facebook.com/grandrapidscc

GRCC Alumni Association
facebook.com/grccalumni

GRCC Foundation
facebook.com/grccfoundation

GRCC Athletics
facebook.com/grccathletics

 GRCC TikTok – @grandrapidscc

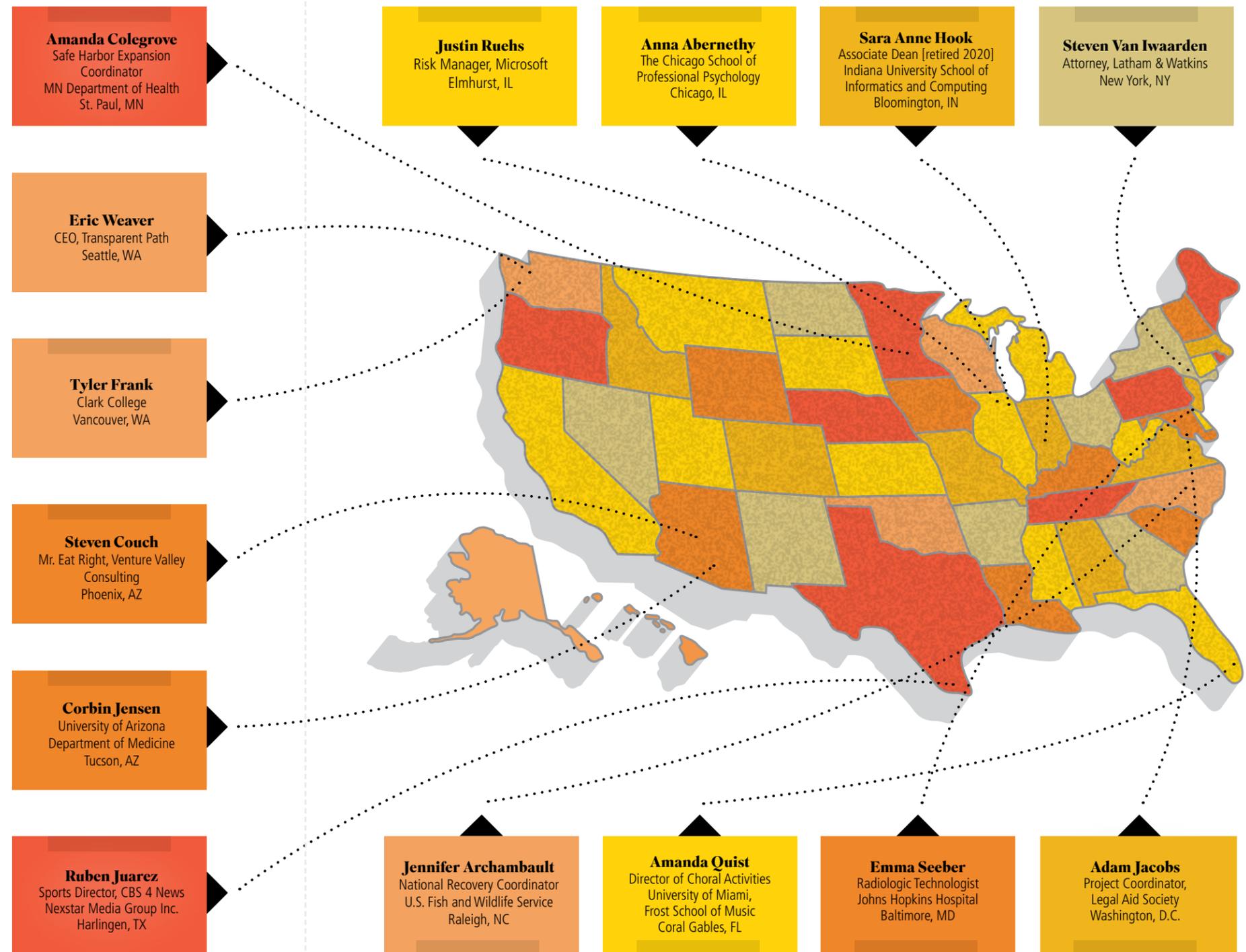
 GRCC X (formerly Twitter) – @grcc
GRCC Athletics – @GRCCAthletics

 GRCC Instagram – @grandrapidscc
GRCC Athletics – @grccathletics

 Extend your networking reach by following our LinkedIn page – linkedin.com/School/Grand-Rapids-Community-College

KEEP IN TOUCH!

Help us keep all our GRCC and GRJC alumni connected to the latest news and events! Just visit grcc.edu/Alumni for the online form to update your contact information and let us know how you prefer to hear from us.





Meet the Team

You will find some new faces in the offices and halls of Custer Alumni House:

Erin Van Egmond, executive director – Before being named to the foundation’s top post, Van Egmond served as associate director. She started at GRCC in 1998 as a student worker in the Financial Aid Office and became part of the foundation in 2005, serving as donor relations coordinator and director of alumni relations (pictured left).



Riley Brooket, scholarship coordinator – Brooket joined the foundation in 2022, after working at Jackson College, Grand Valley State University and WGVU.



Jenna Mencarelli, development manager for Alumni Relations and annual giving – Mencarelli has worked with nonprofit organizations, including the state House and MOKA, for about 10 years. She joined GRCC in 2021.



Mary Reed, donor stewardship manager – A GRCC alumna, Reed started in the Financial Aid Office in 2002, stepping into her current foundation role in 2015.



Becca Rogers, database coordinator – Rogers joined GRCC in February 2023 as the foundation’s administrative assistant and was promoted to her new position in May. She previously worked with a variety of nonprofits, including Family Futures, Equity PAC and Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE GRCC FOUNDATION

I am honored to be the GRCC Foundation’s new leader. I’ve spent the vast majority of my career working here, and I’ve seen the life-changing impact it has from different vantage points: donor relations coordinator, alumni relations director and associate director.

I’m now privileged to serve in the role that many of my mentors held before me. They paved the way not only for me, but for the success of GRCC and all of its students. The foundation’s work in raising \$22.9 million in the 2019 A Broader Vision capital campaign and funding a \$12 million Lakeshore Campus are just two examples that touch the lives of everyone at GRCC.

Our strength lies in the incredible partnerships we’ve developed – with donors, college employees, businesses and the community. West Michigan generosity is legendary – and we at GRCC have seen the seemingly impossible happen countless times.

Our partners – on- and off-campus – understand the challenges students face and the difference scholarship support makes to them. They also recognize the importance of

keeping campus buildings and equipment current so students gain the skills needed in today’s workforce.

Students feel those connections. Many scholarship recipients tell us that while they appreciate the financial help, they’re also touched that someone they’ve never met supports their dreams.

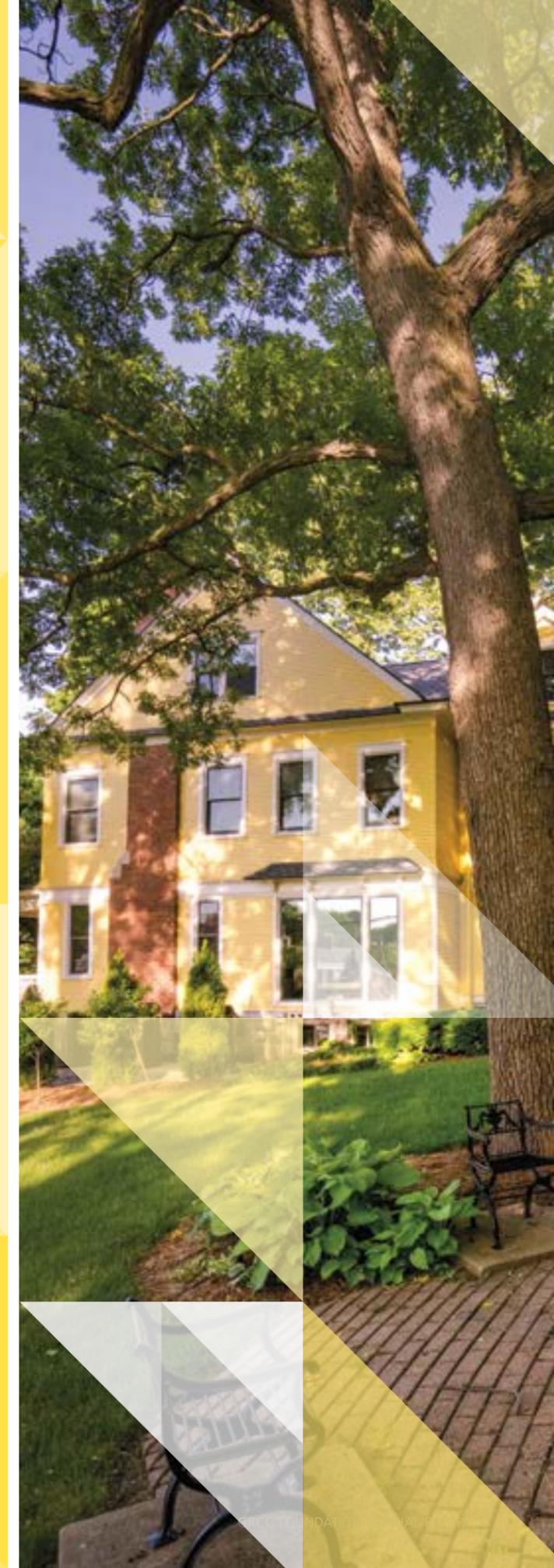
Since joining the foundation in 2005, I’ve watched that magic happen. In my new position, I promise to make sure that a life-changing college education remains accessible to everyone.

I’m excited to continue building relationships with our foundation partners, and I’m very grateful to all of you for your commitment to our students.

With thanks,

Erin Van Egmond

Erin Van Egmond
Executive Director



FOUNDATION STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS (as of June 30)	2023	2022
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 4,573,552	\$ 3,210,117
Contributions receivable — net of allowance for uncollectible pledges of \$0 at June 30, 2023 and \$250 June 30, 2022	\$ 595,566	\$ 2,155,537
Accrued interest receivable	\$ 90,349	\$ 80,085
Investments	\$ 35,455,862	\$ 31,633,274
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 40,715,329	\$ 37,079,013
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS (as of June 30)		
Liabilities:		
Scholarships payable	\$ 550,409	\$ 1,006,512
Accounts payable	\$ 286,703	\$ 291,561
Grants payable	\$ -	\$ 5,576
Funds held on behalf of others	\$ 1,445,446	\$ 1,612,151
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$ 2,282,558	\$ 2,915,800
Net assets:		
Without donor restrictions	\$ 9,272,182	\$ 8,494,809
With donor restrictions	\$ 29,160,589	\$ 25,668,404
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$ 38,432,771	\$ 34,163,213
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$ 40,715,329	\$ 37,079,013

GRCC FOUNDATION MISSION

It is the mission of the GRCC Foundation to secure and manage financial gifts to support and promote student, employee and community learning, enabling the college to fulfill its mission and vision.

GRCC FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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GO GREEN!

You can receive future GRCC Foundation annual reports online – with the same stories of our students, our events and our efforts as in the print version. If you want to “go green” and receive the electronic version in future years, please go to

grcc.edu/ContactUpdate

