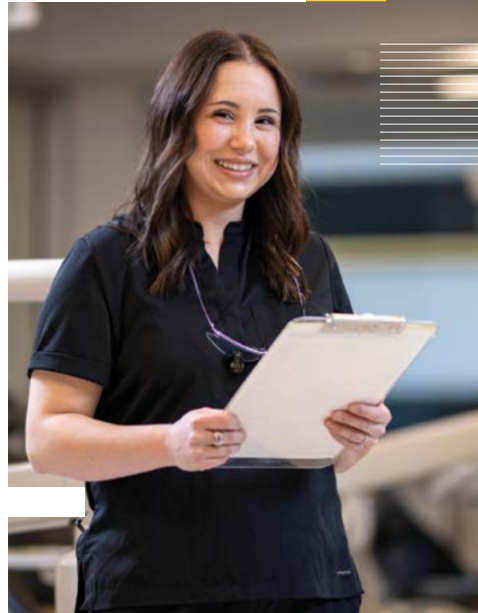




GRAND RAPIDS
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE
FOUNDATION
ANNUAL REPORT
2024-25

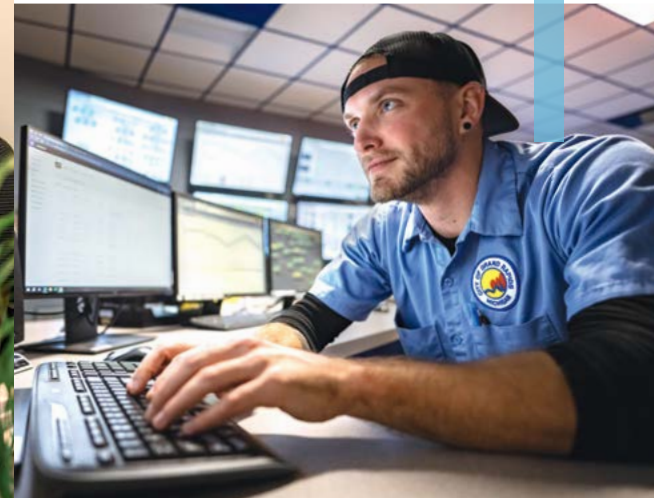
\$1.4 MILLION IN SCHOLARSHIPS



\$45 MILLION IN ASSETS



625 DONORS



\$3.5



548 TOTAL FUNDS

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WELCOME

Greetings from the interim president and foundation board chair. This year has been one of change, growth and opportunity, and we are excited to share the work the Grand Rapids Community College Foundation has done.

While the numbers of scholarships given and received are compelling, we know that numbers alone don't always move people. But stories do. People are moved to action by human experience — stories of dedication, resilience and transformation. In this report, you will find stories that illustrate the life-changing impact of education and community.

Education is a turning point. Just one opportunity or scholarship can open doors and truly change the course of someone's life. Behind each scholarship is a story of someone like you. Someone who believes in our students and has chosen to invest in their future.

Your generosity does more than provide financial support. It sends a message to our students that they matter. Scholarships tell students that they are seen and someone is cheering them on as they move through their educational journey. That kind of belief is powerful. It builds confidence, fuels ambition and helps students reach heights they never thought possible.

As the landscape of higher education continues to shift, many of our students are facing growing personal and financial challenges. Your support is more vital than ever. You help keep education accessible, inclusive and transformational. Thank you for your commitment to GRCC's mission, to our students and to the belief that everyone deserves the chance to learn, grow and succeed.

As part of your continued support, we ask that you share stories with each other and with those not yet connected to the college. Celebrate the impact you have had in a student's life. Spread the word about students' amazing accomplishments. Tell your friends and family about the opportunities at GRCC and the amazing community dedicated to student success.

Together, we can continue removing barriers and ensure educational success is within every student's reach.

Together, we can make a difference.

Dr. Steven J. Triezenberg, GRCC Interim President

Kristine R. Babcock, GRCC Foundation Board Chair

GRCC FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

WELCOME

The Foundation board of directors extends a warm welcome to Dr. Steven J. Triezenberg and John Globoker.

Dr. Triezenberg joined the board in May 2025 as part of his role as interim president. He brings with him a distinguished career in education, student success and scientific discovery. We are excited to learn from Dr. Triezenberg and look forward to working with him to continue fostering supportive learning environments for our students.

John Globoker, GRCC's new vice president of finance and administration, also serves as the board's assistant treasurer. With more than 18 years of leadership experience in higher education, Globoker will help ensure that students and employees alike have a safe, inclusive environment and the facilities needed to deliver a high quality education.

THANK YOU

David Bottrall and Dr. Jim Buzzitta have been awarded director emeritus. We would like to thank them for their valuable contributions and recognize their dedicated service.

David Bottrall has served on the board for 18 years. Some of his accomplishments include work on the A Broader Vision, Open Door and GRCC Works! capital campaigns. The Bottrall family, along with the Tassell and Wisner families, have been generous supporters of GRCC for many years through scholarships, capital support and work on Leslie E. Tassell MTEC.

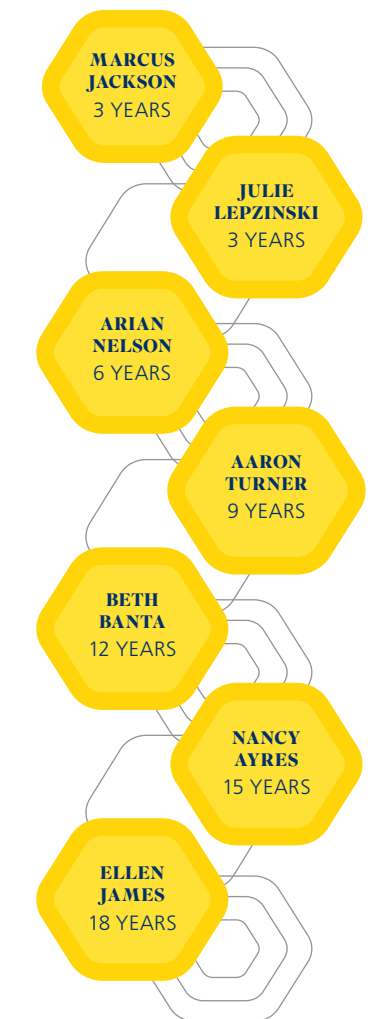
Dr. Jim Buzzitta served on the board for 15 years, including as chairperson from 2019 to 2023. His efforts were instrumental to various capital campaigns, including A Broader Vision, Open Door and GRCC Works! Dr. Buzzitta and his family have been generous supporters of the college through many initiatives and their endowed family scholarship fund.

We would also like to extend our deepest gratitude to **Lisa Freiburger**, who retired from GRCC in May 2025. Freiburger served as GRCC's vice president of finance and administration and as assistant treasurer on the board. Her thoughtful fiscal stewardship, strategic insight and commitment to students have left a lasting legacy on our campus and throughout the community.

OUR THANKS

BOARD MEMBER RENEWALS

Congratulations to the seven board members who have renewed their commitment for a new three-year term. Thank you for your years of service to our organization and for your unwavering dedication to our students.



SUPPORTING FUTURE STUDENTS

Michael and Sherryl Despres know the difference a scholarship can make and have plans to help future generations get their start at GRCC. In 2025, they received the Armen Oumedian Consecutive Giving Award in recognition of their 36 years of consecutive giving.

Michael and Sherryl Despres are both Grand Rapids Junior College (GRJC) alumni. Michael chose GRJC because of the cost and the scholarship help he received. "I was uncertain of what my future would hold if I went to a four-year school right away," he said. "GRJC was an affordable option, and I knew all my credits would transfer to a four-year school."

After considering law or psychology, Michael decided to pursue a degree in business. He quickly became involved in the student community and served as the student representative on the Foundation board. When he transferred to Michigan State University to complete his bachelor's degree, he had the support of GRJC President Richard Calkins, who wrote a letter of recommendation.

Sherryl decided to attend GRJC because of the cost and the option to take night classes that worked around her full-time job. After earning her associate degree, she transferred to Grand Valley State University to study psychology and pursued acting, appearing in "Rodeo Girl," "State of Modern Love," and "Cemetery Stories." She also played Blanche DuBois in the Pulitzer Prize winning play "A Streetcar Named Desire" at the Grand Rapids Civic Theatre in 2019.

Michael is now a managing director of investments at Wells Fargo Advisors, where he offers a range of financial advisory services, from retirement planning to estate strategies. Between acting roles, Sherryl is an acting coach and has served on the Grand Rapids Civic Theatre's board of directors for eight years. She was recently nominated for an Eclipse Award for Excellence in Acting in West Michigan.

Both Michael and Sherryl are deeply engaged in their community and want to see GRCC continue to support the students who come

through its doors, regardless of their life circumstances. Michael serves on the GRCC Foundation board and he and Sherryl have given to the Foundation every year for over three decades.

In addition to their annual support, they have included GRCC in their long-term financial plans. "Planned giving is a legacy we can leave to help the community even after we are gone," Sherryl said. Their gift will ensure future students have the support they need to pursue their college dreams.

"What would West Michigan be without GRCC?" said Michael. "The cost and benefit from GRCC is great. Supporting GRCC helps others who are less fortunate, and it also helps build a better future for our entire community."

"WHAT WOULD WEST MICHIGAN BE WITHOUT GRCC? SUPPORTING GRCC HELPS OTHERS WHO ARE LESS FORTUNATE, AND IT ALSO HELPS BUILD A BETTER FUTURE FOR OUR ENTIRE COMMUNITY."

CONSECUTIVE GIVING CLUB MEMBERS HONORED FOR SUPPORT OF SCHOLARSHIPS

The Armen Oumedian Consecutive Giving Club recognizes donors who have given to the GRCC Foundation each and every year. The club is named in honor of Armen Oumedian, a Grand Rapids Junior College (GRJC) alumnus and one of GRCC's biggest advocates and supporters. He and his family understood the importance of a college education and dedicated significant resources to removing financial barriers for our students.

Armen passed away in 2018, but his legacy lives on through this club. He is also the namesake of the Armen Oumedian Consecutive Giving Award, which is presented annually to a donor who has given consecutively the greatest number of years. The 2025 award recipients are Victoria and Ron Janowiak and Michael and Sherryl Despres, who have given faithfully to GRCC for 36 years!

Every gift makes an impact, and we are so grateful to all of our club members. Your continued support inspires and encourages students to continue their educational journey. Thank you for your loyalty and generosity!

309
CURRENT
MEMBERS


102 FUNDS
SUPPORTED


\$372,000
RAISED IN
2024

46
YEARS
LONGEST
GIVING
STREAK


49 NEW DONORS
JOINED IN 2024

INVESTING IN COMMUNITY



Victoria Janowiak has spent 36 years giving back to GRCC and encourages others to join her in making a community-wide impact. In 2025, Victoria and Ron Janowiak received the Armen Oumedian Consecutive Giving Award in celebration of their 36 years of consecutive giving and faithful support of student scholarships.

Scholarships provide much more than financial support — they empower recipients to pursue their educational goals, build life skills and gain experiences that will benefit them in their future careers. This ripple effect of positive change is something the Janowiaks are proud to support.

Victoria Janowiak’s first connection with Grand Rapids Junior College (GRJC) was during her time as training coordinator for the Ottawa County Department of Employment and Training. She managed Job Training Partnership grants, which supported opportunities for economically disadvantaged and displaced workers from Ottawa and Allegan counties.

“I sponsored several individuals through Junior College Occupational Training programs,” remembers Janowiak. “This gave me a front row seat to the life-changing impact GRJC had in our community.” After a few years of working

closely with GRJC, the college offered Janowiak a job doing similar work in Kent County.

It wasn’t long before Janowiak began supporting student scholarships. Her annual contributions go toward the discretionary scholarship fund, which gives the Foundation the flexibility to apply the funds to the greatest unmet needs. She has also contributed to capital campaigns and special event campaigns.

Janowiak encourages others to give to GRCC. “I know this sounds trite, but a gift to GRCC doesn’t just help individuals — it strengthens the local economy and expands resources. I believe that return on investment contributes to the quality of life for our entire community.”

Over the years, Janowiak has enjoyed getting to know other community donors and hearing their stories of how scholarships make a difference in people’s lives. She had the opportunity to connect with Leslie E. Tassel and his family and learn about their dedication to supporting skilled trades education.

Now Janowiak is GRCC’s executive director for operational planning. She oversees the college’s spaces, making sure they operate effectively and efficiently for students, faculty, staff and the community. She also studies current campus needs, anticipates future use and guides planning efforts to ensure GRCC is always ready for education and community service. In 2022, Janowiak received an Excellence in Education award, which honors employees for their contributions to the college, higher education and the community.

“I’m incredibly proud to be a donor,” says Janowiak. “Change is inevitable, but something that hasn’t changed over the years is GRCC’s commitment to providing all students with opportunities for success. I didn’t attend GRJC, but I wish I would have! I’ve spent more than half my life working here and giving back. It’s been a real blessing.”

FORMER CONSECUTIVE GIVING AWARD WINNERS

- 2020**
Jerry & Jan Benham
- 2021**
Robert Cebelak
Robert Long
- 2022**
Dick & Judy Bezile
- 2024**
Dr. Joe & Sheila Hesse
Frank & Raeni Conner
- 2025**
Michael & Sherryl Despres
Victoria & Ron Janowiak

YOUR LEGACY, THEIR FUTURE

As a GRCC Foundation supporter, you know how meaningful your gifts are to the students you help each year. Did you know you can extend your impact for generations to come by including the GRCC Foundation in your long-term financial plans?

A planned or legacy gift is a donation that will be made at a future date, often through a formal financial or estate plan. In addition to creating a legacy that will last far into the future, planned giving offers two key advantages to donors.

- 1 Donors secure tax benefits for themselves and their heirs.**
Large estates may owe federal taxes. But bequests of cash, real estate or stocks are deducted against the estate’s value, reducing estate taxes for a donor’s heirs.
- 2 Donors determine how their gifts are spent.**
Because a planned gift is part of a legal contract, like a will, the donor can specify how or where they would like their contribution to be spent.

Working with your financial planner to plan a gift to GRCC will help ensure students receive an affordable, high-quality education now and in the future.

MAKE A LASTING IMPACT FOR OUR STUDENTS

The GRCC Foundation can coordinate with you and your professional advisors on a plan to help bring a life-changing education to future students.

BEQUESTS
This is one of the easiest and most flexible ways 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 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 70 ½ 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 advisor 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 INFO:**
grcc.edu/PlannedGiving



UNITED THROUGH GIVING

Classmates and colleagues established the **David M. Schieber Memorial Scholarship** to give Sparta High School students an affordable head start to college.

A community working together toward a common goal can make an impact that empowers and uplifts people for generations. This is exactly what Sparta High School graduates hoped to do when they began discussing a way to give back to their hometown and honor classmate David Schieber, who passed away from cancer in 2009. The group who organized the scholarship included some of Schieber's closest friends: Dwight Anderson, Tom Badgerow, Lee McFall and Scott Siegel.

Schieber graduated from Sparta High School in 1970. He was well liked and admired by classmates for his unique sense of humor and ability to relate to everyone. After high school, Schieber enrolled at Grand Rapids Junior College (GRJC) and later transferred to and graduated from the University of Michigan. Although Schieber often took time off to earn tuition money, he eventually graduated from Cleveland State University College of Law.

Schieber became one of Kent County's lead prosecutors, winning many newsworthy cases over 28 years. He was extremely skilled in the courtroom, and prosecuting attorneys from around the country came to observe his trials. He was well respected by his peers, defense attorneys and judges, and remembered for his fairness and compassion. In addition to his work in the courtroom, Schieber taught a law class at GRCC for students pursuing a degree in criminal justice. He was well liked by the students and highly regarded by faculty members.

We decided to give back to our hometown and create a scholarship fund for deserving students to start their education at Grand Rapids Community College," said Dwight Anderson. "Like Dave, many

area families struggle to afford a higher education. For some young people, this scholarship might make the difference as to whether college is even a possibility.

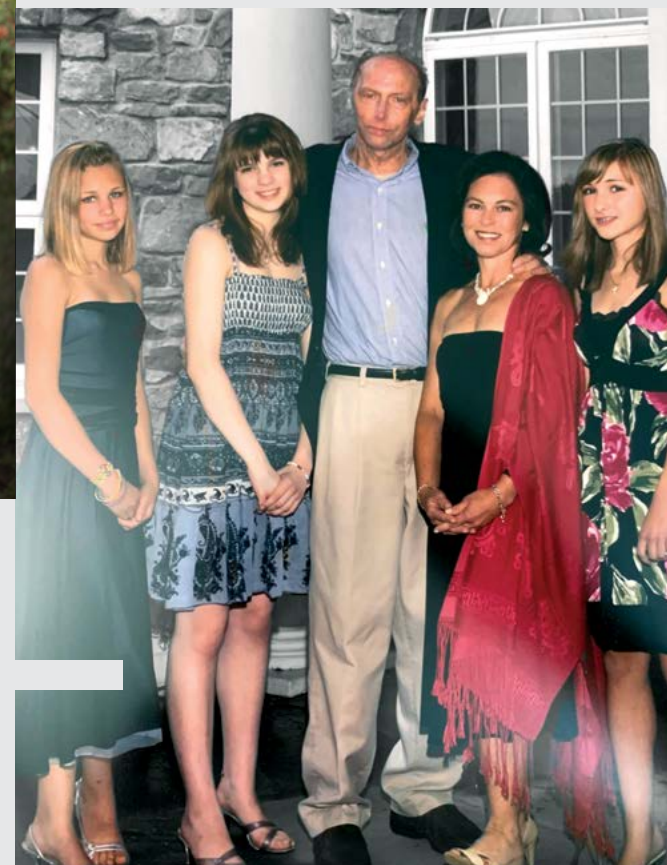
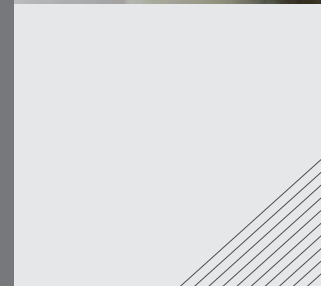
Schieber's classmates reached out to the Grand Rapids Bar Association, the Michigan Bar Association, Sparta community and business leaders, teachers and administrators from Sparta High School and faculty from GRCC to raise money for the scholarship. Dave's wife, Anne Schieber, was instrumental in helping the committee with their fundraising efforts and made several key connections within the community. After five years of dedicated effort, they awarded the first scholarship in June of 2020 to Mary Palethorpe. The scholarship was endowed in 2021, ensuring financial support for Sparta students for many years to come.

While this is a memorial to an outstanding individual and friend, it is, just as importantly, our chance to give something back to our hometown, said Anderson. "When you donate to the GRCC Foundation, you are lifting a financial burden off of students and promoting their success. Your financial support is a blessing and truly is the gift of success.

"Like Dave, many area families struggle to afford a higher education. For some young people, this scholarship might make the difference as to whether college is even a possibility."



GRJC Alumni David Schieber



KEEPING MY HEAD HIGH



I believe that with hard work and dedication, I can achieve my goals and break stereotypes in the auto industry. It's important to me to show others that women can excel in traditionally male dominated fields. I hope to be a role model for future generations and encourage them to pursue their passions.

A technology scholarship helped Anissa Khounsaknalath find the confidence to pursue her dreams. Now she's on a mission to break stereotypes in the automotive industry.

Deciding to attend college can come with a lot of uncertainty, especially around tuition and choosing a career path. Many times, a scholarship is that extra boost a student needs to feel confident in their future.

Between tuition rates and the cost of living away from home, Khounsaknalath was hesitant to continue her education. She decided to give GRCC a shot because the Lakeshore Campus is close by and the tuition rates are more affordable, especially with a scholarship from the GRCC Foundation.

"I chose GRCC because it's one of the most affordable schools," said Khounsaknalath. "Here I have opportunities for technical training and the option to earn certificates or degrees in my desired trade. And since it's local, I'm able to stay home while earning my degree, which also saves me money in the long run."

Khounsaknalath received a Technology Scholarship, which is awarded to a freshman or sophomore full-time student majoring in a technical field. She is currently pursuing her associate of applied arts and science in automotive technology and has plans to become a master technician. She's also determined to make a name for herself in a field where only 3.2% of automotive mechanics and technicians are women, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

"My goal after college is to gain as much experience as possible and become one of the top technicians in the shop," she said. "I want to become a well-known and loved female tech. I want others to know that women can excel in traditionally male-dominated fields, and I hope to be a role model for future generations."

Not only did a scholarship relieve the financial burden of attending college, but it also helped Khounsaknalath gain the confidence to pursue her trade. Knowing there are people who are willing to help students achieve their goals is an inspiration to Khounsaknalath and other students like her.

"This scholarship is an important reminder that I am not alone in my journey, and it has helped me keep my head up high. To the GRCC donors who've chosen to support my education, thank you for making me feel appreciated and making my dreams more accessible. Every bit of support I receive means so much and motivates me to work even harder towards earning my associate degree at GRCC!"



Highlights of events like **Creating Connections** are available on the **GRCC YouTube channel**. Hear how scholarships are making a difference for these students and more by visiting youtube.com/GRCC and searching for "Creating Connections 2025."

GIVING IN ACTION

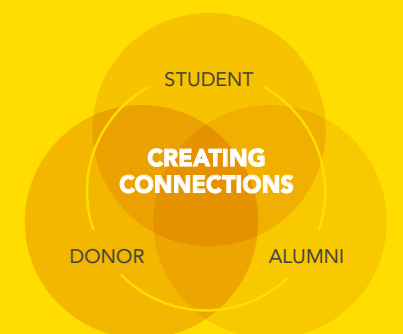
CREATING CONNECTIONS BREAKFAST CELEBRATES THE CYCLE OF GIVING

The annual Creating Connections Breakfast is a special event that highlights the full journey of a scholarship's impact. Students meet donors who made their scholarships possible, and donors see firsthand how their gifts help students achieve their dreams.

At the 16th annual event in March, guests received a warm welcome from the Vice President for College Advancement and Executive Director of the GRCC Foundation, Erin Van Egmond, and Interim President Lisa Freiburger. Next, guests watched a video tribute to Loyd Winer, a distinguished Grand Rapids Junior College (GRJC) alumnus who embodied the cycle of giving. His legacy of generosity and his family's dedication to education continue to inspire and empower students through the Loyd and Suzanne Winer Scholarship Fund, which focuses on students in STEM fields. The video also featured interviews with Winer's sons, Greg and Tom, and scholarship recipient Tara Mushonga, who is studying to become a neurosurgeon.

Students Mark Frens and Andrea Infante also shared how scholarships created opportunities to succeed. Frens spoke about how GRCC gave him a second chance at college and a future nursing career. Infante shared stories of her parents and how their sacrifice and dedication motivated her to pursue a degree in business with a goal of becoming a librarian. For both Frens and Infante, GRCC scholarships have helped make their dreams possible.

Their stories, along with those of hundreds of other donors and scholarship recipients, highlight how our community of generous donors and amazing students creates a lasting impact.



BUILDING CHARACTER ON AND OFF THE FIELD

Detroit Lions offensive coordinator John Morton says his time at GRCC helped him positively impact others through the game of football.

Educational experiences play a pivotal role in shaping character — whether learning to solve equations in the classroom or running footwork and ball handling drills on the football field. This is especially true for John Morton, whose community college experience left a lasting impact on his values and purpose.

John Morton grew up in Rochester Hills, Michigan and attended Avondale High School, where he played football as a wide receiver. In 1989, he attended what was then Grand Rapids Junior College (GRJC), where coaches described Morton as a “lightning-quick” wide receiver. During the 1989 season, Morton demonstrated precision, agility and competitiveness.

“My collegiate career began at Grand Rapids Community College,” said Morton, “And I will always cherish and appreciate the deposits made in me from that time. As it has for so many, including myself, my stint at GRCC taught me invaluable lessons about having a relentless drive, perseverance and a competitive spirit.”

After GRJC, Morton transferred to Western Michigan University (WMU). In his two seasons at WMU, he caught 78 passes for 1,278 yards and seven touchdowns. After WMU, Morton played on various NFL practice squads, including the Raiders, Packers and Jaguars, and internationally with the Toronto Argonauts and Frankfurt Galaxy of the World League.

Morton began his career in 1997 in the Oakland Raiders personnel department before stepping into his role as offensive assistant in 1998. Over the next two decades he worked with a variety of teams including as the New Orleans Saints’ passing game coordinator (2006), the San Francisco 49ers’ wide receiver/passing game coach (2011-2014), Saints’ wide receivers coach (2015-2016), New York Jets’ offensive coordinator (2017), Raiders’ senior offensive assistant (2019-2021), Detroit Lions’ senior offensive assistant (2022) and Broncos’ passing game coordinator (2023-2024).

In 2025, Morton returned to the Detroit Lions as an offensive coordinator. He and coach Dan Campbell hope to build on the success of the 2024 season, which set franchise records for yards, points and touchdowns.

Morton’s collegiate and NFL experience have helped him develop a coaching style that focuses on building relationships with players, creating connections between coaches and players and teaching wideouts to see the big picture of every game.

“My two years of being a part of the GRCC program and community served as a foundation in not only shaping me for a football career, but in molding the character I would discover I needed to positively impact others through the game of football and life.”

Photo courtesy of the Detroit Lions

JOHN MORTON 1989 GRJC SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

SEPT
16

TWO TOUCHDOWN
CATCHES OF 67
AND 24 YARDS

SEPT
23

**SET UP A
TOUCHDOWN**
WITH A 38-YARD
DIVING CATCH

OCT
8

**SCORED ON A
14-YARD TOUCHDOWN**
CATCH AND HAD A TOTAL
OF SEVEN CATCHES FOR
119 YARDS

OCT
21

THREE CATCHES
FOR 21 YARDS

OCT
28

THREE CATCHES
FOR 45 YARDS

SCHOLARFEST CELEBRATES LIFE-CHANGING IMPACT OF SCHOLARSHIPS



Scholarfest 2025 highlighted the incredible journeys of GRCC students and the ways scholarships have helped shape their futures.

Scholarships remain critical to the success of our students. For many, receiving a scholarship is the difference between attending and not attending school. Scholarfest guests gathered to celebrate the dedication and resilience of GRCC students and to raise money in support of future students.

The evening started with a warm welcome from the Vice President for College Advancement and Executive Director of the GRCC Foundation, Erin Van Egmond. Guests enjoyed a meal prepared and served by Amway alongside music provided by the GRCC Flute Ensemble.

After dinner, Interim President Lisa Freiburger spoke about how education can be a turning point in someone’s life and that scholarships provide more than just financial support. “Your generosity sends a message to our students that they matter,” said Freiburger. “Students feel seen and know that someone believes in them. That kind of belief builds confidence, fuels ambition and helps students reach heights they never thought possible.”

Guests watched a special video highlighting the journey of Natalie Alvarado, a first-generation college student who

“Education truly has the power to change lives. Through your generosity, you’re helping to make those life-changing opportunities possible.”

found a community that supported and encouraged her educational dreams. “Every little bit makes a difference,” said Alvarado. “Without scholarships, my journey would have seemed impossible.”

Judge Sara Smolenski facilitated the paddle raise portion of the evening. Within the first few minutes, guests raised \$10,000, which included a generous pledge from an anonymous donor. By the end of the evening, more

than \$85,000 was raised for student scholarships. Kristine Babcock, GRCC Foundation board chair, closed out the evening. “Education truly has the power to change lives. Through your generosity, you’re helping to make those life-changing opportunities possible.”

IT DOESN’T MATTER THE AMOUNT. EVERYTHING COUNTS.

Being a first-generation college student can come with a lot of adversity. GRCC alumna, Natalie Alvarado, says her journey would have been much more difficult without help from scholarships.

Alvarado was born in Costa Rica and came to the U.S. when she was 10 years old. “When you’re the first person in your family to go to college, it’s hard to know which resources are out there,” she said. “There are many things that made me choose GRCC. Affordability is one reason. And everyone here is wonderful!”

In 2019, Alvarado completed her associate degree in criminal justice and returned to pursue a second degree in business in 2023. She participated in the Honors Program and made the Dean’s List and President’s List, which celebrate students who achieve a 3.5 and 4.0 term GPA, respectively. Alvarado works on campus as a peer mentor and plans to transfer to Davenport to pursue her dream of becoming an entrepreneur.

“I want to give my son the example that anything is possible,” said Alvarado. “Ten or 15 years ago, completing my degree would have seemed impossible. You can definitely reach your dreams, and for me, GRCC was the first step. It doesn’t matter the amount of a scholarship. Everything counts.”



ALUMNI HAPPENINGS



Culinary Alumnus Features German Cuisine During Fundraiser

Chef Darrick Carter, a Secchia Institute for Culinary Education graduate, shared his culinary talents and inspired students during a special fundraising event. Current culinary students, led by Chef Carter, Professor Bob Schultz and Associate Professor Holly VanRyn, prepared and served this unique lunch that featured traditional and modern German cuisine.

The menu included a starter of beef consommé and tartare, an in between course of trout fillet with pickled mustard and a main course of beef shoulder rouladen with potato puree and root vegetable truffle foam.

Known for his expertise in fine dining and leadership in top-tier culinary settings, Chef Carter has built an impressive career working in Michelin starred restaurants such as Gourmetrestaurant Dieter Müller and Restaurant Schöte. He has also held executive roles at prestigious hotels like the Intercontinental Cologne and Wasserturm Lucy’s Hotel.

The fundraising event at GRCC’s Heritage Restaurant brought together alumni and supporters of the Secchia Institute. Proceeds support the Stage Alumni Scholarship, a program that offers former Secchia Institute students opportunities to advance their education and expertise. This scholarship also enables past graduates to return to GRCC and provide current students with inspiration and mentorship from accomplished professionals like Chef Carter.

Alumni Enjoy VIP Perks During Homecoming

Homecoming week celebrates GRCC alumni, students and staff with special activities and opportunities to connect. Homecoming 2024 kicked off with a lunch with college leadership, followed by an office decorating contest for staff, a game day at the Lakeshore Campus, a happy hour for GRCC retirees and a bouquet making workshop. A Homecoming Dance open to all students closed out the festivities.

Tuesday afternoon, alumni and students cheered on the men's and women's soccer teams and were treated to hot chocolate and soccer scarves. Before Thursday's volleyball game, alumni enjoyed a special VIP room where they reconnected with old classmates and enjoyed snacks. All proceeds from the volleyball game supported Gilda's Club Grand Rapids, which provides free emotional healthcare for anyone on any kind of cancer journey.

First Annual Giving Day Supports Scholarships and Essential Needs

New to Homecoming week was our first annual Giving Day. During this 24-hour online fundraising event, faculty, staff, alumni and friends of GRCC united to make a lasting impact in the lives of students.

The money raised directly supported three vital initiatives.

Scholarship Support: Alleviating financial barriers for students.

Emergency Grant Assistance: Providing urgent help for students in crisis.

Food Pantry Resources: Ensuring our GRCC food pantry is well stocked and ready to support students in need.

"I'm happy to donate because I see the continued need among our students," said Nancy Forrest, who taught at GRCC for 35 years. "Many students work more than one job, balancing families and other challenges all at the same time. I admire them for trying to build the best lives that they can."

Thank you to everyone who contributed and for rallying to support our students. Together, we're helping meet essential needs and open doors to incredible educational opportunities.

Alumni and Employees Get In the Game

GRCC alumni, employees and their guests joined us for a fun-filled evening at the ballpark as the West Michigan Whitecaps took on the Dayton Dragons.

The GRCC Foundation and alumni welcomed attendees in a tent just outside the ballpark gates. Guests had the chance to spin a wheel and win GRCC swag.

Inside the ballpark, attendees enjoyed box seat tickets and classic ballpark food as they cheered on the Whitecaps. It was the perfect summer evening to reconnect and celebrate our GRCC community!

Club Members Celebrate 20 Years of Giving With VIP Luncheon

The GRCC Foundation hosted a special luncheon to acknowledge and express our gratitude to donors who have been members of the Armen Oumedian Consecutive Giving Club for over 20 years. The consistent generosity of our donors has been instrumental in transforming the lives of our students and enabling them to achieve their educational goals.

Guests were welcomed, and the importance of donor contributions and the difference a scholarship can make in a student's life was emphasized. Professor Sasha Ahmed introduced the talented students from the Secchia Institute for Culinary Education, who prepared and served the meal. Donors also heard from students Natalie Snyder and Jonathan Zamudio, who shared personal stories of how scholarships have impacted their educational journeys.

Thank you to our 21 donors who attended this unique and memorable event. Your support helps ensure the continued success of our students and our community.



FIND MORE ALUMNI INFO
at grcc.edu/Alumni



sharing our stories

Each scholarship tells a story — financial barriers removed, confidence boosted, dreams made possible. Sharing these stories enriches our community by fostering empathy and promoting a deeper understanding of diverse backgrounds and perspectives.



Ryan Butkus
Alumnus
Project Launch Manager, NN Inc.
“GRCC is a place to develop your skills and discover your path. I learned the value of hard work, patience and time management, which prepared me for life and my current career.”



Dr. Sommer Jabbar-Pearson
Alumna
Director of Advancement, AYA Youth Collective
“I learned so many lessons at GRCC, and I would not be where I am today without my time there. I created a tribe of people who supported me and inspired me to continue my education.”



Kevin Nauta
Alumnus
Letter Carrier, USPS
“I will never forget the fact that I was blessed with full scholarships from GRJC that made it possible for me to go to college. Giving what I can to GRCC is something I can do to make the world a better place.”



Misti Stanton
Alumna
Talent and Culture Officer, Mercantile Bank
“GRCC provided the first foundation that launched me into my professional career. From my time on the volleyball team to the classroom, I learned a lot about my voice, my skills and my place in the workforce.”



Elijah Maas
Current Student and Athlete
GRCC Foundation Scholarship
“I’m so thankful to be able to call myself a Raider, attend school near my hometown, further my career in nursing and start my future debt-free. This scholarship pushes me to do my best in the classroom and on the field.”



Nancy Clouse
GRCC Retiree
Established the Roger W. Clouse Scholarship
“My husband was a proud GRJC alumnus and U.S. Veteran. He valued his community college experience and felt his best college years were the two he spent at GRJC. I created a scholarship to honor his memory and support students who are veterans.”



David Alvarez
Current Student, Culinary Arts
GRCC Foundation Scholarship
“My goal is to become a chef and serve my community. I am a Marine Corps Infantry Combat Veteran, and it means the world to me that people out there believe in me enough to take a chance on investing in my education.”



Kiana Vu
Current Student
GRCC Foundation Scholarship
“I’m extremely thankful to the generous donors who provided this scholarship. It lessens the stress and worry of not being able to afford tuition, textbooks and other college-related expenses. Thank you for contributing to my future so I can contribute my skills to others.”



Joseph Bugingo
Current Student
GRCC Foundation Scholarship
“Thank you for this life-changing scholarship. As a first-generation student, I’ve faced unique challenges, but this award reaffirms my potential. I’m committed to making the most of this opportunity and inspiring others to pursue higher education. Your support will have a lasting impact on my family and community.”



Sulema Kiekintveld
Alumna
National Sales Manager, Experience Grand Rapids
“The courses at GRCC have a lot of variety, which was helpful for me since I wasn’t sure which route was right for me. I found my niche after taking hospitality planning and catering classes. GRCC gave me room to explore my options and learn more about a career that could work for me.”

SCHOLARSHIPS

New scholarship for 2024-25

Bradley Swartz
Culinary Scholarship

Newly endowed scholarships for 2024-25

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.

1

M. Alten Gilleo
Memorial Scholarship

2

Angela Zainea Salinas
Memorial Scholarship

3

Secchia Scholar
Internship Grant



NEW SCHOLARSHIP HELPS STUDENTS IMPACTED BY CANCER

The newly endowed Angela Zainea Salinas Memorial Scholarship honors a dedicated GRCC employee known for her creativity, kindness and commitment to building community. Established by Angela’s husband, Mo, this scholarship will be awarded to students who have been impacted by cancer, either personally or through a family member or friend.

Angela Salinas graduated from Western Michigan University in 2003 with a bachelor’s degree in organizational communication and Spanish. She wanted to find a position where she could use her Spanish skills and began working at GRCC as an English as a second language (ESL) enrollment specialist. In 2007, she joined the admissions team, where she worked with high school and international students.

In 2018, Salinas became GRCC’s coordinator of employee events, engagement and onboarding. She excelled at welcoming new hires to our community and celebrated all employees with kindness and enthusiasm. “When new folks come in, my goal is to give them a sense of connection and belonging,” Salinas said during a 2023 episode of the GRCC Voices podcast. “I welcome new people with open arms because they are going to make our community even better.”

After receiving a cancer diagnosis in 2020, Salinas continued to be a light and positive force on campus. “I can’t even begin to tell you the amount of support, encouragement and love I got from my GRCC family,” she said. “It was truly amazing. It was everything I needed at that time and is something I hope other people can experience in times of need.”

After Angela passed away in 2024, Mo Salinas contacted the college about setting up a scholarship in her honor. Donations began pouring in to honor this beloved member of GRCC and the scholarship was endowed within a few months. The generosity of family, friends, and colleagues ensures Angela Salinas’ legacy of kindness and support lives on and will continue to make a positive impact for years to come.

ArtPrize Open House Highlights Local Artists

For ArtPrize 2024, GRCC hosted six entries in the Paul Collins Art Gallery. We invited GRCC staff, faculty, alumni, donors and board members to an open house to hear from each of the artists about their pieces. The pieces included digital paintings, video, oil on canvas and 3D printed sculpture. Through their art, the artists prompted conversations around data and privacy protections in digital spaces, long-term social impacts of screen addiction, family ancestry and mental health challenges.



TORN
by Daniel Sundahl

Sundahl began creating art as a way to process post-traumatic stress disorder. He wants this piece to show people that hope and peer support can conquer the ultimate hopelessness that drives people to suicide.

Sundahl's piece is a digital artwork based on a photo he took in Las Vegas of a flight paramedic.



10,000 FOLLOWERS
by Erin Reinholtz

This exhibit asks the viewer to reflect on the consequences of social media on human interaction. Reinholtz chose to focus on the eyes in her portraits to spark a dialogue about how we connect with others.

Reinholtz's piece is a series of five large portraits drawn in charcoal and oil.



THE PROMISED LAND
by Andrew Caldwell

Inspired by his ancestry, Caldwell's exhibit is a way to imagine and create scenes that reflect what his family might have experienced throughout history. Caldwell is an assistant professor of photography at GRCC.

Caldwell's piece began with images from an old family album and images taken during trips to places his ancestors lived. The scenes are created through Photoshop and AI.



More on ArtPrize at GRCC
grcc.edu/ArtPrize



Alumna Celebrates Culture and Creativity with Bilingual Children’s Book

Irma Hersel’s debut children’s book, “Where Nopalitos Grow,” uses the power of storytelling to honor her Mexican heritage and community. Hersel attended GRCC in 2000, where she took a journalism class, worked on the Collegiate, GRCC’s student-run newspaper, and joined a Hispanic student group.

Hersel continued her education with a bachelor’s in communication from Ferris State University and a master of business administration from California Lutheran University. Most of her professional career has been in healthcare talent management, where she combines creativity with strategy to help people and organizations succeed.

Inspired by visits to her grandmother’s village in Mexico and a desire to uplift others, Hersel began working on a children’s book that teaches valuable lessons about family, heritage and the power of dreams. “Where Nopalitos Grow,” which she wrote and illustrated, debuted in 2024. It received enthusiastic reviews and was named a 2024 Best Book Awards Finalist by American Book Fest.

The story follows Roberto, a curious boy who embarks on a mesmerizing adventure through the vibrant landscapes of Mexico in his dreams. Filled with colorful illustrations and captivating storytelling, the story invites readers of all ages to explore the rich traditions of Mexico and discover the joy of dreaming.

Hersel says GRCC supported and encouraged her during a pivotal time. “GRCC gave me the foundation to express myself, connect with others and believe in my ability to make an impact. It gave me both confidence and community.”

Visit irmawrites.com to learn more about Hersel and her work. Look for her bilingual children’s book, “Where Nopalitos Grow,” at Amazon, Etsy, Target and Walmart.

WAYS TO GIVE

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

Visit grcc.edu/Foundation 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



GRCC ALUMNI OWNED BUSINESSES



Art & Textiles

American Etching LLC
Andrew J Schmidt Photography
Emily Luyk Illustration & Fine Art
Flashback on Leonard
GarenHuis Yarn Studio
Morgan Jean Photography
RC Caylan Atelier
The Color Forest



Business Services

Budget Queen Tax and Financial Services
Custer Inc
Fresh Coast Signs
KAZAP Accessibility Associates
Mixed Staffing & Recruiting
Pytha USA, LLC
Richardson Business Solutions
TACT Marketing & Strategy



Personal Services

Association of the Blind and Visually Impaired
E3 Coaching Studio
GR Task Master LLC
Grand Haven Therapeutic Massage
Julie Schillim Counseling
Music Studio of Karen A. Betz-Griewahn
Pathways To The Sacred/ Sacred Steam GR
The Space



Mechanical & Electrical Services

Control Solutions Inc
Gas Pedal Customs
VanKempen Electric



Food & Drink

Airborne Burritos
Archival Brewing
Black Calder Brewing Company
Carolina Low Country
Casa De Los Abuelos GR
City Built Brewing Company
Decadent Desserts by Donna
El Caribe
Everplay Cafe
Four Chefs
Holland Cakery ‘n’ Sweets
I Could Cook That
Ice Box Brand
Meyers Hometown Bakery
Monica’s Cookies
Palermo Pizza
Patty Matters
Pressed In Time
Refined Personal Chef Services
Social Arts
Sweetwaters Coffee & Tea
The Ginger Chef
YoChef’s Mobile Gourmet

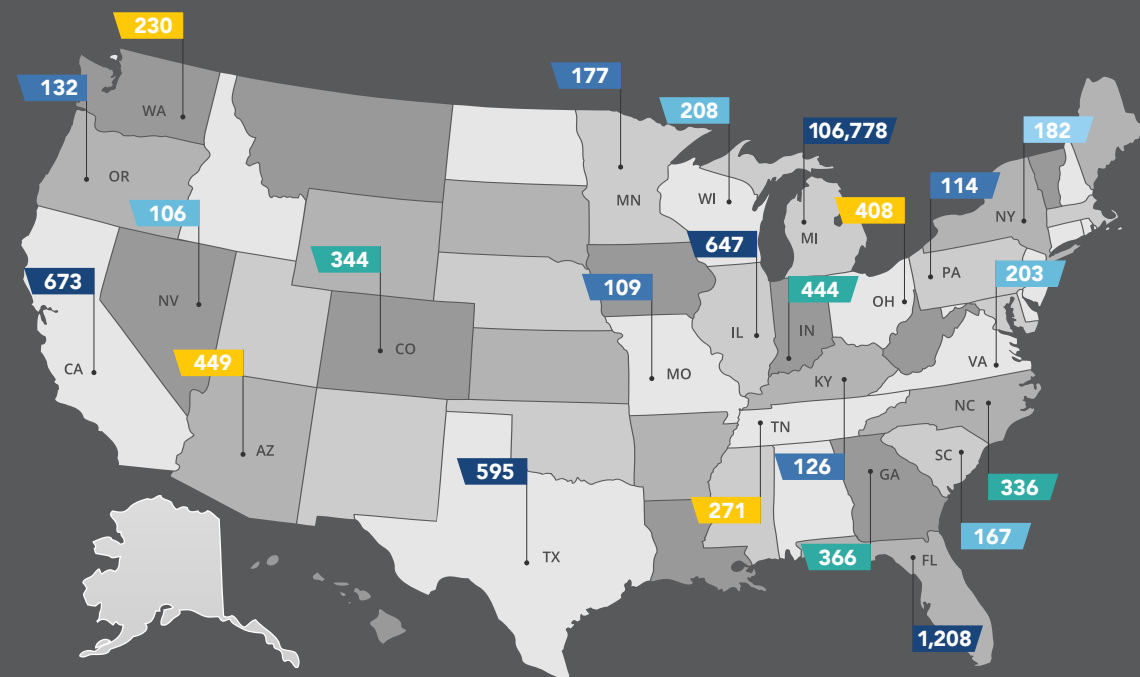


RAIDERS SUPPORTING RAIDERS

Food trucks, career coaching, music lessons — so many GRCC alumni are pursuing their dreams of owning a business.

We support them and you can too. Head to grcc.edu/Alumni and you’ll see a menu link to alumni-owned businesses. There, you’ll find a directory highlighting the extraordinary accomplishments of GRCC alumni business owners. Use the link on the page to add your own business to the list so that we can support you, too.

GRCC.EDU/ALUMNI



WHERE ARE GRCC ALUMNI?

There are over 115,000 GRCC alumni worldwide. Check out the map to see the top states where GRCC alumni are throughout the United States. While most reside in Michigan, did you know that Florida has the second highest number of GRCC alumni?

STAYING CONNECTED

No matter where you are, you can stay updated with the latest news by following us on social media.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Help us ensure all our GRCC and GRJC alumni stay informed about the latest news and events! Simply visit grcc.edu/Alumni, click on "update your contact information" and tell us how you want to hear from us.



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Meet Chef Darrin Mayweather, 2025 Young Alumni Award Winner



he applied to the Secchia Institute for Culinary Education at GRCC. After graduating with an associate degree and a personal chef certification, Mayweather earned a bachelor's degree in hospitality management from Ferris State University.

In 2019, he and fellow GRCC alumnus Chris Sampson founded Social Arts LLC, a full-service catering and private chef business. Mayweather returned to GRCC in 2022 as an adjunct instructor in the culinary program. His classes are spaces where students can show up as their authentic selves and learn what to expect working in the culinary industry.

When he's not in the kitchen or teaching, Mayweather is busy giving back to his community through his work with organizations like the Boys and Girls Club and Bethany Christian Services.

"I've seen people of all walks of life growing up in the inner city," said Mayweather. "Whether you are below poverty or a billionaire, everybody is exactly the same to me. I choose to pour into local Black food entrepreneurs. I want to feed the less fortunate without expectation for anything in return. Wanting to be with and serve people is who I am at heart."

The Young Alumni award recognizes graduates under 40 for their remarkable accomplishments in their professions, civic engagement and service to GRCC and the community. Mayweather is a living example of these values, showcasing an unmatched work ethic, a servant-leader mentality and a humble approach to his success.

Mayweather was born and raised in the inner city of Grand Rapids. Wanting to build a better life for his family,



A special interview with Chef Darrin Mayweather is available on the GRCC YouTube channel. Visit youtube.com/GRCC and search for "Darrin Mayweather."

NOMINATE AN ALUMNI!

Do you know a GRCC alumni who deserves to be recognized for their dedicated service and incredible contributions to our community? We're looking for nominations for the 2026 Distinguished Alumni Award and Young Alumni Award.

The Distinguished Alumni Award recognizes alumni for their career achievements, public service and dedication to the college. It is the highest honor bestowed upon former GRCJ and GRCC students.

The Young Alumni Award recognizes graduates who are 40 or younger for their community and civic contributions, service in support of GRCC and exceptional accomplishments in their profession.

To nominate someone, go to grcc.edu/AlumniAwards, where you'll find links to both applications. Nominations are accepted all year long and the winners are announced in January.

For a paper copy of the applications, contact the Foundation at foundation@grcc.edu.

From the Foundation Executive Director



Thank you for your support. It is especially encouraging during a time of change in the higher education landscape. What hasn't changed is the importance of scholarships and the impact they have on our students and our community.

Many of you have likely heard about "free" community college tuition in our state. You may be wondering, do scholarships still matter?

The answer is simply: yes. Scholarships are critically important for our students.

We are grateful that the state has recognized the need for students to have more access to higher education and that a community college is the best place to provide it. We also know that tuition programs like Michigan Reconnect and the Michigan Community College Guarantee have limitations — they only cover tuition, and not all students are eligible.

This is where the GRCC Foundation can make a difference. Our team is here to connect the community and the college and make sure every donation goes toward removing

financial barriers for our students. A Foundation Scholarship can be the reason a student can afford to buy textbooks. It can mean not having to work a second job. It can be the extra boost of confidence a student needs to continue pursuing their dreams.

Our team works diligently throughout the year to ensure the best possible outcomes for our students and the college. We connect students with life-changing scholarships, work with donors on opportunities to give back and help alumni stay engaged with our wonderful and supportive Raider community. These threads of connection between students, donors and alumni come full circle to create a lasting impact.

I am deeply grateful for this team and to be a part of this incredible community where dreams come true every day. I hope you will join me in celebrating our students and looking ahead to all the lives we have yet to impact together.

With appreciation,

Erin Van Egmond

Erin Van Egmond
Vice President of College Advancement and
Executive Director of the GRCC Foundation

Meet Erin Van Egmond

Van Egmond has dedicated her career to supporting students and has been a vital part of the GRCC community since 1998, starting as a student worker in the Financial Aid Office and becoming the Foundation's associate director in 2015 and the vice president for college advancement in 2024. She accepted the position of executive director in 2023.

MEET THE FOUNDATION TEAM

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



Mary Reed
Associate Director

A GRCC alumna, Reed started in the Financial Aid Office in 2002 and joined the Foundation in 2011 as donor relations coordinator. She became the stewardship and events manager in 2015 and stepped into her current role in 2024 where she continues to support student success.



Riley Brooket
Scholarship and Event Coordinator

Joining the Foundation in 2022, Brooket adeptly coordinates the scholarship application processes and manages communications with recipients and stakeholders. Her previous experience includes Jackson College, Grand Valley State University, and WGVU.



Becca Rogers
Database Coordinator

Rogers joined GRCC in February 2023 as the Foundation's administrative assistant and was promoted to database coordinator a few months later. She previously worked with a variety of nonprofits, including Family Futures, Equity PAC and Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan.



WELCOME
Anne Momany
Executive Assistant

Joining the team in September 2023, Momany brings extensive experience in managing logistics, scheduling, tracking expenses and providing high-level administration support to executives and board members.



Erin Muehlenkamp-Threat
Senior Development Officer

An experienced nonprofit professional, Muehlenkamp-Threat has a proven track record of driving sustainable growth and advancing mission-driven goals. She joined the Foundation's team in March of 2025.

FOUNDATION STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS (as of June 30)	2025	2024
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 3,571,355	\$ 2,227,608
Contributions receivable — net of allowance for uncollectible pledges of \$0 at June 30, 2025 and \$250 June 30, 2024	\$ 109,223	\$ 266,669
Accrued interest receivable	\$ 107,311	\$ 122,316
Investments	\$ 41,865,128	\$ 39,287,201
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 45,653,017	\$ 41,903,794

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS (as of June 30)		
LIABILITIES:		
Scholarships payable	\$ 10,400	\$ 454,732
Accounts payable	\$ 270,542	\$ 252,609
Grants payable	\$ -	\$ -
Funds held on behalf of others	\$ 1,676,711	\$ 1,543,283
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$ 1,957,653	\$ 2,250,624
NET ASSETS:		
Without donor restrictions	\$ 11,503,547	\$ 10,378,034
With donor restrictions	\$ 32,191,817	\$ 29,275,136
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$ 43,695,364	\$ 39,653,170
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$ 45,653,017	\$ 41,903,794

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
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WHY NOT GO GREEN?

You can receive future GRCC Foundation annual reports online with the same inspiring stories of our students, alumni and community. If you want to “go green” and receive the electronic version next year, please visit our website below to update your communication preferences.

[GRCC.EDU/CONTACTUPDATE](https://grcc.edu/contactupdate)

GRAND RAPIDS
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