Francie Riddle '00 - From Boat Builder to College Art Professor

In retrospect, Francie Riddle wishes her high school guidance office hadn't focused only on 4-year colleges as her next step after graduating from Northampton High School in 1995. She quickly learned that she was not college ready and her brief semester at one of the Five Colleges resulted in a decision to move to Maine to attend boot building school. An outcome she is now glad about, because she credits the experience for both her strong work ethic and sense of the possibility of art.

It was that experience, along with her love for people who were living the life she wanted to lead, that led to her "aha moment" of knowing that she wanted to be an art teacher – a field that combines both her parents' vocations, as Mom was an elementary school teacher and Dad is an art preparator for museums. She made the decision to enroll at GCC and is clear that she could not have been happier with what followed, noting that the professors were enthusiastic, inspirational and encouraging. "I looked at the GCC Art faculty as people who were living the life I wanted, teaching Art at a community college," said Riddle. The die was cast and she began the journey that would bring her to serving as Continued on page 4

Greater Amherst Areas, Local Business Leaders, and GCC's wonderful Legislative Delegation - in service to students, the College and community

• Fundraised, along with the GCC Foundation Board of Directors and staff, over $14 million in support of programs and students at GCC. Continued on page 6

 GCC President Bob Pura to Retire in June

That, along with his humor and community-minded spirit, will be missed. The accomplishments over his 18 years of leadership are too many to list, but a few examples that demonstrate his commitment to student success and the College's reach into the community follow:

• Worked toward a sustainable future with a Silver LEED certified main campus building renovation and the development of the Renewable Energy/Energy Efficiency and Sustainable Agriculture academic programs;

• Developed deep and lasting collaborations between GCC and the community - with Franklin/Lungmore K-12 schools, Western MA colleges, the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, Community Action of Pioneer Valley, the Regional Employment Board, Franklin County Community Development Corporation, Franklin County Opioid Task Force, Franklin County House of Corrections, Chambers of Commerce for Franklin County, Greater Northampton and

Western Mass Higher Education Legislative Forum

In March, GCC was well represented at the Western Mass Higher Education Legislative Forum held at Westfield State College, where the public higher education community was given the opportunity to meet with the entire legislative delegation for the region and present the case for adequate funding in the FY19 state budget to support the collective work for student success at the institutions of higher education.

Shop AmazonSmile

Did you know that you can enjoy your purchases and know you are helping GCC students? AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support GCC students every time you shop, at no cost to you. AmazonSmile donates 5% of all of your purchases to support programs and services for GCC students when you select the Greenfield Community College Foundation Inc as your charity of choice?

It's easy to help: go to www.smile.amazon.com and use your usual Amazon login information. All of the millions of products eligible for charitable donation credits carry the AmazonSmile logo.

The AmazonSmile donations will help GCC students with support services designed to help them stay in college and succeed!

Please sign in to AmazonSmile for your next purchase and help change lives at GCC while you shop...

The Catalyst

A Newsletter for Alumni, Parents, and Friends of Greenfield Community College and the GCC Foundation

GCC Foundation
270 Main Street
Greenfield, MA 01301-3272
www.gcc.mass.edu/foundation

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From the President

The relationship between state allocation and student costs in public higher education is crystal clear. As state allocations decrease, costs to students increase. According to the "2018 State Higher Education Executive Officers Association's Annual State Higher Education Finance Report," that relationship has now passed a "milestone." Students are paying more (a greater percentage) for public higher education than ever before. In 2001, students paid approximately 30% of the costs for attending a State College here in Massachusetts, today it is above 50%.

There is no doubt that the collegiate path is not the best path for all. And we need to do a better job of creating opportunities for good jobs at good wages for those who don't. That said, it is increasingly clear that a high school diploma is no longer the entry into the workforce that it once was. Because of the changes in society, 12 years is just not enough time to prepare for the complexities of today's world. A college education can bring enormous benefits, including less unemployment, higher wages, better long-term health and higher life satisfaction.

The binary nature of our nation is both the creation and product of a binary economy. Education, which has historically been this nation's engine for economic and social mobility, has become binary as the economy. As costs rise, access and completion become more challenging for larger numbers of students. Debt load, part-time attendance (which is now 70% at GCC), and the nation's graduation gap have grown as costs to students have grown.

Education has seemingly become more of a harness of the binary economy than an engine for democracy. Changing the downward spiral of poverty into a widening circle of hope, rebuilding the middle class and increasing the opportunities for social and economic mobility can only happen with the strengthening of our collective commitment to public education.

Post WWII, public education (Pre-K through higher education) was appropriately resourced. Returning Vets and Baby Boomers (of which I am one) certainly benefitted from those "Golden Years of Public Higher Education" in this country (1948-1979). Those that followed, not so much. As a very proud community college graduate, I can tell you first hand that the vehicle to achieve that increasingly elusive American Dream was real. We can't let the dreams and aspirations for a better life die with my generation of community college students.

Horace Mann, the first secretary of Education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts wrote that public education was "the balancing wheel of the social machine." I don't know what he would think today. Fewer and fewer families can afford the costs of a public college education and the annual $50,000 price tag for private colleges and universities are now available only to the 1%. Those are not challenges for the weak of heart and mind. The easy answers to the questions about funding for public higher education are long gone. But, I know we can do better.

And here is the good news about you and Greenfield Community College. Although it might not be as true in the aggregate throughout the United States, here at GCC, lives are changing for the better, families are becoming stronger and so too this community - one student at a time. You help to make good on the promise of a college education, even at a time when state allocations are driving up costs to students and their families. I can't thank you enough for your ongoing and passionate commitment to the students, faculty, and staff of GCC. You are truly local heroes, one and all.

With best and warm regards,
Bob

GCC President Robert L. Paris

Join the Alumni Association!
Membership is FREE.

Did you attend GCC? We value your connection to the college. As a member of the Alumni Association, you can participate in many ways and we welcome your involvement at all levels.

www.gcc.mass.edu/alumni

Stromgren Named GCC Foundation Campaign Co-Chair

GCC alum Lindsay Stromgren '95 joined Lorna Peterson at the helm of this year's campaign. Stromgren accepted the Co-Chair role because "I wanted to do more for the College, recognizing the many connections I have to GCC." He noted his time as a student in the Fire Science Program, as well as his two decades as a board member in the program and his service as a member of the College's Fire Science Advisory Board.

Also, he appreciates the College's impact on three generations of his family: he came to campus as a child when his father was a faculty member here and, as of this year, he is a "GCC parent" as his daughter Merissa is now enrolled.

The College is pleased that both Lindsay Stromgren of Pelham, a GCC alum and Amherst Assistant Fire Chief, and Amherst resident Lorna Peterson, retired Executive Director of Five Colleges, Inc., are serving in this leadership role this year.

Give to the GCC Foundation 2018 Annual Campaign

What starts at GCC changes the world… and it starts with you.
www.gcc.mass.edu/give

GCC Foundation
www.gcc.mass.edu/foundation
Francie Riddle (continued)

Chair of the Art Department at Springfield Technical Community College (STCC), the faculty at GCC still stands out in Riddle’s memory and she quickly names the various ways they informed her art and impacted her life. “I still use the color wheel I developed in Penne Krol’s Color Theory class,” she said, “and John Bros’ 3D Design class ended up being the first college course I ever taught.”

And it was Badge Hyde who credits for the moment when she could really see herself as an artist and a teacher. “I was in a drawing class with him when he told me that people were impressed by my drawing and asked if I knew why. I said I had no idea and he said you should pay attention to that. I knew then that I wanted to be a teacher who gets you, even when you don’t,” she recalled.

Hyde’s last influence on Riddle was to set her on the next step to her dream. After completing her Associate’s at GCC in 2000 and being accepted for transfer to UMass Amherst Fine Arts Program, she confided in Badge that she was afraid to start there and wanted to stay at GCC. He replied, “If I see you back here, I’ll show you the door.”

With that encouraging threat, Riddle transferred and completed her Bachelors of Fine Arts in Painting at UMass in 2002 then later completed her Masters of Fine Arts in Painting/Installation/Community Arts in 2006 at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. She found her way to installation art because of the joy she found in being able to “jump into my work.”

After returning, she began first as an adjunct Art faculty member at STCC in 2007, eventually moving to full time and now serving as Associate Professor / Chair of the Visual & Performing Arts Department. She also spent five years as Coordinator of the Amy H. Curbery Fine Arts Gallery at the College.

“I really love my job,” she exclaimed. And apparently they love her back, as Riddle received the College’s Award for Outstanding Faculty in Academic Year 2015-16 after being nominated and selected by her peers for the distinction.

One of her proudest accomplishments was painting the mural in one of the campus buildings. It was a community-wide process that is represented in the thoughts, quotes and images incorporated in the installation that she pulled from the hundreds of people on campus solicited to provide input. “The mural represents as many identities on campus as possible,” she said.

Nearly twenty years after finding her way to GCC and ten years after beginning at STCC, she is settled, content and passionate about education, especially public higher education. She lives in Florence with her daughter, Britanny, 15, who she adopted from foster care when Britanny was seven years old. Riddle’s priority is spending time with her daughter “the most amazing person you will ever know – she’s an avid reader who has always wanted to be a writer and who loves adventures, especially to famous writers’ homes.”

2018 Campaign Kickoff

We had a great start to the 2018 GCC Foundation Annual Campaign breakfast, thanks to our speakers - GCC Foundation Board President Michael Davey, GCC President Bob Pura, Campaign Co-Chair Ahearn President John Bress, Alumni speaker Corinne Fitzgerald, Student Speaker Mike Hinkel-Felbeck - and ALL of the wonderful campaign team members and GCC faculty and staff! We hope our extended GCC community can help this great campaign team reach our goal of $825,000. To donate: visit www.gcc.mass.edu/give or call 413-775-1600.

Remembering Diane Esser ’71

Diane Esser, Class of 1971, passed away on February 26th of this year. An important member of the GCC family, Diane was a champion of the College. Even before she became a multi-term President, she worked to open the doors to GCC as the recipient of funds raised at this year’s Bartender’s Shootout! What a great time we all had on February 18th at the 21st Annual Bartender’s Shootout Fundraiser, with proceeds going in support of this new fund created to recognize and honor Bob Pura’s upcoming retirement after 17 years with GCC! Thank you so much to the crew at Taylor’s and all of the participants for making the day a success. For more information about how you can help grow this fund, please call Regina Curtis at 413-775-1426.

Diane Esser, pictured above at the College’s 50th Anniversary and (R) with her husband, Wil Roberts, at a past function with the Chelsea Community College Foundation.

Diane went on from GCC to receive her Bachelor’s degree from the University of Massachusetts and her law degree from Boston University - succeeding at every turn. She also went on to Boston University - succeeding at every turn. Diane was a force of nature - passionate about justice - social justice, economic justice, legal justice - and she knew that education was one of the most significant paths towards that end. In fact, she was so smart, strong and courageous about her passions that she moved to the University of Massachusetts where she pursued her law degree.

Diane discovered the intelligence, the power and passion behind GCC as the recipient of funds raised at the 21st Annual Bartender’s Shootout Fundraiser.

She also, while at GCC, met her husband Wilson Roberts. Eventually, across four decades and three generations, the Robert/Esser family became one big GCC family: all five of their children and, so far, two of their grandchildren attended the College.

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Bob Pura to Retire (continued)

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- Identified GCC’s core message and how it informs the work of its faculty and staff.

There’s a clarity of focus on relationships and community here. And when relationships are powerful and community is powerful, people know they belong somewhere, then learning is powerful. – Bob Pura

A graduate of community college himself, the first in his family to attend college and the son of an immigrant, Bob received his Associate Degree from Miami-Dade Community College, Bachelor’s from the University of South Florida, Masters from St. Thomas University and his Ph.D. in educational administration with a focus on community college leadership from the University of Texas in Austin. As a first generation college student, he understands what a community college education can mean to students and the responsibility that brings to his position. Opening doors to higher education to all who aspire to a better life for themselves and their families while at the same time maintaining high academic standards is the nobility of missions in higher education.

Bob has chaired the Massachusetts President’s Council, was a member of the Working Group on Assessment of Student Learning for the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education and served on the Commission on Academic Student and Learning for the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education and served on the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education and served on the Commission on Academic Student and Learning for the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education and served on the Commission on Academic Student and Learning for the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education.

In January this year, GCC Executive Director Regina Curtis traveled to Northern California to visit with members, and good friends, of the College community.

The Rogers Family – The initial and celebratory reason for the trip was the 100th birthday anniversary of Mary Stuart Rogers. The Carnation Company heiress and Mary Stuart Rogers granddaughter, Janet Rogers and her wife, Bev Phelps, with their son Carles Pi-Sunyer '90 at his Google Nest office in Palo Alto. After graduating from GCC, he found the University of California, Santa Cruz and fell in love with the college. He went on to earn an A.A., and graduated from that institution before beginning his career in the tech industry.

Regina Curtis with Carles Pi-Sunyer '90 at his Google Nest office in Palo Alto.

The Rogers Family were welcoming and giving of their hospitality throughout the trip. Although Regina and Carles left GCC, they found their philanthropic spirit and the idea that they have had on the success of GCC students over the past years.

Carles Pi-Sunyer ‘90 – Regina was able to expand her visit with the Rogers family to include lunch in Palo Alto with another GCC alum, Carles Pi-Sunyer who is employed as a software engineer at Google, where his work touches the lives of millions of people every day. He came to the company following a Silicon Valley career that included stints at AOL and LinkedIn.

Carles’ work transforming the way people communicate started at Greenfield Community College. He found his GCC experience “totally Stuart Rogers Women’s Resource Center.

Morton A. Slavin Wellness Center at GCC Dedication

The College community celebrated the grand opening of its new Wellness Center on April 17th, recognizing a founder and longtime friend, Mort Slavin, with friends and family members.

Mort Slavin was a member of the GCC Board of Trustees for many years and in 1962 when he was appointed as a member of the college’s inaugural Board of Trustees. He was later appointed to serve as a founding member of the GCC Foundation, Inc. Board of Directors in 1980 and remained on that board through two terms as a Trustee member, and then as an Honorary Board member until his death. He was an active participant throughout, offering wisdom, wit and a passion for student success.

Mort understood and believed in the community college mission and his actions spoke to his commitment. He and his wife, Susan, who predeceased him in 2009, were a constant presence at Annual Meetings, GCC graduations and special events for nearly 50 years. And his legacy will live on: Mort’s family created an endowed scholarship in honor of his 80th birthday in 2000 to provide financial aid for students and now his son, Dr. James Slavin, has provided funding to create the Morton A. Slavin Wellness Center.

Greenfield Community College is deeply grateful for the decades of service Mort provided in support of students at GCC and for these lasting legacies.

California Visit

The Redtail Hawk writes songs across the sky There’s music in the waters flowing by And you can hear a song such time the wind sighs In the golden rolling hills of California – Kate Wolf

Celebrating the dedication of the Morton A. Slavin Wellness Center at GCC are, left to right, GCC President Bob Pura, Hurl Slavin, Monica Monteshe and Jim Slavin.

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Morton A. Slavin, who passed away in 1993, leaving the Rogers Family were welcoming and giving of their hospitality throughout the trip. Although Regina and Carles left GCC, they found their philanthropic spirit and the idea that they have had on the success of GCC students over the past years. The Rogers Family - The initial and celebratory reason for the trip was the 100th birthday anniversary of Mary Stuart Rogers. The Carnation Company heiress and Mary Stuart Rogers granddaughter, Janet Rogers and her husband, Bev Phelps, with their son Carles Pi-Sunyer '90 at his Google Nest office in Palo Alto. After graduating from GCC, he found the University of California, Santa Cruz and fell in love with the college. He went on to earn an A.A., and graduated from that institution before beginning his career in the tech industry.

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Bob has served on Massachusetts President’s Council, was a member of the Working Group on Assessment of Student Learning at the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education and served on the Commission on Academic Student and Community Development for the American Association of Community Colleges. He sits on the Boards of Directors of The Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, Baystate Health, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges Foundation, The Education Consortium and the American Association for Colleges and Universities.

At the core of his learning experience, however, are the students and colleagues he has worked with over his 40-year career. “It really was my students who taught me the most about teaching,” he said. “And here at GCC, it is the faculty, staff, and the students who have taught me how to lead a community.”

Since becoming president, he has seen investment in public education decrease dramatically across the country and in Massachusetts. He said this trend began in 1980, and got worse after the 2008 recession, with some years of reprieve. But this community has risen to the challenge, he added, mostly through creative collaboration among schools, area employers and nonprofits and especially so the donors to the GCC Foundation. “We do more with less, but we would love to have the opportunity to do more with more,” he mused.

Bob’s impact on the College and its profound impact on living and strengthening communities is not recognized just by his students, colleagues and others in the higher education system. Following are some of the statements made by the extended community of GCC friends, supporters and collaborators:

• Bob has not only been an incredible president of GCC, but he’s been an incredible leader in the community. – U.S. Congressman Jim McGovern
• Bob Pura came to us well prepared to lead the campus. He proved himself time and time again as a visionary, competent, inspiring and community minded leader. His legacy is a strong, quality institution dedicated to the service of its community. – State Senator Stan Rosenberg
• Bob is a remarkable person. The opportunity the delegation has had to work with him, to speak with citizens and local leaders for public higher education is greatly appreciated by all of us who represent this area. Bob has made it his mission to speak on behalf of what GCC means to the local culture and economy and the impact of his work is seen every day in countless ways. – State Representative Steve Kulik

• Bob it truly this community’s college president – through his work with students on campus, with community and local leadership on collaborative initiatives, and with our Franklin County legislative delegation, he has been a genuine part of our community and a tireless advocate for the people he has served to strengthen. – State Representative Paul Mark

• He’s the most successful man that I’ve ever known with no ego. Replacing Bob is going to be the toughest part of my career. – Bob Cohan, Chair, GCC Board of Trustees
• His service to the community and behind the scenes work that he has done deserves recognition as one of those among us who give of themselves to help their fellow man, not for the recognition, but because it’s the right thing to do. – Mike Rifenbarg, Publishers, Daily Hampshire Gazette and the Greenfield Recorder

• Bob has a way of weaving the story of GCC together. Great educators have a way of telling a story and helping to include people in telling that story and he’s able to do that. – Clare Higgins, Executive Director, Community Action of Pioneer Valley

• When you’re confident in where you want to be and the motivations to get you there; you give them an element of fearlessness, and I think that’s what Bob brings to GCC and to education. – Chris Donelan, Franklin County Sheriff

The Rogers Family

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At the core of his learning experience, however, are the students and colleagues he has worked with over his 40-year career. “It really was my students who taught me the most about teaching,” he said. “And here at GCC, it is the faculty, staff, and the students who have taught me how to lead a community.”

Since becoming president, he has seen investment in public education decrease dramatically across the country and in Massachusetts. He said this trend began in 1980, and got worse after the 2008 recession, with some years of reprieve. But this community has risen to the challenge, he added, mostly through creative collaboration among schools, area employers and nonprofits and especially so the donors to the GCC Foundation. “We do more with less, but we would love to have the opportunity to do more with more,” he mused.

Bob’s impact on the College and its profound impact on living and strengthening communities is not recognized just by his students, colleagues and others in the higher education system. Following are some of the statements made by the extended community of GCC friends, supporters and collaborators:

• Bob has not only been an incredible president of GCC, but he’s been an incredible leader in the community. – U.S. Congressman Jim McGovern
• Bob Pura came to us well prepared to lead the campus. He proved himself time and time again as a visionary, competent, inspiring and community minded leader. His legacy is a strong, quality institution dedicated to the service of its community. – State Senator Stan Rosenberg
• Bob is a remarkable person. The opportunity the delegation has had to work with him, to speak with citizens and local leaders for public higher education is greatly appreciated by all of us who represent this area. Bob has made it his mission to speak on behalf of what GCC means to the local culture and economy and the impact of his work is seen every day in countless ways. – State Representative Steve Kulik

• Bob it truly this community’s college president – through his work with students on campus, with citizens and local leadership on collaborative initiatives, and with our Franklin County legislative delegation, he has been a genuine part of our community and a tireless advocate for the people he has served to strengthen. – State Representative Paul Mark

• He’s the most successful man that I’ve ever known with no ego. Replacing Bob is going to be the toughest part of my career. – Bob Cohan, Chair, GCC Board of Trustees
• His service to the community and behind the scenes work that he has done deserves recognition as one of those among us who give of themselves to help their fellow man, not for the recognition, but because it’s the right thing to do. – Mike Rifenbarg, Publishers, Daily Hampshire Gazette and the Greenfield Recorder

• Bob has a way of weaving the story of GCC together. Great educators have a way of telling a story and helping to include people in telling that story and he’s able to do that. – Clare Higgins, Executive Director, Community Action of Pioneer Valley

• When you’re confident in where you want to be and the motivations to get you there; you give them an element of fearlessness, and I think that’s what Bob brings to GCC and to education. – Chris Donelan, Franklin County Sheriff

The Rogers Family – The initial and celebratory reason for the trip was the 100th birthday anniversary of Mary Stuart Rogers. The Citizens Company was founded in 1968, it has remained independent and is one of the last community foundations in the United States. It is a leading philanthropic foundation which is uniquely designed to be held in perpetuity and serves a significant role in the community with a very significant purpose. The Rogers family has been a key player in the community, giving sumptuous amounts of support to the College, and this community. They have had on the success of GCC, to its president, saying “Opening the doors to higher education to all who aspire to a better life is the right thing to do.”

Morton A. Slavin Wellness Center at GCC Dedication

The College community celebrated the grand opening of its new Wellness Center on April 17th, recognizing a founder and longtime friend, Mort Slavin, with friends and family members.

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Francie Riddle (continued)

Chair of the Art Department at Springfield Technical Community College (STCC), the faculty at GCC still stands out in Riddle’s memory and she quickly names the various ways they informed her art and impacted her life. “I still use the color wheel I developed in Penne Kreid’s Color Theory class,” she said, “and John Bross’ 3D Design class ended up being the first college course I ever taught.”

And it was Budge Hyde who she credits for the moment when she could really see herself as an artist and a teacher. “I was in a drawing class with him when he told me that people were impressed by my drawing and asked if I knew why. I said I had no idea and he said you should pay attention to that. I knew then that I wanted to be a teacher who gets you, even when you don’t,” she recalled.

Hyde’s last influence on Riddle was to set her on the next step to her dream. After completing her Associate’s at GCC in 2000 and being accepted for transfer to UMass Amherst Fine Arts Program, she confided in Budge that she was afraid to start there and wanted to stay at GCC. He replied, “If I see you back here, I’ll show you out the door.”

With that encouraging threat, Riddle transferred and completed her Bachelors of Fine Arts in Painting at UMass in 2002 then later completed her Masters of Fine Arts in Painting/Installation/Community Arts in 2006 at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. She found her way to installation art because of the joy she found in being able to “jump into my work.”

After returning, she began first as an adjunct Art faculty member at STCC in 2007, eventually moving to full time and now serving as Associate Professor / Chair of the Visual & Performing Arts Department. She also spent five years as Coordinator of the Amy H. Carlberg Fine Arts Gallery at the College.

“I really love my job!” she exclaimed. And apparently they love her back, as Riddle received the College’s Award for Outstanding Faculty in Academic Year 2015-16 after being nominated and selected by her peers for the distinction.

One of her proudest accomplishments was painting the mural in one of the campus buildings. It was a community-wide process that is represented in the thoughts, quotes and images incorporated in the installation that she pulled from the hundreds of people on campus solicited to provide input. “The mural represents as many identities on campus as possible,” she said.

2018 Campaign Kickoff

We had a great start to the 2018 GCC Foundation Annual Campaign breakfast, thanks to our speakers - GCC Foundation Board President Michael Davey, GCC President Bob Pura, Campaign Co-Chair Amherst Assistant Fire Chief Lindsay Strongren, Alumni Speaker Corinne Fitzgerald, Student Speaker Mike Henke-Felbeck - and ALL of the wonderful campaign team members and GCC faculty and staff! We hope our extended GCC community can help this great campaign team reach our goal of $85,000! To donate: visit www.gcc.mass.edu/give or call 413-775-1600.

Remembering Diane Esser ’71

Diane Esser, Class of 1971, passed away on February 26th of this year. An important member of the GCC family, Diane was a champion of the College. Even before she became a multi-term Board President, she worked to open the doors to public higher education. She lives in Florence with her daughter, Brittaney, 15, who she adopted from foster care when Brittaney was seven years old. Riddle’s priority is spending time with her daughter “the most amazing person you will ever know – she’s an avid reader who has always wanted to be a writer and who loves adventures, especially to famous writers’ homes.”

Nearly twenty years after finding her way to GCC and ten years after beginning at STCC, she is settled, content and passionate about education, especially public higher education. She lives in Florence with her daughter, Brittaney, 15, who she adopted from foster care when Brittaney was seven years old. Riddle’s priority is spending time with her daughter “the most amazing person you will ever know – she’s an avid reader who has always wanted to be a writer and who loves adventures, especially to famous writers’ homes.”

Diane - whose life is better as the result of giving back and opening the doors for others. Diane was a force of nature - passionate about justice - social justice, economic justice - and justice - social justice, economic justice - and she knew that education was one of the most significant paths towards that end. In fact, she was so smart, strong and courageous about her commitment to justice - she put her heart and soul into reinventing it.

So many feel her loss so deeply. But for every one who feels her absence, there are countless others - who have never met Diane - whose life is better as the result of her work and passionate commitment to create a just and better world for all. Diane will be missed by her GCC family, but how blessed are those whose life she touched.
The relationship between state allocation and student costs in public higher education is crystal clear. As state allocations decrease, costs to students increase. According to the “2018 State Higher Education Executive Officers Association’s Annual State Higher Education Finance Report,” that relationship has now passed a “milestone.” Students are paying more (a greater percentage) for public higher education than ever before. In 2001, students paid approximately 30% of the costs for attending a State College here in Massachusetts, today it is above 50%. There is no doubt that the collegiate promise of a college education, even at a reasonable cost, is not what it once was. The College’s dreams and aspirations for a better life have been confronted by the weakening of community college students.

Horace Mann, the first Secretary of Education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts wrote that public education was “the balancing wheel of the social machine.” I don’t know what he would think today. Fewer and fewer families can afford the costs of a public college education and the annual $30,000 price tag for private colleges and universities are now available only to the 1%. Those are not challenges for the weak of heart and mind. The easy answers to the questions about funding for public higher education are long gone. But, I know we can do better.

And here is the good news about you and Greenfield Community College. Although it might not be as true in the aggregate throughout the United States, here at GCC, lives are changing for the better, families are born growing stronger and so too this community - one student at a time. You help make good on the promise of a college education, even at a time when state allocations are driving up costs to students and their families. I can’t thank you enough for your ongoing and passionate commitment to the students, faculty, and staff of GCC. You are truly local heroes, one and all.

What starts at GCC

In February, GCC hosted the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce monthly breakfast, welcoming US Congressman Jim McGovern at Lenox public school. As a Congressman McGovern made a small group of his own in attendance to have the Congressman’s remarks and enjoy a chance to visit – pictured, left to right, are GCC President Robert L. Paris, Regina Curtis, Director of Resource Development, and Robert Mugar Yacubian, Executive Director of Five Colleges, Inc.; are serving in this leadership role this year.

In 1941-1979. Those that followed, not so much. As a very proud community college graduate, I can tell you first hand that the vehicle to achieve that increasingly elusive American Dream was real. We can’t let the dreams and aspirations for a better life die with my generation of community college students.

Resource Development Regina Curtis, Franklin County Chamber of Commerce's Annual State Higher Education Finance Report, that relationship has now passed a “milestone.” Students are paying more (a greater percentage) for public higher education than ever before. In 2001, students paid approximately 30% of the costs for attending a State College here in Massachusetts, today it is above 50%. There is no doubt that the collegiate promise of a college education, even at a reasonable cost, is not what it once was. The College’s dreams and aspirations for a better life have been confronted by the weakening of community college students.

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Western Mass Higher Education Legislative Forum

In March, GCC was well represented at the Western Mass Higher Education Legislative Forum held at Westfield State College, where the public higher education community was given the opportunity to meet with the entire legislative delegation for the region and present the case for adequate funding in the FY19 state budget to support the collective work for student success at the institutions of higher education.

Francie Riddle '00 - From Boat Builder to College Art Professor

In retrospect, Francie Riddle wishes her high school guidance office hadn't focused only on 4-year colleges as her next step after graduating from Northampton High School in 1995. She quickly learned that she was not college ready and her brief semester at one of the Five Colleges resulted in a decision to move to Maine to attend boat building school. An outcome she is now glad about, because she credits the experience with both her strong work ethic and sense of the possibility of art.

That, along with his humor and community-minded spirit, will be missed. The accomplishments over his 18 years of leadership are too many to list, but a few examples that demonstrate his commitment to student success and the College’s reach into the community follow:

- Worked toward a sustainable future with a Silver LEED certified main campus building renovation and the development of the Renewable Energy/Energy Efficiency and Sustainable Agriculture academic programs;
- Developed deep and lasting collaborations - between GCC and the community - with Franklin/Lamphere K-12 schools, Western MA colleges, the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, Community Action of Pioneer Valley, the Regional Employment Board, Franklin County Community Development Corporation, Franklin County Opioid Task Force, Franklin County House of Corrections, Chambers of Commerce for Franklin County, Greater Northampton and Greater Amherst Areas, local Business Leaders, and GCC’s wonderful Legislative Delegation - in service to students, the College and community;
- Fundraised, along with the GCC Foundation Board of Directors and staff, over $14 million in support of programs and students at GCC.

At the College’s Academic Year 2017-18 Opening Day - the start of his 18th year as president of Greenfield Community College - Bob Pura announced he will be retiring from the position he has held since 2000; in a speech to faculty and staff, Bob let his colleagues know that this academic year would be his last. His vision, his compassion and his “true north” focus on the importance of access to a quality education, combined with his passionate commitment to students and their success, have informed his exemplary leadership.

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Did you know that you can support GCC students with your Amazon purchases? AmazonSmile dedicates 5% of all of your purchases to support programs and services for GCC students when you select Greenfield Community College Foundation Inc. as your charity of choice?

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Please sign in to AmazonSmile for your next purchase and help change lives at GCC while you shop...