



Testimony to the Vermont House Commerce Committee
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"Because of my experiences at GIV I now have a new perspective on what it means to achieve success." – 2018 Governor's Institute participant

Thank you for inviting me here to speak today about one of Vermont's most valuable tools for developing its potential workforce – the Governor's Institutes of Vermont (GIV).

In fact, the Governor's Institutes stands at the crossroads of many of Vermont's most pressing issues, a scaleable, cost effective and extraordinarily potent intervention that changes the trajectories and lives of hundreds of young people every year.

What is GIV?

The Governor's Institutes began in 1982 and now serves nearly 600 high school students annually who come from every Vermont town and county. GIV reaches into every Vermont high school to encourage young people to follow their curiosity or passion to a residential Governor's Institute, where they engage in hands-on learning led by college faculty and professionals and centered around the student's own interest area and pace.



Surrounded by role models and peers who share their interests on a college campus, students gain confidence and self-direction, increase their aspirations, and find new awareness of potential careers and an understanding of how to reach them. They connect with Vermont leaders in their field of interest and develop new insight into their own abilities and desires. Some earn certifications or college credit, but most valuable takeaway is invariably students embracing their own potential.

In a long-term study of outcomes among alumni more than 6 years after participation, 79% of alumni said GIV had made them more aware of interesting career or educational pathways and more than **two thirds** said that GIV had influenced their career choices. 98% were able to identify lasting benefits they carried into their professional lives, 91% reported successfully earning a college degree or post-secondary credential, and 88% called GIV one of the most important things they had done during high school.

Recent participants say things like:

"GIV gave me the opportunity to start thinking about my career and where I want to go in life. Saying that this was a life-changing experience is an understatement."

"Being around people that were interested in something that I felt passionate about made me feel like it was okay to be what I might be labeled as nerdy at school."

"I think that with this experience at GIV I have much better foresight and a clear and focused vision for the future."

Among the factors that make GIV uniquely impactful are:

Universal Accessibility. GIV Institutes are residential and offer a sliding scale tuition that guarantees affordable tuition at all income levels. Transportation and extra support are provided when needed. This means that access extends to teenagers across the state, regardless of where they live, as well as to students facing disability or economic barriers.

Outreach. GIV actively recruits underserved teenagers and incentivizes them to engage deeply, take smart risks, and embrace their full potential. It also conducts special initiatives to remove barriers and promote achievement among historically disadvantaged populations, and has a great track record of success. For example, last year 47% of GIV STEM students identified as female.



Student-Directed and Student-Focused. GIV doesn't fit students into a pre-defined environment or agenda. With each Institute being a new pop-up opportunity, individual students experience how their agency shapes their surroundings and drives their learning. The structure rewards the students for their interests and achievement, not for fitting into an existing mold. Often, students are challenged to identify real-world, open-ended problems and develop solutions.

Agility. GIV's flexibility lets it quickly turn emergent workforce development priorities into student pathways. The recently added Health and Medicine and Architecture/Design/Build Institutes were designed to meet Vermont's most critical workforce needs.

Cost Effectiveness. GIV reliably changes lives, increases motivation and aspiration, connects students with career pathways, peer reinforcement and networks to follow their professional interests here in Vermont, for approximately \$2000 per student. With 99% of students completing their GIV experiences and 98% reporting valuable long-term outcomes, it's essentially a guaranteed investment.

"[GIV] felt like an environment where I could grow and strive to reach my full potential."

In other states, state-supported Governor's Schools are free for all attendees. In Vermont, GIV is an independent nonprofit charging tuition from students that can afford it. We receive 17% of our support through a legislative appropriation, which underwrites the sliding scale tuition framework, and match it 4:1 with private dollars. We have doubled our enrollment and added several new Institutes to meet state workforce priorities despite being level-funded since 2010 and frankly, I am here talking to the Education Committee about increasing that appropriation to \$275,000 to avoid 20% program cuts next year.

But what I'd invite this committee to think about is scale. Here is an incredibly effective, proven, readily scalable model that could reach twice or three times as many young people if funding reflected the power it has for our workforce. It showcases the Icelandic model of "getting students high on their own brain chemistry" instead of drugs, and it is one of the best bets we have to stop our most promising students from pursuing educational and career opportunities elsewhere without fully understanding the potential of their talents here in Vermont.