



**Testimony to the Vermont House Education Committee**  
Presented by Karen Taylor Mitchell MPA  
Executive Director of the Governor's Institutes of Vermont  
February 21, 2020

Thank you for inviting testimony from the Governor's Institutes today. Right now as we speak, 76 high schoolers from more than 25 schools are eagerly anticipating arriving at Goddard College tonight, where they'll be spending the weekend. What are they so excited about? Spending their weekend in class with GIV!

- Some will be working alongside a former NASA engineer to custom-design real-world devices for landing on and measuring the surface of Mars.
- Some will be probing the connection between art, technology and astrochemistry.
- Some will study introductory psychology with a Johnson College professor.

These students and more will dive deep into learning, have fun and present astoundingly complex final projects from 2-3 pm this Sunday at Goddard's Haybarn Theatre (*Please consider this your invitation to attend the final presentations!*) We know from past studies that the majority will be spurred on by their Governor's Institute experience to greater things.



**Request Summary:** I am here to respectfully ask for a line item increase that will be the first increase to GIV in over 15 years. An increase to at least \$275,000 is vital if we are to prevent cuts of 20% or more to one of Vermont's most successful educational resources, one which serves nearly 600 young people each year from every single high school and community in Vermont.

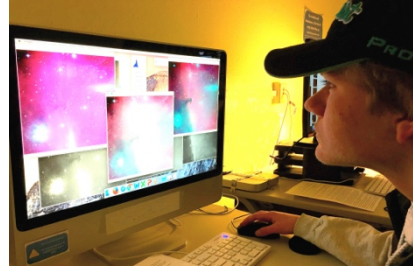
**What is GIV?** Imagine a pop-up mini-college that blends the fun of camp, the advanced learning of a college, and the triumphant sense of achievement of a marathon. High school students curious about a topic come together on college campuses for an intensive residential GIV Institute, where they dive deep into a topic they choose alongside new friends and expert role models. They challenge themselves, try out living on a college campus, experience the world outside their immediate surroundings, and meet people who share and support their positive interests. In doing so, many discover that they have more ability than they ever imagined and more opportunities than they knew existed.

**Why Does GIV Exist?** The Governor's Institutes of Vermont, established in 1982, effectively addresses some of the most critical problems in Vermont's education today, such as:

- insufficient education dollars;
- barriers to higher education that disproportionately affect students from remote towns, difficult backgrounds, certain demographics, or income levels;
- community and economic disparities in resources to fulfill Act 77.
- disengagement and isolation of our teenagers;
- low college matriculation and completion rates
- the need to give smart young people reasons to stay in Vermont.



**Who Does GIV Serve?** The roughly 600 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders who participate in GIV come from every Vermont school, plus tech centers, home schools, and not in school. Nearly half come from families earning less than Vermont's sustainable wage. Plenty face challenges like being foster students, new Americans, trauma survivors, or being diagnosed with ADHD or on the autism spectrum. We are highly successful in drawing first-generation students into the college pipeline. Because of our extensive work on accessibility for under-represented students, 47% of our STEM students are girls or identify as female.



**Is GIV Effective?** GIV's impact is best described by its alumni. In a survey of those who had participated between 6-29 years previously, some of whom were now in their fifties, **88%** called GIV one of the most important things they'd done during high school. **83%** attested that GIV had increased their academic or creative motivation and **71%** felt more prepared for college. **80%** said their academic/creative focus increased, **79%** were more aware of interesting career or educational pathways – even higher when looking at just females' responses - and more than two thirds said that GIV had influenced their career choices. **98%** could name lasting benefits from GIV and **91%** had completed college or post-secondary education.

*With statistics like that, one might hope we would be talking about scaling GIV up. And indeed, GIV is a readily scalable model with potential to play a much bigger role in Vermont's educational success.*

**But GIV's Impact Is In Peril.** GIV has been level-funded by the state at \$192,654 for the last decade. (Previous funding was higher.) Throughout that time as costs have increased, GIV has scaled to meet need and raised private dollars to double the number of students served each year, expanded the range of topics for students, and increased participation from impoverished homes and communities. State dollars receded from 35% to 17% of GIV's budget.

But state funding remains essential to underwrite the sliding scale tuition model that ensures equal access for all applicants, and subsidies required by students with financial need now top \$340,000/year. GIV, a small nonprofit, operated at a significant loss last year and without an increase in state funding is facing cutting programs serving up to 120 students/year.

Please do your best to keep this program intact for Vermont's young people. Thank you.



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*"The importance of [GIV] programs, for me personally and for society in general, cannot be overstated. To me courses were interesting and engaging, but they were just a small fraction of the experience. It is the people who impacted me (and continue to do so) that I appreciate more than anything else. I had never been so challenged by my peers before, in fact, I had no idea that there were so many passionate and competitive [young people] in Vermont. What I took away from GIV was more than knowledge; I took away a motivation that is far transcendent of subject matter or time."*

- 2017 participant

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