



Testimony to the Vermont House Education Committee
Presented by Karen Taylor Mitchell MPA
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Thank you for inviting me here to speak today on behalf of Vermont's learners and our state's business community.

I am here to update you about an existing statewide educational intervention in Vermont that is extremely effective, cost efficient, promotes equity, strengthens our workforce pipeline, makes Vermont's young people more resilient, and increases their aspirations, college completion rate, and overall chances of success – one that is the envy of other states – called **the Governor's Institutes of Vermont**. The Governor's Institutes exists to make life-changing, hands-on enrichment available to every high school student in Vermont.



Imagine yourself as a 16-year-old high school student in Vermont today. You have a strong interest in something – maybe it's mathematics or music or current events or business or engineering - but you've bumped up against the limits of your small school's curriculum, and you don't know anyone else in your school or community who wants to talk about the subject the way you do. Imagine feeling isolated, thwarted, and discouraged because you don't see any future for yourself in what you care about.

Now, imagine going somewhere where you're surrounded by people who care passionately about the same things you do, where the only limit to your learning is your own pace and you discover the pathways to careers that utilize your interest. Can you imagine how transformational that would be?

600 young Vermonters each year attend GIV, a 35-year old initiative started under Governor Snelling that improves our state's educational equity. Students from **every single Vermont town, city, high school and tech center** choose between 13 intensive residential opportunities over summer or winter break where they dive deep into topics ranging from science, to architecture/design/build, to information technology, to art. *See the attached list of participating communities.*



Who attends GIV? It is open to anyone who has an interest in one of 50+ topics covered, the capacity to work hands-on at an advanced level in their topic, and readiness to be away from home for a week. Sometimes they are straight A kids, but often not. Sometimes they're coasting, verging on failing, or dropping out because they're bored. Picture the teenager zoning out in class doodling amazing art; the quiet rebel who can take apart and repair a computers yet still get bad grades; teens bullied because they've made the social misstep of loving math, and the ones

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coasting through school without ever finding a real challenge or reason to engage. Young people like these find affirmation, rich intellectual challenge, supportive peers - often for the first time in their lives - and the road to their futures at GIV.

In their own words, participants say:

"GIV is a wonderful way to gain education on a specific topic for high school students whose schools may not have a curriculum that supports it. It makes it possible to see what actually happens in the industries of your dreams rather than to just imagine it."

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

"The program was a very valuable experience for me. It not only taught me about art and personal expression, but it taught me about myself and my limits and goals."



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

"I learned more in that one week than I did my whole freshman year of World History."

"The best thing about GIV was that it gave me a passion for discovery and learning."

"Because of my experiences at GIV I now have a new perspective on what it means to achieve success."

A recent email we received from an alumna highlights the longer-term impacts that parents, teachers and students often report:



"I have done multiple institutes through GIV and I truly have to say that GIV does turn dreams into futures. I have always wanted to do more with the arts and GIA opened that door for me and changed my life. GIV IT/DM also allowed me to explore what I really wanted to do as a career and it made me realize that the dream I had for so long can become my future. I've graduated high school and am going to Champlain College for Computer Networking/ Cybersecurity. I am going to be living my dream and it wouldn't [have] happened if it wasn't for the Governor's Institute."

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So what exactly happens at a Governor's Institute? Students choose from eleven summer and two winter residential Institutes on Vermont College campuses, where they focus on their interests in topics like the **Arts, Engineering, Math, Architecture/Design/Build, Astronomy, Entrepreneurship, Health & Medicine, Writing, Environmental Science & Technology, Information Technology & Design, or Current Issues/Youth Activism**. Days are intensive, with hands-on, inquiry-based learning in real-world project applications motivating students to engage well into the night. Most teachers are renowned experts or professionals in their field.

At the Institutes, students experiment with what it would feel like to be a professional scientist or writer or game designer or entrepreneur. They live and study alongside professional and graduate students who become role models. They gain skills and knowledge related to their field, and discover the steps they'll need to take to build careers in those fields. The single most formative thing, according to alumni up to 30 years later, is that they get a chance to step outside the high school box and meet other students who share their interests and support their positive achievement.

In a 2014 long-term study, 98% of alumni ranging in age from 24-50 attested to specific positive outcomes they got from GIV. 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.

Relatively few GIV students come from privileged families who can access similar opportunities elsewhere. Most rural Vermonters can't just walk down the street to find an afterschool program or an internship matching their interest area. Many GIVers are first-generation college students. Some have backgrounds involving trauma, relocation or hardship. We partner with social service agencies to extend opportunities to a wide range of students. Also in keeping with GIV's inclusivity mission, **GIV is Vermont's largest provider of STEM career exposure opportunities to high school girls.**

The Governor's budget proposal contains a \$192,654 line item in the Agency of Education grants budget for the Governor's Institutes, an amount consistent since 2010. During that period GIV has not sought an increase in funding, yet we have nearly doubled enrollment from 337 to 603 students and expanded the students' array of choices from 7 to 13 Institutes (which support 10 different colleges in 8 counties). We have added Institutes targeting Vermont's key workforce needs in the construction and medical fields and increased short-term winter opportunities so that students who need to work in the summer can explore potential careers ranging from neuroscience, epidemiology and robotics to digital journalism.



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The state's investment in GIV is what ensures that all Vermont students can participate regardless of family income. GIV's innovative sliding scale tuition model is underwritten by the state's support. Approximately 1 in 3 participants comes from families making less than \$45,000.

If I were on the House Education Committee and I wanted to improve Vermont's key educational outcomes, I'd seek out where the value is for the money. GIV is highly effective, unusually efficient, and reaches the whole state with proven results in a way that internships cannot. We bring funds from the private sector and individuals into education. **Every dollar from the legislature is matched 4:1 with private dollars.**

This year if the legislature is able to increase funding for GIV to **\$240,000**, that investment of less than \$400 per student will not only trigger a lifelong transformation for the majority of participants, it will set the stage for GIV's continued expansion and leadership at the crossroads of education, economic development, equity and social justice.

Thank you for your kind attention and all you do for Vermont's youth.



Constructing a model wind turbine at the Governor's Institute on Engineering, 2018.

**Self-Reported Hometowns of
Governor's Institutes 2014-2018 Participants**

Adamant	East Calais	Londonderry	Quechee	Troy
Addison	East Corinth	Ludlow	Randolph	Tunbridge
Alburgh	East Dover	Lyndon Center	Reading	Underhill
Andover	East Dummerston	Lyndonville	Richford	Vergennes
Arlington	East Fairfield	Manchester	Richmond	Vernon
Bakersfield	East Hardwick	Marlboro	Ripton	Vershire
Barnard	East Middlebury	Marshfield	Rochester	Waitsfield
Barnet	East Montpelier	Mendon	Rockingham	Wallingford
Barre	East Randolph	Middlebury	Roxbury	Waltham
Barton	East Thetford	Middlesex	Royalton	Wardsboro
Beecher Falls	East Wallingford	Middletown	Rupert	Warren
Bellows Falls	Eden Mills	Springs	Rutland	Washington
Belmont	Elmore	Milton	Rutland Town	Waterbury
Bennington	Enosburg	Monkton	Salisbury	Waterbury Center
Berlin	Enosburg Falls	Montgomery Ctr	Saxtons River	Waterford
Bethel	Essex	Montpelier	Shaftsbury	Wells River
Bondville	Essex Junction	Moretown	Sharon	West Berlin
Bradford	Fair Haven	Morristown	Sheffield	West Brattleboro
Braintree	Fairfax	Morrisville	Shelburne	West Burke
Brandon	Fairfield	Mount Holly	Sheldon	West Danville
Brattleboro	Fairlee	New Haven	Shoreham	West Dover
Bridgewater	Fayston	Newbury	Shrewsbury	West Glover
Bridport	Ferrisburgh	Newfane	South Burlington	West Hartford
Bristol	Florence	Newport	South Chittenden	West Marlboro
Brookfield	Franklin	North Bennington	South Hero	West Rupert
Brownsville	Gaysville	North Chittenden	South	West Rutland
Burlington	Georgia	North Clarendon	Londonderry	West Townshend
Cabot	Glover	North Ferrisburgh	South Newfane	West Wardsboro
Calais	Grafton	North Hero	South Reading	Westford
Cambridge	Grand Isle	North Montpelier	South Royalton	Westminster
Canaan	Graniteville	North Pomfret	South Ryegate	Weston
Castleton	Greensboro	North Troy	South Strafford	Weybridge
Cavendish	Groton	Northfield	South Woodstock	White River Jct.
Charlotte	Guilford	Northfield Falls	Springfield	Whiting
Chelsea	Hancock	Norwich	St. Albans	Whitingham
Chester	Hardwick	Orwell	St. George	Wilder
Chittenden	Hartford	Panton	St. Johnsbury	Williamstown
Colchester	Highgate	Pawlet	Stannard	Williston
Concord	Hinesburg	Peacham	Starksboro	Wilmington
Corinth	Huntington	Perkinsville	Stockbridge	Windham
Cornwall	Hyde Park	Peru	Stowe	Windsor
Craftsbury	Ira	Pittsfield	Strafford	Winhall
Cuttingsville	Irasburg	Pittsford	Stratton	Winooski
Danby	Jamaica	Plainfield	Sudbury	Wolcott
Danville	Jay	Plymouth	Sunderland	Woodbury
Derby	Jeffersonville	Pomfret	Sutton	Woodstock
Dorset	Jericho	Post Mills	Swampscott	Worcester
Dummerston	Johnson	Poultney	Swanton	
Duxbury	Killington	Pownal	Taftsville	
East Arlington	Lake Elmore	Proctor	Thetford	
East Barre	Leicester	Proctorsville	Thetford Center	
East Burke	Lincoln	Putney	Townshend	