



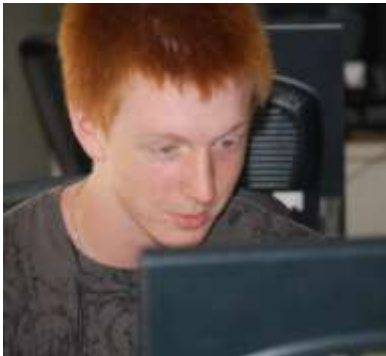
Testimony to the Vermont Senate Education Committee
Presented by Karen Taylor Mitchell MPA
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“GIV gave me the opportunity to start thinking about my career and where I want to go in life. Saying this was a life-changing experience is an understatement.”

– 2018 participant

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 **the Governor's Institutes of Vermont**, 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 – a program that is the envy of other states. 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, writing, art, business, public policy 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?

More than 500 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 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."

"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."

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

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

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



"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."

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

An email we recently 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."



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 that engage students 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, writer, 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. **GIV is Vermont's largest provider of STEM career exposure opportunities to high school girls.**



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 peers 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 gained 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 women's responses) - and more than two thirds said that GIV had influenced their career choices.



Most GIV students don't come from privileged families who can access similar opportunities elsewhere. Rural Vermonters usually 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.

The state's support is essential to underwriting GIV's innovative sliding scale model, which is so effective that 1 in 3 participants comes from families making less than \$45,000. The Agency of

Education grants budget contains a line item to partially fund the Governor's Institutes. **Every dollar from the legislature is matched 4:1 with private dollars.**

Since 2010 the annual appropriation has been \$192,654. During this period, GIV has nearly doubled enrollment from 338 to 603 students and expanded topical choices from 7 to 13 Institutes (which support 9 different colleges in 8 counties). New Institutes targeting Vermont's key workforce needs in the construction and medical fields have been launched, and we've increased short-term winter opportunities so that students who need to work in the summer can still explore potential careers ranging from neuroscience and robotics to digital journalism.

Secretary of Education Dan French has told us that he supports an increase in GIV's appropriation. If the legislature is able to increase funding for GIV to \$240,000 this year, that investment of less than \$400 per student will trigger a lifelong transformation for the majority of participants and set the stage for GIV to continue to lead at the crossroads of educational equity, aspirations, workforce development, and achievement.

As the Senate Education Committee seeks to improve Vermont's key educational outcomes, one good place to look might be proven, cost-effective and agile models that effectively and equitably reach the whole state and which are ready to be scaled up. GIV has a 36-year track record of bringing funds from the private sector and individuals into education, reaching teenagers from all areas of the state, and a success rate on improving their educations, futures and careers that is unmatched by any other state educational investment. I hope you will consider the potential impact of strengthening this extraordinary program.

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

