

The Necessary, the Possible, and the Impossible



ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20



JOHNSON CENTER
AT GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY



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Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy

The Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University was established in 1992 with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Our mission is to be a global leader in helping individuals and organizations understand, strengthen, and advance philanthropy, resulting in a smart, adaptive sector that helps create strong, inclusive communities.

We put research to work with and for professionals across the country and the world. Through professional education offerings; research, evaluation, and consulting services; and bold thinking to advance the field, we support a philanthropic ecosystem defined by effective philanthropy, strong nonprofits, and informed community change.

A Message from Our Executive Director

“Start by doing what’s necessary; then do what’s possible; and suddenly you’re doing the impossible.”

Attributed to Francis of Assisi, this quote seems an apt description of how the philanthropic sector responded to the last year. At the beginning of our fiscal year (July 2019), we at the Johnson Center were in the midst of five nationwide searches to fill open positions. Multi-year projects were coming to fruition, as we prepared to launch our e-learning series, LearnPhilanthropy Academy, and to begin focus group testing our competency model for foundation program officers. Our Scholar in Residence for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Juan Olivarez, was co-leading an effort to launch Grand Rapids’ own inclusive growth initiative.

When the pandemic hit, everyone in the sector had to quickly adapt — doing what it was possible to do, rather than what we had thought was necessary only weeks before. Over the course of 2020, we have learned to see our work and our communities in a different light. Sometimes that light has been the glow of an hours-long Zoom marathon. Sometimes it has been the glare of historical and present injustice, a spotlight turned upon our systems, our actions, and the very real racialized violence and disparity that exists in our country.

We did the possible: we moved all our professional development courses online, expanding the range of practitioners who participate in our programs. Attendees now regularly hail from many states and nations. In this age of social distancing, we are proud to serve as a space for convening and connection.

Looking forward, we will continue to assess the needs of the sector as they evolve. New programs in scenario planning, best practices for collaboration and organizational mergers, and sustainable fundraising (among others) are already in the works. New research projects will provide critical information about BIPOC leadership in our sector, and new online tools will advance equity by making data more accessible.

This year has changed all of us, and it has changed our work. With our parent institution, Grand Valley State University, we have adopted a bolder and more urgent commitment to centering equity in our practice and in the principles and skills we teach and share with others. (See [Partners in Action Against Racism](#) for more.) The sector — indeed, the country — has come to recognize that long-standing racial injustices must be addressed and eliminated — something that seemed impossible just a short time ago.

In my annual message last year, I shared our commitments to six strategic priorities that would guide us through 2021. While many of our plans were disrupted this year, we were able to make important progress — and will continue to do so in the coming months. We share specific updates for each priority below.

Philanthropy has always played a unique role in envisioning a brighter future. Together, we have the opportunity to rebuild a society where no voice is silenced, no community is overlooked, and every life and contribution is valued. We look forward to striving with you to create this world. It is possible.



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Teresa R. Behrens".

Teresa (Teri) Behrens, Ph.D.

Executive Director

Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy

A Message from the Dean of the College of Community and Public Service

Higher education is at an inflection point. In a startlingly short time, we at Grand Valley State University (GVSU), along with our peers at institutions worldwide, have been made to probe the core value of a college or university education and to create new ways of delivering on that value for students and their families.

We have had to find our place in a world turned upside-down, and we have risen to that challenge. Students, staff, and faculty have worked together to produce over 1,000 face masks for frontline workers. We have partnered with Spectrum Health to convert our Cook-DeVos Center for Health Sciences into an alternative care site for COVID-19 patients, prompting a visit from Michigan's Governor Gretchen Whitmer. And we have established a Virus Action Team (VAT) to design and oversee rigorous schoolwide policies to keep our community safe.

Across GVSU, countless members of our faculty and staff — including at the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy — have worked tirelessly to maintain the highest standards of academic rigor and quality while converting their courses to online formats almost overnight. Throughout these transitions, they continue to offer critical emotional and mental support to each other and to our students.

Yet, we continue to face great uncertainty. What will the next generation's classroom look like? We do not know how students of all ages will experience learning in the foreseeable future. But what we do know for certain is that learning itself is more important than ever. People will continue to seek spaces for connection, context, and ingenuity, and we will continue to provide them.

On a broader scale, we take our commitment to our West Michigan community very seriously. The Johnson Center — through its applied research; data-informed tools and resources; and programs for nonprofits, donors, and foundations — provides vital support for this community in times of both crisis and rebuilding. This work continues to evolve as new and urgent needs arise.

We cannot know what challenges and opportunities 2021 will place before us. But we can invest in the programs, projects, and — most importantly — the people who will surely meet those moments with ingenuity, passion, and great courage. I invite you to learn more and follow this work at gvsu.edu/lakerstogether.

Be well, and be safe.



George Grant, Jr., Ph.D.
Dean, College of Community and Public Service
Grand Valley State University

Highlights

July 2019–June 2020

2019

July 17

The Johnson Center launched the **Ecosystem for Nonprofit Leadership** project in partnership with Ferris State University's Latino Business and Economic Development Center and about two dozen other prominent organizations in our community.

September 11

The Community Research Institute, founded at the Johnson Center in 2000, is officially renamed the **Community Data and Research Lab** (CDRL). Kallie Bauer is appointed interim director.

September 23

Juan Olivarez hosted and Teri Behrens moderated "**Inclusive Growth Communities: New Strategies for Prosperity**" featuring a panel of Michigan mayors at the Economic Club of Grand Rapids.

Sept/Oct

Partnering with AEA's Social Impact Measurement working group, Mission Investors Exchange, and CMF, we presented a three-part **evaluation and impact investing webinar series** for nearly 500 participants.

Sept/Oct/Nov

Tamela Spicer partnered with Grand Valley State University's Division of Inclusion and Equity to present "Building a Culture of Inclusive Leadership," our **first ever Leadership Lab series**. Thirty nonprofit leaders participated in this three-part, cohort-based program.

Sept/Oct/Nov

The "**Field Focus: Inclusive Strategies for Prosperity**" digital campaign shares resources and spotlights examples of successful inclusive growth efforts around the U.S.

2020

January 14

Our fourth annual **11 Trends in Philanthropy for 2020** report is published, featuring the insights of our trusted experts and thought leaders. The report was viewed more than 5,300 times in its first six months.

January 15

Juan Olivarez joined 22 area groups to establish **InGR: Inclusive Growth Grand Rapids**. The coalition works to bring inclusive growth-focused strategies and resources to our local community.

February 11

LearnPhilanthropy Academy, an on-demand, online learning platform for practitioners and students, officially goes live with *Track 1: The Philanthropic Sector*.

Spring 2020

The Johnson Center welcomed **two new members to our leadership team**: Jeff Williams as director of CDRL, and Leslie Staroneck as director of learning services.

March 25

A special, five-part blog series from Jeff Williams and CDRL used **IRS-990 data to assess financial threats and opportunities** for the sector during the COVID-19 crisis.

April 13

The **Economic Inclusion in Grand Rapids Data Update**, underwritten by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, is released, providing new data to help city and community leaders battle inequities.

May 28–29

We hosted a two-day "Financial Analysis in Grantmaking" course online, the **first ever fully remote offering of The Grantmaking School**.



Dorothy A. Johnson Center
FOR PHILANTHROPY

Progress on Our Strategic Priorities

We are moving forward with the strategic priorities we identified in 2018-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic upended many of our plans and programs in 2019-20 — as it did for so many in philanthropy and beyond — but we are eagerly moving forward into 2021. We are taking the lessons of this historic year and applying them to our research, professional development offerings, and partnerships.

Strategic Priority 1: Develop a two-year applied research agenda that informs and guides our work.

Our research agenda continues to evolve to reflect the expertise of our current staff and the needs of our sector. Some priority areas continue:

- Diversity, equity, and inclusion in philanthropy
- Family and individual donor journeys
- Foundation exits, including program closures and spend-downs
- The development of competency models for foundation and nonprofit roles

New priority areas reflect our commitment to understanding the sector and providing tools for organizational and community recovery:

- Inclusive growth, or inclusive economies
- IRS 990 data as a resource for understanding risks and opportunities in the sector

Strategic Priority 2: Disseminate findings and our knowledge of the field and trends at conferences and through scholarly and practitioner-focused publications.

The cancellation of “conference season” in 2020 meant moving all our publications and distribution plans entirely online. Our weekly blogs — available at johnsoncenter.org/blog — have become our primary vehicle for sharing new research, and reflections on COVID-19 and the movement for social justice.

This spring and summer, we published the five-part series called *In the Time of Coronavirus* on our blog. Researchers from our Community Data and Research Lab developed the largest database of longitudinal IRS Form 990 data in the country, and used that information to assess the financial strengths and risks facing nonprofits nationwide as they entered and move through this crisis. Jeff Williams and Tamela Spicer were invited to speak on several state- and nationwide webinars to interpret the data and share how nonprofits can use this information to prompt strategic conversations and make plans with stakeholders. This content was accessed online more than 6,500 times.

Strategic Priority 3: Collaborate with other units in GVSU to develop badging processes.

Our learning services team worked diligently throughout 2019-20 to complete a competency model for foundation program officers. This work included hosting a series of focus groups with foundation program officers and nonprofit stakeholders to validate the model. Set for release in Fall/Winter 2020, this competency model will serve as the backbone for the development of a badging program with GVSU.

We anticipate releasing a second competency model, this one for nonprofit leaders, Winter/Spring 2021.

Strategic Priority 4: Deliver a continually evolving, first-in-class suite of online and in-person educational services for foundations, donors, and nonprofit leaders.

From July 2019 to February 2020, we saw a tremendous increase in demand for our professional development offerings. Several new courses — including “Designing Metrics for Program Evaluation” and a three-part webinar series on “Evaluation & Impact Investing” (hosted in partnership with the American Evaluation Association, Mission Impact Investors, and the Council of Michigan Foundations) — broke records for attendance.

Nationwide stay-at-home orders beginning in March meant moving all of our courses online. The Grantmaking School has now undergone a complete overhaul to incorporate best practices in adult online learning and to avoid screen fatigue among participants. We are also refining all of our courses to better center the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion in our materials and in the practices we encourage philanthropy practitioners to adopt and pursue.

Strategic Priority 5: Recruit, hire, and retain a diverse, talented, and engaged staff that supports and advances the work.

The Johnson Center hired five new staff in 2020. Two new members of our team — Jeff Williams, director of the Community Data and Research Lab, and Carol Glanville, program manager — started their roles in February, right before statewide stay-at-home orders were implemented. Leslie Starsoneck, director of learning services, and Mandy Sharp Eizinger, program manager, joined us at the beginning of April and have been fully remote so far.

A search for a new W.K. Kellogg Community Philanthropy Chair was conducted over the summer of 2020. Michael Layton, Ph.D., joined the Johnson Center on September 1 as the second holder of the Kellogg Chair.

Strategic Priority 6: Develop a fundraising plan to increase funding through endowments, unrestricted support, and project funding.

In Fall 2019, the Johnson Center engaged an external firm to conduct a landscape scan assessing our value proposition to philanthropy and brand awareness at the local, state, and national level. Interviews were conducted with more than 50 of our peers and partners. The findings from this study are now informing our field and donor engagement strategies, our research agenda and professional development offerings, and the development of a new Johnson Center website.

We are grateful to the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation and the F. Martin and Dorothy A. Johnson Family Fund for providing the support necessary to complete this study.

Finances and Financial Narrative

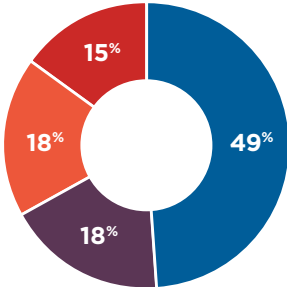
We committed to ensuring our organizational sustainability by securing and stewarding the human, financial, and intellectual resources necessary to support our mission. As an academic center of GVSU, the university provides significant support for our operations in the form of administrative and facility costs and allocations from the GVSU general fund. The Johnson Center is responsible for raising the earned and contributed revenue necessary to cover our remaining annual budget of approximately \$3 million.

Our expenses are covered by a diverse funding mix that include program revenues, general operating support, and earnings from several endowments. In the coming year, the Johnson Center plans to strengthen the role of contributed revenue in powering our mission and strategic priorities. In particular, we will seek increased funding to support our research agenda and current initiatives.

We deeply value our relationships with the many passionate donors, partners, and clients who empower our work. Together, we are building a world that is shaped by smart, adaptive, and effective philanthropy.

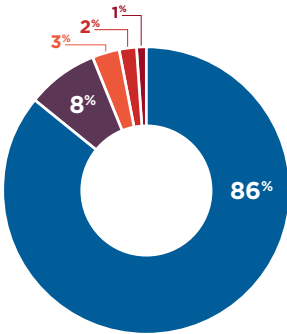
Funding and Expenses for Fiscal Year 2019-20 (July 1, 2019–June 30, 2020)

Direct Expense Funding



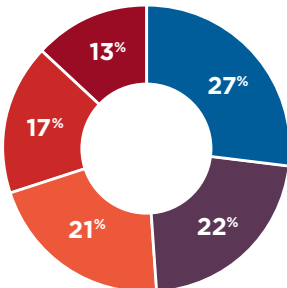
- 49%** Program Revenues
- 18%** Underwriting & Other Investment
- 18%** GVSU General Fund
- 15%** Endowment Earnings

Expenses by Category



- 86%** Personnel
- 8%** Purchased Services
- 3%** Travel & Meetings
- 2%** Supplies & Computers
- 1%** Other

Expenses by Program Area



- 27%** Community Data & Research Lab
- 22%** Operations
- 21%** Learning Services
- 17%** Chairs & Scholars
- 13%** Communications & Engagement

2019-2020

Donors & Grantmakers

General Support Funders

Arts, Equity, & Education Fund
Teresa R. Behrens & George Schimmel
Rob & Diane Collier
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
Julie & John Couturier
Shannan Denison '99 & Kevin Hubbard
F. Martin & Dorothy A. Johnson Family Fund
Frey Foundation
Grand Haven Area Community Foundation
Autumn L. Hubbard '15
Shannan Denison '99 & Kevin Hubbard
Dorothy A. Johnson
James & Brittany Kienker
Dr. André Kimboko
Dr. Priscilla J. Kimboko
The Kresge Foundation
Land Trust Alliance
Arend & Nancy Lubbers
Max M. & Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation, Inc.
Kevin J. Peterson '17
Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation
Pat Robinson '99, '05 & Dan Robinson
David '70 & Jerri '73 Schroeder
J. Michael Schultz '77
Wege Foundation
Woodward Hines Education Foundation

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Richmond Memorial Health Foundation
Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland
The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts
The Kresge Foundation
The Urban Institute
The William Penn Foundation
Wake Forest School of Medicine

Clients

Community Data and Research Lab Clients

Calvin College
Fair Housing Center of West Michigan
First Steps Kent
Grand Rapids Community Foundation
Greater Ottawa County United Way/Lakeshore Housing
Home Repair Services of Kent County
KConnect
Michigan After-School Partnership
Michigan Nonprofit Association
Ralph C. Wilson Jr., Foundation
Ruth Mott Foundation
W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Kent School Services Network
Grand Valley State University Office of the Provost

Frey Foundation Chair for Family Philanthropy Clients

AFP Central VA Chapter
Council of Michigan Foundations
Max M. & Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation

Learning Services Clients

Michigan Nonprofit Association
Michigan Public Health Institute
National Assistance League
New City Kids
Office of the Foundation Liaison
Philanthropy Colorado
Ralph C. Wilson Jr., Foundation
Spartanburg County Foundation
Susan G. Komen Detroit
The Senior Alliance
United Methodist Retirement Communities
W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research
West Michigan Asian American Association, Inc.
Whole Child Inc.

2019-2020

Our Leadership and Advisory Councils

Meet Our Leadership Council

The Johnson Center's Leadership Council advises on our strategic direction. We would like to thank the members for providing their time and expertise to help shape the center's direction.

David Egner, Co-Chair

President & CEO
Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation

Kate Pew Wolters, Co-Chair

President
Kate and Richard Wolters Foundation

Dan Cardinali

President & CEO
Independent Sector

Arend D. Lubbers

President Emeritus
Grand Valley State University

Robert Collier

Trustee
Russell and Annabelle Woodard Family Fund

Donna Murray-Brown

President & CEO
Michigan Nonprofit Association

George Grant, Jr., Ph.D.

Dean
College of Community and Public Service
Grand Valley State University

Joel J. Orosz, Ph.D.

Distinguished Professor of Philanthropic
Studies Emeritus
Grand Valley State University

Mae Hong

Vice President
Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors

Diana R. Sieger

President
Grand Rapids Community Foundation

Dorothy A. Johnson

President Emeritus
Council of Michigan Foundations

2019-2020

The LearnPhilanthropy Advisory Board

Patrick Briaud

Senior Advisor
Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors

Katie Casey

Independent Consultant

Rebecca Chamberlain-Creanga

Internal Communications Officer
The Kresge Foundation

Meghan Duffy

Executive Vice President
Grantmakers for Effective Organizations

Mary Galeti

Vice-Chair and Executive Director
Tecovas Foundation

Dara Major

Philanthropy and Social Sector Consulting

Amy Sample Ward

Chief Executive Officer
NTEN

The Foundation Review Editorial Board

Robert Ashcraft, Ph.D.

Executive Director
Lodestar Center for Philanthropy and
Nonprofit Innovation
Arizona State University

Patricia Patrizi

Patrizi Associates

Michael Quinn Patton, Ph.D.

Founder and CEO
Utilization-Focused Evaluation

Hallie Preskill, Ph.D.

Managing Director
FSG

Patrick Rooney, Ph.D.

Executive Associate Dean for Academic Programs
Indiana University
Lilly Family School of Philanthropy

Johnson Center Staff

2019–2020

Tara Baker

Philanthropy Assistant

Kallie Bauer, M.B.A.

Project Manager

Teresa (Teri) Behrens, Ph.D.

Executive Director

Emily Brenner

Project Coordinator

Sherry Collver

Unit Coordinator

Julie Couturier, CPA

Director of Operations

Jamie DeLeeuw, Ph.D.

Research Manager

Jason Franklin, Ph.D.

W.K. Kellogg Community
Philanthropy Chair

Carol Glanville, M.A.Ed.

Program Manager

Tiana Hawver, M.S.

Office Coordinator

Brian Herron

Web Developer

Karen Hoekstra

Marketing and
Communications Manager

Tory Martin, M.A.

Director of Communications
and Engagement

Michael Moody, Ph.D.

Frey Foundation Chair for
Family Philanthropy

Juan R. Olivarez, Ph.D.

Distinguished Scholar in Residence
for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Adriana Paz, M.S.C.I.S.

Senior Database Administrator

Kevin Peterson

Program Associate

Pat Robinson, M.P.A.

Associate Director of Special Projects

Mandy Sharp Eizinger, M.S.

Program Manager

Tamela Spicer, M.A.

Program Manager

Leslie Staroneck, M.S.W.

Director of Learning Services

Melyssa Tsai O'Brien, M.P.H.

Research Manager

Jeff Williams, M.A., M.B.A.

Director, Community Data
and Research lab

K. Aaron Yore-VanOosterhout, Ph.D.

Research Manager