



1992-2022

# Celebrating 30 Years of the Johnson Center

Annual Report

FISCAL YEAR 2022-23



Dorothy A. Johnson Center  
FOR PHILANTHROPY



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 strategic services; and bold thinking to advance the field, we support a philanthropic ecosystem defined by effective philanthropy, strong nonprofits, and informed community change.

Learn more at [johnsoncenter.org](http://johnsoncenter.org)

## A Message From Our Executive Director

When the Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership — what is now the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy — was founded at Grand Valley State University in 1992, there were approximately 32 universities in the U.S. offering graduate degrees or concentrations in nonprofit management.

Today — as the Johnson Center itself reflects on 30 years of work and impact and stretches forward into the future — there are more than 400 undergraduate and graduate programs in philanthropy nationwide. Across that landscape, some 50 or more academic centers on philanthropy — our peers in the field — conduct research, provide community-focused services, and engage with the nonprofit sector's many actors.

Philanthropy's interplay with research and teaching in higher education has ensured that our practice, as a field, has disciplinary boundaries and hones

of the next generation have always been complex. Yet today we face challenges — in technology and access, social and structural resilience, in equity and justice — unlike any we have faced since the advent of the Industrial Revolution. We must meet this moment with ingenuity, determination, and — most importantly — with a profound sense of humanity and generosity of spirit. I am privileged to join the Johnson Center as its executive director — and therefore to be a part of the GVSU community — at such a moment.

In the months and years ahead, the Johnson Center will continue to invest in the power of applied research — combining the rigor and resources of the academy with the immediacy and wisdom of communities — to spur meaningful transformation in the public interest. At home at GVSU, we are uniquely positioned to serve as an interpreter and nexus for the ideas, practices, successes, challenges, and opportunities of philanthropy and its study.

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LESLEY D. SLAVITT

skills and knowledge that elevate the effectiveness of the work, nurture advanced learning and context-setting, and ensure new knowledge creation. Our relationship with higher education has been and, I believe, will become even more essential to philanthropy's future.

I believe this because we are experiencing a pivotal moment in the evolution of both philanthropy and higher education, a moment that, like the pandemic itself, may be seen as what Arundhati Roy called “a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.” The needs of our communities, our workforce, and

I am eager to engage and connect across the field; you can reach me at [slavittl@gvsu.edu](mailto:slavittl@gvsu.edu). I look forward to our partnership as we collectively navigate these extraordinary times and seek out innovative and truly human approaches to addressing our shared challenges — and our shared promise.

Lesley D. Slavitt, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy

# 1992–2022: Celebrating 30 Years of the Johnson Center

## A Vision for Michigan and National Philanthropy

In 1990, Dr. Russell Mawby, then president and CEO of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, understood the importance of building a university-based anchor institution in Michigan to advance the effectiveness of philanthropy. He issued a call to action to Michigan’s college and university presidents, soliciting proposals for the creation of such a center.

Grand Valley State University’s then-President Don Lubbers immediately saw the need and the potential, based on a powerful belief in the importance of civic action and the community connectedness modeled at GVSU. President Lubbers believed West Michigan was an ideal home for the creation of research and knowledge on philanthropy that could advance not only the local community but practice worldwide.

Together, Dr. Mawby and President Lubbers committed generous resources from these two institutions to launch the Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership at GVSU in 1992. In 1999, the center was renamed in honor of Dorothy A. Johnson, the trailblazing founding president and CEO of the Council of Michigan Foundations, upon her retirement.

In today’s professional landscape — defined as it is by an organization’s ability to adapt and reskill to meet emerging opportunities and needs — the nonprofit sector and its partners urgently seek useful data, information, and knowledge, and comprehensive professional training programs. The field relies on us for critical insights through research and evaluation; for accessible, skills-based professional development; and for thought leadership that helps people make sense of new trends and address major questions.

## 30 Years Back, 30 Years Forward: Exploring Philanthropy’s Path Over Time

In September 2022, we launched a year-long celebration of our 30th anniversary — 30 years of developing expertise in community data, establishing and strengthening relationships with peers worldwide, and advancing excellence in practice through professional development programs for nonprofits and The Grantmaking School. To honor and celebrate these decades of work, we pursued unique research projects, highlighted our founders and shapers, and convened a series of timely conversations with international peers at the intersections of philanthropy’s past, present, and future.

Learn more and explore a 30-year timeline of the Johnson Center’s evolution at [johnsoncenter.org/about-us](https://johnsoncenter.org/about-us).

### PAST

***Philanthropy, 1992–2022: What Difference Can 30 Years Make?***, authored by Dr. Michael Moody, provides a sweeping analysis of how the philanthropic sector in the U.S. has — and hasn’t — evolved since the founding of the center in the early 1990s.

### PRESENT

The philanthropic sector is an ecosystem: a web of interdependent actors striving constantly to build something greater than the sum of its parts. ***11 Trends in Philanthropy for 2023*** explores how the players in this ecosystem respond to today’s national and global zeitgeist.

### FUTURE

The Johnson Center’s **30th Anniversary Summer Webinar Series** brought together philanthropic speakers from Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, WINGS, Carleton University, Brooklyn Law School, CEMEFI, and others for in-depth conversations with a combined audience of over 800 people from 39 countries. Our look to the future included the provocative and insightful program, “Will There be Nonprofits in 30 Years?” exploring changing organizational structures and priorities for community innovation.

## Pivoting to a New Era of Leadership

The celebration of our 30th Anniversary coincided with both a transition in executive leadership and the world's slow emergence from the COVID-19 pandemic. Any one of these would have prompted meaningful questions and explorations of our work, workplace, and impact among staff and with our colleagues at GVSU and across philanthropy. In combination, they created a remarkable opportunity for thinking boldly — for expanding and deepening our engagements and relationships at home and globally.

In February 2022, Dr. Teresa Behrens, executive director of the center from October 2018 to September 2022, announced her retirement, initiating a period of transition and a national search for a new leader. That search successfully concluded in early April with the onboarding of our new executive director, Dr. Lesley D. Slavitt, in April 2023.

The Johnson Center's leadership holds deep gratitude for the passion and dedication of our extraordinary staff who navigated the natural disruption caused by changes in leadership with incredible dedication to our clients, communities, and one another.

“ I believe deeply in the mission and purpose of the Johnson Center and its relevance to the public good. Having had the privilege of working in the sector for many years, I have seen the effect of information and knowledge gaps on the ability of stakeholders to ensure our best work. The center not only bridges those gaps but also provides critical tools necessary to address them.”

- LESLEY D. SLAVITT



### Meet Dr. Lesley D. Slavitt, Eighth Executive Director of the Johnson Center

Lesley D. Slavitt, Ph.D., joined the Johnson Center as executive director in April 2023. She immediately focused her energies on listening and learning with an orientation toward action. She spent the remainder of FY2023 (April, May, and June) investing in critical relationships inside and outside of the university and familiarizing herself with the programs, impact, and people of the center and its robust network. Collectively, this work is steadily informing her perspective on the Johnson Center's mission, strategies, scope, and relationships as we look to 2024 and beyond.

Dr. Slavitt previously served as CEO of the Fiat Chrysler Foundation and spent 10 years at JPMorgan Chase (and legacy companies) advancing its corporate philanthropy and foundation impact. Most recently, she helped lead COVID-19 response initiatives for the State of Michigan, including working to close the disparity gap in communities across the state. She also previously served in administrative roles in social-justice-centered higher education and urban innovation organizations.

# Making Local Connections in Michigan

## Marquee Events for Community Engagement

The Johnson Center held two new public events in FY23 as intentionally broad-reaching and community-focused convenings. Nonprofit Board Connect, held in August 2022, attracted approximately 100 nonprofit leaders and community members to make connections between organizations and those interested in board service. The Nonprofit Clinic, held in April 2023, brought together more than 110 practitioners for professional development and low-cost access to over a dozen professional service providers (e.g., retirement program providers, human resources professionals, consultants).



“St. Cecilia Music Center attended **Nonprofit Board Connect** and, as a result, has voted in three new board members! [The event] offered a great space to engage with community members seeking involvement in a nonprofit. We found three qualified and enthusiastic candidates that will bring their expertise, energy, and networks to our organization.”

- Cathy Holbrook  
Executive & Artistic Director  
St. Cecilia Music Center

Both programs focused on deepening community engagement with the nonprofit sector and advancing nonprofit efficacy in our region. Together they embody all that West Michigan and its people are and can grow to be through our collective generosity. Nonprofit Board Connect and the Nonprofit Clinic capstone the Ecosystem for Nonprofit Leadership initiative — a multi-year, multi-partner effort to reconceptualize nonprofit board service and staff-board partnership — that was led by the Johnson Center and concluded in late 2022.

## The Soul of Philanthropy: Grand Rapids Pop-Up

The Johnson Center was proud to serve on the Grand Rapids Steering Committee for TSOPMichigan, a group of dedicated community leaders working to bring the traveling exhibit, The Soul of Philanthropy Reframed & Exhibited, to Michigan. The Soul of Philanthropy, curated by Valaida Fullwood and with photographs by Charles W. Thomas, Jr., is a special exhibit of black-and-white photographs and narratives offering insights into centuries-old cultural customs and beliefs about the giving and generosity that — though rarely referred to as “philanthropy” in Black communities — have long been an integral and transformational force in lives and communities throughout American society.

From October 22–November 26, 2022, The Soul of Philanthropy: Pop-Up, Abridged Edition was on view at Muse GR, a Black-owned art gallery and gathering space.



## Sharing Recommendations from the Nonprofit-Funder Dialogue Series

In July 2023, the Johnson Center and our partners at Co.Act Detroit released the final report and recommendations of the Nonprofit-Funder Dialogue Series. This program engaged several dozen nonprofit and foundation leaders in Grand Rapids and Detroit for a series of conversations in 2021 and 2022 aimed at building transparency and trust. Co.Act and the Johnson Center are convening presentations based on this work for a two-part webinar with the Council of Michigan Foundations and joint programming with Detroit Future City.





## Supporting the Next Generation of Philanthropy's Leaders at GVSU

The Johnson Center is proud to play an important role in supporting outstanding GVSU students and faculty through our graduate assistantships, research fellowships, and student positions for undergraduates. In 2022-23, the Johnson Center hosted:

- One undergraduate research assistant in our Community Data and Research Lab.
- Three graduate assistants supporting the Frey Foundation Chair for Family Philanthropy Dr. Michael Moody and W.K. Kellogg Community Philanthropy Chair Dr. Michael Layton: Katie Dietz (M.P.H. candidate), Gideon Darko (M.S. candidate, criminal justice), and Evelyn VanDerMark (M.S. candidate, school psychology).
- Two Kathy A. Agard Fellows in Philanthropy: Maddison Reilly (M.P.A.) and Winni Walsh (M.P.N.L.).
- Two Joel J. Orosz Fellows in Philanthropy: Laken Chapin (B.B.A. marketing) and Nicole "Knicki" Karsies (Professional M.A. in social innovation)
- Russell Mawby Faculty and Student Fellows in Philanthropy: Dr. Elena Lioubimtseva, Geography and Sustainable Planning Department, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, along with students Kate Poynter and Hannah Zylman.

### JULY 2022

Dr. Teri Behrens and Melyssa Tsai O'Brien presented a program called "**Aligning Practices with Values: Evaluation as a Tool for Equity**" to the Connecticut Council for Philanthropy.

### SUMMER 2022

Dr. Michael Layton and Mandy Sharp Eizinger convened a **three-part webinar series on the Sustainable Development Goals**, building on the content and reach of Volume 13, Issue 4 of *The Foundation Review*, "Community Leadership and the Sustainable Development Goals." The series and the journal issue were both generously sponsored by the C.S. Mott Foundation.

### SEPTEMBER 2022

"**The Future of Family Philanthropy**," an article co-authored by Dr. Michael Moody and Nick Tedesco, president & CEO of the National Center on Family Philanthropy, was published in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*.

## Ongoing Research Projects at the Johnson Center

Across program areas, the Johnson Center secured many large and/or multi-year projects in FY22-23 that contribute to a robust outlook for FY23-24. Highlights include:

- **National Study on Donor Advised Funds.** Jeff Williams co-leads the Donor Advised Fund Research Collaborative (DAFRC) with partners from Brigham Young University, DePaul University, and Kienker Consulting. Together they are conducting a national study drawing on transaction-level data from over 100,000 DAF accounts at more than 100 DAF-sponsoring organizations to provide the most accurate and insightful view of this giving vehicle available to date. The project is generously supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and pursued in partnership with GivingTuesday Data Commons.
- **2023 U.S. Collective Giving Research Initiative.** Dr. Michael Layton and research partner Dr. Adriana Loson-Ceballos of Colmena Consulting are leading a partnership between the Johnson Center and Philanthropy Together to undertake a nationwide survey of collective giving groups in the U.S. to better understand their impact across race, gender, and sexual orientation. This research — generously supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Lodestar Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation — will build on the groundbreaking 2016 report, *The Landscape of Giving Circles/Collective Giving Groups in the U.S.*, conducted by the Collective Giving Research Group.

It is anticipated that through the current scaling of the giving circles movement, more than 350,000 people in 3,000 giving circles will collectively give another \$1 billion by 2025. As co-created, community-powered philanthropy, giving circles not only democratize giving and connect individuals to human and geographic communities — they also have the potential to help reverse the troubling and dramatic decline we see in household giving across the U.S.

- **Fundraising and New Types of Donors.** Fundraisers today face the challenge of engaging not only traditional donors but also connecting with new and emerging donors who are typically younger, less likely to have a prior relationship with the institution, and prioritize impact and innovation in their giving. To help with this challenge, Aimée Laramore, Mandy Sharp Eizinger, and Dr. Michael Moody are pursuing new research funded by the GivingUSA Foundation. Their research gathers data from both

### OCTOBER 2022

Mandy Sharp Eizinger and Tamela Spicer presented at the **Annual National Conference for Growing Community Foundations** in Wichita, Kansas. Dr. Michael Layton served on the National Advisory Group for the event.



### NOVEMBER 2022

Dr. Aaron Yore-VanOosterhout hosted Professor Renée Cummings, the first Data Ethicist in Residence at the University of Virginia, for the **in-person event “Disrupting Data Injustice.”** The program is presented in partnership with GVSU and the Delta Project.

Kallie Bauer, Karen Hoekstra, Tory Martin, and Jeff Williams all presented sessions at the **50th Annual Conference of the Council of Michigan Foundations.** Dr. Michael Layton interviewed Sara Lomelin, CEO of Philanthropy Together, for the main stage plenary event “Practicing People-Powered Philanthropy.”

Both Dr. Michael Moody and Jeff Williams presented during colloquium sessions of **ARNOVA’s 51st Annual Conference.**



development professionals and new types of donors themselves to develop recommendations for how fundraisers can best cultivate and support these new donors.

- **Family and Community Philanthropy in Mexico.** The evolution and growth of philanthropy in Latin America is at a crucial moment. Increasing wealth concentration, the preponderance of family business ownership, and a nascent culture of formalized philanthropy mean that the philanthropic infrastructure in many countries is developing steadily — but requires intentional cultivation to truly thrive. In FY2023, Dr. Michael Layton and Dr. Michael Moody, began exploring the intersections of family and community philanthropy in Mexico — how and why donor families give in local communities, what can explain the success or failure of philanthropic institutions, and how this connection of family and community philanthropy can be strengthened — with the hopes of doing similar studies in other Latin American countries in the future. The project is generously funded by the C.S. Mott Foundation.
- **Advocating for Data Disaggregation.** The Johnson Center is leading a cohort of partners in Michigan who are aiming to increase the awareness and use among statewide agencies of expanded protocols for racial/ethnic data disaggregation in collection and analysis. The work is supported by the Leadership Conference Education Fund.
- **Conducting Large-Scale Evaluations.** The Johnson Center continues to serve as the evaluator on many large-scale, multi-year projects, including:
  - the federally funded “Promise Neighborhoods” project led by Western Michigan University,
  - the GVSU-Battle Creek Public School partnership, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and
  - the W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s Grand Rapids, Michigan Place-Based Evaluation.

After 13 extraordinary years of service and scholarship as the Frey Foundation Chair for Family Philanthropy, Dr. Michael Moody concluded his time at the Johnson Center on July 31, 2023. Dr. Moody accepted a full professorship at the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University and began that role on August 1, 2023. Dr. Moody continues to be a research partner on both the Family and Community Philanthropy in Mexico project and the Fundraising with New Donors project.



## JANUARY 2023

The Johnson Center published its **seventh annual 11 Trends in Philanthropy report**. A follow-up webinar attracted nearly 700 registrants from 40 states + D.C. and 13 different countries. Philanthropy New Zealand responded with its own publication on national trends, and the Mexican Center for Philanthropy (CEMEFI) sought out a partnership with the Johnson Center to create its own report on philanthropic trends in Mexico. Our **30th anniversary summer series webinar, “International Perspectives on Trends in Philanthropy,”** uplifted this global conversation by engaging leaders from CEMEFI, Carleton University (Ottawa, Canada), and WINGS (Brazil/U.K.).



## MARCH 2023

Dr. Aaron Yore-VanOosterhout spoke on a panel called “Disaggregated Data and the Pursuit of Equity” at **Michigan Nonprofit Association’s Nonprofit Day at the Capitol** in Lansing, Michigan.

## MAY 2023

A **special issue of *The Foundation Review*** on impact investing featured articles from practitioners around the world exploring how foundations can use their investment portfolios to further their charitable missions while still achieving a financial return. The issue was generously sponsored by the Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation and Mission Throttle.



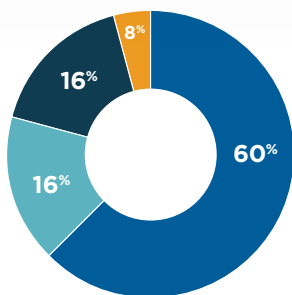
## Finances and Financial Narrative

The Johnson Center’s mission is supported by a diverse mix of funding sources that includes program revenues, general operating support, and earnings from several endowments. As the center is a unit of GVSU, the university provided support for our operations this year in the form of administrative and facility costs and allocations from the GVSU general fund. The leadership and staff of the center were responsible for raising the earned and contributed revenue necessary to cover our remaining annual budget of approximately \$3.5 million.

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.

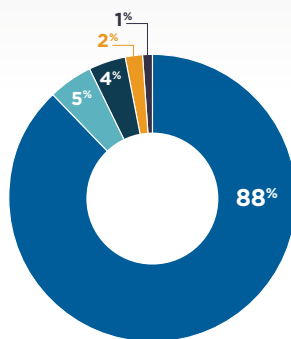
### Funding and Expenses for Fiscal Year 2022-23 (July 1, 2022–June 30, 2023)

#### Funding Sources by Category



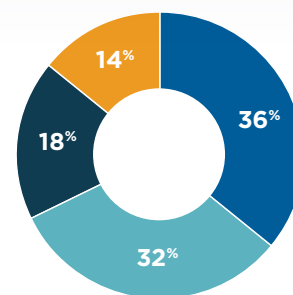
- 60%** Program Revenues
- 16%** Endowment Earnings
- 16%** GVUS General Fund
- 8%** Foundation Support

#### Expenses by Category



- 88%** Personnel
- 5%** Purchased Services
- 4%** Other
- 2%** Supplies & Computers
- 1%** Travel & Meetings

#### Expenses by Program Area



- 36%** Community Data & Research Lab
- 32%** Operations & Communications
- 18%** Learning Services
- 14%** Endowed Chairs



## Supporters & Clients, 2022-2023

### *11 Trends in Philanthropy for 2023*

Bank of America

### *The Foundation Review*

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GVSU President Emeritus Arend D. Lubbers  
Victoria Martin  
Patricia J. Robinson  
J. Michael Schultz  
Hunter Seidman

### Institutional Grantmakers

*Note: Because the Johnson Center partners with a variety of organizations, we occasionally serve as sub-awardees on grants that support joint research and capacity building projects. We therefore gratefully recognize all organizations that support our individual and partner-based work.*

Charles Stewart Mott Foundation  
Fidelity Charitable Trust  
Ford Foundation  
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation/BYU  
Jobs for the Future  
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## Spend-Down Philanthropy Peer Group

- The Burke Foundation
- Clark Enterprises
- Compton Foundation, Inc.
- Fred A. and Barbara M. Erb Family Foundation
- Fund for Nonviolence
- James B. McClatchy Foundation
- McCune Foundation
- Nina Mason Pulliam Trust
- Posner Foundation
- Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation
- Stupski Foundation
- The Threshold Foundation

## Clients

- Alabama Power Foundation
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- Bosch Community Fund
- Center for Congregations
- CFLeads
- CI: Now
- City of Grand Rapids
- Collaboratory
- College Futures Foundation
- Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan
- Community Foundation of Elkhart County
- Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne
- Connecticut Council for Philanthropy
- Connecticut Council for Philanthropy
- Corewell Health Foundation Leadership
- Council of Michigan Foundations
- Data Driven Detroit & Michigan Municipal League
- Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation
- Feeding America of West Michigan
- Fred A. and Barbara M. Erb Family Foundation

- Fremont Area Community Foundation
- Geneva Global
- GivingUSA Foundation
- Global Ministries of the Christian Church
- Grandville Avenue Arts & Humanities
- Grantmakers of Oregon and Southwest Washington
- Guiding Light
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- GVSU - Continuing Education
- GVSU - Padnos Sarosik Center for Civil Discourse
- GVSU - REP4
- GVSU - Student Senate
- Hispanic Center of West Michigan
- Humanity United
- KConnect
- Kent County Health Department
- Land Trust Alliance
- Mel Trotter Ministries
- Michigan Association of United Ways
- Michigan Nonprofit Association
- New Mexico State University
- Michigan Office of Foundation Liaison
- Pathfinders of Muskegon
- Philanthropy Southeast
- Public Sector Consultants
- Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation
- Ruth Mott Foundation
- Ruthmere
- Social Impact Commons
- Spectrum Health
- State of Michigan
- Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- Western Michigan University
- WMCAT

# 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

### **M. Gasby Brown**

Founder & CEO  
The Gasby Group, Inc.

### **Donna Murray-Brown**

Vice President of Strategy and Development  
National Council of Nonprofits

### **Dan Cardinali**

Senior Fellow, PolicyLink and  
Board Member, The Bridgespan Group

### **Isaiah Oliver**

President & CEO  
Community Foundation for Northeast Florida

### **Robert Collier**

Trustee  
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### **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  
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### **Dorothy A. Johnson**

President Emeritus  
Council of Michigan Foundations

### **Robert Smart, Ph.D.**

Vice Provost for Research Administration  
Grand Valley State University

### **Arend D. Lubbers**

President Emeritus  
Grand Valley State University

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### **Michael Quinn Patton, Ph.D.**

Utilization-Focused Evaluation

# Johnson Center Staff as of June 30, 2023



**Trish Abalo**  
Research Associate



**Alexandra Akaakar, M.S.**  
Data Analyst



**Kallie Bauer, M.B.A.**  
Senior Project Manager



**Crisol Beliz**  
Research Associate



**Emily Brenner, M.P.A.**  
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