

Third Annual Vermont Education Summit

Opening Remarks Summary



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The J. Warren & Lois McClure Foundation
The Vermont Community Foundation

In September 2011, McClure Foundation Vice President Barbara Benedict welcomed educators, legislators, businesspeople, and philanthropists to the third annual Vermont Education Summit to discuss the role of leverage and philanthropy in promoting educational opportunities for Vermonters. The forum's speakers were Matt Dunne, the Manager of Community Affairs for Google; Joyce Judy, President of Community College of Vermont (CCV); and Chara Vincelette-Perochi, Director of Veterans' Services at CCV.

This summary of Mrs. Benedict's remarks is offered as background material for those who are planning to attend the fourth annual forum in Middlebury on October 18, 2012.

"We are all attending the 2011 Vermont Education Summit because we all desire to help our students reach their full potentials while we develop the best possible workforce for Vermont. I'm privileged to be here as a representative of the philanthropic community, as one with degrees and practice in the fields of education and in business, as one who learned about the importance of an active and "warm handed" philanthropy from my parents; and I hope to launch this forum by offering some general insight into our current educational grant-making – and highlighting the important role that leverage plays in bringing more dollars and more services to Vermont students to bolster their opportunities and their chances of success."

- Barbara Benedict, McClure Foundation Vice President

PHILANTHROPY TO PROMOTE HIGHER EDUCATION

Three key aspects or approaches to our philanthropy

This September 2011, we are all familiar with the red area of this pie chart:

Initiatives to Support Immediate Needs.

We're addressing the huge impact of Hurricane Irene and getting students and classrooms ready for learning.



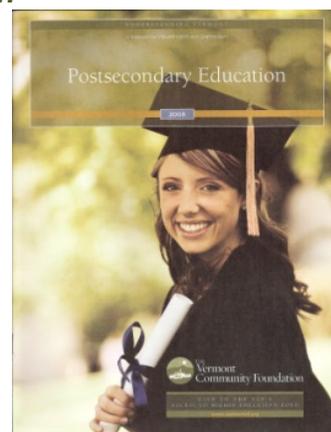
But our basic McClure Foundation philanthropic thrust is the beige base on this chart:

Promotion of Effective Programs in Place. That means supporting practitioners already in the field and already doing great things, then spreading the word about these effective practices.

And whenever possible, we work in the green area of the chart: *Support for Systemic Change*, or encouraging communication and cooperation among stakeholders in education in order to streamline, update, and align Vermont's educational institutions and policies.

Why we focus specifically on Access to Higher Education

As our Foundation addressed funding requests in the early years of this millennium, we perceived gaps in workforce development and learned that many higher-level jobs were remaining unfilled in Vermont due to a lack of qualified applicants. We learned that while Vermont had the one of the highest high school graduation rates, it also had one of the lowest rates in the nation of students going on to college.



We sponsored research in 2008-2009 to determine the financial, aspirational, and preparation challenges Vermont students face in attending college. A copy of this report, pictured above, is available at www.understandingvt.org/p2e-main.

Our research identified gaps and barriers faced by Vermonters, issues which we continue to endeavor to address, and our research revealed some magnificent bright spots, including several model programs in place in Vermont (most in the public sector, as we prefer to work with institutions with high degrees of transparency & accountability). These programs have inspired our funding in the last four years.

We acknowledge that any research report quickly becomes out of date. We feel that the lasting impact of our educational research evolves from the connections made through

research interviews, connections that continue via forums such as this—and from our identification of so many “bright spots” worthy of support and promotion to other interested parties.

Using Leverage to Maximize Higher Education Outcomes

Once we identify promising programs to support, we look for ways to maximize the force of our support for these programs through leveraging.

Leverage: applying the action of a lever to bring more force to bear on a load. And see also that leverage is “power of action.”

What action to take? Find promising projects that might attract more public and private dollars. Look for opportunities to collaborate with local/state funding, to match or attract government grants when they come along.

lev·er·age (lev'ər ij, lē'vər ij), *n.* 1. the action of a lever. 2. the mechanical advantage or power gained by using a lever. 3. power of action: *He was unable to gain much leverage, and as a result failed to get what he wanted.* [LEVER + -AGE]

To visualize leverage in our Foundation’s case, consider our goal to maximize Vermonters’ post-secondary educational opportunities and outcomes.

The bar/lever in this case is our current educational system. You apply force on one end and lift the load on the other. And “lever” comes from the French word meaning “to lift.” How appropriate, as this bar represents the institutional excellence with which we are already blessed in Vermont. Nothing happens without that and those professionals.



Promoting Systemic Change in Vermont Education

How do we lift that lofty set of goals on the right of our lever?

We stay informed to promote measures to support and strengthen our “bar,” and work to enhance our current educational infrastructure. We combine our efforts to unearth more resources, looking for matching funds from individual philanthropists, from state funding, and from national foundations. And we work to move our fulcrum toward our goals, so the effect of our resources is maximized.

Think of our fulcrum as the *communication, co-ordination, and collaboration* among players and systems that comprise our lever's bar: educational professionals, school systems, colleges, libraries... to *promote systemic change* in education in Vermont. Our effectiveness improves as we work together.

We are fortunate in Vermont to have the means to move the fulcrum of our lever closer to our goals: Vermont's PreK-16 Council

A few years ago, the Vermont legislature set the goal of ensuring that at least 60% of the adult population will have earned an associate's or higher level degree by 2020 [Latest available figures in 2011 showed the current level of attainment was just over 40%].

What is more, in the spring of 2010, the Vermont legislature commissioned an inclusive and accountable council to advise it how to make this happen!

The State Pre-K to 16 Council works to bring all the elements of Pre-Kindergarten through college in alignment. And present at the 2011 educational forum were its first Chair, Tim Donovan, Chancellor of Vermont State College [keynote speaker for this year's forum]; State Representative Peter Peltz, current Chair of the Council; and four other council members. Learn about the work of the Council at: <http://prek16vt.org>.

Even with all the collaboration, we still need to consider more funding for our goals.

The elephant in the room of every conversation about post-secondary education in Vermont is the cost of that education.

Even our most reasonable tuition in Vermont, for community college at CCV, approached \$7,000 per year in 2011 – and our students have book and commuting costs as well. *Where will Vermont students find funds? How can we help them?* This is where philanthropists, program directors, institutional administrators need to consider leveraging their dollars. And we can't just think of leveraging as dollars. When we support a program in place, we leverage our own dollars with the invaluable expertise, infrastructure, and proven success of our Vermont educational institutions.

At the McClure Foundation we look for opportunities to collaborate with local/state funders and opportunities to match or attract huge government grants. And we promote our work via this forum [and now our website at www.mcclurevt.org] in order to attract like-minded philanthropists to partner with us on current projects or to commit funds to the Vermont Community Foundation's [Access to Higher Education Fund](#).

***Using Leverage to Promote Post-Secondary Opportunities:
An Example: Introduction to College Studies(ICS) at CCV***

One example of such a project where McClure Foundation dollars and the dollars of our funding partners continue to be matched with vital mentorship for students and State commitments in the form of vouchers for free college courses is Community College of Vermont's Introduction to College Studies Program. See our [ICS infographic](#).

Our goal: expose more potential first-generation high school juniors and seniors to college culture and expectations by expanding ICS programs to include rural schools/schools less participation.

Instead of merely spending \$50,000 on scholarships, our Foundation dollars leverage CCV expertise and Vermont public dollars to enable dozens of students to experience a college mini-course on one of the CCV twelve state campuses that offers them a look at college expectation and strategies for success. Vermont high school students who complete ICS successfully earn college vouchers—worth \$600 to \$1,500—that are good at any of a dozen or so Vermont institutions (including UVM).

We thank our funding partners for helping us to make this possible and we welcome additional philanthropists who might want to share in support of this program that is breaking down barriers to college attendance.

How You Can Help Support Opportunities for Vermont Students

If you have any interest in joining with other stakeholders and philanthropists who gather at our Fall Educational Forum to pool their experience and/or resources to help Vermont students, please contact Peter Espenshade, 802-388-3355 ext. 248, for details about this year's forum, which will be held on Thursday, October 18.

And day-to-day, imagine the positive force we can be on behalf of Vermont students if we just build upon the good things we all are doing in our own spheres of influence:

As Philanthropists, we can continue to look for more partnerships to leverage our dollars; as educators, we can ever mindful of our student-centered goals;

As Leaders in Education, we can investigate ways to qualify our Vermont high school graduates for more tuition assistance and we can equip students with tools that enhance student success;

As Business People, we can unearth internships for students, to help them connect the world of school with the realities of the workplace; and

As State Legislators and Administrators, we can work toward alignment between the parts of our educational system and passage of legislation and tax policies that benefit the Vermont families already making sacrifices to educate their children.

Thank you!