



# VASSAR

Community  
Benefits

2019-2020

Since the opening of Vassar College in 1865, the College has been deeply connected and involved with the City and Town of Poughkeepsie. Vassar's enrollment of 2,440 students and employment of 1,285 faculty and staff have a significant impact on the civic, cultural, and economic life of the local area. This report describes some of the community benefits that Vassar College contributed to the City and Town of Poughkeepsie for the period of July, 2019–June, 2020.





## Direct Financial/Material Contributions

Vassar made financial and material contributions to area organizations through several mechanisms. The Vassar President's Office contributes to non-profit annual appeals, fundraising events, and sponsorships. In addition, Vassar's **Good Neighbors Fund**, which is administered through the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life, supports local non-profits who are working in conjunction with students, faculty, and staff. In addition, Vassar employees contribute to an employee directed giving program, **Community Works**, which makes donation to local non-profits. In the last year, 10 non-profit organizations received total contributions of \$73,000 from **Community Works**. In the Spring of 2020, four students were awarded a named award (the Hess award) which provides a financial award that the student may use to contribute to an outside organization. Four local agencies received a total of \$2,000.

Vassar Dining Services contributes perishable leftover food to Feed Hudson Valley which is provided to those in need in the area. Leftover food from Vassar events is contributed to local shelters through a student group called Rescuing Leftover Cuisine.

With the arrival of the pandemic, Vassar College was able to share with the community from its stockpile of personal protective equipment. This occurred from donations that were received from Vassar from parents and from equipment that has been stockpiled over the years. The items donated to the Town, the Arlington Fire Department, and the Dutchess County Emergency Response Center included 60,000 surgical masks, 2,500 N-95 masks, 4,000 gloves, 170 Tyvek suits, and 100 goggles.

Vassar's response to the pandemic also included a donation of \$10,000 from the **Good Neighbors Fund** to assist the Poughkeepsie City School District with the purchase of Chromebook computers so that students could participate in one-line learning.



## Use of Campus/Facilities

The Vassar campus and many of its buildings are open to the public. Many local residents use the campus for walking, visiting, or bicycling. Vassar provides the use of meeting space on a regular basis to community meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and the Vassar Chess Club.

In addition, the Vassar golf course is a public golf course operated by a private franchise. ***The Vassar College Farm and Preserve*** located off Hooker Avenue is the largest open green space (over 500 acres) in Poughkeepsie open to the public for walking and nature exploration. Vassar leases a portion of the Vassar Preserve to the Poughkeepsie Farm project, which is a separate non-profit that provides locally grown produce to a large number of area residents and educates the local community about food and agriculture. The ***Vassar College Community Gardens*** provides 120 plots to local residents at no cost for their own gardens. ***The Vassar Environmental Cooperative***, located on the Preserve is shared office and meeting space with the aim of increasing conservation in the Hudson Valley.

Vassar allows its athletic facilities to be used by outside group upon agreement. The Vassar pool is used by the Dolphin Swim Club, Mid Hudson Aquatics, and the Arlington and Our Lady of Lourdes Swim teams. The basketball courts are used by a local youth basketball league. Other athletic facilities are used by an area Karate Club, Fencing Club, and track and field club. The athletics department maintains community partnerships with the Marist and Spackenkill Track and Field Teams, and Dutchess Field Hockey.





## Sharing of Educational Opportunities

Vassar's mission is education and one of the benefits that we bring to the community is sharing the education resources, classes, lectures, and knowledge with the community. **The Loeb Art Gallery** is free and open to the public and shares its art collection with 30,000 visitors per year. We also have a **Museum of Geology and Natural History** that contains an extensive collection of rock, minerals, and fossils open during the year and also through appointment for field trips. The Vassar Life Long Learning Institute offers non-credit educational courses to community members fifty-five and over for a nominal fee and 300 community individuals participated in 2019-2020. Lectures, concerts, plays, and other events are open to the public and advertised through Vassar events which reaches 5,000 individuals in Poughkeepsie.

Two years ago, Vassar executed an agreement with Dutchess Community College whereby a limited number of students from each college could enroll in a class at the other campus for no additional fee. Vassar's prison studies program includes a class which is conducted at the local Taconic Women's Correctional Facility which is a combined class of Vassar students and those incarcerated. The women from Taconic receive Vassar credit for the class.

Vassar has established a **Poughkeepsie Scholars** program where entering students from Poughkeepsie High School have a financial aid package which does not include any loan expectation. In 2019-2020, there were seven graduates of Poughkeepsie High School who were enrolled at Vassar under these terms.

Vassar has created the **Vassar Science Scholars program**, where a group of students from Poughkeepsie High School meet at the campus on Saturday mornings for hands-on science experiments lead by science and mathematics faculty. The program has been in existence for many years and included the participation of hundreds of Poughkeepsie High School students.



## Vassar Volunteer Contributions to the Community

Vassar students and faculty organize several initiatives on campus which provide time and talent to the community. The largest organized effort of volunteerism is related to commitment to engage with primary and secondary education through the *Vassar Urban Education Initiative (“VCUEI”)*. This program involves over 100 Vassar students who work in programs with City of Poughkeepsie students in assisting English Language Learners, Middle School Tutoring, and college counseling and test preparation for high school students. VCUEI also offers a free two-week summer academic program where area high school students are exposed to college academics and are counseled about the college application process. The results these efforts are over 5,000 hours of volunteer time dedicated to supporting local education efforts.

Vassar students are involved in over a dozen student directed organizations which visit and provide music for area nursing home residents, support the local chapter of *Habitat for Humanity*, support area newcomers through the *Vassar Refugee Solidarity Committee*, donate leftover food, managing a community radio station, and helping cook and serve free meals in collaboration with a local church.

Over 500 students per year are involved in *Community Engaged Learning* where a student is placed in a local organization and uses that experience (coupled with academic work) as a guide to connecting studies with practical experience. These students perform many functions within the hosting organizations and provide resources and insights that are valuable to the community.

Each summer, Vassar funds 6-8 students through the *Community Fellows program* to work with area non-profits. The full-time work during the summer offers the non-profit a resource that would not otherwise be available. The projects that are created during the summer are often beyond the scope of what the agency can create as they manage the day-to-day needs of the agency.

Vassar students also work with non-profit community agencies throughout the year for no cost to the local organization. Students, who qualify, may be paid under the *federal work-study program* for 7-9 hours per week of work with a community agency. Vassar contributes to that program and a total of approximately 60 students are working in community agencies each year.



## Participation in Community Civic Groups

Vassar, along with other corporate and institutions, was a founding member of the *Poughkeepsie Alliance* which seeks to enhance the quality of life in the City of Poughkeepsie. The Alliance, formed when staff in the City offices related to planning and development were stretched thin, has participated in planning and investment in many projects in the City. Vassar is a member of the *Dutchess County Chamber of Commerce*, *the Arlington Business District* and in close communication with the other four colleges in our area. Recently the Vassar President has joined the *Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet* and the *Board of Vassar Brothers Medical Center*.

## Economic Impact

With its employment base of 1,285 individuals and a student body of 2,440, the economic impact of Vassar College on the area is significant. In addition, the College welcomes 20,000 visitors per year and the Loeb Art Gallery 30,000, so the College has a significant impact on tourism. The impact is most felt in the commercial area surrounding the campus and Vassar has taken a major role in supporting the local merchants. During the summer, the Arlington Farmers Market is welcomed on Vassar property and we recruit merchants and restaurants to table within the College student center every Tuesday during the academic year. Each student is provided with \$100 of Arlington bucks which can be spent at area restaurants which amounts to \$400,000 to \$500,000 annually.

Vassar College endeavors to purchase locally when at all possible and its current preferred vendor for office supplies is a local company. The Dining Services participates in the *Farm2Fork* program where 12% of its food purchases (over \$300K annually) are made from local producers.



