

Community
Benefits
2020-2021

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 2,435 students and employment of 1,154 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, 2020–June, 2021.





Economic Impact

With its employment base of 1,154 individuals and a student body of 2,435, Vassar College has a significant economic impact on the area. In addition, the College welcomes 20,000 visitors per year and the **Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center** 30,000, so the College has a significant impact on tourism as well. This 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 in Arlington Bucks that can be spent at area restaurants, which amounted to over \$300K in the past year.

Due to Covid restrictions, the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center was only able to be open to the public on the weekends. This year, we were able to welcome 7,000 visitors.

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 8% of its food purchases (over \$300K annually) are made from local producers.



Direct Financial/Material Contributions

Vassar made financial and material contributions to area organizations through several mechanisms. The Vassar President's Office contributes to nonprofit 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 nonprofits who are working in conjunction with students, faculty, and staff. Through this fund, eight local nonprofits received total contributions of over \$21,000. In addition, Vassar employees contribute to an employee-directed giving program, **Community Works**, which makes donations to local nonprofits. In the last year, 10 nonprofit organizations received total contributions of \$83,500 from **Community Works**. In the Spring of 2021, two students were honored with the Hess Award, which provides funds that the student may use to contribute to an outside organization. Four local agencies received a total of \$2,000.

Vassar Dining Services was unable to contribute perishable leftover food to Feed HV this year due to Covid restrictions. Feed HV, a local food rescue network, provides food to those in need in the area.



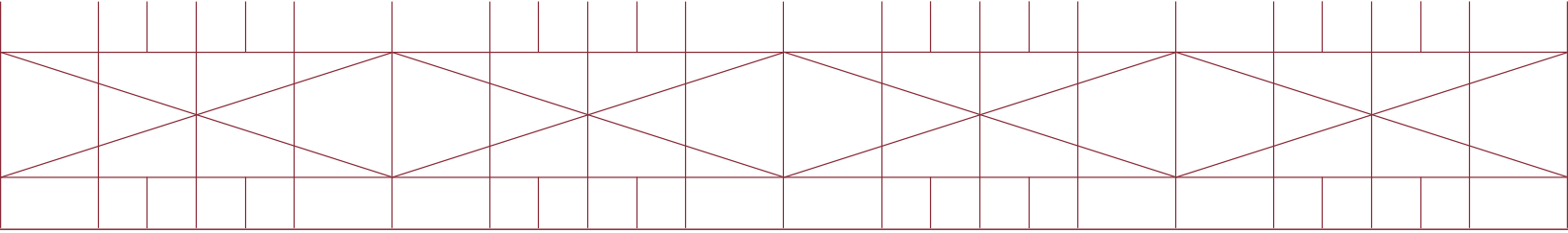
Use of Campus/Facilities

Vassar's 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. The green space in front of Alumnae House is regularly used by the Arlington Farmers' Market. This year, the Board of Trustees voted to commit the green space to be used by the community, in perpetuity, guaranteeing a home for the Arlington Farmers' Market. The open space near Crafted Kup on Raymond Avenue is also open to the public and free to use.

In addition, the Vassar golf course is a public golf course operated by a private franchise. **The Vassar College Farm and Ecological Preserve** located off Hooker Avenue is the largest open green space (over 500 acres) in Poughkeepsie and 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 nonprofit 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, provides a 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 groups upon agreement. The Vassar pool is used by the Dolphin Swim Club, Mid Hudson Aquatics, and the Arlington and Our Lady of Lourdes high school 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 College and Spackenkill High School track and field teams, and Dutchess Field Hockey.

Many of Vassar's buildings were closed to the public this year in compliance with Covid restrictions. However, visitors were still able to enjoy the campus outdoors.



Cooper House, Williams House, and 157 College Ave were used in training sessions for local fire departments. The Arlington Fire Department, the NY Office of Fire Prevention and Control, and other local fire departments were able to perform a structural building collapse training session in Cooper House. Arlington Fire was also able to complete a non-destructive training session on search and rescue and hose advancement in Williams House and 157 College Ave.



Sharing of Educational Opportunities

Vassar's mission is education, and we share our educational resources, classes, lectures, and knowledge with the community. **The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center** is free and open to the public and shares its art collection with 30,000 visitors in a typical year. This year, even during the pandemic, the Loeb Art Center was able to stay open to the public on the weekends and saw just over 7,000 visitors. We also have a **Museum of Geology and Natural History** that contains an extensive collection of rocks, minerals, and fossils. Although it was closed during 2020-2021, it is normally open during the year and through appointment for field trips. The Vassar Lifelong Learning Institute offers non-credit educational courses to community members 55 and over for a nominal fee, and 300 community individuals participated in 2020-2021. Virtual lectures, concerts, plays, and other events are open to the public and advertised through Vassar Events which reaches more than 6,000 individuals in Poughkeepsie.

Three 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. Through this agreement, nine DCC students enrolled in classes at Vassar and seven Vassar students enrolled in classes at DCC. This year, Vassar conducted a combined virtual class with Exodus that included both Vassar students and formerly incarcerated individuals from Exodus Transitional Community. The students from Exodus received Vassar credit for the class.

Vassar has established a **Poughkeepsie Scholars** program whereby entering students from Poughkeepsie High School have a financial aid package that does not include any loan expectation. This year 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. In 2020-2021, this program was run virtually. The program has been in existence for many years and has included the participation of hundreds of Poughkeepsie High School students.



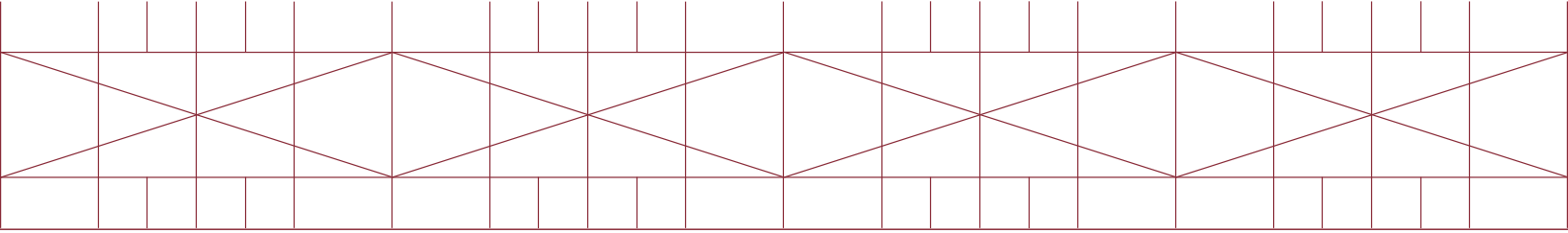
Vassar Volunteer Contributions to the Community

Vassar students and faculty organize several initiatives on campus that provide time and talent to the community. The largest organized effort of volunteerism is related to a commitment to engage with primary and secondary education through the **Vassar Education Collaboration (VEC)**. 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. VEC 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. This adds up to more than 5,000 hours of volunteer time dedicated to supporting local education efforts.

In the last academic year, VEC's programs were all virtual due to campus travel restrictions and schools being closed for the majority of the year. But in addition to our regular program offerings, VEC provided one-on-one virtual tutoring to students in the community who were struggling with virtual learning. Our virtual two-week summer program, which covered the subject of Exploring Climate, enrolled 15 local youth. We also ran a parallel two-week program specifically targeting City of Poughkeepsie 8th graders titled "Getting Ready for High School" which involved discussions, guest lecturers, and self-guided activities within the area. VEC continued its gift drive for English-language-learning kindergarten students by assembling gifts for 60 children—a result of raising over \$1,200 from the Vassar community.

Vassar students are involved in over a dozen student-directed organizations that 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, manage a community radio station, and help cook and serve free meals in collaboration with a local church.

Over 300 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.

This summer, Vassar funded 15 students through the **Community Fellows** program to work in person or virtually with area nonprofits. The full-time work during the summer offers the nonprofit 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 nonprofit 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 Improvement District***, and is 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***.

Environmental Impact

Vassar is committed to reducing its carbon emissions. In 2020-2021, Vassar's carbon emissions were 15,036 metric tons, a reduction of 15,514 metric tons from our 2005 baseline of 30,550 metric tons. We plan to reduce our carbon footprint to just 20% of our 2005 baseline by 2025. In the area of physical plant, we have adopted green-building guidelines, which were developed by a team of students, faculty, and staff from our facilities team. Thanks to these, every new building will have net-zero carbon operational emissions, and all major renovations sharply decrease our reliance on combustible fuels. We are engaged in a multi-year effort to replace most of our natural gas consumption with biofuel, and as of July 2021, we are purchasing exclusively 100% green electricity on an ongoing basis. In addition, Vassar donated and installed 21 street lights on Raymond Avenue with dark-sky-complaint LEDs. This reduced the Town's energy use and improved visibility in the area.

