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The Impact of the Seidman College of Business Outreach Centers on the
Grand Rapids Business Community

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The Impact of the Seidman College of Business Outreach Centers on the
Grand Rapids Business Community

By Benjamin Michael Thoenes

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to explore the advisory role of selected Outreach Centers of the Seidman College of Business as led by their executive directors, and to examine the effects of their relationships with the Grand Rapids business community. For the basis of comparison the interviews included the director of one organization outside the Seidman College of Business. A qualitative approach in the form of a researcher-designed interview was used for the purpose of collecting data (Creswell, 2005). The interviews, conducted at each of the Outreach Center Offices, were designed to elicit important information regarding the Centers and their endeavors. Detailed notes were transcribed and data were hand-coded. Emerging and recurring themes revealed that the Outreach Centers hold true to the mission statement of the Seidman College of Business and are extremely effective within the local business community. They have achieved this through expert consulting and service-oriented practices that have led them to positively impact countless business entities throughout West Michigan, the Midwest, the entire country, and the world. The Outreach Centers have also developed an excellent mode of communication between the school of business and the business world, which has resulted in the sharing of ideas and many positive responses and feedback. The findings of this study have important implications for the continued success of the Grand Rapids business community and the integrated education/business model for students at the Seidman College of Business. Recommendations include future research projects that may further investigate the other

Outreach Centers not included in this study and other forms of community involvement within the Seidman College of Business such as career fairs, departmental career nights, graduate programs, and many other opportunities connecting students to the ‘real’ world of business.

The Impact of the Seidman College of Business Outreach Centers on the Grand Rapids Business Community

The attainment of a mission statement articulated by any College of Business can be measured by the influence and impact it has in its region, specifically in the realm of commerce

and business, and the employability—the preparedness—of its graduates. Equally important, the development of any successful business community often relies on the partnerships it forms with other organizations and institutions. Clearly, positive and successful relationships between a university and its local business community are vital to the overall socioeconomic status of a given area.

Grand Rapids has a reputation of being a growing business hub regionally and nationally, some of which can be attributed to its mutually beneficial relationship with the Seidman College of Business at Grand Valley State University. In fact, their mission statement speaks to these outcomes:

Seidman develops business talent that contributes to the economic growth of West Michigan and the Great Lakes region. Through the exchange and application of knowledge with a global perspective, our students learn to make informed decisions, act ethically, and take initiative. Our distinctiveness is grounded in strong community collaborations, applied scholarly contributions, innovative approaches to learning, and a supportive environment. (Seidman College of Business, 2018)

This mission statement provides evidence that the Seidman College of Business pursues excellence through its goal of fostering personal, professional and organizational endeavors to help all parties involved, including its students. In doing so, it is vital that communication channels between academic institutions and business communities remain open and be continually developed to ensure future success and growth.

Historically, institutions of higher learning have been viewed as “ivory towers,” entities purposefully isolated from the realm of the typical citizen. However, the Morrill Acts of 1862 encouraged the state to create land-grant universities to better integrate these institutions with the

needs of the state. This legislation prompted states to focus on a full spectrum of educational opportunities in contrast to the historic practice of solely offering an abstract liberal arts curriculum. Throughout the twentieth century continual progress was made toward better coordination between universities and the state and local government, corporations, and business communities. Most of the land-grant colleges of the past became large public universities that we see today (Land-grant University, 2018).

However, the origins of Grand Valley State University are rather dissimilar to the founding of most land-grant state universities, an important factor in its brief history. In the late 1950s, under the leadership of L. William Seidman, a regional effort was undertaken “to gain support to establish an independent, state-supported, four-year institution in higher education in West Michigan” (50th Anniversary, GVSU History, 2018). After Public Act 120 passed on April 26, 1960, the Grand Rapids community and constituents in an eight-county area had to raise one million dollars toward the founding of the new university. Grand Valley State University was founded in 1960 and opened its doors in 1963.

The founding of Grand Valley State College, as it was first named, revealed a tension between two philosophical paradigms: those who were committed to a 19th-century classic liberal arts college model and those who held a more contemporary idea that tax-supported institutions had a responsibility to the community to provide professional education in areas such as business and education. According to Dr. Anthony Travis, the two philosophical paradigms competed to test which one would form the academic culture of the new institution. He coined the first, ‘community pragmatism,’ and the other, ‘academic foundationalism’ (50th Anniversary, GVSU History, 2018).

The establishment of the Seidman College of Business was also unique. The first economics courses were taught in 1965, with a School of Business and Economics being established in 1970. The F.E. Seidman Graduate College was formed in 1973 by the generous financial support provided by the Seidman Family Foundation. In 1979, undergraduate and graduate programs were merged into the Seidman College. Due to a university-wide restructuring effort in 1983, the Seidman College was renamed the Seidman School of Business, and as of July 2004, the Seidman School was newly re-named the Seidman College of Business (Seidman College of Business, History, 2018). A brief description of the development of the Seidman College of Business follows:

In 1988, the opening of the Grand Rapids L.V. Eberhard Center provided opportunities to offer courses in Grand Rapids in addition to those offered on the Allendale Campus. . . In the summer of 2000, the college moved into the Richard M. DeVos Center, a new \$50 million facility on the Robert C. Pew Grand Rapids Campus that housed a variety of university programs and services. Then in May of 2013, the College called the newly constructed L. William Seidman Center, its new home. This new facility, housing all of the College's programs as well as its business outreach centers, bolsters the many linkages that the College has formed with both the local and international business communities from a prime downtown location on the Grand River. (Seidman College of Business, History, 2018)

In this paper, I examine the specific ways in which the aforementioned Outreach Centers of the Seidman College of Business (SCB) at Grand Valley State University maintain an advisory role for businesses in the region and explore the services they offer. The seven Outreach Centers form an integral component of the Seidman College of Business whose mission is to

provide informational and educational services to the business community in the region and the state of Michigan. Personnel at the Outreach Centers often assist entrepreneurs and startups; domestic and international businesses of any various sizes; government agencies; and local non-profit organizations. In addition, their versatile business services and business knowledge range from helping people start a new business to designing strategies to increase competitiveness (Outreach Center, 2018).

The theoretical basis of this study draws from Organizational Identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985) as discussed and elaborated by Anand, Joshi, and O’Leary-Kelly (2013). While OI theory examines an organization through a framework of “who are we” and “who we want to be,” the latter group of researchers expanded the theoretical basis to include negotiated and changing identity. The original OI theorists spoke about central and enduring qualities, yet other researchers challenged that notion as organizations continually face changes. This expanded version of OI encompasses “who are we” and “who we want to be” as continuously renegotiated set of meanings that can change over time (Anand, et al., 2013). These researchers argued that the connection of a firm to its strategic group relies significantly on its identity. Managers of a strategic group will be likely to identify with an organization when it overlaps with their own identity.

Although OI was first applied to organizations or firms and their strategic groups in competitive settings, this theory is applicable to this study of the Outreach Centers in that it answers questions “that probe organizational values and goals and provide(s) members with a sense of stability” (Anand, Joshi, & O’Leary-Kelly, 2013). The OI application may also be useful in this examination of the purpose and functions of the various Outreach Centers as the

study focuses on management and strategic planning for these organizations. Through the theory of OI, we can examine the identity and goals of these entities.

The purpose of this research was to explore the advisory role of selected Outreach Centers of the Seidman College of Business as led by their executive directors, and to examine the effects of their relationships with the Grand Rapids business community. For the purpose of comparison, I also interviewed the director of a non-SCB organization.

This project was unique because the researcher explored how a College of Business established and maintained collaborative relationships through business outreach centers and examined the ways these efforts contributed to the local business culture. The information gathered on this topic could help current and future students learn about the important dynamics of mutually beneficial and service-oriented ventures between an institution and regional businesses and community organizations. Oftentimes, university students experience a disconnect between academia and the “real world”—the actual world of work. This project report may better inform students as to their choices in regard to resources currently made available to them and later as they join the workforce.

Review of the Literature

Grand Rapids is rapidly growing in many different sectors. The greater metropolitan area was the fastest growing economy in the U.S. last year, according to *Headlight Data*, a company that tracks economic and workforce development (Harger, 2017). The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicated that the Grand Rapids' workforce grew 4.4 percent last year. In addition, total employment in the four-county region grew from 516,394 in 2015 to 539,152 in 2016, making it one of the most vital job growth regions in the United States (Harger, 2017). Currently, MLive

reports that the Grand Rapids area is the fastest growing population center in Michigan according to new numbers from the U.S. Census Bureau (Vande Bunte, 2016).

The Grand Rapids region has a long and rich history of commerce. In a qualitative study, Castro (1999) attributed this success to civic virtue and the ethos of business adopted by the people of Grand Rapids. In his study, Castro detailed the history of economic development in Grand Rapids and attributed this success to the loyalty dedicated to community-based businesses, particularly the furniture business and a concentration of privately held firms. Local economic development emphasized the business climate for existing firms rather than attracting new ones. Nevertheless, Grand Rapids had a high rate of firm proprietors, entrepreneurs, and corporate officials. Furthermore, these Grand Rapids businesses cooperated in civic and cultural ventures and concerned themselves with broader social issues. Castro also reported that the Grand Rapids history of small locally-controlled family owned businesses were not only connected to the local business culture but to the culture of the community in general.

In recent decades researchers have examined the disparity between business school focus and business community needs with some findings reporting minimal communication. One extensive research study by F. R. David, M. E. David, and F. R. David (2011) undertook the content analysis of 200 corporate job descriptions and the examination of 200 résumés of business students that revealed a low to no proficiency on the job description-derived skill sets (David, et al., 2011). The researchers recommended that rather than pursuing solely academic tracks we need more practitioners, and we need to close the gap between business school curricula and corporate needs. According to these researchers, it is time for a new business school model that more closely aligns pre-graduate training with post-graduate job requirements (David, et al.).

More recently, researchers described the efforts of two universities (including Grand Valley State University) that experimented with course design and discipline integration in an applied environment (Lane & Farris, 2016). In this case the two universities, six colleges, three faculty members, and one corporate sponsor designed a course based on experimental program integration. Extensive survey questions to students revealed that participants gained new knowledge and an overall positive response. They also received practical information in the form of résumé-builder and an opportunity to open doors as leaders themselves.

It is important to develop an understanding of the richness and uniqueness of Grand Rapids's history especially in the cultural environment of a vibrant business sector. Additionally, it is vital that current undergraduate business students be guided toward obtaining useful skill sets prior to the job searches and realizing their full potential. GVSU students should be informed as to what opportunities are available for them to gain further experience in the real world of business. For these reasons it is crucial to further study the relationships between the Seidman College of Business, its Outreach Centers, and the Grand Rapids business community.

Method

The purpose of this research was to explore the advisory role of selected Outreach Centers of the Seidman College of Business as led by their executive directors, and to examine the effects of their relationships with the Grand Rapids business community. For the basis of comparison, I also interviewed the director of an organization outside the Seidman College of Business.

I chose to use a qualitative approach in the form of interviews for the purpose of collecting data (Creswell, 2005). These interviews were designed to elicit important information regarding the Outreach Centers and their endeavors. In discussion with my project advisor, Rita

Grant, I selected three Outreach Centers that aligned with my interests in the business community. I was able to interview the Executive Directors of these Outreach Centers in addition to interviewing the Executive Director of a non-SCB Center aligned with Grand Valley State University.

I initially contacted each participant through an email inquiry to ask if she or he was interested in being interviewed. After each receiving positive responses, I set up times to meet with each Executive Director. It was made clear that participation was voluntary and that the information shared would be used to complete my Senior Honors Project, the Frederik Meijer Honors College capstone. I met with each participant individually and addressed the questions, yet allowed the participant to speak freely at any time. I took detailed notes during the interviews and then transcribed their responses which are included in this report. Afterward, I coded the data and looked for emerging and recurring themes (Creswell, 2005).

The SCB Outreach Centers included in this study were:

Richard M. and Helen DeVos Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Interviewee: Executive Director, Shorouq Almallah

Van Andel Global Trade Center

Interviewee: Executive Director, Sonja Johnson

Family-Owned Business Institute

Interviewee: Executive Director, Ana Gonzalez

The Grand Valley State University Center included in this study was:

Johnson Center of Philanthropy

Interviewee: Director of Communications and Engagement, Tory Martin

The initial process for the creation of the researcher-designed questionnaire used in this study consisted of writing and revising a number of drafts of sample questions. I worked toward identifying and honing my core research questions, while understanding that in qualitative studies new information during an interview may lead to new research questions. In addition, I based some of my questions on OI theory: “who are we” and “what do we want to be” (Anand, Joshi, & O’Leary-Kelly, 2013), and explored the ethos of business (Castro, 1999).

The research questions posed during the interview included:

1. Please tell me about your view of “who we are” and “who we want to be” in relation to the mission of this Outreach Center and the Seidman College of Business.
2. What is the history of the Outreach Centers? When and why were they established?
3. What is your view on this question: What are business schools doing for businesses?
4. What are some of the key services you provide to SCB students, business partners, and the community? Please share one of your favorite success stories.
5. Have you noticed any areas where your collaborative partnerships could improve and grow?
6. How do your outreach efforts affect the business climate in the region and vice versa?
7. What are the possible benefits for GVSU students in regard to internships, mentorships, and career opportunities developed through the relationships fostered by this Outreach Center and the SCB?
8. What are some of the ways these SCB efforts develop leadership at various levels?
9. What are some ways to better inform SCB students about your services?
10. In regard to this topic, in which direction do you see SCB moving toward in the next five years?

After the interviews were transcribed, I took the added step of asking each participant to review the final form. This process of checking data is known as triangulation, a way of checking data that contributes to the trustworthiness and accuracy of a researcher's transcriptions. To triangulate data, a researcher cross-checks his or her own insights and interpretations of findings with the participants of the study (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, & Garner, 1991).

Results and Data Analysis

The following is a description of the findings from the conducted interviews.

Through my interview with Sonja Johnson, the Executive Director of the Van Andel Global Trade Center (VAGTC), I was able to gain a firmer understanding of the Center as a whole (Sonja Johnson, personal communication, March 16, 2018). After I hand-coded and analyzed the transcription of the interview, four main themes emerged: a) developing positive communications and relationships between the Seidman College of Business and the Grand Rapids business community, b) fostering of growth and development for Michigan businesses through expertise and advising, c) providing real-world experience and professional opportunities for students, and d) informing constituents of the effects of changes in political and economic factors at the national and global level. The VAGTC constantly adapts new techniques of advising as they must stay up to date.

In response to the question of group identity and mission, Sonya Johnson described the main focus of the VAGTC as being advisory in nature and serving as a conduit between SCB faculty, students, and the business community: "Our role is to open doors." The stated mission of the Van Andel Global Trade Center is as follows: "The mission of Van Andel Global Trade Center is to strengthen the community through increased global business by providing international consulting, training, and resources" (Van Andel Global Trade Center, 2018).

In regard to possible benefits for SCB students, the VAGTC works tirelessly to provide them opportunities for growth and experience while assisting Michigan businesses in many ways. The VAGTC helps students by providing selective employment and volunteer opportunities and hosting professional events and seminars. These services allow students to gain practical work experience and confidence in their selected field of study. Other learning experiences consist of putting students in contact with real Michigan businesses in their respective areas to help tackle real-world issues and business problems.

The Van Andel Global Trade Center offers numerous types of advising and services for Michigan business such as international business training seminars, export and import assistance, international and emerging market research, and customized on-site training with experts (Economic Impact Survey Results, 2015). Specific areas of international business in which they consult are international consulting and market entry, export and import advising and assessments, cultural assistance and language services, foreign investment opportunities, compliance and regulations, free trade management, global supply chain logistics, NAFTA advising, global risk factors, and many types of market research. All of these expert consulting services and opportunities are intended to increase competency in organizations, develop strategic partnerships inside and outside of the university, and to increase economic development of the Grand Rapids region through international business (Van Andel Global Trade Center, 2018).

Through my interview with Ana Gonzalez, the director of the Family-Owned Business Institute, I was able to gain a better understanding of the functions and goals of FOBI. The FOBI is different than most of the Outreach Centers in the way that it is smaller, and with fewer sources of funding. The themes that emerged from coding and analyzing the interview

transcriptions were: a) the importance of serving family businesses through scholarships, education and advocacy, and b) international family business collaboration. The goal of the FOBI is to connect members to resources and opportunities in order to help their businesses develop and grow to become more successful (Ana Gonzales, personal communication, March 19, 2018).

The Family-Owned Business Institute offers many training and educational seminars and courses for students, faculty, and the public which help support community businesses and provide many learning and experiential opportunities for all who partake. Specifically, the Family Business Management course offered by the FOBI highlights the important relationship between management, ownership and family dynamics in the world of business. This also provides local family-owned businesses a chance to meet and network with other similar business. Ana Gonzalez emphasized the fact that the FOBI understands that family-owned businesses are all unique entities that come from different areas and markets of business and have different needs and goals. She also stressed the fact that family-owned businesses operate in slightly different ways than traditional companies and that oftentimes, alternative goals other than solely profit are at play. These companies think differently, and the FOBI adheres to these varied needs and structures their educational services accordingly to better serve family-owned businesses. Due to their limited funding, often times the FOBI can still serve businesses indirectly by referring them to ways to receive further assistance and funds. This is additional consulting advice outside of their normal informative services (Ana Gonzalez, personal communication, March 19, 2018).

The Family-Owned Business Institute also encompasses international aspects. They believe that global collaboration is very important to successful businesses. With respect to this

issue, the FOBI annually welcomes a “Scholar-in-residence” to the Seidman College of Business to work with seven other scholars and researchers to discuss family business topics and to conduct research on this topic. Through idea sharing and mutually beneficial studies, both parties are able to build positive relationships and produce vital and relevant research in the field (Ana Gonzalez, personal communication, March 19, 2018).

In general, I learned that the FOBI believes that family-owned businesses are the backbone of many communities and that the further support, growth, and development that they can help provide these companies will only help Grand Rapids in the long run. They try to foster a sense of community through balancing a core culture of values most often associated with hard work, sacrifice, service, integrity, quality, loyalty, trust, respect, and commitment (Family-Owned Business Institute, 2017).

The interview with Shorouq Almallah was very informative about the practices of the CEI (Shorouq Almallah, personal communication, March 21, 2018). The mission statement reads as follows:

The Richard M. and Helen DeVos Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation (CEI), in The Seidman College of Business, is dedicated to developing best practices in entrepreneurship education and community engagement that enhance and impact the creation of new ventures and opportunities. (Richard M. and Helen DeVos Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation, 2017)

Based on the interview transcriptions, several main themes emerged: a) the provision of student entrepreneurial opportunities, b) community education and outreach, and c) the Lend GR microloan program. The CEI provides students with numerous educational and experiential opportunities in the form of classes, seminars, networking, pitch competitions across the country,

and mentorships. The idea behind these services is to support the growth of all students in these areas and to create an environment that fosters entrepreneurship and enhances entrepreneurial activities. Shorouq Almallah described the purpose of the CEI as, “We are here to help provide resources and to promote the mindset to interested individuals and groups to help them pursue their own ventures” (Shorouq Almallah, personal communication, March 21, 2018). These services are geared to help students apply their learning and use innovative concepts in a real-world setting. The long-term goal is to create a “pipeline of entrepreneurs” at Grand Valley State University. As a result of all of these projects, engaged students and faculty will positively affect Grand Rapids and add young, bright business minds to the local business community

The CEI also interacts with and supports the local Grand Rapids business community in many ways. To instill an entrepreneurial mindset early in students’ careers, the CEI works closely with local K-12 institutes to offer classes, activities, and programs. These partnerships are crucial to developing a sense of community in Grand Rapids and proactively promote entrepreneurial and innovative behavior in young students.

The Lend GR microloan program is an excellent service for local entrepreneurs. The program provides small dollar loans to low income borrowers who may not meet the criteria for traditional bank lending (Richard M. and Helen DeVos Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation, 2017). At times, some low-income startups may face difficulties such as non-sufficient funding, below average credit scores, or other factors preventing them from being approved for normal bank loans. The Lend GR microloan program is an efficient way to bridge the funding gap for these businesses to obtain the necessary resources, so they may grow and receive technical assistance in specific business areas.

To conclude, CEI is extremely committed to the support and enrichment of the entrepreneurial community. They believe that local economic development is the key to a prosperous community. Essentially, they act as a consulting hub within the Seidman College of Business where entrepreneurs can connect to a plethora of resources ranging from mentorships, networking opportunities, regional and national conferences, workshops, high-tech startup and incubation facilities, and access to capital. Almallah spoke about a real, measurable “Laker Effect” that can be felt and seen in the regional business community. As a result, Grand Valley students and graduates are often highly pursued and sought after for business positions and perform well.

The final interview conducted during this project was with Tory Martin, the Director of Communications and Engagement at the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University (Tory Martin, personal communication, April 4, 2018). The Johnson Center for Philanthropy is slightly different than the previous Outreach Centers in this study. It is not one of the Outreach Centers for the Seidman College of Business but a separate entity within Grand Valley State University. They work with many similar businesses and groups in the local community and have many of the same goals. Although their mission statement is currently in the process of being revised, the philanthropic tenets have not altered. The Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy (JCP) is extremely committed to helping donors, foundations, and non-profits of all kinds achieve their organizational goals. Martin described the broad mindset of the JCP and explained their desire to think and work globally while maintaining an impact in the Grand Rapids community. She emphasized that the JCP is very West Michigan-grounded, but that they also conduct collaborative work in many countries such as Australia, Saudi Arabia, and more (Tory Martin, personal communication, April 4, 2018).

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate and analyze the mutually beneficial relationship between the selected Outreach Centers within Seidman College of Business at Grand Valley State University and the local business community of Grand Rapids. Grand Rapids has a reputation of being a growing business hub regionally and nationally, and upon completion of thorough research, I believe much of the success can be attributed to this relationship with the Seidman College of Business of Grand Valley State University. The Outreach Centers play an integral role in this process and assist many different types of organizations in many areas of business.

Based on my interpretation of the qualitative data from the interviews, I concluded that the Outreach Centers hold true to the mission statement of the Seidman College of Business and are extremely effective within the local business community. They have achieved this through expert consulting and service-oriented practices that have led them to positively impact countless business entities throughout West Michigan, the Midwest, the entire country, and the world. The Outreach Centers have also developed an excellent mode of communication between the school of business and the business world, which has resulted in the sharing of ideas and many positive responses and feedback. All the Outreach Centers examined in this study also provide numerous student opportunities, a key part of their role as a part of the school of business. The centers are also always evolving and changing to meet the needs of their clients and to stay up-to-date with global shifts in related fields. Future research projects related to this topic may further investigate the other Outreach Centers not discussed in this essay and other forms of community involvement within the Seidman College of Business such as career fairs, departmental career nights, graduate programs, and many other student opportunities.

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Appendices

Transcripts of Interviews

A. Richard M. and Helen DeVos Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Interviewee: Executive Director, Shorouq Almallah

B. Van Andel Global Trade Center

Interviewee: Executive Director, Sonja Johnson

C. Family-Owned Business Institute

Interviewee: Executive Director, Ana Gonzalez

D. Johnson Center of Philanthropy

Interviewee: Director of Communications and Engagement, Tory Martin

Senior Honors College Project Questionnaire

Transcript A

Name of Participant: Shorouq Almallah

Title: Executive Director

Outreach Center: Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation

1. Please tell me about your view of “Who we are” and “Who we want to be?” in relation to the mission of this Outreach Center and the Seidman College of Business.

The mission of Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation (CEI) is create best practices in entrepreneurship education and community engagement to enhance and impact the creation of new ventures. We support entrepreneurship on campus and in the community by figuring out how to train people to develop the skills and connect with the necessary resources to launch a business. We are here to help provide resources and develop the mindset and skill set so that interested individuals or groups can pursue their ideas and ventures, internally and externally.

Our focus is on GVSU students, talent development, “pipeline of entrepreneurs” through curriculum and degree programs, as well as provide real world and hands on experiential opportunities outside of the classr

2. What is the history of the Outreach Centers? When and why were they established?

The CEI officially began in 2000, but Almallah recently found a memo from 1977 requesting an entrepreneurship class.

3. What is your view on this question: What are business schools doing for businesses?

The Seidman College of business has a very unique collaboration with the business community; one she doesn't see at other schools.

4. What are some of the key services you provide to SCB students, business partners, and the community? Please share one of your favorite success stories.

Students:

We maintain a focus on students, talent development, “pipeline of entrepreneurs” through curriculum and degree programs, entrepreneurship major, and a certificate for non-business majors as stated above. We offer exciting work opportunities such as co-curricular activities where students can apply their learning and use those concepts to build it into a business. Talent development includes a wide variety of activities such as: “Pitch” competitions, conferences, workshops, mentoring, and peer to peer networking.

Business Community:

In regard to the community we develop our collaborative and reciprocal relationships in many different ways. We contribute to the local economic development which is the key to a prosperous community. We identify and connect stated needs to available resources, and through partnerships with organizations whose missions align with the CEI. We sponsor and host various conferences to collaborate with these local organizations throughout the year.

Our partnerships extend to schools, from K-12 grades. We partner with schools to instill entrepreneurship at an early age by bringing programs to their schools and offering workshops at Grand Valley State University. More specifically, we are involved in the following programs:

- Teen Entrepreneurs Summer Academy for entrepreneurial practice and experience
- More community outreach: LENDER Program (See handout). This is a new venture begun January 2018. These services include: Initial consultation, due diligence, help with loan applications, technical consulting where they leverage

GVSU students to work with the entrepreneurs in areas of business development and marketing plans, financial statements, social media, etc.

- Microloans to low-income entrepreneurs, where banks might not be of help
 - Kale chip lady example, fill the funding gap. (A success story-- #4).
 - Possibly low credit score prevents big bank loans. We assist with loans to help those who would probably not be accepted by the banks.

5. Have you noticed any areas where your collaborative partnerships could improve and grow?

More student outreach on the Allendale campus and to foster more interest in entrepreneurship and awareness of the CEI

6. How do your outreach efforts affect the business climate in the region and vice versa?

We believe the ways we interact with the local business community are mutually beneficial for the university as a higher education institution and the community at large. For example, the internships, co-ops and service programs (even engineering and nursing) that are established help make an impact on the community. In our thinking, GVSU has a positive impact, a measurable “Laker effect” through the services we offer such as consulting, and so many more ways of community interaction

7. What are the possible benefits for GVSU students in regard to internships, mentorships, and career opportunities developed through the relationships fostered by this Outreach Center and the SCB?

Students:

Some specific examples include the four student teams from GVSU who placed in the top 10 at a competition in Utah for startups. Our students experience a high rate of competition success and receive money for their innovative ideas. Another more recent example is the “Student Incubator” idea in the works that would focus on redesigning the office.

8. What are some of the ways these SCB efforts develop leadership at various levels?

n/a

9. What are some ways to better inform SCB students about your services?

We continue to struggle as to how best to connect with the Allendale campus and get the word out about the center. These efforts include email lists and social media. We also post occasional flyers and promotions in Allendale.

10. In regard to this topic, in which direction do you see SCB moving toward in the next five years?

In the near future we will implement a new program in the works for more community outreach. We plan to identify areas where gaps exist and then design new opportunities to address these needs. We do not want to duplicate other community partners in any way.

This fall we hope to launch a new service for veteran entrepreneurs or service members. We plan to establish a specific program that is intensive, accelerated and cohort-based. We envision for example a 12-week cohort with other veterans where they can receive networking, training, coaching, and small grant funding while they work to develop business plans. This program would allow veterans to explore their ideas further and build upon their ideas in an accelerated manner. This would be the first type of program in Michigan to fill that need in the community.

We are in the early stages of this project planning and have a lot more hand-holding with entrepreneurs.

Senior Honors College Project Questionnaire

Transcript B

Name of Participant: Sonja Johnson

Title: Executive Director

Outreach Center: Van Andel Global Trade Center

1. Please tell me about your view of “Who we are” and “Who we want to be?” in relation to the mission of this Outreach Center and the Seidman College of Business.

Our role is to open doors. Our SCB faculty members connect to businesses which allows students and faculty to network and gain practical experience. We also work with the Executive M.B.A. program to “bridge the gap.”

2. What is the history of the Outreach Centers? When and why were they established?

We have been part of GVSU since 1999. We received seed money from Van Andel and receive a small stipend each year. We have minimal employees as we prefer to hire more students and charge for their services.

3. What is your view on this question: What are business schools doing for businesses?

We are the only university in the U.S. that is a grantee administrator for a foreign trade zone that includes a tri-county area: Kent, Ottawa, and the Muskegon trade zones.

We assist in the development and growth of businesses such as Wolverine, Adient (Holland), Southern Lisoplate (SLP), and work toward keeping jobs in West Michigan. We also offer training seminars.

4. What are some of the key services you provide to SCB students, business partners, and the community? Please share one of your favorite success stories.

Students:

We work with businesses to hire GVSU graduates. One of our goals is to provide our GVSU undergraduate students with soft skills and confidence through real experiences. We achieve this in a two-fold approach: a) students receive their education with all topics are focused on International Business; b) we provide a culture series each quarter. For example, Germany in February, and China in June. This information is on our website.

Students can interact with actual data and businesses, and then go out with a consultant to see where it goes from there. Ideally the companies hire sophomores and juniors. Each year they sponsor the Family Enterprise Case Competition that is organized by the University of Vermont. Schools around the world compete, analyze, and offer solutions on the case.

Business Community:

For the business community our services include In-bound and outbound, importing and exporting, and keeping businesses in Michigan, that in turn hire GVSU graduates. Other of our services include: training, consulting, memberships, and sponsorships. VAGTC connects local businesses as seen in the example of connecting a law firm with a manufacturing firm on a tariff issue. Furthermore, we assist and facilitate future connections, as with our Network connector.

We are not a membership organization; anyone can work with us. Our doors are open to everybody. Companies can become members of VAGTC.

5. Have you noticed any areas where your collaborative partnerships could improve and grow? n/a

6. How do your outreach efforts affect the business climate in the region and vice versa?

First, we do have people call and contact the VAGTC. There are approximately 8000 business a year in all of Michigan, and we field about 3000 questions a year through email and calls. Often people simply ask general business questions. Examples are questions on tariffs, shipments, or how to get a certificate of origin. We tell them how to get these certificates and so forth.

Currently we are addressing many of the issues with NAFTA and what will be changed. This past year businesses have had lots of questions in this regard.

Other areas involve International market research. This year we had to hire two more graduate assistants to handle products and services around the world for various companies. We help them by providing them with data, and they make the decisions. We help start-ups and entrepreneurs during their growth and development stages, particularly with international components. We mesh businesses from across the state together and work toward short- and long-term solutions.

7. What are the possible benefits for GVSU students in regard to internships, mentorships, and career opportunities developed through the relationships fostered by this Outreach Center and the SCB?

There are many and varied benefits for GVSU students. There are numerous job opportunities. We have the Laker Job Board. We connect students to businesses in their field. They can choose to volunteer to work at the Trade Center. During “World Trade Week” students can help run the event, and they also get to attend the sessions and learn about the international business community

We host business conferences and ask for students to help with events that allows them to get exposure. We also partner with the West Michigan World Trade Association and offer opportunities for students to hear a lecture, have a dinner and network.

8. What are some of the ways these SCB efforts develop leadership at various levels? See above.

9. What are some ways to better inform SCB students about your services?

We continue to figure out the right balance between online and face to face learning. We believe face to face is better learning, not through a webinar. Students can find this information on our website.

10. In regard to this topic, in which direction do you see SCB moving toward in the next five years?

In the near future we would like to see a better balance between federal and state resources. The government is slower than VAGTC. We need to examine “what’s not being offered” and figure out how can we help in more extensive ways. We need to find funding for new ventures, make contracts with the state opportunity and file applications for more grants. Yet we do not want to become dependent on grants in case funding dries up. And as always, we offer helpful solutions for present day concerns and issues.

Businesses learn best from other’s mistakes such as when dealing with new markets. These can be costly mistakes. We believe you can’t receive this type of assistance from a webinar—for us interaction is the key.

The VAGTC has accomplished much, very strategic working with limited resources. The following is a list of new directions for VAGTC:

- Planning a summer summit about global trade and compliance, and meeting regulatory rules
- Connecting GVSU alumni with companies and having them come back to help
- India 2004 Project. We plan to have our alumni working for the India Business Council
- Working with the Holland Chamber of Commerce to arrange a Sister City in Mexico to visit during tulip time, the Tulip Festival. We'd like to promote the interactions between business communities, May 9th.
- We would like to host Governor Snyder's team and the delegation from China when they visit GVSU that same week.

Senior Honors College Project Questionnaire

Transcript C

Name of Participant: Anna Gonzalez

Title: Executive Director

Outreach Center: Family Owned Business Initiative

1. Please tell me about your view of “Who we are” and “Who we want to be?” in relation to the mission of this Outreach Center and the Seidman College of Business.

We serve family businesses through scholarships, education, and advocacy. Our focus is on academic concerns. We give back to the community in a different way as in our sponsorship of seminars and programs to support research in the family business field.

2. What is the history of the Outreach Centers? When and why were they established?

Our Outreach Center was established in 1999. We serve family businesses through scholarships, education, and advocacy.

3. What is your view on this question: What are business schools doing for businesses?

In addition to providing academic, scholarly information through seminars and programs we offer a Family Business management course. We understand that family owned businesses come in different sizes and that each entity is unique. We also understand that non-economic goals are often at play. The decisions made by these FOB are not only based on financial priorities—these companies think differently.

4. What are some of the key services you provide to SCB students, business partners, and the community? Please share one of your favorite success stories.

Students: n/a

Community:

In regard to the community, we bring an international aspect as seen in the program in which we bring in one representative a year to do research on family business. This individual, who has the position of scholar-in-residence, works with seven people and undertakes projects with the Seidman Business College.

In addition to our Family Business management course, we sponsor a Board of the Family Business Alliance. Our goal is to connect members to resources and opportunities to be successful. We are in contact with family owned businesses all of the time. We also host spring and fall seminars for smaller businesses.

SCB Faculty:

We offer a four-week travel grant for Seidman College of Business faculty members to undertake research projects.

5. Have you noticed any areas where your collaborative partnerships could improve and grow? n/a

6. How do your outreach efforts affect the business climate in the region and vice versa?

As mentioned, we collaborate with the Board of the Family Business Alliance and maintain relationships. We reach out to small and medium size companies so they can develop and grow.

We help through our consultation services and inform companies and individuals where to obtain further assistance. In these ways and others we support them indirectly with advice.

We have established the FEFO, an entity that invests money toward foundation endowments. We meet to organize the allocation of resources and plan seminars. This is a family-oriented office that assists in organization for investments, philanthropy, and the further development of

entrepreneurship.

7. What are the possible benefits for GVSU students in regard to internships, mentorships, and career opportunities developed through the relationships fostered by this Outreach Center and the SCB? n/a

8. What are some of the ways these SCB efforts develop leadership at various levels? n/a

9. What are some ways to better inform SCB students about your services? n/a

10. In regard to this topic, in which direction do you see SCB moving toward in the next five years? n/a

Senior Honors College Project Questionnaire

Transcript D

Name of Participant: Tory Martin

Title: Director of Communications and Engagement

Office: Johnson Center for Philanthropy

1. Please tell me about your view of “Who we are” and “Who we want to be?” in relation to the mission of this Outreach Center and the Seidman College of Business.

The Johnson Center for Philanthropy is an academic center at GVSU, one of many like this across the country. The JCP focuses on three areas. First, is Community Research Institute: a data shop that works with non-profits and foundations in Michigan for data research and projects. They also work with schools and museums and other related organizations. Next we have our Nonprofit Services department. They primarily serve small to mid-size non-profits in the local community and across Michigan with a variety of services. These include strategic services and numerous workshops for the public on various skillsets involved with non-profit work. The workshops are offered for a nominal fee. Then we have the Institute for Foundation and Donor Learning. The Johnson Center for Philanthropy works with foundations and operates a journal, *The Foundation Review*, the first peer-reviewed journal about philanthropy in the U.S. Our mission is to understand, strengthen, and advance philanthropy in all areas.

We are part of GVSU, but we do not have partnerships with every school. For example, we do not do much work with the Seidman College of Business. Ours is a different purpose, a different track. We work with many of the same organizations in the business community, yet focus

mainly on non-profits. We also partner with the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce, the City of Grand Rapids, and news outlets such as MLive and MIBiz.

In relation to “who we are,” our mission statement is currently in the works. We desire to be thinking and working globally while having an impact on the local community. We are very West Michigan-grounded, but we are also doing work in many countries such as Saudi Arabia, Australia, and others.

As to “who we want to be,” we strive toward global perspectives and global experiences that help us inform the region of West Michigan with techniques and strategies other people and groups undertake with non-profits. In this way we aim to address similar problems. You could say we approach these matters in more philosophical ways—we think of ourselves as helping to build pipelines for non-profit leadership in communities.

Our work is to help communities become more engaged with themselves. Their philanthropy will be unique, guided by local experiences, cultures, regulations, and more.

2. What is the history of the Outreach Centers? When and why were they established?

Grand Valley State University is out in front; philanthropy is relatively new subject area for academia. Our goal is to understand, strengthen, and advance philanthropy in all areas.

This Center was established in 1992 and was not always named the Dorothy A. Johnson Center. We are grounded in West Michigan and offer consulting work and have the capacity for helpful advising. Now we are attempting to make the leap from what we’ve learned to a next phase of truly informing the wider philanthropic world.

3. What is your view on this question: What are business schools doing for businesses? n/a

4. What are some of the key services you provide to SCB students, business partners, and the community? Please share one of your favorite success stories.

We work in a unique manner using a holistic approach involving donors, funders, non-profits, and volunteers. Michigan has a community foundation in every single county, and there are other regional and national foundations doing great work in communities across Michigan – including the Grand Rapids Community Foundation, community foundations along the Lakeshore. This was something Michigan did very intentionally – the W.K. Kellogg Foundation used challenge grants to help every county set up a community foundation. This is a specifically Michigan phenomenon.

The Johnson Center has supported investment in local philanthropy and hosted workshops for students, faculty and non-profits. These involve a wide range of topics including fundraising, strategic planning, and managing volunteers. There is more information on our website.

Community:

In the community we serve non-profits. The Grand Rapids area has over 3000 non-profit organizations. As mentioned previously, we offer numerous workshops for these groups throughout the year. For the larger community, we operate a journal, *The Foundation Review*, the first peer-reviewed journal about philanthropy in the U.S.

5. Have you noticed any areas where your collaborative partnerships could improve and grow?

(See answer to Question #10.)

6. How do your outreach efforts affect the business climate in the region and vice versa? n/a

7. What are the possible benefits for GVSU students in regard to internships, mentorships, and career opportunities developed through the relationships fostered by this Outreach Center and the SCB?

We offer numerous opportunities for students. Currently, there are at least a dozen students in undergraduate and graduate programs employed here at the Johnson Center as researchers, marketing students, graduate assistants and fellows. Many of our staff members teach or pursue their own graduate degree programs here at GVSU.

8. What are some of the ways these SCB efforts develop leadership at various levels?

West Michigan is a hugely philanthropic area and Grand Rapids is a hub for this activity. There is a passion and huge demand for a well-networked space and a vibrant place for philanthropy. Much of this work has efforts in West Michigan's strong faith-based community. Some examples are: Voice Kent, a community data project on Grand Rapids that involved working with the city and partners. We are beginning to do more with community leadership where we provide training and capacity building, which in turn helps them maximize resources, streamline, and achieve efficiency. In other words: helping those who do good do better.

9. What are some ways to better inform SCB students about your services? n/a

10. In regard to this topic, in which direction do you see SCB moving toward in the next five years?

Ways toward improvement for the future? We are currently revising a new strategic framework. This is a new plan for the Center; there is an exciting transition in the works. We desire to make a leap to national thought leadership, building on the work we've done and the lessons we've learned so far in order to have a larger impact on philanthropy as a whole sector. This means blogging, webinars, and other media-oriented approaches to the sharing of ideas. It means

writing and convening thought-provoking, informative discussions. We're building up our channels in order to reach the broadest audience. We just began a podcast, *Field Notes in Philanthropy*, in partnership with WGVU, and we're working to develop a stronger digital presence.