



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR RELEASE: Immediately

DATE: December 13, 2019

CONTACT: Josh Gerstman: (206) 592-3705, jgerstman@highline.edu
Traci Russell: (206) 934-5661, traci.russell@seattlecolleges.edu

EXTRAORDINARY \$10 MILLION BEQUEST WILL BENEFIT STUDENTS AT 17 WESTERN WASHINGTON COMMUNITY COLLEGES Centenarian benefactor Eva Gordon had humble roots, gave little indication of her accumulated wealth

DES MOINES, Wash. — Eva Gordon was a hard-working woman who was ahead of her time. Having lived a long and happy life she had few regrets, save one: not having a formal education herself.

“If I had a scholarship when I got out of high school, I could have done so much more,” Gordon said in a 2013 profile by South Seattle College.

Thanks to a generous gift of nearly \$10 million from the Eva Gordon Estate, the students at 17 Washington community and technical colleges will have the opportunity to fulfill their dreams. **The gift is one of the largest to community and technical colleges in Washington State, with each college foundation receiving approximately \$550,000.**

Gordon, who passed away in June, 2018 at the age of 101, grew up on an orchard in Eugene, Oregon and graduated at the top of her high school class. Little by little she invested money from meager paychecks to build a fortune and give back to others. During this time, Gordon loved seeing college students work hard and improve their lives, wishing she could have been a student herself if money hadn’t been so tight in her younger years.

“A lot of people didn’t know the wealth she had. If there was a coupon for two-for-one at Applebee’s, she was all about that,” said **John Jacobs, her godson and estate representative.** “She liked seeing students working, earning and doing things. Her goal was to provide an opportunity for those folks who could ill-afford it, whether vocational training or an academic skill.”

“As an alumna of Highline College, I can appreciate the magnitude of impact that the gift from Eva Gordon will have in creating access to high quality college education for our students,” said

Ana Maria Popp, Chair of Highline College Foundation. “As a Foundation Board Member, I applaud the vision Mrs. Gordon had in choosing to share her resources with colleges across Western Washington. I hope members of our community are as inspired as I am and consider following Eva’s lead by including community college foundations in their estate plans.”

“Eva Gordon’s vision and generosity will impact a generation of students” states **Highline College President Dr. John R. Mosby.** “We are focused on creating access to a high quality education and finding ways to support students through to completion of their educational programs. We look forward to working with the Highline College Foundation to use these funds to remove financial barriers so students can persist in their education.”

"We are very grateful for the gift made by the estate of Eva Gordon," says **Dr. Suzanne M. Johnson, President of Green River College.** “Across Western Washington access to a college education will increase significantly as a result of Eva’s thoughtful philanthropy. At Green River College this gift will provide countless students with access to education and all the benefits that provides across their lifetimes. We can’t wait to put this gift to work opening the doors of opportunity to more students.”

“We are grateful to Eva Gordon for her generous bequest and her vision of providing opportunities for people who would otherwise not have access to an education,” comments **Dr. Tom Keegan, President of Skagit Valley College.** “Her gift to SVC reflects our core theme of equity in access and removing barriers to student success. It will help increase access to higher education through SVC Foundation programs such as student scholarships, emergency funding, and childcare support.”

After graduating from high school, Eva Gordon went to work as a legal secretary and later for a Seattle investment firm. She married her husband, **Ed Gordon**, in 1964 and together they shared a common dedication to higher education.

Ed Gordon, who passed away in 2008, was able to go to college thanks to the encouragement and support of his aunt. After graduating from college, he became a Navy pilot and flew patrol bombers during World War II and the Korean War — an opportunity he credited to his college degree. After serving his country, Ed settled in Seattle where he met Eva. Ed worked as a stock broker and together, they taught courses at the McNeil Corrections Center. Ed would deliver curriculum on business practices, while Eva led the group in warm-up exercises.

“The generosity of this gift is so moving and what it will mean for our students is life-changing,” states **Shoreline Community College President Cheryl Roberts, Ed.D.** “We are extremely honored to accept Ms. Gordon’s donation and carry her legacy forward. These funds will greatly extend the scholarships we are able to offer hardworking students who endeavor to earn a degree or certificate but face great financial challenges to do so.”

With jobs, family responsibilities and a median age of 26, Washington’s community and technical college students are often one step away from having to quit college to pay the bills. The recipient college foundations will be able to help students pay for books, fees, supplies, technology needs, housing, transportation, food, child care and unexpected financial emergencies

that could otherwise stand in the way of their success. Each college foundation will work with its board and school administrators to decide how funds are allocated to maximize opportunities for students.

“Eva had a tremendous heart and liked to throw a rope to help people climb,” remembers John Jacobs.

The college foundations below are receiving donations from the Eva Gordon estate. During their lives, Eva and John Gordon often made generous contributions to **South Seattle College** as well.

- Bates Technical College
- Cascadia College
- Clover Park Technical College
- Edmonds Community College
- Everett Community College
- Grays Harbor College
- Green River College
- Highline College
- Lake Washington Institute of Technology
- North Seattle College
- Pierce College Foundation
- Renton Technical College
- Seattle Central College
- Shoreline Community College
- Skagit Valley College
- South Puget Sound Community College
- Tacoma Community College

###

Founded in 1961 as the first community college in King County, Highline College annually serves more than 16,500 students. With over 70 percent students of color, Highline is the most diverse higher education institution in the state. The college offers a wide range of academic transfer, professional-technical education, basic skills and applied bachelor's degree programs. Alumni include former Seattle Mayor Norm Rice, entrepreneur Junki Yoshida and former Washington state poet laureate Sam Green.