

BENNINGTON COLLEGE

Annual Report on Philanthropy 2025





MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



“Thank you for your unwavering support. Bennington thrives because of you.”

To Everyone Who Makes Bennington Possible,

Reflecting on the past year, I am filled with gratitude for the generosity and vision of this community. Your support in 2025 helped sustain the very heart of Bennington: its commitment to curiosity, creativity, and self-directed learning. Because more than 30% of our operating budget comes from philanthropy, your investment directly shapes students' daily experiences and fuels the work that makes this College distinctive.

At a moment when higher education faces significant financial and cultural headwinds, your continued generosity is more critical than ever to ensuring that Bennington not only endures, but remains bold in its mission and impact.

This annual report offers a glimpse into that impact: stories of donors whose belief in Bennington animates our purpose; a summary of our Fiscal Year 2025 philanthropy; and highlights of the donor communities and special giving days that propel us forward. My hope is that you feel the same sense of pride and possibility that I feel each day on this campus.

As I retire from Bennington, I will continue to serve as a strategic adviser to the Board, and I am deeply mindful of all that we have accomplished together. It has been a privilege to serve this community, and I am profoundly grateful for the trust and partnership you have shared with me throughout my tenure, as well as for the thoughtful, intimate conversations we have had along the way. Your passion for the transformative experiences you found at this unique College has been a constant source of inspiration. Bennington's future is bright, and I leave with full confidence in the strength and spirit that define this College.

Thank you for your unwavering support. Bennington thrives because of you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Walker".

Laura Walker
Bennington College President

2025 by the numbers



\$47.49M

Endowment
market value

1,476

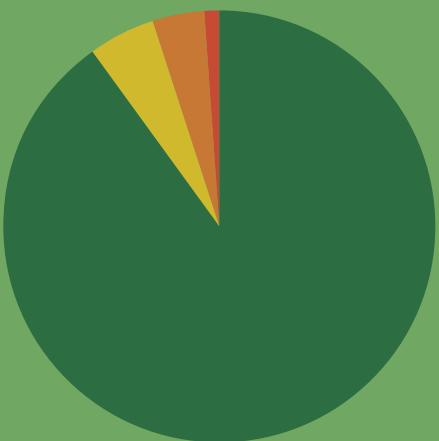
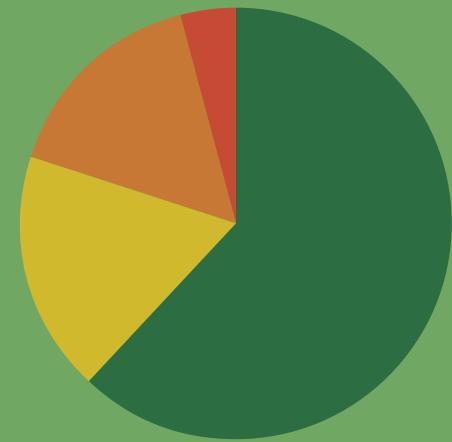
Donors in our
community

\$19.88M

Your collective
support

The people who made this year possible

- 62% Alumni & Students
- 18% Parents
- 16% Faculty, Staff, & Friends
- 4% Foundations & Organizations



Where your generosity makes change

- 90% Unrestricted Institutional Support
- 5% Programming & Faculty Enrichment
- 4% Scholarships & Financial Aid
- 1% Field Work Term



\$1.40M

new commitments

\$2.45M

matching funds unlocked

20

scholarships supported



Ignite the Spark Challenge

At Bennington, 98% of students receive financial aid (both merit- and need-based) with an average award package of \$56,162. More than 60% of those students rely specifically on need-based aid, which means your generosity has a direct and immediate impact on their ability to access a Bennington education.

In recognition of the College's commitment to expanding scholarship support, **Chair of the Board Nick Stephens '77** and **Trustee Mary Bucksbaum Scanlan '91** launched the **Ignite the Spark Challenge** last year. The Challenge is a dollar-for-dollar match created to amplify the impact of every donor gift. Thanks to their leadership and the generosity of donors making new and sustained commitments, this initiative expands scholarship opportunities, strengthens Bennington's academic excellence, and helps ensure the College remains accessible to all.



Carol C. Stark-Osornio '85 with her daughter Lily C. Osornio '25 and Katrina Leestma '88

“I’ve always seen my path as entrepreneurial. Bennington taught me that. It wasn’t about staying in your lane—it was about understanding that there are no lanes.”

“Let’s do it.” That’s Katrina Leestma’s signature phrase—and how she lives: with conviction, energy, and purpose.

Katrina came to Bennington in the mid-1980s from a small city near Chicago, encouraged by a high school friend, Lincoln Shatz '86, who was already a student. She credits Bennington with shaping her life. “There’s just no culture like Bennington,” she says. “It gives you this freaking gumption.”

It also guided a career of rich, interdisciplinary work from printmaking to teaching mental health nursing. “I’ve always seen my path as entrepreneurial,” she explains. “Bennington taught me that. It wasn’t about staying in your lane—it was about understanding that there are no lanes.”

Bennington wasn’t just where she studied—it’s where she became. “I would not be the person I am without that education. It’s not just me who’s benefited—it’s everyone I’ve worked with. That’s the ripple effect.”

Now, Katrina is creating a new ripple—by giving back. While attending a Bennington graduation for close friend and classmate Carol C. Stark-Osornio '85's daughter Lily in 2025, she felt the magic again. “It’s still there. It’s still Bennington.” Inspired by alum, friend, and trustee Ciaran Cooper '87, she walked into the Institutional Advancement office and said, “I want to make a gift.” She joined the “Ignite the Spark” scholarship campaign, during which gifts are double matched, in honor of her parents.

For Katrina, giving isn’t charity—it’s transformation. “Nobody tells you the magic that happens inside the giver when it’s personal. It’s life-affirming.”

SILO LEGACY SOCIETY

BENNINGTON COLLEGE

344

Silo Legacy Society
members who secure
our tomorrow

\$1.32M

impact created
through giving

7.5%

of fundraising total

Silo Legacy Society

Bennington's planned giving community, the Silo Legacy Society, is made up of individuals who have chosen to plant their legacies at Bennington. Through their commitments, they support the Bennington of tomorrow, ensuring that the transformative power of a Bennington education endures for generations to come.

Rooted in Purpose, Growing for the Future

Planned giving support accounts for nearly 7.5% of fundraising total—equating to more than \$1.32M received for Bennington last fiscal year.

Though diverse in background and experience, our 344 Silo Legacy Society members share a common belief in Bennington, its mission, and its lasting impact.



BENNINGTON COLLEGE



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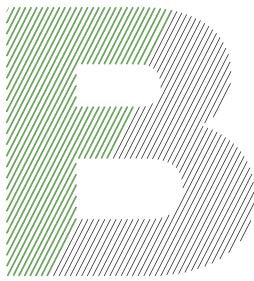
Sigrid Burton '73 is one such alumna who shares her reasons for making a planned gift commitment.

A respected and expressive painter, Burton studied art at Bennington. During a particularly serendipitous Non-Residential Term, she began working as a studio assistant for Helen Frankenthaler '49—an experience that led to a full-time role after graduation. Following two years with Frankenthaler, Burton worked for a year as an assistant to Jules Olitski. Collectively, these formative experiences deeply influenced her artistic development—something she continues to see as a lasting benefit of her Bennington education.

“Bennington persists in its unique mission and truly stands alone in its approach. There are very few comparable educational options available today, and I believe it’s important to ensure its continuation.

I am a big believer in education and its ability to change and impact lives. I support and believe in the mission of the College, and I want to demonstrate my commitment through financial support—both during and after my lifetime.”

To learn more about planned giving, reach out to us at silolegacysociety@bennington.edu



BENNINGTON
FUND

\$861k
annual dollars raised
from gifts under \$25,000

284
new donors to the College

691
donors who have given 3
or more years consecutively

329
donors welcomed
to the 1932 Circle
Donors who made a gift of \$1,000 or more

The Bennington Fund

The Bennington Fund is the heart of Bennington College—propelling us forward, meeting our most immediate needs, and directly impacting students today. Every dollar raised supports our most urgent priorities, making it one of the College's most vital fundraising initiatives.

“I’m proud and excited to help support the college in its continuing mission to provide an unmatched liberal arts education to a wildly diverse, international student body. A Bennington education puts the student in control of his/her/their own course of study, and as a two-time graduate of Bennington myself, I can personally attest to the value of my experience and learning there, both in the classroom and out. Bennington changed my life. I want to help ensure that others benefit as I did.”

— CIARAN COOPER '87 MFA '04
(CURRENT TRUSTEE)



\$158,389

raised

367

donors

236

alumni

66

different class years

38

states represented

58

donors made their first gift ever to Bennington

Bennington Day Highlights

We held Bennington's first-ever day of giving, Bennington Day, on April 16, 2025, and you showed up to make it a success!

Top: Students riding the "Cash Cab," answering Bennington trivia for a chance to win a prize; Bottom: Students writing thank-you notes during lunch at our Gratitude Table.





BENNINGTON
1932
CIRCLE

265

members

99.6%

total support

236

alumni

**Our 1932 Circle donors
fuel transformative
opportunities for
students across the
College.**

The 1932 Circle

The 1932 Circle, Bennington's leadership giving society, celebrates donors whose generosity reflects the spirit and ambition at the heart of the College. Named for the year Bennington opened its doors, the Circle recognizes those who advance its mission through annual gifts of \$1,000 or more. Through their leadership, members help create transformative opportunities for students and faculty and shape the future of the Bennington community.



Rosalind “Roz” Bernheimer ’62

1932 CIRCLE DONOR STORY



Left to right: Lisa Hartmann '62 and Rosalind “Roz” (Moger) Bernheimer '62 in class circa 1960s.

Rosalind “Roz” Bernheimer ’62 says, “Bennington sets itself up to be about the individual, but it’s really about the connections.”

Roz met her husband Wally in Booth House living room and Dr. Joseph Lord at Boston Children’s Psychiatry Department during Non-Resident Term (now Field Work Term). Her NRT opened professional doors she never imagined. When Roz applied for a job at the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health as a graduate, Dr. Lord’s recommendation sealed it.

“I got to do things I never could have done,” she said. “That was because of Bennington. I never would have called Boston Children’s to get a job. I never would have had to do it or thought to do it.”

After graduation, she joined the Boston alumni group, served on the Board during challenging years, and, inspired by the opening of a snack bar when she was a student, gave a transformative donation to name the current *Roz’s Café*.

Roz continues to give consistently, as she has for more than 50 years. Her generosity is reflected in her membership in the Commons Society for her consistent support and in the 1932 Circle for her leadership giving, which drives transformative impact across the College. Because she included Bennington generously in her estate plans, she is a Silo Legacy Society member. Finally, Roz has given to major construction projects and to the Bennington Fund, the source of the College’s scholarships and crucial operating support. Her granddaughter, Xia, is now a third year Bennington student.

“I have a very special place in my heart for Bennington. It’s not just a place—it’s a way of being. And you can’t describe that.”



Helen Frankenthaler '49
in her studio circa 1960s

The Helen Frankenthaler Foundation

The Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, established by and named for the renowned American artist who spent her formative years at Bennington (Class of 1949 as well as a Trustee from 1967 to 1982), is among the College's leading benefactors.

Bennington helped mold Helen Frankenthaler into a creative powerhouse who helped define Abstract Expressionism in America and Color Field Theory. Her legacy is a living, breathing testament to her vision—one that helps shape a Bennington education every single day.

The foundation's connection to Bennington goes beyond philanthropy. They are active participants in the Museum Fellows Term, which gives Bennington undergraduates the unique opportunity to do semester-long internships in art organizations in New York City. They also loan several of Frankenthaler's artworks to the College for display and educational purposes.

In just the past year, Bennington has received a \$150,000 grant from the Foundation for the Frankenthaler-Stickney Scholarship, originally launched by Helen herself in her lifetime. This scholarship, which also bears the name of Rebecca Stickney, a beloved Bennington staff member of over 40 years, supports one

student in the visual arts and another in the sciences and mathematics. Additionally, in June 2025, the Foundation made an unsolicited grant of \$10,000 to the College in consideration of the nationwide loss of federal arts funding, which has impacted Bennington and many other institutions. (In March 2025, the National Endowment for the Arts withdrew a \$10,000 grant offer to the *Bennington Review* literary journal.)

The Foundation has also continued to support the Creative Legacy Fellows (a Field Work Term fellowship) as well as the Museum Fellows Term (MFT). Students in MFT meet with the Foundation several times during the semester, and the Foundation's inaugural Manager of Education, Rachael Pullin, even accompanied the Frankenthaler Fellows on a trip to the Venice Biennale in 2024. The Foundation has recently added a webpage devoted solely to its deep and longstanding relationship with Bennington College.



All-Class Reunion 2025

"I was very moved by the reunion and left with a deep gratitude for the opportunity I had to go to Bennington. For me it was a life changing opportunity that gave me tools to create a wonderful life filled with art and ideas."

"Everything came together so beautifully, and I truly had one of the best weekends of my life. I actually got teary-eyed after leaving campus."

These reflections are from just two of the nearly 300 alumni who returned home to Bennington for our All-Class Reunion in October. Spanning generations—from the 1950s through the Class of 2025—alumni traveled from around the world to reconnect with friends, meet new ones, and engage with current students.

Throughout the weekend, alumni shared their expertise in workshops and performances, and spent time with students talking about life after Bennington—showcasing the creativity, curiosity, and impact of our alumni community.

This Reunion also ushered in a new chapter of alumni engagement. We relaunched the Alumni Association and introduced a range of new volunteer opportunities, from mentoring current students to offering classroom perspectives to speaking with prospective students.



Thank you for investing in Bennington and believing in its spirit of creativity, individuality, and the unconventional paths that lead to joy and transformation. Thank you for believing in its magic and for helping carry us forward. Because of supporters like you, Bennington's community is alive with compassion, imagination, and inspiration.