

IMMEDIATE RELEASE...

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**GIANFORTE FAMILY FOUNDATION GIFTS \$500,000 TOWARD
SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STUDENTS IN TWO-YEAR MANUFACTURING PROGRAMS**

Gianforte family foundation gifts \$500,000, creating the Gianforte Manufacturing Scholarship for two-year manufacturing and industrial education for lower income students and veterans

HELENA, Mont.,—Students who enroll in manufacturing and energy industry programs at two-year colleges in Montana will have up to \$500,000 worth of scholarships available to them over the next two years through a gift from the Gianforte Family Foundation.

"We don't have enough high wage jobs in Montana and manufacturing jobs are some of the best in terms of pay-scale," said Greg Gianforte. "This program is designed to help veterans and lower income Montanans get the training they need to access these jobs, give them a leg up and simultaneously grow the manufacturing sector in Montana."

The announcement and presentation was made Thursday, December 18th, at the Helena College Airport Building. Students, industry representatives and Montana University System leaders were present at the announcement along with Mr. Gianforte. The Gianforte Family Foundation gift of \$500,000 to the Student Assistance Foundation, a private non-profit student financial assistance corporation, will be used by students attending certain programs in several colleges in Montana (see list below).

Commissioner of Higher Education Clayton Christian said the scholarship gift by the Gianforte family will provide many opportunities for students to train for good jobs in growing industries. "Montana's manufacturing sector has made it clear to our colleges that we have a shortage of qualified workers for a lot of high-wage jobs," said Christian.

Tom Spika (speak-uh), president of Spika Welding and Manufacturing, said student access to industrial training programs is a key to a healthy economy for Montana.

"This gift is great news for Montana manufacturers as well as students who are considering a career in the manufacturing field," said Spika, who serves as chairman of the Montana Manufacturing Council, a subsidiary of the Montana Chamber of Commerce. "We are experiencing a severe skills gap and workforce shortage for many of us requiring skilled welders, machinists, and other manufacturing positions, and this scholarship will go far in promoting and facilitating a workforce to match these current and future job opportunities."

The scholarship gift will provide up to \$125,000 worth of assistance for four consecutive college semesters, beginning Spring Semester 2015, for students enrolled in manufacturing and certain industrial training programs. The scholarships will become available immediately for use starting

this Spring Semester of 2015. Colleges will be communicating to students and prospective students about the application procedures. The scholarships have a priority on covering up to 50 percent of tuition for veterans and lower income applicants for certificate and two-year degree programs that lead to jobs in manufacturing such as welding or machining.

John Cech, Deputy Commissioner of Higher Education for Two-Year and Community College Education, said the gift from the Gianforte family will improve student access to degree and certificate programs that convert into jobs that pay good wages in growing industries.

“Montana’s colleges and universities have built a major partnership with business and industry leaders who are hiring welders, electricians, machinists, process plant technologists, and more,” said Cech. “This generous gift from the Gianforte Family will open the doors of education for more Montana students to improve their lives and serve Montana employers.”

Colleges with programs that are eligible for student use of the scholarships are: Bitterroot College of UM in Hamilton; City College of MSU Billings; Flathead Valley Community College; MSU Northern; Highlands College of Montana Tech in Butte; Little Bighorn College at Crow Agency; Fort Peck Community College in Poplar; Miles Community College; Dawson Community College; Great Falls College of MSU; Helena College of UM; Missoula College of UM; and Gallatin College of MSU in Bozeman.

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