



Pillar & Post

Philanthropy with Purpose

“When I first contacted TSJC regarding my interest in a Named Scholarship, it was to fulfill a promise I made to my wife,” Dennis Grabowski said. “She wanted me to help her give back—to support the next generation of nurses in appreciation of those who helped her during her battle with cancer.”

Vickie and Dennis Grabowski shared a beautiful and loving marriage for three decades. “To best describe my wife—she was a person who became instant friends with everyone she met. Vickie had a unique ability to always see the sun on the darkest of days, and make everyone around her tingle with her effervescence for life.”



Vickie and Dennis Grabowski

After graduating from Trinidad State in 1972, Dennis started his career as a Mechanical Draftsman, but would continue his studies and achieve his career goal of becoming a Mechanical Design Engineer. In 1978, he accepted a career changing position with Sperry Corporation in Durham, NC as a senior sales engineer. Later, in 1986, he would launch his own company to considerable success, before selling his business in 2008.

“Looking back, I started my company from scratch—I built a business focused on custom chemical solutions, growing it into a multi-million dollar entity,” he said. “I then ran the company until it became necessary to care for Vickie.”

When Vickie’s diagnosis first arrived, it would confirm an aggressive form of breast cancer. The prognosis optimistically predicted 18-36 months of continued life.

“Her 10-year battle was a testament to Vickie’s physical and emotional strength—to her incredible will to live,” Dennis explained. “Her positive attitude, and the blessing of a gifted and compassionate medical support team, allowed Vickie to beat the odds and bless us with many additional years of quality life.”

Honoring Vickie Grabowski would become a clear and guiding purpose for his philanthropy. And this purpose would be further refined by deep, thoughtful reflection.

“It is my intent that this published piece of emotion and fact reflect positively on the Foundation, TSJC, and the immense gratification that has resulted. My hope is that it will inspire others to pursue the same—to contact the Foundation, to come back to Trinidad State.”

– Dennis Grabowski



“I began with a mandate from my wife,” Dennis explained. “Many on her care team were nurses, and we wanted to establish robust scholarship programs to accelerate and develop the next generation of Nursing professionals. At Trinidad State, a permanent, endowed Nursing scholarship now bears the name of Vickie and myself.”

“Our second scholarship focuses on STEM technologies,” Dennis added, “in recognition of my time at Trinidad State and the indelible, life-altering impacts that resulted.”

Dennis then elaborated to describe a greater philosophy, one that deeply impacts his philanthropy at Trinidad State.

“I intend to support TSJC students who are passionate in their pursuit of an education, and who are responsible and accountable to the results. I want to invest in student success, in the development of excellence. No student should ever think a ‘full ride’ is a ‘free ride’—I want them to know the financial support they’re receiving encourages them to work harder to achieve excellence in their education.”

“My life demonstrates how Mechanical Engineering and Mechanical Design require critical thinking,” he explained, “a thinking that is supported by technical training and strong skills in applied mathematics. These skill sets enabled me to solve complex problems. They proved invaluable in my chosen career of Mechanical Design Engineering—and in my success as a business entrepreneur and investor.”

“As such,” Dennis continued, “the skill sets I wish to promote philanthropically are those of ‘Critical Thought’ as it applies to problem solving in our technical world. And I want to honor my wife by supporting students pursuing a Nursing career, with an emphasis on ‘Compassionate Care’ as it applies to the field of Oncology.”

“My life experiences have exposed the benefits and power of both objectives,” he added.

Since 1983, Dennis has also served as a financial mentor to over 100 individuals and small business owners. Today, he still manages and guides investment portfolios in excess of \$25 million.

“As with investing, my philanthropic objectives are long-term,” Dennis explained. “As a result, all my donations will be targeted for endowed, perpetual scholarship programs.”

In creating their scholarships at Trinidad State, Dennis appreciated the role of the Foundation in these conversations.

“When I first contacted TSJC,” he said, “I was lacking in knowledge about how to best accomplish my goals. I have learned a great deal—and it teaches me that a working partnership between a Donor, a responsible institution, and a committed student can be very powerful.”

For more information about endowed scholarship opportunities at Trinidad State, please contact Toni DeAngelis at toni.deangelis@trinidadstate.edu or 719-846-5520.

“Vickie was the catalyst—she led me back to my alma mater, and the realization that it was time to give back,” he explained. “The objectives I wish to accomplish are, in part, a direct result of my life experiences.”

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“But I will say, it doesn’t matter what the next person’s inspirational trigger will be,” he said. “What matters is that everyone becomes inspired to give back. And I would challenge any TSJC alum to deny the many positive impacts Trinidad State has had on their life.”

“Genuine, thoughtful reflection is a powerful inspiration. We can all help.”