



News release

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**Michael Kopper, Michele Whitfield
donate \$2.85 million to Foundation**

Michael Kopper and Michele Whitfield today announced a \$2.85 million donation to the Gateway Technical College Foundation to fund scholarships for students in engineering and manufacturing-related programs as well as benefit students in the college's Promise program.

A total of \$1.5 million was contributed to establish the Kopper Family Fund while \$1.35 million will go to Gateway's Promise program. Both will benefit students as they gain an education at Gateway to family-sustaining careers. Kopper is the founder and CEO of the decanter centrifuge manufacturer Centrisys Corporation and his wife, Whitfield, is the marketing director of the company.

"Gateway's vision for education is the same as ours. We want to help Gateway to further what they are already doing," said Michele Whitfield.

"Michael's philosophy and my philosophy is that you have to pay it forward. Michael started his education at a technical college in Germany very much like Gateway at a very young age and it has helped him in his career success. We believe it's important to keep manufacturing alive, and the way to

do that is through education. We felt the need to give and allow for more educational opportunities in the Kenosha area.”

“The legacy established with this inspiring gift will transform the educational opportunities available for generations of students attending Gateway Technical College,” said Bryan Albrecht, Gateway president and CEO.

“The value of a legacy gift of this type can only be measured in the hopes and aspirations of those who will fulfill its purpose. On behalf of the entire Gateway community, we are grateful for the generosity and trust exemplified by Michael and Michelle in establishing the Kopper Family Fund endowment honoring the value of technical education.”

Whitfield said her and Michael’s ultimate goal is to spark an interest in technical education among others as a viable and solid way to gain the skills to a career. “It also provides a way to train the next generation of manufacturing workers and engineers – which helps all of manufacturing to be successful,” she added.

This is the largest donation ever to the Foundation.

“We are so honored Michael and Michele have chosen to invest in generations of Gateway students’ education and the community through Gateway Foundation’s endowment,” said Jennifer Charpentier, Gateway Technical College Foundation executive director. “Their support is inspiring. I am grateful.”

Whitfield said Kopper and his business partners sold a portion of the business three years ago, and their donation to the Foundation for the scholarship and Promise program came from that sale.

With a technical background that spans 40 years, Kopper is a centrifuge manufacturing and service expert. Kopper began his career in the dewatering industry as a 14-year-old apprentice at the centrifuge manufacturer Humboldt-Wedag. After earning an engineering degree from a Cologne, Germany, technical college, Kopper supervised the startup, operations and process refinements of Humboldt centrifuges around the world.

After many years of working in centrifuge operation and service with Humboldt, Kopper founded Centrisys in 1987 as a repair and optimization company for decanter centrifuges.

To see photos of the event, go to: Photos: <https://flic.kr/s/aHskT9jRGW>

Gateway Technical College collaborates with communities in Kenosha, Racine and Walworth counties to ensure economic growth and viability by providing education, training, leadership and technological resources to meet the changing needs of students, employers and communities.

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