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STUDENTS OFFER FREE TAX HELP FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich., Feb. 28, 2017 – Student, alumni and faculty volunteers from Davenport University are offering free income tax preparation sessions, available to low- and middle- income tax-filers (less than \$57,000 in total family income) at locations across West Michigan. Every year, millions of dollars in tax refunds and credits go unclaimed by those who need them the most. Taking advantage of free tax preparation services help West Michigan families receive tax refunds and credits that enable them to stay in their homes, feed their families, keep the lights on and save for tomorrow.

Davenport University sponsors the intercollegiate partnership that includes Cornerstone University, Aquinas College and Grand Rapids Community College to provide tax assistance in conjunction with the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, a cooperative effort of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and nonprofit groups that train volunteers to prepare basic tax returns in communities across the country. The volunteers are all certified by the IRS to participate. In 2016, more than 65 DU volunteers participated in the program. All V.I.T.A. volunteers together logged more than 7,790 volunteer hours, totaling more than \$7.2 million in tax refunds and credits.

“Our students are happy to serve their community and gain practical, professional experience,” said Judy Knapp, VITA Program Manager and Accounting Honors Program Coordinator at Davenport University. “The volunteers learn real-life skills and how to work with clients while also helping them receive an essential tax refund.”

The free tax preparation service will be available at 14 different sites across West Michigan, including Davenport University’s Peter C. Cook Center in downtown Grand Rapids and its W.A. Lettinga and Holland campuses. For a complete list of locations and times for VITA assistance, visit taxhelp.davenport.edu.

Tax assistance is offered on a first-come, first-served basis. Those wishing to take advantage of the free program should bring the following paperwork with them:

- Picture ID and social security card for filer and spouse, social security cards for dependents.
- Birth dates for primary, secondary and dependents on the tax return.
- Wage and earning statement(s) Forms W-2 from all employers.
- Other income statements (Forms 1099).
- Form 1095-A, B or C for the Affordable Health Care forms and healthcare info.
- A copy of last year's federal and state returns if itemizing.

- Bank routing numbers and account numbers for direct deposit.
- Everything saying “important tax document” on it.
- Rent paid out-of-pocket, landlord’s name(s) and address or 2015 property taxes and the home’s taxable value.
- Home heating costs as reported on the December – March utility bills.

The program will also offer an alternative method to e-file for free. Taxpayers whose income does not exceed \$57,000 can prepare and e-file their own federal and state taxes for FREE using IRS provided software by visiting taxhelp.davenport.edu and connecting through the MyFreeTaxes.com link on the left side of the page.

For locations, times and to schedule an appointment, call 616-871-6147, 2-1-1 or visit taxhelp.davenport.edu.

About Davenport University

Founded in 1866, Davenport is a private, non-profit university serving nearly 8,000 students at campuses across Michigan and online. With tuition among the lowest of all private universities in the state, Davenport provides high academic quality, small class sizes, conveniently located campuses, faculty with real-world experience, and more than 80 dynamic undergraduate and graduate programs addressing in-demand careers in business, technology, health professions and urban education. More information is available at www.davenport.edu.

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