A tribute to two pioneering women who believed in Centralia College and the students it serves.

Margaret Corbet and Katharine Kemp

The Centralia College Foundation, created in 1992, has raised more than $800,000 the past two years for scholarships and for recognition of exceptional classroom instruction and classroom equipment to provide the highest quality educational experience for students. The foundation engages in campaigns to raise funds to support the college. The college strives to provide the best facilities and classroom instruction by members of the faculty.

This important historical statue will serve as a lasting remembrance in honor of Margaret Corbet and Katharine Kemp - two women who faced overwhelming challenges as the Junior college came to life and persevered through the Great Depression and World War II. Their efforts were instrumental in keeping the college alive.

Your support will help keep alive their vision of the importance of education provided by Centralia College.

The cost of this statue project is expected to be $100,000.

By supporting the statue campaign:

Yes, I am alum of Centralia College

Please make your check payable to Centralia College Foundation and mail it to 600 Centralia College Blvd, Centralia WA 98531.

Name: ____________________________ Phone: (____) _____________

Address: __________________________ City: ________________ Zip: ____________

Email: ____________________________

[ ] $________ Check

[ ] $________ Pledge for $________ (#) months $/_______ month

Yes, count me in! I want to help keep the legacy of Margaret Corbet and Katharine Kemp alive.

I am pleased to support this project by enclosing a:

Yes, I am alum of Centralia College

Please make your check payable to Centralia College Foundation and mail to 600 Centralia College Blvd, Centralia WA 98531.
Margaret Corbet, serving as head of the Centralia High School English department in 1925, became the first principal of the upstart junior college just coming to life on the third floor of the high school building. Corbet, who hailed from Canada and specialized in teaching Latin, was a splendid blend of determination, academic integrity, and passion for student success.

Seven years later, in 1932, Katharine Kemp joined the junior college as a language instructor and dean of students. It was her belief in the junior college concept and ability to inspire students to do their best that joined her with Corbet. The two became close friends and were champions for the upstart two-year college.

And just in time. Centralia Junior College had opened to 15 students in 1925 and grew to 133 students by 1928. Then the economic stresses of the Great Depression weighed down the college, bringing it close to collapse.

The Centralia Junior college, considered at that time as a private entity, was expected to be self sufficient. That concept worked until 1933 when the banks took a holiday and the fledgling college was unable to pay expenses.

It could have been the end of the junior college but Corbet and Kemp refused to let that happen. The two women rallied the community to come up with funds to pay faculty and other expenses necessary to keep the college open. The second time that the junior college found itself on the precipice of closing was during WWII, when so many college-age men and women were involved in the war effort. Again, these two college matriarchs rallied the community, raising the money needed to keep the college operating.

The stories abound of how the two, sometimes forming a tag team, would challenge students to do their best. Often it only took a look or a word from one of them for a student to know he or she was under the watchful eye of someone who believed in him or her. The students responded, buoyed by the fact that the college’s leadership not only knew them but knew about them. And cared.

Margaret Corbet and Katherine Kemp never relinquished their passion for high achievement nor their desire for student success.

They serve as models of what college leadership and faculty instruction can be. They set a high standard that will be recognized through this statue, a tribute to the two pioneering leaders in education.

Washington Hall’s Corbet Theatre is named in honor of Margaret, who also was the college’s drama instructor; Kemp Hall is named in honor of Katharine.

Margaret Corbet and Katharine Kemp
The Beginning of Something Special

Two women with a strong vision for what is possible, will be recognized through this statue

Jim Stafford, the artist commissioned to create this bronze statue, was born in Chehalis. He enjoys painting the flora and fauna of the area.

A Centralia College alumnus, he obtained a Master of Fine Arts from the University of Oregon in 1968. He was voted into the International Society of Animal Artists, based in New York, in 1980.

Stafford was commissioned to create the Reach for the Stars statue, which honors his son, who died as a youth, and graces the north entrance to Washington Hall on the college campus.

As a Centralia College student, Stafford knew Kemp and has strong memories of the woman who encouraged him to pursue his love of art.