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Address at Convocation of Faculty and Staff, delivered on September 20, 1973

Arend D. Lubbers
Grand Valley State University

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I am pleased to welcome all of you today. I am also pleased to have this opportunity to speak to you as we gather to begin the school year.

INTRODUCE DEANS

The Grand Valley State Colleges are unique; unique in structure, in program, and in origin. Grand Valley began as a dream shared by some community-minded citizens who wanted an outstanding public liberal arts college for western Michigan. They felt it was important to have an independent college, not a branch of a larger university. They wanted an institution with its own character and characteristics, a college with a healthy pride and self-respect. So they began to work to bring their dream to life. We are now enjoying the legacy of their dream, their hard work, and their substance.

There is another group to whom we owe particular thanks. That is the legislature. Through their continuing interest and support, Grand Valley has grown and flourished during these early years. We may have some disagreements with the legislature on the question of the amount of resources required to adequately support Grand Valley. And while we will continue to fight for what we believe is fair and just, we should not overlook the fact the legislature has given us the means to make this dream come true. Like our friends in the western Michigan community, we owe them special thanks.

A third group came to Grand Valley, overcame the problems of starting a new college, waded through the mud, gave of themselves in more ways than most of us are asked to. They were the pioneer faculty and administrators. They took the dreams, work, and resources of others and made a college of it. As we begin our second decade, we salute them and express our gratitude for giving us newcomers an interesting place to work.

Ten years ago, these three groups -- community-minded citizens of western Michigan, the legislature, and the pioneer staff -- forged a partnership to build a different kind of public colleges. This partnership formed at the beginning of Grand Valley is our hope for the future. Each partner has a continuing responsibility, each partnership must have many members who catch the vision and excitement of these
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colleges, people who work for their advancement, aware that the future of the colleges can be jeopardized by disinterest or political and personal expediency.

Our hopes are high as we enter the second decade. Though we have made mistakes, the development of Grand Valley has provided most of us with genuine satisfactions. The development has changed the conditions in which we operate and the perception others have of us.

Last year Grand Valley came into the spotlight more than previously. In the Michigan higher education galaxy, we are not a big star but we have more visibility than before. Sometimes this was to our advantage, sometimes it was not.

In the $150,000 Venture Fund Grant from the Ford Foundation, Grand Valley was recognized nationally as an institution providing good quality education, willing to take necessary steps to adapt to the times, with the prospect of success in the future. All of you can take credit for this significant, tangible recognition of the work that has been done here. Unfortunately or fortunately, depending on one's viewpoint, the terms of the grant authorize me to spend it. You are welcome to bombarding me with ideas as to its wise expenditure. Some already have. The only criterion I have at present is that the funded projects should have a continuing and major effect on the life of a college, an institute, or all the colleges.

The Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education and the National Science Foundation found it in the national interest to award GVSC over $380,000 to finance projects associated with College IV. When credits are handed out for that one, Dean Toft is ahead of anyone and Dean Kolenbrander second in line, but, here again, the context in which they worked, the successes of the other colleges and institutes, contributed to the favorable reception of the grant request.

There are other indicators of national recognition, but I mention these two because they are the most significant to date. I hope they help reaffirm for you that the part of your life invested here is worth it. I further hope that these monies and all monies coming here translate into personal and professional growth for students, faculty and administrators.

There was more visibility on the Lansing scene also. You probably followed the newspaper and TV accounts. GVSC's push for a law school, along with one for Michigan State and Western, was defeated in the Senate. The Board of Control will reassess its position, I am
sure; and I invite any of you who want to express your views on legal education in western Michigan to talk to me directly. I believe it might be helpful for interested parties at the three institutions desiring a law school to share their ideas with one another.

The appropriation to GVSC for operating funds was a disappointment. We had hoped for about $350,000 more than we finally received and expected at least $150,000 more. There may be a silver lining, however; GVSC is funded on the basis of 5325 students. Our projection and staffing is for 5500 FYES. A contingency fund was established by the legislature to increase the appropriation by $1,000 for every full-time student enrolled over the appropriation base in colleges of 8,000 or under. The final figure will be determined at the beginning of the Spring quarter. The appropriation as it now stands is $7,779,000 compared to $6,641,000 last year. Our operating budget this year is $11,100,000 compared to last year's budget of $9,337,000.

The capital outlay appropriation met our expectations. Money was made available to proceed with the science building, complete the Field House finally, remodel two buildings, and begin planning a new classroom facility. I cannot predict starting or completion dates for the new buildings, but they are in the works.

In this coming year, one of our major objectives is to move ahead in the area of communication, hoping that more people will see us, like what they see, and support us with their dollars, or marks, or francs, or dinars. This past year was good in many ways. We hope to build on it.

We do have an interesting story to tell, and each year a new chapter is added.

Two years ago William James College opened, and Grand Valley became a group of colleges. The original dream was in the process of becoming reality. Now College IV and the F.E. Seidman Graduate College of Business join their three sister colleges, and Grand Valley moves into still another stage of development. In doing so, Grand Valley reaffirms its commitment to alternative styles of education and its desire to offer higher education in the fields that many people of this area seek it. To prepare for the management of additional colleges and to provide flexible and responsive administrative systems for a student body that is expected to number 5500 FYES this year, the administration was reorganized in April 1973. The merits of the organization and its genesis have been argued, and I welcome the discussion. Perhaps at another time, we can spend an hour
together on the subject. For the present, I will address myself to one concern growing out of reorganization.

Some have felt that the reorganization was designed in part to weaken the autonomy of the colleges and that eventually the colleges will lose their distinctive qualities. It is true that reorganization brought about more careful review of curriculum from the Office of Planning in an attempt to check unnecessary duplication of courses amongst the colleges. There is also the hope that, through central administrative coordination, policies can be implemented that will allow greater ease in cross-registration amongst the students of all the colleges. These two objectives can be accomplished without threatening the distinctive and exciting qualities of each college. I am committed to the concept of separate colleges working individually in most respects but willing to cooperate with one another occasionally in the interests of service to students and economy. Commendation is due all the colleges for working to maintain their individuality and offering students true alternatives to education.

In our separateness, we are still part of Grand Valley and looked upon by many as one structure, as, in fact corporately, we are. The tendency for members of one college to pick at weaknesses of another is always with us. It can have a healthy effect, and it can be destructive. If at times members of one college feel weighed down by the academic or personal indiscretions of another, please remember that some of their strengths may be contributing favorably to the development of the way Grand Valley is perceived, and thus indirectly to every college.

Though each college has its own character and the growth ambitions in the colleges extend from zero to several hundred in the next few years, the lessening of the overall growth rate can encourage all of us to concentrate on a new kind of growth, one of professional development as individuals and groups. An objective for each college, institute, and administrative unit this year is to determine where and how it can improve what it is already doing, set priorities, figure budgets, and work with the necessary people within or outside the unit to begin making substantive improvements in quality.

I realize this objective is generally stated and needs specification. In the coming months I plan to share my specific ideas about each college, institute and administrative unit with you individually and listen to yours.
As we work toward improved quality of our existing programs we cannot avoid the sensitive area of who our colleagues will be and on what basis will they be selected and retained.

Some of you have expressed interest and even concern in the work of the special committee of the Board of Control appointed to consider the appointment, tenure, promotion, and grievance policy of the colleges. The origin of the committee goes back to three cases that the Grievance Committee heard last year. After their deliberations, they recommended changes to improve the procedure. I asked Professor Hoitenga to chair a task force to study the grievance procedure and other policies relating to appointments, tenure and promotion.

The report of the task force was submitted to the All-College Senate, and the document as passed by the Senate was forwarded to the Board of Control. The Board responded by taking two actions. They appointed the special committee to study the document and they asked the Dean of the Office of College Planning to present them with an alternative paper on the subject for their study. It is my understanding that the Board wanted one plan originating from a faculty source and another from the office in charge of long-range planning. The Board committee now has both papers.

All interested faculty should have access to the documents that the Board will consider. In the next few days, copies of the paper from the Office of College Planning will be circulated to all faculty and staff. If you do not have the All-College Senate paper and want a copy, please call Dr. Kolenbrander's office.

In August, I recommended to the Board members that no serious consideration or action take place until all faculty returned to campus for the fall term and had an opportunity to offer their views to the Board. This recommendation was acceptable. At the October Board meeting, I want to recommend a procedure for effective faculty input to the Board committee's deliberations, and I ask the faculty of each college to let me know how they wish to proceed in this matter.

There is no urgency in making a decision about so important a matter as appointments, tenure, promotions, and grievance policy that should keep the college community from careful, deliberate, and complete consideration. The larger issue that confronts the faculties of all colleges arises out of the real, if not inevitable, possibility of a static or reduced number of students attending college. The procedures followed at many institutions, including Grand Valley, may result in
nearly 100% tenured faculty within this decade. Is this desirable? What are the effects on the quality of instruction if this is the case? Is tenure used primarily to protect academic freedom or is it becoming increasingly a safeguard for slovenly teaching and irresponsible behavior as some claim? Is there any way academic freedom can be preserved and still alter the present tenure system to rid it of its weaknesses? Some have answers that satisfy them; others are still seeking. As members of the faculty, please think as objectively as possible about the problem and assist each of the Grand Valley State Colleges to find a wise solution, one that will preserve superior instruction for students in the future. The Board will listen carefully to all that you have to say.

Some recent reports advocated tenure quotas: no more than two-thirds or three-quarters of the faculty should be tenured. I have trouble with that policy. My preference is in line with AAUP recommendations. There should be no continuing quota limitations on tenure. Those who deserve tenure should have it. An institution, however, must make sure that the standards are high.

One of our objectives for the coming academic year is for the college community and each college individually to arrive at a personnel policy that has a fair balance between protection of the individual's rights and protection of students and colleagues from weak teaching and administration. If we can find the right system, substantial time, energy, and money of individuals and institution may be saved for more happily productive activities.

To deal with this issue, to work together on qualitative improvements throughout the colleges calls for sharing opinions and mutual influence amongst faculty and between faculty, administrators, and students. The Committee on Organization and Objectives will suggest that the All-College Senate be replaced by a more workable academic council -- a council that will meet often, communicate with me directly, and give frequent advice and counsel. This is a matter for you to decide. I will be pleased by any attempt to improve communication and increase thoughtful, deliberative action by a representative body.

For my part, I want to meet with each department in CAS, the faculties of the other colleges and institutes, and the members of each administrative unit as soon as possible. I need to sense your feelings and hear of your aspirations. In turn, I want to share ideas, analyses, and plans with you more completely than I can in even a lengthy address as this one is turning out to be.
I still believe that the quality of life on a campus and the quality of education are closely related. They depend in part on communication and resulting understanding. In a group of semi-autonomous colleges composed of over 5,000 students and 500 faculty and staff, understanding requires effort accompanied by good will.

Few years begin at Grand Valley without looking ahead to the next major projects. Though I strongly urge an emphasis on quality in what we are doing, there are two new directions that require consideration. We are already involved in the first and we must carefully plan its direction. Increasingly, the concept of a college's campus is broadened. To carry out our program, I believe we can think in terms of Ottawa, Kent, and Muskegon counties as our campus area. As we reach out, we come in contact with other institutions that are doing the same. The result can be harsh competition or it can be cooperation, a meshing of programs that will serve the people more completely. I am encouraged by our first steps in cooperation with Grand Rapids Junior College, Calvin, Aquinas, Kendall, Davenport, and Western Michigan University in the Model Cities area of Grand Rapids, our cooperation with the Grand Rapids public schools and junior college in a community arts program, and with Muskegon Community College in offering courses that mesh with their curriculum in Muskegon. During the coming year, the development of our expanded campus concept, including an expansion of international studies, can help us fulfill our commitment to the community.

Some day an end will come to adding colleges to the cluster. I ask, however, that you consider a future possibility of negotiating with St. John's College of Annapolis and Santa Fe to see if a third St. John's is possible as one of the Grand Valley State Colleges. As a first step, all the data will be collected about the college. When we ascertain exactly what it takes to operate St. John's, and if there is a student market, we will try to determine if it can operate within our financial structure on a fair basis with other colleges. By the end of this year, we should have data to provide the All-College Senate or Academic Council for their consideration.

As an institution, Grand Valley has been fortunate to move forward in the past two or three years with a momentum that was characteristic of most colleges in the early and mid-1960's. Yet we are living in a world which is vastly different from the world of the early 1960's. All institutions are having to deal with problems of credibility and accountability as well as increasing competition for financial resources. Many institutions face these conditions at a time of serious retrenchment as well. We face them while we are
still developing. What this means for Grand Valley is, while we nurture the dream of continued development and improvement, we act responsibly to use the public and private resources committed to our charge. Simply put, we must concentrate on getting the best out of available resources. We will be scrutinized, perhaps irritatingly so at times. Part of the dilemma of the 70's is the loss of faith in familiar institutions. It is also the opportunity of the 70's. If we can help restore faith in education and in educational institutions "demonstrating" through our own creative and responsible use of our resources, we will have, I believe, lived up to the faith and trust bestowed so generously upon us. So we will welcome those who want to see us in action. We will listen to their suggestions and hope that they can endorse us with enthusiasm.

The public wants to have faith in educational institutions. Education is part of the American dream. I believe that we at Grand Valley are creative, responsive, willing to attach dreams to economic realities, and still make dreams come true. I believe we have the stuff that makes people excited about education. I come away from contacts with my faculty, administrator, and student colleagues charged up about our future together. I cannot guarantee that the days ahead will be no harder than those past, but we have something different going here. It is good, it is life-giving, it is respectful of people's commonalities and differences. Whatever we go through together, victories and defeats, we can grow in quality of spirit and mind, and we can have a sense of purpose for our lives by being here.
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the special committee of the Board of Control appointed to consider the tenure,
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and other policies relating to tenure and promotion.

The report of the task force was submitted finally to the All-College Senate, and the document passed by the Senate was forwarded to the Board of Control. The Board responded by taking two actions. They appointed the special committee to study the document and they asked the Dean of the Office of College Planning to present them with an alternative paper on the subject for their study. It is my understanding that the Board wanted one plan originating from a faculty source and another from the office in charge of long-range planning. Dr. Kelenbrander has submitted the paper from his office. The Board committee now has both papers on the subject of tenure, promotions, and grievances.
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