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Address at Fall Convocation, delivered on September 21, 1977

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ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT AREND D. LUBBERS
GRAND VALLEY STATE COLLEGES
FALL CONVOCATION
SEPTEMBER 21, 1977

TWO YEARS AGO THE FALL TERM OPENED WITH A CONVOCATION DEVOTED TO THE THEME OF "HIGH QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION AT GRAND VALLEY." THIS SHOULD BE A CONTINUING THEME IN OUR LIFE TOGETHER AT GVSC, AND I WANT TO EMPHASIZE IT AGAIN AS WE MOVE FORWARD INTO A NEW SCHOOL YEAR.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES HAS JUST PASSED THROUGH A PERIOD OF EXPANSION THAT SAW THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MORE THAN 1,000 NEW COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES AND A MORE THAN DOUBLING IN THE ENROLLMENTS OF EXISTING INSTITUTIONS. THERE WAS A NATIONAL CONCERN FOR NUMBERS AND ACCESS, A CONCERN FOR BROADENING THE CURRICULUM AS WELL. THOUGH PRESSURES FOR ACCESS AND CURRICULUM EXPANSION STILL EXIST, THE "HIGH WATER MARK" OF THAT PHASE IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION HAS PASSED.

AT OUR OWN INSTITUTION, THE RAPID GROWTH IN NUMBERS OF STUDENTS DEMANDED ENERGY FROM ALL OF US. THERE IS STILL OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT HERE, BUT WE CAN GIVE MORE TIME NOW TO THE SATISFYING JOB OF ASSESSING THE QUALITY OF OUR WORK AND PLANNING THE DIRECTION FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS.

IN THE JUNE 1977 ISSUE OF HARPERS MAGAZINE, PRESIDENT SILBER OF BOSTON UNIVERSITY WRITES, "THE ONLY STANDARD OF PERFORMANCE THAT CAN SUSTAIN A FREE SOCIETY IS EXCELLENCE. IT IS INCREASINGLY CLAIMED, HOWEVER, THAT EXCELLENCE IS AT ODDS WITH DEMOCRACY; INCREASINGLY WE ARE URGED TO OFFER A DANGEROUS EMBRACE TO MERE ADEQUACY." HE GOES ON TO DESCRIBE HOW OUR SOCIETY HAS EXCELLED IN THE PRODUCTION OF CONSUMER GOODS AND STATES THAT THE RETREAT FROM EXCELLENCE HAS BEEN PHILOSOPHICAL. "OUT OF A WELL-INTENTIONED BUT INEPT CONCERN WITH EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY, WE HAVE BEGUN TO REJECT ANYTHING THAT EXCEEDS ANYONE'S GRASP," SILBER CONTINUES. HE TALKS ABOUT THOMAS JEFFERSON'S BELIEF IN AN ELITE BASED ON VIRTUE AND TALENTS AS COMPARED TO AN ARTIFICIAL ARISTOCRACY FOUNDED ON WEALTH AND BIRTH. IT IS THROUGH EDUCATION, IN PART, THAT THE VIRTUE MATURES AND THE TALENTS ARE DEVELOPED. ALL OF THIS STRUCK A RESPONSIVE CHORD IN ME.

THE INSTITUTIONS THAT WILL STAND IN THE FUTURE, THE INSTITUTIONS THAT WILL NOT ALLOW THEMSELVES TO BECOME BOGGED DOWN IN PETTY INTERNAL BICKERING AND CULTIVATED ADVERSARY RELATIONSHIPS, THE INSTITUTIONS THAT WILL ATTRACT STUDENTS OF VIRTUE AND TALENT WILL BE THOSE THAT SET THEIR STANDARDS OF EDUCATION HIGH, THAT TAKE PRIDE IN THEMSELVES. THEY ARE THE ONES THAT WILL ASK STUDENTS TO EXCEED THEIR OWN GRASP. I COVET SUCH A FUTURE FOR THESE GRAND VALLEY COLLEGES FOR WHOM I HAVE PERSONAL COMMITMENT, PROFESSIONAL PRIDE, AND GENUINE AFFECTION; FEELINGS THAT I AM SURE MOST OF YOU SHARE.

AGAIN, LET ME QUOTE JOHN SILBER, "EVERY DAY IT BECOMES MORE OBVIOUS THAT A TECHNOLOGICALLY SOPHISTICATED SOCIETY WILL NEED MORE, NOT FEWER, EDUCATED CITIZENS. POST-INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY WILL BE GRIM FOR A FUNCTIONAL ILLITERATE, AND IT WILL ITSELF BE BADLY DISRUPTED BY THE PRESENCE OF LARGE NUMBERS OF SEMI-LITERATES WHOSE SKILLS, IF ANY, ARE SUITED TO A WORLD THAT NO LONGER EXISTS. A RESTORATION OF EXCELLENCE IS, THEREFORE, IN THE INTEREST OF SOCIETY AT LARGE AND OF EACH OF ITS MEMBERS." IN OUR DEMOCRACY WE ARE EDUCATING MORE CITIZENS. WE MUST MAKE SURE THEY ARE TRULY BECOMING EDUCATED.

AS WE AT GVSC BEGIN OUR YEAR-LONG PLANNING PROCESS, LET'S REMEMBER OUR COMMITMENT TO THE LIFE OF THE MIND. THE MIND MUST BE SHARPENED THROUGH THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS TO A HIGH LEVEL OF EFFICIENCY. IT MUST PERCEIVE IN GENERAL AND SPECIFIC TERMS, IT MUST ANALYZE AND MAKE CHOICES THROUGH ITS ABILITY TO USE KNOWLEDGE, EXPERIENCE, AND PROCESS. IT MUST BE FORMED AND SHAPED BY A BODY OF KNOWLEDGE THAT COMES FROM A HERITAGE OF PAST CULTURE OR CULTURES, THROUGH THE LITERATURE, THE HISTORY, THE SCIENCE, THE PHILOSOPHY, THE ARTS, THE SOCIAL SYSTEMS OF THOSE CULTURES. IT MUST BE TUNED TO USE LANGUAGE; ANY OR MANY LANGUAGES, THAT OF MATHEMATICS, THAT OF THE COMPUTER, THAT OF A FOREIGN TONGUE, BUT STILL, MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE SO THAT THE MIND CAN MAKE ITS PERCEPTIONS, ANALYSES, AND FEELINGS CLEARLY KNOWN AND EXPRESSED IN THE MAJOR LANGUAGE OF OUR SOCIETY. THE MIND MUST KNOW WHAT REASON IS AND WHAT THE RATIONAL PROCESS HAS MEANT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMANKIND. IT MUST BE ABLE TO APPLY THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD IN ITS SEARCH FOR KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING.

AS EDUCATORS, WE HAVE A SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE MIND. EACH FIELD OF STUDY, EACH PROGRAM, EACH COURSE MUST BE MEASURED FIRST BY WHAT IT CAN DO FOR THE MINDS OF THOSE INVOLVED. OFTEN THE MIND TENDS TO BECOME LAZY. TO DEVELOP, IT ALWAYS NEEDS CHALLENGING AND THAT IS WHAT WE ARE HERE TO DO. WE CAN DO IT IN DIFFERENT WAYS; WE CAN EVEN ENTERTAIN SOMETIMES WHILE WE ARE DOING IT. IN FACT, WE SHOULD STRIVE TO MAKE THE PROCESS INTERESTING. YET, THE DEMANDS ON THE MIND MUST ALWAYS BE RIGOROUS AND THE STANDARDS BY WHICH WE MEASURE THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE MIND, HIGH.

WHEN GRAND VALLEY WAS FORMED, THE FIRST FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATORS COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO A HIGH QUALITY OF EDUCATION ROOTED IN THE TRADITION OF THE LIBERAL ARTS. EACH OF OUR UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGES IN ITS OWN WAY HAS HELD TO THAT PRINCIPLE. IN THE ENSUING YEARS WE HAVE RECOGNIZED THE NEED TO ADD PROFESSIONAL CURRICULA TO OUR PROGRAM. I, FOR ONE, HAVE BEEN ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THESE ADDITIONS IN BOTH UNDER-GRADUATE AND GRADUATE STUDIES, BUT I COULD NEVER ENDORSE SUCH A DEVELOPMENT IF THE MIND-EXPANDING LIBERAL STUDIES CURRICULUM IN EACH COLLEGE HAD NOT REMAINED AT THE CORE OF THE INSTITUTION. THOUGH THERE ARE DIFFERENCES IN EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY HERE, I BELIEVE ALL OF OUR COLLEGES AND INSTITUTES, TAKEN AS A WHOLE, HAVE ACHIEVED A HEALTHY BALANCE BETWEEN THE ESSENTIAL, TIMELESS VALUE OF THE LIBERAL ARTS AND THE NEEDS OF SPECIALIZED SOCIETY FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION. GIVEN OUR DIVERSE AND DECENTRALIZED STRUCTURE, THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN AND AMONG PEOPLE AND GROUPS OF EDUCATORS IS BETTER HERE THAN IN MOST PLACES. THAT HELPS THE BALANCE. TO HOLD WITH THE BEST OF OUR TRADITION AND ADJUST TO NEW TIMES IS A WORTHY QUEST, AND WE ARE MAKING PROGRESS TOWARD IT.

WE CAN BE PROUD OF OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS. MANY PEOPLE IN HIGHER EDUCATION WATCH US WITH GROWING RESPECT FOR WHAT WE ARE DOING HERE.

IF A STUDENT GROWS INTELLECTUALLY, IF HIS OR HER MIND BECOMES AN EDUCATED MIND WHILE STUDYING AT GRAND VALLEY, THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE OF OUR EXISTENCE IS MET. THE STUDENT WILL BE WELL SERVED. AS WE MOVE INTO A YEAR OF ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING, LET ME BE SPECIFIC ABOUT MY PRIORITY CONSIDERATIONS IN ACADEMIC AFFAIRS. THEY ARE:

- 1) TO MAINTAIN BALANCE AND DIALOGUE BETWEEN LIBERAL ARTS AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES.
- 2) TO DEVELOP CLEAR OBJECTIVES FOR EACH COURSE OF STUDY, WITH CONTENT WORTHY OF INTELLECTUAL DISCOURSE AND FAIR, YET DEMANDING, STANDARDS FOR FOR EVALUATION OF STUDENT WORK.
- 3) TO CONSIDER AND PLAN FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS THAT ARE NEEDED IN SOCIETY AND THAT GRAND VALLEY IS BEST SUITED TO OFFER BECAUSE OF THE EXISTING FACULTY QUALIFICATIONS AND AVAILABILITY OF OTHER NECESSARY RESOURCES.
- 4) TO CONSIDER WHAT ADDITIONS AND CHANGES EACH COLLEGE AND INSTITUTE WANTS TO MAKE IN ITS UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM WHEN RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE.
- 5) TO CONSIDER CAREFULLY HOW EACH COLLEGE AND INSTITUTE CAN PROVIDE A HIGH QUALITY OF ACACEMIC COUNSELLING FOR STUDENTS.

- 6) TO REVIEW OUR POLICY ON FACULTY AND STUDENT RESEARCH IN EACH UNIT TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER OR NOT IT MEETS FACULTY AND STUDENT EXPECTATIONS AND, IN FACT, ENHANCES ACADEMIC QUALITY.
- 7) TO WORK OUT PLANS FOR ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES SUCH AS THE LIBRARY, AUDIO VISUAL AIDS, AND THE COMPUTER.
- 8) TO REVIEW OUR RENEWAL AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR FACULTY AND STAFF TO SEE IF PEOPLE ARE WELL SERVED FOR THEIR BENEFIT AND THAT OF GRAND VALLEY.

EACH OF YOU MAY HAVE YOUR OWN PRIORITIES AND SUGGESTIONS. THEY SHOULD ALL BE GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CONSIDERATION IN THE PLANNING PROCESS. I HAVE NOT TOUCHED ON MANY AREAS OF INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT, SERVICES, AND ADMINISTRATION, BUT THERE IS NOT TIME TO DO THIS IN ONE SHORT ADDRESS. OUR ACADEMIC PLAN COMES FIRST; THAT SETS THE ESSENTIAL DIRECTION. OTHER SERVICES ARE VITAL TO IT, BUT ARE, IN FACT, DETERMINED BY IT.

THOUGH I HAVE CONCENTRATED ON ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND THE LIFE OF THE MIND, I CANNOT CONCLUDE WITHOUT A FEW COMMENTS ABOUT THE QUALITY OF OUR LIFE TOGETHER THAT EXISTS APART FROM, BUT INFLUENCES, OUR INTELLECTUAL QUEST. THERE ARE SO MANY WAYS WE COME IN CONTACT WITH ONE ANOTHER, WAYS THAT DETERMINE OUR HAPPINESS. DORMITORY AND APARTMENT LIVING BRINGS PEOPLE, OFTEN STRANGERS, TOGETHER IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO ONE ANOTHER AND TAXES ONE'S PATIENCE AND GOOD WILL. LIFE UNDER THOSE CONDITIONS, OFTEN FUN AND REWARDING, STILL DEMANDS UNUSUAL CONSIDERATION OF OTHERS' HABITS AND TEMPERAMENT, AND THE GOOD JUDGMENT TO

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KNOW WHEN TO INSIST ON YOUR OWN POINT OF VIEW AND WHEN TO ACQUIESCE.

ALL INSTITUTIONS HAVE BUREAUCRACY. MOST OF US IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER ARE PART OF IT AT GVSC. IT IS CRITICAL THAT THOSE WHO ARE A PART OF IT TRY TO ASSIST STUDENTS AND THEIR COLLEAGUES, TAKING SATISFACTION IN MAKING SYSTEMS WORK WELL FOR PEOPLE, RATHER THAN BE DOMINATED BY SELF-PROTECTION AND AN ALOOFNESS FROM THOSE THEY SERVE. A KIND WORD AND HELPFUL GESTURE CAN HAVE A LASTING EFFECT ON THE PERSON WHO IS THEIR RECIPIENT.

THIS FALL THE FACULTY MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT IT WANTS TO BE REPRESENTED BY A UNION OUTSIDE THE STRUCTURE OF THE COLLEGE. I PERSONALLY AM NOT SO CONCERNED ABOUT THE IDEOLOGICAL OR ECONOMIC ARGUMENTS ON EITHER SIDE OF THE ISSUE AS I AM ABOUT HOW OUR LIVES TOGETHER ARE AFFECTED BY THE DECISION. THIS IS A CRUCIAL ISSUE, AND ONE WAY OR ANOTHER IT WILL HAVE EFFECT. WHATEVER THE DECISION, I HOPE THERE IS A FORCE OF OBJECTIVE WISDOM THAT SEES TO IT THE OUTCOME IS IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF EACH COLLEGE AND INSTITUTE AND ALL OF US WHO WORK TO BUILD A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE INTO THE GRAND VALLEY STATE COLLEGES.

THE BUILDINGS WE USE, THE LOVELY CAMPUS WE TRAVERSE, HAVE MORE EFFECT ON US THAN WE REALIZE. TREATING THESE RESOURCES WITH RESPECT IS, IN A WAY, TREATING EACH OTHER WITH RESPECT. WE SHOULD STRIVE TO ESTABLISH A POSITIVE CYCLE FOR MAINTENANCE OF OUR FACILITIES.

IF THE PEOPLE WHO DEVOTE THEIR PROFESSIONAL TIME TO THE CARE OF BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS TAKE PRIDE IN THEIR RESPONSIBILITY AND DO A GOOD JOB, THE REST OF THE PEOPLE WHO USE THE FACILITIES ARE LIKELY TO BE MORE COOPERATIVE IN KEEPING THEM CLEAN. THE REVERSE IS ALSO TRUE, AND I AM SURE THERE CAN NEVER BE A PERFECT POSITIVE CYCLE BECAUSE THERE ARE ALWAYS SOME PEOPLE WHO DO NOT CARE. WE CAN, I BELIEVE, HAVE MORE POSITIVE THAN NEGATIVE REACTION IF WE REMAIN CONSCIOUS ABOUT THESE ATTRACTIVE FACILITIES WE HAVE THE PRIVILEGE OF USING FOR OUR WORK AND OUR PLEASURE.

TOGETHER WE HAVE COME THROUGH A FAIRLY DIFFICULT FINANCIAL PERIOD. THERE ARE ALWAYS FRUSTRATIONS WHEN THE MONEY SUPPLY IS REDUCED OR AT LEAST THE RATE OF INCREASE FROM THE STATE APPROPRIATIONS REDUCED. WE HAVE MANAGED OUR MONEY WELL AND, AS A RESULT, THERE HAVE BEEN NO MAJOR HUMAN DISLOCATIONS. WE HAVE MANAGED OUR MONEY IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF GRAND VALLEY, AND THUS IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE SOCIETY WE SERVE. MANY OF YOU IN SO MANY WAYS CONTRIBUTED TO THAT GOOD MANAGEMENT BY STRETCHING DOLLARS, SUGGESTING AND IMPLEMENTING BETTER WAYS OF SPENDING, AND OVERCOMING THE TENDENCY TO COMPLAIN ABOUT A SITUATION OVER WHICH WE HAD NO CONTROL.

FORTUNATELY, THE ECONOMIC PICTURE IN MICHIGAN HAS IMPROVED. THOSE IN THE LEGISLATURE RESPONSIBLE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION APPROPRIATION WORKED HARD TO PROVIDE MORE DOLLARS FOR THE INSTITUTIONS. WE APPRECIATE THEIR EFFORTS. I WOULD CHARACTERIZE THIS BUDGET AS ONE THAT HELPS US MOVE FROM A DIFFICULT, UNCERTAIN PERIOD TO ONE THAT SHOULD ALLOW US TO WORK THROUGH THE YEAR WITHOUT THE THREAT OF CUTBACKS.

OF COURSE, WE WANT FUNDING AT A HIGHER LEVEL AND EVEN GREATER EQUITY OF FUNDING WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION.

THESE ARE DIFFICULT GOALS TO ACHIEVE, BUT WE WORK TOWARD THEM. FINALLY, IT WILL BE THE PUBLIC WHO DECIDES. THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE EDUCATORS IS CRUCIAL. A MORE COMPLETE BUDGET ANALYSIS WILL BE WRITTEN AND PRESENTED TO THE FORUM OR BY SPECIAL MEMORANDUM.

NOT ONLY IN MANAGEMENT OF MONEY, BUT FOR ALL THE GOOD WORK EACH OF YOU HAVE DONE, FOR EACH KINDNESS, FOR EACH SPECIAL EFFORT THAT OFTEN GOES UNRECOGNIZED, LET ME THANK YOU.

AS WE TURN TO THIS NEW YEAR, I HOPE YOU--STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF-- SHARE MY ENTHUSIASM FOR GRAND VALLEY AND WORKING HERE. TO OUR NEW STUDENTS, WE WELCOME YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY. TO PARENTS, SPOUSES, AND OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS OF STUDENTS, WE HOPE YOU WILL FIND ENRICHMENT BY YOUR ASSOCIATION WITH THESE COLLEGES.

UNLESS PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT IS ACCOMPANIED BY SATISFYING PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THOSE WHO ARE ASSOCIATED IN WORK, THERE IS A LIKELIHOOD THAT ACHIEVEMENT WILL NOT REACH ITS POTENTIAL, NOR LIFE HAVE THE GRACE, COURTESY, AND RESPECT NECESSARY FOR CIVILIZED HUMAN LIFE. ABOVE ALL, WITHIN THESE COLLEGES AND INSTITUTES, I COVET AN ATMOSPHERE WHERE THERE IS A HIGH LEVEL OF PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AND PEOPLE WORK TOGETHER TO CREATE A HAPPY HUMAN CONDITION.