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Grand Valley Review: Experiments in Education: The Early Years at Grand Valley

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Experiments in Education: The Early Years at Grand Valley
The front cover for this issue was taken from the cover of the first Grand Valley State College Catalog, 1963-1964. (The back cover is from page one of the 1964-1965 catalog). The drawing represents the tall, arched columns of the Great Lakes group of buildings, the first of several complexes being planned for the new college. The founders of the college, who prepared the first catalog, had clear ideals:

The objectives of Grand Valley College are to graduate young men and women capable of becoming responsible members of modern society: knowledgeable of our western heritage and appreciative of other cultures; conversant with science, concerned with social problems, and respectful of human values; skillful in the process of analysis and able to judge between competing claims; alert and fluent in defense of fundamental rights and courageous in their beliefs. We will achieve these objectives through a stimulating program of liberal education combined with an array of social and cultural events that are an essential part of student life.

Instead of repeating this statement, the 1964-65 catalog allowed Cardinal Newman to promote (or defend) a liberal education: "[it] gives a man a clear conscious view of his own opinions and judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them, and a force in urging them. It prepares him to fill any post with credit, and to master any subject with facility." A preceding statement places some burden on the students, who "are chosen in the expectation that they will benefit from a liberal education and will graduate as alert, fair, concerned citizens of a complicated human world." This statement is repeated (though Newman's is not) in the 1965-1966 catalog, but in neither is it certain that "social and cultural events," mentioned in the first catalog, are expected to play a role in assisting the liberal arts to fulfill these objectives, for, in both, they appear in a section called "Student Affairs."

For the 1966-67 and 1967-68-69 catalogs, the preparers reverted to the 1963 statement of objectives, but made some subtle changes. Although there is the same positivity about their achievement, the burden of proof is (as it was in 1964) on the students, but here it may be seen only after graduation: "These objectives will be achieved as students who graduate from Grand Valley prove to be responsible members of society [italics mine]." Interestingly, an addition to the list of what students should be is "creative in their thinking." The entire statement is preceded with a tip of the hat to "individuals, businesses, unions, and foundations" from whom Grand Valley "enjoys substantial private support," and notes that "[a]s a new college . . . [Grand Valley] adds promising innovations, all with the purpose of making education increasingly meaningful for its students."

The 1969-71 Catalog statement retains the list of student qualities and skills, but promises that students will have them before they go out into society: "The
objectives . . . are to graduate students who are responsible members of modern society . . . [italics mine]." In 1969, the School of General Studies was announced; it "was developed in accord with Grand Valley's stated commitment to decentralization" and would be "free to develop new methods and curricula within the framework of the liberal arts tradition." William James College was introduced in the 1971-72, catalog, along with three institutes: Urban Studies, Educational Studies, and Environmental Studies. The 1969 statement of objectives remained unchanged.

The 1972-73 catalog announced the "cluster college" approach to education" and illustrated choices in three colors: moss green for CAS; blue for Thomas Jefferson College (the renamed SGS); and pink for its newest entity, William James College. White pages, which opened and closed the catalog, provided general information, but also indicated that there was in fact only one Grand Valley State College. The catalog further announced: "Three additional colleges, plus graduate level programs, are now in the planning stages." Despite these and forthcoming additions, Grand Valley's objectives were printed from the preceding catalog without change.

"Grand Valley gives you a choice," proclaimed the cover of the 1974-75 catalog, resplendent in orange, gold, brown, beige, and tan, proclaiming also that the name of the institution was now plural: Grand Valley State Colleges. College IV and the Seidman Graduate College of Business had been added to the cluster. Despite all these changes, the statement of objectives continued to be unchanged.

The 1975-76 and 1976-77 catalogs were a few inches wider and taller (the latter announced the new Performing Arts Center), but they continued to state the objectives of the college as they had appeared in 1969. It is interesting to note that in all the years that the statement was modified and printed, nobody ever noticed that it stated only one objective; nobody ever thought to print "the objective is . . ." until the 1977-78 catalog, which was even wider and taller than the last. However, the statement is used in a historical rather than a current sense: it is quoted in a brief description of the history of the college, with this introduction: " . . . the Michigan Legislature in 1960 established Grand Valley State Colleges [sic] as a self-governing, coeducational institution dedicated to the objective of graduating students who . . . ." This format was repeated in the 1979-80 catalog, which retained the same 8x11" size.

By the time of the publication of the 1980-81 catalog, things were changing so fast that the catalog opened with a "Notice": "Grand Valley reserves the right to revise all announcements contained in this publication . . . ." Thomas Jefferson College was gone, College IV had been renamed Kirkhof College, and there were three new Centers (International Studies, Performing Arts, and Continuing Education) as well as an Honors Program. Grand Valley now offered " . . . over one hundred academic and career preparation programs leading to . . . degrees in 78 major areas." The statement of objective(s) was missing altogether. In its place was a photo-essay section, "People at Grand Valley," in which selected students, faculty, and administrators told why they liked the college. The 1981-82 catalog was scarcely different, except that on its cover, and inside, the institution called itself Grand Valley or Grand Valley State—Colleges had been dropped. Under the section "Academic
Excellence" it was noted that the institution had a Research and Development Center. The 1982-83 catalog used the same photo for its cover as that of the preceding year. Its contents were relatively unchanged.

A statement of objectives was reintroduced in the 1984-85 catalog: "The mission of Grand Valley State consists of three components: instruction, research, and public service." The three areas are further detailed in a short paragraph each. For "instruction" the goal was stated as, "... developing critical thinking, self-expression, and learning skills, and acquainting students with the tradition of humane values and the heritage, problems, and prospects of their own and other cultures." This mission statement served catalogs until 1988-1989, when Grand Valley became a university, and the objectives expanded to fill the new role, as well as nearly two catalog pages, entitled, "The University and its Objectives." One of the several new objectives, the "undergraduate instructional mission," was said to be sought "through a liberal education curriculum which acquaints students with the tradition of humane values and the heritage, problems, and perspectives of their own and other cultures, and which develops lifelong skills of critical thinking, articulate expression, and independent learning." The 1988 mission statement still serves for the present catalog.

How did we get from there to here? This issue of the Grand Valley Review is focused on the early years of the college. We are pleased that the contributors include faculty members from all three academic divisions, from an administrator, a former student, and a COT staff member. Old-timers are invited to reminisce and newcomers to learn about the foundations of the Grand Valley State University of which they are now a part and all of us to consider the prediction of the writers of the University's first catalog: "Grand Valley contemplates a vigorous growth over the next decade. Its beginnings are small, its potential is great. Mere size does not make a great college, but quality in education does. It is to the best in teaching and learning that we are dedicated."

---R.S.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The spring issue will feature the special topic, "Experiments in Education: Contemporary Views," and will be produced in conjunction with Grand Valley's new Center for Teaching and Learning. We will publish the keynote lecture by Professor Maryellen Weimar, given at the conference "Conversations about Teaching" at GVSU on August 15, 1995, as well as some reflections on the afternoon workshops coordinated by members of the Grand Valley faculty and staff. Essays on our special topic and other topics, as well as fiction, poetry, and art are invited. The deadline is February 15, 1996. Please submit hard copy and a diskette, preferably on Microsoft Word for Windows, to the Editor, 166 Lake Huron Hall.
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COMMUNITY PRAGMATISM VS. ACADEMIC FOUNDATIONALISM: THE BEGINNINGS OF GVSU

Anthony Travis

The first ten years of Grand Valley State College, as it was then known, were dominated by two philosophical paradigms that competed to test which would form the academic culture of the new institution. The first of these I have termed "community pragmatism" and the other "academic foundationalism." During the first ten years of Grand Valley State College these two educational philosophies were in a creative tension. As the second decade of the institution dawned, however, academic foundationalism was clearly being eclipsed by community pragmatism and a newly emerging academic progressivism.

The Community-Pragmatic Philosophy

In the late 1950s, L. William Seidman, a partner in a large accounting firm named after his father, with offices in Grand Rapids, organized a community-based effort to establish a much-needed college in the Grand Rapids area. James Zumberge, the first president of the college, recognized L. William Seidman in 1964 as "the man who rightfully deserves the title of Father of Grand Valley State College. . . . Without his dedicated effort and unrelenting drive, [it] would not exist today."

In 1958, a comprehensive study commissioned by the Michigan legislature bolstered Seidman's case for a regional college. The study, informally named the "Russell Report," after its chief author John Dale Russell, anticipated significant growth in demand for higher education among the post-war baby-boom generations. The report noted that the first of these would come of college age in the mid-1960s. It also predicted that a high proportion of them would desire to attend college because of the growing realization that social and political mobility would increasingly depend on a college education. In addition, the American economy was developing to the point where companies needed more people with a college education than ever before, and there would be new white-collar job opportunities.

In light of these circumstances, the Russell Report recommended that the higher education system in Michigan expand by building new four-year regional colleges instead of adding new capacity to existing campuses. Further, it argued that regional colleges could provide undergraduate education at a lower cost than existing institutions, such as the University of Michigan, because they would not be burdened by the high costs of graduate education or academic research. Additional money could be saved by not building dormitories at these regional colleges because local
lower-income students would be able to attend college by saving room and board costs and by working part time in the nearby cities.

To the delight of Seidman and the other civic supporters of a regional college, the Russell Report identified Grand Rapids as the area of greatest need for an institution of higher education and recommended that the state build its first regional college there.

In response, in 1959 Seidman formed the Committee to Establish a Four Year College (CEFYC). The committee set about convincing two key audiences of the need for a regional college in Grand Rapids: the local citizens, and the state governor and legislature. On the local front, the CEFYC obtained a grant from the Grand Rapids Foundation to fund a more detailed study of the educational needs of the area. John X. Jamrich, a professor at Michigan State University, was commissioned to conduct the research for the study. The Jamrich Report found that "by 1965 there may be 6,000 young people in the eight-county area seeking a higher education, for whom there will not be a facility available." Seidman and the CEFYC effectively used both the Jamrich Study and the Russell Report in public presentations to convince the citizens of Grand Rapids of the need for a regional college.

On the second front, Seidman and the CEFYC worked to convince the governor and the legislature to establish the first regional college in the Grand Rapids area. Such action, they argued, was necessary to insure the economic future of Michigan. Seidman's first success in the political arena came when he and other civic leaders persuaded the local Republican legislative delegation to sponsor an enabling bill in the House to establish the college.

The House Republican leadership, however, was another story. Committed to cutting expenses and balancing the state budget, they questioned the very premise that it was necessary to expand the capacity of the higher education system. They tended to view the bill as unnecessary "pork" for the "[Republican] boys" in Western Michigan. It took Democratic legislators from Detroit to tip the balance in favor of the enabling act. The Democrats supported the bill for ideological and political reasons. They were sympathetic to the idea of enabling middle-income families to send their daughters and sons to a low-cost regional college, and many were persuaded by the early and powerful support of the bill by the United Automobile Workers Union and by the Democratic Governor John Swainson. Equally important in obtaining Democratic support from the eastern part of the state was Seidman's very effective lobbying effort. As a recognized civic leader with a reputation for integrity, he was able to frame the issue as a matter of good public policy rather than as a partisan or regional advantage.

In the end, both houses of the legislature passed the bill by large margins, and the governor signed it into law, with a smiling William Siedman standing beside him. It had passed with overwhelming support. However, a critical compromise had been worked out between the Republican leadership and the bill supporters. In order to test the depth of community support and to put off to the future any large
appropriations for the new regional college, the compromise measure required the community to raise one million dollars from private sources. Only then could Seidman achieve his dream and receive a charter for a new, state-supported college.

Seidman now set about meeting the new challenge. He organized a fund-raising committee, representing the business and financial elite of Grand Rapids. The leaders of the fund drive included such men as Richard M. Gillett and Edward J. Frey, heads of the two largest banks in Grand Rapids. It was civic leaders like these who signaled community approval of financial support for the institution. In response, contributors representing a wide spectrum of the community contributed to the campaign, with more than 5,000 donors giving between $1 and $200. Organizations such as the United Automobile Workers Union and the Affiliates of the Michigan Education Association, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (Grand Rapids), and the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce gave substantial amounts to the drive. Foundations such as the Grand Rapids Foundation, a local philanthropy organization dedicated to funding worthy community projects, also participated. The response was so enthusiastic that in little over a year Seidman and the CEFYC had raised the required one million dollars. In 1960, the legislature fulfilled its commitment by authorizing and funding the college. In return for funding the new college, community members and state legislators expected Grand Valley State College to educate, at the lowest cost possible, highly trained workers for the local economy.

From these events, one can see the outlines of the community-pragmatic philosophy that was one of the two paradigms that shaped the early history of Grand Valley State College. This story of community support in the founding of the University is still evoked to demonstrate the historic lineage of community and state interest in and expectations for Grand Valley State University. The financial involvement of Grand Rapids citizens, for example, is used by President Lubbers and other University leaders on various ritual occasions to remind potential donors of the historic legitimacy of giving money to the university. One of the most recent examples was the University's dedication of the Cook Carillon Tower, named after businessman and philanthropist Peter Cook, who donated the necessary funds for its construction. At the state level, President Lubbers has recently reminded the legislature in the funding process that the University has been true to its charter promises of keeping tuition lower than that of most of the other universities in the state.

**Academic-Foundationalist Philosophy**

The second of the two polar stars that has guided the development of the university over the years is the academic-foundationalist philosophy. Based on their philosophy of education, the founding academic fathers decreed that the institution would be modeled after private, selective, undergraduate liberal arts colleges. There would be no technical, vocational, professional or graduate education.
This group of founders included not only William Seidman, the chair of the Board of Control, but also James Zumberge, the first president of the college; George Potter, the first academic dean; and W. Harry Jellema, the first faculty member. This group was joined by a number of consultants from other Michigan public universities to meet at Hidden Valley Ski Club, located just north of Grand Rapids, on June 22 and 23, 1962, to chart the academic future of the college. The principal members of this group shared an academic philosophy which rejected most of the historical developments in public higher education since the late nineteenth Century, harking, instead, back to earlier American and British models.

Until the early twentieth Century, small private liberal arts colleges, such as Kalamazoo, Calvin, and Hope, had been the model for higher education in Michigan as well as the in the rest of the United States. Such institutions emphasized classical studies, which included ancient history and literature, and moral philosophy. Because curriculum choice was limited at these colleges, most students took similar courses throughout their four years. As a result, graduates all completed similar educational curricula.

In late nineteenth century America, however, higher education began to undergo a dramatic transformation. Most importantly, the German University model began to challenge the dominance of the liberal arts college. The American version of this German model stressed graduate, professional education, and scientific research. University faculties were intensely interested in graduate programs and in research, delegating the teaching of undergraduates to new, untenured faculty members or graduate assistants working on their advanced degrees. In such institutions, the curriculum was divided into distinct disciplines housed in their own departments. Although undergraduates were required to major in one of these newly emerging fields of study, they were given a broad choice of electives to complete their program. Beyond requirements for individual majors, little thought was given to the question of what all college graduates ought to know.

After World War II, the large public and private universities dedicated to graduate teaching and research began to dominate the higher education system in both student numbers and prestige. Many policy makers saw them as vital to the future of the country, and the United States government decided to continue to expand its war-time research collaboration with America's universities. The Cold War, the space program, the managed economy, and the health care system all required expensive research. The federal government thus spent large sums of money on campus-based graduate programs and research projects. In response, these universities emphasized research and graduate studies over the less prestigious and less funded function of teaching undergraduates.

The leading universities were invested with so much prestige and federal funding that most undergraduate teachers colleges desired to emulate them by transforming themselves into regional universities. They too lusted after federal research funds and the prestige of graduate programs. As a result, in the late 1950s and 1960s there emerged many new, regional universities which de-emphasized undergraduate education.
education. Other single-purpose colleges, such as Michigan State College (agriculture), transformed themselves into large multi-purpose universities.

In opposition to these trends in higher education, the academic founders of Grand Valley State College committed themselves to reinvigorating undergraduate education and restoring the nineteenth century ideal liberal arts curriculum. They especially wished to avoid becoming a regional university. In their eyes, such institutions shortchanged undergraduate education for second-rate research and inferior graduate study. Furthermore, they wanted to avoid even the appearance of being a teachers college. They felt that such a school would be dominated by its school of education and, as a consequence, would maintain a narrow professional focus. Grand Valley State College would focus all of its efforts on undergraduate liberal arts education.

At the Hidden Valley Ski Club meeting, Executive Assistant to the President, George Potter, presented to the group a first-year core curriculum that was based on his experiences at British and Canadian Universities, one which would focus on classical studies. Potter's plan was modified by Harry Jellema, a well respected philosophy professor at Calvin College, to include moral philosophy. President Zumberge was in general agreement with Potter and Jellema on these issues, and William Seidman, now chair of the Board of Control, also expressed his fervent support for a strong liberal arts curriculum, but he argued that eventually the institution should also offer some professional programs, including education and business. Seidman did not, however, press the issue. For him it could be put off for future discussion, since the group was at the the time working only on the first year curriculum.

The group reached consensus on a foundation program of nine core liberal arts courses required of all freshman students, three five-credit courses to be taken in each of the three quarters of the freshman year: The Art of Self Expression, The History of Greece and Rome, Introduction to Moral Philosophy, Problems of Modern American Society, Introduction to College Mathematics, The Foundations of Life (Natural Science 1), Frontiers of Science (Natural Science 2); and two courses in French, German, or Russian (the third to be completed in the second year). Students were also required to participate in a program of physical education, unless excused for medical reasons. The designers of this core curriculum saw it as the centerpiece of a revived traditional liberal arts undergraduate college based on their foundationalist philosophy.

Having agreed on the intellectual philosophy that was to undergird the institution and having laid out the subject matter for the core curriculum, the founders left the development of the actual content of the courses to the faculty who were yet to be hired. Yet they were determined to hire a faculty that agreed with their academic philosophy. Zumberge, Potter, Jellema, and Seidman now turned their attention to more pragmatic matters.
The Conflict between the Academic Foundationalists and the Community Pragmatists

The academic idealists faced a series of challenges from those espousing the community-pragmatist vision. This conflict set the stage for future decades of growth, innovation, and transformation.

President Zumberge and Dean Potter recognized from the outset that their commitment to a nineteenth century liberal arts college model clashed with the state legislature's requirement that costs per student at Grand Valley State College be kept much lower than those of the state's major public institutions, such as the University of Michigan and Michigan State University, not to mention premier private liberal arts colleges. After all, an essential characteristic of private, ideal, liberal arts colleges, such as Hope, Calvin, and Kalamazoo, was small classes to enable a great deal of student-professor contact. Accordingly, the idealistic administrators and faculty felt strongly that the tutorial method of instruction, with one faculty member engaged in discussions with five students or fewer, should become the hallmark of the institution. Yet the widespread introduction of such intense faculty-student contact inevitably would drive up the costs in excess of what the state government thought tolerable.

William Seidman, enthusiastically supported by Zumberge and Potter, proposed a bold solution: an experiment in advanced instructional technology. In order to achieve the necessary cost savings for the tutorials in the face of increasing numbers of students, they introduced an elaborate audio-visual system which would enable professors to tape their lectures, thus making them available on demand to students seated in individual, audio-visual equipped study carrels. A student needed only to dial a code number to receive a previously tape-recorded instructional program. In all, there would be 120 tape units that could deliver 120 different lectures. William Seidman was instrumental in winning a major grant to pilot this concept. The designers of this instructional system hoped that, ultimately, professors would be spared some of the required classroom lecture time and thus would have additional time to work with students on a personal level in tutorials.

The academic foundationalists were challenged by community pragmatists on a second front: the state held the college to the Jamrich Report's growth projection of 10,000 students by 1971. This figure dated back to the period when Seidman's committee, citing the Jamrich Report, successfully convinced the legislature that there was a need for a new college in the Grand Rapids area. Although the administration and most of the faculty understood that they needed to achieve this goal, they also knew that such numbers would undermine their plans for a small liberal arts college.

To solve this problem, Dean George Potter proposed that for every 500 students admitted to the college (later increased to 1,500 students), a new academic complex would be created, with its own facilities and faculty. Some functions, however, would remain centralized; for example, the science, physical education, and library buildings would serve the entire campus. Thus, as the college grew, it would
decentralize, and, with the exceptions noted above, each academic society would remain small and autonomous. Potter’s plan was modeled after Oxford University, itself a collection of relatively autonomous liberal arts colleges.

Theoretically, this plan would preserve the integrity of Grand Valley State College as a premier, public, liberal arts college as enrollments grew. But no one was prepared for what followed. In September of 1963 the first freshman class arrived on campus. As James Zumberge wrote, "we were not deluged with applications...[in fact they] came in at an agonizingly slow rate." Zumberge believed that this small number of applications was not indicative of student rejection of the philosophy of the college; rather, he asserted that low enrollments were due to practical considerations. On the one hand, "local students with adequate resources would most likely attend a residential college away from home"; on the other hand, "most students who could not afford to go away to school were inclined to select an institution of established reputation in the area before taking a chance on a new non-accredited college whose physical plant was still on paper when they applied for admission." Grand Rapids Junior College, for example, was one of the oldest in the nation, with a strong academic reputation.

As it turned out, the applications were so meager that, according to Zumberge, "we gambled on a good many borderline students who should not have been admitted, as their academic performance later indicated." Even so, that first year, only 226 students showed up for registration, out of the 400 students earlier projected by the administration. This projection had been sent to Lansing in support of the college’s budget request for the next fiscal year. The legislature took unfavorable note of the discrepancy.

It soon became very evident that the college would not measure up to the growth curve projected by the Jamrich report of 1957. For example, in 1964 the college attracted only 334 new students (as compared with 226 in 1963). In 1965 the figure doubled to 659, but in 1966 new enrollment fell back to 551. In 1967 new students increased to 715. Yet the report had projected 2,500 students for the college in 1965. The student body was, in fact, about half that figure.

The Jamrich Report had not taken into consideration that the existing community colleges and universities would massively expand their enrollments or that new community colleges would be established. Higher education in Michigan had become a buyers’ market by the early 1960s, and the buyers were not buying Grand Valley State’s brand of education.

The challenge to the idealistic model became direct. The state legislature interpreted the slow growth of the college as a failure to meet the expectations of regional students who wanted preparation in professional occupations, not exclusively in the liberal arts. Other state universities that had instituted professional programs were experiencing swelling enrollments. The legislature further noted that the lack of an adequate number of students at Grand Valley State College drove up the cost per student to a level that was slightly below that of the University of
Michigan. For the state legislature, this negated the purpose of regional colleges: low-cost undergraduate education.

Thus a dilemma was created that could not be resolved. How was an institution with programs and expectations modeled after liberal arts colleges, which selected academically talented, upper-middle-class students seeking self-knowledge and fulfillment, to appeal to largely working-class and rural applicants who were only marginally interested in the liberal arts and were being admitted on a relatively non-selective basis?

As early as November 1963, only a month after the first freshman class arrived on campus, D. J. Guzzetta, the North Central Association (NCA) consultant for the college's accreditation effort, had issued a warning in this regard. In his second report to the Grand Valley State College administration he wrote:

The interesting point to mention with regard to the college's program is that, as a state-supported institution, it cannot be too selective, yet it is offering a liberal arts program designed to require more individual student initiative than is normally demanded by many "prestige-selective" institutions. Should the College achieve the success it is counting on under the above conditions, a major break-through in American public higher education will have been made.

The real challenge to the college lies in the ability of its staff, the nature of its curriculum and the teaching techniques applied to motivate a comparatively 'non selective' student body into assuming more individual responsibility for learning. A spot checking of student's records followed up by random interviews with students left the writer with the impression that this may be possible at Grand Valley State College. However, this can only be accomplished by aiming for even closer faculty-student-administration team effort than one normally finds on a campus.

The next year, the NCA advisor had become blunt in his negative assessment of the college's chances of success. "There appears to be some question as to whether the College is admitting the caliber of students who are prepared to cope with this type of curriculum." Although the college was to achieve accreditation in a timely fashion, this discrepancy was a major factor in convincing both Zumberge and Potter that they must, however reluctantly, move the institution away from its original goals.

In addition, prospective and existing students, reflecting the more pragmatic twentieth century aspirations of the surrounding community, sought an education that would directly prepare them for an occupation. Student surveys indicated that many of them wanted to become teachers. The surveys also revealed a high rate of dissatisfaction among the students with the foundation program and with the lack of a wider choice in the curriculum. It was also difficult to attract transfer students from the area community colleges because they were also required to take the foundation program.

In the face of such dismal enrollment figures and student disaffection, innovative technology and the decentralization models for the future proved insufficient. In only
its second year, the college was forced to begin to move away from its original foundationalist ideal.

A teacher-preparation program was in place by 1964. Zumberge, writing in 1965, felt that the original plans for the college to be a traditional liberal arts college did "not necessarily mean that a program of teacher education would be included, but I could not see how a state supported college could possibly abrogate the responsibility of producing teachers for the primary and secondary school system throughout the state." In other words, his support was based on the pragmatic grounds that the state government expected Grand Valley State College to have a teacher-preparation program.

It was evident that the idealists did not hold complete control of the agenda. Despite misgivings on the part of some of the pioneer faculty, they all agreed that it was indeed necessary to institute a teacher-education program. They, however, stipulated that no major in education or school of education be created and that as many teacher-preparation courses as possible be offered by liberal arts departments. To house those courses that did not fit into any liberal arts department, such as student teaching, a center without a separate faculty was created. It was not until 1972 that an Educational Studies Institute with faculty, but without the status of a liberal arts department, was formed.

On the heels of the inauguration of the first professional program at Grand Valley State College, a group of pragmatic faculty emerged, led by Glenn Niemeyer (History) and Marvin DeVries (Economics). To attract a greater number of students to the college, they proposed a Business Administration program. This proposal was supported by the administration, if reluctantly, because William Seidman, although a supporter of the liberal arts, had always thought that the college needed to offer education and business programs. In addition, still faced with shortfalls in student enrollment, the administration looked around desperately for ways to attract new students to the college.

After furious debate, replete with accusations of betrayal of the liberal arts ideal, the Faculty Assembly, comprising all the faculty, passed a compromise proposal. Business subjects could be offered, but only within the confines of the economics department. Located there, idealists hoped, the business "track" could be infused with liberal arts concepts.

After 1965, Zumberge, growing more desperate over the failure of the liberal arts college to attract adequate numbers of students, increasingly worked with the pragmatic faculty to boost low enrollments. The college had predicted, for example, for fall of 1965, an enrollment of 1,800. The Jamrich Report had, in 1957, predicted 2,500. Yet only 1,340 students were enrolled. Between 1967 and 1968, major changes were made in the foundation program in order to attract more students. For example, the pragmatist faculty, with administration support, successfully convinced the Faculty Assembly to drop the foreign language requirement for all students, because many other colleges had already done so. The option was a Bachelor of
Science degree, which did not require the study of a foreign language, as did the Bachelor of Arts.

Pragmatic faculty, again with the support of the administration, also proposed a number of new courses as options to the required Foundation Program in order to give students more choice. Students would also be allowed to complete the Foundation Program over a two-year period, rather than one. In 1969, President Zumberge wrote, "[i]n retrospect, had not those changes been accomplished at that time, the future of Grand Valley State College could have been in severe jeopardy." In 1973, the foundation program was done away with altogether. It was replaced with a distributive education plan. After only ten years, little was left of the original Foundation Program in form or philosophy.

Another blow to the special nature of Grand Valley State College had come when it became clear by 1966 that neither the students nor the faculty were willing to utilize the study carrels with their audio-visual capabilities. Faculty were reluctant to tape their lectures for use in the system. The more distant goal of using tapes as a substitute for live lectures was out of the question. As a result, the carrels soon were transformed into study areas that students often used as lunch stops, leaving apple cores and banana peels behind.

The failure of this technologically advanced system to evolve into a substitute for some lectures struck a mortal blow to the plan to balance high-intensive faculty-time tutorials with low-intensive faculty-time study carrels. And as the faculty found more students in their classes and were forced to hold tutorials on their "own time," in order to maintain state mandated student-faculty ratios, the number of tutorials declined. By 1973 tutorials had largely disappeared.

Another straw in the wind was the development of Grand Valley State's intercollegiate sports program. From the beginning, the college had urged and provided for a number of intramural sports, but student surveys and opinions printed in the student newspaper clearly indicated that students, especially males, demanded intercollegiate sports, especially basketball and football. In the first years of the college, President Zumberge hoped to avoid "entry into this activity." It became clear, however, to President Zumberge by 1968 that football would be coming to the College as soon as the institution could afford it:

In 1968, we still had no football team, and if some of the faculty members in the humanities division have their way, we will never become involved in this sport, at least not on an intercollegiate basis. It is doubtful, however, whether the view of the dissenters will prevail. I think not. The question is no longer, "will GVSC engage in intercollegiate football," but "when will the first game be played?" The important thing to remember is that football is a tradition of long standing on the American college scene. Students love it. Alumni demand it, and a good many faculty members enjoy it.

In regard to the football question as well as the academic ones, President Zumberge was increasingly forced by outside pressures to adopt a pragmatic position. In the process, by the late 1960s and early 1970s, Grand Valley State
College began to resemble the comprehensive regional university model that it had wished to avoid.

In 1968, some of the idealistic progressive faculty, such as Dan Clock, Gilbert Davis, Bill Baum, and Dan Andersen, formed a new, ultimately autonomous, alternative learning society, at first called the School of General Studies and later Thomas Jefferson College. The remaining faculty formed the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), which still contained by far most of the faculty and students at the institution. With the departure of many of the progressive idealists, and the hiring of professional studies faculty in business and education, the pragmatic faculty now made up a CAS majority. Separated as they were into two different colleges, the two groups of idealistic faculty could no longer make common cause against the drive to make the college over into a regional university with a host of professional programs.

The departure of President Zumberge in 1968 and of Academic Vice-President Potter less than a year later further demoralized the foundationalists. Arend D. Lubbers, who replaced Zumberge as President of Grand Valley State College in 1969, did not bring the foundationalists hope. He was more interested in new, progressive educational ideas than in re-instituting a nineteenth Century liberal arts curriculum. Idealistic progressive faculty, on the other hand, hoped that he would advance their ideas for alternative colleges. He did. Within a few years, there were two more experimental colleges: William James College and College IV (later called Kirkhof College). With the establishment of these colleges, President Lubbers hoped that the institution could meet the expectations of the community for professional education in the College of Arts and Sciences and, at the same time, fulfill its progressive education mission in the alternative colleges. The institution, in the 1970s, now called the Grand Valley State Colleges, would earn a national reputation for experimental education within a cluster college model.

Although he leaned toward an idealist, progressive, educational philosophy, President Lubbers also had a keen pragmatic sense. A good symbol of this pragmatism was his decision to establish, as one of his first acts, intercollegiate football. He was very aware that the survival of the institution depended on meeting the expectations of the community and those of the students.

Although the previous president had not been forced to resign, there had been rising dissatisfaction in the state government and in the local community with his inability to bring costs down and increase the numbers of students enrolled at the college, as well as with his slowness to move the college away from a rigid liberal arts philosophy of education. Therefore, it is not surprising that another of President Lubbers’ first acts was to appoint as dean of the new College of Arts and Sciences Glenn Niemeyer, a leading pragmatist faculty member who also had a strong commitment to the liberal arts.

Nor is it surprising that the new dean proposed a new array of professional programs, such as nursing, criminal justice, public administration, and social work, in the first two years of his administration. His actions were especially timely in the face
of declining student enrollment in the teacher-preparation program, and thus in the liberal arts majors in the College of Arts and Sciences.

The Ascendancy of The Pragmatic Community Philosophy

The cluster college concept was not to survive the 1970s. Falling enrollments in the experimental colleges, an economic downturn in the state of Michigan, and a more conservative era all joined together to cause its collapse. This left the proponents of the pragmatic community philosophy in charge of the agenda for Grand Valley State. In the 1980s and 1990s, Grand Valley State intensified its drive to become a regional university. By 1995, Grand Valley State University had become a regional comprehensive university recognized for the academic quality of its undergraduate and graduate programs, its attention to teaching, and its focus on the individual needs of its students, as well as the needs of Western Michigan, as is indicated by the willingness of the business community of Western Michigan to donate substantial funds to University projects. The pragmatic community philosophy now dominates the social space at Grand Valley State University. It is continually invoked to justify the academic course the University is on.

The foundationalist, liberal arts philosophy, on the other hand, has continued its decline as its adherents have begun to retire in large numbers and few new faculty with that philosophy are being hired. The one area where idealist faculty, both progressive and foundationalist, continue to try to exert their influence is in arguing for a core curriculum in the general education program, which President Lubbers has supported. He has, for example, proposed considering a new, core general education curriculum that would sharply limit the courses allowed in the program and insure that they would be clearly interrelated to each other. The core would reflect what every Grand Valley State University graduate should know, regardless of major. He also supports, but does not mandate, a consolidation of the liberal arts into a single college located on the Allendale campus and the consolidation of the professional programs on the Grand Rapids campus, when the planned expansion of the Grand Rapids campus is completed. Enough money has been donated for the first stages of the project to begin.

In effect, a new, two-campus university may be created in the next five years, with a number of important links which will allow for the continual growth of the comprehensive regional university model undergirded by a pragmatic philosophy, and at the same time strengthen the public, liberal arts college model undergirded by an idealistic philosophy. Will idealists, if given a third chance, be able to achieve what they hadn't been able to achieve before, a healthy number of students enrolled in their various programs?

If these initiatives do not blossom into real change that creates a supportive structure for an idealistic liberal arts based philosophy of education, the university will no doubt settle into its role as a highly successful regional university with deep roots in its community.
Harry Jellema began his second academic career at GVSC when he became the first professor that I engaged for the new college. He was the reason that we were able to field an unusually good faculty of fifteen to start things going. His presence set the level of quality that I was looking for.  
—James Zumberge, First President, Grand Valley State University

Professor Jellema began his first career in 1921 as the founder of the Calvin College Department of Philosophy. Later, he was chair of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Indiana, but returned to Calvin and stayed until he reached the mandatory retirement age of 70. At an age at which many professors seek the dreams of retirement, Jellema came to Grand Valley with a vision that was shared by others during those early years—a vision of a publicly supported four-year college, unique in that it would be devoted exclusively to teaching, and teaching only undergraduates, and teaching them the liberal arts and sciences. The only professional preparation would be for elementary and high school teachers; but the exception was justified on the ground that these prospective teachers would have the same requirements that other students would have, the same liberal education.

When Professor Jellema invited me to join him in the Philosophy Department in 1965, the third year after Grand Valley opened its doors to students, everyone who had been attracted to join the original faculty and administration was still enthusiastic about this vision for Grand Valley. But soon thereafter, owing to our fear and ambition, the vision gradually lost its guiding, unifying power. The fear was that we could not attract enough students to share with us a vision of higher education so unique; the ambition was that we could modify the vision to provide the many other things modern colleges are expected to provide, not only to their students but also to those constituencies, private or public, who support them. These other things were professional programs, graduate studies, research, services to the community, and more. In what follows, I review the significance of the original vision, as personified in Professor Jellema himself for those who knew him, and as embodied in the original college itself. I also comment on what is left, or not left, of that vision in the institution as we know it today.

Teaching. Professor Jellema believed that teaching is the heart of education; he was himself first and foremost a teacher. Frederick Feikema Manfred, the American novelist, described, in the character of Thurs, his own encounter as a student with Professor Jellema in the Calvin College of the 1930s:
Mr. Hobbe had the reputation on campus of being the most brilliant Christian, the best read...the most tolerant. . . . And some there were who felt that Mr. Hobbe was a bad influence on the Christian youth. . . . Mr. Hobbe's defenders. . . . claimed that Mr. Hobbe taught one to think. . . . Thurs hadn't been long in Mr. Hobbe's class when he decided that Mr. Hobbe was the truest Christian he had ever known. He decided that was not because Christianity was great but because Mr. Hobbe was a profound man, one who transcended narrow doctrinaire creed, one who was daring enough to accept the notion that there was a God....\textsuperscript{2}

—From The Primitive

Thus Professor Jellema, as Professor Hobbe, was introduced to the American novel-reading public.

A generation later, Alvin Plantinga, one of Jellema's students who has become one of America's important philosophers, introduced Professor Jellema to the world of professional philosophers:

I first encountered Harry Jellema in the spring of 1951. . . . That spring I was a freshman at Harvard. I returned to Grand Rapids. . . . [during a break] to visit my parents. . . . [and] took the opportunity to visit some of Jellema's classes. After attending three of his lectures. . . . I decided on the spot to leave Harvard so that I could study philosophy with Jellema. That was one of the best decisions I ever made.

In those days. . . . Jellema was at the height of his powers; and he was indeed impressive. He looked like a great man—iron-grey hair, handsome, an upright, vigorous bearing bespeaking strength and confidence, a ready smile. And he sounded like a great man. Although he had grown up in the United States, there was a trace of European accent—Oxford, I thought, with perhaps a bit of the Continent thrown in. . . .

Many of us came deeply under his spell; had he told us black was white we would have had a genuine intellectual struggle.\textsuperscript{3}

—Alvin Plantinga, John O'Brien Professor of Philosophy, University of Notre Dame

I was among those students in this later generation who enjoyed coming under Jellema's "spell." Some years afterwards I was honored to find myself one of Jellema's colleagues in the early Philosophy Department at Grand Valley. Busy working at becoming a teacher myself, I found him a fascinating model. The big difference was that I had to work at it, whereas, for Jellema, teaching seemed to be the most natural thing in the world.

Jellema was a born teacher, not made, as most of the rest of us are. He had a keen instinct to communicate, to interest, challenge, and lead us his students from where we were to where we had to be. Patience, congeniality, classroom presence—these were his natural gifts. Every lecture was a living dialogue between him and us—or him and himself if there was no class discussion. I sometimes visited
his large lecture classes in the Introduction to Philosophy at Grand Valley. On two occasions, at least, the students showed their appreciation at the close of the hour with a spontaneous round of applause—something I had not heard of before. Nor have I since.

Our Center for Teaching, established just last Fall and inaugurated with a Conference on Teaching Excellence that attracted nearly 300 participants, is the latest evidence that excellence in teaching is still a high, perhaps even the highest, priority at the University. Professor Jellema would have been pleased.

Liberal Education. After teaching, Jellema's highest priority was not writing books or articles in his field ("contributing to his discipline") but advancing the liberal arts curriculum:

Harry Jellema is one college professor who. . . survived without writing a book. . . . He is first and last a teacher, and he obviously has inculcated in those around him a love of teaching. . . . He has confined his writing to articles on curriculum and the liberal arts. 4

—Gerald Elliott, Journalist, former Adjunct Professor in Communications, Grand Valley

Jellema was the architect of Grand Valley's first General Education Program. It required every student to take a "foundation course" in the major disciplines of the arts and sciences, as well as distribution courses beyond one's concentration.

The simplicity and integrity of that first Program has never been surpassed. Its succeeding versions testify to the continued, often intense, interest in general education, but also to the onset of increasing confusion and disagreement about what a general education program should be. A recent issue of the Grand Valley Review (Spring 1994), devoted to a critique of the present program, reveals both the interest and the disagreement. There seems to be no visionary thinker among us capable of leading the rest of us to agreement about something so important that it once was called the "Foundation Program" for a baccalaureate degree.

I deeply regret that we failed to unite ourselves in a firm, continued support of that Foundation Program. That Program still seems to me clearly superior to every one of its successors, not only in its simplicity but also in its challenge to keep our focus, and that of our students, on the basic ideas in the main areas of human knowledge that every educated person ought to know.

Philosophy. Great teacher, single-minded advocate of liberal education, and finally, "premier philosopher":

Services for W. Harry Jellema, former chairman of the Philosophy departments at Calvin College and Grand Valley State Colleges, will be held at 11 a.m. Wednesday at La Grave Christian Reformed Church.

Jellema, 89, who died Sunday at Butterworth Hospital, was considered by his colleagues and former students as one of the premier philosophers in the country. 5


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Philosophy? That also, I think, was part of Jellema's vision for Grand Valley; but it needs explanation. Of course he wanted a Department for the professional teaching of philosophy. But philosophy for Jellema was a subject, not properly confined to any single department. Indeed, in an important sense, Jellema thought, it was downright improper to confine it to a Department. For that suggests that philosophy is just one more specialized subject, no different really from any other. But Jellema thought it to be quite different, because it examines the ultimate beliefs we have about any subject whatever, ultimate beliefs that determine how we think about anything—including how we think about all the special disciplines that make up the arts and sciences.

In short, Jellema believed that everyone has philosophical ideas, and better to realize it than not. And especially better for a college faculty, a community of specialists, to realize it than not. For he believed that these ultimate beliefs will show through our teaching whether we are aware of it or not. For Jellema, in short, a college or a university is a philosophical enterprise.

The idea is not easy to grasp; it is certainly not the popular idea of what a college is for. It is not even the common notion of what education at any level is really all about. But Jellema was a visionary, even about the role of his own "subject," philosophy. One of his former students, and later his colleague for a short time at Grand Valley, tells how, in Jellema's own language, the idea came through to him:

Jellema was one of a kind. . . . His lectures were works of art delivered in riveting prose with an unobtrusive moral authority that transported you out of yourself. . . .

My life was decisively shaped by his teaching and example. I can still hear him saying: "More important than what you think is the mind with which you think." . . . For the first time, we too began reflecting about the mind with which we thought. Or didn't think.  

—John Beversluis, Professor of Philosophy, Butler University

What philosophy should do, then, is move us to examine "the mind with which we think."

If we conduct this examination, Jellema believed, we would discover, as we try to form our minds for ourselves, that they are likely to be more or less formed for us by the way we were brought up and educated. Formed by what? By one of what he considered the three main Western philosophical traditions: idealism (that is, Greek humanistic idealism and its heirs today); theism (the Judaeo-Christian idea of God); and modern secular scientific naturalism. In other words, Jellema claimed that we will likely find ourselves more or less disposed individually to one of three ultimate beliefs: the autonomy of human rational and moral ideals, the sovereignty of God, or the ultimacy of nature (of the cosmos, the material world). This is what Jellema meant when he taught that the "mind with which we think" is more important than what we think.

Actually, Jellema meant something more. One of his former students and long-
time colleagues at Calvin College suggests it:

He was an acute and stimulating thinker who, aware of the pedagogic function of philosophy, knew how to elicit mature and viable answers. He did not peddle ideas, nor did he merely commend them; he made them alive and irresistible.

For him, philosophy was there to deepen understanding and to delineate the perspective of faith. [But] the history of philosophy was for him the progressive articulation of competing faiths seeking appropriate understanding.7

—Henry Stob, early student of Jellema and later his colleague in philosophy for many years at Calvin College

That "something more" is as provocative as it is exciting, and, if it is true, utterly serious. Here it is: Christianity (or any religion) is not the only faith. One's ultimate philosophical beliefs constitute one's faith, whether these beliefs look like religious beliefs or not. It will follow that the competition, the conflict, between such beliefs might be as deep and significant as religious conflicts themselves.

Jellema, of course, was a Christian theist, one of the visionaries in the development of Calvin College. He realized, of course, that Grand Valley could not be another Calvin College (though some wags in those early days wondered aloud about that, when they referred to the new school in Allendale as "Calvin West"). Still, Jellema hoped, I think, that its faculty might be as self-conscious and open about their quite diverse philosophical beliefs as his colleagues at Calvin College were about their shared Christian beliefs. It would not make the new college a Christian college, of course, but still, it could have been a philosophical one. That indeed would have made it unique. But, as I noted earlier, that was an idea pretty hard for most of us in those early days to grasp, let alone implement.

I often wonder what such a university would be like—the entire faculty devoted to their specialized subjects, but also eagerly raising, now and again, in class and committee, in special seminars and public colloquia, the larger philosophical questions that arise from their specialized artistic, scientific, and professional pursuits. And not only raising such questions, but also giving their answers to them; and further, revealing how these answers might affect and be affected by the very subject they teach; and finally, defending their ultimate beliefs against the inevitable challenges of their colleagues who would disagree. When I came to Grand Valley, I thought—much more vaguely than I now express it—I would find out what such a college would be like. But I never did.

Still, could Grand Valley have been more fortunate than it was, that back in 1963, Calvin College retired this visionary thinker—a superb teacher, a premier philosopher, and a devoted advocate of liberal education?

1 From a letter to the family on the occasion of Professor Jellema's death. This vignette and the following ones are
excerpted from longer tributes to Professor Jellema written either during his retirement or upon his death. They are collected, with many others, in a memorial booklet, *In Memory of William Harry Jellema: 1893—1982*, ed. Dewey Hoitenga, published by Grand Valley.

The Philosophy Department has a limited number of copies left, if anybody is interested in obtaining one.


7"W. Harry Jellema: A Former Student Remembers," written for the Memorial Booklet.
FROM HARD HAT TO PROVOST:  
A STORY OF SUCCESS AT GRAND VALLEY

-adapted by the editor from an interview with Glenn Niemeyer

Yes, of course, the title is intended to tease you into reading this essay, but it isn't false. Glenn Niemeyer's interview for a position at Grand Valley included donning a hard hat and being taken by George Potter, Assistant to the President for Academic Affairs, similarly topped, on a tour of Lake Michigan Hall, then being built in the middle of an abandoned farm. It was February, 1963, and many colleges were looking for people with Ph.D.'s. Having grown up and been educated in Michigan, Glenn had wanted to try living elsewhere for awhile. He had gotten some offers from small liberal arts colleges in Washington, Oregon, California, and Colorado. But then he heard about a new and experimental college which was about to open near Grand Rapids. Despite the lure of the West, this new college offered a unique experience—to try out some of his own ideas about teaching, to shape the curriculum of a history department, and to be part of the building of a new institution. One of his professors tried to discourage him from going to a new college with no reputation; that was not the way to start a career. But in 1963, it was easy to think that if one didn't like a job after a year or two, one could easily get another. Besides, Grand Valley State College was the only college that sent its offer to him in a telegram.

When the college opened in September, for 226 students and twelve faculty members, Lake Michigan Hall was still being built. Nevertheless, classes commenced; students and faculty simply shared the environs with full-time hard hats and flies swarming into through the apertures of the building; they had to speak up over the sounds of pounding, scraping, and buzzing. Sidewalks were yet to come; planks served as a way to get from muddy parking lots to buildings. Glenn and Marvin DeVries, an economist who taught math that first year (and later became Dean of the Seidman College of Business), shared an office that they would have to vacate soon, because it belonged to President Zumberge, whose office was still in Grand Rapids. When, in January, the President was ready to move onto campus and Lake Superior Hall was completed, Glenn and Marvin packed all their books and papers into a plastic cart each, topped it with their desk and chairs, and moved into an office there. When Lake Huron Hall was ready a year later, they did it again.

Glenn and John Tevebaugh were the History Department for the first two years. Although both had specialized in American history in their graduate work, John taught the Western Civilization course, and Glenn taught "Problems of Modern American Society," a kind of introduction to Social Science. Each taught a class of 60 to 75 students, lecturing to them three times a week and holding discussion sessions of 20 to 25 once a week. The tutorial was the special feature of the college. Students
would meet five times a term in small groups with the professor to present papers based on their assigned readings, not in textbooks, but on reserve in the library and specially chosen to show varying interpretations of historical incidents. Glenn remembers these tutorials as being extremely valuable in the level of instruction and interaction they afforded both the student and the professor.

When, at the end of that first school year, a faculty assembly was called for Memorial Day, nobody thought it strange, and everybody came. They were used to meeting at odd times—over lunch, even at night—to carry on discussions which pursued the answers to such questions as, "What does it mean to be liberally educated?" and "What, in fact, are the liberal arts?" They met not only to shape the curriculum, but to shape the content of what they were teaching. They were young, in both age and experience, but they were, in Glenn's opinion, extremely well qualified, most holding Ph.D.'s, and very much committed to shaping an excellent liberal arts college.

They didn't always agree, and by 1965, it was clear that there was more and more diversity about the meaning of "liberal arts." At the first faculty assembly in fall, 1965 George Potter announced that the curriculum had to be changed: the disastrously low student enrollment indicated that students were not being attracted to the system. Glenn, Marvin DeVries and some members of the Science Division got together to talk about new programs, especially in the professions, and Glen was chosen to approach the president, who, they knew, was opposed to professional education at Grand Valley. When Zumberge didn't say no, this group, calling themselves CONAP (Committee on New Academic Programs) went ahead in their planning. The first new programs to emerge were in Business and Nursing (Education was already in place).

In 1970, the new president, Don Lubbers, asked Glenn to be the Academic Dean. Glenn really liked being a professor: he was a popular teacher, had published a biography of Ransom Olds for the Michigan State University Business Series, and was working with a professor at the University of California, Irvine, on a book about William Durant, founder of General Motors. But he accepted the new position, continuing to teach one class and write articles on Durant, until the frequent interruptions of his class for emergency deanly matters led him to give up teaching and scholarship altogether. When, in the seventies, Grand Valley became a cluster of colleges, Glenn became Vice-President of the Colleges for Academic Affairs. In 1980, he was also appointed Provost. And, although I have not personally seen him do it, it may well be that he still puts on a hard hat to visit new buildings in progress on the campus (or thinks about it).
THE GOOD OLD DAYS AT GRAND VALLEY:
A PERSONAL VIEW

Howard Stein

Dramatis Personae
Carl Bajema  Assistant Professor of Biology
Albert Baker  Associate Professor of History of Science and Chemistry
Frederick Bevis  Assistant Professor of Biology (now Professor Emeritus of Natural Resources Management)
Marcia Boyles  Assistant Professor of Biology (later first Director of the School of Health Sciences)
Philip Buchen  Vice-president for Business Affairs
Robert Chamberlain  Associate Professor of English and Chair of Arts & Humanities Division
Philip Clampett  Assistant Professor of Biology
Arthur DeLong  Professor of Psychology
Greta DeLong  Associate Professor of Psychology & Education
Marvin DeVries  Assistant Professor of Economics (later Director of Seidman School of Business)
Marlys Flanders  Wife of Assistant Professor of Anthropology Richard Flanders
Weldon Frase  Professor of Education
George Potter  Academic Dean
Arthur Hills  Assistant Professor of Music and George Potter's assistant
Shirley Hills  Art's wife
Henry Hanson  Visiting Lecturer in Mathematics
Charles Irwin  Chair of Physical Education and Athletic Director
Harry Jellema  Professor of Philosophy and Chair of Social Science Division
Lorraine Jerkaitis  Wife of Channel 35 Art Director James Jerkaitis
Donald Lautenbach  Director of the Plant Department
Arend D. Lubbers  Second President
Jean MacDonald  Wife of second Athletic Director George MacDonald
Carl Meloy  Professor of Chemistry and Chair of Science & Math Division
Rodney Mulder  Assistant Professor of Sociology
Glenn Niemeyer  Assistant Professor of History
John Payne  State Technical Services Director
Louis Rus  Professor of English and Chair of the Department
John Scherff  Plant Department Supervisor
Mary Seeger  Assistant Professor of German
Wilhelm Seeger  Assistant Professor of German
Jane Sharphorn: Wife of Assistant Professor of Physical Education and first basketball coach David Sharphorn
Roberta Simone: Assistant Professor of English
Rose Stein: Wife of Associate Professor of Biology Howard Stein
Ronald Ward: Assistant Professor of Biology
John Weldon: Assistant Professor of Chemistry
Vernon Wolfe: Admissions Counselor
Theodore Young: Associate Professor of Philosophy
James Zumberge: President

Prologue

The identifications above are provided for the benefit of newcomers, people whose association with Grand Valley is less than 25 years. Many of the people mentioned below are no longer actively involved with the university; more than a few have died; and others are known today with different titles. My recollections are not organized by any historical timeline, and I certainly made no effort to tell a complete story. What follows is a very personal, probably a biased, view.

... 

I first saw the campus of Grand Valley State College in February of 1965. The ensuing three decades of sometimes turbulent development has produced a qualitatively changed institution. In no way can we consider the Grand Valley of today to be merely a larger version of the original. In fact, the college changed from year to year in those early days. Faculty size progressed annually from 12 to 30 to 60 to 90 before the first class graduated. Understandings achieved during the earliest years were exposed to challenge by each new and proportionately larger cohort of faculty. Instead of a senate, we had a Faculty Assembly which consisted of the entire faculty, plus the professional staff, and vigorous debate on major issues drew participation from many quarters. Few policies escaped detailed probing.

We were almost all very young and mostly inexperienced. Jim Zumberge had been a professor of geology at the University of Michigan, George Potter had never been a dean, Phil Buchen was a corporate lawyer with no prior college experience, and most of the faculty had never taught full-time elsewhere. Youth and inexperience can lead to error; they also offer a refreshing willingness to take chances and to sidestep tradition.

I came to Grand Valley after five years on the faculty of Kansas State College of Pittsburg (now Pittsburg State University). My four new colleagues in biology in 1965-66 (Carl Bajema, Fred Bevis, Marcia Boyles, and Phil Clampett) had amassed a total of five years of full-time college teaching. Being the old man of the department, at 32, was new for me because I had been the departmental baby at Pittsburg. A 34-year-old physiologist hired at Pittsburg two years before I was had been referred to by the chairman as "the boy." I never knew whether he had a corresponding name for me at 27.
Grand Valley's basic curriculum, a very rigid Foundation Program, was largely the brainchild of Harry Jellema, one of the few grey-haired presences on campus. All students were required to take the same nine courses, except for the choice of foreign language. The watchword was liberal arts, modified by a term I had never heard applied in this context: pure.

Shortly before departing from Pittsburg, I paid a courtesy call on the Academic Dean, who shook my hand and thanked me for being "a bulwark of the liberal arts" at an institution which was in transition from a teachers college to what they called a "general purpose" college. Within my first month at Grand Valley I was being told that I had no grasp of liberal arts. Pure liberal arts, I heard, eschews any notions of employment, and I had sinned by injecting such practical matters into the discussions of curriculum.

The only applied program was Education, which had been accepted by the faculty because it was expected of a regional state-supported college. Teacher preparation, operating within the Psychology Department, was consistently relegated to second class status in debate within the Faculty Assembly. I suspect that the education faculty felt tolerated at best.

The Biology Department soon proposed the addition of a program in medical technology. The plan required completion all of the general education requirements and fulfillment all of the specific requirements of the biology major, but credit would also be given for internship at an approved hospital lab. The battle royal over medical technology was no less keen within the Science & Mathematics Division than elsewhere at the college. I no longer remember which arguments were the most persuasive, but medical technology was finally adopted at that level and college-wide. Our liberal arts college had become a little less pure.

This was far from the only dispute. The suggestion to overcome perennial shortfalls in enrollment by providing flexibility in the Foundations Program met furious opposition. Dean Potter appointed a committee to make recommendations, including the late John Weldon and Fred Bevis, representing the Science & Math Division. Because the faculty was small, there was ample opportunity for extended debate on the concept as well as the many alternative patterns of requirements. Discussion occurred in faculty offices, over lunch in the small faculty dining room in Seidman House, and at social gatherings on weekends. John and Fred, both disposed toward making changes, frequently consulted others in Loutit Hall on strategy. A sharply divided faculty dumped the Foundations Program in the first of many changes in General Education at Grand Valley.

For the most part, dissent on any issue was open, and few members of the faculty were quiet about their views. An undaunted small group of liberal arts purists found themselves consistently on the losing end of votes in the Faculty Assembly. Most of these people became the founders of Thomas Jefferson College, initiating what became the "Colleges" era of experimentation. Al Baker, who held joint appointment between Chemistry and History of Science, probably deserved the Outstanding Dissenter Award. There were frequent votes in the Faculty Assembly in which he alone or he and a handful of others suffered defeat. We should admire
people who hold to principles, even in the face of nearly 100-1 odds, and Al did have principles.

In contrast, the Physical Education Department was monolithic. At meetings of the Faculty Assembly, P.E. faculty typically sat in a row and virtually always voted as a bloc. Before you assume that Chuck Irwin, their leader, was a despot, you need to understand their unique position. The faculty was divided into the divisions of Social Studies (alias Social Sciences), Arts & Humanities, and Science & Mathematics. Physical Education was independent of all three. According to prevalent rumor, George Potter, hardly the champion of intercollegiate athletics, threatened Chuck Irwin with dire consequences if Physical Education did not do his bidding. I have no direct evidence that this was true, but no hands in that department went up before Chuck's in any votes in the Faculty Assembly.

Physical Education and the Library held remarkable sway in the other major component of the governance system, the Academic Affairs Policy Council (AAPC). Chaired by Dean Potter, it consisted of the three division chairs: Chuck Irwin as chair of Physical Education, Steve Ford as Director of the Library, and three elected faculty members. The reasoning behind this arrangement was that each academic unit (including the Library) got representation, and neither the Library nor Physical Education logically fit into any of the divisions. The small number of librarians and physical education faculty hence had more clout in the AAPC arena than did the larger academic divisions.

On a practical basis, the Dean controlled the AAPC. In those days Steve Ford, Bob Chamberlain, and Harry Jellema were close allies of George Potter. Carl Meloy was never noted as a forceful figure, and Chuck Irwin, as described above, was limited in his opposition. Long meetings were further extended by inclusion of strictly administrative detail into the AAPC agenda, testing the patience of the elected members.

Teaching hours in some cases were personally negotiated by faculty members with Art Hills, who made up the schedules. Advisors in the sciences perceived awkwardness in finding reasonable schedules for our students. The difficulty arose because too many classes were jammed between 10:00 and 3:00, and too few classes met on Fridays. A memo with my signature (though Ron Ward was also involved) informed George Potter, Jim Zumberge, and Phil Buchen of this situation. The body of the memo included a table summarizing the numbers of classes offered by each department, and by each division, at the various days and hours. The courses in one division were especially concentrated. Rather brashly, I ended the note with the question: "Are we running a college or a country club for the faculty?" Potter's response, with my permission, was to circulate the memo among key faculty members. I was too naïve to suspect that the dean would leave my name on the document. We might say that my popularity subsequently suffered in some quarters, but student choices were broadened in later terms.

Consistent shortfalls in enrollment and some community pressures nudged us toward more dramatic programmatic changes. Dean Potter appointed the Committee on New Academic Programs (CONAP) in 1968-69. Its chair was History professor
Glenn Niemeyer. Other members included Mary Seeger, Marv DeVries, and me. CONAP was charged to investigate possible majors to be added. CONAP thoroughly discussed and even designed programs in communications, nursing, business, and engineering, among others.

Prior to CONAP, the late Dr. Keats Vining, Jr., then chair of the Education Committee of the Kent County Medical Society, had approached the Grand Valley administration with a proposal to start a baccalaureate program in nursing. Marcia Boyles, Carl Meloy, and I met several times with Dr. Vining and the directors of the Schools of Nursing of Butterworth, Blodgett, and St. Mary's Hospitals. After a while, I remained as a committee of one to have monthly meetings with these nurses. They wanted Grand Valley to start with a curriculum which would enable employed nurses with hospital certificates to earn college degrees in nursing. Our School of Health Sciences began operation in 1971, but with a nursing curriculum tailored for students coming directly out of high school.

Grand Valley had offered two courses in accounting through the Economics Department. In the early days of CONAP, economist Marv DeVries opposed any expansion into a business major. Unhappy with that turn, I described the committee's discussion to Ron Ward of the Biology Department. He and I, consulting several college catalogues, formulated a business program which consisted of a core for all business majors, plus additional specialization in accounting, marketing, etc. Did submission of that proposal to CONAP influence the formation of the Seidman School of Business a couple of years later? Someone in the administration can supply that answer.

One feature of the college's plans was the videotaping of lectures. This would free the faculty to spend time with students in small groups (the tutorial system). We used tutorials even before any videotaping. Meeting students in groups of three or four several times each term enabled us to personalize their education. In Biology 101, for example, we required all students to read selections from a book in preparation for the tutorials, and the discussions centered on the philosophy of science. Unfortunately, that system fell of its own weight.

The major miscalculation emanated from the demands and consequences of videotaping. We were using castoff cameras from TV-13, obsolescent technology. Shortcomings of that equipment prevented us from stopping and resuming in the midst of lecturing; one had to deliver 50 minutes as if in a live lecture. The taped lectures were to be typical of our daily lectures, but we quickly realized that a lecture worth capturing for many years of use required many hours of preparation. Marcia Boyles and I agreed that well over 20 hours of preparation were necessary for each hour of product. The Audio-Visual staff kept insisting that blemishes on tape were no worse than the errors that we made daily in live lectures, but the live lecturer does not repeatedly make the same mistake.

I made three tapes for Biology 101 on the chemical background for the course. A demonstration on one tape involved shaking a jar full of wooden balls, and, though the jar broke, I bravely kept going. We used these tapes for several years, until an experiment revealed another fault in the plan. The taped lectures were offered in
room 132 Lake Huron Hall, a large lecture hall with a projection booth in the back. One day, instead of openly attending the lecture, we sneaked into the projection booth after the class had gathered. Ten to fifteen minutes after the videotape started students began to look around the room. Finding no instructor, one by one they left the room before the lecture was over. Using a taped lecture to save faculty time for personal interaction just did not work.

A faculty which had to maintain a 20:1 student faculty ratio and which provided lectures, labs, and discussions could not also be expected to continue with tutorials. That would have left no time for intellectual pursuits, not to mention the tasks of developing a college.

Research briefly surfaced as cause célèbre. Several professors in the Science & Math Division wanted space, time, and funding for research. Jim Zumberge and George Potter met with the division to discuss the issue. Jim had an international reputation in glacial geology, but he brushed us off. When I was a young faculty member at Macalester College, he said, I managed to get research done by personal sacrifice. You can do the same. The priority was clear.

The relative uniformity of age among the faculty, their youth, and their commitment to a common enterprise led the faculty to associate socially. Those living in the Grand Haven and Grand Rapids areas tended, with notable exceptions, to cleave with colleagues in their home communities. Evening parties and picnics were common. The fledgling Faculty Club struggled because of the small population of potential members, but ox roasts and dinners (a number of times at Point West in Holland) became features of the club’s program.

Art DeLong, Wellie Frase, and Jack Payne often convened noon-time meetings of the Faculty Club board at the bowling alley at Lake Michigan Drive and 48th Ave. That was the closest restaurant, if we can glorify it with that title. The thread of conversation at those meetings, over several years, was that a clubhouse would crystallize the organization. Jack in particular worked hard on designing a building which was to be built near the water tower. Could we afford to build it? Would there be sufficient clientele to keep a building financially afloat? Who would be responsible for day-to-day management? Should we raise dues before building or should we wait until after the facility attracted more members? Questions were endless, and answers came slowly.

A parallel organization, Grand Valley Wives (Times have changed, haven't they?), developed a vigorous program of its own. Its leaders included Shirley Hills, Jane Sharphorn, Marlys Flanders, and Rose Stein. Jean MacDonald and Lorraine Jerkaitis joined in somewhat later. The Wives subdivided into Northwest Grand Rapids, Jenison, and Grand Haven clusters, in response to difficulties in functioning as one unit. Among their accomplishments was a booklet of advice for wives of newly hired faculty and staff, a welcoming tea, and several interest groups. Each year they produced a group Christmas card which was mailed to faculty. The money people donated to the card fund was used for scholarships. (I'd like to see that practice resurrected.) Eventually the Wives merged with the Faculty Club (now called the University Club), and some of the Wives' activities persisted for many years.
And then there were the faculty/staff teams in the intramural leagues. Though Grand Valley had no gymnasium or well-designed playing fields, an astonishing percentage of its students (about 200 when the total enrollment was perhaps 1,100) participated in basketball and touch football. Naturally the young faculty responded with its own teams, under the leadership of Fred Bevis. Our first touch football game, played on a mowed area immediately south of the present Cedar Studios, showed that students had found an arena in which to flex their muscles—rather literally. Injuries in that game scared off all but a few foolhardy non-student players. Bevis was quarterback, John Scherff was running back, and Vern Wolfe was willing only to punt. We were constantly on the prowl for players.

Basketball games were played at Jenison High School. The "officials" were students, and the calls in games involving the faculty were not always completely unbiased. Faculty members also played each other at times at Allendale High, where Rod Mulder fell on the tiled gym floor and broke his elbow.

Being part of a new and undefined college required a sense of humor at times and generated comical outcomes at others. For example, Science & Math faculty hired in 1965 waited until Loutit Hall was finished in December before they got regular offices. Their temporary offices consisted of a line of open cubicles with six-foot walls on the second floor of Lake Huron Hall. Mathematician Henry Hanson, retiree from another college, was so hard-of-hearing that several of us left our cubicles when he was visited by students; there was no way to concentrate during the shouted conversations.

Yet another awkward situation came from the donation by the Angus family of the first of Grand Valley's teaching vessels. Ron Ward obtained a grant from the National Science Foundation to refit the boat for its new oceanographic function. Don Lautenbach, a retired Navy chief bos'n's mate, suggested that the work could be done more cheaply by Grand Valley's employees under his supervision. A permit was obtained to haul the overweight and oversized vessel from Grand Haven to campus. The ANGUS was placed in a cradle next to an old barn east of Lake Michigan Hall in the fall. When the work had been completed, the college's application to the state highway department for the return trip was denied. The rules, it seems, allowed an oversized load to be moved only once. The Governor's office had to intercede, averting conversion of the boat into a land-locked relic.

Lautenbach also served as the first captain of the R.V. ANGUS. Don once gunned its engine in order to make a quick exit from the Government Pond in Grand Haven and ignominiously missed the opening. A steel hull can have its advantages.

The college had an anti-nepotism policy, but encountering difficulty in attracting some outstanding faculty, the administrators bent the rules. Bob Chamberlain as Arts & Humanities Chair with Bobbie Simone (Chamberlain) in the English Department was rationalized by the intermediate presence of the chair of the English Department, Lou Rus. Art and Greta DeLong were hired as Professor of Psychology and Associate Professor of Psychology and Education, respectively. When Art became chairman of the department, there was some mumbling that Greta was really in education (which was an arm of the Psychology Department). Nevertheless,
a later appointment to the Foreign Languages chair was blocked because Bill and 
Mary Seeger both taught German. The policy was rescinded.

George Potter appointed me to the chair of the "Tenure, Teaching Load, Etc. 
Committee," a title which only he could have imagined. One day he requested that 
the committee propose a sabbatical policy within several weeks. At my complaint 
about the rush, he stated that we needed the policy because some of the faculty 
might be eligible to apply for leave. "When might they be eligible?" I asked. We won't 
know, he responded, until you devise the policy.

Don Lubbers' first autumn picnic for the faculty and staff produced the famous 
skinny-dipping episode. Guests who accepted Don's invitation to use the swimming 
pool retired to a bedroom to change. Explanations after the fact varied, but Bob 
Chamberlain dived or was propelled unclad through a second-story window. The 
Lubbers have never again invited us to swim.

The Biology Department accepted a donation of two live specimens: a rattlesnake 
and a copperhead. In the absence of any alternative, the snakes were placed in a 
terrarium kept at the rear of the biology lab on the top floor of Lake Michigan Hall. 
The snakes disappeared. One reaction was that custodians refused to clean the 
building until the snakes were caught; another was that George Potter decreed that 
the biologists would immediately find and execute these creatures. The snakes had 
not escaped but had crawled into the warm space above the lights at the top of the 
terrarium. Fred Bevis, Carl Bajema, and I formed the execution team. Using a crude 
home-made snake handler's noose, Fred, with Carl's assistance, captured each 
snake and plunged it headfirst into formaldehyde until all struggle ceased. My self-
appointed role was to stand atop a nearby lab table with a stout meter stick in case 
the serpents got loose. The department still retains these pickled specimens.

Varsity sports came to Grand Valley. Basketball and crew (which ultimately 
became a club sport) were not controversial. In contrast, football engendered the 
complaint that it is not a "gentlemanly" sport. Soccer was touted as far superior in 
that regard. Crew and soccer, of course, were consistent with George Potter's 
Oxford University origins, but Jim Zumberge was also anti-football. Considering the 
path of Jim's career after he left Grand Valley, that attitude is deliciously ironic. He 
served as one of the top administrators at University of Nebraska, Southern 
Methodist, and University of Southern California, each a monument to King Football 
in its most highly developed form.

Grand Valley attracted an unusual student body. For the most part, our students 
had to be adventurous to try out GVSC, their more conventional counterparts 
sticking with colleges which had existed long enough to build reputations. One 
indication of student accomplishment is that of the first 25 graduates with Biology 
majors 16% went on to earn the Ph.D. degree, 12% became physicians, and 24% 
have been in K-12 teaching. (I have no data on six of the graduates.) They were a 
joy to teach, and we had the luxury of meeting them in very small advanced classes.

Responding to student objections to being treated as mere numbers, the college 
anticipated subdividing into units of no more than 1,500 students. One cluster would 
hold its classes in the Great Lakes buildings, a second cluster would operate from
Manitou and Mackinac Halls, and two more clusters would be added to fulfill an initial goal of 6,000 students. Science, physical education and athletics, and the library were to remain centralized. Placement of the buildings still reveals evidence of those plans. A major question at that point revolved around whether these clusters would have the same curricula.

A split in opinions about curriculum and instruction offered the opportunity to split off a small group of faculty into a unit which came to be called the Thomas Jefferson College of General Studies (TJC). In some ways TJC carried the banner of "pure" liberal arts which had become sullied by the remainder (inappropriately dubbed the College of Arts & Sciences). Though the physical separation imagined for clusters a few years earlier did not come to pass, formation of the Seidman School of Business, William James College, and Kirkhof College (neé College IV) ensued. Grand Valley State Colleges had been transformed into an experimental campus, which was hard to explain to outsiders. (I leave it to others to describe the cluster arrangement.)

A negative, even ludicrous, outcome of the cluster arrangement was an entirely unpredictable result of the names. TJC and WJC (William James) were terms introduced into a community which also had its cherished JC (Grand Rapids Junior College, now called Grand Rapids Community College). How many students might have chosen Grand Valley if they had not considered it a junior college?

Change had become the primary descriptor for GVSC. The innovations of its earliest days became pedestrian compared with those of the 1970s. Although that decade may be remembered by some faculty as troublesome, Grand Valley served as a microcosm on one campus for most of the types of experimentation in higher education which were occurring in isolated centers throughout the United States. It may have been hell to live through at times, but, in retrospect, it was an exciting decade for us. Important understandings of Grand Valley’s later role were formed in the crucible of debate which characterized the college from its inception. The faculty and the administration learned from its errors and successes. We are probably a better university because of that history.

Ted Young suggested, probably seriously, that when Grand Valley reached 1,500 students, it should cap its enrollment and sell off its excess land. His vision was not illogical, and I agreed then (and still agree) that some consequences of taking that route would be both productive and enjoyable. Small classes, knowing nearly the whole student body, and maintaining a focus on a small range of programs, as we old-timers experienced on this campus, have their rewards. But would that have been a practical road map for a state-supported college to follow? I doubt it.

Epilogue

Some readers might assume that everything seemed to go wrong or that the early faculty were unhappy with their lot at Grand Valley State College. To the contrary, I believe that the education received by our students was very strong, and in many ways I would like to turn the clock back. There was excitement, there was bravado, there was intellectual ferment, and there was a strong sense of purpose. And I was only 32 years old.
I chose the life of a college professor rather than the more financially rewarding life of a physician because I thought that I could make a larger intellectual contribution. I joined the faculty of GVSC in the Fall of 1964 and have a number of fond as well as frustrating memories of the my first ten or so years at GVSC. Some day I plan to write about the mistakes the college made in its experiments in those early years with different academic styles, so that others don't have to learn the hard way, but, for now, I want to take this occasion to record some of the fondest memories I have of life with colleagues and students during the first ten years.

The Day They Evacuated Lake Michigan Hall

In the summer of 1965, a secretary came into the lab where Fred Bevis and I were teaching biology and announced that someone on the telephone wanted to donate a couple of snakes to GVSC. Fred immediately said yes, but I quickly added that we could not take poisonous snakes. Fred reminded me of one of the earliest GVSC policies—to accept any donation a citizen makes—and pointed out that the only poisonous snake in Michigan is the pigmy Missasauga rattlesnake, which he was confident we could handle with care.

A guy showed up holding a burlap bag at arm's length. He had "collected" one huge and very much alive timber rattlesnake and one smaller but still very alive and active copperhead on his way home from New England to show his relatives in Grand Rapids. The garbage can was the only secure "cage" we had in the lab, so the amateur herpetologist dumped the two poisonous snakes into the garbage can and walked out.

The word quickly spread that there were live poisonous snakes in the Biology lab. Secretaries from Dean George Potter's office on the first floor came up to see the snakes. Fred and I securely taped the lid on the garbage can, attached a sign that stated WARNING—POISONOUS SNAKES—DO NOT OPEN and went home for the night.

We thought that Dean Potter would like to see the snakes the next morning, but he wasn't interested. He told us that we had a problem. The janitor refused to empty any trash containers in the science labs as long as the crazy scientists kept poisonous snakes in one of the containers. So we transferred the snakes into the metal terrarium that was equipped with sliding glass doors. We thought this was a big improvement, because anyone who came into the lab now could see the snakes through the glass doors, which we had taped shut for security reasons. Boy, were we wrong!

When I drove into the parking lot the next morning, secretaries were running out of Lake Michigan Hall. The snakes were missing. Dean Potter made some
threatening statement to Fred and me about being fired (terminated, for those of you using modern language) unless we found the snakes within the next few minutes. I was not about to go on a "search and destroy" mission, because I had had only minimal experience handling snakes, and those were nonpoisonous garter snakes, water snakes and blue racers.

The thought of coming face to face with a poisonous snake under a desk or ventilation duct opening made me decide that the best solution for me was to submit my resignation effective immediately. In frustration, I hit the side of the terrarium with my fist and heard the rattle of the timber rattlesnake. The snakes had not escaped. They had crawled into the false ceiling of the terrarium and wrapped themselves around the heat sources—the lights. The Dean was only half pleased: "I am glad you found them, but you biologists have to get rid of those poisonous snakes now."

The terrarium was too heavy to move, and the janitors were not the least bit interested in helping us. So Fred and I began unscrewing the top of the terrarium, where the rattlesnake and copperhead were "resting." I fashioned a noose out of a broom handle and some wire, while Fred filled a large beaker with 95% ethyl alcohol. Fred decided that he would pry up the lid of the terrarium from a distance with a broom handle and I was to get in position to lasso each snake as it came out of the terrarium. I wanted to switch roles, but I did not want Fred or the couple of onlookers present to know how scared I was. Someone armed himself with a broom and climbed up on a laboratory table behind me so that he would be in position to attempt to hit one of the snakes with the broom handle if both snakes decided to come out at the same time.

I lassoed the head of the first snake that stuck its head out and pulled the writhing creature over to a laboratory table. I plunged its head into the beaker of alcohol, and the snake stopped writhing. The next cooperated similarly. Fred and I kept our jobs, but we no longer automatically accepted living animals from citizens.

The bodies of these two serpents remain with us, pickled in large specimen jars, labeled *Crotalus horridus horridus* and *Agkistodon contortrix mokeson*. Grand Valley students have been studying the bodies of these two snakes in introductory biology courses for the past thirty years.

### It's Time to Go on Another Field Trip

My fondest memories of academic life during the first ten years at GVSC are of the many field trips that Fred and I organized and led for our students and such colleagues as Johnny Lucke and Dick Lefebvre in Geology. I had fallen in love with the Upper Peninsula as a youngster. Fred had conducted research in forestry and had taught forestry courses at Michigan Technological University. Fred was (and remains) the most knowledgeable person in the natural history of Michigan and the rest of temperate North America that I had (and have) ever met. I suggested to Fred that it would be fun to take biology students on a field trip to study the natural history of Michigan's superior peninsula during the summer of 1965. Thus began a tradition that was to enrich the academic and social lives of the hundreds of Grand Valley students who went on field trips with Fred and/or me to such places as South
Manitou Island in Lake Michigan, the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore adjacent Lake Superior, Point Pelee adjacent Lake Erie, and the Florida Keys, as well as the Smoky Mountains during the spring wildflower season.

We always encountered problems on these field trips. Some were with animals. Once a student brought a pineapple along and set it on a picnic table at Andrus Lake campground near Whitefish Point in the UP. It was gone the next morning. She was sure one of us had stolen it, until it was found in the woods. Scientific analyses of the pineapple revealed the imprint of a bear's paw. Raccoons also got into food containers and mosquitoes into tents. Once, waking up inside a twelve-person tent at Point Pelee, Ontario (one of the best spring migrant bird watching sites in North America), I shined my flashlight on the ceiling to see hundreds, if not thousands, of mosquitoes resting and waiting for their turn to sample the warm blood of the dead-tired humans sacked out on the floor. The last person to enter had not bothered to zip up the tent flap. I abandoned the mosquitoes and students, crawled into my car, and slept the rest of the night (until 4:45 a.m.!) with the car windows rolled up.

Automobile breakdowns created another set of problems. Twenty five of us started for the Keweenaw peninsula in six cars one summer, but, by the time we reached Munising, we and our camping gear were all squeezed into four cars. Another time Fred volunteered to take all our tents to Norway Lake in the UP and set them up so that all we would have to do when we arrived around midnight was to carry our sleeping bags from the cars to the tents. But Fred decided that he would first check out a couple of his research sites. His station wagon overheated from pulling the trailer loaded with camping gear on a wilderness road approximately ten miles from Norway Lake. I arrived at Norway Lake at midnight with five carloads of students and could not find any sign that Fred had been there. It was raining hard, and the students were exhausted from having attended classes during the day and driven nine hours. They slept in the cars and on top of picnic tables in a shelter that night. On at least two trips to the Smokey Mountains, I had to pick up students standing by their broken-down autos.

On one Florida field trip a student got stung by a Portuguese Man-of-War while sitting on a picnic table; another threw a rock up at a coconut in a tree, and it bounced off and hit him in the head. At John Pennekamp State Park in the Keys, some students pitched their tents on the flood plain and found their gear floating in and out of their tents on air mattresses.

You have not lived until you have eaten student- or faculty-prepared cuisine on a field trip. My children, who often accompanied me, still grimace when they remember Bevis-burgers and smile when they remember the huge frying pan that we used to whip up the scrambled eggs.

Despite everything, Fred and I got a lot of praise from students who participated in these field trips. Grand Valley administrators, on the other hand, considered these trips to be a nuisance at best, maybe because they heard some tall tales that kept getting taller. Another reason may have been that too many students were going. One spring, approximately ninety students came to the Smokey Mountains: one out of every fifteen Grand Valley students were with Fred and me rather than enjoying
classes on campus. Still another reason may have been that they couldn't figure out how to evaluate field-trip time for salaries. Finally, they may have thought that, since the students and faculty members were having so much fun on the field trips, there was obviously no meaningful learning taking place. My desire to take students on field trips died in 1973 when it became all too obvious that field trips created too many problems for the administrators, not one of whom ever thanked Fred or me for providing students with meaningful learning experiences outside the classroom.

Fred Bevis is now retired, but he and I still go on field trips together. I will be spending part of my sabbatical, hiking in Beartooth/Yellowstone Park, Wyoming, with Fred this September. We will also be going to study the forests of the Upper Peninsula in October. We have both slowed down: Fred can no longer sprint down the trail to the next plant, bird or rock formation that provides him with another teachable moment; and I can saunter only a little faster than he can. Fred's driving hasn't changed much though: he "rolled" his van in May after driving through the night. He was saved by an air bag.

Fred Bevis has my vote for the most outstanding teacher ever to walk the halls of Grand Valley and the fields on and off campus for all the time he was willing to spend outside the scheduled class hours to help students learn about the natural world.

The Evolution of the GVSC Curriculum By Jerks

One of the more fascinating yet frustrating theories concerning evolution is called punctuated equilibrium or "punct eq." It proposes that much of the morphological change in the fossil record is best described as long periods of little or no evolutionary change (stasis) punctuated by short (geological time, not human time) episodes of rapid evolution. A critic of this theory has affectionately labeled it "evolution by jerks." The evolution of the foundation/core and undergraduate curricula at GVSC might well be described using the same affectionate language, because it was also very jerky, with short episodes of stasis (usually two to three years, but often as short as three academic quarters), punctuated by a very rapid burst of change designed to make the catalog copy deadline for the next academic year.

The original freshman curriculum that our founding fathers established was very rigid. Each freshman took nine courses from the same set of seven courses and was given a choice only in the remaining two courses—they could choose the foreign language they wished to study from among French, German, or Russian.

Economic considerations played a major role in the rapid abandonment of this first core curriculum. Prospective students wanted a cafeteria style curriculum so that they could avoid broccoli and other things they didn't like or thought were too demanding of their time and thinking. They went to other colleges and universities, and GVSC experienced the first of many enrollment crises. The state legislature had allocated money expecting rapid growth, which did not occur. Fearing a drop in state funding, the administration became very supportive of proposals to modernize the curriculum.

I proposed a course in human ecology for non-biology majors. I had taken a
graduate level course that dealt with human lifestyle, population growth, and environment problems. Our students deserved the opportunity to learn the basic concepts of ecology (including the ecological process of Darwinian selection) and how they have been applied to the scientific understanding of our population and pollution problems. Such a course seemed more worthwhile than what is often taught under the guise of biological science but is all too often simply trivial morphological and physiological information about life science. The administration supported adding this course as an option in the science core curriculum for non-majors. Maybe they thought it an attractive and meaningful one, but maybe their opinions were strengthened by the fact that it would cost less than the traditional life science lab course. The course was first offered during the fall, 1966 quarter. Most of the rest of the state universities began offering introductory environmental science courses some four years later, when the first annual Earth Day was celebrated. My guess is that more students took this course during the first ten years at GVSC than any other science course. I remember lecturing to approximately 450 students in the fall quarter of 1971.

Statistics was the second course that I was able to contaminate the original pure GVSC curriculum with. I thought it was important because the real world in which we live is not purely deterministic; it is stochastic: deterministic and probabilistic processes interact, and these interactions need to be taken into account when one is doing real science—constructing and testing scientific theories. However, purists dominated the mathematics faculty at GVSC then and did not want to teach such an obviously applied course as statistics. So I proposed a biology course on research design and data analyses (i.e., biostatistics). This led to an all-out war over academic turf. The mathematicians realized that if they didn't teach a statistics course, other faculty would invade what they viewed as their private terrain. The administration in its traditional "what costs less?" decision-making mode was concerned about the proliferation of such courses in the social sciences as well as in biology and the other sciences. It obviously is more cost effective to pack all the students into multiple sections of the same course. Introduction to Statistics was first taught in 1966, under the auspices of the Mathematics Department, with discussion sections taught by biology and social science faculty.

What part of the original curriculum was of most value in producing real learning? The small class sizes and tutorial sessions forced students and faculty to interact in educationally productive ways. However, financial problems eliminated most tutorials and small class sizes. In the good old days, I taught a total of 180 to 200 students in three or four different courses a year. Now I usually teach five, six, or even seven different courses containing 300 to 400 or more students a year. Occasionally, I teach a course which is limited to only twelve or fifteen students. I know that much more real learning occurs in classes limited to realistic numbers. Large classes and too many different course preparations today sometimes make me long for the good old days.

A college curriculum ought to be designed to provide students with numerous opportunities to improve their skills in critical thinking and communication. Liberally
educated students ought to know how to apply the major theories of the physical and biological sciences to solve problems and how to think critically about ethical questions. Students need to understand how philosophers (both secular scientists and theologians) have grappled with and continue to cope with the problem of what human beings ought to do on this planet. They need to know why what persons do, either individually or collectively, can differ from the belief systems which they champion and what can be harmful to other persons and the human life support systems of this planet.

The history of curriculum reform and teaching at Grand Valley needs to be carefully evaluated so that others can learn from both our mistakes and successes. We who survived the "jerky" period are probably in the best position to do so.
A FIELD FOR DREAMS

Donald W. VanderJagt

Dreams! For centuries men and women have been motivated into action because of dreams. From a young Jewish boy with a multicolored coat several thousand years ago whose destiny and that of powerful nations were foretold in dreams, to a young Afro-American preacher a few decades ago whose dream activated a nation to address years of inequities, dreams, whether real or idealizations of personal goals, have activated people for centuries. Dreams have been the subject of great literature of the past and have formed the basis for modern films. At times it has been as mundane as attracting a legendary baseball team to a field in Iowa. “Build it and they will come!”

For early faculty at Grand Valley State College, the dream was building a unique institution in a cornfield in Allendale. Although there were some visions of buildings and other physical facilities, for most faculty it was the anticipation of being part of the formation of a college at which we would not repeat the mistakes that other institutions had made or introduced during their development.

"The Dream" is what attracted both faculty and students to this new institution. It certainly was not the physical plant, for it was essentially non-existent. It was not the programs—there were none. It was not the alumni or the exhibited value of a GVSC education, for these were some distance into the future. It was the dream to develop programs, the opportunity to actually build the curricula and philosophical underpinnings of the institution.

In our first few years, there were many issues to resolve and, consequently, much interaction between faculty. It was the second year of the college's existence before a faculty retirement plan was adopted. There were multiple debates, which sometimes went on into the evening (even during blizzard conditions), on “What is a liberal arts institution?” Although the debate was vigorous, there seemed to be a sense of unity among the faculty: people worked together. Personal agendas were set aside, and directions that represented faculty consensus were mapped out. Most faculty members were very supportive; a few, including one or two of the most colorful debaters, became disenchanted and left the institution to establish their dreams elsewhere.

In those early years, it was observed that an increasing number of faculty were members of many committees and, consequently, had insufficient time for teaching and professional development. The faculty passed a resolution that no faculty member was to be a member of more than two committees, a resolution that was rather short-lived, as is readily evident today.

One issue in which there was both great unanimity as well as significant disagreement was the design of the program for the training of teachers. It was generally understood that Grand Valley would include programs to prepare K-12
teachers, but there was great debate as to how best to accomplish it. There was strong agreement that what other institutions were doing should be significantly improved and that we should not have a proliferation of methods courses (a characterization of most education programs of the time) and that teachers learn by observing and doing. What emerged was the Teacher Aiding Program, a feature of many of today’s teacher preparation programs.

As one can imagine, in starting a college in the early 60s, there was strong sentiment against developing into a “publish or perish” Institution. Grand Valley was to be a college in which excellence in teaching was of prime importance. Faculty should be rewarded for good teaching, not for research. On the other hand, there was an equally strong attitude that this institution was not to be an extension of high school. The curriculum was to be designed and delivered to teach the students to think, not simply to recall facts and regurgitate the content of a professor’s lectures. The emerging library was an integral part of all instruction. In all disciplines, students were required to utilize the library and to write papers. Faculty met in tutorials with groups of three-to-five students on a regular basis to assist them in developing their thinking and writing skills. This was a time-consuming but very valuable experience for faculty members. As a young faculty member, I probably learned as much as or more than many of my students did through these experiences. It was virtually impossible for students to go through a course without significant personal interaction with a faculty member. Unfortunately, the influx of students and the increasing time commitment of the faculty for tutorials led to their weakening and ultimate demise.

Although faculty members were occupied with charting the course of the new school, not all the students were similarly involved. There were no planned student activities, so inventive students designed their own. Outhouses and other imported items were the focus of some pranks, but the most impressive one was the student painting of the Grand Valley water tower. Only recently, in a discussion with two students in that Pioneer Class, was I privy to the details of how it was accomplished. The regular sight of herds of cows and sometimes herds of deer on campus was simply not sufficient to satisfy the extracurricular needs of the students.

Changing offices or classrooms as buildings were completed during a semester was a regular occurrence during those early years. At the time of my first visit to campus, Lake Michigan Hall was mostly completed and portions of Lake Superior Hall were occupied. Other than the Great Lakes complex of buildings, the campus consisted mostly of fields. During those initial years, I occupied an office in most of the academic buildings on campus, in some cases even on several different floors. Getting stuck in the muddy parking lots, which had not yet been paved, was another frequently expected challenge.

Library accumulations were growing as fast as possible in those early years, but a major teaching tool for mathematicians was non-existent on campus: we had no computer. In the '60s, of course, no desktop computer was available, only large and medium-sized mainframes. Prior to coming to Grand Valley, I had taught a FORTRAN course for mathematics and science majors at another institution.
language certainly is not in vogue now, but was state-of-the-art thirty years ago.) I complained about the lack of a computer on our campus to the dean, George Potter, on numerous occasions, but was consistently told that computers were not necessary at Grand Valley and that it was more important to build the library. Without debating the necessity or wisdom of that choice, I did manage to overcome this deficiency. During my second year at Grand Valley, I taught a course in FORTRAN in which we debugged our programs in small groups and, at the end of the quarter, traveled to Argonne National Laboratory near Chicago to utilize some of their computer facilities. We had hands-on experience with key punches and actual computers to run our programs, experiences which are now several generations outdated, but were valuable for students at that time. The following year, arrangements were made with a local bank to utilize their computing facilities, and a student made regular trips to submit our programs to be run during the night shift. On the basis of these experiences, several of those pioneering students became successful professionals in the computer field.

When President Lubbers arrived on campus some five years after my initial appointment and noted in a faculty address that we lacked a computer, within days I met with him to encourage and support his efforts to obtain such a facility. My efforts were rewarded by his appointing me to chair a faculty committee to address the issue. The result was a state-of-the-art computer which was considerably less powerful than today's smallest desktop computer and not much more powerful in many ways than today's graphing calculator.

Although it was exciting to be one of thirty or so faculty members developing the policies and structure of a new institution, it was even more exciting to be one of two faculty members (Dr. Dan Clock was the other) developing the curriculum for a discipline. We were both second year faculty members; there had been no mathematicians on the faculty during the first year. Dan and I determined a four-year mathematics curriculum and service courses during our first year. Many additional courses have since been added as the programs and mission of Grand Valley changed; but virtually every course in the original curriculum has survived to the present. In fact, even the numbering scheme has survived as new courses have been added.

One final anecdote. My first quarter (before we changed to the semester system) at Grand Valley was the beginning of the second year for the Pioneer Class of students. These students had taken Foundation courses their first year, which included no precalculus material, and I had the dubious honor of teaching them in the first calculus class on campus. What the students had in enthusiasm, they lacked in preparation. During the first year of operation, it had been decreed that any Grand Valley student could enroll in calculus independent of mathematical preparation. I questioned the dean about that decision, but he was insistent that such a policy was appropriate. I had taught calculus for several years elsewhere and very quickly realized that many of these Grand Valley students were very inadequately prepared in basic precalculus fundamentals. Predictably, about half the class failed, which led to some heated discussions between the dean and me. As a result, in the second
quarter, I taught a much smaller class in Calculus II and tutored many of the students who failed so they were prepared to take Calculus the next quarter. By the beginning of the following year, a precalculus course was in the curriculum.

In recalling those early days of Grand Valley, I have many pleasant and rewarding memories. I was very fortunate to be part of a faculty which really developed an institution, one which has deviated from some of those early ideals, but which, nevertheless, has emerged into an institution consistent with most of those original dreams and aspirations. To my former colleagues, administrators, and students, my deepest and sincere gratitude for a rare and rewarding professional opportunity.
THOSE WERE THE DAYS:
GRAND VALLEY IN THE SIXTIES

Roberta Simone

When I arrived in 1965 with a new Ph.D., I thought and appreciated that there was nowhere else in the world where someone like me could expect to teach Shakespeare in one term (and not be expected to publish a book at the end of it) and Greek Literature in another, and Virgil and Dante or Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton in others, and so on, down through much of the English curriculum. Of course, I had to take my turn with the required freshman course, but that was called, "The Art of Self-Expression," so much nicer than "Composition," which I had taught exclusively, several sections at a time, for three years each at Bowling Green State University (Ohio), and the University of Illinois (Urbana). In my first year at Grand Valley, I taught just one five-credit class each quarter. How was that possible? Each professor would lecture to sixty or seventy-five students in a big hall twice a week, then break the class down to three, four, or five discussion sections, which met twice a week, and then into bi-weekly tutorials of three to five students. Though teaching only one course at a time may sound like a cushy job, it was not.

In addition to teaching, we spent a lot of time in a numbing number of committee meetings and in Friday afternoon faculty assemblies, constructing what the college would become. We argued about what liberal education meant and how best to implement it, what new programs and new courses to establish, what students should know and even what kind of recreation would implement that. We were serious and responsible teachers, full of enthusiasm for the college, for our students, for our profession. We were a young faculty, and there were no older cynics around to say, "We tried that once, and it failed," or otherwise to dampen our spirits. Being at Grand Valley in those early years was exhausting, but exhilarating—and also fun!

The college was small enough so that I knew all the faculty and all the staff. We'd have great interdisciplinary parties on weekends (like Carl Kobernik's annual Halloween costume fest) and lunches at noon, sometimes eight of us grouped around a table meant to seat four in the Grand Traverse Room on the second floor of Lake Michigan Hall, augmenting brown bag lunches with soup, coffee and cookies from vending machines. Later, we ate somebody's home-cooked meals in a short-lived dining room for faculty in Seidman House, and even later, at an even shorter-lived café in what is now the Grand River Inn, run by a few faculty wives. Our conversations were usually academic: somebody generally brought a good student blooper along: e.g. about "toe-headed boys" or "students staying up late and raping with each other," or some favorite author's deserving to win the "Pullet Surprise." We even had an interdisciplinary limerick contest, in which the Political Science Department beat the English Department hands down.
Although nostalgic, I cannot be entirely romantic about the smallness of the college. There was cacophony as well as harmony. There was some snarling between the "pure liberal arts" and the "professional ed" types. And although the French Department had only three members, two of them (European born-and-bred, native French speakers—a coloratura soprano and a retired colonel) would communicate with each other at department meetings only through the third, an Iowa-nurtured youngster with a new M.A. The latter returned to graduate school and ended up as a Professor of Social Work.

Students in general were, or seemed to be, more respectful in those early years, and classes were more formal. Students were called Mr. Van Dyke and Miss Jones, not Mike and Deb. Professors were called Professor or Doctor and were thought to be more knowledgeable than were taxi-drivers. Moreover, they were not called upon to pussy-foot around student egos. A few examples may serve to illustrate. 1) A certain history professor, in returning mid-term exams to his classes, attached signed withdrawal slips to all those that had been given an F. A student complained that he had attended every lecture and discussion section, read all the assignments, and studied four hours for the exam, and yet had flunked it. The professor looked at him sympathetically: "You did all that and still failed the exam? Gosh, you must be really stupid." 2) Another History professor opened a discussion section with a question on the day's reading assignment. Nobody answered. Nobody answered for the full fifty minutes, after which time, the professor said, "I'll ask it again next time," and walked out of the classroom. 3) A student told his English professor that a mistake must surely have been made in giving his paper a C. The professor looked through the paper and said, "By Golly, you're right; this is a D paper." 4) A visiting professor from England felt pestered by a student who stopped her in the hall to ask if she had graded their papers yet. "If I had finished the bloody things," she responded, "do you think I should want to keep them?"

Student evaluations were used not as a basis for faculty contract renewal or promotion, but rather for faculty edification—and sometimes amusement. We could also read each other's at will. Their comments would range from, "He should wear more modern ties," to "The textbook was not relevant" (this for a Shakespeare course in which the text was his collected works). I read student comments about the most revered and distinguished professor on campus, Harry Jellema—a master of the Socratic method—whose class I had observed in order to learn how to do it better myself. Samples: "I don't know what he wants." and "If you don't agree with him, he marks you down." Sound familiar? But my all-time favorite came from a class, in which Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel* had been taught: "I didn't pay good tuition money to read about giants copulating."

We all have favorite student stories. Mine come from those early years. A freshman submitted this thesis for his essay: "Football is a contact sport." After several sessions with him in which I again explained the difference between fact and opinion, and that a thesis had to be an opinion, he proudly handed me his revision. His new thesis was "Hockey is a contact sport." Another student of mine was having
trouble with *The Divine Comedy*. "Is the reading too difficult?" I asked. "No, no," she replied; "the reading is easy. It's the understanding that's hard."

But we had excellent students too, excellent non-majors in our general education courses (like Cindy Hull, now in the Anthropology Department), and excellent majors, several of whom went on to get Ph.D.'s (even though they may not have done well on the specialty part of the GRE's—for we didn't teach toward that exam) and to win awards for excellence in teaching and in scholarship. Those I know tell me how important their years at Grand Valley were to them. Sharon Whitehill is another who came back to teach at Grand Valley.

We had an active theatre performance group before we had a Theatre Department. Al Baker of the Chemistry Department and Lou Rus and Bob Chamberlain from the English Department together directed the student/faculty performance group "Les Visages" (meaning "faces" or "masks") for the first three years in such contemporary plays as *The Bald Soprano* by the Romanian Eugene Ionesco. One of the student actors, Richard Dean, later did the costuming for the film *The Cotton Club*; another, Dick Haisma, went on to dance for a national ballet company. This group also performed at the annual Arts on Campus festival in the spring. In 1966 the festival featured the world premiere of my translation of a sixteenth century Italian comedy—*La Lena* or *The Bawd*, which had been part of my dissertation, and I was thrilled to see it on stage. For this performance, we needed a professional director and found Laura Salazar, the wife of Hugo, who taught Spanish. Laura set about laying down the rules for the actors like a drill sergeant: e.g., "You miss two rehearsals and you're out." "Please, please," I had to tell her; "you don't know how hard it was to persuade my colleagues to take part." Hundreds of people from on and off campus came to Lake Huron Hall to view Gil Davis, Lou Rus, Bill Oldenburg, Ralph Wiltse, Don Hall, Ted Young, and John Freund in black tights, slippers, and befeathered felt hats. After the performance, there was some question of its propriety for conservative West Michigan; today, it could probably be performed by a local junior high without comment.

Grand Valley sponsored its first interdisciplinary conference in 1967—the Erasmus Quinquecentennial—largely through the initiative of Dr. Quirinus Breen, an old friend of Harry Jellema's, who after having retired from the University of Oregon and been a member of the Princeton Institute for Advanced Studies, came to Grand Valley to spend a few years in the History Department. Professors Oskar Kristeller from Columbia University and Deno Geanakoplos from the University of Illinois gave the keynote lectures; Grand Valley, Hope and Calvin faculty members read papers, and Grand Valley students read selections from Erasmus's works and provided vocal and instrumental music. At dinner that night (served in the Commons) I sat next to one of the presenters, a historian who had newly arrived from England and was teaching at Hope. I was stunned by the arrogance he displayed throughout the evening. With his Oxford accent, he sneered at the provincialism of West Michigan, belittled its institutions of higher education, and denigrated every conference presentation but his own. Finally, exuding utter contempt, he announced: "I certainly came here under false pretenses." About a week later, we learned that indeed he
had. While the conference organizers were trying to collect the conference papers for publication, they learned that the man had disappeared, that he had been discovered to be an impostor, not only of a professor, but earlier and elsewhere of a medical doctor and a lawyer. To this day I marvel at his chutzpah!

As young faculty members, some of us were, yes, well, I suppose we could have been considered naughty. I even have it on good authority that our present, august provost was not above playing tricks on the plant manager or on Vice-President Phil Buchen, who sent around explicit orders that coffee could be made only where there was a sink. I must admit, however, that Glenn never took part in the lotteries we set up before faculty assemblies on how long the academic dean would take in his opening comments. One of my favorite metaphors comes from a faculty assembly. When it was announced that educational studies would be transferred from the auspices of the Psychology Department to its own "institute," a professor of Russian stated: "You have just pounded the last nail into the coffin of liberal arts at Grand Valley." This same professor, having grown up poor in inner-city Detroit, was overwhelmed by the president's lawn party at which champagne and martinis literally flowed out of battery-run gadgets: all you had to do when your cup was empty was hold it under the stream of your choice. In his most exaggerated Russian accent, he announced, "Welcome to the people's punchbowl." And later he pointed out that the necktie of one of board members in attendance probably cost more than his whole suit. At an earlier one of these parties, such faculty garb had been tested for its durability in the presidential swimming pool.

We had a faculty newsletter in the early years (sort of like today's *Forum*), which did not last long, because we used it so much for spoofs. Its purpose was to note awards, publications, participations, etc. of the faculty. One day it announced: "Bill Oldenburg has recently been elected to the Buccaneer Boosters. Congratulations, Bill." Whoever the editor was didn't realize that one could "boost" the Buccaneers (the Grand Haven High School football team) simply by buying a button, which Bill had done. Succeeding issues announced similar "honors" as well as faculty lectures that would not take place: e.g., a presentation on family planning by a thirty-year-old who was the father of five children. Eventually, the editor caught on, and publication ceased for a while.

Our energy, however, also produced some exciting intellectual events. During a couple of summers, Grand Valley hosted high-achieving high-school students in a program called HIFYS. To these we brought such prominent writers as X. J. Kennedy and Anthony Burgess, the latter of whom, at an evening party given in his honor, played the piano and sang Tom Lehrer songs with me: we both knew all the words. Perhaps everybody's favorite presentation was Political Science Professor Bob Carley's. He would be introduced to the audience as a professor who had just flown in from Germany, and for an hour he would shout in a German accent and pound his fist on the lectern as he extolled fascism. Later, differently appareled and introduced as a visitor from Moscow, he'd growl out statements in a Russian accent about the superiority of communism. The high school students, completely taken in by his performances, would be roused to vociferous counter-arguments.
The Pit in Seidman House was a cozy fireplace surrounded on three sides with carpeted stairs as seats, where students could sit and study or chat, etc. It was also a place where speakers could give intimate talks and some of us in the English Department gave poetry readings and performances of readers' theater, which were well attended by both students and faculty. Once, Bill Oldenburg directed a production of eighteenth-century British writer Henry Fielding's *Tom Thumb*, in which Loretta Wasserman played Queen Dollalolla and I played Princess Huncamunca. Another time, Laura Salazar directed us in the contemporary Soviet play, *It Happened in Irkutsk*, a stirring patriotic drama about Siberian factory workers choosing romance with their tractors, rather than with each other. A third performance was *MacBird*, a biting satire on the Kennedy assassination: the only line I can remember from it is Ted Kennedy's, as he arrives in Texas: "Look, Bobby! Moo-cows."

By 1969, the English Department was suddenly no longer "cutting edge." The School of General Studies was established: its professors were not called professors, but tutors, and it seemed that experimentation and eccentricity would be reserved for them. Still, the main college retained a few eccentrics. There was a rumor that an anthropologist was living in Mackinac Hall (he had been seen early in the morning advancing on the Men's Room with a toothbrush) and another rumor of weird "happenings" in the introductory art class, complete with toilet paper strewing and body painting. A middle-aged, casual visitor to the campus complained bitterly to me that he couldn't tell the boy-students from the girl-students, because of their common long hair and jeans. I wondered why he should care? What was this guy doing on campus? Meanwhile, in the English Department, Tony Parise continued to wear a crewcut, Aurele Durocher still sported his string ties clasped with a shiny Petoskey stone, and Bob Chamberlain still had chalk all over his suitcoat. But Lee Kaufman drove his motorcycle to school. And we had a new president, whom we could call Don (I had always called President Zumberge, "President Zumberge"). Certainly, the sixties had finally hit the cornfields.

One sunny morning with Arlo Guthrie's "Alice's Restaurant" playing from the balcony of Lake Superior Hall, a small group gathered around the Library steps to hear opinions on the Vietnam War. A math professor was roundly booed for supporting the U.S. involvement. Everybody expected a rebuttal from the next speaker, the popular young professor with the five children and the mid-term withdrawal slips. Instead, he proposed that all wars would end if we accepted Jesus into our hearts. The audience was stunned into silence. Later, in response to student and faculty unrest over the U.S. invasion of Cambodia and the killings by the National Guard of students at Kent State, the president announced a two-day suspension of classes so that the students and faculty could gather in the Field House for discussions and workshops. At a morning assembly, the hundreds in attendance passed a resolution that granted "political asylum" to any Kent State students who wanted to transfer to Grand Valley. At one of the afternoon workshops (then called "teach-ins"), one of our most mild-mannered and soft-spoken professors jumped up and exclaimed, "The faculty has got to get its shit together."
When the war was over, Grand Valley was blessed with a number of Vietnamese refugee students, some of the best students I have ever taught. While our other students wrote essays about crying at high school graduation or triumphing at winning the game at the last moment for their high school team, these Vietnamese students wrote accounts of escaping through the jungle with a younger sibling on one's back and a sockful of rice in one's hand. The content of these papers was incredibly moving, but even more striking was the remarkable control of the content in their early mastery of the language—the precision in diction, the flourish of style.

As the sixties came to an end, so did the institution as we had known it; it had been too good to last, mostly because it was too economically inexpedient. Soon we were teaching more classes, having fewer tutorials, and preparing students for getting jobs. The student body just about doubled each year, there were more options in required courses, and curricula changed so often that I was less knowledgeable at the beginning of the year about what was required for students than a newly hired faculty member was. The faculty just about doubled each year too, so that on top of all our other duties, we seemed always to be reading applications and interviewing candidates. Soon, I was seeing more unfamiliar faces at President Lubbers' fall kickoff parties than familiar ones.

I will leave the "scandals" and the urban myths (campus myths?) of the early years to the editor of The National Inquirer and end as I began: by reminding especially the new young Turks that we were serious, hard-working, and committed to making Grand Valley, if not exactly what it is today, at least, a first-class public college, and by asking them not to be too impatient with us if we say, "We tried that once, and it didn't work."
ARTS ON CAMPUS: A PERSONAL ACCOUNT

Laura Gardner Salazar

The Arts on Campus festival began in the first spring of Grand Valley's existence. In addition to musical events and art exhibits, the committee chose plays that would offer students experiences they had not had in high school and would develop a voice different from those found at other area colleges. There was, of course, no Theatre Department at the time, but there were theatre enthusiasts: Professors Lou Rus and Bob Chamberlain in English and Al Baker in Chemistry, the advisors of the drama club "Les Visages," had produced short plays, Eugene Ionesco's The Bald Soprano in 1964 and Gertrude Stein's Brewsie and Willie in 1965. Grand Valley was a new school, but that did not mean that it had to think small or be conformist.

I came to Grand Rapids in 1964 with my husband Hugo, who had been hired to teach Spanish at GVSC. Through him the committee learned that I was a drama teacher and play director. In the spring of 1966 the committee chose to produce La Lena or The Bawd, an English language premier of the sixteenth century Italian Ariosto's comedy, a full-length play. They hired me to direct the play. Roberta Simone had translated the play as part of her dissertation, so the two of us collaborated on a production which emphasized the vitality and ribald humor of the Renaissance, resulting in a romp that raised a few eyebrows.

I was hired as a part-time teacher in the English Department and was to direct the play for the next year. The program that went to press before casting indicates that the play was Shaw's Androcles and the Lion. When I held auditions, there were not enough male actors to fill the parts. We substituted three medieval morality plays—Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and Noah and the Flood—and filled in with faculty and staff members. The little theatre in Lake Huron Hall seemed well suited to staging these tiny dramas that were given modern dress and a contemporary twist. The Devil popped out of Hell's mouth, and when Cain tried to light a fire to burn his sacrifice, a mushroom cloud of smoke arose. In a parade of the Seven Deadly Sins, Wrath appeared as a biker in leather and chains. One actress, decked out in silks and furs, complained backstage that she could not understand how her character, Pride, could possibly represent a sin.

The following year, the Arts on Campus play was Sheridan's The Rivals. In addition, an Ann Arbor company brought a happening. Inspired by them as well as by articles I had been reading in the Tulane Drama Review, the theatre group tried its own hand at a happening, somehow or other using cooked oatmeal as a prop. The blue velour curtain was never the same. Grand Valley was ahead of its time. My mother came to see these productions, and we had a good argument about new theatre forms. Finally I asked her how my grandmother, the piano teacher, had taken to jazz. I won the argument.
Arts on Campus was a joyous outflowing of our youth and our pride in our new school. When an event concluded, the whole audience plunged into the pit of Seidman House to argue into the night about the writing, acting and staging. The long winter was over, and we were bursting intellectually and physically like the pear trees around us. The pioneer students were exceptionally talented and hard working and were willing risk takers. Over the years, they have made their mark in theatre locally and across the country. Surely they made their mark on Grand Valley as they set the tone for what was to come.

The enthusiasm that fed the faculty spilled over into two new projects. One was local, and the other had implications for all of Western Michigan. Grand Valley State College Friends of the Arts began in the spring of 1968. Its purposes were as follows:

1. to organize and sponsor scholarships, prizes, performances, concerts, exhibits, lectures, and art happenings of exceptional quality that will stimulate and interest the college audience;
2. to make these programs available to the greater Western Michigan Community and thereby achieve exposure to the arts;
3. to establish an Endowment for the Arts at Grand Valley State College;
4. to give financial support to young artists at the college, which will always assist and never dictate.

The bylaws added to point four: "The tradition of freedom in the arts is to be cherished and kept open as one of the last channels for truly creative thought."

Friends of the Arts supported dance, film, music, theatre, and the visual arts. A weekly series of films helped to carry the spirit of Arts on Campus throughout the year. The English Department sporadically organized group readings of plays and poems. In 1969, the Friends of the Arts sponsored the college actors in the American premier of Antonio Buerro Vallejo's *The Concert at Saint Ovid*.

Faculty members as well as administrators and "friends" from the community made up the membership. One of those "friends," Nancy Mulnix, had almost single-handedly brought the Calder stabile to Grand Rapids. She, along with Whitney Seven of the Art Department, whipped up the scheme to ask Calder to make a print of his stabile to donate to GVSC. The sale of the prints would be used for scholarships for arts students. Thus was born, in 1970, both the name of the fine arts building and the Alexander Calder Scholarship, which is still given annually to GVSU arts students. As academic programs and funds in the coffers grew, the Friends of the Arts dissolved. The Grand Valley State College Foundation took over fund raising for the arts, and departments took over the need for activities and formal study.

Not satisfied with what we could do only on our own campus, Margaret Crawford, a professor in the Art Department, and I took it upon ourselves to develop a project which we called "Culture in the Cornfields." We hoped it would help all of us cope with a sense of isolation from the artistic revolution going on throughout the country by inviting area college arts faculty to join us in cooperative ventures. As a result, we exchanged newsletters, calendars and performances. Michigan had just developed...
an Arts Council, so speakers came to the campus to help us understand and benefit from this initiative. Culture in the Cornfields flourished for two years. Individual schedules made it impossible to continue group work, yet answers to a survey I sent out in 1970—my last correspondence on this project—begged us to continue at all costs. We were not able to do that, but the short-lived organization did make connections with colleagues, which I still enjoy.

The flowering of Arts on Campus gave us all spirit and joy. It got the arts off to a strong start at Grand Valley. It must have convinced the administration and faculty to develop majors in the arts disciplines and to encourage more complexity and excellence in their projects. As I write this, we are in the middle of the 1995 Shakespeare Festival, and I wonder if it will have a comparable impact. Ask me back to write about it in 2020.
MEMORIES OF GRAND VALLEY STATE COLLEGE 1968-1972

Cindy Hull

When I was first asked to reminisce about my years as a student at GVSC, I felt some trepidation, since the request was made by an English professor from my student days, whose red pen was legendary among students with questionable grammatical and spelling skills. Once I was assured that my essay would not be graded, I relaxed somewhat and settled in for what I thought of as an easy assignment. I immediately began to reconstitute the buildings in my mind: now where were those language labs? But, as I reconstructed the "institution" of Grand Valley, I found that those early buildings, the "commuter" dining hall in Lake Michigan and the Pit in Seidman where I spent too many hours lounging and socializing, were filled with memories of people, events and emotions which have lain dormant for many years. I brought my husband, also a 1972 graduate, into the assignment and found that although we were in different disciplines, we shared many of the same feelings and memories.

Since buildings are more visible than memories, they might be a good place to start. GVSC was then even more a commuter campus than it is now. Although commuters could and did eat in the Commons with the dormies, we seemed to congregate on the Great Lakes side of campus (after 25 years, I still don't know where north is located on the campus). I remember, vaguely, driving to campus in the dark for my 8:00 a.m. French classes and inhaling pre-class coffee and donuts in the commuter dining room with my husband, then boyfriend. Some commuters rented study carrels, which were located behind the language labs in Lake Superior. These study carrels consisted of a locked desk, book cupboard and narrow coat closet; in the era when backpacks would have been considered bourgeois, they saved us from carrying all of our belongings with us throughout the day.

Seidman House had a comfortable lounge area with a pit surrounding a fireplace. A television set was placed there for awhile, and in 1968 the pit was filled with baseball fans watching the Tigers win one of their rare World Series.

A new university president (Arend Lubbers) arrived and a new library (Zumberge) was constructed during my years at GVSC. Previously, there had been several small libraries located around campus. The humanities library was located in Lake Superior Hall and the sciences library was in Loutit. Without computer accessing, finding research materials was a challenge not appreciated by students today. I remember the smell of the new, nearly empty, library which, for me, permeates the building to this day. Then it was a wonderful, quiet study area away from the noise of the cafeteria and Seidman House.

Yet, GVSC was more than buildings. There was a feeling of being involved in
something new and exciting. The experimental colleges, Thomas Jefferson and William James, although looked at askance by many, were indicative of new hopeful philosophies of education—education that went beyond the classroom and the traditional teaching and learning techniques. There were jokes about these colleges even then, especially TJC—speculation about whether it was possible for one to receive a B.A. in basket weaving or life studies. But the experiment was exciting and enhanced a tradition at GVSC (and continuing at GVSU) that new ideas can and should be explored and that faculty who are forward thinking are encouraged, not silenced.

My favorite course in undergraduate school was Philosophy 101, taught by Professor Jellema. It was a course that changed my life forever. Jellema introduced me, and hundreds of others, to Plato's Republic and to the Socratic method of teaching. He asked us to think about those things that we take for granted. I remember being asked to define "what is real" and then to defend my answer. "How do you know that the chair you sit in is real?" "Well, because it keeps me off the floor?" He made us consider the possibility of other realities, other forms of government. He was a true teacher in the "real" sense of the word.

My career goals were also shaped at Grand Valley. I entered college, knowing that I was going to be a secondary school teacher. That was a given. Then, I took anthropology. Doc Flanders and Prof Wilkerson introduced me to other cultures, and again forced me to reconsider the "reality" of my life in western Michigan and the possibility of other realities. Through a study abroad program, I was introduced to the Maya of Yucatan, Mexico, and from that time on, I knew that I would not be teaching high school social studies. I was on my way to graduate school. It never occurred to me that I would come back to Grand Valley and teach anthropology, but that is just one of life's pleasant surprises.

Grand Valley, like all colleges and universities across the country, was enmeshed in the politics of the Vietnam war during the 1960s and early 70s. The war and the civil rights movement had a tremendous impact on curriculum and social involvement. For example, I remember writing an essay for Political Science in which I had to answer the rhetorical question, "If Jesus Christ were alive today, would he be in prison?" It was a time when civil disobedience and political protest were contested issues. Alternative lifestyles were explored through the readings of Emerson and Thoreau, and students were challenged to question the status quo.

Liberal ideas (some would call them radical) were also the norm on most college campuses, and complacency was criticized. In 1969, the only free book one could obtain on campus was Chairman Mao's Red Book, which was distributed free of charge by the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society). I don't know how many GVSC students actually read the book, however, since it was widely suspected that the faculty was more radical than the student body.

Students seemed to take education seriously then. Perhaps this is just old timers' reminiscing on my part, but it seemed that there was much emphasis on reading—not only reading for class, but being informed about current events. All of my friends were avid readers of newspapers and magazines. It seemed important somehow. However,
on a more realistic plane, it was crucial for students, particularly male students, to succeed in college, for if they did not, the killing fields of Vietnam awaited them.

There have been many changes over the years at Grand Valley. There are more dorms, more apartments, more instructional buildings and facilities. Grand Valley went from a College to Colleges to a University in the blink of an eye. The corn fields have almost disappeared, yet much of Grand Valley is the same. We still have the same president, who provides consistent leadership while maintaining our important mission to students and community. We still have enriching classes and programs. Doc Flanders' summer archeology school continues under the guidance of Doc Brashler. We have increasing numbers of wonderful international study programs which allow students the opportunity to experience diversity and to grow intellectually and in cultural awareness. Although we have lost many of the faculty who enriched our lives, Prof Jellema and Doc Flanders to name only two, some of those faculty who enriched my education remain as a core of dedicated faculty who are now my colleagues instead of my professors. Finally, and most important to me, I still arise before dawn, commute to Allendale and start my day inhaling coffee before classes at Grand Valley.
PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY DAYS AT GVSU

Daniel Andersen

Among the key policy makers and early administrators for the new Grand Valley State College were such persons as William Seidman, Philip Buchen, James Zumberge, and George Potter. Harry Jellema, a retired philosophy professor from Calvin College, certainly played an important role, perhaps the most important, in setting the direction of the college. (Apologies to any that have been overlooked!) These persons committed themselves and the faculty to search for ways that would make this new college something unique, something different from typical liberal arts colleges, something that would make it stand out.

Certainly GVSC was to be a liberal arts college, or a college where the liberal arts and sciences were to be stressed and majors only in the liberal arts and sciences were to be offered. There was no thought in those days of expanding to include professional schools. Though the planning for higher education by the State of Michigan indicated that the new college would focus upon teacher preparation and business administration, the policy makers emphasized that these would be based on a central core of the liberal arts. All students enrolled for the B.A. degree and were required to complete a foreign language requirement. (The B.S. degree, which omitted the foreign language requirement, was not introduced until years later.) All students completed the "Foundation Program," a set of nine courses in the arts and humanities, the social studies, the sciences and mathematics. The ideal was to take three Foundation Program courses each term for the three terms of the freshman year, deferring work on one's own major program until the sophomore year. GVSC was then on the quarter system, with three ten-week terms or quarters, plus a summer quarter, constituting the school year. All courses were for five term credits, in which one term credit was equal to 2/3 semester credit. Three courses for fifteen such term credits constituted a normal full-time academic load.

But such features alone would not make GVSC significantly unique. These were simply variations on the theme of the liberal arts and a general education program that were found in many colleges. In its early and formative years, the faculty and administration committed itself to some form of decentralization of the college as a way of expressing its own uniqueness. Just what form this would take and how it would be administered were issues that would be hammered out as time went on. One of the first ideas to be considered was that of organizing separate collegiate societies of roughly 1,500 students each. The Great Lakes complex of buildings—Lake Michigan Hall, Lake Superior Hall, and Lake Huron Hall—was envisioned as housing one such collegiate society. Perhaps an Islands complex—Manitou Hall, Mackinac Hall—would house another. I remember questioning in a faculty meeting whether
separate collegiate societies should require totally separate buildings in order to have a sense of individual identity. Some courses common to each such society might be taken in a common facility, especially in the sciences.

The first step in the implementation of the idea of a "decentralization" of the college was to organize the faculty into two study committees (fall, 1966, I believe). It was decided that one committee would design a new unit or "society" while the other would concern itself with maintaining the "regular" or "main" college as an effective academic institution. Each faculty member chose the committee of personal preference. I remember myself with such people as Daniel Clock, Gil Davis, Tom Goss, Margaret Crawford, Tom Bulthuis, Lee Kaufman, Bill Baum, and on the "Second Society" committee, which was significantly smaller than the other. Some of us had been meeting informally at Win Schuler's Restaurant in Grand Haven for some time, discussing various ideas for a new school. George Potter, Grand Valley’s academic vice-president, appointed Don Hall to chair this group, but Daniel Clock took on this responsibility when Don went on to the position of Grand Valley’s Dean of Students. The Grand Valley faculty continued to meet as a whole to take care of the ongoing business of the college.

In one of these faculty-as-a-whole meetings a most crucial issue was brought up and voted on. I missed this meeting. I think it was on the day I drove back home along Lake Michigan Drive at 80 mph to take Doris to the hospital for the birth of our youngest son. As it was described to me later, my colleague and chairman of the physics department, John Baker, brought up the issue of governance for any new unit that might be formed. Was governance to be by the GVSC faculty as a whole? Or would a new unit have its own separate faculty meetings and be independent to govern itself? Professor Baker suggested that it would hardly make sense to design a new unit for the college and not allow it to govern itself. It could be out-voted on any problem or issue that came up if the entire GVSC faculty were involved. It was moved, seconded, and passed that any new unit or branch would enjoy autonomy. This carried the implication of separate faculty, administration, and admissions process. This crucial decision affected the course of GVSC for the next fifteen years.

The Second Society Committee designed just that: a new unit or branch at GVSC. It was given the name School of General Studies (SGS). The main college was named the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS). SGS was designed after a British academic model. It had a Common Program of required courses beginning with the New Student Problem Series (NSPS) in the freshman (or new student) year. NSPS included a term each of courses: Man and Society (social studies), Man and the World (the sciences), and Man as an Individual (arts and humanities). A weekly forum (lecture and discussion) to be attended by the entire SGS community was integrated into the topics of NSPS. The Common Program went on to include a Sophomore Common Seminar, a Junior Seminar, a Field Study off campus for a full term, with both a field supervisor and a campus faculty supervisor, and a Senior Project followed by a Senior Seminar in which the individual projects were discussed and critiqued.

The Common Program occupied about a third of every student's academic program. Most of the elective courses offered by SGS were called Examinations.
Students could register for such a course and not show up until a formal examination at the end of the term. Each faculty member offering such examination courses listed specific weekly days and times when students could make contact to discuss their progress in pursuing the examination goals, which were clearly spelled out by course syllabi. These discussion times quickly became discussion classes, attended by most students enrolled for these courses. The idea of being totally absent from the first day until the final examination, a common practice in European schools, was somewhat frightening to our students.

Students were encouraged to design and undertake independent studies, with appropriate faculty supervision, varying from five to fifteen credits. Course grades were either S (Satisfactory) or I (Incomplete). The S grade was to be assumed as equivalent to grade C or better in the regular grading system. The I grade carried the implication that the course could yet be satisfactorily completed at some time in the future. I do not recall that SGS required students to undertake a "major" program. They could assemble a minimum number of credits in an area of study and describe it as a "concentration" on their graduation logs if they wished.

The person who was to lead or direct SGS would have the title Chairman of the School of General Studies. Later on, this office was distinguished by the title of Dean. A crucial policy was worked out in regard to the issue of self-governance. There would be three votes on all decisions to be made, with two votes sufficient to carry a matter. The Chairman had one vote, the collective faculty had one vote (determined by simple majority of the faculty), and the Town Meeting had one vote (determined by simple majority of the entire SGS community, if my memory is correct).

In fall, 1968, SGS was opened. It had a student body of eighty. Daniel Clock as Chairman, Gil Davis, and Tom Goss were its full-time faculty. Its course offerings were rounded out with several dual appointments between CAS and SGS and the offering of several of the Examination courses by various CAS professors. As a member of the CAS physics department, I taught two of these exam courses that first year: Modern Astronomy and the Revolution of 20th Century Physics. In the spring, 1969, term, Daniel Clock asked me to be his administrative assistant on a half-time appointment, remaining with CAS physics for the other half. In fall, 1969, I was appointed full-time to the SGS faculty.

It is my recollection that growth of SGS was to be kept rather slow and deliberate. I think that plans for the second year called for a student body of 120 and the equivalent of six full-time faculty (to have a twenty-to-one ratio). But an event took place that altered these plans and would soon change the character of SGS dramatically. Unknown to us, Nasson College, a liberal arts college in Springvale, Maine, had also embarked upon a venture into experimental higher education. They created what they called "Unit II." It was a unit fully immersed in the wave of experimental education that swept through higher education in the 1960s and gradually died out in the 1970s. It was designed more in the style of Bensalem College at Fordham University, Old Westbury on Long Island, New York, and Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, than in the style of the British model that inspired SGS. There was no "Common Program." There were no required courses. Every last credit earned by a student was
by that student's personal choice. Most courses were of a seminar nature, with free
discussion and interaction by all members. The lecture format was shunned.
Independent (individual) studies and off-campus studies, under faculty supervision,
were encouraged. Grading in such institutions was probably similar to that at SGS.

Experimental education as a whole and Unit II in particular attracted independent-
minded, creative, self-motivated students and, undoubtedly, some "dead-beats"
looking for an easy ride. They were students who saw an opportunity to take full
control over factors in their lives that were of intimate personal concern. There
certainly were many personality types, but perhaps, as a whole, students could be
described as noisy, eager to sound off, quick to express themselves in various ways,
even rambunctious. One needed to live in the decades of the '60s and '70s to
appreciate the turmoil in our nation, politically, socially, and educationally. It was a time
of "radicalization," of opposing "the system," of anti-war vigils and demonstrations.
Experimental higher education was an expression of the times, of the national mood.
But there was little evidence of it in higher education in conservative West Michigan.
Experimental units were established elsewhere in Michigan: Justin Morrill College at
Michigan State University and Monteith College at Wayne State University, perhaps,
and to some extent, at the Residential College at the University of Michigan.

But Unit II at Nasson College was not autonomous. Governance at Nasson College
was by the faculty as a whole, not by separate units. The more conservative and
traditional faculty reached the point where they could no longer tolerate the influx of
these expressive and radicalized young people. They felt that the academic integrity of
the entire institution was being compromised. So, sometime during the '68-'69 school
year, they voted to dissolve Unit II. It would no longer exist after that school year.
Somehow Unit II became aware of the existence of SGS and the potential it had for
being a truly experimental unit as they understood it. Unit II wanted to move en masse
to GVSC and be incorporated into SGS. During the summer of 1969, Academic Vice-
President George Potter and one or two SGS faculty (and perhaps a student or two)
got to Springvale armed with GVSC catalogs, SGS information, and application
forms. They personally interviewed Unit II students interested in making the move to
West Michigan. I don't remember just how many of these students were admitted to
SGS, but the fall, '69 term opened with 169 students. Three Unit II faculty
members—Ben Beck (psychology), Hugh Haggard (philosophy and religion studies),
and Don Klein (English literature)—obtained full-time positions at SGS.

During the 1969-70 academic year, the SGS program remained intact, with its
Common Program and Exam courses. But change was in the wind! The influx of Unit II
students and faculty carried the full impact of the wave of experimental education into
GVSC. The die had been cast. The faculty and students could outvote the chairman.
One can anticipate what was to transpire. The policy of giving no grades remained
intact, but the Common Program—all required courses—was eliminated. Exam
courses simply disappeared, being replaced by seminars. Independent studies
proliferated. New, innovative pedagogical approaches were introduced, such as the
"Floating seminar," in which the final description was produced at the end of the term
rather than at the beginning. In due time professional internships were introduced. The
Chairman of SGS, Daniel Clock, resigned. He was replaced by T. Dan Gilmore, whose charismatic personality was instrumental in uniting the faculty and students. A "retreat" (never!) at the commencement of the school year was renamed an "advance." Such "advances" became popular; the school reunions held ever since are called "advances."

Grand Valley State College itself continued its course of decentralization. Because each new unit was autonomous, it was decided to call them "colleges" rather than "societies" and each was to be headed by a dean. Bill Baum continued through the second year of SGS on a dual appointment between SGS and CAS. Confronted with the need to decide upon one or the other of the units, he chose to remain full-time in the CAS Political Science Department. But before he left he was instrumental in having SGS change its name to Thomas Jefferson College (TJC), and Thomas Jefferson became the pedagogical hero of this unit all its days. GVSC went on to establish William James College and College IV, later renamed Kirkhof College. During the days of this federation of colleges, GVSC took the name of Grand Valley State Colleges. Each college had its unique philosophy, pedagogy, and personality. A student in any of the colleges could cross-register for courses in the other colleges to an extent determined by the student's own college. The course requirements and grading practices of the college offering the courses were to be observed.

TJC reached its maximum size in the fall, '74 term, with over 500 students. They were typical of the students described above, for TJC was now fully immersed in the wave of experimental education. The use of a testing instrument with national norms indicated a mean score of 75th percentile on academic potential and a mean score of 90th percentile on creative potential. Over one in every three TJC students went on to graduate school. Informal discussion at the 1995 Advance indicated that eventually one in every two TJC graduates may attend graduate school. The only students at Grand Valley ever to win Danforth Foundation Graduate Fellowships were enrolled in TJC.

As the '70s passed, the political turmoil of the country subsided, career orientation became the focus of higher education, involvement with and commitment to a "cause" of some kind faded away. In its early years, TJC students were rather broadly distributed across the spectrum of arts and sciences, but especially psychology, social studies of various kinds, elementary education, and the arts as a whole. In the later '70s, TJC became more a school of the expressive arts: theater, mime, dance, music, visual art. Its student enrollment declined gradually through the late '70s. It was finally terminated in spring, 1980, as part of a drastic austerity measure at GVSC. It had outlived many of its counterparts in experimental education, and it still lives on in the lives of many persons scattered around the world. The most visible physical evidence on the GVSU campus of the existence of Thomas Jefferson College is a cozy little nook with an appropriate memorial plaque along the north wall of Lake Huron Hall.
THE FOUNDING AND FLOUNDERING OF THE SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES

Gilbert R. Davis

In the mid-1960's, American higher education came under serious attack from academics and intellectuals alike. Judson Jerome's assessment was typical: "[T]he system isn't working. The whole network of departments, fields, areas, credits, requirements, courses, grades, which we have accepted as educational design, does not relate coherently to human learning, and the network is collapsing of its own Byzantine weight." This call for radical reform was echoed by such educational critics as Father Leo McLaughlin, Fordham University's president; Elizabeth Sewell, Bensalem College's founder; Harris Wofford, SUNY at Old Westbury's president; Michael Novak, faculty member of that early experiment; and the nation's educational gadfly, Paul Goodman.

For some of us, this was a heady call. Inspired by the model of intellectuals and political activists who themselves had limited formal education—I think of such 1960's luminaries as Eric Hoffer, Edmund Wilson, Lewis Mumford, Irving Howe, and Michael Harrington—we were looking for radical ways to reform college and university programs. For me the opportunity came during my interview for a position here when George Potter, our first dean, assured me that Grand Valley would grow along a British model, developing a series of satellite colleges, each with its own approach to schooling. In addition, John Freund, a member of the newly formed English Department, urged me to join him at Grand Valley in planning a new school. Potter and Freund assured me that President Zumberge endorsed this model, encouraging faculty members to come forward with ideas for a college to complement the established College of Arts and Sciences.

So it was that I arrived at Grand Valley in 1965; and so it was that the following year John Freund—who suddenly resigned, for personal reasons, that winter—and I sent out a memorandum inviting all interested faculty to meet for the purpose of planning a satellite college. To show colleagues we meant to "invent" a new college radically different from the existing one, we headed the memorandum with the following quote from Einstein:

One had to cram all this stuff into one's mind, whether one liked it or not. This coercion had such a deterring effect that, after I had passed the final examination, I found the consideration of any scientific problems distasteful to me for an entire year. . . . It is in fact nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry; for this delicate little plant, aside from stimulation, stands mainly in need of freedom; without this it goes to wrack and ruin without fail. It is a very
grave mistake to think that the enjoyment of seeing and searching can be promoted by means of coercion and a sense of duty.

A dozen or so faculty members from across the various disciplines joined our little planning group—which became officially known as the Second Society—and we were off to an intoxicating start. In short order, the group sorted itself out, guided by a "hard core" of reformers ready to throw out conventional notions of how students are educated. We were determined to design a program to attract students committed to learning and intellectual pursuits for their own sake. I repeat, it was a heady time!

The curriculum we settled on contained a Common Program, occupying a third of the students' course work, distributed throughout the four years of study. The Program focused on the "study of enduring human and intellectual problems" in the humanities, social studies, and sciences. The remainder of the degree work was concentrated study in a "specific discipline or a combination of disciplines." This was accomplished through a variety of what we euphemistically called "educational experiences": forums, independent studies, examinations, seminars, off-campus projects, and a senior thesis. Grades were either satisfactory or unsatisfactory, supplemented with written evaluations. Preparing to enroll our first students in the fall of 1968, the School of General Studies (SGS)—as we were then called—described itself this way:

... a four-year liberal arts college offering programs leading to the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Philosophy degrees. While offering its students all the educational resources of Grand Valley, the new School provides students with unusual opportunities for multidisciplinary study as well as significant freedom and responsibility.

Today, SGS's program seems hardly radical—no doubt a measure of how much higher education has changed in the past three decades—but we had a struggle getting the entire Grand Valley faculty to approve the final plan, as was required. Only an eleventh-hour plea by the Physics Department's John Baker swung the narrow margin.

From my perspective, SGS's first two years unfolded as we had planned, except that we were not attracting the numbers of students we needed to increase our faculty. No doubt most high school students and their counselors were put off by this unorthodox approach to higher education going on in a Western Michigan cornfield. We were also burdened by the difficulty the admissions staff had explaining to prospective students what we were doing. (And, of course, it's possible the staff neither understood, nor sympathized with our program.)

Our slow growth led to the ill-fated plan to swell SGS's ranks by incorporating faculty and students of a failed experiment at Nasson College (Maine). Immediately, Thomas Jefferson College (TJC)—as we were now known—almost doubled in size. Worse yet, we were overwhelmed by new students and faculty openly hostile to our program. They scorned our avowed intellectual approach as elitist, rejecting the
idea—as Michael Novak put it—that "logic, clarity, precision, technical competence, verbal skill, [and] the reading of books have more educational value than their opposites." What they wanted was a humanistic approach to creating a "learning community," drawing heavily on encounter groups, psychodrama and Gestalt training, in order "to clear away the emotional furniture" impeding learning.

Within a few years, our experiment in educational reform was subverted by counter-culture warriors, whose goal of deconstruction included, among other things, the complete abandonment of the Common Program, to be replaced by no requirements at all! Thus, a student could complete a Bachelor of Philosophy degree by taking all 180 quarter hours in one subject—as at least one student did. The grading system was discarded as coercive and oppressive. Worse yet, many TJC faculty members, deeply committed to the human potential movement, replaced academic studies with courses in psychological voodoo, from Yoga and meditation to EST and Rolfing, and many students were only too happy to seek therapy rather than academic instruction.

Encounter groups and sensitivity sessions sprung up like mushrooms, later to be coupled with an especially virulent brand of true-believer politics that scorned opposing points of view as fascist deception.

Despite the abundant rubbish going on in TJC during those dark days, many students still came to study in a setting of responsible freedom, reflecting the original SGS plan. But too often we had students and faculty working at cross purposes, which produced some ugly confrontations. Two examples come to mind. The early one involved first canceling, then relocating the Junior Seminar because some students disrupted it as an intellectual, elitist activity inconsistent with their view of TJC as a "learning community." For me, the most interesting confrontation came when I advised the Women's Playwriting Cooperative that they could not legally give their theater performance "for women only" in a Grand Valley—and therefore public—facility. My action prompted some students and faculty members to begin "de-tenure hearings" on the grounds that I lacked the TJC spirit. One can imagine their fury when I gave them the bad news about the illegality of this effort as well.

Were it not for the students who continued to come to study at TJC, I would have parted long since; but these were students to inspire any faculty member. Indeed, there was widespread agreement among faculty in the other three satellite colleges—William James College and College IV had been added—that TJC had Grand Valley's best and worst students. For the worst, TJC was politely referred to as a respectable place "for the downward mobility of upper-class students"; sadly, some were either on their way to mental breakdowns, or between recurring episodes. But working with TJC's best—those who took education seriously—was an unalloyed joy. These were the students CAS faculty could not get enough of in their classes: Grand Valley's best and brightest.

Before TJC was put to rest in 1979, there was a brief flurry of activity to return it to something like its original intention; but by then few students were looking for alternative education, and TJC's growing notoriety deterred those who were. Our reputation had caught up with us. Yet at its best, TJC enriched the Grand Valley
community in ways no other satellite college did: there were the splendid students who came for the freedom and direction some of us provided; there was also our outstanding downtown theater, Stage 3; and, of course, there were the celebrated National Poetry Festivals, the jazz workshops, and a variety of other creative arts contributions. At its worst, TJC was impossible to defend, and its closing came as no surprise. Of the faculty, most were left without work, unlikely to teach in higher education again—mercifully!

One of three TJC faculty members folded back into CAS, I was returned half-time to my original home, the English Department; the other half of my time was spent directing the new Honors Program. I suppose this gave me another chance to do some educational fiddling, especially since the Program stressed interdisciplinary approaches as well as independent studies, drawing its faculty from departments throughout GVSU. But by the 1980's these were less than radical ideas, which are—happily—still flourishing in the GVSU Honors Program.

As I review my comments here, I am reminded of how disheartened I was to see our educational experiment partially destroyed by anti-intellectual, counter-culture warriors with little interest in education and less in academic pursuits. The original faculty members had named SGS for Thomas Jefferson because we wanted to identify our aims with this country's most celebrated intellectual, one who personified Emerson's "American Scholar": man thinking and man acting. For us, Jefferson's achievement as an intellectual and man of civic action represented the TJC ideal, and we wanted our students to aspire to his model. Considering TJC's reputation then, and the unflattering picture most colleagues today have of our modest experiment, we did Jefferson a great disservice.
GRAND VALLEY AND THE NATIONAL POETRY FESTIVAL

by Judith Minty

I have slept there with long
extended metaphors, caressed the body of syntax,
kissed simile’s ear. Appetites
move with a rhythm like tides. They are
seldom satisfied. We eat, knowing we will be hungry again.

The valley fills the cup of the hand
with its gorges and meadows, its reservoirs
named after lakes. Fish swim there
almost free, tethered by invisible silver cords. They roll
in the river, fold their gills back with the current.

I have traveled to other cities
to fondle their books, proposition their young verbs.
But desire dies for weak nouns, for prepositions
that fall limp into voids. We learn
to beware of guards who station themselves near the walls.

It is back to that valley we trudge
when we feel ourselves thinning. Only there
can we dance in the fire, chew raw meat,
distill water from Indian lakes. There, baying at the moon,
we can suck eyes from all the little fish heads.

("Grand Valley," from In the Presence of Mothers, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1981)

I wrote the poem "Grand Valley" in the mid-1970s, after one of the three summer poetry festivals that took place on the Grand Valley campus. The poem is not literally about Grand Valley or about me, although I had been a student at Thomas Jefferson College, one of the cluster colleges at Grand Valley, and subsequently had taught for a few years at both Thomas Jefferson College and the College of Arts and Sciences.

It seems to be about an awakening, not only of the speaker of the poem but of the place itself. Perhaps it is even about an awakening of an era in American poetry. There seems to be a wildness to it, as if the poem and the speaker had been energized from within—and how could that not be true? For there was such an abundance of creative energy circulating during those poetry festivals that even the
corn fields surrounding Allendale, Michigan, must have been sizzling. The bizarre and wonderful idea of creating a National Poetry Festival in the middle of Midwestern farmland was conceived by Robert Vas Dias, with whom I had studied in 1971-72. Robert had come from New York City to teach at Grand Valley's innovative Thomas Jefferson College, one of the few state-supported experimental colleges in the country. Not only was Robert a good poet and learned teacher, he was a true impresario. He'd recently edited a poetry anthology titled *Inside Outer Space: New Poems of the Space Age*, so was in contact with many of the avant-garde writers in this country, several of whom had been incorporating performance work into their readings long before that sort of thing mainstreamed into our culture. He'd also directed a poetry reading series in New York and run a writers' workshop for several years in Aspen, Colorado. It wasn't long before Robert was arranging regular campus "Happenings," events which were full of joyful celebration and ritual and which included multi-disciplinary combinations of such arts as painting, dance, poetry, and music. Food preparation and, of course, the eating of it, was always a part of these Happenings. I remember one Spring event that the rain would eventually wash away: it included sidewalks painted with pastels, costumes, singing and dancing, poetry readings, and trees decorated with hand-printed poems on rice paper. Out of these events arose a strong sense of community, particularly among those of us who were part of the TJC experience.

The first National Poetry Festival occurred in the summer of 1971. It was a nearly spontaneous Happening, much like those celebrations on campus during the school year, and the list of famous poets who'd been invited was breathtaking. It was to be Paul Blackburn's last public appearance, and his admirers had gathered to honor him. The famous and controversial Ted Berrigan was there, as were California poets Gregory Corso, Jackson MacLow and Diane Wakoski, who understood the oral tradition of poetry, and practiced it. African-American poet and fiction writer Al Young, and poet Sonia Sanchez were there; so were Tom Weatherly and David Henderson. John Logan and Robert Creeley had come in from the East Coast. Donald Hall and Robert Bly were there too. Michigan poets Jim Harrison and Dan Gerber, who published the influential *Sumac* magazine in the '60s and '70s, were there to talk about publishing and to read their own poems. Armand Schwerner read from his new language book *The Tablets*, and Philip Whalen, a practicing Buddhist monk, read his poems. Jerome Rothenberg, who'd recently published *Technicians of the Sacred*, an anthology of ritual and tribal poetry through the ages, urged festival participants to open the way to ritual in their own lives and work.

In the spirit of TJC, the event was conceived as a "festival of poetry, poets, and students of poetry . . . not as a spectator-oriented, performance situation, at which an 'audience' sits passively at 'lectures' and 'seminars,' but as a place and a circumstance in which for ten days, the human, esthetic, and practical resources [would] be available for a sustained experience of the art of poetry and engagement with the artistic personality." It was an extraordinary ten-day affair. Here was a gathering of poets who valued each other's work, who were forming the poetry of the future, who were discussing with enthusiasm their art and its possibilities. Here were
poets who were actually performing and chanting poetry. Dancing it even.

The second National Poetry Festival, operating under the same generous premise as the first, took place in 1973. In the intervening year since its inception, the festival had achieved a national reputation. The literary world had heard of Allendale, Michigan; literary magazines were abuzz with it, and the invited poets were eager to gather together, to have meaningful dialogue with each other.

On June 14th, another notable cast of performers arrived for ten days of "poeting," as Etheridge Knight would call it. Those invited included Diane di Prima, Robert Duncan of the famed Black Mountain School, Allen Ginsberg, David Meltzer, and the charismatic Kenneth Rexroth—all from the West Coast. Although the nightly readings and the daily workshops and exchanges were remarkably rich and rewarding, an impromptu Midsummer Night celebration—complete with bonfire and singing, dancing and chanting, and revelry until nearly dawn—was also memorable.

Ed Dorn, whose famous long mythopoem "Gunslinger" had recently been published, was there, as was Ted Enslin, who'd come down from Maine. Dorn, I remember, offered a late night performance of "Gunslinger" in its entirety toward the end of the festival. That reading, attended by about thirty die-hard enthusiasts, lasted until 5 a.m. George Economou and his wife, the New York poet and playwright Rochelle Owens, were also in attendance. I was impressed that Rochelle refused to eat for the entire day before her reading. I was also astonished when she announced that her mother believed that George wrote all of her poems for her.

But if these writers weren't enough of a list of talent to converge on Grand Valley that summer, the Objectivist poets—George Oppen, Carl Rakosi, and Charles Reznikoff—all well past middle-age by then, were also in residence for the entire ten days. Louis Zukofsky had already died, and this was the first time that the remaining three had ever been together; they considered it an historical meeting. Oppen and Rakosi came with their wives—Reznikoff was a bachelor—and they all stayed in the college's dormitory with the rest of us, sleeping in their bunk beds and sharing the communal bathroom.

About 100 registered participants were in attendance for the length of the festival, but the nightly readings often drew audiences of 400. Everyone was aware of participating in a major moment in American poetry. The digressive talks by Robert Duncan about form were brilliant. Ginsberg, who'd arrived at Grand Valley with his leg in a cast, still managed to delight his entourage of devotees with afternoon blues improvisations. Di Prima offered meditation sessions and spoke about women and creativity. Enslin, who was working on "Ranger" then, spoke of the long poem and its function. Meltzer had just finished anthologizing a two-volume collection of texts from the Jewish mystical tradition, and he and Ginsberg engaged in long ongoing dialogues about the Kabbala and the hidden wisdom found therein. Economou conducted translation workshops and Rexroth held forth on the art of translating the work of Chinese and Japanese poets. Rakosi, a clinical psychologist for most of his life, delved into the psychology of the poet. Poets all, we were in awe, I think, to be in each other's company. I remember that Charles Reznikoff, 79 years old and an esteemed poet himself, announced, after having attended Robert Duncan's lecture...
on form, "I have touched genius in the form of Robert Duncan."

July 9-19th were the dates of the 1975 National Poetry Festival, and although we didn't see it as an omen then, it would prove to be even more dynamic than its predecessors—like the finale at a Fourth of July fireworks. Robert Vas Dias had moved to England, so volunteers and students were running the festival, which was sponsored by Grand Valley State Colleges and the Michigan Council for the Arts. Information on the poster touted Readings, Workshops, Discussions, Poetry Events, Exhibitions, Film, Music, Dance—And Theater. "For ten days," the red and black poster promised, "the human esthetic and practical resources are available for a sustained experience of the art of poetry and engagement with the artistic personality."

For a fee of $50, none of the 200 registrants was disappointed. More than twenty-five poets of national and international reputation participated. Among the culturally diverse group were Asian-American writers Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge, Lawson Inada, Alex Kuo, Shawn Wong, and Jessica Hagedorn, who, it was hoped, would perform with her West Coast Gangster Choir.

African-American poets Etheridge Knight and Nikki Giovanni, and novelist Ishmael Reed were invited. Jim Welch, the Blackfeet poet and novelist, drove in from Montana. Laguna Pueblo writer, Leslie Silko, arrived from Arizona. Other Native American poets included Simon Ortiz, Carroll Arnett and Howard Norman.

Diane Wakoski was there, as well as Carol Bergé and Kathleen Fraser. William Heyen, co-founder of the Brockport (NY) Writers' Forum, was there. Ira Sadoff came from Ohio. Several Michigan poets joined the reading roster. Charles Simic, who just last year received the Pulitzer, also came. And like cream on top of the coffee, Robert Creeley was there. As were Robert Bly, Galway Kinnell, and James Wright.

Word of the festival had spread, almost by underground. Students and participants converged on the Grand Valley campus from all over the country. Some hitchhiked or came by bus; some rode motorcycles—a man named Stanley came all the way from San Francisco on his; others drove cars or arrived by plane into Grand Rapids.

The offerings of daily discussion groups, panel discussions, seminars, and workshops was impressive. Readings and performances went on every night; films, music, and dance "happened." Robert Bly played his zither and sang. With so many egos and so much creative talent gathered in one place, sparks sometimes flew. There were often shouting matches about poetry, about art, about politics and ethnic differences, about publishing. Carol Bergé stormed out of Bill Heyen's reading of Swastica Poems because she misunderstood and thought he was pro-Nazi. Robert Creeley mumbled through his entire reading and only the sound man wearing a headset heard him and wept. People fell in love and strolled the campus hand in hand. One of the most famous poets ravaged the dormitory soft drink machine after it stole a handful of his quarters. Clearly, it was reported, trolls guarded the bridge at the ravine, but that didn't stop someone from stealing Robert Bly's bookbag. A psychic was called; she "saw" the bookbag at the bottom of the ravine, but it wasn't found. Later, Robert told me that he'd never managed to reconstruct all of the work from those lost notebooks.

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The '70s were the Golden Days of poetry at Grand Valley, and we all thought they would go on forever, but hopes for a fourth National Poetry Festival in 1977 were crushed when the National Endowment for the Arts withdrew its preliminary approval for funding. They were the Golden Days for TJC as well, but the college was unable to bear the festival's expenses alone. The disappointed students disbanded and eventually formed The Third Coast Poetry Center, first at Thomas Jefferson College, then in Grand Rapids. Out of this group emerged the Michigan Poetry Festival, a more or less annual event which focussed on Michigan poets and poetry and which lasted for several years.

Those of us who attended a National Poetry Festival will never forget its impact on us. Seldom have so many poets gathered in one place at one time to share their passions, their work, and their ideas about poetry. The poets who participated in the National Poetry Festivals represented what was happening in American poetry at that time. They were the ones who were extending the language and experimenting with form, who had rejected the safe and expected ways of making poetry, the ones who were proving to all of us that a rich and diverse literature can still be created in this country.

Twenty years later, many of us continue to carry that message. We continue to write, continue to explore the boundaries of our art form. Some of us have entered universities and now teach the work of the poets we came to love and admire two decades ago, and we understand the importance of introducing work of those who have followed in their footsteps. At least a dozen of us have written about the National Poetry Festival, either in poems—as Carl Rakosi has, for example—or in essays. When any of us meet, in different parts of the country, the subject of the National Poetry Festivals often is brought up as common ground, always with a sense of pleasure. Dick Bakken, a participant in the 1975 festival, now directs the annual Bisbee (Arizona) Poetry Festival. Joyce Jenkins, a TJC graduate and also a participant in the festivals, now publishes the popular Poetry Flash in Berkeley, California, and is one of the most influential people in the Bay Area poetry world. None of us who were there will forget those happenings, or the nourishment we received from them. Even then, we knew we were participating in a unique moment in the history of American literature.
WILLIAM JAMES COLLEGE'S FIRST YEAR:
AN INSIDE PERSPECTIVE

Richard E. Paschke

One of President Lubbers' goals when he took office in early 1969 was to help steer Grand Valley State College along a course it had already begun: to provide West Michigan, and the state, with more than one pedagogical alternative for a college education in one central location (Roos, 1985; William James College: An Unfinished Conversation, Video tape). Two colleges were already present on the Allendale campus: the College of Arts and Sciences, and Thomas Jefferson College. By March of 1971, a planning task force, which had been working diligently for more than a year, issued a report detailing suggested pedagogy, admissions policy, curriculum, grading system, and graduation requirements for the third college, to be named after the American philosopher/psychologist/physician, William James. That twenty-five page report was remarkable in its attention to detail: from individual descriptions for more than twenty-six proposed courses, to a carefully constructed rationale, tying the curricular structure of the new college to the life, values, beliefs and writings of its namesake.

William James College (WJC) was conceived of as an interdisciplinary, non-departmentalized entity, consisting of concentration programs, rather than majors, organized around a common core of courses to be called the Synoptic Program. Three qualities were to permeate the WJC approach to education: future-orientation, career-orientation, and person-orientation:

...William James College will be future-oriented, since its programs will correlate with society's projected needs; it will be career-oriented, since its concentration programs will lead to clearly defined professional opportunities, as well as to advanced studies; it will be person-oriented, in that its programs will stress intellectual and personal maturation within a community of learners.

Those three qualities became hallmark characteristics for the twelve years WJC flourished in the Grand Valley cluster.

Some members of the WJC Planning Task Force are still familiar and active participants in the day-to-day life of Grand Valley State University in 1995: Tom Cunningham (Chair), Mary Seeger, Don Williams, and John Batchelder. Even before the committee released their report, they had begun a national search for faculty to teach at the new college. In January, 1971, Tom Cunningham contacted William Laughlin, an anthropologist and one of my mentors at the University of Connecticut, where I was a post-doctoral fellow in Behavior Genetics, in the Department of Biobehavioral Sciences, itself an innovative academic venture. Its graduate and post-
doctoral programs were interdisciplinary: psychology, molecular biology, anthropology, genetics, and biochemistry were all represented. I saw in William James College the opportunity to apply to undergraduate education some of the exciting results of the disciplinary cross-pollination that I had been experiencing at Connecticut and, earlier, in an interdisciplinary doctoral fellowship program in neurology at Purdue.

Five other people were hired in winter, 1970, to become the founding faculty of William James College when it opened its doors in fall, 1971. Robert Mayberry was a philosopher from Penn State and Cornell, a student of English literature and linguistics, and an aficionado of French and American wines and world music. Richard Joanisse was a sociologist at the University of Chicago, interested in social theory, philosophy, and educational policy. Kenneth Hunter was a mathematician/computer scientist from the University of Wisconsin, an advanced student of Eastern philosophy, and a private consultant to business and industry. Daniel Clock was a mathematician from the University of Wisconsin and Northern Michigan University, a historian of science and mathematics. And John MacTavish was an earth-scientist, and environmentalist. Both Dan Clock and John MacTavish were current faculty members at Grand Valley and members of the WJC Planning Task Force.

Another important staff member was Ginny Gordon (presently the Administrative Assistant to the Dean of Arts and Humanities); she had been an Executive Administrative Secretary in Grand Valley’s Central Administration. Ginny served as WJC’s rudder, guiding its corporate body through the complex procedures involved in launching a new college, among them, ordering equipment, generating reports, typing and printing syllabi, and preparing catalog copy. Ginny showed remarkable strength and endurance in helping an idealistic and work-driven new faculty start the college without the aid of department heads. Ken Venderbush, who had been Vice-president of Student Affairs at the main college, served as a half-time acting dean and instructor in communication.

The entire student body of 160 and the six faculty members fit comfortably in the large lecture hall in Lake Huron for its orientation and inaugural meetings in September, 1971. WJC’s governing body, the WJC Council, consisting of both instructors and students, engaged in many hours of weekly meetings as the new college labored to interpret and flesh out the directives set forth in the planning document/ blue-print for the new college.

The Synoptic Program was one of the most exciting and intellectually stimulating innovations of that document:

[it] is designed to provide student with the skills and discipline necessary for college and career work, to acquaint students with a variety of intellectual fields, and to provide students the opportunity for developing their own broad and comprehensive view of human experience. The Synoptic Program, thus, is William James College’s counterpart of the programs of study offered by most colleges under such titles as "the foundation and distribution program,"
"the general education program," or "the liberal arts program." Ultimately, the Synoptic Program should provide each student with the background for, the interest in, and the capability for developing his own synoptic view of life; that is, a view of life manifesting and characterized by comprehensiveness and breadth.

The program included a whole series of synoptic lectures. Invited that first year were nine prominent scholars, among them, Martin Marty, Jerome Kagan, and David Elkind. Tom Cunningham, who had planned the series and invited the speakers, was to open the series with a lecture of his own: "William James—A Man for Today." WJC faculty members had been sent a bibliography for each of the speakers, immediately after they were hired; they were to prepare their own preparatory lectures and plan to lead discussion groups and panels on each of the topics.

The Synoptic Program also had a beginning core of fourteen specialized courses, with titles such as Writing, Argument and Analysis; Symbols, Language and Linguistics; Statistics; Computer Programming; Environmental Politics and Law; Development and Evolution of Behavior; Individual And Institution; and The Dynamics of Interpersonal Relationships. A group of thematic courses was also proposed. Among these were The Social Rebel In Literature; Computers And Thought; Youth In Rebellion And The Counterculture; The Human Dimension Of Environment; and The Emergence of Technocratic Man. The faculty also prepared additional courses, not proposed by WJC planning task force, but considered to be necessary to round out the concentration program offerings. Most of these courses were prepared over the Summer of 1971 and taught by the new WJC faculty in the first year.

All faculty taught three preparations per quarter. During the first few years of WJC's existence, most of each quarter's preparations were new. The time and energy demanded by this commitment to curricular development and teaching wreaked havoc on the personal lives and health of many WJC faculty and staff members in the early years. Yet, so brightly burned the flame of William James' original vision that the pace of development held steady and even quickened in the second year of the college's existence: hired then were twelve new faculty members, including six women, one of whom, Adrian Tinsley, became its first full-time dean.

Interdisciplinary concentration programs replaced traditional majors in the WJC curriculum. The first year concentration programs were Administration and Information Management, Social Relations, and Environmental Studies. In the second year, Arts and Media was added, and the Environmental Studies Program changed its name to the Urban and Environmental Studies, in order to reflect the broadening sweep of its attention.

There is no question that the faculty took the report of the planning task force seriously and used the life and philosophy of its namesake William James as a rich source of concepts, inspiration, and direction for the continued growth and development of their college. James' pragmatic approach to the technical, social and philosophical problems of his time was considered to be a touchstone for evaluating
good teaching: "An impression which simply flows in at the pupil's eyes or ears, and in no way modifies his active life, is an impression gone to waste. It is physiologically incomplete. It leaves no fruit behind it in the way of capacity acquired." James' pluralism became a benchmark for building WJC's programmatic structure: "The truth is that all great questions form a unity and the answers come about through an ever-larger and wider embracing integration of provinces often lying far apart from one another." This was translated into WJC's transdisciplinary curriculum and non-departmental organizational structure.
A few weeks ago, I received an e-mail message from a William James graduate who was poking around on the Web and saw the GVSU home page. She sent me a chatty memo, with details about her current job as a multimedia producer. She closed the message by affirming that she continues to practice what she learned at William James: connecting her personal interests and her career. She said, "I have . . . 'combined my vocation and my avocation as my two eyes make one in sight'." (Robert Frost).

A year after the closing of William James, Barbara Roos modeled this ideal when she produced the videotape "William James: An Unfinished Conversation". Roos, who founded the Film and Video Program at William James College, chose to use video to express her commitment to the principles of alternative education that we
were living and exploring at WJC. She says she produced the tape "as a witness to the vitality of the ideas that were at the center of the college. Many of these ideas introduced by the alternative colleges of the '70s have taken root in traditional colleges throughout the nation."

Over the course of a year, Roos gathered interviews from students and faculty and worked for many months with editor Suzanne Zack to assemble the material. We all benefited from her work on this project. The taping and the public screening provided a positive way to continue to experience community and to help us deal with the loss we were feeling at the closing of the college.

The video is a series of dialogues between students and faculty, centered around such topics as grades, problem-centered learning, community, and reasons behind both the founding and closing of the college. According to Roos, "The tape is structured as it is to reflect a central value at William James: the rich insights that result from the process of dialogue."

Most contemporary mainstream media is produced with the widest possible audience in mind. This video is different. It was made for a narrow audience, the WJC community. However, the tape does communicate the nature of the college to contemporary viewers. It has been shown at conferences on education, on cable television, and in public screenings. Hundreds of tapes were purchased by individuals. At this time, as we consider the history of the colleges in the Grand Valley Review, it seemed useful to offer this tape, which provides a thoughtful discussion of many elements of WJC, as a part of our dialogue at the University.

The title of the video is significant. The tape is not just a memorial; it is a rich interchange of ideas about teaching, learning and living. Roos says, "A tape about William James isn't like a yearbook where you close the book and walk away. The conversation continues wherever we are and whatever we're doing with our lives."

Following are some excerpts from the video. To borrow a copy of the hour-long tape, contact Deb Singer in the School of Communications office, ext 3668.

Thanks to Joy Seeley and Peter Taylor for their technical assistance in digitizing the photographs from the video.
ADRIAN TINSLEY: “For me to come to a college that was going to put some emphasis on being able to ‘do’ in the world was really important. This [was] the desire of my heart!”

RICHARD PASCHKE: “In some ways what we did at James is what good teachers all over in other kinds of schools have always done. But they didn’t have whole colleges to do it in!”

BOB BURNS: “The essence of James was really the idea of a highly personalized, highly particularized education to suit the needs of the individual student.”

INGE LAFLEUR: “Feminism really seemed to be in harmony with a lot of the other things we were trying to do at William James College. A sense of cooperation rather than competition; that is, we didn’t have grades, we didn’t have rank for faculty, we didn’t have tenure. . . . a sense of participation and nurturance rather than hierarchy or bureaucracy in forming our academic community.”
ROBERT MAYBERRY: "I really think it was possible to operate with higher genuine standards with the ungraded system because... if you got into a discussion of assessment [with a student] one was not arguing about the grade that was being attached to the project. I think we had better criticism and better standards."

AREND LUBBERS: "I felt that there probably were different ways to learn and if we could establish colleges with different pedagogical approaches and styles that might be useful in higher education."

STEPHEN ROWE: "The problem with most education is not that it's wrong, but that it only completes half the cycle. For every unit of impression there has to be a unit of expression—you have to engage in the kind of doing that enables the student to come into possession of the material."

JEAN DOYLE WJC '84: "I never heard from any teacher that 'I have the information and I'm going to put it in your head.' I heard 'this is a subject I'm really excited about, and I hope by the end of this experience you will be too. And let's go!'"
DIANE STONEMAN WJC '83: "That was the thing about William James. You couldn't just take a course. If you took a course in politics you'd have to go out and organize a workshop."
BARBARA BOYLAN WJC '83: "That was the beauty of it!"

MAGGIE ANNERINO WJC '83: "You had to learn a lot about yourself to go through the [WJC] system. It made me dig!"

KATE NOONE WJC '81: "One of my first experiences at James, I came to class unprepared. And I wasn't being helpful to the class... and then I felt I understood what James was about."
THE FOURTH COLLEGE AT GRAND VALLEY

Milt Ford

When College IV opened in the fall of 1973, Bob Toft, its designer and founding dean, had been here for a year working with Mary Neal, who now works in the GVSU Alumni Relations office, to orchestrate the huge amount of work that goes into the launching of a new college, even a college within a college. College IV was to operate on a pedagogical model featuring self-paced instruction, mastery learning, and modular design of a liberal arts curriculum.

When I came from Oklahoma State University to Grand Valley in 1973, I was excited about designing a whole English curriculum for people who needed schedules which would not conflict with work and family responsibilities and would be free of speed requirements. Since we were designing a new kind of delivery system, we each had to work with the book store, print shop, records office, and all of the other support systems that make a college run. Since each of us represented a whole discipline and since the college was offering degrees in all of them, each of us was responsible for a whole academic discipline. The delivery system was self-paced and mastery-learning based, so all the material for a course and for the testing of it had to be in a permanently accessible form, for which each professor would be responsible. But that was to be only one of our tasks; when I think of those first two years, I think of double or even triple time. There were only seven of us on the faculty the first year and ten the second, and we had to represent the college on all the college-wide committees. Each of us was tied closely to the workings of the larger Grand Valley.

The key to College IV was the "module," a unit of study or block of material, a conceptual chunk of a course or curriculum, contained in a booklet which instructed the student on how to gain mastery of it. The module might include explanations of the subject matter or library assignments or the viewing of films, visiting sites, or conducting experiments. It also included self tests by which students could judge their readiness to take the mastery test through which they would be given credit for the completion of the module. Because Grand Valley was then on the quarter system and five credits was the standard course size, each module represented one half hour of course credit, and ten modules would be equivalent to one course. Although there were no classes, there was a learning and testing center where students could check out media materials, as well as a biology and chemistry lab for conducting experiments under the supervision of a professor.

Besides writing the modules, a professor was also coach or consultant when a student needed help. We were in our offices for student visits approximately twenty hours a week. The first floor of what is now the old part of Au Sable Hall where the School of Education is located was designed to house College IV. The whole central core of that section of the building was open space where students could study and
wait to talk to professors. The learning and testing center was on one side of this area and the lab on another.

The professor was responsible for keeping the testing center supplied with multiple forms of mastery tests for each module. These tests were administered by the testing center, which was open forty hours a week. Professors graded the tests and returned them to the testing center, where students could pick up the results. No grade was given until the student demonstrated mastery of the material, and, in theory at least, a student could take the test as many times as necessary to pass it. The only grade ever reported was "M," for mastery. The professors had to do credit-by-credit hand audits when a student was ready to graduate. This was a paper-work nightmare, since a total of 360 modules would have to be accounted for in order to qualify a student for graduation.

Part of what made this instructional system attractive was the clear definition of the content of the curriculum created by the objectives that defined each module. With these clearly-defined objectives, it was possible to sequence a student's learning experience to make sure that prerequisite material was mastered before a given objective was attempted. This system reached beyond the confines of a single discipline. For example, a chemistry module might have as a prerequisite a particular math module containing a mathematical principle needed in the chemistry module. It was one of my responsibilities, in the first years of the college, to keep the system organized, using a large room with course objectives on filing cards taped to the wall and connected by lines that showed the flow of learning from module to module, from the perspective of the whole College IV curriculum.

Through a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Post-secondary Education, College IV was able to engage the services of an evaluation team from the University of Michigan to do a careful evaluation for continued improvement of the system as we were constructing it. That team was in close contact with every member of the faculty and kept meticulous records on many topics, ranging from the number of hours a week each faculty member spent on preparing and delivering the College IV curriculum to their attitudes concerning how things were progressing. The team also worked closely with students to determine what was making for their success or lack of it in this kind of learning environment. The findings showed that students loved the system, but were not satisfied with the progress they were making in it. And herein lay the fatal flaw of this otherwise excellent educational creation. Because the college appealed to students who did not have access to regular classes, the college, as part of its philosophy, did not impose deadlines on any phases of the learning process. And because things are the way they are, students kept doing the things in their lives that had deadlines and time constraints and saved their studies for later. At the rate one student was completing modules, it would have taken over 150 years to complete a degree.

There were also successes. College IV attracted a number of students who wanted to move quickly and efficiently through the curriculum. The students who went to graduate school after College IV did extremely well there.
After two years of the "pure model," Bob Toft left Grand Valley, and Carl Arendsen became acting dean. Before the end of that year, Doug Kindschi had been hired as dean and was taking the leading role in designing the new College IV, which would feature a competency-based general education program, building on the liberal arts foundation of the college with such professional programs as the Hospitality and Tourism Management Program (now in the Science and Mathematics Division) and the Advertising and Public Relations Program (now in the Arts and Humanities Division). The liberal arts programs were shaped into broader entities, such as the Humanities Program (now combined with the Liberal Studies Program). In 1978 Russell H. Kirkhof, an inventor and producer of tools and parts for the auto industry, who was attracted to the practical nature of the professional programs in the recreated College IV, gave a generous gift to Grand Valley, and College IV was renamed in his honor. The college was very successful, both in attracting students and in producing graduates with a liberal arts foundation and the skills and knowledge employers in the area were looking for. When Grand Valley reorganized in 1983, the faculty, dean, and programs in Kirkhof College found new homes in the divisional structure, and the competency-based general education program played a strong role in the definition of the general education requirements of the newly structured Grand Valley State College. The Kirkhof name continues to be honored in both the name of Grand Valley’s School of Nursing and the Student Center.

Many people associated with the early days of College IV made the transition into the new GVSC and continued or continue to make important contributions to Grand Valley. Bob Toft now lives outside of Washington, D. C. and serves Grand Valley in the area of grant development. Carl Arendsen, the math professor on the original College IV faculty and acting dean for a year, is a member of the Math Department. Doug Kindschi, the second Dean of College IV is the Dean of the Science and Mathematics Division. David Bernstein was the original psychology professor in the college, who was joined in the second year by Christine Falvey. Both are now in the Psychology Department. Ted Sundstrom, now a member of the Math Department, joined College IV in its second year, as did Dorothy Merrill, who recently retired from the School of Health Sciences. Don Edinger, also retired, was the biology professor on the original College IV faculty and later taught in School of Education. Gary Page, now chair of the Hospitality and Tourism Management Program, directed that program when it was part of Kirkhof College.

Both the "pure model" College IV and Kirkhof College, which developed from it, made a valuable and lasting contribution to the Grand Valley State University we know today.
In May, 1973, seven faculty members, one Dean and one executive assistant to the Dean gathered to begin the task of building a new college. Since it was to be the fourth college of the Grand Valley cluster and since it had no other name, it was called College IV. During the preceding year the Dean, Bob Toft, had secured large federal grants, drafted the College's curriculum plan, and hired the faculty. Some readers will know that the College IV experiment ended with the departure of Bob Toft, who subsequently became Grand Valley's federal contact person in Washington. Doug Kindschi was hired as the new dean. His task was to fashion a new and viable identity for the College within the cluster. Along the way the College acquired a benefactor and a name, Kirkhof.

This is not an historical essay or nostalgic revisiting of College IV/Kirkhof College. Rather, I will focus on the innovative ideas that distinguished College IV, both within the Grand Valley cluster and nationally. I will describe the major innovations, comment on their allure, and say why I think that they were mistaken.

It was the dream of College IV to remove many of the barriers which kept people away from higher education. Some of these barriers were in the physical and social environments. Classes that all students had to attend in "lock-step" fashion prevented those with certain kinds of jobs and/or family responsibilities from enrolling in college. The typical course also assumed that most students were roughly equal in preparedness for the course and that, once in the course, most students would march along productively at the pace set by the instructor. College IV's (especially Bob Toft's) dream for higher education was that the barriers could be dissolved largely by redesigning the curriculum. The heart of the new curriculum was the "module." A module could be any piece of curriculum which made sense as a unit of study. In the simplest case, modules were counterparts to chapters from a conventional textbook, say, an introductory textbook in a discipline. But unlike most textbook chapters being written in the early 1970's, modules were self-contained learning packages. Being self-contained meant that a module opened with a clear set of behavioral learning objectives which told students what to expect on the assessment test. It contained a practice assessment equivalent to the mastery test students would take for credit. Module designers were encouraged to enrich modules with experiential and media components, using the latest instructional technology.

What was the process of study and learning in College IV? What replaced the classes, laboratories, regularly scheduled quizzes and research papers that are conventional college requirements? College IV retained some of these requirements. Modules in biology and chemistry required that students complete laboratory exercises or experiments. There were modules devoted to the process of writing papers. However, instruction was to be largely self-directed and self-paced. A well-
designed module was one which enabled students to prepare for a mastery exam without additional instruction. Tutorials were available with either a faculty member or a student tutor, since it was acknowledged that some students would need tutoring in order to understand the material and to pass the mastery test. But, in theory, a student could move through large chunks of curriculum without a single tutorial; contact with other students could be minimal, almost nonexistent. Furthermore, students could move through the curriculum at their own pace. They took mastery exams when they felt ready; there were no deadlines or quotas for the number of modules mastered in some given unit of time. Passing a module meant correctly answering 90% of the items. Students were not penalized for achieving less than 90% correct; they simply took another form of the assessment test at a later time.

College IV's instructional model rested on two linked assumptions. The first assumption was that any domain of knowledge, including an academic discipline, is composed of an identifiable structure of conceptual knowledge and procedural skills. The second assumption was that these concepts and skills can be decomposed into their atomic components and the logical dependencies between them. That is, one can say how being able to understand or do one thing depends upon being able to understand or do another set of things. For example, being able to write a complete sentence depends upon knowing when sentences lack either a subject or predicate. The elements of knowledge at any level can be decomposed into elements at the next lower level, and so on. These knowledge atoms and their logical dependencies become a map for instruction in the discipline. In principle, one can find a sequence of instruction by which a field of knowledge can be most efficiently learned or mastered.

The notion that knowledge can be abstracted and decomposed into its elemental particles and rules of combination has a long intellectual history. It is the basis for all empiricist philosophies. It appears in the early 20th century as positivist philosophy and in its psychological cousin, Behaviorism. In this time of high technological fashion, it comes clothed seductively as "expert systems," a subfield within artificial intelligence. In building an expert system, "knowledge engineers" interview and observe experts within some domain, say medical diagnosis or oil prospecting, in order to extract the knowledge these experts call upon and the rules of inference they follow. Then computer programmers build a model which emulates the experts.

In College IV, faculty were both discipline experts and knowledge engineers. To press the analogy into stark form, it was the students who were to be programmed. I believe that the assumptions upon which College IV was founded are strategically useful, but insufficient as a theory of knowledge. The strategy of abstracting the rules of an educational system is what Seymour Papert, a guru of artificial intelligence at MIT, calls a "powerful idea." The very act of trying to say what it is you are doing draws your attention to the central and substantive. You must continually sort out the essential from the nonessential and the consistent from the inconsistent. It is a relentless game of logic. As an enterprise it promises an elegant and economical curricular structure, free of unintended redundancies and waste. If, for example, students have mastered the skills of proposing testable hypotheses in
psychology modules, they don't need to repeat that training in sociology or biology.

However, this objectivist theory of knowledge is based on assumptions which have been broadly criticized. It assumes that knowledge is objectively specifiable and that it is meaningful, free of the medium in which it is embedded and the context in which it is used. Moreover, the theory of instruction which comes out of this epistemology assumes that this static body of knowledge can be mastered by an individual mind through its own rational and observational powers. The knower's task is to build the best mental representation of a given knowledge domain. Thinking about a problem or situation within that domain means reaching the optimal solution or understanding, usually judged against some specifiable criteria, which can be abstracted from the context.

This model of the individual knowing mind moving about in ethereal knowledge ignores a pervasive aspect of human knowing. Knowledge is a social enterprise; its very fabric is woven from strands of discourse. There is disagreement about how best to represent any given issue or problem; the process of defining a problem is dialectical, with constant reinterpretation. What is the best solution and how best to move towards it are matters for discussion with others. I have become increasingly convinced that any theory of human intelligence and its instruction must be grounded in a social view of knowledge and cognition. The work of L. S. Vygotsky, the Russian psychologist is particularly helpful here. According to Vygotsky, minds are formed by internalizing social processes, especially language. The making of individual minds and of knowledge within society are part of the same social processes. If knowing is, at its heart, such a social process, surely there are implications for teaching and learning. Kenneth Bruffee has been explicit about some of these implications for the teaching of English composition. Bruffee argues that if the origins of thought are in external conversation, then we need to consider the kinds of conversations we set for students. We need to create collaborative work communities which foster desirable conversations among peers.

College IV removed a barrier to higher education by plucking the curriculum out of its socially constrained form. It matched its educational "delivery system" to the socially fragmenting culture many of us live in. However, by freeing students, we also isolated them further. The evaluation team for one of our federal grants coined the phrase "lonely learners" to characterize the many College IV students who were registered but inactive. In order to solve the problem of limited access to education, I think that we created an impoverished and alienating form of education.
BREAKING THE SILENCE:
THE MAKING OF THE CLERICAL, OFFICE,
AND TECHNICAL ASSOCIATION
AT GRAND VALLEY, 1970-79

Virginia L. Gordon

When I was invited to contribute my memories of the early days of Grand Valley, I felt compelled to write about the organization of our clerical/technical union, because, although it was a significant chapter in the history of this university, it has never been described in any spoken or written history. With this essay, I hope to end the silence.

When some of us in the clerical staff came to realize in the early 1970s that our working conditions weren't fair and then acted on that realization, chaos followed. Not unlike labor problems throughout American history, our own process created turmoil and stress, and because of the pro- and anti-union factions that divided us, sometimes we felt threatened and betrayed, not only by the college administration, but by our co-workers as well. During the sixteen years that have passed since then, we have all learned to respect each other and to work together. Differences are now settled within the framework of a legal contract that cannot be changed without agreement on both sides. Today, we settle issues through a democratic process, a process of which I am very proud.

In the early days of the university, the clerical and technical salaries were similar to those of other colleges in the state, but as time went by our increases grew smaller, and we hardly ever knew if or when we would receive raises. Often, when someone received a merit raise, others in that same department were penalized with smaller raises in order to compensate. A raise didn't depend so much on your worth as an employee as it did on the willingness of your boss to go to bat for you. Such favoritism exacerbated our already low morale. Most of us came from politically conservative areas and were not politically savvy, so at first it was easy for the administration to keep changing the rules. And while there was plenty of grumbling, no one was willing to speak up where it counted.

We had to be proficient in such academic areas as writing and math and in the technical skills of typing, shorthand, dictaphone, and accounting. We were expected to be the problem solvers for both faculty and students and the essence of diplomacy and tact. We were even required to dress professionally—no slacks, even in winter. Yet we were the lowest paid staff group on campus. Even so, many of us believed that if we were dependable and did not make a fuss, we would be "taken care of." We were in awe of academia and assumed that an enlightened institution would, in good faith, make decisions concerning our employment in our best interests.
However, some of us came to believe that those in power were taking advantage of our naiveté.

Meanwhile, faculty were being hired from all over the United States, bringing with them the new ideas of the seventies. They were constantly meeting to discuss their teaching philosophies, create policies, and mold their working lives. An important issue for them was the equalization of male/female faculty salaries. Our janitorial staff was unionized, and, through their contract, better paid and with some control over their working lives. But the clerical and technical staff felt helpless.

Taking a harder look at our situation, some of us held our first organizational meeting in a home close to campus. Twenty women were present, all eager to voice their concerns. The meeting lasted late into the evening, launching several other meetings and a struggle that would continue for many years. We took our concerns to the president and agreed to try settling our differences by working closely with the administration.

In 1973, a Committee of Five was elected by the clerical/technical staff as a liaison to the administration. During the following few years, our committee became the Liaison Committee, a larger elected group that discussed, researched, and wrote proposals for change. At first, some of the women were afraid to speak up at meetings, but it was not long before many who had never made an administrative decision before grew into their new roles like professionals. This was a liberating experience for us. We passed recommendations that were sent to the Personnel Office for approval. We developed a grievance procedure and a professional growth and development policy and made recommendations concerning wages and fringe benefits. However, although we made some gains, we were unable to change wages, unfair hiring and promotion practices, poor retirement benefits, and the policy of having to take forced vacation or unpaid leave when the college closed for winter holidays and inclement weather. Accordingly, a small group of us began meeting outside the limits of the Liaison Committee to question its effectiveness. When, subsequently, a new personnel manual and compensation package was thrust upon us, one which we had had little part in developing, our worst fears were justified.

Since 1963, clericals had worked a 37.5 rather than a 40 hour week on a weekly salary, a benefit meant to attract employees from jobs closer to their homes in the cities. We were expected to work the additional two-and-a-half hours only when the need arose, which was infrequently. With the new package, our work week would be increased to forty hours; the extra working hours totaled two-and-a-half hours a week, or three weeks a year, and the only increase in salary would be based on that extra time: in essence, no increase at all. Through a phone survey, we discovered that, under this new policy, some of our co-workers would be receiving four cents more an hour and some fifteen cents, but most salaries would decrease as much as ten cents an hour, without the additional hours figured into the calculations.

Another grave disappointment to us in the new compensation package was a step system, which we had wanted—to replace the ambiguous minimum-maximum salary schedule in effect—but this one would work to our disadvantage. In the twelve-step system it outlined, a salary would increase $5.00 a week each year, but
it would take twelve years to reach the top. After a promotion, it would take a year before a salary’s increase would be at all significant.

We could no longer tolerate such unfair policies and circulated a petition targeting the wage scale and forty hour work week, requesting the board of control to table the entire package. We collected 130 signatures. Our only hope to stop the package from being implemented was to attend the April 1978, Board of Control meeting and distribute presentation notebooks which contained articles, memos, and statistical data to illustrate our point, and the petition.

It was a lovely day, and we felt optimistic as we walked across campus. As the spokesperson for the group, I explained the inequities in the package to the board. One member of the board asked several questions, which gave me the opportunity to elaborate. But then a member from the Liaison Committee gained the floor to say that the committee had voted in favor of the package and wished to have it immediately approved by the board, fearing that a postponement would only hurt the workers. I managed to regain the floor and to urge the board at least to investigate our concerns. The petition to table the package was ignored, and the package was adopted, with one abstention; but it was further resolved that the chair appoint a Review Committee to examine the effect the package would have on our wages and to submit its findings to the October 1978 Board meeting. We left feeling that at least not everything was lost.

After the meeting, battle lines were drawn and became more fierce when the Grand Rapids Press entered the debate. One headline read, "GVSU Workers Upset Over School’s New Pay System." In addition, letters from the clerical/technical staff were published in the "Letters to the Editor" section of the Press. An excerpt from one letter summed up the feelings of many:

I am well aware that there are many ways to present an issue, but to talk about a weekly increase in pay and ignore the additional hours is an obfuscation, deliberate or not. When Personnel tells me that I received a 5.7% increase and I know that means I will be making .03 cents less per hour, I am not fooled!

I learned only by accident that the Board of Control Review Committee had met briefly before the June board meeting and rubber stamped the original package. When I informed our group, many were furious, but others simply considered it to be business as usual. During the summer, five of us set out to do some investigating. We met with a state insurance analyst, who told us, after reviewing the new manual, that among other things, the document, including the retirement plan, could be rescinded by action of the Board of Control for any reason at any time. Our situation was worse than we had imagined.

At first we considered an independent association, but among the disadvantages was the inability, because of cost, to take grievances through the state arbitration process. Our local treasury would have had to be enormous to consider even one arbitration. If an independent association cannot afford to arbitrate, a contract is useless. Therefore, we began a search for a well-established union. After meeting
with three labor unions, we agreed that the Michigan Education Association would be the most effective in our particular situation. In the fall, when we met with co-workers to share our ideas and enthusiasm, we were faced with some antagonism. The meeting soon erupted into argument. No longer were we a group working together for a common cause. The bickering and paper war began. Those opposed to affiliating with an organized union began the drive for an independent association. However, there were enough signed union interest cards to bring the issue to a vote.

During this time, I was the Administrative Assistant to the Dean of William James College and got a lot of support from the dean as well as from faculty members: one had helped compile statistical data for our Board of Control presentation, and others promoted our cause through discussions with colleagues. Others of the clerical staff across campus also received support from the faculty members in their areas. Our core Union Interest Group grew in number and included television engineers, library staff, and lab technicians. Committed to our cause, we often met late into the evening. Our planning meetings were energizing and collegial, if not without some disagreement over issues, and the memos we circulated were crafted carefully to reflect the philosophy of the group as a whole. Our open meetings focused on defining our problems and discussing solutions.

With our union interest cards turned in to the Michigan Employment Regulation Commission, things began to fall into place. When we returned from the college winter holiday closing (having had to use some forced vacation days or unpaid lost time), the first 1979 issue of the Public Relations office's campus newspaper, the *Forum*, contained two articles: an anti-union view, "Why a CT Association?" and a pro-union view, "Why MEA?" It's interesting to note that, at that time, there was no movement among the staff to maintain the status quo. As the January 30th referendum approached, the Personnel Office sent out a list of voting instructions, explaining the three options. This memo provoked another paper war among the clerical/technical staff, making it painful to deal with co-workers who had become adversaries.

When the votes were tolled, it was clear that very few had wished to preserve the status quo and that an overwhelming number of eligible voters had supported the union. The student newspaper, the *Lanthorn*, described it this way:

**CT'S VOTE IN MEA UNION A LANDSLIDE.** 128 of 138 eligible voters turned out to vote. When votes were counted, the results showed 70 votes for MEA, 30 votes for the Association and 28 votes for Neither. No run-off election will be necessary."

But the *Forum* voiced a different point of view. Someone was quoted as saying, "I think we're more divided than ever. People are angry and some are threatening to quit." Yet another, "I don't think the election will mean any serious changes."

However, as soon as we learned of and congratulated ourselves on the victory, we set up another meeting, and we were joined by some who had been active in the push for an independent association, so some of us, at least, felt more united than...
ever. After all those years, we had finally gained the college's attention and the legal right to participate in the decisions affecting our working lives. That was January 30, 1979, the day that marked the beginning of a whole new list of struggles that brought about the wages, benefits, contract language, and the camaraderie that we've worked so hard to achieve, and that we enjoy today.
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