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I am pleased to be here before the Grand Rapids Rotary Club again. This event gives me an opportunity to talk to an important group of public spirited citizens about Grand Valley State Colleges. This experience will not be, I hope, entirely self serving. For there are things happening at Grand Valley that have important implications for Grand Rapids, for Western Michigan, and for the world of higher education. We all bring to these gatherings a common concern for the future of greater Grand Rapids.
I am especially indebted to this spirit which has fostered, among other things, important educational innovations. It was this spirit that in 1916 created Michigan's first community college. It was this same spirit that gave birth to the dream that is known today as Grand Valley State Colleges. Since GVSC is currently celebrating its 10th year, I'd like to remind you of what you have helped create and sustain. But more than a simple reminder, I hope you will share our pride in the past, and our enthusiasm for the future.

Talking about GVSC is easy for me, for not only is it part of my
job, there are exciting things happening at Grand Valley which create an environment of enthusiasm which is contagious. That is a personal opinion which I hope you will share before we are finished here today.

At the conclusion of my brief remarks, I would like to take a few minutes to answer any questions you may have. We have not yet arrived at the point in time when the character and distinctive features of GVSC are firmly established in the public mind.

If I were to ask you to describe GVSC, I'm quite sure that I would get a variety of responses including the following —
- That's the place that publishes a student newspaper that uses dirty words.

- That's the place that gives credit for far out courses like butterfly chasing, and bunny tracking.

- That's the place that sponsored a study which recommended lower salaries for Michigan legislators.

None of the foregoing are true but they have become part of popular conception of GVSC. Although I would venture the guess that your college-age offspring would offer
a much different picture.

In the early sixties a most unusual partnership was created. The partners included some citizens of Western Michigan, the Legislature, the public and private colleges and universities of Michigan, and a small band of faculty and staff. Each partner brought its distinctive gifts to this union, but all were dedicated to a common goal, i.e., to create a quality four year liberal arts institution which would meet the education needs of our three-county area.

In 10 years, we have grown in many ways - our pioneer student class had 226 hardy souls in it,
last year we had 5200 students
(this year we'll have 6000). We
began with 1 building and now we
have 18 with estimated value of
over 20 million dollars. Since our
beginning we have graduated 2900
students. Originally the faculty
and staff of GVSC numbered 35, this
year we will have almost 600. We
have had a wide range of sports,
and cultural events which have
attracted over 30,000 people to
our campus. While these statistics
are dramatic, I think facts behind
them require some comment. I believe
that these figures indicate that
GVSC has met, and is meeting the
challenge contained in our original
charter. We have created new Colleges under the GVSC umbrella, so we now have a total of 5 (CAS, TJC, WJC, College IV, and the F. E. Seidman Graduate College of Business), in order to offer a range of educational opportunities. We have offered a variety of programs to the community like Project Make-It and GAP (designed to help high school students succeed at the college level). We operate a new educational television station, established with the support of many private citizens in this area, and in this room. This station is now offering instructional programming to 65,000 school students.
Incidentally, Channel 35 and the Wolverine Education Television Corporation are launching a membership drive this fall, which I hope you will personally support.

I am particularly proud of the programs we offer in concert with other institutions.

Calvin and Grand Valley join together to educate teachers for handicapped children. We also cooperate in a Bachelor of Nursing program.

Next Sunday, the college curriculum via newspaper will be offered in cooperation with the Grand Rapids Press, Aquinas, and Michigan State University.

We work with Grand Rapids J.C., sharing some of their facilities, and the Grand Rapids Public School System in a Community Arts Center and the training of public school teachers for some of the new kinds of tasks they face in the cities.

In a consortium with Aquinas, Calvin, Davenport, J.C., Kendall, and Western Michigan University, we are working on a plan to bring college courses to the Model Cities Neighborhood.
The quality of these innovations, as well as the improvements and the way GUSC has operated, has been recognized in two important first ways, by grants from the Ford Foundation, the U.S. Office of Education, and the National Science Foundation, and second by increasing student enrollment in the face of a national and a state trend going the other way.

So much for the past and the present, now what about the future. Education at all levels is in the
the spotlight today. Like most major institutions it has lost much of its credibility. Educational institutions, like most institutions which experienced dramatic growth, tend to believe in their own invincibility. This is perceived by many as unresponsive, unaccountable, non-relevant, inefficient, duplicative, and expensive. There may be some grain of truth in these popular reactions, but generally the kind of education we have is in direct proportion to the level of one's participation and support. There are several attempts being made in the country today to restore confidence in higher education. Wisconsin has gone to a monolithic structure which
puts all decision making authority in the Governor's Office and has theoretically eliminated all institutional rivalry. It has also eliminated all institutional competition which I believe is essential to growth and relevancy. California is attempting another approach, and that is region-alization. They are attempting to organize all institutions of higher education, i.e., two and four year colleges on a regional basis to allow greater flexibility to meet regional needs. New York State is following the Regional approach, and they are in the process of establishing Regional Consortia of 2 and 4 year, public and
private colleges, very much concerned with off-campus and cross-campus opportunities. What the future holds for the 14 state supported colleges and universities of Michigan is not clear at this time. But the issue is of sufficient importance to be the subject for a special Governor's Commission, which concluded its preliminary findings by saying; "planning and coordination of higher education has proven unworkable and is in critical need of repair." Whatever may be their final recommendations, I hope they may help to maintain the faith and trust the citizens of Michigan have in their institutions of
higher education.

In the final analysis, no board or commission can do any more than register the dissatisfaction that many feel, and to make some broad recommendations for future policy direction. The public faith and confidence will be the result of how the colleges and universities respond to the rapidly changing educational needs. For my part, I welcome continued cooperation with the public and private schools and colleges. I do not see this as a threat to our institutional independence (or autonomy); on the contrary, I think
we have demonstrated that we can

come together and work together

in a way that enhances the integrity

of the separate members. Furthermore,

I believe we must continue to seek

the new and creative approaches to

the rapidly changing educational

markets. I am particularly interested

in the second career market, i.e.,

providing an opportunity for those

who are retiring to be educated for a

career in a new field. The other day

we had the opportunity to register a

father and daughter at GVSC. This

example will become more commonplace

in the years ahead. While we are

looking for new alternative approaches
like St. John's College (Great Books), we are constantly reassessing and re-evaluating what we are doing already, to be sure that we are getting the most, and the best, out of the resources committed to our charge.

I am grateful for the legacy which you helped bestow upon us. We need your continuing support to enable us to provide the something extra, the something special, which is the key-stone to our past and our future.
I have told you about Grand Valley and the hope for its future. Now I want to turn to the geographic, economic, and cultural context in which I see Grand Valley, and all educational institutions of the area developing. First, allow me a rapid but, I hope, not unrealistic historical analysis. Early in the development of our nation, perhaps the greatest source of human energy and creativity came from the frontier, carving a new society out of a wilderness. With growing industrialization and commerce, small thriving cities became great centers of commerce and culture. New York, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, and later Los Angeles and others, were energy centers for our growth and development. Now the problems of these great centers seem to sap the nation's energy to an unusually high degree. If there is to be still another geographic shift in our national energy source, where will it be? Let me propose a theory. Cities the size of Grand Rapids with their surrounding communities may be the places within the next century that give America its strength, its new ideas, its social stability. They are large enough to offer the advantages
of a city, and yet their problems are more manageable. They can offer challenging, interesting professional opportunities for people; yet they remain comfortable, enjoyable places to spend our leisure without the hassle from crowds and impossible expense. I suggest that regions around cities such as Grand Rapids, Charlotte, North Carolina, Nashville, Tennessee, Des Moines, Iowa, Austin, Texas, Tucson, Arizona, and other cities in that size range, may become the places to live. In a sense, they will become regions, not too large, with a growing regional identity. Community pride within the region will remain, but regional awareness will have its place in the minds of people.

Many Americans visit Toronto and come away impressed by their metropolitan government, an amalgamation of many small units, respecting individual community interests but melding the affairs of many towns into one regional unit to solve problems of transportation, recreation, and planning. It is a model that cities such as Grand Rapids may well emulate.

Even without organization, I believe these regions will develop as commercial, cultural, and social energy centers. Economic, cultural, recreational, and educational resources in these regions will be creative,
prosperous, sound, and always sensitive to the special requirements of the region. In this context, working with the other institutions in the area, we plan to build our program at GVSC. I believe all of us in the Grand Rapids area have reason for optimism in the future. The times are uncertain now. Mistrust, scandal, questionable values, shifting the spotlight from one unhappy person or group to another, seem to rule the day. People want to place confidence in something or someone, and many find it difficult. Even their self-confidence is undermined. Through all of these troubles, and there are troubles in every time, will emerge a city of Grand Rapids -- a Grand Rapids area blessed with its strong heritage of purposefulness and industry and open to the best of change. It will not be paradise on earth, but it will offer a life style that Americans, not only Grand Rapidians, will come to realize in the next century is the best the nation has to offer. We at Grand Valley are dedicated to help this vision of the future become a reality.