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Notes for Dialogue with Jerry Elliott, delivered for Program at Torch Club on October 16, 1973

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Recently the newspapers reviewed in detail the terms of your contract with GVSC's Board of Trustees? Is there anything the papers left out that you would like to add to this record?

On a more serious note—Grand Valley is now a cluster of five colleges and you have a committee investigating the possibilities of establishing a third St. Johns college on the Allendale campus?

First, is there a limit to the number of different colleges, or types of colleges, one may conjure up? Second, why a St. Johns-type college? Third, is the cluster college kind of competition on a single campus good for the total operation, good for the student or good for education per se?

Grand Valley has been sharply attacked by some legislators for its sometimes innovative programs; yet GVSC recently received a substantial grant from a large foundation because of the college's innovative programs? How do you reconcile these opposing views—and, more importantly, how do you propose to keep the legislators at bay while shaking the foundations' plum tree?

This year you drastically reorganized Grand Valley's administrative setup and in the process created three new vice-presidencies, for a total of six. As a result, some faculty members were heard to complain that there was a more equitable ratio between students and vice presidents than there was between students and faculty. How do you answer this objection—after making due allowance for the hyperbola?

In the present system, under which most of the V.P.'s are called vice presidents of the college, to be preferred to the more traditional system of appointing vice presidents to handle specific functions for the entire campus? And what is the virtue in being able to shift vice presidents at will, from one set of modules to another?
GVSC now has a graduate college--the F. E. Seidman Graduate College of Business--something that hardly was being talked about a year ago. What gave it all of its impetus? Do you expect to establish other graduate colleges?

Since our old-time normal schools at Ypsilanti, Kalamazoo, Mt. Pleasant and Marquette started on the road to university status by assembling a few graduate schools, is it a safe presumption that in the back of your mind is the intention or desire to follow this same course? Grand Valley State University does have a strong ring to it!

Whatever happened to the proposed law school at Grand Valley State Colleges that had the vigorous support of other, private or independent, colleges in this area?

Since Michigan State and Western Michigan also want law colleges, how can the dilemma be resolved? Do all three get law schools, or does none get one? If only one is to have a law school, how is the Legislature to determine which is the college or university to get it--on what basis is the decision to be made?

You may have noticed a story in the Sunday Grand Rapids Press of Oct. 7th to the effect that a man who tried to persuade first the Skills Center and then local colleges to establish a course in musical instrument repair was turned off or away but found a sympathetic listener in Western Michigan University. The same man appears to have been instrumental--no pun intended--in getting the Japanese firm of Yamaha to locate a plant in the Grand Rapids for the assembling of musical instruments. He had good reason, therefore, to plug for a course in instrument repair--a field, incidentally, that never has been overcrowded. Was it myopia, disdain, pride or what that led USC to brush
off this fellow? And wasn't GVSC a little inconsistent, since about a year ago its Thomas Jefferson College awarded a man named Jason Corry 15 credits for learning how to make Indian flutes—good ones, I should add, that now are being used by some of the country's finest flutists?

We teach people how to become lawyers, doctors, accountants, why shouldn't we teach them how to become musical instrument repairmen—especially since no other school is doing it?

You have been encouraging the development of intercollege sports at Grand Valley. Would you care to explain why, particularly since GVSC seemed to be doing all right with a losing football team?

The beginnings of Grand Valley as a football power coincides with a report in the Chronicle of Higher Education to the effect that football is a costly business in all but a few large universities. To put it bluntly—it costs money, money taken away from education. How can you justify expanding GVSC's football program?

Admissions fell below expectations at Grand Valley this fall but still showed an appreciable gain. At the same time, Central Michigan University enrolled 400 more freshmen than it had expected to appear—though last year it registered a decline in admissions. How do you account for these seeming vagaries of the high school graduates of these times? Why, incidentally, is there a declining proportion of high school graduates now entering college than was the case only a few years ago? Are students, or prospective college students, shopping? Are they wandering aimlessly? Are they merely seeking a warm, comfortable place away from the cold of a materialistic society?
As you look back on Grand Valley State Colleges' first ten years, what do you think the last decade presages for the college in the next ten years? Will GVSC reached an enrollment of 10,000 by the end of the '70s? Will its administrators seek, as the college's first president, James Zumberge, pledged, to hold enrollments at 10,000? Will GVSC hold to the cluster-college concept? Will any of its present colleges be abandoned or converted into still other kinds of colleges? Qno vadis?