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Welcome to Grand Valley Family Day. No other time do so many students and their families gather in one place as they do at Commencement. We come together for recognition and learned discourse. The recognition takes considerable time so we keep the learned discourse short. In the days when brevity in speech-making was not so much a virtue, a most sought after speaker was Ralph Waldo Emerson, America's noted philosopher. I was spurred to take up a volume of his work after many years of personal neglect when I was reminded that 1982 is the 100th anniversary of his death. When I was young, Emerson was oft quoted. He was good for one liners even though they were lifted from lengthy, complicated texts.

Here is one that made me think of you, the graduates. "Drudgery, calamity, exasperation, want are instructors in eloquence and wisdom." We usually talk of the joys of study, but all students know there is much of what Emerson identifies in the process of learning. You have come through to this successful conclusion. We congratulate your perseverance and achievement. All of us, graduates and parents, can express appreciation to the faculty for seeing you through to this point. On what they think, do, and say depends the quality of the institution, and to a great extent the quality of your education.

To provide the learned discourse we have invited a special person, L. William Seidman. He is the founder of Grand Valley. Many people made our institution possible. Without him Grand Valley's existence was impossible. He had the vision, idea and drive. It awes me to think how many lives have been affected by this one man's dream.
Emerson said, "I learn immediately from any speaker how much he has already lived through the poverty or splendor of his speech." Our speaker has lived splendidly and creatively. He lead an international accounting firm bearing his family name. He has taken degrees at Dartmouth and Harvard. He has taught at the university level. He founded a Washington Campus where students, including our own, learn about the operations of government. He has participated at a high level in the administrations of a Michigan Governor, a Vice President and a President of the United States. Currently he is a leading executive of the Phelps Dodge Corporation, a foremost producer of copper.

As we at Grand Valley chart a successful course for the future, even though engulfed in an economic crisis that threatens to alter higher education in our state, it is fitting that we turn to Grand Valley's first pilot, L. William Seidman.