Remarks, delivered at the Foundation Luncheon on June 14, 1983

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Remarks by President Lubbers - Foundation Luncheon - June 14, 1983

In his opening remarks Paul Johnson referred to the number of people who have supported Grand Valley this past year through personal financial contributions. I do not have the national statistics, but I am sure our college ranks high nationally in private support for a new, regional, state college. We at the college can never express enough our appreciation to you, the alumni and friends, for your giving and your interest.

There has always been a partnership between individuals, private organizations, and the state in building Grand Valley. In 1960 one million private dollars was combined with a state appropriation to establish the college. Since then private funds in gifts and loans have made possible the Loutit Hall of Science, the dormitories, F. E. Seidman Center, WGVC-TV, the stadium, and of course our 3 1/2 million dollars in endowment.

When the Grand Valley College Foundation was established, the Trustees were asked to fill three functions - one, to review and make recommendations concerning all Grand Valley fund-raising projects; two, to actively promote membership in the Foundation to build the
endowment of the college; and, three, to help us secure a downtown center in Grand Rapids for instruction for our 3800 students scattered in classrooms around the city and a central place to house our programs to aid business in economic expansion and job creation.

At the annual meeting of the Foundation, the Trustees assisted in setting our fund-raising objectives, including a $300,000 goal to expand our engineering science program. Through Foundation membership several hundred thousand dollars have been added to the endowment, and largely through the generosity of Trustees, James Sebastian, Peter Cook, Richard DeVos and the late Fred Hubbard, a site has been secured for a Downtown Center. At this bi-annual Foundation luncheon we are pleased to report this success, but all projects are still in progress. To serve the people of Michigan and particularly the people of this region of west Michigan, we need your continuing commitment, interest and generous response. We want your participation to be fun for you. We also want you to take satisfaction in it because you see that you help in sustaining and building an institution that makes a difference in the quality of life where you work and live in relationships with others.
When the Foundation was established we explained that an endowment was needed to maintain quality in difficult times and expand it when funding from state sources was adequate. In this recent financial crisis, the few hundred thousand dollars income from our endowment has made a big and helpful difference for us. At this time, too, we had to go through a not totally unhealthy retrenchment. Along with the retrenchment we cut back deeply enough so we could reallocate some of our funds to programs that are needed to aid the economic expansion of west Michigan. I believe the people of Michigan can and should expect that the institutions they support with tax and private dollars will set as their first priority assistance to the rebuilding of the state’s economy. We at Grand Valley are poised to do that through expansion of our engineering and technology, through our expertise in marketing, finance, planning, labor relations, personal motivation, and one of the best computer instruction programs in Michigan.

One of the major reasons why we and other institutions of higher education are ready is because Governor Blanchard courageously asked for and received a tax increase. This made it possible to stabilize
higher education in the state. Though there is controversy over the tax increase, I believe its stabilizing effect will begin to pay dividends in one respect. It will help higher education enter into a stronger partnership with the private sector. The future will be characterized by closer ties and greater understanding between private business, colleges and universities, and the state. This will happen because it is necessary, it is in everyone’s best interest, Michigan can thrive again through will and cooperation, through the sharing of talent, expertise, and resources.

One of the major resources Grand Valley has is the Seidman College of Business. Leading that school is an economist administrator who has proven as skillful in his predictions as anyone in the state, Dr. Marvin DeVries. Dr. DeVries, who is optimistic about Michigan, and particularly west Michigan, persuaded our distinguished guest to join us today - an economist whose work has made him one of our nation’s economic experts. Dr. DeVries will introduce him to you.