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Opening Remarks, delivered at the Annual Foundation Meeting on November 25, 1996

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ANNUAL FOUNDATION MEETING
OPENING REMARKS
NOVEMBER 25, 1996

Welcome to the annual meeting of the Grand Valley University Foundation Board of Trustees. We are gathered to elect new trustees - Betty Burton, Kevin Cusak, James Hackett, John Logie, and Shelly Padnos. We are honored that you have agreed to join us. At this meeting the baton of leadership will be passed from Richard DeVos, President of the Foundation, to Robert Hooker, Vice President who will assume the Presidency, and Casey Wondergem the Vice Presidency. We will pay tribute to Richard DeVos for his long successful tenure as President of the Foundation. From his family, his wife, Helen, his son, Dan, and his daughters-in-law Pam and Betsy have joined us. We are pleased they are here to participate in the celebration. Pam is an active member of the Foundation Board.

To all of you Foundation Board members, thank you for making this a great year at the University. As it says in Proverbs, "A man’s gift makes room for him." We can make that inclusive by saying man’s and woman’s. In any case, it makes room for you at these tables, and we at the University are pleased that you have filled your space. To open this meeting and offer
the invocation in music are the madrigal singers under the direction of Professor Ellen Pool.
ANNUAL FOUNDATION MEETING

CITIZEN OF THE WORLD

NOVEMBER 25, 1996

We plan, we work towards objectives; we observe the gains or losses as our communities and institutions move along. Some people strive to make life better, others are indifferent; some care only for personal gain, and take it at the communities expense; others are builders.

Cervants, through Don Quixote, says, “He that proclaims the kindnesses he has received shows his disposition to repay ‘em if he could.” Today we thank Rich who always proclaims the kindnesses he has received, has the ability to repay them, and with Helen, more than repays them in time devoted and money given. There are generous people and wealthy people. Not often is a community and a university the beneficiary of two people who combine in abundance those two characteristics. We celebrate and give thanks today for Rich’s term as President of the Grand Valley University Foundation and his contributions to the university as a trustee, a friend, and a donor. Let’s take a few minutes to review what this generous, honorary alumnus, former trustee has done for our university.
I don't know what the vintners are saying about 1996, but for the Foundation and the University it is a vintage year. Rich, as you turn over the lead position at the Foundation, you leave after a year of significant achievement. Giving from private sources was $12.3 million, nearly double the highest previous year. The University enrolled 14,662 students, 5.6% more than in the fall of 1995, with a freshman class 13.7% larger than last year. More students, more faculty, more computers, more books, and more buildings are evidence of what is taking place.

Most of you are aware the Governor and the Legislature for the past three years have recognized our growth in enrollment that took place the past twelve years. This has helped us in our pursuit of a special University concerned with high academic quality and service to our students. The Governor, with Legislative support, is ready also to increase space for our endeavors by contributing $35 million for the construction of a building in downtown Grand Rapids. The private contribution to the project, $15 million, has been raised and David Frey will report for the Grand Design 2000 Campaign.
State officials have not backed away from our project, but the court ruling that a 1970's mandate for special education spending in the K-12 field has not been met threatens to take $500 million out of the state budget with a potential loss of $3 billion. The special education students have not been neglected, and it appears to me that this is another example of an unwise government mandate. The Governor has asked that capital outlays be delayed until the issue is settled, and that the Supreme Court of Michigan review the earlier decision. By a 6 to 1 vote, the court agreed to hear the case.

One of the functions of the Foundation Board is to assist the University reach legitimate political objectives. I will ask the Executive Committee of this Board to discuss the best ways for us to hold before the Governor and the Legislature the University’s need for more space, and demonstrate to them the urgency of that need. After our discussion, we will be in contact with all of you, sharing our recommendations and asking for your support and perhaps participation.

The private part of this downtown equation is known. Rich DeVos, Jack Batts, and David Frey led all of us in finding the solutions; Bob Pew and
Steelcase gave the University the Stowe-Davis property and that set us in motion. Money was raised and pledged to buy and clear the rest of the land we needed. Then David Frey headed the Grand Design Campaign 2000, a campaign he will tell you about.