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# Commencement Address, delivered on December 11, 1999

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*Grand Valley State University*

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# COMMENCEMENT

Saturday, December 11, 1999

Address by President Arend D. Lubbers

Commencement is a family day. All of you are accompanied to this ceremony by those who love you most and receive your love in return. High moments in life should be celebrated with those who are bound together in love and sacrifice. Those whom you have invited share with you one of the most important symbolic days of your life, a day that represents the culmination of a process that began when you were five or six years old. Of course, the degree you will receive certifies only your course of study at the University, but your formal education began long before. In our time, a time characterized by the rapidity of change, it is interesting to speculate how many of you will find this day an important point on a continuum of formal education. Whatever it turns out to be for you, we are here today to celebrate and to certify on your behalf.

We have asked to keynote this event a graduate of Grand Valley, Robert Monaghan (MONAGIN). Bob enrolled as a student the day Grand Valley opened, and he graduated four years later at the first Commencement. He is one of the historic 226 who came to the new college in the cornfields. It took some courage to matriculate at a new state college with one building. I'm sure some of Bob's friends who graduated with him from Ottawa Hills High School in Grand Rapids tilted their eyebrows upward when he told them where he was headed. At the beginning of his senior year the first residence hall, Copeland House, opened and Bob moved in as the first hall director. He was at the beginning of so many Grand Valley events. He and his classmates set us on course, established student organizations, and made Grand Valley a friendly place. The first students at a new institution set the tone.

We who are here 36 years later are grateful to Bob and his pioneer classmates who can take pride in what began with them. And Bob does take pride. He is the model alumnus. He keeps in touch with Grand Valley, he visits when he can though he lives in Atlanta, he gives generously to his alma mater, and most important of all, he has built a successful career, one that makes his alma mater as proud of him as he is proud of Grand Valley. That career has led him to his current position, Vice President for Employee Management Data Services for the Siemens corporation in the United States. He is responsible for Human Resources and payroll systems for Siemens' 65,000 employees in our country. In 1986, nearly 20 years after he graduated, Grand Valley recognized his rising star and bestowed on him a Distinguished Alumni Award. The ultimate success of an institution like ours is measured by the lives and professions of our graduates.

Each year at the December Commencement we invite an alumnus or an alumna to return and reflect for you on some aspects of life important to them. By listening and observing you become more aware of what your University is through the reflections of someone who came before you. This year I am pleased to present to you Robert Monaghan, successful business executive, a person committed to serving people, and Grand Valley alumnus extraordinaire.