Address to Faculty and Staff, delivered on November 17, 1994

Arend D. Lubbers
Grand Valley State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/presidential_speeches
Part of the Archival Science Commons, Education Commons, and the History Commons

Recommended Citation
Lubbers, Arend D., "Address to Faculty and Staff, delivered on November 17, 1994" (1994). Presidential Speeches. 141.
https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/presidential_speeches/141

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the University Archives at ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Presidential Speeches by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.
ADDRESS TO FACULTY AND STAFF

November 17, 1994

On many campuses the President delivers a State of the University address annually. I have not adopted that custom because I prefer to address the University community when there are university-wide issues to examine and directions to set. That is not necessarily an annual occurrence. So far as the state of the university is concerned, that, it seems to me, is defined for each individual by his or her own state of mind. Yet I do accept responsibility as primary spokesman for the University to its various constituencies, and therefore should have, in my own mind, a clear idea of where we are and the direction we should take to our future. I am ready to examine some issues and talk about directions. I am ready to listen and to have the state of mind of others influence my decisions and actions. This is the process of mutual enrichment that builds a university.

Let me set forth views on what I consider important. You can then react, reshape, supplement, or embrace, and together we will formulate the agenda for the next period of our university’s development.

Nineteen ninety four has been a very good year; the year equity funding for education was adopted by the Governor and the Legislature. Though we remain the lowest funded of the state universities on a student per capita basis, the gap between us and the other universities of our kind narrowed. No matter where one ranks in per capita funding, when an appropriation is significantly higher than previously, the natural question arises, “Where is the money going?” The Provost has briefed the Salary and Budget Committee and will meet with the A P Committee in December to
explain our plan for expenditure. I will explain it in broad terms, and if anyone wants more
detailed information, it is available.

First, the tuition increase for students was significantly less than in recent years so the
appropriation covered a larger share of the salary and benefits increase and additions to the
Faculty. Our hope is to keep any tuition increase for next year low as well.

Second, base budget commitments were made for 35 new faculty positions in 1994 and
1995 using a large proportion of the increase. Later I will discuss what I hope these additions will
mean to the University.

Third, the new science and student services center adds more than 30% to our academic
and office space, and with it a commensurate increase in utilities and maintenance beginning in
this fiscal year and reaching “full force” in the next. The bad news is an estimated 2 million dollars
will be needed; the good news is that equity funding provides the money at a time when the state
is not funding new building openings. The recreational gym and fitness center, paid for by the
students, will add also to the utilities and maintenance budgets.

Fourth, the budgets for computers and accompanying technologies is like Pac Man
devouring money at a steady pace. As all of you, students, faculty, and staff, become more skillful
and more addicted to the use of these technologies, we who work with the budget try to find
ways to pay the bill. This year’s increased income has helped.

Since base budget requirements for this fiscal year will not use all of the appropriated
money, there are some dollars for one time expenditures this year. There was some money set
aside for a new ceramics building, but the cost of the project may require some of these one time
dollars. Now is the time to do what is necessary to improve and maintain the campus
infrastructure - heating and cooling, side walks, building repairs. Now too, we can buy modest amounts of equipment beyond that allowed by our annual base budget. With massive remodeling ahead of us in areas vacated by those leaving for the new building, we will be well advised to save some money for those projects. “Those projects” leads me to a discussion of space, possibly the most volatile subject on a university campus, after parking. Seidman House will be empty, to the relief of those who are packed in there. Water Resources will move and art will take Cedar Studio II. Large areas of Lake Michigan Hall and the Commons, and some space in the Kirkhof Center, will become available for redesign as people move to Henry Hall and the Student Services Building. There are no current plans to build an addition to the Zumberg Library, yet the current use demonstrates we need more space. I think the Seidman House, with its beautiful areas for student study, and substantial area for book and document storage should be reserved for library use. Plans for the other areas I mentioned are being discussed. Requests for space coming from several departments and programs are included in the discussion. In December I want to see from those responsible for space utilization a process for considering and prioritizing requests. In the meantime, please direct your inquiries to John Gracki, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs. Our final plans should be set by March 1st and remodeling will begin soon thereafter.

This is a very good year as we see our campus in metamorphosis. The construction is close upon us and it affects our feelings, even the way we think about our university. The bells in the Cook Carillon add a sound to our environment and the tower itself gives us a campus landmark. The Meadows Golf Course makes us seem more suburban than rural. All of this to one degree or another does and will provide facilities for work, relaxation and enjoyment, but just as important, an environment of beauty, for few of us can say our spirits are not downcast when
surrounded by the neglected and shabby nor deny the lift in our spirits when we are in a beautiful 
garden. Let us make our campus a practical yet attractive garden so that we may remain uplifted 
and respond to one another accordingly.

But campuses are not about gardening, nor is their physical aspect what they are about. 
They are places where people are educating themselves in the best way open to them. We set out 
to improve the way we do that. The general education commitment is part of the fiber of the 
University, and we constantly seek to strengthen it. The subcommittee on General Education has 
a proposal before you for the modification of existing general education requirements. I commend 
them for their work and urge them to continue their study and review so that refinements can lead 
this university to an even better general education core curriculum.

In my last address to the Grand Valley community, I urged the internationalization of the 
university. The report from the task force laid out a set of goals that will accomplish that. We 
need no more objectives; we need now the time, money, and will to reach those we have. I am 
encouraged by the progress we are making. The Dean for International Studies, Lou Olivier, is 
moving on the curricular front with the cooperation many of you are giving him. He and 
associates in the Seidman School of Business have signed an agreement with a like school in 
Angers, France. The Japanese Studies Group has expanded and changed its name to the East 
Asian Study Group. Discussions for student and faculty exchange have begun with East China 
University in Shanghai, and students from Grand Valley may enroll there next summer. The Latin 
American Studies Program has attracted the attention and skills of a large number of you. With an 
active program on campus, I think it is time for us now to find a sister university in Latin America.
We are searching for faculty to add to the new African and African American Studies Program. Application to offer a minor in the field is now before the University Curriculum Committee.

When a new Admissions Director is selected we will ask that attention be given immediately to the task force recommendation that more foreign students be recruited, further internationalizing the university. I am encouraged by what is happening. Building on a strong base going back years, implementing what the task force suggests will bring us where we want to be within this decade. I hope all of us will review the task force report regularly to keep us on track toward making this a university that is global in its perspective, educating students who can think, communicate, and work throughout the world.

A curriculum in a modern university is under constant review. The factors that lead us to prepare our graduates to deal with people everywhere, instantaneous communication, rapid transportation and technologies that speed up nearly everything we do make us ask constantly, “Are we teaching what is needed in our society?”

A field that is burgeoning, the health sciences, is one to which we are heavily committed, and one that needs the review I have just mentioned. Physical Therapy will expand. There are excellent opportunities for nursing also to add services for practitioners in their field. I urge the University Curriculum Committee to give careful and immediate consideration to the establishment of a Physician’s Assistant program and one for students of Occupational Therapy. The coming years will bring a demand for more people educated for health professions, and Grand Valley, located in an area with exceptional health care services, has a responsibility both to students who seek a profession and the institutions and organizations who employ health care professionals to provide them.
All divisions should look carefully to the future, seeking to make the curriculum one that is attractive to students because it serves them well. I support the proposed geography major because I think it will attract students, and we are beginning to realize the neglect of the subject at all levels of education has become a serious detriment to our society which lacks global knowledge and an intelligent understanding of the world environment.

As they look, enrollment considerations are important. I am always amused by growth statistics. Company or institutional spokespersons each year report growth that will never end. I remember higher education enrollment predictions in Iowa made in 1960. For them to be realized by 1990, 99% of the high school graduates had to be enrolled in college, none of them leaving the state. Our university will not increase forever, nor will it grow as it has in the past decade, but it should enroll more students each year for the rest of this decade. Some of the new faculty position relieve overburdened departments; others are expected to result in growth. To fulfill our mission, modest growth is hoped for and expected.

The curriculum is “the meat” of the university, the substance. It is the primary reason for a university’s existence. But to whom and for whom should it be provided? For several years I have said often and I hope clearly that I believe we are a university with a dual mission. We want the Allendale campus to offer a high quality of undergraduate education, have high freshman admissions standards, become more residential, and earn the reputation as the best state supported undergraduate program in Michigan, much like Miami University is in Ohio. We are making progress toward that goal. Our west Michigan region continues to grow in population. Many employed people, and those who for some reason cannot leave the area for their education, need professional education and the employers in the area need them educated. We must take that
education to them, serving much like a sprawling urban university. The success of this dual
venture within one university structure depends, I believe, on the ability of the faculty to live in
the two worlds, one that of a large liberal arts college with several professional programs, the
other a comprehensive regional university meeting the area’s professional requirements.

Our recent visitor, former Prime Minister Lubbers of the Netherlands, in his address to us
stressed the outward view of European nations. To survive, to make the best life for people, each
nation must reach out to others, creating trade, trading ideas as well, and building relationships.
Our university is like that. People in this region are used to our reaching out, and we must prepare
for our next outreach. I think there are more potential students who want what we have to offer if
we can deliver it to them.

I remember well the question raised when we took the initiative to build the Eberhard
Center in downtown Grand Rapids. “What will happen to Allendale?” “Why does Grand Valley
need to be in Grand Rapids?” I appreciated the support of the Grand Rapids Press in that
initiative. It was important, but the editorial admonished us not to neglect Allendale. From my
observation, Allendale has not been neglected, nor will it. We can make our next moves in the
region without the concern that the home base will be deprived. And what are those moves to be?

For some time our Grand Valley Foundation Board with advisors from the community
have urged and planned for expanding our downtown Grand Rapids campus. The plans call for a
business school-international trade center building, a graduate school library, a student center, and
facilities for other programs now scattered throughout downtown. Connecting an International
Trade Center to the Seidman School of Business has curricular implications for other
departments. I think the business school of the future will take on some characteristics of our
School of Education. Educating teachers reaches beyond the faculty of the School of Education; so will educating people in business and trade for the global economy. Language professors, historians, sociologists, psychologists, literature professors, communicators and I am sure others will offer part of the curriculum formulated for business people of the region who explore the international trade market, and I hope we can find the will and the faculty to forge the new relationships with the Seidman School necessary to make an international trade curriculum relevant and successful.

The Legislature has taken the first step recognizing our need for the facility. We will pursue state funding, and we know that private funds are necessary if we hope to secure a state appropriation. We are organizing for a private campaign to raise 12 to 15 million dollars. In lead gifts, we have received pledges of 7 million dollars.

There is no doubt in my mind that the future will bring with it many ways for the non traditional student to become educated. The most successful purveyor of continuing education will be the one who provides it most conveniently. We are now hooked to several locations by satellite and telephone wires. Fiber optic cable joins our Allendale and Grand Rapids campus and will be our continuing education highway to many locations in the future. When Henry Hall is completed, we will have three classrooms equipped to teach multiple sites; the two others are at Eberhard Center. We are in Traverse City because of this capability.

The new higher education center of Muskegon Community College will enhance our outreach to that area, but the largest and fastest growing market for us outside of Grand Rapids is Holland. We need classrooms and interactive video there, and soon. The Holland area students can use what we have to offer, but they will not come here for it. Whoever goes to them, offering
what they need, will have their enrollment, their appreciation, and the appreciation of their employers. Some institutions are doing it partially. We are among them. We must do it more completely. To do so we will have to build our own facility. The resources for it are a problem we must solve even at some risk. If we fail to provide the citizens of Ottawa County what they need, someone else will, and what we presently have here and elsewhere will be diminished. If we succeed, our mission as a comprehensive regional university will be strengthened, recognized, and appreciated.

When the right curriculum is in place and the constituency is well defined, there are two more elements that determine how successful the university will be - human relationships and quality of work. This current year the attitudes and perceptions revealed by the Women's Climate Study speak directly to our relationships with one another. I was not surprised by most of the findings. It is not surprising that a far larger number of women believe they are not dealt with equally than there are men on campus who perceive that women are unequally treated. The two that did surprise me, though probably should not have, were the perception that we didn't pay attention to or care for providing adequate dependent care, and the rather harsh attitude by many students toward gays and lesbians on campus.

A Child Care Task Force was appointed and is advising the Planning Department on the construction of a new building to replace the house on M45 now used for child day care. An architect will be selected, and I anticipate construction beginning no later than next summer. At some time there may need to be another Dependent Care Committee dealing with long range and broader issues. A Gay and Lesbian Task Force was appointed charged to study any barriers to full participation in university programs and services and remove these barriers. It is my opinion that
most people are born to their sexuality. Overt sexual behavior will elicit a negative response, one that may have negative consequences for the perpetrators. But that is true for both the heterosexual and homosexual person. I see no reason why a human biological factor can rightly be used to deprive a person or a group from the services or job opportunities at the university.

Sexuality is a major player in human relationships, and in the last few years the light has focused on practices of sexual harassment that were kept in the dark previously. This was necessary, and notice has been served on behavior that was too long overlooked. As with change, there is some uncertainty. What is acceptable behavior now? Some become unduly inhibited in their relationships because they fear reprisals though that, I believe, is a minor problem. The Sexual Harassment Task Force presented their report to the University Academic Senate and I understand the Senate has adopted a policy. I am waiting to receive the policy from the UAS. My hope is that our community will have a clear definition of sexual harassment and the penalties for those who indulge in it. There have been some unfortunate embarrassments resulting from charges of sexual harassment rather than gender discrimination. We need to understand and define the difference.

I want to reiterate a statement I made two years ago. I believe it is unethical for a professor or member of the staff to engage in an intimate relationship with a student while that student is enrolled at the university. If everyone would hold to that ethical standard, campuses would be healthier, happier places. In my thirty-five years as an administrator, the most serious and frequent personal problems have been the result of improper faculty, staff, and student sexual relationships.
Our relationships on campus are conditioned not only by how much an individual makes, but how much she or he makes compared to others. The Women's Climate Study revealed that women believed they were paid less than men for equal work. It is almost impossible, if not impossible, to objectively factor the value of a person's work compared to another. What can be objectively reviewed are salaries, rank, and length of service. This information the Human Resources Office has supplied to the Women's Climate Study Steering Committee. We will await the analysis and recommendations of the Steering Committee. I hope the recent attention to this issue will assist in the refinement of an equity formula to help in salary determination.

I can understand the concern women and minorities have about the opportunities to fill faculty and administrative positions. I will endeavor to see that there are equal opportunities. More important is to see that the pool of highly qualified candidates for each job has minorities and women in it. The balance between discrimination and reverse discrimination is what we are trying to find. It is not easy. The number of women in graduate school has increased substantially in nearly every field. That helps. Unfortunately, that is not true for minorities, particularly in some fields where we have the most growth. We have to work harder. The fairness quotient as we fill positions, make tenure and promotion decisions, and determine salaries is so important in our feelings about one another. As a university, we must all be committed to seeking fairness without sacrificing quality to what just appears to be fair. For fairness to the students for whom we exist is to make their educational experience one of high quality.

Quality - probably the most important element in defining our institution for our students and those of the general public who pay some attention to higher education. In this address I did not have time to speak about each person's special interest here at the university. If I had, and I
really wanted to, you would call me the Kruschev or Brezhnev of Allendale. I can speak of quality and that pertains to all of us at the university. The new buzz word is Total Quality Management. I’m not sure I know exactly what it means and I am too old a bird to latch onto some management theory that I haven’t already practiced. Yet, I like what I think it means. Every working group: a department, an administrative office, those involved in a program, including everyone associated with it, takes a look at its functions and one at a time discusses and implements ways to improve the function. I don’t want us to be carried along in a bureaucratic way. I don’t want long developed prejudices to be a weight on our way of operating. Good people can sometimes be less than they should be because they let the old way of doing things substitute for thinking.

Last year the idea of “one stop shopping” for students on the Allendale campus was tossed around. We wanted to make it more convenient for a student to deal with records, financial aid, work, payment and any other matter that concerned them. That required quality thought and quality cooperation. People from all the offices that deal with student administrative matters brainstormed - even some turf was surrendered. The Student Transaction Center was born and designed into the new Student Services Building - one stop shopping.

My intent is not to lay before you a plan to use in quality analysis or improvement; only to initiate thinking and discussion. Ours is a fast moving university and the demand for action sometimes overwhelms any time for reflection. Reflection and finding out how others in your unit are reflecting is a prerequisite for quality improvement. The question we should all be asking is “Are my systems and the use of my time and those around me serving the university as a whole and the students specifically as effectively and efficiently as possible? Follow that by asking, “How
can I and the colleagues I work with improve what we are doing?” I compliment the faculty and non-teaching members of the university community for contributing to the development of a fine university. As we prepare ourselves for the next leap forward, let’s look at how we operate, keep what we do well, and improve where we think we should. Let me know how you think this can best be accomplished.

Our daily business is teaching, researching, applying research for the improvement of our community, raising the money to do all of this, and managing the campuses. A growing responsibility, not easily assumed by some because it appears presumptuous, is values education. Through our Philanthropy Center and Volunteerism program initiatives are taken in that sphere. The campus ministry, independent of the university, has worked effectively in the field. I think the shrinking world that requires of us global education may be responsible in part for the confusion of the age. The values shored up by belief systems, unassailed from the outside, are no longer protected from interaction with others of differing systems and cultures. For many people, particularly the young, it is confusing and difficult to separate the essential from the unessential in their inherited belief system. Consequently they throw it all away, or at least make no commitments. Professor and Representative-elect Jon Jellema, spoke eloquently at a luncheon following the dedication of the Cook Carillon last Tuesday, calling us to our responsibility. I quote:

“This has become a troubled world. More than ever the academic community needs to respond, needs to become a community of scholars working together, seeking both to preserve and to transform. The academic community must demonstrate how to combine the wisdom, the values, the lessons from the past
with the insights, the energy, and the resources of the present. The bells in the
Cook Carillon must serve as a constant reminder that our task as a community of
scholars is to be the catalyst for reformation, transformation, reconciliation. The
bells must call us to a life of engagement, not retreat, not apathy, not withdrawal;
they must call us, in Donne’s words to be “involved in mankind.”

The carillon project was an emotional one for me. I could not explain it very well. I see the
tower and the bells as a symbol of community. The ringing of the bells calls us together in a
community of peace and common cause. That’s about all I could say and then Jon said it all for
me. He gave thought to my feelings, and called all of us to a destiny we should accept. Now, each
day, when the bells play, I will be reminded that we are a community of scholars, a catalyst for
reformation, transformation and reconciliation, and I will go about my business attempting to
reform, transform and reconcile.