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Remarks, delivered at the Leadership Dinner on May 17, 1999

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Leadership Dinner
Monday, May 17, 1999

I must begin my remarks by expressing gratitude to Dick Lacks for his help in bringing to fruition projects at Grand Valley. He left us recently but his mark is upon us, and I will not forget the fun we had together in making capital events happen for the good of the University and for the good of the community.

Publius Syrus, not a household name to us, yet a well-known Roman. He made a statement about money that is relevant to our situation in west Michigan. He wrote, “Money alone sets all the world in motion.” When we look at what private benevolence and public spending has done to improve our cultural, educational, health, economic, and social landscape, we see his truth. For the University alone around $100,000,000 was, and is being invested in a five-year period to assist us as we educate students and serve our community at Michigan’s fastest growing higher education institution. St. Paul writes “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.” You members of the Grand Valley University Foundation have sown generously for us. I hope you look favorably on what you are reaping. Our long-time sower, Rich DeVos, has led the Foundation since 1976 when the endowment was a little over $1,000,000 to the 35 million dollars today.
We appreciate what you Foundation builders have done for the endowment while at the same time helping us construct facilities. Think of what is in store for us during the next year: the completion of the Richard DeVos Center, the dedication of our expanded downtown campus, breaking ground for a new engineering building, breaking ground for a new Water Resources facility in Muskegon, breaking ground for an Alumni House and Visitors Center at Allendale and the completion of Secchia Hall, a residence for students in downtown Grand Rapids. Fred and Bernie Keller, Steelcase, Audrey Sebastian, Chuck and Pat Johnson, Bill and Jay Jackson, Peter and Joan Secchia and John Bultema and George Bailey have made lead gifts in these projects that are on their way.

Previews for the future, projects on which we are beginning to work, a Health Education building on the Spectrum campus and a Communications building on the Allendale campus, will come into your focus after we complete our campaigns for the Engineering Building and the Water Resources Institute. The spotlight shines on them. We need your help. Henry Ford said, “Whether you think you can or that you can’t, you are usually right.” We think we can do these things with your help. Don’t let Henry Ford down.

The University makes two major awards - the Leadership Award to young leaders in our community. Tonight we celebrate the support of the University and
the community of Jim Hackett and Pam DeVos. Previous recipients of this award with us tonight are:

Donna Brooks  Doyle Hayes  Fred P. Keller

Dan DeVos  Kyle Irwin

The other major award given on the alternate year is the Hall of Fame. Several friends inducted in our Hall of Fame for distinguished service to the University are here tonight.

They are:

Roger Andersen  Dick Gillett  Seymour Padnos

Peter Cook  Bob & Judy Hooker  Bob Pew

Rich DeVos  Pat Johnson  Ed Schalon

David Frey  Paul Johnson  Audrey Sebastian

I invite tonight's recipients and Hank Meijer who will present Pam DeVos and Bob Pew who came especially from Florida to present Jim Hackett to come to the platform.