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Remarks for Leadership Dinner, delivered on June 3, 1997

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REMARKS FOR LEADERSHIP DINNER

JUNE 3, 1997

AREND D. LUBBERS

Coming together each year as members of the University Foundation is similar to the gathering of a Scottish clan. We come together to assess, to honor, to listen to the elders, to share the table, and enjoy the company of fellow members.

We have shared the table, we have visited during the social time, we are about to give honors, the senior most important elder of the clan will soon address us, so what is left but the assessing? And I will briefly do that now.

Most of you have heard sometime in your life the old Methodist hymn, “There will be showers of Blessings.” Well, it’s been raining blessings at Grand Valley the past year. Those showers have been falling and they are not letting up. We are inching our way toward ground breaking for the Seidman Business School, International Trade Institute. The private money, 15 million dollars in gifts, is coming in, and secure, as Bob has mentioned. The state money is secure too, we believe. The necessary legislation is likely to be the last appropriation bill passed in this session, and we may wait until July for that to happen. There is no major argument, just some political jockeying. When we
meet at the Enrichment dinner next year, we will look across the river to see the cranes, cement mixers, steel girders, and all manner of objects that clutter an active construction site.

Attractions coming soon are a ground breaking this Friday on the Grand Valley Meijer campus in Holland. In a city where we have 800 students now, we will have 1800 students in two years. Thanks to Fred and Lena we have a place to build. On the Allendale campus shovels will turn ground next week for a classroom-office addition to Mackinaw Hall. The new wing will be larger than the original building, and accommodate the increasing number of students in the fall of 1998. By the end of July a new Art Building will be completed. It is not boastful to say that it is a “state of the art” facility. It has everything an artist can desire in pursuing his or her muse. It lacks only a name. I would like so much for a person who is interested in the arts and publicly ready to demonstrate that interest to lay claim to naming the building. Please pass the word. Less than a month later, additions to Calder Fine Arts Center will be completed. Music, too, is a priority this year, and these facilities are for the musicians. They represent a significant leap forward in the university’s music program.
The greatest blessing for any university is the desire of students to attend it. Grand Valley has not been neglected. Our applications for the freshman class are running 15% ahead of last year and the quality remains high; one of the best profiles in Michigan of both public and private institutions. Even with 500 more living spaces recently completed, we still have 500 admissible students on a housing waiting list. This has been a very good year, preceded by a very good year.

Why does this happen? There are many reasons. Tonight is the time that Foundation members should step up and take their share of the credit for what is happening at the University. The successful Grand Design campaign, an endowment surpassing 25 million dollars, the political support so many provided for our enterprise are some of the reasons that we are having a very good year and looking forward to another one. Next year we will complete the projects we are beginning this year, downtown will be under construction, and we will be exploring a project with Butterworth Hospital to place Grand Valley Health Care education on the Butterworth campus.

You, the Foundation members, are part of the University’s momentum, or collectively you are an engine that drives it. That momentum brings
students, good faculty and staff, facilities, and financial support. Grand Valley belongs to everyone in the state, but you are its special stewards because you give to it more than your tax dollars. You make it possible for the University to be a special University, and it is becoming a special University in this special place, west Michigan. The Foundation members develop the atmosphere from which the showers of blessings come. I hope they keep coming.