Remarks, delivered at the Center for Health Professions Groundbreaking on May 23, 2001

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The British Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli said, “The health of the people is really the foundation upon which all their happiness and all their powers as a state depend.” Today we are breaking ground to add to that foundation in our community, and by so doing contribute to the happiness of people throughout the world who seek to maintain or repair their health in our city, a city that is the home for important medical and health care. I have said from the beginning that this building we begin to construct today is not just a facility of Grand Valley State University, it is a part of a growing health, medical, research center that will come to distinguish Grand Rapids and west Michigan as a leader in the nation in matters of health. This is the logical next step towards the ultimate goal that will require further steps added to those already taken.
We are embarked on an awesome task and I ask that we pause to reflect and give thanks. “Almighty God, the force that gives us life, you are now giving us an opportunity to enhance that life. Our ideas, our gifts and the public wealth are joined together for that purpose today on our journey where new miracles of health care will lead us. For the resources, for the people who provide them, for the ideas and the people who give birth to them, for your grace that blesses them all we give thanks on this morning in our lives when we are dedicated to the cause of healthy bodies and healthy minds.” AMEN.

Our dreams to be the best center of health, medicine, and research depends on our ability to support the best in health care, research and education. That means the best hospitals, research institutes, and university. Ultimately, one of these cannot be sustained without the others. Today we launch a project that focuses on the university. Since the beginning we have had to play “catch up.” The state was late in providing its second largest area with a university. The university came long after the medical reputation of west Michigan was well established.
Today marks the decision to provide the indigenous university to Grand Rapids the capability to participate in the building of a great center of medical and health expertise. It says to all that we are ready to take the next leap forward. We want the best, and we know a university of high quality is necessary before we successfully complete the leap.

Today there is once again the coming together of tax dollars and private donations. Generous donors and our state representatives and senators have given and worked to bring us to this event when the shovel turns to dirt. For nearly three decades the chairman of our University Foundation, Rich DeVos, has been present to help Grand Valley move forward. He has quite a health and heart story himself and, along with Peter Cook, is leading our campaign for health. Sir Walter Scott wrote, “Ill health, of body or of mind, is defeat...Health alone is victory. Let all people, if they can manage it, to be healthy.” Rich has contrived mightily and succeeded. As Chair of the Grand Valley University Foundation he will make introductions and remarks at this time.