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Principles for Successful Presidential Administration, delivered at the Grand Haven Rotary Club on April 9, 2001

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Grand Haven Rotary Speech

Monday, April 9, 2001

Arend D. Lubbers, President
Grand Valley State University

Principles for Successful Presidential Administration

A. Develop a positive working relationship with the faculty

1. D Oxy-moronic Concept – easy for “built-in” adversarial relationship
2. D Don Butler story “We and They”
3. D Quality of Faculty ultimately determines quality of university
 - a. D draws good students
 - b. D serves clientele
4. D Good relationship provides basis for President to persuade faculty to do what the University needs to do to serve its clientele – new programs
5. D How is this achieved?
 - a. D assign time to do it
 - b. D visit departments and divisions
 - c. D informal contacts
 - d. D formal convocations
 - e. include on entertainment lists
 - f. D provide money directly from President for individual faculty projects
 - g. D provide adequate budgets for library and technology
 - h. D avoid a union
6. D Against conventional wisdom – appointed V.P. for Finance and Administration so new President can become acquainted.

B. Keep enrollment levels according to plan

1. D Central – smallest accredited college in Iowa -- 431 students in 1960
2. D In 1969 enrollment was 1,390 – passed eight colleges
3. D Reasons for growth: good faculty, good housing, football team
4. D Grand Valley – 2,000 in 1969 -- 19,000 in 2001
5. D Enrollment depends on mission, quality of programs, promotion, proximity
6. D Temporary decline will not “kill” a President, a trend of decline will – Central example

C. Secure and manage well the finances of the university &

1. Y Deficit in my second year made me nervous and I vowed never to have one again
2. Y Courage to make cuts – Recession of 1982 -- \$2 million cut from \$20 mill appropriation
3. Cut budget to capture funds to reposition the university – faculty vote to reduce faculty on basis of quality – agreement to take no raises case study – some others differed – MSU. President lost his job.
4. Y First university to hire an outside lobbying firm – Shapiro story
5. Y Problem of term limits
6. Y Private fundraising – prove the need, identify the opportunity, find people who are interested. Together you share a cause that will benefit people.
7. Y Relationships develop and from those often spring friendships. With friendship comes trust.
8. Y Never ask for money in social situations. Make an appointment so your friends know he or she is going to be asked.

D. & Find staff members who can do their jobs better than you could do those jobs.

1. Y The Grand Valley story – RVS, GAN
2. Y Loyalty is an essential ingredient
3. Y President must be free to roam from one area of the university devoting time to what is presently a top priority. Priorities change and he must move on. Provosts and Vice Presidents must manage the administration day to day.
4. Y Butler story about Central official leaving
5. Y Good administrators make the President look good. Most of my success depended upon the work of my colleagues.

E. & Pay attention to the Board of Trustees and work for the selection of good ones.

1. Y Classic case of good PR. President failing to work with Trustees – Leading state university won the battle – lost the war.
2. Y GVSU – Republican in charge – Democrats in charge
3. Y President cannot control, but often can influence – helps to have good luck.

F.) Define the mission of the university and actively engage in providing programs to accomplish the mission.

1. U GVSU particularly challenging and interesting because of the void in public senior higher education in large population area – many programs to be added – kept my life interesting
2. U Engineering story – 4-4 tie in Provosts group – Mackey’s question – Cantel’s sanction.
3. U Attempt to stop Bachelor of Nursing program
4. U Move faculty toward internationalization of the university. Resistance – now engagement over broad spectrum
5. U Easy for President to be removed from program development – needs to raise money – becomes servant and provider of resources for faculty when he should not surrender some leadership and engagement – doing together.

G.) Pay close attention to campus facilities, insist on beauty, cleanliness and efficient function.

1. U My father – after satisfied students, a beautiful campus is the best selling point in the recruitment of new students.
2. U My campus rounds – people see me pick up papers and other trash, no one dares touch a tree without calling me, my dust on windowsill test.
3. U Don’t settle for the least expensive when seeking funding for new buildings. Have an art budget.
4. U Much praise for the DeVos Center – the architect, Vern Ohlman, deserves much of the credit.
5. U Every building an art gallery and the whole campus a sculpture garden.
6. U Student enthusiasm for facilities makes them treat them with respect. Less trash than most. Noticed this at other beautiful campuses. Faculty take pride.

H.) Human objectives are as important as professional objectives in making a good university.

1. U After love of my wife and family, meaning for my life comes through professional accomplishment.
2. U Must be the same for many people.
3. U University provides us the structure and the context in which to work out our destinies.

4. B I have considerable means at my disposal to help people with their destinies. The office adds a dimension to what I do.
- a. encouragement
 - b. listening
 - c. interest
 - d. compliment
 - e. personal concern
 - f. money for special needs
5. B Universities often become battlegrounds and diplomacy is necessary to avoid major wars.
6. B President should try to stay above or in control of inevitable conflicts. He should have designated warriors to fight some of his battles.
7. 65 to 70% positive thoughts make for a healthy campus.
8. B Keep the neurotics and ideologues from setting the tone and running the committees. If not tended too, they will destroy the positive ethos.

Recipe — refined over 40 years.

I am often asked what I think I do best, and I always reply: “Survive.”

“When it is evident that a leader’s day is past, the one service he can render is to step aside and leave the ground clear for the development of a successor.” T.R. Roosevelt

“Thou marshal’s me the way that I was going.”

Marry the right spouse.