Faculty and Staff Highlights: Antonio Herrera Professor Emeritus

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Colleagues: What brought you to Grand Valley State University and why did you stay?

Herrera: I came to Grand Valley in 1972. I grew up in Colombia and was a teacher there. I came to Grand Valley for new opportunities. It was a very exciting time at the university — programs were in their infancy and Grand Valley offered an open field of possibilities for those with creativity, goals and clear objectives. This was the place to be.

President Lubbers was a great support in matters of accepting new ideas that are still part of the structure of Grand
Valley. I grew up professionally with this institution. Now that I’m retired, I can see the whole picture of Grand Valley and it is beautiful.

**Colleagues:** What have been some of the most important accomplishments you have achieved during your time at Grand Valley?

**Herrera:** I was honored to play a part in helping create the College of Graduate Studies and the curriculum for graduate programs. Many people at Grand Valley were opposed to graduate programs at the time. There was no place for the college so we would travel to different cities in the area to teach. We eventually had an office in downtown Grand Rapids and then in the State Building, before having an office on campus. These programs flourished because of community and faculty support.

I also helped establish bilingual education programs and I helped with the joining of the liberal arts curriculum with the professional education curriculum.

In the 1980s, the budget was tight; many programs were being cut. It was a painful time. There were plans to cut our reading program. I came out front and said this couldn't happen. The reading program was the most fundamental program; reading is the most fundamental skill of learning for a human being. They listened to my plea, so I volunteered to meet with two professors from Michigan State University’s reading program. They provided me with the fundamentals of their program and we were able to save the reading program at Grand Valley.

**Colleagues:** What people, programs and partnerships have enriched students and the university?

**Herrera:** I was very much involved with expanding our international and global education. We established partnerships and programs in several countries, including Ghana, Korea and Yugoslavia. We had both students programs and faculty teaching programs in these countries.

Also, receiving accreditation through the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education was a hard process, but extremely important. I tip my hat to the faculty and deans who helped in this process, like Loretta Konecki and Dean Elaine Collins. This accomplishment put a seal on the quality of the College of Education.

**Colleagues:** What are your hopes and dreams for the future of the College of Education?

**Herrera:** I hope that the College of Education will continue its commitment to grow and change in ways that help all students and educators to be successful in a changing world.

We have challenges as we enter a new era, and that is linking human values to technology. Today’s learners are techies and the human element has suffered. We need to create a synergy and balance between learning and technology and be sure to establish relationship with our students.

I hope we continue our commitment to all students, all children, all youth and all young adults. One of the important things about education is that it can provide opportunities students might not have outside of the university. We need to continue providing those opportunities, whether it is through technology, or partnerships, or research and service from the faculty. It is crucial to the success of our students, individuals and our country.