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## Address to the Faculty: March 20, 1997

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# ADDRESS TO THE FACULTY

## MARCH 20, 1997

*Arend D. Lubbers*

I have asked to address you today on an immediate and practical issue that will have short term and long term implications for the development of our university. After addressing the issue, I will range over other topics that I believe are important to our common life. To provide a context for the recommendation I am going to make, let's look back to a "golden age" for university building: that period between the end of World War II and 1970.

The gold was truly provided by the federal and state governments. Enrollments burgeoned. The federal government provided 3% money to build student housing and thirty years to pay off the loans. Increases in appropriations were not tied to inflation or less; they were based on the rapidly increasing enrollments. For several years campuses were seas of mud, as classrooms, laboratories, recreational buildings, offices and dormitories were under construction, changing the landscape of higher education in the United States.

New colleges such as Grand Valley originated in that period, but equally or probably more important, existing universities reached new levels of service and academic sophistication. It was more than a numbers game. It was the building of a broad higher education system to sustain the world's leading democracy and a research capacity to protect that democracy and propel it to new levels of knowledge. A slow-down in the rate of money flowing into the enterprise was inevitable when the facilities and programs began to catch up with demand. There was always the demand to keep abreast of the new technologies, but people were finding places for their education. On some campuses those 3% dormitories had room to spare, and when recession began moving like a cloud bank across the country in 1979, the university builders were pushed aside by those who proposed a new age for higher education with the catchword "downsizing." Downsizing came along with budget cutting and with lists of colleges and universities that were candidates for closing. In Michigan at that time, I remember that some leaders at our largest universities had Grand Valley on such a list. I figured that closing the two Valleys and Lake State would save the state less than forty million dollars and inflict economic as well as educational hardship on the regions served by these colleges. My counter suggestion was that the University of Michigan, which looks upon itself more like a prestigious private than a state university, surrender its appropriation. It could continue to function with slight dislocation for awhile until private and federal sources picked up the slack, while the state would save more than five times the money that closing the three previously mentioned institutions would garner. This was a "tongue-in-cheek" episode, but not one couched entirely in good humor.

When the state of Michigan began to emerge from the cloud, the higher education game did not revert entirely to the growth mode of the 1950s, '60s, and '70s; nor was it in a permanent down-sized situation. Growth varied by institution and continues to do so. Grand Valley was born in the golden age of growth. We had our blip in the late '70s and emerged from the recession on a fast growth track that has not abated. We find our university in a situation and condition many found themselves in during the golden age, when they moved to higher numbers of students and greater academic achievements on easy state dollars and 3% federal money. The difference now is that the dollars aren't so easy for academic construction, and 3% federal money is replaced by 7% private financing for student housing. We have had to find our own way to sustain unusual growth and academic improvement, since those two aspects of university development are not the priorities they once were in the nation.

I point to four initiatives. The first, and probably the most important, is the unprecedented student facilities fee—unprecedented because the Student Senate recommended the fee to the Board of Control at a time when our need for classrooms and recreational facilities was critical.

The second is the active solicitation of funds from private donors for buildings, endowments, and programs, a sum that has doubled in three years.

The third is the recognition for the past three years by the governor and the legislature of our increase in student enrollment. This harkens back to the golden years, and I express publicly my deep appreciation to them for that recognition. This provides one-time money for facilities during the three-year period we phase in faculty and program expansion, thus assisting in achieving two goals—adding to instruction and office space, and enhancing academic programs.

The fourth is a joint effort with other universities that is now coming to fruition. Though building for growth on many campuses is no longer a motivating factor, replacement of deteriorating or outdated facilities is. So those of us who need space because of student numbers have joined cause with those who don't and the state is responding. By fall I hope we will break ground for the building downtown, giving us by the fall of 1999 250,000 square feet of space in which to pursue our academic objectives.

This brings me to the issue which prompts my speech at this specific time. The university continues to attract freshmen applicants of good academic quality. Last year 2,150 women and men comprised our freshman class. They averaged above twenty-three on the ACT score and had a class average high school grade point of 3.3. This, I believe, ranked Grand Valley among the highest three or four state universities. This year the quality of the applicant pool may be slightly better, and the numbers are 14% ahead. It is likely that 2,200 freshmen will join our Allendale student body in the fall. If we do not increase that number, but hold to it in 1998, we will need twenty more classrooms and sixty offices. I hesitate to retreat from the 2,200 number, because, if we do not build the classrooms, we will have to limit the freshman class to between 1,500 and 1,700.

What profile for Allendale emerges if we sustain and maintain a freshman class of 2,200? I see a campus of 10,000 to 11,000 students of improving quality. Most of the

students will live on or adjacent to campus, which will require more on-campus student housing. If 1,800 to 1,900 of the freshmen live on campus, an equal number of places should be available for upper-class men and women as we build a balanced living environment. In the fall, there will be 2,400 places for our students in university-owned housing.

Our success in the recruitment of qualified freshmen has exceeded what I expected. It has given us, I believe, one of those opportunities to lift our university into a special place among universities in Michigan and, perhaps, in the Midwest. We must strive to consolidate this success. We do it by sustaining our present numbers and by having the facilities for instruction, study, research, counsel and recreation. Classrooms and offices are the most pressing need. More housing is not far behind. Our student facilities fee is committed into 1999—part of the larger package for building and remodeling in evidence now, and the sidewalk project along Campus West Drive to be laid this summer. I prefer to pay off the projects committed before undertaking others. I prefer not to use cash reserves. I prefer not to borrow. But my preference in these matters does not overcome a conclusion that I have reached: it is in the best interests of the university to assign the student facility fee through 2003 and build the classrooms and offices necessary to keep the momentum that moves this university forward. I recommend this to all of you. To give it a chance of happening by the fall of 1998, I must recommend it to the Board of Control in April. This we do to meet the objectives of our university, objectives that a few others in earlier times and with similar ambitions met, when building for enrollment was a priority. I follow this recommendation with calling for two more living centers, each housing 175 students and raising our total accommodations to 2,750, a number of beds we can easily fill.

The classrooms and offices will be attached to Mackinac Hall, at the east end of the building, extending south toward the Commons, making the addition slightly larger than the original. The living centers will be constructed on the north side of the plateau where two new ones will open this fall.

These two recommendations have an urgency that moved me to ask for your time today. Now that we are gathered here, allow me to comment on several other matters of importance to our university community.

Look about you and you see the activity and conditions of a construction site: men and women in hard hats, mud, heavy machinery, masons, and more mud. It appears to be a permanent part of our life. This summer we will occupy a new art building, Calder Hall will be significantly enlarged for the music department, and there will be a remodeled Lake Superior Hall and new student housing, as I mentioned before. Without a state appropriation for these facilities, a logical question to ask is, "Where does the money come from to pay for them?" There are three sources: one I mentioned earlier, the student facilities fee; the second, surplus from the general fund; and the third, income from endowment funds.

In the past three years, the governor and legislature recognized our enrollment growth and appropriated significant increases for Grand Valley. We cannot move these substantial increases into the base budget immediately. It takes time to appoint

faculty and staff. Eventually that money will be used for that purpose, but we have some one-time money in the year we received the increase. That one-time money is being used to build and equip academic facilities. Much of our endowment is restricted; that is, the income must be spent for the purpose designated by the donor. We have some unrestricted funds, however, that can be used for any purpose. Some of those dollars are also being used for facilities.

Now before returning to the discussion about buildings, I want to address policy matters.

There are two matters before us that I urge the Faculty Senate to bring to resolution. The first is a discussion on the core curriculum. For several years, members of the faculty and academic administration have attended conferences and conducted discussions on liberal education and the appropriate core curriculum for a university with a liberal arts tradition such as ours. This year Professor McKendall, the Liberal Studies Coordinator, and Professor Sicilian and his committee dealing with the core curriculum are coming forth with proposals for improving our core curriculum. I commend them for their work and urge the Senate to act on their recommendations before the end of the next fall term. We need improvement, and we should not wait too much longer for it. I realize that the debate about liberal learning and core curriculum continues. It should where high quality undergraduate education is the goal, but there is a time to make decisions. That time presents itself periodically in good institutions. For us it is now.

The second matter concerns the policies relating to retention, tenure and promotion. Most of our difficulties stem from the unevenness of policies among the schools and divisions and from the failure to carry out policies in a prescribed and consistent manner. This weakness causes unnecessary disagreements, uncertainties, tension, and threatened or filed law suits. I asked that this issue be addressed and it has been. Task Force recommendations, I understand, are being considered by the Executive Committee of the Senate. I look forward to receiving a policy proposal that I can, with my endorsement, take to the Board of Control. This issue is one of the most important before us. The manner in which we evaluate and decide who will be the permanent colleagues of the university will determine the quality of our instruction and research, as well as the ethos in which we conduct relations with one another.

Rushing toward the future may describe the pace of university life today. The rapid pace makes it important to know what we want our future to hold. Periodically, we set forth a plan so that our objectives are clear. A plan for our next phase will be given final review by the Executive Committee of the Senate tomorrow and the University Academic Senate soon. Drafts have been circulated to the university community for comment and change. Now is the time for adoption by the community and the Board of Control. The plan is a chart. It sets goals, but the planning and work to realize them takes place in the departments, divisions, and schools.

For the years I have been here, I have observed a faculty that enriches, expands, and sometimes eliminates as it develops a curriculum for the clientele which the university is expected to serve. By the intelligent and wise actions of the University

Curriculum Committee, guided by Professor Rathbun, I know there is activity on the learning front. Always with student interests in mind, we must keep our thoughts focused on what the curriculum is and should be, guarding ourselves from the temptation to add pet courses that increase cost without really strengthening the curriculum.

I mentioned the clientele which the university is expected to serve. That clientele may expand or contract from time to time and its needs may alter as professions change. The changing clientele is part of the curriculum equation. Presently there is an expansion in the numbers of people who are seeking higher education. That increase is comprised of traditional eighteen to twenty-two year olds and the older adult population. To meet the demand, technology is being utilized to provide distance learning. The professor in one location and students in several others is a teaching technique we have used for some years. For us and for others, I see this way of education on the increase. How good it can become depends on faculty adaptability and technology's ability to offer the student materials he or she needs. Whatever the difficulties, whatever the weaknesses, this educational delivery system is here and will remain. For a university like ours, we have much to gain by being a leader rather than a follower in distance learning.

We can have demand. We can have technology. But we still don't have the university we want unless we have qualified people on the faculty and on the staff in all non-teaching jobs. I am overwhelmed, almost, by the decisions we in the university community will make in the next few years. The most important relate to hiring people. The future of Grand Valley for the next twenty-five years depends on how well we make appointments in the next three years. Additions, retirements, and replacements confront us. We want more full-time faculty, fewer adjuncts, good people to maintain our new facilities, and good staff to make student life and life throughout the university the best. I can't tell you the exact number of new hires, but it will be in the hundreds.

As we make these personnel decisions, I hope we avoid two mistakes: first, to exclude those who have the potential to be better than we are (a subconscious tendency easy to indulge); and second, to fill a position with a candidate that doesn't meet our expectations because a better one is not immediately available. We can keep searching.

While we are on the search, we will remember our commitment to diversity. Many new people have been appointed in the last three years, but we have not kept pace in the appointment of minorities. Even in an employment category where the number of minorities is up, the percentage is down. Though there has been criticism lately of affirmative action as it has been advocated and practiced in the nation, I believe our university must be committed to appointing significant numbers of minorities in all employment categories. I ask the deans, the departments (both academic and administrative), and the schools to consciously seek out qualified minority candidates in these years when many people new to us will join our community.

Though more women are employed by Grand Valley than men, the concern of women that they are not given equal opportunity, that there are "glass ceilings" and

subtle discriminations that still exist, is an issue that we must hold always before us. I hope the Women's Commission will be the body that makes certain that women's concerns are dealt with fairly, thoroughly, and on time. A policy is not always a solution, but since we improved our policy on sexual harassment, we have had fewer problems. Sound policies as they relate to the employment of women will make this a better university.

To those in our community who are gay or lesbian, I continue to give you my support. You should live on our campus with equal opportunities in employment. You should live free from verbal or physical abuse. Understanding is not easy to come by, but through the task force dedicated to improving life for gays and lesbians on campus, we will continue to seek and encourage it.

The quality of people, the diversity, the human condition we create for ourselves, the programs we offer to our students—all these create the character of the university. But the people and the programs require facilities if they are to work effectively. In our rush to the future, we are building, but we need to build more. I mentioned the new building downtown and the addition to Mackinac Hall. We are now in a legislative process that, I hope, will lead to a ground-breaking ceremony downtown on October 3rd and completion by fall of 1999. That is optimistic for the completion date, but it is possible. With more square feet downtown, decisions must be made to assign programs, faculty, and library resources to that location. Those decisions should harmonize the work of the two campuses, not divorce them from one another. A faculty committee will be asked to assist in the planning.

Another project that is imminent is a building to accommodate our increasing activity in Holland. When we contemplate Holland, we understand that we are a university expected to serve the region. A few years ago, we, along with some other state universities, received special funds from the state. They are referred to as lapsed funds, and, in effect, are a reward for the way we handled our reduction in budget during the last recession. We invested those funds, assigning them to a future Holland project. Because the market has been good, we can now use them for the \$6,000,000 building we will construct on land provided to the university by Fred Meijer. The scope of the project is limited by the dollars available. We could effectively use double the amount, and we have a plan that calls for additions when we can raise the money for them. Ground-breaking will take place in June in the hope that the project will be completed in a year.

There is an alumni building project underway and another being contemplated. The football alumni are raising money to improve the football building at the stadium. The Alumni Board wants to build an alumni house on campus for meetings, lodging, receptions and offices. They are preparing a campaign to raise money for the house.

As I look a little farther into the future, I see two more major buildings—one on the Allendale campus and another downtown. On the Allendale campus, we need a communications building. Grand Valley is a leader amongst Midwestern colleges and universities in the field of communications. We have the faculty and some excellent equipment, but inadequate facilities. I think improving communications facilities is our next major Allendale project.

I have concluded and I share with you my conclusion for the purposes of discussion and planning, that our professional health programs should be located downtown, preferably attached to the Butterworth Hospital Campus. This project also requires the harmonizing of the Allendale and Butterworth campuses, which will include a well-planned transportation system. The overcrowded Henry Hall after two years of use demonstrates that the expanding health programs require more space. To have it in at least five years, we must begin thinking about it now.

All these buildings in our future—what do they mean for growth? Earlier I stated that I saw an Allendale campus of 10,000 to 11,000 students. Maybe it could be 12,000, but I believe a number should be agreed upon. It should be a number that can be sustained in good times and bad. More than a number, it should be a number with qualifications. The student academic profile should remain high, and, over the next several years, more of that number should live on or adjacent to campus. The Allendale campus is then established as a premier place for undergraduate education. Some of its students will inevitably enter programs that, in their last years, will take them to a downtown facility, but they may choose to live in Allendale, taking some courses there. The proposals that prompted this speech will maintain Allendale at about its present number, and future buildings are likely to enhance quality rather than increase the number.

Buildings downtown and in Holland, and expanded capacity for distance learning, are likely to increase enrollment. They will make it possible to expand graduate programs, programs that I believe our natural clientele will ask for. How many and how much they can be expanded depends on the legislature's willingness to fund for enrollment. I believe we should make accommodations if the funds are available to us. As we move cautiously into this future, we should not over-expand. We can't predict when professions will change, and our predictions of market saturation are imprecise. But we can't let our caution keep us from creative thought and energetic movement in providing higher education for students who want it from us. Our continuing education, our graduate programs, what we offer in our off-Allendale centers will find their own level of enrollment in the next decade. Then, perhaps we will know better what the total Grand Valley enrollment should be. None of our decisions about enrollment, of course, are binding on future generations. What bolts of creative light will hit this university? What philanthropic giants will hurl their dollars at it? I wish I could be here to see. It is my lament that I cannot.

I think we have built the foundation for the university that we set out to build. Most people here want Grand Valley to be an excellent university. Even in our disagreements, we come together in our work ethic. We agree to work hard to educate well and to serve beyond the minimum expected. I have wanted Grand Valley to be a special place because of the quality of its academic life and the civility of our common life together. Our newness, our growth, the demands placed upon us have required unusual effort from faculty and staff. Many people have given more than is usually asked, some cheerfully, some with a little grumbling, but enough have given so that I believe we are a better university than might be expected, considering the resources that have been available to us.

We have also been helped by generous people. This past fiscal year, more than twelve million dollars in private gifts came to the university. So when giving of self becomes somewhat burdensome for those who work here, we know at least that there are those who give to us because they appreciate what we have accomplished.

I want us to have pride in our university: the kind of pride that is infectious; pride that makes good people eager to take jobs here; pride that keeps people here. It comes because we and those who were here previously have done good work. It comes with tradition, and we are the tradition builders in an institution only thirty-six years old. It comes because people find fulfillment in their jobs and compensation that is acceptable to them. It comes because colleagues admire each other's work and are stimulated by one another to do their best. You know you have pride when you want the university to succeed as much as you personally want to succeed.

President John Kennedy and his speech writer, Ted Sorenson, were masters at using the right words to elicit a positive emotional response from Kennedy's audiences. Remember, "Ich bin ein Berliner?" I'll never forget it or the response. Another one I will always remember is, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." It was the best national remark in recent times, in my estimation. It is more difficult to apply that remark to the place where a person works. Except for taxes, the nation may seem somewhat remote. The workplace carries with it the frustrations, disagreements, and disappointments of daily life. Yet, how does it sound? "Ask not what your university can do for you, rather what you can do for your university." I don't mind it. When you make an extra effort to help a student, you are answering the question. When you publish a good article or book, you are answering the question. When you help to keep the campus clean, working, and attractive; when you cut through red tape; when you help a student or colleague in distress; when you give what money you can; when you strive continually to improve in your job; when you understand someone else's point of view, you are answering the question.

In closing, I turn to another significant American far removed from our time or John Kennedy's—the first First Lady of our country, Martha Washington. I am always impressed by her imperturbability. She lived through uncommon difficulties. I have, since my early reading in American history, admired her famous husband. And in that reading I have discovered nuggets of wisdom coming from her that have affected me. Let me read one to you that reveals her nature and, in the revealing, gives us good advice: "I know too much of the vanity of human affairs to expect felicity from . . . public life. I am still determined to be cheerful and happy in whatever situation I may be; for I have also learned from experience that the greater part of happiness or misery depends upon our dispositions, and not upon the circumstances. We carry the seeds of the one or the other about with us in our minds wherever we go."

If we follow Martha's way, whatever the vicissitudes, we will indeed make our university a special place.