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Enrichment Dinner Remarks, delivered in April 2014

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Enrichment Dinner Remarks
April 2014
By Arend D. Lubbers

Grand Valley is a university that is still 'becoming'. Many of Michigan's universities have been around so long, that they are already what they will be in the future. At Grand Valley, anything is possible. We are still young, growing, adventurous, ambitious, and yes, imaginative.

Those of us who were here in the early days imagined a university that would both nurture this community, and be nurtured by it.

The Grand Valley University Foundation has been at the core of the university's relationship to the community for fifty years. A look at the Foundation's leadership provides a clue to its success.

I think of Dick Gillett who was a great strategist. I remember many times sitting in Dick's office late in the afternoon, while he helped me figure out how to get from point A to point B. He knew everyone and helped us build relationships that became crucial to Grand Valley's success. Grand Valley had no better friend.

Our next foundation leader was Paul Johnson. Paul was more than a provider and advisor. He invested a significant part of his emotional life in Grand Valley. He used to say that our foundation was like Avis, remember the old Avis ads? "#2 but trying harder." We didn't have the advantages of 100 years of support like other schools, but by trying harder, Paul and the foundation leaders pulled people in and rallied them around our vision. In the nicest way he would not take "no" for an answer.

And then there's Rich DeVos' leadership. Rich is a person of extraordinary vision. On occasion he has the ability to incorporate someone else's vision into his own, enhance it, and help bring it to fruition. That capacity added immeasurably to the success of the Foundation. We would not be what we are today without his ability to think beyond the commonplace.

In the future as in the past, it's all about relationships. The future of Grand Valley will continue to be intertwined with the growth and excitement in this community; becoming our very best together, as partners, as friends, as we always have. The partnership between the West Michigan community and Grand Valley will be important for the bright future that awaits them both.