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A Speech to the GVSU Community, November 13, 1991

AREND D. LUBBERS

You may remember the speech Harold Hodgkinson delivered to the faculty last year. He has continued for nearly a generation as the chief analyst, statistician, and guru for higher education. Recently Professor Ishak sent me an article by Dr. Hodgkinson. In it he stated, "The social cement holding institutions together—the recipe for which is two parts trust, one part loyalty, two parts self sacrifice, one part leadership—seems to be cracking everywhere." The article was published in 1971, about the time he delivered the commencement address at Grand Valley. Since that time three downturns in the economy, each spewing a period of under-funding and increased scrutiny and criticism of higher education by the public and their representatives, heavier demands for more services from universities often appearing to be antithetical to one another, and now intense competition for students of the dwindling cohort, have caused even wider cracks in the cement. Some causes for this deterioration are within the universities, some without. The news articles we have read in the last few weeks attest to both. I am not here today to analyze these causes, only to express the belief that here at our university the foundation remains strong. There are a few cracks, and I believe they are not endangering to the trust, the loyalty, the self sacrifice or the leadership. I am grateful to the faculty and staff who make it so.

In these days when we read of \$9 million deficits at a sister state institution, when Presidents resign under pressure or because they weary of the constant strain brought on by cash shortages and adversarial relationships, we are poignantly aware that these are not easy days in higher education. But, to those who work in state government or who because of cutbacks in state spending no longer have jobs, to those in the private sector who for a few years have seen no increase in their compensation, and to those who are recently unemployed, we in higher education are considered among the most fortunate. They question our right to our perceived good fortune. There is some resentment directed towards us which detracts from the state's ability to give an objective evaluation of higher education, its needs, and its value to the citizens of the state. Yet, there is light for us. The citizens are eager for education. The Governor has claimed education is his priority. So what *is* our condition today?

There is no doubt that the recession and tax reduction absorbs the attention and energy of lawmakers and administrators. Higher education cannot attract the spotlight, but we do share in the cutbacks, and if the payments that were withheld during the last three months of the state's fiscal year are not restored, higher education will suffer among the highest reduction in appropriations in the state. We have what no other state institution or agency possesses and that is the power to tax, called tuition and fees. That power has helped us maintain quality and equilibrium within our universities, and now the Democrats in the House are seeking to limit that power through a constitutional amendment limiting tuition increases to the rate of inflation. The initiative would be somewhat palatable if the Legislature guaranteed that appropriations also would equal inflation. Those who framed the constitution of Michigan in 1963 had the wisdom to grant exceptional autonomy to universities. The record shows that their conviction has resulted in strong universities, and that the strength comes in part from institutions solving their unique problems in their own ways. The record further shows that tuition and fees are not increased disproportionately when appropriations are adequate.

We are at a time when citizens and their elected representatives know there is a need and a demand for higher education. They want access to that education; they want good quality and they are having difficulty deciding how to pay for it. The times reveal a heightened disparity between the public's desire for services and their desire to reduce the taxes necessary to provide those services. The move to reduce taxes is driven by the feeling that the tax system is not fair and that the waste in government spending, particularly in welfare, justifies the reduction. Since we in higher education are significantly tax dependent, we are afflicted by the tax reduction movement. At the same time, what we offer is what the citizens need. That is why I am optimistic about the future of higher education. There will be eventually a clearer perception of what we must have to provide the people what they must have. In the meantime, we will use our wits and common sense to make our university a stimulating place, one of the best places to learn in our state and beyond, and a place where people work in partnership to achieve the university's objectives.

In my 32 years in college and university administration, the 1980s provided for me the greatest trial and the longest "era of good feeling." The deep recession of the early eighties dislocated life in our state. Many people on our campus lost their jobs. Some programs were eliminated, others reduced. We survived the trauma and came out a better institution. What did we learn from that experience? Prepare for the next one. The mid-years of the decade can be compared to the seven years of plenty. Appropriations were up; students began to seek us out; the students were more serious about academic achievement and fewer were inclined to self-destruct. During this time, that I hoped in my fantasies would continue indefinitely, we prepared ourselves for the reality that it would not. Now about us we see that the years of plenty are at an end for awhile. Fortunately for us, students are continuing to seek us out in large numbers. Students continue to demonstrate a maturity sur-

passing that of the 1970s and early 1980s, and Grand Valley is not facing deficits or reductions in faculty and staff. As we make our budget projections for the remainder of this year and for 1992-93, we believe that our university, by prudently managing our resources, will proceed without dislocation. We have an excellent faculty and staff, and we plan to keep them. This university is special. I believe we can keep it that way through a period of weakened state appropriations by our preparation, prudent spending, and if necessary, self-sacrifice. Some of you will remember when we as a faculty and staff agreed to a year with no raises in order to forestall more dismissals for financial reasons. Because of the improved financial condition during the year, we were able to pay a 3% raise in June retroactive to the beginning of the fiscal year. That is the kind of partnership that helps to make this place special. Presently, I see no call for similar action. My primary goal during this recession is to maintain the jobs at Grand Valley. We need them, and I am confident we can preserve them.

A decade ago the confederation of colleges which comprised Grand Valley merged into the institution that we are today. The structure and organization has worked well enough, yet there are some who advocate a change. The present organization attempts to keep the liberal arts and sciences departments and the professional programs of like disciplines closely aligned, but some claim that it separates the arts and sciences disciplines from one another by creating strong divisional boundaries. I think it is time for us to examine the premises on which we are organized to ascertain whether or not our structure will best serve the academic development of the university's departments and schools in the 1990s and into the 21st century. The time has come for open, thoughtful, and deliberate discussion about these matters. To launch the discussion, I have the following comments:

First: The School of Education, the School of Nursing and the professional health programs, and the School of Social Work should be independent as the Seidman School is in our present organization. This is necessary for their standing within the professions they serve, and for the future recruitment of faculty and administrators. The School of Engineering is in a developing stage. Eventually it, too, could become independent, but now it should remain attached to the science division. The School of Communications, the School of Criminal Justice, and the School of Public Administration have such close ties to their divisions that they are special cases. For now, they too should remain attached to their divisions while we define clearly the conditions that determine whether a school should remain attached to a division or become self-standing.

Second: If we move to increase the independence of the professional schools, special care must be given the general education requirements for the graduates of those schools. The strength of our university lies significantly in its roots as a liberal arts college, and as the university becomes more complex and comprehensive in its curriculum, we must be aware of that strength and never permit its diminution. As we begin these discussions, we should seize the opportunity to tighten and improve

the general education core now required. We still have too much a pot pourri of courses. The more departments and individual faculty feel the need to generate and protect credit hours of instruction, the greater number of courses there are that find their way into the core curriculum. Today at Grand Valley no departments or individuals are or will be threatened by the lack of student credit hours generated. There is no better time to look objectively at our core requirements, define precisely what the well educated graduate should experience, prescribe the core courses that specifically meet that definition, and insist that our graduates with majors in the arts and sciences and in the professional schools take them. We can sharpen our focus in general education and in doing so improve our communal intellect.

The unequivocal commitment to the liberal arts core has one overriding implication. The professional bachelors degree will require more than 120 semester hours for graduation, and that is happening in some fields now. The knowledge explosion will have its way with the professions, and the schools that educate for them must have adequate time. The traditional arts and sciences majors should remain within the 120 semester hour time frame. They move into professional work when they proceed to graduate school. As a university, we are beginning to face this inevitability, and our plans for the future should take it into account.

Finally, as we sort out our thoughts about core requirements and hours necessary to be educated and proficient in a specialty, we should be guided by a cardinal rule: There is to be no duplication of fields or courses in the university unless there is general consensus that they cannot be avoided. For instance, any special needs for language or ethics by students majoring in the professional schools should be accommodated by the liberal arts departments responsible for those fields. The successful interchange between such schools and departments, the sharing of faculty and courses, will lead to efficient operation, but more than that, to the mutual appreciation of person for person, department for school, and school for department. This approach is not uncommon amongst us, but there are always reasons and tendencies to set it aside. We should overcome them the best we can by cooperation and accommodation.

Third: To raise the issue of independence for some of our professional schools, to once again intensify the discussion on general education and what it should be at our university, to insist that the price for professional school independence is acceptance of an all university liberal arts core, and to foreclose debate on whether or not to join the divisions in a College of Arts and Sciences, does not seem logical. Several faculty have mentioned to me their hope for again being joined together in a College of Arts and Sciences. Others have said to me, don't try to fix what isn't broken. Both views are intelligently held and I realize that with discussion comes the discomfort that threat of change or change engenders. Yet I have the intuitive feeling that now is the time to examine the structure this university should carry into the 21st century, and if matters of greatest importance to the institution are to find their way to the agendas of university governance, the issue of the organization of the arts and

sciences should be among them.

As I scan our academic landscape, the position of academic Dean faces the most significant changes if we decide to alter our structure. I want the present incumbents to know how much I appreciate their efforts in a difficult vocation wedged between faculty and the Provost and President. And if change takes place, I reiterate what I said, "There is stimulating work here for everyone."

A further threat is the separation of the professional, vocational from the liberal arts. The ideal for which we have striven, unifying the process of training for a job with the development of the intellect through the study of humanities, arts and sciences can so easily be set aside. If any plan emerges from our discussions, it should include ways to keep this striving alive and practical.

There is no urgency to the three topics that I place on your agenda. The decision to act or not to act in regard to them can be reached after thoughtful deliberation. But as in all matters of importance to the university, those deliberations should proceed without interruption and when all viewpoints have had fair hearing, a decision made. So the appropriate governance bodies can deal with the issues I have raised that are not now being addressed, I will ask the Provost and the Chairman of the University Senate to jointly propose a procedure for us to follow.

Fourth: It is improper for the administration and students to negotiate a change or addition to the curriculum. The Faculty prepare the course of instruction and it is their responsibility and right to ultimately decide the composition of the curriculum. For that reason, when the administration and representatives of the Black students agreed on several actions to improve campus life, we would not agree to stipulate changes in instruction. Instead, a faculty task force was appointed to engage the issue of multiculturalism in the curriculum. The task force has made its recommendations. The issue of how our University will adapt its course of instruction to the need of a multicultural approach is joined. Since the beginning of universities, the curriculum has evolved and changed as society has evolved and changed. We are at a time when the multicultural dimension will find expression at the universities in our country. In some it will make sense; in others it will not. For us, it is important that we do it well. I can accept the task force recommendations, but if possible, we should try to find ways that a large majority of the faculty can accept. For without near consensus, what we do will be piecemeal and have little, if any, lasting effect on the University. Perhaps some planned experimentation is valid as we try to find the best ways to recognize this growing force in our society without surrendering to pressures that could lead us down the wrong curricular path. Every society needs common values and understanding to hold together and the universities are responsible to find the ways to formulate and purvey them. We are seeking those ways. I appreciate the task force's able and conscientious efforts. I hope during this academic year the faculty will take action to improve multicultural instruction so that our students of all races will better understand and accept each other, and realize that the survival of our nation as a leader demands that understanding.

I have addressed matters that I want to place on the faculty agenda; now I will share with you the matters that interest me, and to which I plan to devote time now and in the future. They also comprise an agenda for the University as I share them with you in anticipation that you too may have an agenda for the future. I want to hear about your objectives so all of us together can construct a map to the future. If you don't like some of the items on my list, let me know; if you have some to add, let's discuss them. Before I present my list, I will again state my overall objectives for our University. I want Grand Valley to be distinguished for the high quality of its undergraduate program, drawing excellent students from Michigan and beyond, who are supported by a faculty capable of the best teaching. I want the Allendale campus to be the center of this special undergraduate initiative. I want Grand Valley to serve this region of the state with both undergraduate and graduate programs that will contribute to its economy, health, and social services. I want this accomplished with special care given to personal requirements and feelings of the students. To accomplish this, as I have said before, calls for the faculty and staff to live in two worlds—one, the world of the liberal arts undergraduate college with attached professional programs, and the other, the urban university with its variety of students, special research needs, and infinite schedule. Now I will tell you what's on my mind today as I consider the building of that University.

First: We must continually apply our energies to attract 1600 highly qualified first-time freshman students. Our freshman profile, measured by grade point and test scores, surpasses or is equal to all state universities in Michigan, except the University of Michigan and Michigan Tech. There is a possibility that this year we may rank third. Our admissions standards are higher, I believe, than all the private colleges except Kalamazoo. We are making progress towards attracting the first-time freshmen that will propel us toward the goal of being a distinguished college. I hope we can sustain the 1600 number, but there is no reason to strive for more unless appropriations increase significantly so we can appoint the faculty and staff necessary to sustain a larger number. More important, I would rather improve the quality than increase the number. In the era of a dwindling 18-year-old cohort, I commend our admissions staff for their skill, the faculty who generously give time to assist in admissions, and whose teaching attracts good students, and the administrators whose concern for the students is beginning to be known beyond our University. We are likely to increase our enrollment slightly in the fall of 1992 because of an improved retention rate. If we continue to be the fastest growing, it will be because no other university is growing at all. Unless state spending for higher education increases significantly, and I don't think it will for a few years, we will reach our numbers limit. If we had the money to expand, I still would favor keeping the FTIAC number about where it is now, and provide more instruction for older adults in our graduate programs. If we had the money to meet the demand of older, qualified students who wanted access to our curriculum, I think our enrollment would reach 18,000 near the end of the decade. With the funds I think will be available, the figure is likely to be

between 14,000 and 15,000.

Second: The quality of the University depends ultimately on the quality of the instruction provided by the faculty. There are two happy developments over the last decade in regard to the faculty. First, the veterans have stayed, and second, the new faculty have stimulated their colleagues and their students. The veterans can congratulate themselves on the high quality of new colleagues they have attracted. I am less concerned than I was five years ago when I considered the “changing of the guard.” To those of you who recently joined our academic community, if you make this your place of fulfillment, you have the capacity to carry Grand Valley to new levels of intellectual achievement. Having said this, I still want us to think about and plan better procedures for identifying the faculty and staff we will seek in the future, and continually improve our faculty and staff development programs for those who are here. This is much on my mind. Let me hear your ideas.

Third: To have an excellent faculty is the first objective; to have enough full time faculty is the second. Though the case for more faculty in most departments is easily justified, our resources are limited or we are not satisfied with the candidates who apply to fill needed positions. As the enrollment levels, we will concentrate on finding resources and people so we can add to the full time faculty in areas of high student demand. Though Grand Valley by almost any measure is the most cost effective university in the state, cost efficiency borne by faculty and staff has its limits. It is important for us to provide the citizens with value for their dollar, but it is also necessary to offer good education and good working conditions.

Fourth: This past week a former student seeking teacher certification after graduating from another university came to us confused and embarked upon her work with enthusiasm after a Professor in the Psychology Department guided her through the process of course selection. His encouragement will never be forgotten and always appreciated as she successfully carries on her career in an area school. Recently I attended a party that a graduating student gave for her Professor and her class in Business because she liked what was happening in the class. These are illustrations of what is best about Grand Valley. Yet, our alumni in some academic areas criticize the advising or lack of advising during their college experience. We are generally helpful people, but my agenda calls for more attention to the guidance of our students until all will find our people and systems as helpful as so many do.

Fifth: I was asked last week about bricks and mortar for the future. The distinguished university to which we aspire must do most of its work within walls, and I was and am ready to share with you the building needs as I see them. You, too, may have your list, and I hope you will share it with me. No list is fixed in concrete until it is poured for construction of a building—or perhaps a little before that—and the time to discuss it is now. Here are the facilities for Allendale:

1. The long-sought Science Building is like a military fortress that does not surrender. We have just launched our latest campaign, and ever the optimist, I hope in

1992 we will achieve our objective. The war is a long one.

2. I don't need to explain to you our shortage of offices and classrooms. With funds that I think we can use, another 13 classrooms and Anthropology and Psychology labs and 21 offices can be added to AuSable Hall. If we begin planning at the first of the year, the facilities will be ready for the fall of 1993.

3. An art building

4. An addition to the library

5. Space for the School of Communications

6. An arena added to the field house for recreation

7. Student services space and administrative offices

8. Language Houses and an International Center

For downtown we have been given permission by the state to plan for a Business School building and Graduate School library. After the Science Building, this will be the priority for state funding. It will have general purpose classrooms, as well as spaces designed specifically for the Business School. Another downtown facility for which we anticipate a need is a Student Center.

These facilities will be needed in this decade. I mention them to you now so you may comment and we can refine the list before we begin the work we must do to bring it to fruition. State lobbying, private fund raising, and potential bonding are all in our future if we are to succeed. We can only work and hope.

Sixth: My mind is open to new programs, yet our University is comprehensive in its offerings to the degree that the citizens are served well. As resources become available, we should reinforce what we have. I can see the possibility of some existing undergraduate departments considering a masters degree program. I think a Master of Arts in a teaching field is particularly useful to teachers in our region, and we should find the money when we are ready to launch such a degree. We should be exceedingly cautious about additional fields of study. I hope you agree.

I have suggested an agenda for discussion and possible action. I have shared some plans for the future. There are some things, however, that are imminent. First, the Cook-DeWitt Center is about to open and be dedicated by a series of concerts and lectures running from November 24th until early April. In November and in each month from January through April, there will be a pipe organ recital. I hope those of you who enjoy music will take pleasure in the new instrument in our midst, a 22 rank Reuter Pipe Organ. The 250 seat auditorium is different from anything we have. I

think it will become an important place on the campus for music, for lectures, for academic convocations, for debates, for large meetings, and for worship.

Less germane to our purpose, yet an enhancement to our surroundings, is the golf course that will emerge from the ground next spring. Golfers will have to wait until summer 1993 before they can take to the links. No University funds will be used to finance it. We anticipate that within two or three years it will prove to be a better investment than fallow land or corn; and it will be a source of enjoyment for students, faculty, and staff.

One other addition you may have noticed nestled at the northeast corner of Lake Superior Hall is the Shakespeare Garden. Professor Roz Mayberry has taken the initiative on that project and several of our community members have joined her. The University is officially involved, and I look to this initiative as the beginning of an ambitious project to make our campus bloom. We can have gardens here that will give us the special joy that comes only with plants and flowers, and attract people to come for miles to enjoy them. Nothing excites me more than the prospect of our campus adorned by the deep greens and myriad of colors that a garden provides.

With the thought of a beautiful garden in your mind, I will wind gently towards the conclusion of my remarks.

After 22 years here I have an affection for the place and for the people so I am discomfited when my proposals are unsettling to some. I don't like to antagonize friends. Yet, conviction about professional matters is an essential quality in a University President and my feeling of responsibility for the future of the University and my desire to participate in it for several more years makes me risk the displeasure of some to place on the University agenda those items I believe that call for attention. Harold Hodgkinson talks about trust, loyalty, self-sacrifice and leadership as the cement that holds a university together. I agree, but I want to add a fifth element—"good will." That is having good feelings toward those around you, those with whom you work, even when in disagreement with them, even when you are seeking to defeat them. "Good will" usually accompanies those who share a common objective, an objective as broad as the good of a university. It is supported by the most delicate structure of human feelings that can be swept away in frustrations induced by pettiness, anger, thoughtlessness, and incompetence. As we enter into the debates about our future, we can rough up the ground, but let's declare out of bounds the structure that supports "good will."