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Faculty Response

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In his address to the GVSU faculty last Fall, President Lubbers posed again the question which has been repeatedly asked since 1963, namely, once the major campus of GVSU was located in Allendale, how much of a presence should there be in Grand Rapids? His conclusion, stated as a premise in his introduction of the speech, reveals his position that there should be two campuses, one in Allendale and one in Grand Rapids, each with a separate focus, and possibly differing tasks for professors and students. Indeed, questions about where to locate the education provided for students by faculty members have been seriously and painfully posed since 1963 at least. When the founders of the nascent institution debated the point about site, there were several suitable tracts of land in the three county area under consideration. It is important to remember, however, that the early vision for Grand Valley State was to establish a series of four small (1500 students) liberal arts units which would offer only a balanced liberal arts curriculum. The Allendale site seemed idyllic for the kind of detached learning about to take place.

However, the social consciousness of the 1960's rumbled even through Allendale. By the fall of 1967, the start of only the fourth year of the college, there were already cracks in the seemingly implacable wall of pure detached learning. Alternative colleges with significantly dissimilar styles of pedagogy were embraced soon after, albeit reluctantly by some. Important for this discussion is the fact that many faculty members and students saw the importance of doing certain tasks in an urban setting. Indeed in 1969 the Grand Rapids Foundation gave a considerable amount of money to Grand Valley State to begin an Urban Studies Institute, and academic courses from several departments were offered in various locations in the city. Many of the artists on campus used a variety of urban settings to showcase their work. By the mid and late 1960's there were significant pieces of research done in many disciplines using an urban setting. Indeed, the Grand Rapids community took us more seriously when we were present there and from the beginning expected a good, concerted effort on our part. My point here is simply that many of us have used Grand Rapids as a campus for two decades or more, and the direction President Lubbers urges upon us is really the culmination of efforts commenced over twenty years ago, almost from the beginning of Grand Valley State.

Of greater importance than our history of involvement in Grand Rapids is the growing size, prosperity and diversity of the Grand Rapids metropolitan area. It is apparent to all that the economic base of the area is fast becoming the best in Michigan.

Most of the new jobs and many of the existing ones in the private and public sectors will demand higher and higher levels of education and technical competence. President Lubbers is certainly correct when he states that "In modern America each region that has a city at its core needs a blend of research, graduate education, continuing education at the undergraduate level, telecommunications, consulting services, and access to a significant library to survive as a desirable place to live." It is now up to us to decide whether we want to be the university which is the catalyst for this, or if we wish to retreat from Grand Rapids and leave these functions to one or more other universities. It seems to me that GVSU, as an emerging university, could ably serve 15,000 students by the year 2000, given the projected economic and population growth and concomitant needs of the region. With careful, yet aggressive planning, this appears to me to be a modest, not an unrealistic proposal.

To examine the model outlined by President Lubbers, it may be helpful to briefly look at three other postures GVSU could adopt. First the two extremes. There are some who suggest that we took the wrong path many years ago when we began to offer professional programs, some at the graduate level. They would have us be mainly a "pure" liberal arts college for which the Allendale campus by itself is more than adequate. Some who suggest this position would also reduce the size of the faculty and student body to the 6000 student level once espoused by the founders of the college. Ideally, most students would live on campus to populate a residential undergraduate college. It seems to me, however, that as a public institution with regional obligations and aspirations, we have moved far beyond this posture and it would be a form of political and curricular suicide to retreat to this small, mainly liberal arts only stance.

The other extreme would be to construct a university in which the two campuses would be virtually separate, autonomous entities. It would be patterned after the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, Flint and Dearborn. We obviously have neither the size nor distance which would call for this posture, and duplication costs alone make this easily dismissable.

The two, intermediate postures proposed assume that GVSU is an emerging, growing institution. The population and economic growth described earlier necessitates two kinds of growth for us. First, we will continue to see an increasing demand for good undergraduate offerings, some from full-time and some from part-time students. In a sizeable metropolitan area, there will surely be larger numbers of older students who want their first bachelor's degree or wish to retrain themselves for a new profession. Second, the demand for graduate programs will certainly escalate, joined by more and more requests for basic and applied research. These come from the public as well

as private sector. Just in the last five years there has been a 50% increase in credit hour offerings. The pressures to meet the expanding needs of the region will be substantial. If this growth is well planned there is no need to consider it as unbridled, haphazard or reckless in any sense. What we are building is a University whose undergraduate reputation for general education and the liberal arts is improving, and whose undergraduate and graduate professional programs meet regional needs to improve the economy and overall quality of life. Some argue that to do one of these well negates the potential and quality of the other. I believe the inverse is true. That is, as the quality of the liberal arts and professional programs grows, they have a healthy kind of synergistic effect on each other.

The question then is not whether to grow, but how fast and where to locate it. One way would be to continue to construct more and more buildings on the Allendale campus to house additional classrooms, faculty offices and support services. The only presence in Grand Rapids would be the newly constructed Grand Rapids Center to accommodate the engineering and evening graduate programs. In the main, faculty would remain on the Allendale campus, as would almost all undergraduate courses. The Grand Rapids presence would be minimal. Perhaps research facilities could be built in the future. The two major advantages to this plan would be that there would be few faculty "split" from the Allendale campus and there would be little need to have support services in Grand Rapids, especially library holdings.

Given that we are a state university, mostly serving the western Michigan region, I believe that the two campus model proposed by President Lubbers is the most prudent one to adopt. In Grand Rapids we should offer, during daytime and evening hours, most of our graduate courses and most of the third and fourth year courses of the professional programs. Even some of the junior and senior level liberal arts courses could be offered there. I would qualify this in several respects, however. First, these courses should be phased in slowly, with careful planning over the next 10-15 years. Second, at the undergraduate level whatever is offered in Grand Rapids should also be offered on the Allendale campus if the enrollment warrants it. If only one section of a course can be offered it probably should be on the Allendale campus. Third, the support services needed in Grand Rapids should also be phased in carefully. In a few years, much of the library work needed will be done by computer hook-up, especially for journals and reports. But the library resources needed for the Grand Rapids campus remains one of the most important issues to be resolved.

Slowly and carefully, most faculty teaching in the professional programs should be moved to the Grand Rapids campus. As we become larger and begin to look more and more like a real university, there will be greater decentralization of authority in

matters of budget, personnel and curriculum. Already at GVSU, compared to a few years ago, more and more work is being done at the department level. This is mostly a function of size and role and although these changes may seem difficult for some faculty members, it is inevitable as an institution grows. The next new building at GVSU will likely be a life sciences building on the Allendale campus. Subsequent buildings for classrooms and faculty offices will probably be on the Stow Davis property next to the Grand Rapids Center. These will also contain research facilities for faculty and students, mostly in the professional programs.

To have a campus in Grand Rapids is convenient for the array of commuter students. That is how it should be since we will probably have more part-time students in the year 2000 than we do now, especially in Grand Rapids. But mainly, I believe it is important for the faculty and students in professional programs to be in close proximity to the community they serve, for teaching, research and socialization into the profession. Convenience is nice, but day to day contact with the "real world" is essential for undergraduate and graduate faculty and students. Only then are important reciprocal learning and research opportunities fully enjoyed. Only then will the greater Grand Rapids community recognize and respect Grand Valley State as *the* University in Grand Rapids. Day to day interaction for faculty members and students with their respective professional communities engenders respect for them as well.

I am convinced that if we build, slowly but carefully, a sizeable and formidable Grand Rapids Campus, the Allendale Campus will not suffer, but will be enhanced. I believe that the reputation of both campuses will grow together. I also believe that the more complete the Grand Rapids campus becomes, the more likely the Allendale campus will attract better and better students. If I did not believe this, I would not recommend it.