



**Gayle R. Davis**  
**Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs**  
**Fall Convocation**  
**Friday, August 26, 2011**

Welcome to the opening convocation of the 2011-2012 academic year at Grand Valley State University. It is good to see all of you -- members of the Board of Trustees, students, faculty, staff, family members and other friends of the university. Thank you for joining us in this celebration of a new academic year.

Before we move on in our ceremony, I'd like to direct a few words to our many first year students in the audience. Your campus orientation for the past few days has given you a chance to become acquainted with the university and some of its people, to gain a lot of information and a sense of the culture of college. This orientation format is not uncommon in organizations, but attending a formal opening convocation may well be a new experience for you.

We treat this assembly with special ceremony, as you can see by the fact that the faculty and staff are wearing academic regalia. These beautifully colorful, serious costumes pay homage to a centuries old tradition in institutions of higher learning. As we wear these garments in the style of those of the middle ages, we are reminded of our places among centuries of others for whom the pursuit of intellectual excellence and growth was central in their lives. The academic regalia symbolizes a departure from ordinary modes of everyday life, just as the university provides an unusual environment in our larger society.

That environment is planned to nurture time spent in communication and reflection, exploration, intellectual focus and achievement. I welcome you to this academic world. I know your experience at Grand Valley will lead to wonderfully expanding horizons for you.

You students are entering a beautiful, dynamic university, full of people who have your success in mind -- a dedicated, caring and talented faculty and staff. In fact, may I ask the faculty who are assembled here this morning to stand for your new students and be recognized for the central role you play at Grand Valley.

I extend my wishes to each of you, students and faculty alike, for a wonderful academic year.