



**Figen Mekik**  
**Chair Faculty Senate**  
**Fall Convocation**  
**Friday, August 26, 2011**

Good morning President Haas, Provost Davis, esteemed administrators, colleagues, fellow faculty and our much cherished students,

It is my great honor and pleasure to welcome all of you to a new year at our venerable institution. One of the best things about working and living in academia, and particularly at Grand Valley, is that every new year holds the promise of enormous personal growth and intellectual gains. Every year we start afresh and anew.

I would like to especially welcome our incoming freshmen and all our new and returning students. I know I am speaking on behalf of the entire faculty when I say we are thrilled to see you here because you are our future thinkers, creators, entrepreneurs and leaders in a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected but at the same time increasingly more competitive. We are enthused and ready to educate and guide you into your chosen professions, and in turn, we entrust you to lead us into brighter futures.

Though I mean every word of what I just said, that probably sounds like something you would expect a professor to say. Ok, but please indulge me for a minute and think about your hero, the one person whose accomplishments leave you breathless and wondering if this person had super-human talents and skills. Maybe this person is Mozart, or Einstein, or Martin Luther King Jr.... Maybe he is Justin Verlander, or she is Meryl Streep or Maya Angelou... Or maybe it is your mom or dad...

No matter whom you are thinking of, I assure you of three things: [1] they are not superhuman, [2] they didn't get to where they are by chance, and [3] you have the talents to exceed their successes if you dedicate yourself to the task.

How do I know this? There is an enormous and ever growing body of historical, psychological and scientific research which shows that though people may be born with various innate abilities, it is almost never those with extreme talents who become the greatest achievers. However, the best of the best are almost always those who chose to work hard at things that are seemingly impossible for them, not things that come easily. These are the folks who take pains to work on their challenges because they have found something they love, something they have true passion for. And the great achievers are almost always those who read broadly and who make it their mission to learn as much as they can about everything, not only interesting, fun or easy material... Everything! It is those folks who become our idols and heroes.

So if you are willing to dedicate yourself to something you are passionate about, to work hard at things that you may think are beyond your abilities, and to accept challenges, you too will become world-class and achieve greatness in whatever you choose to do. And I emphasize *whatever* your endeavors may be.

So please take full advantage of all the resources and programs Grand Valley has to offer. Find your passion and do NOT waste a single moment in seizing opportunities to partner with your professors on scholarly research and creative projects. That is what professors are here for! Please also take full advantage of our liberal education programs. Take chances and open new horizons for yourself by taking classes in subjects you don't find necessarily interesting as well as those dear to your heart. And always remember that the faculty at Grand Valley are at the top of their fields, and are ready and eager to guide you into realizing your dreams. No goal is too lofty.

So, I wish you a happy start to a new year at Grand Valley. To the returning students: welcome back! To the new students: welcome home!