

Thomas J. Haas
Convocation 2017
August 25, 2017

What a great day! We've been looking forward to welcoming you to campus and the start of another academic year at Grand Valley State University. We're especially pleased to see all of you new **Lakers for a Lifetime!**

We are joined today by members of our Board of Trustees. The trustees work hard in their roles to contribute to our wonderful university, and we are grateful for their efforts.

We welcome Provost Maria Cimitile, who leads our distinguished faculty. These experts in their respective fields have chosen a life of teaching. You will find them knowledgeable and accessible. Some of them, you will remember throughout your life for the difference they make.

We're joined by members of my cabinet and many Grand Valley staff members. Welcome to them and to all the students and guests who are on campus to help us kickoff the 2017-2018 academic year.

These are exciting times. As educational entrepreneur and writer Tony D'Angelo wrote:

Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow.

Passion and growth – two things in abundance at Grand Valley. We have passion for our mission – to educate students to shape their lives, their professions and their societies.

We believe in life-long learning so our passions, curiosity and openness continue to grow.

We value scholarship and service. We value the integrity of each person. We live in challenging times, but no more challenging than times our parents and grandparents faced.

We're up to this challenge.

We must commit to respectfully listening to others' opinions and then respectfully voicing our own. We believe in civility and respect.

We are grounded in a liberal education tradition. We believe in critical thinking. High-minded thinking can only come with high-level inputs.

We must encourage each other to read many authors, listen to many speakers and to thoughtfully consider our role in an ethical, vibrant learning community.

We have a chance every day to improve our lives and the lives of others by what we do and what we say. Open inquiry and intellectual curiosity are keys to our success on campus and in the world.

You are pursuing a college degree, and your friends and family should start to see the difference in you. You will grow and change as you are exposed to new thoughts and ideas – both inside and outside of the classroom.

Yes, there's a great deal of hard work, and yes, there's a great deal of fun. Make sure you get those in the right proportions!

As I say, these are exciting times. Let me paraphrase psychologist Jean Piaget:

The goal of education is not to increase the amount of knowledge, but to create the possibilities to invent and discover, to create people who are capable of doing new things.

We can hardly wait to see what “new things” you will create and invent. We are certain we will be proud of your “Laker Effect.”

Class of 2021, this is your community. Thank you for choosing Grand Valley State University.

Let's make it a successful year! Go Lakers!