

This is a day we've been anticipating! Welcome to all who gather for the formal beginning of another academic year at Grand Valley State University. We are especially excited to see all of you new **Lakers for a Lifetime!**

Class of 2020 has a nice ring to it... don't you think?

Let me introduce current board members; David Hooker, immediate past board chair, Megan Sall, chair, Academic and Student Affairs Committee, and Victor Cardenas, Finance and Audit Committee. Megan and Victor are also Alumni of Grand Valley State University.

The Board joins many others who work to provide the conditions and the climate that will contribute to your success at Grand Valley State University. We're happy you are here.

Please welcome Provost Gayle Davis who leads our distinguished faculty. You will learn from these accomplished academics because they choose to be teachers... to share their knowledge and their experiences so you can broaden your own. You will then branch into new directions, expanding the knowledge base. Their goals are to help you achieve your goals... and more importantly your full potential.

We're also joined by members of my cabinet and other Grand Valley staff members. We welcome them and all of the students and guests who have joined us to kick off another academic year on campus.

Many of you are new to our community, but we trust you choose to be here because you share Grand Valley values... values that begin with our liberal education tradition. We know that when people are not merely reciting facts but rather grappling with ideas, their potential is unleashed. Ultimately, a liberal education encourages people to think broadly... communicate effectively... and play a critical role in their businesses and societies.

We value scholarship and service. To all of you who might plan a spring break, know that Grand Valley has a long history of what we call "an alternative spring break." For 25 years, Lakers have used their spring break to travel all over the country to perform acts of service in communities that desperately need their help. And you don't have to wait for spring break. Keep your eyes open for opportunities on our campuses and in our local communities to make a difference.... To make that Laker Effect.

The Laker Effect is apparent all over campus... and in the communities in which our alumni live. The definitions of Laker Effect are as limitless as are Lakers. It is all about leadership.

Lakers believe in superior performance – in teaching, scholarship, service and inclusiveness. We are an institution of higher learning. Open inquiry and intellectual curiosity are integral to our health on campus. We are dedicated to hearing different voices. (PAUSE)

Hearing. Listening.

And when you are the one to speak, remember we value civility and respect.

The connections we share in this community grow out of our commitment to integrity and taking responsibility for what we say and what we do.

We are committed to fostering greatness in each member of our community... no matter your background... no matter your major. Open yourself up to your professors who are dedicated to finding and nurturing your gifts. You are here to learn at a higher level.

American journalist and author Sydney J. Harris said this:

The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows.

Those few words are quite impactful. By pursuing a degree at Grand Valley State University, you have decided to look farther and wider than you ever have before.

You will also have newfound freedoms here on campus, so I'd be remiss if I didn't offer some advice:

Go to class... go to office hours... meet and embrace new people and new ideas. Go see the Lakers play... go to one of our Fall Arts events. Join a club... join a sorority or fraternity. Spend time at the library... work out at the Fieldhouse. All contribute to a healthy lifestyle.

You get the idea. There's a lot of work to do and a lot of fun to have.

You are welcome here.

This is your community! Thank you for choosing Grand Valley State University. We look forward to watching what you do and how you contribute to campus as you pursue your degrees... and set your sights.

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