

Expanding Our Reach: 2012-2013 and Beyond

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Introduction

As we reflect on the beginning of our second half-century, I am confident that we will see this as a time in our history when Grand Valley began to come of age. A time when our reach as a university began to significantly accelerate, and our impact as individuals and as a university began to multiply.

I'm reminded of chaos theory's "butterfly effect" — a small change in one place can result in large differences at a later time, in a different place. The mere flutter of a butterfly's wings in India can impact the weather in Texas. There are examples of this in any complex system including a university.

Grand Valley's flutter began with our founders 52 years ago and continues through all of you and our 86,000 alumni.

That flutter indeed impacts the entire world.

What power ... what responsibility we all share.

This past year, we had the largest graduating class in our history as 5,300 students obtained their degrees — magnifying the impact. Our incoming freshman class this fall reflects our 30th year of consecutive enrollment growth. In the six years I've been here our enrollment has increased 6 percent, our economic impact has increased 40 percent and the number of Grand Valley alumni has increased 40 percent. Clearly our "butterfly wings" are growing in number and influence each year, and our reach is expanding exponentially. That is leading to an increased recognition at the local, state, national and international levels, proving we have something really special. Grand Valley's pursuit of excellence in education is making a difference. I want to thank you all for your unique contributions to our success.

Every year during the summer, I, along with the other members of the Senior Management Team, take time to assess how we're fulfilling our mission and progressing toward the goals of our strategic plan. The university continues its active reliance on robust strategic planning to ensure thoughtful and focused decision-making. In the five years since attaining institution-wide accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, we have made significant strides in linking strategic planning to the attainment of student outcomes, as well as to budgeting at every institutional level.

On a timeline, we are halfway to our strategic plan goals for 2015, but we are more than halfway toward accomplishing them. As of last year, we had met eight of 14 continuing objectives, with another 19 annual objectives on track to be accomplished by the end of 2012. I couldn't be more proud of our achievements. Each of your departments has a plan for specific unit goals to help us meet our objectives, making Grand Valley one of the few intentionally strategic universities in the country. It shows



in our outcomes, which are some of the best in the state and the nation. We can be proud of the diligence campus leaders have shown in incorporating strategic planning into their administrative and management responsibilities.

I think too often we are so busy in our individual work that we can't fully appreciate what we are accomplishing together ... our true reach as a university. I'd like to celebrate just a few of the many notable accomplishments of our campus community that can only happen with your hard work; then look to the future and expand from my remarks during the faculty and staff academic opening meeting.

Reaching for Excellence: Serving Students

In addition to having another year of enrollment growth, we can be very proud of the exceptional students who choose Grand Valley for their college experience, and for the way in which we nurture and help students of all backgrounds succeed.

Highlights in this area include the following:

- The results of our GVSU Climate Study were announced, and the news is promising. Satisfaction levels were very high with students, and nearly 90 percent of respondents felt Grand Valley was committed to diversity, up from 60 percent in 2005. This year the university was also recognized as a national role model by Minority Access Inc. for our commitment to diversity, and Grand Valley was recognized for several "best practices," further evidence that we are on the right path in this important area. I want to thank Vice President Jeanne Arnold and the Campus Climate Implementation Committee for their work.
- Our commitment to diversity is making a difference in our student population. Enrollment for students of color increased this year, taking us from 12.8 percent to 13.6 percent. We can and will continue to diversify our student body. Thanks to Director of Admissions Jodi Chysinski and her team for their ongoing efforts to bring students of color to campus. When students experience what we offer, they want to be part of our learning community.
- Another highlight, which is dear to my heart, is our support of our students who have served this country in the military. For the third year in a row, Grand Valley has been identified as one of the country's top "military friendly schools" by G.I. Jobs. We have 450 students who are veterans. I want to especially thank those who are part of our Veterans Network, a cross-disciplinary group of faculty and staff members whose support of these students goes above and beyond.
- One measure of our success in supporting and retaining students is timely graduation and the success of the Grand Finish program. This year was the first year grants were awarded and nearly 900 students met the requirements and made it a Grand Finish. Thanks to Vice Provost Lynn Blue, Chick as she's known, and her team for helping us implement such an innovative program.
- We provide hundreds of opportunities for students and the entire community to



enjoy arts and cultural events from around the world at no charge. This is our ninth year of offering the Fall Arts Celebration, during which music, dance, art, theater, literature, and thought-provoking lectures can expand students' worldview.

- We serve students by offering practical learning opportunities with internships and co-ops that often lead to jobs in a tough economy.
- Our campus life is robust and offers much to students — free exercise at the Fieldhouse, movies in the Kirkhof Center and more than 300 student organizations.
- An innovative pilot program, Campus Links, is starting this fall for students diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome. Students are paired with trained peer mentors who live in the same on-campus housing unit. There are very few models like this in the country. These students are solid academically but can benefit from help to navigate the social aspects of college life. Disability Support Resources is the lead on this collaborative pilot with the Autism Education Center, Housing and others. This is another example of Grand Valley's dedication to the success of all of our students.

Reaching for Excellence: Academics

Excellence in academics is a cornerstone for Grand Valley. Thank you for putting Grand Valley in the academic spotlight and encouraging our students to reach their fullest potential. There are many rewards for your efforts.

A few highlights this year are below:

- From 2008-2011, external funding from grants and awards increased by \$7 million with a 70.5 percent increase in proposals submitted for funding. That includes opportunities like the \$1.1 million Target Inquiry grant received by Dr. Deborah Herrington in Chemistry to improve inquiry-based instruction for middle and high school science teachers; and a \$1.79 million U.S. Department of Health and Human Services grant received by the Physician Assistant Studies program to help expand the program with more students and faculty.
- Many of you were successful in getting new or renewed accreditations this year. The Padnos College of Engineering and Computing, and the Seidman College of Business were reaccredited with flying colors. The Doctor of Nursing Practice degree program also attained accreditation. Congratulations to all of you who successfully went through the process this year.
- Innovative new programs and opportunities for students were created across the curriculum, including in biomedical engineering, energy and nanotechnology, and a new master's program in Speech-Language Pathology.
- The Brooks College of Interdisciplinary Studies now houses the International Big History Association and hosted the inaugural conference earlier this month. Hundreds of international scholars, scientists and students gathered on



campus. This is a discipline that has captured the support of Microsoft founder Bill Gates as well as scientists and academics from across the globe. Dr. Wendy Wenner is to be thanked for her exemplary leadership of the Brooks College and we welcome Dr. Anne Hiskes as the new dean.

- Seidman Management Professor Simha Magal worked with students to create a hypothetical company called Global Bike Inc. as part of our ERP/SAP program and it's being used by more than 250 universities in more than 30 countries. He's written THE textbook on the subject and has been named a SAP mentor, one of only two faculty members in the country to be so honored.
- Our colleagues make us proud. Dr. Al Steinman, from the Annis Water Resources Institute, was named to the Nature Conservancy Board, and Professor Ashok Kumar received a Fulbright chair — a rare and distinguished honor. He left last month to serve his term at Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi.
- The University Libraries received the 2012 Excellence in Libraries Award, making Grand Valley the only university in the country to receive the award.
- Our colleges continue to receive national recognition. The MPA program was ranked 25th in the country, the Seidman College of Business was ranked as a “Best Business School” by the Princeton Review, and the Padnos College of Engineering was just cited as one of 29 Exemplars of Real World Engineering Education by the National Academy of Engineering.
- Internally, we continue to work toward an infrastructure that will support excellence, and many of you have helped with these efforts. Especially noteworthy is the effort to improve our support for junior tenure-track faculty, and review our competitiveness for attracting and retaining graduate students.

Reaching for Excellence: Student Accomplishments

The accomplishments of our students are another way we can measure our reach and our success. Thank you for putting in the extra attention and time it takes to help them compete nationally and internationally.

Special highlights to note among our student accomplishments are the exceptional students who received national and international scholarships.

For example:

Fulbright scholar, Rikki Ella Brown

Battuta scholar, Aubrey McMahon

A record four Gilman scholars

Goldwater scholar, Brianne Docter

Manson A. Stewart scholar, Jonathan Langerak



And our first Rotary Ambassadorial scholar, Jessica Pleyel.

- Our marketing students won three national awards at the American Marketing Association Collegiate Conference.
- Advertising students placed 10th in the nation at the American Advertising Federation competition.
- Our students won their district in the American Society of Mechanical Engineers competition and will go on to compete at the international level in November, Grand Valley's third time to place at this level.
- Andrea Fleming took third place in the Opera Grand Rapids Collegiate Vocal Competition.
- Grand Valley students were the only U.S. theater group invited to perform at the International Spanish Golden Age Drama Festival.
- And our student-athletes scored big this year. Our Lakers were the women's indoor and outdoor national track and field champions for the second year in a row.
- The Laker women scored another victory as we held our first home women's lacrosse game on our new fields.
- Another athletic first for Grand Valley was the baseball team's experience in Cuba. I can tell you it was an opportunity none of them will ever forget, and an opportunity to broaden their educational, cultural and athletic experiences.

Reaching Deeper

While we have reached for excellence in every area this year, it is especially gratifying that we have the drive to reach deep within for efficiency and effectiveness, and to create a culture of excellence for the entire campus.

- When the governor's office started reviewing the performance of Michigan's public universities based on the outcomes that matter most to the state, Grand Valley scored the highest.
- When the Business Leaders for Michigan stated the areas in which higher education should be measured, we were already meeting more than half of the goals for 2015.
- Grand Valley continues to deliver the highest performance while receiving the least investment per student by the state. Decreasing state funding makes us increasingly dependent on private gifts. It is a sign of our commitment to excellence that we do so well with what we have.
- Another highlight of this year is the launch of the new initiative "Laker for a Lifetime." We want students to understand the values that unite us from the moment they come to campus — values like service, creativity and innovation,



lifelong learning, and, of course, giving back. This culture carries into our students' lives when they become alumni, and will keep them engaged with Grand Valley for decades to come. I want to thank the members of the steering committee who have given so much time and effort to get this program going in its first year. One of the first examples of how powerful this can be was the signing of the last steel beam for the library by more than 1,500 students. If you were there, you know how powerful it was to see students showing their appreciation for the 1,400 donors who supported that project. The energy was contagious.

- Our culture of giving back is exemplified by those of you who already give so much of your time and talent. More than 55 percent of you also gave your treasure to our Faculty/Staff Campaign. That's way above the national average. I thank you for once again exceeding all expectations in your support for our students and our university. Your generosity is a reflection of your passion for our mission and for our students.

Reaching Broader

We are also reaching broader. Grand Valley has a growing impact on the region, the state, the nation and the world.

- Our economic impact in West Michigan is now more than \$730 million, and the university is responsible for the creation of nearly 11,000 jobs in this area.
- We are graduating twice as many students as we did a decade ago. Most of them are employed and the majority live in Michigan — the largest share in West Michigan.
- We are investing in all of our campuses. You can see the construction of the L. William Seidman Center on our Pew Grand Rapids Campus and the Mary Idema Pew Library Learning and Information Commons in Allendale. They'll both open in less than a year. We will soon break ground on a new science laboratory building on the Allendale Campus as well as expand and repurpose Zumberge Library. We also have projects planned in Muskegon with a new field station for the Annis Water Resources Institute, and a new health building is on the drawing board near the Cook-DeVos Center for Health Sciences building downtown.
- Private support for the university is an increasing priority for Grand Valley to help us keep tuition increases to a minimum and ease the burden on students and their families, while at the same time supporting academic excellence and enrollment growth. This takes many forms including capital; the university endowment, which is our "savings account" for long-term strategic projects and supports programs, endowed chairs and scholarships; and the Grand Valley Fund, which provides unrestricted funding for our annual priorities.

We are increasing our presence statewide.



- Grand Valley houses the Small Business and Technology Development Center and this year reached out to thousands of businesses statewide. The university opened a new center in downtown Detroit to better serve southeast Michigan.

Grand Valley is creating a stronger global presence.

- We are among the top 10 study abroad programs in the country.
- We have been listed 16th in the world for sustainability.
- We are now offering our full-time MBA program in India.
- Jonathan Engelsma and his students have created a mobile app, “Art at GVSU,” which one of the first mobile apps for an art collection in the world. The next step is to create open access so our collection will benefit cultural institutions worldwide.
- Our 86,000 alumni are living and working in every state, and also in more than 40 countries in every field imaginable.
- Also, a special treat for all Lakers was to share in the experience of our own Olympian and alumna, Sarah Zelenka, as she represented not only Grand Valley but also our nation as she rowed with her teammate in London, only missing the bronze medal by 0.2 seconds.

Reaching Forward

As we start a new year, I'd like to encourage you to reach forward, to stretch toward our 2013 and 2015 goals and our future as the state's most innovative, creative and entrepreneurial university. The ground is shifting significantly in the national conversation about higher education and its value in today's society. In spite of the many financial and cultural pressures we are experiencing, GVSU will continue to be smart and nimble enough to serve our students, faculty and staff and ensure a stable future in which we will thrive.

Some of our goals for 2013 include:

- Ensuring that our academic programs are accessible for today's students, appropriate to their educational needs, and rich with opportunities for hands-on learning. We will continue to offer our existing programs as well as new offerings in ways that are distinctive and keep GVSU on the leading edge of academic excellence, relevance, and congruence with the talent needs of our community and state.
- Continuing to improve our learning environment. This includes opening the Seidman Center and the Pew Library and planning for upcoming projects to provide state-of-the-art facilities on our campuses.
- Pursuing aggressive goals in student recruitment and retention, especially those students who most need our help to access and complete a Grand



Valley education. We will continue to take our student success model even beyond our academic programs and into Career Services, helping students prepare for the next phases of their personal and professional lives after graduation from GVSU. The new university-wide Office of Community Engagement, led by Ruth Stegeman, will enhance our reach and our historical commitment to community partnerships.

- We will continue to graduate more students who have a strong foundation in what it means to be culturally competent. Our inaugural cohort of the Intercultural Training Certificate program graduated this year and we now have six full sections scheduled for the 2012-2013 academic year. These students will be even better prepared to assume their place as global citizens and impact their society. It's what employers are looking for and completion of this certificate is noted on students' transcripts.
- Our most critical priorities as we "reach forward" with private funding are to broaden our base of donors to prepare for our next comprehensive campaign in 2020. It is a specific priority to increase support from our 86,000 alumni. To help grow our future alumni support, one of our primary initiatives for this year is Laker for a Lifetime. In the next year we will expand that initiative to target all segments of current students and to create a stronger bridge to fully engage our most recent graduates as they become active alumni.
- In the coming year, we will begin preparing for a renewed cycle of campus-wide discussions as a prelude to formally developing this institution's strategic positioning and plan for 2016-2020. Integrated with new processes required by the Higher Learning Commission, this enhanced strategic planning process will be especially valuable as we organize ourselves and marshal our resources to effectively address the many pressing changes in the environment for higher education.

Summary

Reaching forward is challenging, though we all know that Grand Valley is very experienced in finding ways forward in challenging atmospheres. We will be tested and I am confident that we will pass with honors! Thank you for continuing to reach for excellence, for caring so much about our students, and for making GVSU "magic" our constant reality. You make this a special place to work and a special university for our region and our state. As you go about your work this year, think about those butterfly wings and how each action you take will impact generations to come. You are making a difference every day. Go Lakers!





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