

Thomas J. Haas, President
Convocation Address
August 22, 2008

Trustee Taylor, Board members, Provost Davis, distinguished faculty and staff members, students and guests, let me welcome you to an exciting new year at Grand Valley State University.

We are celebrating this morning! To all of you students: we are celebrating your arrival. Our beautiful campuses ... our academic programs ... our individual responsibilities ... all have new energy and meaning because you are here joining us today.

We collectively celebrate Grand Valley's successes ... and dream and plan for more. We celebrate your successful performances in high school that put you in the Grand Valley family... and we dream and plan for more.

Look around you ... whether it's your fellow students ... or someone in an academic robe whose face you don't yet know... these are the people who will help you achieve your goals... and yes, they will celebrate with you at each triumph.

You've chosen a great place to expand your intellect, your character and develop new goals.

Be prepared to work. There are more than 200 areas of study here at Grand Valley. Be assured ... your classes will excite you ... and they will challenge you as well.

The greatest German writer of all time, Goethe, said:

"Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do."

Let us learn together and set a course of action that allows us to contribute all that we can. It is your responsibility to make your time at GVSU what you want it to be.

Remember -- Grand Valley's mission is to educate students to shape their lives ... their professions ... and their societies...and let us dream and plan for more.

We welcome you today with new academic buildings ... housing ... and recreational facilities.

The addition to Mackinac Hall is complete and the first floor was renovated for the Regional Math and Science Center and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Advising Center.

Another expansion was completed at the Kirkhof Center ... the place where you might take in a movie, grab a cup of coffee, or play some pool or video games.

More than 400 of you are living in the new Glenn A. Niemeyer Learning and Living Center. It's a state-of-the-art facility where students learn where they live. Consultants from around the country evaluated the building, and they told us that this is one of the finest facilities of its kind ... not only in Michigan, but in the entire country!

If you like to be active, you'll have to check out the new Laker Turf Building. This building will house the Movement Science programs and indoor track facilities. If you're into rugby, lacrosse, soccer, or even ultimate Frisbee, you might be spending some time in this spectacular space.

Our new projects are constructed to LEED standards -- that means Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. At Grand Valley, we want beautiful and functional spaces that protect our environment. You'll notice many green roofs as you look around our campuses.

As a matter of fact, Grand Valley is the only Michigan school cited in a new guide of "cutting-edge green" colleges and universities. *The Kaplan Guide* recognizes our commitment to sustainability – a commitment that considers environmental, economic, and social responsibility...and this commitment is driven by our students.

Grand Valley has just been named one of the best universities in the Midwest by *The Princeton Review*. The New York based educational services company looked primarily at our excellent academic programs...and for 12 years in a row as one of America's Best College Buys Buys.

You've chosen a great place...BUT we dream and plan for more.

To continue our standards of academic excellence, in addition to the new facilities, we've added more than 30 faculty members...outstanding individuals from all over the world who join others on the faculty and staff who are committed to your successes.

Grand Valley's reputation for a liberal education and a focus on undergraduates leads high achievers to our door.

Here are just a few examples of notable accomplishments:

- The National Science Foundation has awarded a three-year grant totaling nearly \$460,000 to support undergraduate research in biochemistry at Grand Valley.
- Associate Professor of biology, Roderick Morgan, and Professor of chemistry, Robert Smart have discovered with their students an inhibitor that has the

potential to treat drug-resistant bacterial infections, and they won a state-wide grant to continue their work.

- Associate Professor Steve Mattox won College Science Professor of the Year from the Michigan Science Teachers Association.
- History Professor James Goode won the Robert H. Ferrell Book Prize for distinguished scholarship.
- Associate Professor Karen Libman received national recognition for her work in theatre for the development of “Bard to Go,” the highly successful touring arm of Grand Valley’s Shakespeare Festival.

Many different fields... the same standards of excellence.

- And of course Laker Athletics ... 5 years of winning the Directors Cup as the best NCAA D II Intercollegiate Program in the nation!

And we dream and plan for more!

As much as we enjoy having you on campus and look forward to your contributions to excellence... you and your parents will be glad to know we’re working to get you out of here with an undergraduate degree in four years.

The additional faculty members we’ve hired have allowed us to schedule more sections of high demand required classes. The best way to reduce the expense of getting your degree is to make steady progress toward graduation, and be prepared to take your place in the work force or continue your education with an advanced degree.

While you’re working hard, find time to expand your interests beyond academics. Find or develop other passions. Take a guess at how many student organizations we have on campus. There are more than 260!

They range from belly dancing ... backpacking ... Harry Potter ... and chess. There is a place for you in one or many of them.

We started with a quote from a German man of letters. Let me end with someone distinctly American ... Will Rogers... known as Oklahoma’s favorite son and for his down home common sense. Rogers said:

“Even if you are on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there.”

You are definitely on the right track here at Grand Valley State University. We’re honored you’ve chosen us to help you along that track for this brief time in your lives....and we continue to dream and plan for your success!

Follow Will Rogers advice ... don't sit, get moving toward your future... prepare yourselves to take your place of distinction in our region... our state... and our world.

Thank you....Go Lakers!