

Thomas J. Haas, President
Convocation Remarks
Friday, August 28, 2009

Trustee Wolters, Board members, Provost Davis, distinguished faculty and staff members, students and guests, welcome 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 have chosen to become part of our community.

We collectively celebrate Grand Valley's successes... and dream and plan for more. We celebrate your successes ... and we dream with you, and plan for more.

US News and World Report has reported that GVSU is in the top spot in the category of "Up and Coming Schools" ... for schools like ours in the Midwest.

This category is based on surveys of presidents, provosts and other academic leaders, who judge campuses on their quality and performance. We are thrilled with this award, but I am not surprised.....and, it's not the only one.

Grand Valley has just been named one of the Best Universities in the Midwest by The Princeton Review. The Review looked at our excellent academic programs and the ratings of our own students.

And, for 13 years in a row, Grand Valley has been picked as one of "America's Best 100 College Buys."

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 great German writer Ger-tah, 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 you time at GVSU what you what it to be.

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

We welcome you today with academic buildings... housing... and recreational facilities ... Second to none in the State!
... and we dream and plan for more.

You've probably noticed the construction zone in south campus. Nearly 600 new beds and a new dining service building are well on their way to completion for next fall.

As we have in our recent past, 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.

As we seek to improve campus facilities, the new library and learning and information commons is our highest priority. And, if you are new to campus, I want to be sure you know that this new building will be named for Mary Idema Pew, the mother of our Board chair, Kate Pew Wolters.

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 additional faculty members...outstanding individuals from all over the world who join others on the faculty and staff who are committed to your successes.

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.

And 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!

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And of course, don't forget Laker Athletics ... 6 years of winning the Directors Cup as the best NCAA D II Intercollegiate Program in the nation!

Our first football game of the year is being played in Texas, so I invite each of you to come to Lubbers Stadium on Saturday night and watch the televised game on the Jumbo-Tron.

Today, I began my remarks with a quote from a German man of letters. Let me end with someone distinctly American... Will Rogers.
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 critical time in your lives...as 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.

“Please stand if you are able, for the choral benediction performed by the University Arts Chorale under the direction of Professor Ellen Pool.

Following the choral benediction please remain standing and join us in the singing of our Alma Mater. The words will be on the big screen and on the inside of the front cover of your Convocation program.”