

Convocation August 2011
President Thomas J. Haas remarks

Trustee Myers, Board members, Provost Davis, distinguished faculty and staff members, students and guests, welcome to another Grand year at Grand Valley State University!

We are so happy you're here! To all you new students – the class of 2016 – like the sound of that? We especially want to welcome you and thank you for picking Grand Valley as the place that will guide your studies for the next leg of your journey and connect you to our growing alumni base. We have some 80,000 alumni all over the world, with many staying right here in Michigan. They welcome you to the Grand Valley community as well. You are now a “Laker for Life.”

As motivational author and speaker Jim Rohn said, “There are two ways to face the future. One way is with apprehension, the other is with anticipation.”

I imagine you have a good dose of both right now. We're here to help on both fronts – ease one and feed the other! You have an exciting future at Grand Valley State University.

Look around you. We've attracted the best and brightest – we're talking about each of you. How do we do that? We have faculty that are at the top of their fields. They believe in teaching. They've elected to give their time and talent to Grand Valley students because they believe in a liberal education and personal relationships with students.

You have a successful future at Grand Valley State University.

You've chosen an exceptional place to expand your intellect and your character. We will help you achieve the goals you have and the new ones you will set. This is where Grand Valley joins you in shaping your lives... your professions... and your societies.

You've probably heard our mission statement, but you will come to know that it's much more than a statement – it is our mission. When the Grand Valley community sets its mind to something, it achieves it.

- The Princeton Review calls us one of the “Best in the Midwest.”
- For the 15th year in a row, Grand Valley has been named one of “America's 100 Best College Buys.”
- Grand Valley was recognized by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* as a top producer of Fulbright Scholars.

- And, our director of the Michigan Alternative and Renewable Energy, Arn Boezaart, has been recognized as a “Thought Leader” in energy, and our vice provost for Health, Jean Nagelkerk, has been recognized as a “Thought Leader” in health care.

That’s the team you’re joining... a team of leaders.

Speaking of teams – let’s talk athletics. The Grand Valley State Lakers have been awarded the trophy for the best all-around Division II sports team in the nation – the Directors’ Cup – for the eighth straight year.

We’ve established that we have leaders and we have winners at Grand Valley, and now most importantly, we have you.

There are so many opportunities that await you. We have more than 300 student organizations that need members... Where do you see yourself? In the ballroom dancing club? How about the Comic Book Club, the Nerf Club, or for you Harry Potter fans, the Quidditch Club?

That list doesn’t even include all the clubs that will support your areas of study. The point is to get involved on campus.

We’re excited about the campus itself. In the time you are here, you will be able to use a new, high-tech library in Allendale. You’re already seeing the construction of the Mary Idema Pew Library Learning and Information Commons, named for the mother of our Board member, Kate Pew Wolters. We are designing the best for you and future students so you can compete globally in the information age. That facility opens in the spring of 2013.

In 2013, we’ll also open a new Seidman College of Business on the Pew Grand Rapids Campus. That cutting-edge building will enhance opportunities for our business students while contributing to the well-being of downtown Grand Rapids.

You’ve been hearing a lot about the financial challenge in our state and how that is affecting education, particularly higher education. I want you to be assured that we continue to do everything we can at Grand Valley to give you an exceptional educational opportunity. We work on quality, affordability and accessibility every day. That’s our job.

Your job is to take advantage of the opportunities that are right in front of you today so you can create the future you’d like to see in the years ahead.

Author Denis Waitley cautions that, “The reason most people never reach their goals is that they don’t define them, learn about them, or seriously consider them as believable or achievable.” He goes on to say that winners can tell you where they are going and what they plan to do along the way.

Set your goals.... Start down that path with enthusiasm and know that the community of Grand Valley is beside you, and it is strong. You are a Laker and you are a winner!

It's going to be another challenging year in academics... another winning year in athletics... and another exciting year at Grand Valley State University.

Let me leave you with a line from Winston Churchill, "I am easily satisfied with the very best!"
You are the very best, and we are honored that you are here!

Go Lakers!