**Thomas J. Haas**

**Convocation remarks**

**August 24, 2018**

What an exciting day! Welcome to campus and a new academic year at Grand Valley State University. All of you new Lakers, give yourselves a hand!

We are joined today by members of our Board of Trustees.

The trustees work hard and join us in making sure Grand Valley excels in academics and in service to our students. We thank them for their efforts.

I want to recognize Provost Maria Cimitile who leads our distinguished faculty. How fortunate you are that these experts in their respective fields have chosen a life of teaching. You will find your professors have an open door and a hunger to pass on their knowledge to you.

Our reputation for having an atmosphere that allows mentoring relationships between faculty and students is well-deserved. They want you to achieve your highest potential.

We’re joined by members of my cabinet and many Grand Valley staff members. Welcome to all who are joining us on campus today to help us get the academic year off to a wonderful start.

I know you’ve had years of preparation and study to get you here and you’re all thinking, “Now what?”

It’s everything you’ve been thinking – classes … sporting events … meeting new people … classes … maybe missing home just a bit … and more classes and, yes, homework.

It’s critical to keep in mind a quote that has been attributed to both the Greek writer Plutarch and the Irish poet William Butler Yeats — whoever said it was brilliant:

**“The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled.”**

You are not a passive learner here. You will be challenged and your curiosity will be ignited at a higher level than you’ve experienced before. You will be active in your pursuit of knowledge. You will be passionate about reaching your goals.

We have a passion for our mission: to educate students to shape their lives, their professions and their societies.

We want to pass along our belief in lifelong learning to you, so you will take the next steps and expand our knowledge as a species even more.

At Grand Valley, we value scholarship and service. We value the integrity of each person.

We live in challenging times, and so our commitment to respect and civility is crucial to the well-being of our community.

**We are up to this challenge.**

Philosopher Allan Bloom had this powerful description of learning:

**“Education is the movement from darkness to light.”**

The true power of education … of lifelong education is its ability to continue to turn on lights.

We’ve discussed education as igniting a fire … as turning on lights. Our liberal arts tradition sets the stage brilliantly for all of it.

As you start classes next week, approach them as you would an amazing opportunity, for that is exactly what they are. They are your opportunity to soar to new heights.

You are a Laker now. You have access to the finest professors and the finest facilities.

You will work hard, you’ll have a lot of fun, and you will make a lot of choices. A critical choice will be when to work hard and when to have fun!

The faculty, staff and RAs are all here to help you succeed. We want to see your passions ignite and the light of new ideas fill your minds.

We can hardly wait to see what you will accomplish — your “Laker Effect.”

Class of 2022, this is your community. Thank you for choosing Grand Valley State University.

Let’s make it a successful year! Go Lakers!