

Welcome Speech by College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Dean Frederick J. Antczak
Region 12 Michigan Science Olympiad Tournament
Saturday, March 29, 2014

Good morning and welcome to the 30th Michigan Science Olympiad, at GVSU.

I want to give you a quick welcome, do some acknowledgements and ask you a very serious, very personal question.

First of all, are there any scientists in the house?

It's a special pleasure for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to host this tournament annually. GVSU aims to deliver an education for lifelong learning, and of course that must embrace the critical thinking, hypothesizing, observation and (as Jefferson said) "following the truth wherever it leads" that is fundamental to the sciences. And I'm tickled that we can provide all of you student-Olympians with the opportunity to be here, to experience our campus, and to get involved in the scientific discovery and learning that is just plain necessary for academic success.

Another reason GVSU loves the Science Olympiad is that we're always proud to be part of this wonderful outreach to K-12 Education. One of Grand Valley State's values is to offer the communities it serves resources and inspiration in their own lifelong pursuit of knowledge. I want to say especially to teachers: **you are always welcome here.**

Speaking of teachers, I want to recognize the commitment, and the devotion, of Grand Valley faculty and staff for their many years of supporting the Olympiad. I know a little about the preparation they put into making today's event challenging and fun, and I appreciate their special contribution very much. Let's give it up for all the teachers, at your school and ours.

We also have a very special guest, GV President **Tom Haas**, himself an accomplished chemist.

I want to say to the Olympians: you're smart. You're smart to get involved in science, because you're facing a future that will be fundamentally shaped by its possibilities and consequences. In your lifetime, humankind will begin the exploration of the Solar System—and maybe encounter for the first time, on Mars or Europa or Titan, forms of life that are genuinely extraterrestrial—with all the profound biological, political and religious implications that will have. In your lifetime, we will develop means of instant communication that will put our puny I-Phones to shame—and put everything from journalistic standards to interpersonal communication at risk. I suspect that the first human being (since Methuselah) who will live 150 years has already been born. And she or he may be in this room. The new medical and pharmaceutical techniques, nanotechnology and genetic engineering that will make that possible will also raise a lot of profound questions that your generation, the people in this room, will have to answer.

And of course your generation will face extraordinary challenges involving the environment. How will the Earth support 10 billion people? Since Grand Rapids is a world leader in sustainable business, what can we do to create (and what will we have to give up for) a sustainable economy? What difficulties

will Global Climate Change bring, and which can we still avert? Will your generation be able to offer to your kids and grandkids and everyone in their generation education equal to (or better than) yours?

I just want every single Olympian in this world to hear this:

YOU could be the person who cures spina bifida in infants, or Alzheimer's in older people, or some form of cancer.

YOU could be the first human to walk on celestial objects beyond the Moon and Mars.

YOU could make breakthrough discoveries in energy that will protect both the environment and our quality of life.

Humankind desperately needs those scientific breakthroughs. So here's my question: Why **not** you?