



FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

([www.ferris.edu](http://www.ferris.edu))

**REQUEST FOR  
INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE**

*Accreditation of Degree Programs  
Delivered Online*

**Submitted to the Higher Learning Commission  
of the  
North Central Association**

**February 28, 2006**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ferris State University is requesting a change in its status with the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association. Simply, Ferris requests that its Statement of Affiliation Status be changed to read: *“No prior Commission approval required for offering degree programs completely online.”*

The following sections provide our rationale for this change request, provide evidence of the systems in place in support of fully online programs, and outline our plans for development. In preparing this request, we consulted with key stakeholder groups, including leadership in the colleges (deans, department heads/chairs, coordinators, faculty), the University Curriculum Committee of the Faculty Senate, the Student Government Association, the Distance Learning Task Force, online education leadership and support personnel, faculty members currently teaching online, and others. We document the services available to support learners, developers, and/or faculty. We also report on our current experience with fully online courses.

The purpose of this change request is to enable Ferris’ programs and departments to deliver their programs fully online when appropriate. Currently, it is a limited number of program areas that have such plans. Procedures that departments follow in seeking required approvals are documented later in this request. Current plans call for Ferris State University to offer the following programs either fully or mostly online:

### **Certificates**

- Facilities Management Certificate - College of Technology
- Direct Marketing Certificate – College of Business
- E-Commerce Marketing Certificate – College of Business
- Club Management Certificate – College of Business
- Geographic Information Systems – College of Technology

### **Baccalaureate Degrees**

- B.S. in Business Administration, with an emphasis on Leadership and Organizational Development (BS – BA, LOD) – College of Business
- B.S. in Health Care Systems Administration (HCSA) – College of Allied Health Sciences

- RN to BSN Program - B.S. in Nursing (BSN) – College of Allied Health Sciences
- B.S. Training in Business and Industry – College of Education and Human Services
- B.S. Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVACR) – College of Technology (*mostly online*)

### **Masters' Degrees**

- Master of Business Administration (MBA) – College of Business
- Master of Science in Information Systems Management (MS-ISM) – College of Business
- Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) – College of Allied Health Sciences
- Master of Education with a Concentration in Philanthropy Education – College of Education and Human Services

At this time, we are working toward bringing five certificates, five baccalaureate degrees, and four masters' degrees to a fully online status. The BS in HVACR expects to continue to require on-site labs in a few courses, but that program is included in this list because most of the courses will be online. Each of the above-listed programs is described in the Career Guide which has been provided as Appendix A. Additional information is available on the colleges' websites.

With the increasing student interest in online courses, we expect that additional program areas may decide to pursue the alternative of a fully online option. Because Ferris institutional systems are designed to assure academic integrity of all offerings, this request asks for blanket approval to offer current and future Ferris programs through online delivery methods. However, because of the applied nature of much of the programming at Ferris, we anticipate a limited number of programs taking advantage of this option.

## CHAPTER 1: REQUEST FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

### *Proposed Change in Statement of Affiliation Status*

Ferris State University (Ferris) requests a change in its Statement of Affiliation Status (SAS) with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA). We request that the stipulations be changed to enable Ferris to deliver fully online certificates and degree programs. This request is submitted in compliance with the requirements stated in Chapter 7: The Ongoing Relationship, *The Handbook of Accreditation, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*, and the section on “Changes in Educational Offerings.”

The Division of Academic Affairs has prepared this request on behalf of the Ferris academic colleges involved in online learning, including the Colleges of Allied Health Sciences, Arts and Sciences, Business, Education and Human Services, Optometry, Pharmacy, Technology, Kendall College of Art and Design, and the College of Professional and Technological Studies, the university’s full-service Grand Rapids location. The Board of Trustees will consider this request at an upcoming meeting, but full endorsement is expected since it has been developed by a broad-based group and enjoys the support of the Vice President of Academic Affairs and the President.

We request this change to enable Ferris to offer fully online degree programs throughout Michigan, regionally, nationally, and internationally. We request that the SAS read: *“No prior Commission approval required for offering degree programs completely online.”*

### *Expected Outcomes of Proposed Change*

This proposed change supports many University strategic directions as well as state initiatives in support of expanding access to baccalaureate education. Expected outcomes of the expanded opportunities for online degrees include

1. Expanded use of technology to support learning
2. Improved access to higher education
3. Responsiveness to learners’ preferences
4. Curricular redesign
5. Enhanced effectiveness
6. University competitiveness

## 7. Increased enrollments

Later sections address the University's strategic plans, but all of these intended outcomes are well supported by the plans of the University as well as the strategic directions of the Division of Academic Affairs. Securing approval to offer fully online degree programs will assist Ferris to achieve these desired outcomes.

### ***Ferris' Relationship with the Commission***

Ferris was first accredited in 1959. Subsequent approvals included the first professional degree in Optometry in 1977, the addition of a Master of Accounting in 1983, and the Master of Science in Occupational Education in 1984. In 1995, the University had a comprehensive evaluation which resulted in a focused visit in 1998 to review the University's financial stability, general education, assessment, and the merger with Kendall College of Art and Design. At that focused visit, the team concluded that Ferris had addressed its financial concerns and made strides in general education, as well as in its assessment of student outcomes. The visiting team also determined that the Ferris/Kendall merger was going well. The 1998 team expressed concern about library resources, the number of courses in general education that appeared not to meet the stated criteria, and a lack of procedures for evaluating and refining assessment processes. In 1999, the University submitted an additional change request to offer the Master of Science degree in Information Systems Management, in part online, which was approved.

The University's next comprehensive visit took place in March 2001. The visiting team cited many university strengths. Areas of commendation were planning processes; the new library, FLITE; the campus community's appreciation of the University's mission, core values and history; positive changes in finances, technology, communication venues, physical plant, and new buildings; enrollment management and the strategic marketing plan; student support services for collegiate success; enhanced communications and respect; student satisfaction; unique and innovative academic programs with high placement rates; and the positive environment of inclusiveness reflected in the Kendall College of Art and Design merger.

Only three areas were noted as challenges:

1. While noting considerable improvement, there continued to be concern about inconsistency in the expectations related to general education, particularly the criteria for designation of general education courses

2. Resolution of differences in general education between Ferris and Kendall
3. The replacement cycle for technology

Just one follow-up report was requested. A progress report on the status of the merger between Kendall and Ferris was submitted by the April 1, 2004, deadline. The university has addressed the identified concerns, and an update is provided later in this report.

### ***Impact of Proposed Change on Mission and Numbers and Types of Students***

Ferris was established in 1884 by its founder, Woodbridge N. Ferris, at Big Rapids, Michigan. It was first an industrial school dedicated to providing all students who had the motivation to succeed and the potential to benefit from the opportunity to develop marketable skills for a changing society. This goal remains as relevant today as it was when Ferris was founded. Ferris has earned a favorable national reputation for providing high-quality, distinctive programs of study in the fields of business, education, health, human services, technology, optometry, and pharmacy. To learn more about Ferris, visit our online viewbook at

<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/future/viewbook/ViewBook.html> and review the Career Guide provided as Appendix A.

Adopted by the Ferris Board of Trustees in 1997, the current mission of Ferris reads

*Ferris State University will be a national leader in providing opportunities for innovative teaching and learning in career-oriented, technological and professional education.*

The proposed institutional change fits within the scope of Ferris State University's more-than-century-old mission as well as its current mission and the university's strategic plans for the future.

***A State-Wide Agenda.*** In 2004, Michigan's Governor Jennifer Granholm appointed a Commission on Higher Education and Economic Growth to consider the issues and provide recommendations to achieve the goal of a "high performance economy" through Michigan's colleges and universities. This report, disseminated broadly and being acted upon at many levels, was to address three goals:

1. Double the percentage of residents who attain postsecondary degrees or other credentials that link them to success in Michigan's new economy
2. Improve the alignment of Michigan's institutions of higher education with emerging employment opportunities in the state's economy

3. Build a dynamic workforce of employees who have the talents and skills needed for success in the twenty-first century

One of the Commission's recommendations is to "Make Higher Education Universal." This commitment strives to remove financial and other barriers to degree and credential completion, including lack of accessibility to a four-year campus. Another pertinent recommendation is to "Expand Access to Baccalaureate Institutions and Degrees." The report stated that "Michigan's higher education institutions must examine the availability and geographic coverage of higher education services and put in place the necessary partnerships to ensure that residents in all parts of the state have access to two- and four-year degrees." The Commission noted the critical choice facing the state and notes that the "quality of life we enjoy today. . . is imperiled by a changing economy in which knowledge is the key to economic growth and opportunity."

A March 2005 Detroit Free Press commentary by MaryAnne George ([http://www.freep.com/news/education/grad29e\\_20050329htm](http://www.freep.com/news/education/grad29e_20050329htm)) reports the results of a Wayne State University study in 2004 which finds that only 24.4% of Michigan citizens over 25 hold a bachelor's or higher degree, while the national average is 27.7%. The Cherry Commission reported that among post-baccalaureate degrees, the state has an 8.1% completion rate while the national average is 8.9%. George reports that Michigan's college graduate rate has slipped to 37<sup>th</sup> in the nation, as other states have moved ahead. Different studies produce slightly different results, some placing Michigan 40<sup>th</sup> in the nation (<http://www.detnews.com/2005/editorial/0504/14/A10-147224.htm>), but they all paint a bleak picture for a state's transition to a knowledge-based, global economy.

Although these differences may not appear great, the Michigan economy has enjoyed a higher standard of living and higher incomes than most other states. An average Michigan family income was \$44,067 in census year 2000, while the national average was \$41,994 (<http://www.epodunk.com/cgi-bin/genInfo.php?locIndex=23>), because of the historic success of our manufacturing base, particularly the automotive sector. That manufacturing dominance is at risk. However, these jobs which do not require higher education are disappearing.

What these statewide figures mask is the disparity among population groups. White student graduation rates are 50 percent higher than the college graduation rate for African American college students (<http://www.detnews.com/2001/schools/0107/15/a01->

247739.htm). College completion rates are much lower in rural Michigan counties, many of which are primary service areas for Ferris. The county where Ferris is based, Mecosta, had 19% of its residents with a baccalaureate or higher degree, according to 2000 census data. Neighboring Osceola County had a college graduation rate of 11.3%, while near-by Lake County residents have a 7.9% college graduation rate and a \$26,622 median household income. Greater access to higher education options may improve some of these numbers. Online options may be the best solution for some, because of time conflicts with family and work responsibilities.

Much of Michigan is rural, which limits access to higher education for many residents. Many of Ferris' programs are specialized and are particularly supportive of workforce enhancement, such as programs in our Colleges of Technology, Allied Health Sciences, Business, and others. Ferris has always played a role in developing Michigan's workforce. Today Ferris can play a vital role in assisting Michigan to retain the quality of life its citizens have come to enjoy as well as in contributing to the economic vitality of our state. We believe we can most effectively do this by reaching out to more students and providing education that is relevant, accessible, affordable, and valuable. Fully online programs are an essential element to the success of this outreach.

Ferris' commitment to expansion of online offerings is consistent with the recommendations in the December 2004 Final Report of The Lt. Governor's Commission on Higher Education and Economic Growth as well as the state of the Michigan economy and demographics. The Cherry Commission report will be provided in the resource room, but a copy may also be accessed online at <http://www.cherrycommission.org/>

### ***Ferris' Distance Experience***

Ferris has been offering programs at a distance for almost 30 years, since 1978, when the first baccalaureate options were offered to students in the Grand Traverse County area, a location that is a 1-1/2 hour drive from Big Rapids. In 1979, Ferris began offering baccalaureate completion options in the southwest area in Cass County, and since 1984, residents of the Flint community in Genesee County, a 2-3/4 hour drive from Big Rapids, have had access to Ferris baccalaureate and masters' degrees on the Mott Community College campus. Expanding this commitment to outreach is a natural extension of our long-standing practices at Ferris.

Ferris has extended its programming from 19 to 26 sites since 2004. We have the student and instructional support systems to support the proposed change. However, improvements and adaptations will be required as we move forward. These systems are described in Chapters 5 and 6.

**Online Course Experience.** Ferris has considerable experience with online learning options. As of June 2005, Ferris had 123 courses offered fully online, distributed among the colleges as indicated below:

Allied Health Sciences	26 courses
Arts and Sciences	28 courses
Business	42 courses
Education	14 courses
Optometry	1 course
Technology	12 courses

In addition to the fully online courses listed above, many more Ferris courses utilize WebCT, the campus learning management system, to conduct discussions, post course materials, and provide instruction through what we call web-enhanced instruction. An additional high number of courses utilize a blended delivery strategy in which some of the face-to-face time is replaced by online options. The WebCT administrator reported that 278 Ferris faculty were listed as “designers” on the fall 2005 semester roster. Designers are those who have rights to adjust the content of the web-based course. He reports that this would be an under-reporting of the total number of faculty with WebCT accounts, since those who taught in other semesters but were not active fall semester are not included in this count.

The following table summarizes the proportion of students served by off-campus units through fully online courses:

**Table 1: Proportion of Enrollments Generated by Online Courses**

Academic Year	Percentage of UCEL SCH generated through online courses	Percentage of FSU-GR SCH generated through online courses
2003-04	23%	16%
2004-05	36%	17%
Fall 2005	33.7%	13%
Winter 2006	34.6%	16%

In addition to the high proportion of enrollments served through online courses, there is also a significant increase in the number of credits generated through online learning, which will be examined more closely in a later section. Online courses fill early and often additional sections are required. This enrollment growth, student requests, the specific request of a major employer, the uniqueness of some Ferris programs, and other factors all support our rationale and impetus for the implementation of fully online degree programs.

*Numbers and Types of Students to be Served.* The growth of the University's online programs' initiative is a reflection of both our recognition of new opportunities to expand access to higher education and national trends reflecting significant enrollment growth through distance learning programs on campuses across the country. Ferris is committed to the development and delivery of high-quality, fully online, and blended degree programs. The University's steady and consistent growth in e-learning "stand-alone" course enrollments and student credit hour production over the past three years reflects this ongoing commitment. Appendix C provides additional information regarding online course enrollment growth.

Data from the 2004 Ferris Fact Book show a total of 11,803 students served by Ferris. Among these are 10,994 from Michigan. A total of 573, or 4.8%, are from other states. Just 236 were from other countries, or less than 2%. Ferris State University reported a record-high enrollment of 12,547 students system-wide for the Fall 2005 semester, 744 more students than in Fall 2004. Part of that enrollment growth is attributable to the increased number of students enrolling in online classes.

In Winter 2005, the University Center for Extended Learning served 1,474 students with the following distributions: 5% (77) were out of state; 1% (11) were international students; and 94% (1,392) were from Michigan. The proportion of in-state students was close to the university's, with 94% in-state while the university overall enrolls 93% from in-state. For the fall of 2005, the number of students served through UCEL increased to 1,669 students, an increase in headcount of 23.4%. Online courses account for much of this growth.

Although we do not anticipate that the demographic characteristics of the Ferris student population will shift dramatically, we do expect an increased number to enroll from out-of-state because many of Ferris' programs are unique and because we do enjoy

national leadership in some areas. We believe this anticipated increase in out-of-state students is highly consistent with our mission to be a national leader. Current students will have more scheduling flexibility. However, the primary desired impact is that more individuals who have had limited access to higher education will have improved access. Consequently, we anticipate a gradual upward shift in the proportion of older, more rural, and more diverse students.

This change request is designed to serve the following groups:

1. Current students at other Ferris locations, to enhance the variety of courses available and to meet scheduling needs. For adult students, life schedules are often complicated. The average age of students in UCEL courses has averaged from 34-36 for several years. A more flexible delivery, such as an online course or program, is the only option for some.
2. Prospective students at new locations in Michigan, anticipated to be older students pursuing baccalaureate and higher degrees, often after having completed associate degrees or equivalent college work. Most will likely be employed part- or full-time.
3. Prospective students at new locations outside Michigan, particularly in niche areas of particular competence for Ferris. The HVACR program is one example of a program attractive to students beyond Michigan.
4. Targeted employees in selected industries, such as the United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters, for which Ferris is presently developing online instruction, and TACOM (the Tank and Automotive Command), a quasi-military agency with which Ferris is affiliated through our partnership with Macomb Community College.
5. Students who are away on internship, including Maritime students in our joint-admission program with Northwestern Michigan College, Professional Golf Management students, Professional Tennis students, and students who return home or to jobs for the summer or another semester.
6. Current students on the Big Rapids campus, who select online courses as an alternative, to minimize course conflicts, and/or to complement a work or life schedule.

Fully online options are not required by all of these groups, yet the increased number of courses available in selected program areas enhances the access for all groups.

Because most of the university's off-campus programming is at the baccalaureate and master's levels, we anticipate that most students will be older than traditional Big Rapids-based students. Main campus students who would participate in online offerings

are anticipated to be at the higher levels (junior, senior, and graduate), since there is a view shared by many, but not all, that online learning options should be reserved for more mature students. One exception to this upper-division approach is in the College of Allied Health Sciences that is developing a number of first- and second-year courses in areas of health specialization, such as respiratory care. This decision about who will be served by online programs is one of many that will be left to the individual determinations of program-area faculty and the academic program leadership.

The university already has many blended program and course options. Individual online courses are currently offered resulting in a blended program for some students. Blended courses are also utilized where learners have some online instruction coupled with face-to-face instruction within courses.

Many current degree offerings are classified baccalaureate-completion options because of the university's historic strength in partnering with community colleges both through articulation agreements at the main campus and site-based instruction on community college campuses. Therefore, initially many of our online degrees are expected to be the final courses of the baccalaureate, building upon a community college associate degree or equivalent background.

### ***Elaboration on Target Students***

A primary thrust for Ferris' online program is the intent to serve working adults currently employed regionally, nationally, or internationally who are unable to travel to the Ferris campus to enroll in our on-campus education options. As one example, military personnel serving in Iraq have enrolled in Ferris online courses. Among the specific groups to be served are nurses seeking to upgrade their associate degree in nursing to a baccalaureate, individuals seeking to become skilled respiratory therapists or health care administrators, and career-changers seeking to become certified teachers. Public and private school teachers in the K-12 and community college sector seeking professional development to support their classroom efforts and continuing education are other important groups to be served.

Other potential online learner groups include individuals who plan, manage, and maintain the "built environment," a term used in the construction industry to refer to the structures created for housing, industry, and other purposes. Student prospects in this

industry would include members of the United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters, HVACR technicians, facility managers, and members of other technical trades. In many instances we expect online students will be parts of cohort or affinity groups. As one example, TACOM employees, in at least the first phase, will all be individuals who desire to complete a baccalaureate degree to increase their career prospects as Logistical Assistance Representatives (LARs). Stationed throughout North America, Europe, Korea, Iraq, and Afghanistan, LARs are civilians contracted to provide logistical support to the U.S. Army's Materiel Command, TACOM (Tank-Automotive and Armaments Command).

As new needs are identified, new groups of learners to be served through online degree programs will emerge. Ferris has a long and successful history of providing higher education to learners at a distance. Given the budgetary uncertainties of the State of Michigan and the recent governor's challenge "to double the number of Michigan residents with degrees and other postsecondary credentials of value within ten years," Ferris is committed to pursue means to make its programs readily available to place-bound and non-traditional learners.

### ***Proposed Launch Programs***

The following is a list of the programs we plan to offer in a completely or mostly online format:

#### **Certificates**

- Facilities Management Certificate - College of Technology
- Direct Marketing Certificate – College of Business
- E-Commerce Marketing Certificate – College of Business
- Club Management Certificate – College of Business
- Geographic Information Systems – College of Technology

#### **Baccalaureate Degrees**

- B.S. in Business Administration, with an emphasis on Leadership and Organizational Development (BS – BA, LOD) – College of Business
- B.S. in Health Care Systems Administration (HCSA) – College of Allied Health Sciences

- RN to BSN Program - B.S. in Nursing (BSN) – College of Allied Health Sciences
- B.S. Training in Business and Industry – College of Education and Human Services
- B.S. in Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVACR) – College of Technology

### **Masters' Degrees**

- Master of Business Administration (MBA) – College of Business
- Master of Science in Information Systems Management (MS-ISM) – College of Business
- Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) – College of Allied Health Sciences
- Master of Education with a Concentration in Philanthropy Education

Although we list several of the baccalaureate degrees as proposed for fully online delivery, in fact most of these degrees are baccalaureate-completion programs offered at distant sites. As a result, Ferris really brings either the final one or two years of the baccalaureate program and proposes to convert some of these to fully online options.

### ***Summary***

In summary, the programs offered will be the current and future programs of the University that will go through existing internal and external approval processes, as determined by the particular requirements of each program. Ferris does expect that it will increase its number of out-of-state, rural, and more diverse students, but this shift is not expected to significantly change the composition of the Ferris student population. The targeted students will primarily be above age 25 and working part- or full-time, and they will be seeking career advancement opportunities. We expect online offerings to increase the total student population.

### ***Commission's Policies Relevant to Proposed Change***

The Commission policy relevant to this change request is found in Section 7.2 of the Handbook. The applicable section is “Changes in Educational Offerings,” where the language specifies that “commission approval is required to extend accreditation to include degree programs offered through distance delivery methods.” This requirement

is contained within the Policies of the Commission, updated January 2005, and recorded as policy I.C.2.b.

## CHAPTER 2: REASONS FOR PROPOSED CHANGE AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

### *Relationship between the Proposed Change and Institutional Planning*

The proposed change in status results from the Ferris planning process, Michigan's economic conditions, and the changing demands of our students. Ferris' planning process is completed annually and links the university's strategic planning process to its operational planning processes. The university's planning process was noted as an area of strength by the last comprehensive visiting team. Strategic planning operates on multiple levels, with the President setting a strategic vision, the appointment of special task forces in priority areas, the integration of task force recommendations into operational plans, and the embedding of all planning activities for the academic units into the overarching plans and "pillars" of the university.

**Strategic Plans.** Strategically growing the University to prosper in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and earning increased recognition of its academic programs are two of the priorities set out in the University's strategic plan. Additional information about the university's plans can be found at the following sites as well as in Appendix B:

<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/speeches/FerrisFuture102004.pdf>

<http://www.htmls/administration/academicaffairs/vpoffice/pdfs/DivisionalPlan.pdf>

The University presently organizes its strategic plans under three overarching pillars:

- We need to create a learning-centered university.
- We must work together.
- We must become an engaged campus.

The online initiative fits well within all three pillars.

**Learning Centered.** We are increasing our focus on learning vs. teaching. The online delivery strategy necessitates active student participation, thus contributing to the goal of a learning-centered university. Learning-centered technology not only refers to the use of the web for fully online, enriched, or blended options but also supports new instructional pedagogies aligned with current research on learning.

**Working together.** Multiple groups work collaboratively to deliver online instruction: the academic colleges, the VPAA's Office, the Faculty Center for Teaching

and Learning (FCTL), the Information Technology (IT) staff, the University Center for Extended Learning (UCEL), and others.

*Engaged Campus.* Student engagement is maximized in well-designed online courses. Effective pedagogy in online courses enhances the interaction between teacher and student as well as between students themselves.

The Academic Affairs strategic plan is organized around the following major goals:

1. Enhance academic environment.
2. Insure a current and relevant curriculum that focuses on student learning.
3. Review processes that impact divisional effectiveness.
4. Continue to enhance faculty development.
5. Continue to promote a clear path to student success.

Within each of these goals are objectives, such as “maintain high quality technology for faculty and staff; collaborate on the development and implementation of a meshed wireless network that covers the campus footprint; and establish learning communities in order to increase student engagement and to increase student retention.” These and other objectives are consistent with the directions of a university that is embracing the use of technology while emphasizing its commitment to enhancing student learning.

### *Analysis of Need for this Change*

Converging to motivate Ferris to make this proposal are a number of drivers:

1. Increasing student demand for online courses.
2. The opportunity to serve TACOM and our long-time and increasingly important community college partner, Macomb Community College
3. The opportunity to extend Ferris’ historic strengths in career-oriented education
4. The demand for MBA programs to be online to serve full-time, working adults so that this recent program inventory addition can remain viable and attractive to prospective students in a highly competitive marketplace for graduate business degrees
5. The increasing need for qualified health-care workers and the efficiency that can result from offering specialized programs to individuals in widely distributed areas of the state. For example, many respiratory therapy courses are partially or fully online. We could not expect to recruit a full class from any of our sparsely populated communities, such as Petoskey, nor could all of them find a job in their communities if we were able to attract a full cohort. Instead, we can offer a program that meets the needs of

individuals from multiple locations, preparing them for in-demand health careers while not flooding any one employment market.

6. The strategic need of the state of Michigan and the call from Governor Granholm to increase college attendance and college graduation rates among Michigan citizens
7. Potential for enrollment growth, which is a goal of the university and important in our economic outlook

### ***Online Course Enrollment Growth***

Ferris State University has experienced steady and consistent growth in e-learning enrollments. Enrollment in online courses has more than doubled from 4,136 SCH in Academic Year (AY) 02-03 to a total of 8,647 SCH in AY 04-05. During the same period, online head-count enrollments also more than doubled (133%) from 1,456 in AY 02-03 to 3,393 in AY 04-05. In the fall semester 2005, 104 separate sections were offered (some were split sections for offering in different markets) with 1,533 enrollments, 3,565 SCH, and gross tuition income of \$1,192,349. Many additional courses are in development, which leads us to expect major growth in AY 05-06. The following table illustrates this growth in SCH:

**Table 2: Online Course SCH Production for 2002-2005 (including FSU-GR)**

<i>Semester</i>	<i>2002-03</i>	<i>2003-04</i>	<i>2004-05</i>	<i>2005-06</i>
Fall	1,139	1,475	2,703	3565
Winter	1,358	2,306	2,843	3665
Summer	1,639	2,770	3,799	n/a

Each academic college has experienced growth in its online offerings, with the College of Allied Health Science demonstrating the largest increase, moving from 46 enrollments and 138 SCH in 2002 to 707 enrollments and 1,367 SCH in the first two semesters of AY 2005. For the fall of 2005, this number had increased to 1,084 enrollments and 1,284 SCH. Every college had increases in SCH from Fall 2004 to Fall 2005, with College of Technology SCH more than doubling from 140 SCH in Fall 2004 to 304 in 05F; College of Business increasing from 516 to 633 SCH; Education from 533 SCH in 04F to 749 SCH in 05F; and Arts and Sciences moving from 399 SCH to 561 SCH in 05F. These figures are illustrated below:

**Table 3: Fall '04 to Fall '05 Comparisons**

<b>College</b>	<b>Fall 04 SCH</b>	<b>Fall 05 SCH</b>
Allied Health Sciences	1,084	1,284
Arts and Sciences	399	561
Business	516	633
Education and Human Services	533	749
Optometry	31	34
Technology	140	304
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2,703</b>	<b>3,565</b>

The SCH increased a total of 32 percent from Fall '04 to Fall '05. The preceding data concerning enrollment growth, along with information we gather from changes in the national market for online learning, suggest that there will be continued and increasing demand for Ferris' online courses and programs; thus, Ferris is seeking to evolve from offering "stand-alone" courses to developing complete online degree programs.

***Institutional Involvement in Proposal Development***

In March 2003, Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs Thomas Oldfield, the current Associate VPAA and Interim Dean of the College of Technology, appointed a task force to study the landscape of distance education and to make recommendations for its future at Ferris State University. The task force was comprised of three faculty members, three administrators (including administrators of the two units directly involved with implementing distance learning, UCEL and FSU-GR), and a chairperson from the Office of Academic Affairs, Assistant Vice President Laurie Chesley who is no longer with the University. The task force was charged with researching the state of distance education at the University and elsewhere. Based on this research, input from the Ferris community conducted through interviews, surveys and open forums, and conversations within the task force, recommendations were made in response to the charge. The entire Ferris community was invited to contribute ideas to the task force's work as well as to respond to early versions of the report. Presentations were made to the Faculty Senate. Discussion sessions were conducted at multiple times, where individuals could share their views.

Campus input was significantly reflected in the task force's final report. The report, "Report of the Distance Education Task Force –A Proposal for the Ferris Model of E-Learning," was delivered in April 2004. The task force recommendations included suggested terminology to facilitate conversations. The report advocated using Level 1 to refer to Web-Enhanced Courses, Level 2 for Mixed Delivery or Hybrid courses, and Level 3 as reflective of web-based or completely online courses. Level 3 orientation is the subject of this proposal.

Criteria and processes for the approval of online courses were recommended and have subsequently been implemented. Importantly, suggestions were made for what should be included in Ferris' online offerings, including statements about the need for performance standards, evaluation criteria, copyright clearances, etc. These attributes are reviewed in the course-approval process that follows course development. Course developers are not paid for the development until their department and Extended Learning or College of Professional and Technological Studies (CPTS) "sign off" on the course as having met the minimum standards. Samples of the forms and procedures in use are included as Appendix G. The 2004 Task Force report with its assessment of the then-current situation of online learning at Ferris plus appendices, is included as Appendix D and available on the Ferris website at <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/academicaffairs/distanced.html>.

These criteria to date have only been applied to courses for which the university pays development costs. There are concerns about assuring a high level of quality for online courses that are not subjected to this review process. There are questions about whether it is appropriate to scrutinize online offerings more than other forms of delivery, but there is also sentiment at Ferris among those leading and promoting online offerings that this different pedagogy requires different expectations. A committee of the Senate and a task force of the Faculty Center are both grappling with this issue. Current thinking is that rather than "inspecting" courses that the Ferris approach should be to certify the instructors' capabilities for teaching in an online environment. Recommendations will be forthcoming, while many opportunities to learn more about online pedagogy continue to be offered to faculty and staff, as described later.

In Fall 2002 agreements were reached on compensation for online development, intellectual property rights, royalty payments, and other considerations during

negotiations with the Ferris Faculty Association (FFA). This process allowed for extensive review by both faculty and administrators who crafted the faculty contract. Documents outlining these agreements are provided in Appendix G.

Although it was just over one year ago, many of the recommendations of the task force have been fully implemented. The course approval process is in place. The recommended Student Readiness Assessment is operational. Although the recommended “e-learning handbook” is not yet complete, components of it are available and more guidance is available almost daily. For example, in April 2005, a faculty work group that has been meeting for several months published its *“Recommended Best Practices in Online Delivery of Instruction at Ferris State University.”* These proposed best practices were presented to the campus community at two half-day workshops (April 21 and 22, 2005) conducted by the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning. These “best practices” are now available on the Center’s website for use by anyone (<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/academics/center/center.htm>). At the site, other resources include teaching effectiveness suggestions, a calendar of scheduled professional development opportunities, many of which are about enhancing online learning, and a Faculty Handbook with many suggestions for teaching and learning. The Instructional Technology component of the Faculty Center has news updates, helpful hints, as well as forms for requesting assistance for online courses at <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/academics/center/IT/index.htm>.

Building upon the work of the California State University – Chico model, faculty representatives from most Ferris Colleges (Arts and Sciences, Allied Health, Education and Human Services, Pharmacy, Optometry, Business, Technology, and FLITE) and facilitators from the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning created a rubric for online instruction, which summarizes the Best Practices document referenced above. Rubric areas include the following:

1. Learner support and resources
2. Online organization and design
3. Instructional design and delivery
4. Assessment and evaluation of student learning
5. Innovative teaching and technology
6. Faculty use of student feedback

We expect this guidance will be especially helpful in assuring and advancing the quality of online education at Ferris.

In early November, another faculty work group participated in a retreat to identify the characteristics of effective online instruction and to recommend a certification program for instructors. That proposal should be ready for the site visit team's review.

Another of the task force's recommendations was encouragement for support of faculty and students, including professional development activities. In addition to the workshops and guidelines noted above, members of the FCTL staff are also available to provide one-on-one assistance to faculty members. Media Production also provides direct support to faculty. These support services are described in more detail later.

In June 2005, a team of eight attended the Higher Learning Commission Workshop on Online Student Services with a goal of continuing to enhance our adherence with best practices. Team members included two from Student Services; two from UCEL, including the dean; one from Academic Affairs; two faculty (CAS and AHS); and the Dean of University College. The work of this team at the HLC workshop will be reflected in planned improvements throughout the next year. As the work of this group continued from June through November, and ongoing, many of the recommendations began to be implemented. This group's primary recommendations concern enhancing students' ability to access Ferris student services through the web. Easier links and more comprehensive information are recommended.

The group also recommended the addition of a web editor because they found many pages were either not current or not easily navigated. That team produced a report that was submitted to VPAA Dr. Michael Harris in February 2006. By the time the report reached his desk, some of the improvements had either been implemented or planned. One important outcome of this team's work was a survey of online students, the results of which are included in Chapter 6.

In September 2005, a broad-based faculty and administrative group was convened with representatives from most colleges to complete two major tasks: preparation of this proposal, phase 1, and strategizing for the continued enhancement of online learning, phase 2. As a part of their work, this group conducted a survey of

current-semester online faculty concerning their experiences. Results of this survey are summarized in Chapter 6.

The Student Government Association was also invited to review the proposal and two presentations were made to them during fall semester 2005 in seeking their support. The students asked many provocative questions and took consideration of this request seriously. Their board supports this request.

The University Curriculum Committee, a committee of the Faculty Senate, was asked to consider the proposed request to the Higher Learning Commission. In December 2005, they lent their support to this request. In addition to their support, they proposed that a Senate committee be appointed to assure quality in Ferris online offerings. In January 2006, the Faculty Senate passed a motion supporting the concept of Ferris' pursuit of this approval. Minutes of the Senate will be available in the resource room.

Many campus constituencies have had the opportunity to be engaged. Many faculty (more than 200) are directly involved with online course development and teaching, in at least mixed-delivery formats. The e-learning staff, described in Chapter 5, has been deeply immersed. Three separate work groups have produced reports in the past two years, and improvements have been implemented as a result of these recommendations. The campus community was invited to respond to the 2004 Task Force report, through open meetings and posting of the report on an accessible website, and to this proposal during January 2006. In addition to the leadership and day-to-day activities provided by UCEL, FSU-GR, and FCTL in advancing high-quality online learning development, there are others who have been significant in their contributions. The President of Ferris, Dr. David Eisler, has extensive background in the use of technology in learning and regularly talks with faculty and staff about the importance of this agenda. Since his arrival, VPAA Dr. Michael Harris has promoted the need for expansion of high-quality online offerings and is the person who has encouraged this proposal.

A significant portion of the university community is convinced of the value of online learning and is committed to its advancement. There is clear and indisputable support at Ferris for the continued growth and development of online learning opportunities to include fully online degree programs. There is broad-based

involvement and widespread, but not unanimous, support for this request for change of status.

## CHAPTER 3: NECESSARY APPROVALS FOR PROPOSED INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

### *Internal Approvals Required*

According to the *Ferris Academic Program/Curriculum Development and Approval Process*, the delivery of online degree programs is categorized as a “Group IV: Delivering existing programs at new off-campus sites” change. For Group IV changes, there is no curriculum action required other than approvals from the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the presentation of the proposal as an “information only” item to the Board of Trustees. As a result of the Senate’s review of this proposal, a committee is investigating whether the process should be different for online offerings. The document outlining Ferris curricular processes will be provided in the resource room and can be accessed at

<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/academicaffairs/vpoffice/senate/univcurcom/homepage.htm>.

Whenever an online course is proposed for development that will be compensated by the university, it is subjected to the following approvals procedure.

- The proposing faculty member informs interested parties (department head and/or college dean, the dean of UCEL or CPTS) of his/her plan or desire to propose the development of an e-learning course or series of courses as part of a certificate or degree program. The proposing faculty member is encouraged to advise/consult with other faculty who are teaching the same course or who are in the same department. This information provides advance notice of the potential for new courses, prompts a review of other workload and budget considerations, and provokes required conversations about funding, timing, etc. If there is not interest in having a course developed, then this phase should eliminate work for the person proposing the course.
- The proposing faculty member completes a “Request for Approval to Develop an Online Course” form (Appendix G) that outlines the rationale for developing the e-learning course(s). Each course is presented on a separate form. In addition, the faculty member, in concert with the department chair/head, identifies how the course(s) fits into workload and, if overload occurs, what the source(s) of the funding will be to support the development.
- The faculty member secures signatures from the department chair/head and the dean of the college in which the course is offered, an action indicating their approval of the proposed online course development as well as the sources of development funds. If it is not approved, rationale is provided in writing to the faculty member.

- The proposing college sends the form to either the UCEL dean or CPTS dean, as appropriate, if these units will be paying for the course development. The UCEL dean's signature is required if UCEL is expected to pay for the course development and/or admit and register students, and the CPTS dean's signature is required for courses to be handled for that location. If the course is not approved, rationale is provided in writing to the faculty member and the academic college administrators.
- Either UCEL or CPTS forwards the form to the VPAA or his/her designee for review and signature. If not approved by this office, rationale is provided to all parties in writing. When a Course Development Agreement, the faculty contract authorizing online course development, is executed and after the approvals are secured, UCEL or CPTS distributes copies of this fully executed agreement to all signers.

Academic year 04-05 is the first year that this procedure has been in operation and it appears to be working smoothly. Because it is new, not all individuals are informed about the process, but each day awareness is more widespread. Because of the university's commitment to online course development, it has not been necessary to deny any requests, and the process has enabled constructive conversations about the rationale for development as well as the requirements of this alternative delivery strategy. The documents outlining the process as well as the forms used are available in Appendix G.

An area for continuing refinement is acceptance of the course. At present, the department head and the sponsoring unit must check to see that the course meets the minimum requirements. From this process, we have discovered great variation in the comprehensiveness of courses and in the utilization of learning-centered strategies. Work currently underway by the Faculty Center is designed to address this concern, and processes will continue to be refined to assure that courses meet increasingly higher standards. Efforts are now directed at setting higher expectations through the sharing of best practices, identification of the characteristics of well-designed, well-delivered online courses, a proposed certification program, and recognition programs.

Additional conversations continue as additional programs of the university engage in the development of alternative options for students. In every case these conversations must include not only the faculty and the program leadership but also those who support learners through the library, financial aid office, and other student services.

*Summary.* The required internal approvals are received each time a new course or program is proposed for paid development. Approvers include the developing faculty member, the department head/ chair, the college dean, the Vice President for Academic Affairs' Office, and the off-campus unit responsible for its delivery. Because online courses are existing courses in the Ferris curriculum, they do not need to be approved through institutional curricular approval processes, such as the College curriculum committees or the University Curriculum Committee. Nevertheless, the University Curriculum Committee was asked for their review of this proposal, and they recommended that the Faculty Senate define the process for approving fully online program options.

***External Approvals Required***

The only external approval required is from the Higher Learning Commission for change in our affiliation status to allow fully online degree programs.

## CHAPTER 4: IMPACT OF PROPOSED CHANGE ON CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY THE LAST COMPREHENSIVE VISIT

### *Challenges Related to the Proposed Change and Institutional Response*

The last comprehensive evaluation of Ferris State University was completed March 26-28, 2001. The implementation of online degree programs will build upon several strengths noted in the site-visit team report as well as serve as an extension of some of the study's advice and suggestions.

***Related Strengths Identified.*** Ferris received high marks for its inclusive planning process that was found to be well conceived and executed and that serves as a primary strength of the institution. Enrollment management initiatives, including a strategic marketing plan as well as a comprehensive, integrated array of support services, were also cited as institutional strengths. Additionally, the team suggested, an “entrepreneurial spirit should be advanced through the university that reflects the dynamic opportunities available through the Extended Learning Department.” The University, through its inclusive planning processes, has positioned itself to act upon its mission to become a regional, national, and international leader in the delivery of career-oriented, technical, and professional education.

The development and delivery of online degree programs will broaden access to the University's career programs and enhance the institution's public image. Successful implementation of this new delivery option will serve as confirmation of the quality of Ferris' planning, enrollment management, strategic marketing, and integrated student support services. The University Center for Extended Learning continues to exhibit its entrepreneurial spirit in expanding educational options for learners through collaboration with Ferris colleges and partners throughout Michigan and beyond.

### ***Addressing Previous Concerns***

Ferris has taken the challenges identified by the recent comprehensive team seriously and offers the following summary updates:

*Concern 1:* The team reported that “While there has been considerable improvement, there continues to be inconsistency in administration and expectations

across departments related to general education requirements, particularly in regard to rigorous application of criteria to designate general education courses.”

*University Response:* General education criteria are consistently administered. The earlier concern has been addressed in multiple ways. First, to make more clear and consistent the application of stated criteria for general education course designation, several General Education Outcomes Assessment Committees have clarified and refined their stated criteria. Second, to improve consistency in administration and expectations for general education requirements across departments, any requests for general education waivers or substitutions must be considered by the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, a position presently held by Dr. Roxanne Cullen. This second change, in particular, is further evidence of a general education strength noted by the NCA team in 2001: “[t]here is strong support ... for GE by the Vice President for Academic Affairs ....”

Third, general education committees continue to function actively in reviewing criteria and the possible inclusion of additional offerings. Current emphasis focuses on the assessment of learning for the identified general education outcomes.

Fourth, general education is front and center in the attention of the Office of Academic Affairs and Vice President Michael Harris. He has already met with faculty groups, including the Faculty Senate, to begin discussions concerning the importance of general education and continued improvements, including the required emphasis upon documenting learning outcomes. To learn more about the Ferris general education program, consult <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/academics/gened/gened.html>.

The concern noted by the NCA team in 2001 is not an issue related to the online delivery of degree programs because the same standards apply to all classes, regardless of delivery mode.

*Concern 2:* The University needs to resolve differences which exist in the general education requirements between FSU and Kendall College of Art and Design.

*University Response:* Although Kendall College is accredited under the umbrella of Ferris State University, it also maintains a separate identity because of its distinctness. A part of this differentiation is the fact that Kendall College of Art and Design has a different general education program than that of Ferris. Kendall also hosts its own assessment procedures and has independent structures dedicated to the evaluation and

implementation of effective general education in keeping with its semi-autonomous position within the university. That general education information is available to the team on the Kendall website at <http://www.kcad.edu/>. We do not anticipate that Kendall will be proposing any fully online programs in the foreseeable future.

*Concern 3:* The University should develop an institutional replacement cycle for its technology infrastructure as well as provide resources for maintenance and upgrades of its software programs, staffing, and training/development to keep technology personnel current.

*University Response:* Technology enhancement and the development of replacement plans have taken a prominent position in institutional planning. Efforts to update equipment to meet standards have resulted in great improvements in the currency of technology in classrooms and at staff workstations. Further, restructuring in the services area for Information Technology has resulted in highly favorable results in improved service levels. Nevertheless, there continue to be occasional problems with firewalls preventing access to library databases, connectivity issues with some service providers, and the lack of a backup server, a situation that will be remedied soon.

Most campus computers are running the latest versions of supported software. Part of this attention to technology has come from the technology interest of President Eisler. Under his leadership, reorganization, renewed planning, and budget commitment toward implementation of new campus IT systems have been achieved. Technology is in good shape at Ferris.

The following are offered as additional examples of decisions that have been made to address the IT challenge:

- The University's Information Services & Telecommunications (IS&T) unit has adopted a mission statement that reflects its commitment to providing the proper technology to the University community; "IS&T will enable faculty, staff, and students to access and develop information resources utilizing voice, data, and video technologies."
- Major infrastructure planning follows the University's annual planning cycle. The Unit Action Plan spans a three-year horizon and allows for projects to be completed in phases, if necessary, based on the allocated resources. IS&T has a maintenance and reserve budget each year for emergencies, and all infrastructure equipment is on a maintenance contract.

- In summer of 2004 restructuring announcements were made within the IT community to address budgetary and efficiency issues. This included aligning several separate IT units under one leadership, rather than several oversight committees. This has given management the flexibility to assign employees to functions that address the support needs of the given climate. This has increased cooperation among the IT teams along with providing a clear and consistent IT vision to employees. An organizational chart with the current employee assignments will be found in the Resource Room.
- The University PC Standards Committee periodically assesses computer hardware requirements in relation to the software being used at the University. The current hardware standard for new computer purchases is found at <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/tatfsu/technicalstandards/>. The computer replacement standard and laptop standard are also found there.
- Ferris has annual software maintenance contracts for all campus software, including Microsoft Campus Agreement, Symantec virus protection, and Ghost. Campus software standards may be found at <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/tatfsu/technicalstandards/stdsoftware.htm>.
- The Standards Committee reviews campus inventory and identifies equipment that falls below the recommended PC replacement standard and works with those departments to develop a PC replacement strategy that will recycle computers every three to four years. Many computers were replaced this summer to bring all campus computers up to the new standard.
- Each support unit under IS&T sets aside monies for staff training and development. In addition, the University has purchased bulk technical training coupons for staff to utilize. Courses they may take include Microsoft Windows Server, Novell administration, and Network+.
- A recent satisfaction survey conducted by the Technology Assistance Center reveals positive satisfaction ratings. Of the 401 respondents to the Spring 2005 survey, 76.2 rated the process of requesting computer support as efficient (combining somewhat agree and strongly agree ratings). The rating for overall computer support reported 78.34% satisfaction.

The University will address these prior concerns in depth with the preparations for the next comprehensive visiting team in 2010-11.

## **CHAPTER 5: INSTITUTIONAL PLAN TO IMPLEMENT AND SUSTAIN PROPOSED CHANGE**

### ***Involvement of Credentialed Faculty and Experienced Staff to Accomplish Proposed Change***

***Credentialed Faculty.*** Online degree program coursework will be delivered primarily through departmental faculty who are the content experts. Typically, regular faculty are the online course developers and teach the courses they have developed. However, if they are not the instructor of record, either another departmental faculty member with the appropriate credentials or an adjunct faculty member who has been approved to teach through the Ferris adjunct faculty approvals process will be contracted to teach the courses.

Adjunct faculty contracted to teach in the program submit an application, letter of interest, vita, three letters of reference, and copies of their transcripts. Official copies of their transcripts are required once they are hired to teach. Ferris departmental faculty members review the candidate's credentials to confirm that he or she is qualified to teach in that academic area. Each faculty reviewer is then given an Adjunct Faculty Review Form listing the courses for which the candidate is to be reviewed. The reviewer will then indicate whether the candidate has the minimum education and experience expected of an adjunct instructor for the classes for which the reviewer approves the candidate to teach. If the department approves the candidate, the credentials and review forms indicating the courses that the adjunct instructor has been approved to teach are forwarded to the Human Resources Department by the dean, who receives them from the Department Head/Chair.

Adjunct faculty teaching credentials vary by academic department. To teach the general education courses, adjuncts are required to have at least a master's degree in the discipline, doctorate preferred, with prior experience teaching in the appropriate field. Adjunct faculty teaching master's level courses and frequently junior/senior level courses are required to hold a terminal degree in the area of their assigned teaching.

Additionally, all faculty teaching online, whether regular or adjunct, must possess an understanding of learning in an online community and the ability to utilize Ferris State

University's online learning platform, WebCT. However, there are no current practices to assure this and assessment of faculty preparation for online teaching is currently left to the individual departments. There are cases where faculty members utilize different course management options, but these are not supported by the university.

***Curriculum Development.*** Curriculum development is overseen at the academic department level. Faculty have access to instructional design services for the development of online courses. A significant number take advantage of this resource. Syllabi are not standardized within the University, but they are generally consistent within departments and/or colleges. Ferris faculty are well aware of the increasing attention being paid to the assessment of student learning outcomes, and their course development is beginning to reflect this understanding. A group of faculty, facilitated by the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, recently published a rubric for online development. In Section 3, Instructional Design and Delivery, are the two following criteria:

- Course offers opportunity for student-to-student, student-to-instructor, and student-to-resource interaction, and
- Course goals and learning objectives are clearly stated and accessible.

Within section 4, Assessment and Evaluation of Student Learning, are the following criteria:

- 4.1 Learning objectives, instructional and assessment activities are related
- 4.2 Instructor expectations for assignments are clearly communicated
- 4.3 Utilize internal assessment tools where appropriate
- 4.4 Multiple assessment methods are used to measure content knowledge and skills
- 4.5 Opportunities are available for students to receive feedback about their own performance

All of these criteria, developed by faculty, will be valuable to Ferris in continuing its improvement of its online and face-to-face offerings. Since these criteria were initially announced and promoted at the Spring Learning Institute sponsored by the Faculty Center in April 2005, they are not yet widely implemented, but professional development activities through a number of venues, especially the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, are promoting their use. At present, there are few absolute requirements concerning online courses. Many of the factors impacting online course

development and teaching are factors of negotiation with the Ferris Faculty Association (FFA) affiliated with the Michigan Education Association (MEA). Items such as workload, teaching assignments, and compensation are all subject to collective bargaining. Ferris administrators support a wide variety of approaches to curriculum development. We rely on the strength of department leaders and the professionalism of the Ferris faculty at large to promote an ever-improving educational product.

*Assessment of Outcomes.* In 2001, after the last comprehensive visit, the NCA evaluation team wrote: “Assessment has become an institution priority and a way of doing business. The responsibility for assessment is shared by all levels of the institution, and there is broad institutional support for the assessment administration and committee structures.” In a spirit of continuous improvement, Ferris is following the suggestion of the NCA team to continue refining its assessment processes by using results in documenting changes made in pedagogy, curriculum, course content, and academic resources to improve student learning.

Just this year the university committed to utilizing the National Study of Student Engagement (NSSE) for assessing student engagement. A pilot group of over 600 students was administered the questionnaire during the winter of 2005. The University intends to utilize this instrument for the foreseeable future as one of the measures in its multiple measures of institutional effectiveness and student learning. In the future, contrasting the results from online students with on-campus and other-campus students should yield valuable results. The results from the pilot have just arrived on the campus and are being analyzed by various groups. One area where Ferris is above national norms is in students’ use of technology. The NSSE data will be available to the visiting team in the Resource Room.

Online courses and degree programs and other-campus courses are subject to the same processes for assessing student academic achievement as on-campus courses and degree programs. Students enrolled in online classes must meet the same requirements as students in traditional campus classrooms. An Arts and Sciences faculty member, Dr. Robert VonderOsten, has been offered .25 release to coordinate assessment activities. To learn more about assessment of student learning at Ferris, refer to

<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/academicaffairs/assessment/index.htm>.

Ferris' assessment strategies include some national instruments as well as locally developed approaches. General education is assessed both within courses and across programs. The specifics of the assessment of university-wide general education can be found at <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/academics/gened/assess.html>. One major component in assessing general education is the use of the Academic Profile, which began in 1996 and was utilized subsequently in 1998, 2000, 2002, and 2005. Freshmen and seniors are tested in the areas of humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, college reading, college writing, critical thinking, and mathematics. Seniors outperformed freshmen in each of these areas in the 2005 report. The 2004-05 results are included in Appendix K. Ferris upperclassmen consistently show improvement from freshmen to senior years, with score improvements ranging between 11.47 and 13.89 from 1996 through 2005. Results for 2005 show the highest overall increase of 13.89, lending support to the value of the general education program at Ferris. For information on the Academic Profile, refer to

[www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/academicaffairs/assessment/profiles2.htm](http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/academicaffairs/assessment/profiles2.htm).

For a comprehensive look at FSU's general education program, consult <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/academics/gened/gened.html>. To access the specific criteria for the outcomes areas of communication competence, quantitative skills, scientific understanding, social awareness, cultural enrichment, global consciousness and race/ethnicity/gender, go to [www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/academics/gened/Learningoutcomes.html](http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/academics/gened/Learningoutcomes.html).

The Learning Outcomes Area Committees that have faculty representation from all of the University's colleges serve the dual function of

- (1) approving courses for inclusion in learning outcomes area, and
- (2) conducting assessment of student learning for that outcome area. For a listing of the faculty composition of these committees go to

<http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/academics/gened/outcomescomm.html>.

One of Academic Affairs' strategic objectives for 2003-05 was to "use outcomes assessment processes and certifications of student capabilities to ensure the quality of all programs." Various efforts are underway to improve outcomes assessment efforts across the University. Assessment of learning achievement will apply equally to face-to-face and online instruction.

### ***Administrative Structure Necessary to Support this Proposed Change***

Ferris has a matrix, vs. a hierarchical, structure for the administrative and technical support of its online courses and programs. Various functions are shared among the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, the University Center for Extended Learning, and its sister unit in Grand Rapids, the College of Professional and Technological Studies (CPTS), the academic colleges, Information Services and Telecommunications (IS&T), FLITE (Ferris Library for Information, Technology and Education), and the Office of Academic Affairs. The following sections will describe the roles and resources of each contributing partner.

Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning (FCTL). Support for faculty is provided by the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning. Additional information about this central component of Ferris online education can be found at <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/academics/center/center.htm>. Currently, FCTL is coordinated by a tenured professor, Terry Doyle, who serves as the chief instructor for faculty development. A search is currently underway for a Director for this Center. The Center offers an array of workshops to support the professional development of faculty. Recently, an increased number of these offerings have focused on development of online strategies. During the 2004-05 academic year, Center staff project that 80% of regular Ferris faculty utilized the Center in some way, through participation in FCTL activities, utilizing Timme funding, accessing WebCT support, or utilizing the Faculty Development room and equipment. In their full report of 2004-05 activities, Center staff reported the following participants in workshops designed to support online learning:

**Table 4: 2004-05 Participation in FCTL Workshops for Online Instruction**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>No. Participating</b>
FrontPage for WebCT	8
Instructional Design Workshop, Rethinking Teaching (Summer and Winter)	8 + 8 = 16
Respondus (online testing tool) (fall and winter)	12 + 10 = 22
WebCT: "Preparing for your first semester" (summer, fall, and winter)	6 + 6 + 7 = 19
Low-Threshold Activities in Institutional Technology	4

WebCT: Best Practices Retreat	10
Topics in Web-Delivered Instruction	12
WebCT: Content Management	4
WebCT: Getting up to speed with WebCT	18

Many additional professional development opportunities are scheduled throughout the fall semester of 2005. It is important to note that many of those represented in the numbers above would be new to online teaching. Ferris has offered online courses since 1999, so many faculty are well beyond the “Preparing for Your First Semester” workshops and are not likely reflected in these numbers.

The Associate Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Roxanne Cullen, serves in the role as supporting administrator to The Faculty Center, and the the former Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dr. Thomas Oldfield, and interim dean of the College of Technology, had previously provided overall responsibility for Ferris’ online learning. At present, Dr. Michael Harris, Vice President for Academic Affairs, assumes this leadership responsibility for Ferris’ online presence.

Two individuals work directly in support of online development. Dr. J. R. (Randy) Vance, a faculty member from the College of Optometry and WebCT Senior Certified Trainer, serves as E-Learning Consultant, with a half-time reassignment for this role. Because of faculty staffing shortages in the College of Optometry, Dr. Vance takes 25% release from the Michigan College of Optometry and 25% overload. In his e-learning consultancy, he plans, authors, and arranges staffing for training events, principally for WebCT beginning- and intermediate-level skills. He was responsible for planning the recent Spring Learning Institute, convened "Topics in Web-delivered Instruction" lunch/discussion sessions, and planned and co-facilitated the first-ever Faculty Learning Community on "Engaging the Online Learner" for Fall 2005.

Dr. Vance also serves officially as backup administrator for the WebCT course management system and backup in consulting individually with faculty for assistance with online course design or operation as needed. In conjunction with the instructional technologist and others, he reviews the course management system and helps plan when changes will be made to the WebCT learning management system as well as to provide for faculty training in preparation for those changes.

In addition to Dr. Vance's support of faculty, the University has one full-time person dedicated to supporting faculty in online learning, instructional technologist Bill Knapp. Bill is also the WebCT course management system administrator. In his role, he provides one-on-one assistance to faculty members, troubleshoots WebCT issues, oversees student support workers, and develops workshops for faculty. He provides support to faculty in the use of technology for teaching and learning and is available to meet with instructors on a one-to-one basis to assist them with the development of Web-based and digital educational materials. In the recent survey of faculty, Bill Knapp was most frequently mentioned as the person who had provided assistance with instructional design, technology, and WebCT.

A student technology assistant is also available in FCTL to help faculty in the conversion of Microsoft Word, PowerPoint files, and other material for use on the Web. The student assistant also helps with the conversion and preparation of quizzes for use in WebCT, scanning documents, preparing images for the Web, as well as with the development of Macromedia Flash multimedia/presentations.

Another senior professor, Dr. Kimn Carlton-Smith, a history professor, is a WebCT Senior Certified Trainer and a champion for e-learning. Additionally there is a cadre of experienced WebCT faculty who serve informally as mentors within their colleges and departments and have assisted in the offering of WebCT training sessions.

The following faculty comprise this cadre:

Mike Berghoef, College of Arts and Sciences  
Richard Hewer, College of Business  
Warren Klope, College of Technology  
Gloria Lukusa, University College  
John Schmidt, College of Technology  
Jonathan Taylor, College of Arts and Sciences

Ferris also provides instructional design services. At present, some of these services are provided through a federal grant that was received by Ferris for placing its Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration (HVACR) program predominantly online. It is not planned that this program will ever be fully online, due to the required labs, but it is already extensively online. Enid Carlson-Nagel has been hired as the instructional designer for the HVACR online program development. When

she has additional time available, her services are purchased on either an hourly or project basis for additional work with other program areas. Faculty are not required to work with an instructional designer, but we encourage utilizing this resource. Current staffing plans in FCTL call for the addition of a full-time, on-staff instructional designer and the search is currently underway, although we have found filling the position to be challenging. The new goal is to have a person hired by summer 2006. The Center anticipates that this will be a faculty member's first stop when they are thinking about offering an online course. The designer will be responsible for coordinating other required resources, such as media support, freeing the faculty member to focus on the content of the course.

**Information Systems and Technology (IS&T).** The role of Information Services and Telecommunications (IS&T) is extremely important to the University's e-learning efforts. Currently, the WebCT servers (primary and back-up) are maintained in IS&T, and staff occasionally provide expertise in database management as well. Communication regarding the support of WebCT with the campus portal is an open and iterative process between IS&T and Academic Affairs. Guidelines for this relationship between IS&T and Academic Affairs/FCTL have been established in a yearly, renewable Service Level Agreement (SLA) that has established baseline funding for the support of the WebCT hardware. Learn more at <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/adminandfinance/infoserv/>. In addition, IS&T, in partnership with the College of Business graduate programs, maintains two servers in support of graduate and undergraduate online and hybrid courses.

A wide array of Information Technology Infrastructure exists to support online learning at Ferris. Following is the configuration in use to support WebCT:

- Dell PowerEdge 2550
- Dual 1GHZ Pentium-III
- 2GB RAM
- 4 - 73GB 10000RPM Hard Drives (RAID5)
- Redhat Enterprise Linux 3
- Respondus (test software)

Beginning in Winter 2006, the following enhancements will be introduced to support WebCT:

- Dell PowerEdge 2850
- Dual 2.8GHz Xeon

In addition, the Web Content Manager recently acquired a SQL server to better manage content for the Colleges and other parts of the University. The Online Student Services work team had recommended more consistency in college and functional sites to make materials more easily accessible for distant students. In fall of 2007, either WebCT Campus Edition or Vista 4.0 will be implemented. A final decision about which version will be selected will be made this spring. Integral to that migration will be the addition of “high availability,” meaning that the backup server recommended by the Online Student Services task force will in effect be realized through this new configuration.

The University is presently transitioning to using Banner for administrative applications in finances, student services, and human resources. The finance system became operational in July 2005. Human Resources, originally planned for January 2006, has been delayed until April 2006. Student Services will be launched in July 2006. As these conversions are complete, additional opportunities for integration among systems are expected. Processes such as automatically populating courses and other seamless management of learner records are still in development.

IS&T’s role in support of students enrolled in online learning has only recently been clarified as we have begun to differentiate the support services for faculty from those of students. In addition to maintaining the technology for the campus, IS&T has also taken on the role of providing direct support to students during all of the hours that the Library is open, providing expanded support for students at early-morning, evening, and weekend hours. What we do not have is 24/7 support, a topic for continued attention. However, support for students now parallels the hours of the library so that the services are available until midnight and on Saturdays and Sundays. In the survey of online students enrolled in the summer of 2005, a small proportion reported a need for technical support, and of those who utilized the service, 78% rated the service either good or excellent.

**Media Production.** The University provides an array of media production services. Examples of the types of services that support distance learning include assistance for faculty with WebCT, photo-editing software, scanner training, DVD

projects, graphic production, and a variety of photo and media support activities. As more faculty attempt to integrate video and graphics into their courses, we expect that the services of the Media Production unit within FLITE will be in higher demand. Learn more about this unit at <http://www.ferris.edu/library/Services/media.html>.

***University Center for Extended Learning (UCEL) and College of Professional and Technological Studies (CPTS).*** UCEL and CPTS provide coordination support for e-learning. Examples include working with faculty members to secure assistance in instructional design, processing e-learning contracts for development, and promoting e-learning options through class schedules and special marketing pieces. UCEL or CPTS also serves as the initial communication link among students and instructors by registering students, communicating course expectations through posting of letters from instructors, coordinating the acquisition of required course materials, and communicating how to access online resources. UCEL and CPTS also provide financial support for faculty stipends for e-learning course development and for instructional design services. In cases where UCEL has paid for development, a professional staff person verifies that minimum requirements have been met before processing payment.

Assistant Dean Cheryl Cluchey has been assigned oversight of online learning for UCEL and works directly with colleges in advancing online instruction and providing resources and communications to students. Dr. Roberta Teahen, dean of UCEL, works toward strategic expansion of online options and recommends or facilitates system improvements based upon student and staff feedback. She has facilitated the two most recent work groups that are addressing online student services and the development of this proposal and continued strategic implementation.

More information about these two distance-learning administrative units can be found at the following locations:

<http://www.ferris.edu/ucel/> (UCEL)

<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/academics/atc/index.htm> (CPTS)

***The Academic Colleges.*** Identification of e-learning opportunities and assurance of the quality of online teaching is the responsibility of the academic colleges, who have oversight of their curricula and faculty. Academic colleges also must recruit and professionally develop the appropriate faculty for online instruction. Online offerings must be consistent with standards for face-to-face courses and it is the college's

responsibility to assure this quality, while utilizing feedback gathered from students and staff (<http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/colleges/>).

***The Office of Academic Affairs.*** The Vice President for Academic Affairs or his designee is responsible for ensuring that communication and collaboration occur related to e-learning. He makes the final determination about what courses or programs will be offered in a fully online format. This office has ultimate responsibility for the learning management system. Furthermore, he or his designee is responsible for coordinating with IS&T and other University units to ensure the smooth functioning of e-learning. Along with the appropriate deans, he has shared responsibility for setting the institutional vision, agenda, and reporting for e-learning. Overall leadership responsibility for online learning rests with the Office of Academic Affairs and Vice President Michael Harris. Both Associate VP Roxanne Cullen and Interim Assistant VP Pat Klarecki have provided active support to advancing online learning at Ferris. Learn more about Academic Affairs at <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/academicaffairs/>

### ***Staff Qualifications***

Resumes for the qualifications of the individuals responsible for e-learning leadership and development activities at Ferris will be provided in the resource room and selected resumes are provided as Appendix I.

### ***Availability of Learning Resources and Support Services for Online Students***

Because Ferris has been serving non-traditional learners off-campus for 27 years, policies, procedures, and university systems have been developed to ensure that students at a distance can easily access learning resources and support services. A toll-free long distance telephone number (800-562-9130) is provided to off-campus students to accommodate their telephone access-to-campus needs, and all students are assigned MyFSU e-mail accounts. MyFSU is the student's link to services such as WebCT, e-mail, course grades, registration, library resources, financial aid, and more. Regional offices are open until 6 p.m., and answering machines are available at each site. Calls to students are returned promptly. Technician services are available until midnight, as well as on weekends.

***Student Support Services.*** Students seeking information related to online learning support services are directed to the UCEL or CPTS website dedicated to

providing “Information for Online Students.” Information can be found at <http://www.ferris.edu/UCEL/onlinestudent/index.htm>. These pages provide a link to an off-campus student handbook and a self-assessment tool that urges students to consider their readiness to undertake online learning. They also explain how students are to access their WebCT login and provide a hot link to the *Student WebCT FAQ’s*. If a class requires a textbook, this site provides a link to Ferris’ online bookstore, MBS. Students experiencing technical difficulty are given a web link and phone number to contact the Ferris Student and Administrative Technology Services (SATS). Formerly, instructors were the front line for student technical concerns, which added unnecessary burden for them when others were better prepared to handle technology issues.

***Ferris Library for Information, Technology, and Education (FLITE)***. Check out the Ferris library at <http://www.ferris.edu/library/>. FLITE has been a leader in providing library resources for off-campus students, and library support is essential to the success of Ferris’ e-learning initiatives. FLITE currently has a librarian assigned to distance education support. Easily accessible from the FLITE homepage is a menu of services/information available to distant students (those engaged in e-learning and those in traditional classes at our regional sites). See <http://www.ferris.edu/library/distanced/homepage.html>. This menu includes information on document delivery, off-campus database access, and the opportunity to chat live with a librarian, among other resources. In surveys of off-campus student satisfaction, the support of FLITE always rates highly.

Remote students are provided with a student ID card containing a “barcode number” unique to that student and FLITE. A consortium of five libraries, in which Ferris is a member, shares the FerrisNet Online Catalog. Remote students can use the FerrisNet Online catalog to search for books, government documents, videos or music recordings housed in FLITE. They may also secure materials through MelCat and Interlibrary Loan.

***Academic Advising***. Academic advising is an important part of Ferris’ commitment to high-quality education. Advising involves the development and communication of accurate information regarding degree programs, courses, resources, University/College policies/procedures, and career opportunities intended to help students in attaining their educational goals. Each Ferris student is assigned an academic

advisor. Most advisors are university faculty, but in some cases advising personnel have been hired to provide this student service. Responsibility for the advisement of online students remains the responsibility of assigned advisors. In some cases, advisors are assigned at regional offices through a joint appointment with FSU-GR or UCEL and the academic college. Main-campus advisors also travel to regional sites to meet with off-campus students. Ferris' advising systems provided for online students are primarily through the use of e-mail, comprehensive web sites that target key information, and toll-free phone numbers. Ferris develops academic plans for each student so that the student may also monitor his/her own progress on forms referred to as checksheets. Ferris is making increased use of the Web to address routine student questions.

Using WebCT for advising students in clinical sites has grown in popularity. A large number of faculty already provide advising through electronic means, both e-mail communications and web-based, so the transition to fully online degree programs will not present the University with challenges in providing academic advising electronically, even though there is room for enhancement of the online support services.

***Financial Aid.*** Online degree-seeking students looking for information related to financial aid are also directed to the UCEL or FSU-GR website dedicated to providing "Information for Online Students." This site provides a link directly to the Ferris Financial Aid website and includes a link to the FAFSA online application. It also provides students with a toll-free number to call if they wish to speak directly to a Ferris Financial Aid counselor. Ferris has Financial Aid Consortium agreements with many of Michigan's community colleges and a person dedicated to working with these groups. These agreements allow students to receive financial aid for all of their courses even when they take classes simultaneously from both institutions. Ferris financial aid personnel also monitor federal requirements concerning online courses and programs and advise students appropriately.

***Career Services.*** Career services (placement, resume building, etc.) are available to all Ferris students. Off-campus students are encouraged to check the Career Services website at <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/OTHERSRV/Placement/> or to call 800-562-9130 Ext. 2685 to speak directly to FSU career placement staff.

### ***Financial Documentation of Institutional Capacity to Support Proposed Change***

An important factor in assessing the university's ability to support future development is the overall health of the university's budget and the priority-setting processes. Although Michigan and Ferris have endured financial setbacks because of the poor state of the economy, Ferris remains financially strong. The university's leadership has been conservative in its spending and attentive to maintaining a viable institution. The current President and Vice President for Academic Affairs, members of the Board, the administration, and the faculty have declared their intent to support the core mission of the institution. Faculty positions are being added, not cut. Technology is being added and upgraded. Professional development is expanding. The university is positioned to support an advancing presence in the online environment. The large enrollment growth experienced in the fall of 2005, some of it coming from online enrollments, is one contributor to the University's positive financial position.

The business model for online learning plans that the enrollments will more than pay for the investments in development and support. A variety of scenarios have been developed, but no single budget model applies because there are a variety of approaches taken. In some cases, development costs are shared by the College and UCEL or CPTS. In others, faculty members simply decide to develop their course as an online offering, minimizing the university's investment. In every case, the anticipated number of enrollees will vary. In some disciplines, such as respiratory therapy, a relatively limited group will access the course. In other cases, such as social science, the course is attractive to a variety of majors and multiple sections can be supported. Additionally, the amount of support requested by individual faculty members varies. Therefore, it is not possible to determine broadly at what point break-even happens. However, break-even points are figured on each individual course as approvals are being made. In some cases the course breaks even on the first offering. In others, it will need to be offered at least three times with near-full enrollments to recover the investment made in its development.

Expenses related to the cost of online course development and delivery vary according to the amount of service required to support the course developer and whether the service is through an internal or external provider. As noted earlier, faculty members are not required to utilize design or other support services in the development of their courses. Thus, there is great variability in the costs to develop online instruction at Ferris. The decision to utilize university support services sometimes is made based upon

the preferred ownership status. If the university pays for online development, it has the right to use the course with other instructors. The developing instructor has the first opportunity to teach the class. Some faculty members choose to retain full ownership to their courses, thereby foregoing the university's support for development. Appendix F displays three levels of 'service packages' and the types of support provided in each by an instructional designer, web developer (media specialist), and a graphic designer.

Income and expense projections and "breakeven enrollment" projections based upon these models are also provided in Appendix E. Although this model was developed about two years ago and provides guidance on the actual support requirements for development, in no case does it reflect the exact requirements for any course. Some require more, and some require less. Some use lots of media; others use little. Some faculty require considerable assistance, and some choose to utilize none. Therefore, there is no single model in use but instead we organize resources on an as-needed basis as faculty have requests while concurrently offering some group learning opportunities. Whether faculty should be required to demonstrate their capabilities to function effectively as online instructors is a subject of continuing campus conversations. A group of faculty who participated in a November retreat in November have proposed a set of competencies required for online course developers and instructors. That document is just beginning to receive campus-wide review. It will be available for the team in the resource room.

The means for compensation for online course development has been negotiated into the faculty contract. For each credit developed, a faculty member may be paid \$1,500 or be granted release time within normal faculty workload. The payment is only made if the course has not previously been developed for online and if a unit wants to make this investment. Additionally, there is an elaborate procedure for how faculty members will be reimbursed when other faculty members utilize their course. A current faculty member who developed the course has the first opportunity to teach a section, within load constraints. When the individual declines or the instructor's load will not allow it, a course paid for by the university can be used by another instructor. If a large proportion of the content is utilized by the other instructor, the developing faculty member receives royalties in the amount of 10 percent of the adjunct instructor pay amount. For a three-credit course, the typical pay is \$2,475. Therefore, a course

developer would be paid \$247.50 for the use of his/her course by another instructor. This procedure is explained in a document included in Appendix G. To date, only two instructors have had royalties paid, because we generally find instructors prefer to develop their own courses, and those who develop the courses are choosing to teach them.

There is no single budget for online learning. Budgets reside where the functions take place. Therefore, parts of the budget for online learning appear in each of the following budget centers: UCEL, IS&T, FCTL, VPAA, SATS, FLITE, and FSU-GR. More detail on these amounts will be provided at the time of the site visit.

### ***Timeline for the Implementation of the Proposed Change***

The University has immediate interest in launching several fully online degrees. These include the Business Administration degree with an emphasis in Leadership and Organizational Development designed to meet the specific requests of our partner Macomb Community College and our mutual partner, the Tank and Automotive Command (TACOM) and the Teacher Education bachelors for Training in Business and Industry that is designed partially in response to needs of the United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters (commonly referred to as the UA). As mentioned earlier, TACOM employees are based worldwide and a blended option is not possible for them. Likewise, UA members are both national and international, with locals throughout the United States and Canada. These programs will be launched as soon as we receive approval from the Commission. Regular faculty in the Colleges of Business and Education are engaged in development of courses. In Business, the effort is being led by Management Department Head Bill Smith, with support from Dean David Nicol, and Enid Carlson-Nagel, instructional designer. Some courses are being offered in Fall 2005 and Winter 2006. Target implementation of the fully online Business Administration program with a Leadership and Organizational Development emphasis is Summer 2006. In the College of Education, leadership is being provided by Dr. Liza Ing, interim director of the School of Education, with support and encouragement from Dean Michelle Johnston, and this program is also targeted to begin in Summer 2006, if appropriate approvals are received.

The MBA program, also located in the College of Business, has a hybrid program that they would like to move toward a fully online option. Leading this effort are Dr. David Nicol, Dean, and Dr. Bill Boras, Department Chair for Graduate Programs in the College of Business. Most of the courses in this program have already been developed as hybrid courses, with limited face-to-face instruction. Therefore, completing the online development should be a speedy process.

In the College of Allied Health Sciences, the Registered Nursing, Baccalaureate-Completion (BSN) program is also already heavily online. That program, led by Dr. Jacqueline Hooper, Dean, and Dr. Julie Coon, Director of the School of Nursing, will launch a fully online option as soon as approval is received from the Higher Learning Commission. The demand for more highly prepared nurses in Michigan is at a very high level. Ferris only offers off-campus options for the BSN, so offering a fully online option is a natural extension of this long-standing focus. By offering the degree online, the program intends to address nursing education needs in rural areas of Michigan where we have been unable to gather enough students to economically justify a cohort. The Ferris BSN program always operates with cohort groups.

Because of the University's extensive hands-on orientation and its historic emphasis upon application and careers, we do not anticipate that many more of our programs will desire to be fully online. As noted earlier, the College of Technology has a mostly online HVACR program that has been developed and implemented through a federal grant. Although most of the courses in this degree-completion program are online, there are on-site lab requirements. After this initial list of programs is launched, our plan for the foreseeable future would be to add one fully online program at a time for the next few years. In every instance, the plan to put a program fully online will emerge from the recommendations and work of the faculty of the academic college.

The University, through this request, intends to make a fully online option possible and not to suggest that any particular programs should definitely be online. We subscribe to the view that the best online options will be those that are planned, embraced, developed, and supported by the faculty with the active support of the administration of the university.

## CHAPTER 6: STRATEGIES TO EVALUATE THE PROPOSED CHANGE

### *Institutional Measures of Success*

There are five key measures that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of Ferris' online programs:

1. Student Satisfaction
2. Student Learning Outcomes (including grade analyses)
3. Financial Viability
4. Faculty Evaluation
5. Administrative Evaluations

All of the preceding measures are a part of the ongoing evaluative practices of the University. With the emergence of a more active presence in online learning, some additional inquiry will surround this delivery mode.

***Student Satisfaction.*** In the last year, questions concerning online learning have become a part of the Extended Learning student surveys. Improvements identified in these surveys are already being implemented. One example is that we are working hard to assure that students receive the information they need in advance of the start of the semester.

Course, instructor, and program feedback is provided directly to the deans of the offering colleges. Another example of using student feedback for improvements concerns advising. Many students have rated advising services lower than other services. Utilizing this feedback, we have greatly expanded the availability and quality of advising at distant sites. Advising support is also regularly available through training sessions and an online handbook for advisors: <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/academics/advising/>.

In late Summer 2005, students who had enrolled in online sections during the summer semester were asked to rate their experience. These student survey results are included as Appendix L. Following are some of the findings of that study, which were encouraging results to the committees working with improving online learning.

**Table 6 – Students’ Evaluation of Online Instruction**

Question	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
14. Overall, how would you rate the technical support you received for your online class?	11	7	3	2
15. How would you rate the quality of the online course (not the instructor, the course?)	60	93	33	5
18. How would you rate your instructor’s overall effectiveness as an online instructor?	85	67	22	17
19. How well do you think you mastered the learning outcomes/objectives for this course	134 Well 49 Somewhat 8 Not Well			
25. Would you recommend this course to a friend or family member?	122 Yes 27 No 42 Maybe			

Many student comments focused on the need for more regular communications. This information has been communicated to online instructors so that they may learn from the students’ perceptions. This survey will be repeated in the fall and winter semesters, so fall results will be available by the time of the team’s visit.

***Evaluation of Instruction.*** Ferris is committed to ongoing evaluation of instruction. Evaluation occurs in multiple ways. First, both non-tenured and tenured faculty participate in tenure or post-tenure review. One part of that tenure review process is the production of student evaluations of teaching. All faculty should select two courses per semester on which they will be evaluated. The results of that evaluation go to the faculty member and the department head. In cases where there may be problems, department heads meet with the faculty member to strategize for improvement. The post-tenure review process, which is undergoing enhancements, can be found at <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/academicaffairs/PTR.html>.

The Student Assessment of Instruction (SAI) is the survey instrument most commonly used to evaluate regular, tenured faculty as well as adjunct faculty. The results of the evaluations are collated and shared with faculty after the grades are posted. They are also distributed to key individuals in the support service units if there is information provided pertinent to their areas. When an adjunct faculty member fails to measure up to Ferris standards, they are not invited to return to teaching if the department determines that sufficient improvement may not be possible.

A sample of the SAI evaluation form is found in Appendix H. The Vice President for Academic Affairs reviews composite data from the SAI (with no instructors' names attached) each semester. Department heads/chairs review the evaluations with names attached and have responsibility for addressing any areas of concern directly with faculty members. SAI data is also expected to become a part of post-tenure review processes. One item under consideration presently is the appropriateness of the SAI as an evaluation instrument for online courses. Several believe it is not appropriate and we anticipate recommendations will be forthcoming to change the evaluation process for online courses. We expect an alternative evaluation will be implemented within a year.

*Student Learning Outcomes.* As most universities do, Ferris continues to grapple with methods for directly measuring student learning outcomes. Plans will be developed for gathering comparative learning outcomes data from courses offered online, utilizing existing and emerging university assessment processes. In the absence of systems to contrast online learners' performance, we did take the opportunity to review grades and withdrawal rates in sections that are offered both face-to-face and online. The faculty who reported that students achieve at about the same levels is an accurate representation. Looking at courses that were offered in the same semester in both formats, we discovered that success rates (defined as C- and above grades) and withdrawal rates are comparable. Success in online courses ranged from 78 to 87% in Internet courses, and from 76-87% in non-Internet courses. Withdrawal rates ranged from 7-9% in online courses while non-Internet course withdrawal rates ranged from 4-6%. Clearly withdrawals are higher in online courses, but not significantly so. Improvement efforts will focus on reducing this disparity. The following table portrays these findings, and complete detail will be available to the team onsite:

**Table 7 – Comparisons of Student Performance in Matched Courses**

	Internet Achievement Percentages			Non-Internet Achievement Percentages		
	C- and Above	D+ and Below	W	C- and Above	D+ and Below	W
<b>Fall 03</b>	87.3	4.9	6.68	79	6.2	5.1
<b>Fall 04</b>	81.17	5.12	6.29	86.6	11.67	4.6
<b>Winter 04</b>	78.07	8.89	8.89	75.62	4.92	6.38
<b>Winter 05</b>	82.97	6.13	7.34	81.29	13.5	4.29

**Financial Viability.** Program-by-program financial analyses are conducted for all extended learning offerings annually, so financial viability will always be scrutinized. The following sections describe some of the evaluative processes presently in place to assure and advance the quality of higher learning at Ferris, most of which applies equally to online offerings.

**Faculty Evaluation.** Faculty are often surveyed about the services provided to them in support of their off-campus initiatives. In the fall 2005 semester a new survey requested input from just current online faculty. Results of that survey identified areas for improvement, particularly in communications with students. The complete results are in Appendix M.

Highlights include these:

1. 33 current online faculty responded.
2. 30% of the respondents had taught online courses for four or more semesters, while 24% were in their first semester.
3. Two-thirds had not been compensated for their course development.
4. 21% had developed online courses for other colleges.
5. 78% believe that development of an online course takes more time than the development of a face-to-face section.
6. 46.9% reported that after a course is developed that it takes about the same amount of time as for face-to-face, and 37.5% report that it takes more time for online.
7. 81.8% reported that they were either well or somewhat prepared for online instruction.
8. The most common service utilized by faculty was WebCT assistance (66.7%) and Faculty Center workshops (48.5%); only 18.2% utilized

instructional design assistance, although the Faculty Center workshops often emphasize design.

9. The most common tools in use are discussion threads (87.9%), calendars (54.5%), companion learning resources, such as CDs (48.5%), and assignment drop boxes (48.5%).
10. Faculty identified students' readiness for online learning and pre-course communications with students as the greatest challenges (60.6% for each); only 21.2% reported that faculty technical support was the greatest challenge.
11. Asked to rate the students' learning achievements when compared with face-to-face offerings of the same class, 55% of faculty reported that students' performance was about the same; 25% said students did better in face-to-face sections, while 20% reported that students in online courses perform better.

***Academic Program Review.*** How well programs are faring in terms of enrollment, facilities, equipment, and finances is monitored through the Ferris Academic Program Review (APR) process that is led by the Faculty Senate with the support of administrators. The APR process is concerned with how well student learning is supported, quantitative measures, student achievements, employer satisfaction, and similar topics. Some direct and indirect measures of student learning are considered in the Academic Program Review process, including graduate, employer, and student surveys. About 17 programs are reviewed each year. Compilation of the APR report is a year-long process and includes an analysis of all courses offered within a program whether the courses are delivered on- or off- campus, face-to-face, or online. Therefore, the courses offered as part of Ferris' e-learning initiative are included in each academic department's APR. In the Academic Program Review, resources are reviewed; faculty, students, graduates, and/or advisory committees are surveyed; and plans for expansion, reduction, and/or improvement are recommended. To learn more about the Committee's processes, membership, and review schedule, consult <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/academicaffairs/vpoffice/senate/progreviewcouncil/homepage.htm>. Copies of the Academic Program Reviews for the past year will be available in the Resource Room.

***Administrative Program Review.*** An additional review process conducted annually is referred to as the Administrative Program Review. Program outcomes assessment occurs in each program at Ferris and outcomes assessment efforts are reported to the Vice President for Academic Affairs each year through the Administrative Program

Review. For the Administrative Program Review, completed by program coordinators or department heads, programs are currently asked to answer the following questions:

1. What are the program's learning outcomes?
2. What assessment measures are used, both direct and indirect?
3. What are the standards for assessment results?
4. What were the assessment results for the past year?
5. How will/how have the results been used for pedagogical or curricular change?

***Administrative Performance Evaluations.*** An annual performance evaluation for all administrative, professional, and supervisory personnel is conducted. This is the category under which personnel such as mid-level administrators, instructional designers, instructional technologists, counselors, and media specialists are evaluated.

***Financial Analysis.*** Multiple analyses are produced that look at the costs of instruction, ratios of costs, break-even points, etc. These analyses are being produced for online courses and will be produced for fully online programs. Many program offerings, because they are offered in cohorts, have a discrete overall program budget.

## CONCLUSION

Ferris State University has been deliberate in its development of online learning. We have responsibly grown the offerings of courses from multiple colleges. We have positioned resources to support both faculty and students. We gather feedback from students and staff in order to improve our services. Based upon our review of resources and systems in support of online programs and data gathered from students and faculty, we utilized the following table to assess our efforts against the Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degrees utilizing the following scale:

- 4 = Much evidence to support this factor
- 3 = Some evidence to support this factor
- 2 = Little evidence to support this factor
- 1 = No evidence to support this factor

**Table 8 - Ferris Assessment of Best Practices Level**

Practice	4	3	2	1
<b>1. Institutional Context and Commitment</b>				
1a. In its content, purposes, organization, and enrollment history, if applicable, the program is consistent with the institution's role and mission.	X			
1b. It is recognized that a healthy institution's purposes change over time. The institution is aware of accreditation requirements and complies with them.	X			
1c. The institution's budgets and policy statements reflect its commitment to the students for whom its electronically offered programs are designed.		X		
1d. The institution assures adequacy of technical and physical plant facilities including appropriate staffing and technical assistance, to support its electronically offered programs.		X		
1e. The internal organizational structure which enables the development, coordination, support, and oversight of electronically offered programs will vary from institution to institution.		X		
1f. In its articulation and transfer policies the institution judges courses and programs on their learning outcomes, and the resources brought to bear for their achievement, not on modes of delivery.		X		
1g. The institution strives to assure a consistent and coherent technical framework for students and faculty. When a change in technologies is necessary, it is introduced in a way that minimizes the impact on students and faculty.		X		
1h. The institution provides students with reasonable technical support for each educational technology hardware, software, and delivery system required in a program.	X			
1i. The selection of technologies is based on appropriateness for the students and the curriculum. It is recognized that availability, cost, and other issues are often involved, but program documentation should include specific consideration of the match between technology and program.	X			

1k. The institution seeks to understand the legal and regulatory requirements of the jurisdictions in which it operates, e.g., requirements for service to those with disabilities, copyright law, state and national requirements for institutions offering educational programs, international restrictions such as export of sensitive information or technologies, etc.	X			
<b>2. Curriculum and Instruction</b>				
2a. As with all curriculum development and review, the institution assures that each program of study results in collegiate-level learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate awarded by the institution, that the electronically offered degree or certificate program is coherent and complete, and that such programs leading to undergraduate degrees include general education requirements.	X			
2b. Academically qualified persons participate fully in the decision concerning program curricula and program oversight. It is recognized that traditional faculty roles may be unbundled and/or supplemented as electronically offered programs are developed and presented, but the substance of the program, including its presentation, management, and assessment are the responsibility of people with appropriate academic qualifications.	X			
2c. In designing an electronically offered degree or certificate program, the institution provides a coherent plan for the student to access all courses necessary to complete the program, or clearly notifies students of requirements not included in the electronic offering. Hybrid programs or courses, mixing electronic and on-campus elements, are designed to assure that all students have access to appropriate services.	X			
2d. Although important elements of a program may be supplied by consortial partners or outsourced to other organizations, including contractors who may not be accredited, the responsibility for performance remains with the institution awarding the degree or certificate.	X			
2e. The importance of appropriate interaction (synchronous or asynchronous) between instructor and students and among students is reflected in the design of the program and its courses, and in the technical facilities and services provided.		X		
<b>3. Faculty Support</b>				
3a. In the development of an electronically offered program, the institution and its participating faculty have considered issues of workload, compensation, ownership of intellectual property resulting from the program, and the implications of program participation for the faculty members' professional evaluation processes. This mutual understanding is based on policies and agreements adopted by the parties.	X			
3b. The institution provides an ongoing program of appropriate technical, design, and production support for participating faculty members.		X		
3c. The institution provides to those responsible for program development the orientation and training to help them become proficient in the uses of the program's technologies, including potential changes in course design and management.		X		
3d. The institution provides to those responsible for working directly with students the orientation and training to help them become proficient in the uses of the technologies for these purposes, including strategies for effective interaction.		X		
<b>4. Student Support</b>				
4a. The institution has a commitment – administrative, financial, and technical – to continuation of the program for a period sufficient to enable all admitted students to complete a degree or certificate in a publicized timeframe.	X			
4b. Prior to admitting a student to the program, the institution ascertains by a review of pertinent records and/or personal review that the student is qualified by prior education or equivalent experience to be admitted to that program, including in the case of international students, English language skills; and		X		

informs the prospective student concerning required access to technologies, required technical competencies, estimated program costs, and timeframe in which courses are offered.				
4c. The institution recognizes that appropriate services must be available for students of electronically offered programs, using the working assumption that these students will not be physically present on campus. With variations for specific situations and programs, these services, which are possibly coordinated, may include: information about the institution, its programs, courses, costs; pre-registration advising; admission; placement testing; enrollment/registration; financial aid; information about available scholarships, etc.	X			
4d. The institution recognizes that a sense of community is important to the success of many students, and that an ongoing, long-term relationship is beneficial to both student and institution. The design and administration of the program takes this factor into account as appropriate, through actions such as study groups, student directories, inclusion of off-campus students in publications and events, and other strategies of inclusion.		X		
<b>5. Evaluation and Assessment</b>				
5a. As a component of the institution's overall assessment activities, documented assessment of student achievement is conducted in each course and at the completion of the program, by comparing student performance to the intended learning outcomes.		X		
5b. When examinations are employed (paper, online, demonstrations of competency, etc.), they take place in circumstances that include firm student identification. The institution seeks to assure the integrity of student work.	X			
5c. Documented procedures assure that security of personal information is protected in the conduct of assessments and evaluations and in the dissemination of results.	X			
5d. Overall program effectiveness is determined by such measures as the extent to which student learning matches intended outcomes, including for degree programs both the goals of general education and the objectives of the major; the extent to which student intent is met; student retention rates; student satisfaction; faculty satisfaction; extent of access for students not previously served, etc.		X		
5e. The institution conducts a program of continual self-evaluation directed toward program improvement, targeting more effective uses of technology to improve pedagogy, advances in student achievement of intended outcomes, improved retention rates, effective use of resources, and demonstrated improvements in the institution's service to its internal and external constituencies.		X		
5f. Institutional evaluation of electronically offered programs takes place in the context of the regular evaluation of all academic programs.	X			

The views reported above suggest areas for improvement. We will continue to improve our support for faculty and students engaged in Ferris online learning offerings and to assure the continuing improvement of the match between students' goals, targeted learning outcomes, and student performance. This commitment exists regardless of the delivery mechanism, but in the early years of online programming, additional attention will be paid to assuring that all standards are met through online delivery methods.

### *Implications for Faculty Development*

When a faculty member supplements an existing face-to-face course with web tools, the degree to which pedagogy gets transformed is often minimal. The faculty member needs to develop adequate mechanical skills with the course management system, but may require little re-engineering of the methods of instruction and assessment that are familiar to them. As a faculty member moves up the scale in web-dependence to a "mixed-delivery" mode, Level 2, greater transformation of the individual's pedagogical skills is required in addition to the mechanical skills, so the faculty investment is higher and support needs are greater. Or, as one colleague wrote, "the stakes are higher, the chances for failure are greater."

As we offer more courses in the fully online mode in order to enable completion of all degree requirements, faculty will need much more transformation in the way they guide learning activity and in the way they assess their students' achievement of learning outcomes. They also must have full command of the mechanical skills involved in building, operating, and maintaining the electronic course. Planning for the development required in this next phase is underway; through proposed instructor certification programs and increased attention to best practices in online learning. Ferris recognizes the importance of expanded faculty professional development and is committed to assuring its availability.

Ferris State University has the capability and has demonstrated its commitment to online learning. We request the Commission's approval of this online learning request.

## APPENDICES

- A. Career Guide
- B. Planning Documents
  - a. University Vision
  - b. Academic Affairs Division 2005-06 Action Plan
  - c. University for Extended Learning 2005-06 Action Plan
- C. Distance Learning Task Force Report -2004
- D. FCTL Principles of Good Practice for Distance Learning
- E. Support Levels for Distance Learning
- F. Online Course Enrollment Reports
- G. Faculty Agreements
  - a. Intellectual Property Agreement
  - b. Faculty Contract Provisions related to Curriculum and Distance Learning
  - c. Distance Learning Agreement Procedures and Forms
  - d. Royalty Payments
- H. HLC Workshop Online Student Services Workshop
- I. Budget Information – to be supplied in Resource Room
- J. SAI Instrument utilized for evaluation of many courses
- K. Key Personnel Qualifications
  - a. Enid Carlson-Nagel, Instructional Designer
  - b. Cheryl Cluchey, Assistant Dean, UCEL
  - c. Terry Doyle, Director, Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning
  - d. David Eisler, President
  - e. Michael Harris, Vice President for Academic Affairs
  - f. Roberta Teahen, Dean, UCEL
- L. Academic Profile Assessment 2004-05 Report
- M. Survey of Summer and Fall 2005 Online Students
- N. Survey of Summer and Fall Online Instructors
- O. Winter 2006 Off-Campus Schedule (Includes Internet sections)
- P. Ferris Fact Book