

February 7, 2007

Dear Colleagues:

The nature of the first interaction greatly influences later interactions. Whereas I have been at Ferris State University for seventeen years, I am new to the position of Chief Diversity Officer. So, this letter will function, in some ways, as my first interaction with the campus community.

I am not the Affirmative Action Officer. The Chief Diversity Officer works with students, faculty, staff, and administrators to infuse diversity throughout the campus. I will work with the Affirmative Action Officer, but no more so—and probably less—than with vice presidents, deans, department heads/chairs, counselors, students and others.

We need a plan. In the past there have been many diversity-theme initiatives at Ferris State University; however, diversity has not been embedded in the planning documents of the institution. I have formed a Diversity Planning Committee (DPC) to help create a document that will guide our efforts. That committee is working hard and already accomplishing much. The members of the DPC are:

Abdul Ahmed - Student
Yolonda Barnes – Labor Relation/Affirmative Action Assistant
Karyn Benner – Special Programs Coordinator, Minority Student Affairs
Christy Brewer – Hall Director
Mike Cairns – Associate Vice President, Student Affairs
Matt Chaney – Interim Director of Minority Student Affairs
Tyrone Collins – Admissions Counselor
Matthew Eickhoff – Coordinator, Student Engagement/Activities
Micala Evans – Student
Susan Fogarty – Associate Professor, School of Nursing
Karen GreenBay – Coordinator, Scholar Program
Warren Hills – Associate Vice President, Human Resources
Thuy Karafa – Adjunct Faculty, Social Sciences
Pat Klarecki – Assistant Vice President, Academic Affairs
Russell Leonard – Assistant Professor, Automotive Service Technology
Eunice Merwin – Education Counselor of Students with Disabilities
James Mikula - Student
David Pilgrim – Chief Diversity Officer
Todd Stanislav – Director, Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning
Kent Sun – Associate Professor, Mathematics
Luzia Tartari – Coordinator of International Student Recruiting
Troy Tissue – Interim Associate Director, Admissions and Records
Leroy Wright – Dean of Student Life

I have said on several occasions that the work of making FSU a truly diverse institution cannot be the responsibility of one person or one committee. It will take an entire campus. Also, I believe that any diversity plan that is imposed is doomed. I want all members of the campus to know they are welcome to share opinions about our

progress. It is important that our efforts are transparent—substantive, but transparent. To begin this process, I offer a tentative definition of diversity that has been developed by the DPC:

“As intended by its founder, Ferris State University (FSU) is envisioned as a truly diverse community that reflects the public it serves. As such, FSU does not, simply, tolerate diversity, but actively embraces, infuses, and celebrates diversity as a core value. It is a community where people value individual and group differences, respect the worldviews of others, and communicate openly. Diversity at FSU includes, but is not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religion or ethical values system, national origin, and political beliefs.”

A Diversity Office website will be operational in the next several weeks. That website will offer opportunities for feedback. In the meantime, if you have suggestions, criticism, or general comments that you want the DPC to consider please send them to pilgrimd@ferris.edu.

The DPC is now considering diversity goals for the university; those goals—offered here only as a draft—are as follows:

- 1) Create a campus that is safe for and welcoming to diverse populations;
- 2) Improve relations between the University and surrounding communities, especially as it relates to diversity;
- 3) Assess the current state of diversity at the University;
- 4) Recruit, retain, and graduate a diverse student body;
- 5) Hire, retain, and promote a diversified workforce: faculty, staff, and administrators;
- 6) Enhance the effectiveness of diversity-themed organizations, including strengthening inter-organizational communication, providing resources, and promoting relevant activities;
- 7) Encourage and support the introduction of diversity sensitive pedagogy into courses;
- 8) Create a system of implementation that includes accountability, division of labor, timelines, and monitoring;
- 9) Infuse the Diversity Plan into the University’s Strategic Vision.

I welcome dialogue with any member of the campus community about our diversity efforts. A truly diverse campus is one where diversity exists in worldviews and opinions. Know this early: my commitment is to working with all members of this community. It is important that you see the work as it evolves—and that you have a vehicle to have your ideas heard.

David Pilgrim
Chief Diversity Officer