

November 13, 2007

Dear Colleagues:

On November 8, 2007, I had a working session with the Ferris State University Board of Trustees to examine a draft of the diversity plan. I am sending a copy of the plan to you to ask for your input. You will notice that it is significantly shorter—only two pages. I should note that this document is a general plan. Although the plan does have some action steps, the bulk of the specific action steps will be developed at the divisional levels—see item #1G. Those divisional action plans will include tasks, assignments, timelines, and methods of accountability and assessment.

I welcome the opportunity to sit with individuals and groups to discuss the plan. On March 21, 2008, I will take a final version of the plan before the Board of Trustees and ask them to approve the document.

Thank you,

David Pilgrim
Chief Diversity Officer
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Ferris State University Diversity Plan 2008-2010

“My plea in Michigan—and it will be my plea to the last breath I draw, and the last word I speak—is education for all children, all men, and all women of Michigan, all the people in all our states all the time.”

Woodbridge N. Ferris

Definition of Diversity

As intended by its founder and affirmed by students, faculty and staff, Ferris State University (FSU), is envisioned as a truly diverse community that reflects the public it serves. As such, FSU will not simply tolerate diversity, but actively embrace, infuse, and celebrate diversity as a core value. We will be a community where people value individual and group differences, respect the worldviews of others, and communicate openly. Diversity is the full range of human differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, and political beliefs.

Strategic Goals and Initiatives

1. Create a University that is welcoming to diverse populations

- A. University-wide diversity surveys of students, faculty, and staff will be conducted.
- B. A mechanism for addressing concerns and resolving disputes that are neither legal nor contractual will be established (there are mechanisms for handling legal and contractual disputes).
- C. *Dialogue Ferris*, a University-wide series of lectures and discussions will be conducted. The goal is “talk with a purpose,” promoting honest, and ongoing dialogue about diversity.
- D. Seminars and workshops will be conducted to engage the faculty and staff in sustaining dialogue about and understanding of diversity.
- E. *Diversity at Ferris*, an annual assessment report, will provide demographic data on underrepresented groups and examine the state of diversity initiatives.
- F. The University will continue to nurture existing relationships and develop new working relationships with local agencies and organizations that provide support services for Ferris faculty, staff, students and their families.
- G. Each division will produce a diversity action plan in collaboration with divisional diversity work groups.

2. Recruit, retain, and graduate a diverse student population

- A. The University will employ aggressive recruitment efforts that will include, but not be limited to, targeting high schools, continuing the Office of Multicultural Affairs Bus Tour, locating a full-time admissions recruiter in Wayne County, and recruiting in Chicago.
- B. All admission officers will be trained to work with diverse student populations.
- C. A Bridging Ferris summer program will be implemented.
- D. Efforts will be made to increase the number of diverse students in the Honors Program.
- E. An International Students Program will be established.
- F. A Tuition Incentive Program (T.I.P.) Office will be created and entrenched into the University.
- G. The University will develop a plan to address retention and graduation rate disparities, including but not limited to identifying college retention monitors and creating a comprehensive university mentoring program for first-generation students.

3. Hire and retain a diversified workforce

- A. Annually the President, Vice Presidents, Deans, Directors, Department and Division Heads will reaffirm the University’s commitment to having a diverse workforce.
- B. As an initial step, each division and college will develop strategies for recruitment from graduate and professional programs at Michigan, Michigan State, Wayne State, Central Michigan and other state schools.
- C. All advertisements will stress that FSU is committed to being a truly diversified institution where women, minorities, and other underrepresented groups are encouraged to apply.

- D. Search committees will receive information and assistance to attract qualified candidates, including underrepresented populations. Best practices from successful searches including effective strategies for recruiting a diverse workforce will be shared.
- E. Job searches will include minority-oriented media and be extended to urban areas with a higher concentration of minority populations.
- F. A campaign to market the University to diverse populations will be launched.
- G. Competitive fellowships to graduate students, including underrepresented groups, will be funded.
- H. Working relationships will be cultivated with Preparing Future Faculty programs and directors of graduate minority fellowship programs.
- I. Exit interviews with faculty and staff that are planning to leave or have left Ferris will be conducted.
- J. Data on promotion trends will be analyzed and appropriate University-wide procedures proposed.

4. Create environments for student learning that are inclusive of and sensitive to a diverse student population

- A. Diversity issues will be introduced in all Ferris State University Seminar (FSU 100) courses.
- B. Diversity Across the Curriculum, a multidisciplinary approach to ensuring curricula that is diversity-sensitive, inclusive, and incorporate diversity issues and content will be introduced.
- C. Resources will be provided for faculty who want to infuse diversity issues and content into their courses.
- D. The University will support faculty in handling conflict around diversity in the classroom.
- E. The University will support and encourage the establishment of culturally-sensitive and inclusive learning environments.

Conclusion and Final Thoughts

Ferris commits itself to becoming a truly diverse university because it is consistent with the open access vision of our founder, because it is the right thing for a public university to do in serving an increasing heterogeneous society, because it offers a method of strengthening the academic quality of the University, and because it is crucial to our ability to educate properly our students for living and working in the twenty-first century.

This diversity plan was created with input from many people at the University. It is a working document. When opportunities for new initiatives arise, those opportunities will be seized. The University is committed to transforming itself into a truly diverse institution, meaning, diversity will be infused throughout the institution in University-wide plans, in divisional plans, and in the plans produced by academic colleges and departments. There will be vehicles for sustained dialogue about diversity. And, there will be systems in place for information-sharing, assessment, and accountability. We foresee a visible, meaningful, and permanent change to the culture of the University. The specific action steps listed in this plan will be implemented as soon as possible; the entire plan will be implemented by May 31, 2010.