

HLC Self Study Update

Alumni Have Their Say . . .

Responding to the Alumni survey associated with the HLC Self-Study were 242 individuals. The questions were structured so that respondents could answer strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree. For the first set, question 1 (subquestions a-f) related to the mission documents, there was an additional option of “not familiar with.” For each of these six questions, more than 1 in 5 (generally more than 22.5%) answered that they were not familiar with the university’s mission and related documents. In later questions, some offered observations that they felt poorly informed to either agree or disagree.

There will be multiple opportunities for varied stakeholders to consider these results. The Steering Committee will be among the groups to “make meaning” of the findings. However, the following are some highlights from one reader’s perspective.

Taking the approach of looking for areas that may be weaker than others, this reader looked for places where the combined “disagree” and “strongly disagree” responses totaled more than 15 percent of responses. Those questions follow:

Q2c – Advising systems focus on student learning, including the mastery of skills required for academic success - 15.4% disagree or strongly disagree

Q2f – The organization’s systems of quality assurance include regular review of whether its educational strategies, activities, processes, and technologies enhance student learning – 15.2%

Q4a – The organization practices periodic environmental scanning to understand the changing needs of its constituencies and their communities – 17.2%

Looking for the questions that garnered the strongest positive response, they are:

Q1f The organization presents itself accurately and honestly to the public – 66.7% strongly agree

Q2b – The organization provides an environment that supports all learners and respects the diversity they bring – 66.9% strongly agree with this statement

Many additional comments were supplied, pointing to evidence of many satisfied alumni as well as some concerns about the level of support provided to distant and special groups of students. Following are some representative comments:

Ferris was a great experience for me and made my Masters’s education possible for a working mother of four. I continue to recommend it to colleagues and friends. I also hope that one or more of my children choose Ferris for their undergraduate education.

"I felt that in many of my classes our faculty were just "left overs" who felt it was a burden to teach up here. Not a very good motivator." . . . But I did have some awesome, awesome instructors and I do want to thank Ferris for having a campus up here."

As a student that attended Ferris through the University Center I never felt "connected" to main campus. I never knew about activities on main campus, and never felt welcome enough to attend these activities when I heard about them through the community/online. . . . I also felt there were many times that I was left to fix a problem with scheduling on my own and without any support from administration. I do have to say that MOST of my experiences with the faculty was very positive.

Ferris has fallen from one of the best technology schools in the nation, to one of high tuition, overpaid administrators, underpaid faculty and staff, and most importantly, a school that has taken their eyes off of the most vital aspect of any institution: The Students!

Ferris is an excellent place to receive an education; however, it is a technical and focused education. There are "requirements" that look to teach tolerance; however, there's a lot of talk and only a little action. Admittedly, there is a lot done to help with racial tolerance; however, sexual orientation, gender, and religious tolerance (to name a few) are lacking in the curriculum.

Ferris State University is a great school. Their courses and culture help me become a successful member of society.

I graduated with a degree in Television and Digital Media Production. When I went on my internship, I was told I was the most ready intern the company had ever had. I felt very ready for the "real world" after my time at Ferris State. Thanks.

I was a graduate student at FSU from 2001 to 2006. I sense that FSU did reach out to their external constituents.

I would like to see additional programs, a masters degree in engineering technology would be a program I would consider (online).

Since going on to be a part of other universities for graduate and professional education I have an even higher appreciation for Ferris and its connection with its students. Even in the university-laden community I now live in (Boston), I would be hard pressed to find even a fraction of the quality of faculty, practical instruction, focus on students' needs, or career preparation that I received at Ferris.

Since graduating from the Optometry program, I have worked with several doctors who studied at different schools. It became readily apparent that I received a superior education to them. The more doctors I meet, the more I am convinced that I chose the right school to attend. The curriculum was difficult, but it prepared me well for practice in the real world.

The staff was very friendly and helpful! Best part of Ferris was the off campus staff that helped so much.

The comments are valuable in helping us understand several specific concerns of our alumni. Some feel we are less attentive than desirable to diversity issues beyond racial differences; others feel disconnected if they are online or at a distance; still others have no idea about the university mission or how we judge or seek to improve quality. While the current mission is new, Ferris has always had a mission, although it was less central in our communications than it has become in the past couple years. One take-away may be that the University should become more “intentional” (a Dan Burcham favorite word) about communicating with students about how we gather input to inform programmatic decisions, which assessment “best practices” would suggest we should do.

Those who wish to see the complete results, along with the many other comments provided, may write to any member of the Steering Committee or send a note to hlcselfstudy@ferris.edu, and a copy will be provided to you. Because the data is still being analyzed and an official executive summary is yet to be compiled, the raw results will not be posted on the public Ferris website.