

## Ferris State University, Political Engagement Project, Progress Report for Fall 2007

**PEP Courses and Enrollments** – During Fall 2007, 37 instructors (11 were new to PEP!) offered 36 different courses (55 sections in all) to 1,316 students (duplicated count). A complete list of courses and instructors is available at the PEP website: <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/academicaffairs/ADP/PEP/>. These data show a 30% increase in the course activity level and a 14% increase in enrollment over Fall 2006. Once again, there were PEP courses in all 6 undergraduate colleges representing 23 academic departments. Pre and post assessments are being administered, with the data compiled and analyzed by Professor Tony Baker, one of the PEP Faculty Co-coordinators, who redesigned the instrument.

**PEP Events** – In addition to the course activity summarized above, there were numerous interesting PEP course functions in the fall, many of which constituted a departure from the events offered during 2006-7:

- PEP and ADP coordinators appeared on the campus cable program *Beyond the Campus* (this program is available for viewing at the Ferris PEP website: <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/academicaffairs/ADP/PEP/photo-log.HTM>).
- sponsored two campus-wide speakers and one film screening
  - Dr. Brad Bushman on September 19 (with ADP) for more than 200 students and staff on the subject “Does Media Violence Cause Societal Violence?” Dr. Bushman also met with several PEP classes.
  - Diane Wilson, author of *An Unreasonable Woman*, on October 30 for more than 300 students, staff, and community members. She also met with several PEP classes.
  - Michael Moore’s *Sicko* was shown on November 17 with attendance totaling 169. 22 people also attended a discussion session sponsored by the Health Care Administration PEP students.
- Co-sponsored two cultural events
  - A touring production of *1984* by Tim Robbins’ The Actors’ Gang in collaboration with the College of Arts and Sciences and the Humanities Department. Attendance at this event was 1,146 with 45 people attending the preshow lecture – many of whom were students in PEP courses.
  - A campus production of *Dead Man Walking* on four dates in November. Total attendance was 796. This presentation included collaboration of the Theatre course with Social Work courses. Students from the latter department offered post-production talk-back discussion sessions, but no students chose to attend.
- supported voter registration efforts, too
  - During Consitution Week with ADP

- During November with Student Government, the Michigan Secretary of State, and Omicron Delta Kappa to help students become eligible to vote in the Michigan presidential primary, whenever the courts determine it will be held!
- faculty made presentations about their courses at professional meetings off campus, including:
  - Lilly North
  - Michigan Sociology Association
- funded the New York Times on campus
  - For students via the Campus Readership Program (with Student Government)
  - For PEP instructors, delivered to their offices on a daily basis
  - For delivery to various academic departments for general use
  - Hosted a visit from sales rep, Kandace Rusnak, during November 5-6
- nominated several faculty for recognition as PEP Scholars

**PEP Accomplishments and Challenges** – The major challenges in the second year of Political Engagement at Ferris were: change of leadership in academic affairs, program growth, course assessment, and a movement toward increased collaboration.

Ferris involvement in the Political Engagement Project had been initiated by the former Vice President of Academic Affairs who resigned in May, 2007. Because several PEP-related communications were shared only with that person, there was a delay in implementing one or two initiatives, most notably the identification and nomination of PEP Scholars. Fortunately, the faculty co-coordinators continued their work through the summer and for 2007-8, minimizing what might have been a serious leadership and continuity problem.

As noted above, the success of PEP faculty and courses during 2006-7 resulted in excellent retention of veteran faculty and the addition of 11 new instructors for 2007-8. Bigger numbers required additional funding. Again, because of the University's commitment to PEP, that funding was made available by the administration without hesitation. Interestingly, this growth surge has occurred in a semester when there is no election.

Assessment of PEP course and program learning outcomes continues to be a priority, in line with the stated mission of the program at Ferris. Based upon feedback from instructors and students in 2006-7, Professor Tony Baker reconfigured the survey instrument in order to reduce the number of questions and to aim them at the kinds of outcomes that the PEP group had identified at the inception of the program.

Finally, the current version of PEP at Ferris has a broader curricular and co-curricular base than was the case in 2006-7. This year's courses and events are showing a distinct movement toward the arts, including the two plays listed above, a theatre course, a

television production course, a music course, and an applied art course. PEP faculty have collaborated with Student Government, the Humanities Department, the American Democracy Project, Arts and Lectures, cable channel 7, and the Omicron Delta Kappa leadership honorary for various programming elements.

**Planning for Spring 2008 and Beyond.** At this writing (December 14, 2007), 34 faculty (4 are new to PEP) representing 21 departments and 7 colleges have signed up to teach nearly 60 PEP course sections for spring semester. The early registration for those courses tallies 1,400 students with late registration pending. The number of course sections is about 50% higher than last year and the enrollments will increase by 35%. The scheduled courses will be taught at all four undergraduate levels and include one professional doctoral course. Spring semester programming will be richer than last year as well. At this writing, we have the following events scheduled:

**Thursday, January 30 -- Focus the Nation Event.** With more than nearly 1,000 universities and colleges signed up, Focus the Nation is an unprecedented educational initiative designed to engage thousands of faculty and millions of students in a nation-wide teach-in about global warming solutions. The goal of this initiative is education and action.

**Tuesday, February 19 at 11:00 a.m. -- Art of War Opening.** Mr. Benjamin Bush is scheduled to exhibit his photography exhibit, "The Art in War," at Art Works during the entire month of February.

**Tuesday, February 26 at 7:00 p.m. -- James Moore Lecture.** James Moore is an Emmy-winning former television news correspondent and the co-author of the bestselling, *Bush's Brain: How Karl Rove Made George W. Bush Presidential*.

**Week of March 31-April 4 -- Fair Housing 40th Anniversary Events.**

**Tuesday, April 1 at 7:00 p.m. -- Paul Loeb Lecture.** Paul Loeb has spent over thirty years researching and writing about citizen responsibility and empowerment--asking what makes some people choose lives of social commitment, while others abstain. He has written five widely praised books including *Soul of a Citizen*.

**Tuesday, April 22 -- PEP End of Year Recognition Event.** (contact: Dr. Rick Griffin)

Additional PEP activities scheduled for spring semester include:

- Continued distribution of *The New York Times* to the campus
- Distribution of *Educating for Democracy* to PEP instructors
- Sending a team to New York City for the January 25 meeting at the *Times*
- Sending a team to Snowbird for the PEP/ADP meetings in June