

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
August 29, 2016

With the first day of classes there is a special kind of energy on all of our campuses that accompanies the beginning of the academic year. While many of our students are comfortable and prepared for these first few days, there are others who may still be struggling with schedules, or in finding people, buildings, classrooms or offices. In walking around campus and through our buildings, I see faculty and staff who are helping our students. Thank you for doing so.

On Thursday, Friday and Saturday students moved into our residence halls here in Big Rapids. Even if you have seen it many times, it is remarkable to experience our campus come alive with students, their families and friends, and the activities that signal the start of the academic year. I want to thank everyone involved with Bulldog Beginnings, a program that welcomes and engages students during their first week at Ferris.

It was also good to see the work of our students who volunteered with Bulldogs in Action. This is a community service event sponsored by the Office of Housing and Residence Life, with strong support from our athletic teams and other organizations, that helps students and their parents with the burden of the lifting and carrying that comes with moving in on campus. If you have ever helped a son or daughter move into college you know how much this assistance is appreciated.

On Friday volunteers staffed the "First Impressions" information booths welcoming students and parents to campus. Today, they will again be around campus helping students. I want to personally thank all the volunteers who took time out of their busy schedules to point students in the right direction, provide information, and maybe most importantly, be a friendly face in a new environment: Angie Buys, Ann Breitenwischer, Ann Rescoe, Dale Skornia, Deb Ducat, Deb Parrish, Deb Savides, Deb Yost, Debbie Fisher, DeeDee Stakley, Doug Vandecar, Emily Zoet, Geri Johnson, Jacob Bouvrette, Jake Davis, Jay Bush, Jean Inabinett, Jenice Winowiecki, Jill Bush, Jim Cook, Jody Greco, John Monahan, Joyce Mudel, Kaitlin Zies, Kara Pellerito, Karen Kirk, Katelyn Crain, Katy Moore, Kaytlyn Sheldon, Kelly Hicks, Kevin Bunce, Kiefer Morse, Kim Erickson, Kristy Motz, Laurie Daniels, Leah Melichar, Matt Stanke, Michele Upton, Michelle Johnson, Michelle Rasmussen, Nancy Mettlach, Nate Clark, Nathan Leatherman, Nick Campau, Nicole Lintemuth, Patrick MacGregor, Richelle Boerma, Sandy Larie, Sandy Stoddard, Sharon Hopper, Susan Cook, Teresa Fogel, Trudy Roersma. I'd also like to give special thanks to Laura Monahan for coordinating the volunteers, and Shana Beisiegel and Angie Palmer for leading this event for our Big Rapids campus.

This past Tuesday I toured the two, newly built West Campus Apartments. These turned out marvelously, and our students will be very pleased with these new housing opportunities. In addition, we walked through our existing halls, and our physical plant has done a wonderful job getting our residence halls prepared and ready for our students.

On Wednesday Provost Paul Blake and I visited all-college meetings throughout campus. It was an enjoyable and uplifting experience to meet new and returning faculty and staff. When one has the opportunity to talk with nearly all of the faculty and staff in Big Rapids in one morning it reinforces in a powerful way the number of people actively engaged and committed to our students' education and success.

Founders' Day

This Thursday, September 1st, is Founders' Day, our annual celebration of the founding of this institution in 1884 by Woodbridge and Helen Gillespie Ferris. That first cohort of 15 students, 10 men and five women, all came to Big Rapids Industrial School because they were given an opportunity - an opportunity provided them regardless of background, experience or economic status. While we can only imagine what Woodbridge and Helen experienced on their first day, we do know they created a tradition we are proud to continue today by providing opportunities for our students through the University they helped create.

This is the 10th year of our Founders' Day celebration. Each fall I look forward to reflecting on our University – what our founders envisioned back in 1884, where we are today, and what we anticipate in our future at Ferris State University. Our founders were clear that they wanted to do much more than provide an education. They created an institution open to everyone and left a legacy of building up men and women, developing character and instilling an appreciation of the fundamental values of life. For students attending Ferris Institute the intent was to provide not just an education, but prepare them for careers in fields as diverse as telegraphy, stenography and pharmacy. Today, we continue this tradition, and I am confident Woodbridge and Helen would be proud of what their school has become.

Founders' Day is for you. I am hopeful you will attend and participate. Please take a moment to review the many events scheduled throughout the day:

- At 11 a.m. in University Center (UC) 203 I will be presenting on the past, present, and future of our University, touching on the heritage and history of our University, progress on our Strategic Plan, expectations for the coming year, and some of the opportunities and challenges ahead.
- From noon to 1:30 p.m. you are invited to lunch under the big tent on the Quad to visit with colleagues and celebrate the beginning of the semester.
- At 1 p.m. women's soccer will be hosting their home opener against Lewis University. While the women's soccer field is being improved, home soccer games will take place at Top Taggart Stadium. Our women's soccer team had one of their best seasons last year, and they look forward to your support.
- At 1:30 p.m. in UC 217, Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion David Pilgrim, and Multimedia Specialist Franklin Hughes, will share with you what they have learned from their research about a relationship between Ferris Institute and Hampton Institute in Virginia. Through this partnership, which began in 1910, a number of African American students from Hampton attended Ferris Institute for college preparation, then went on to larger universities in the Midwest and became successful, nationally prominent individuals. This discovery truly embraces what Woodbridge N. Ferris believed in his heart and lived out every day in Big Rapids – *education for all of the people all of the time.*
- From 4 to 7 p.m. the North Quad will be host to many activities, including our annual Ice Cream Social featuring celebrity servers and Jones' Ice Cream. Sponsored by Governmental Relations and General Counsel, this event brings together the Big Rapids and University communities.
- At 7:30 p.m. our football team opens its season against Ohio Dominican. We have enjoyed watching our team have two consecutive, undefeated regular seasons and look forward to supporting Coach Annese and his team as they seek to win our conference championship for the third year in a row. After the game students are invited to enjoy "The Fifth Quarter" featuring a DJ and dancing on the football field.

Founders' Day has grown into a wonderful celebration of our University, our people, and our community. My thanks go out to the many people who contribute to the success of the day. Please join us if your schedule permits. More information on Founders' Day is available here - <http://www.ferris.edu/foundersday>.

While you are traveling and coming to and from the Big Rapids campus, I'd like you to take special note of a new set of stop signs at the intersection of Ives Avenue and Magnolia Drive, just across the street from the entrance to University Center. I want to thank Big Rapids city officials for keeping our students and residents safe on the roads adjacent to campus.

There are many people to thank at this time of year – grounds workers who make campus look beautiful, dining services staff who take great pride in making delicious meals for our campus community, housing staff who help students adjust to their new home, and certainly our faculty and staff who are integral to the education we provide. We all know that there are many, many more people who contribute to this. Each of us plays an important role in helping the start of the fall semester be a successful one. Thank you for helping our students get started on the academic year. If you're traveling this week for Labor Day weekend, safe travels and have an enjoyable long weekend.

David L. Eisler, president