

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
October 10, 2016

At Friday's Board of Trustee meetings Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion David Pilgrim presented the 2015-16 Diversity Report. This was a significant occasion, marking Dr. Pilgrim's 10th year leading our University's Diversity and Inclusion efforts. In this report he presents examples of progress and achievements, continued challenges, an assessment of and recommendations for each of the six goals in the 2016-2021 Diversity and Inclusion Plan. Please take time to read this document which is accessible [here](#).

If you have not done so recently I also encourage you to read our Diversity and Inclusion Plan, entitled, "There is a Home for You at Ferris State University," which is accessible [here](#). This plan and the goals it sets forth are objectives I both strongly embrace and support. The preface of this plan presents our commitment to diversity and inclusion in a clear, cogent and compelling fashion -

"We value diversity. We recognize that the myriad of ways in which we differ - our races, our ethnicities, our genders, our gender identities, our sexual orientations, our ages, our social classes, our physical abilities, our faiths and ethical values systems, our national origins, and our political beliefs - offer a richness that enhances the university.

We value inclusion, meaning, proactive behaviors that make each person feel welcome and empowered - those who are rich, those who are middle-class, and those who are poor; people of all religions and people with no religion; people of all colors and histories and people who are a mixture of many; conservatives, moderates, liberals; people of all genders and sexual orientations; people with physical, mental, and emotional challenges who choose to study at our campuses and online; and people who learn in traditional ways and people who don't. An inclusive Ferris is a community where all those people and others believe that the University belongs to them as much as it belongs to others. This is the Ferris we are creating."

Many people have contributed to advancing diversity and inclusion at Ferris State University. On this 10th anniversary there is much of which we can be very proud and celebrate. At the same time, challenges remain and more progress is needed. Thank you for your efforts for diversity and inclusion. Working together we can continue to create a university that not only meets, but exceeds the aspirations above.

Wall Street Journal U.S. College Rankings

At the end of September, *The Wall Street Journal/Times Higher Education* released its inaugural ranking of U.S. Colleges. One of the ways this ranking is unique is that it incorporates results from a survey of 100,000 college students. Students were queried on their experience with professors, how much they collaborated on projects and were pushed to think critically, and whether they would recommend the school they attend. The rankings seek to value schools on good teaching, stimulating/engaging students, socioeconomic factors and racial diversity. The overall score is derived from ratings on Outcome, Resources, Engagement, Environment, Right Choice, Salary of Graduates and Debt Repayment.

The top 500 of this survey includes a number of Michigan schools - the University of Michigan, Michigan State, Michigan Tech, Kalamazoo College, Albion College, Kettering University, Hope College, University of Detroit Mercy, College for Creative Studies, Alma College, Calvin College, Andrews University, Lawrence Tech, Wayne State, University of Michigan

Dearborn and Ferris State University. Ferris is ranked 492nd in this survey, something that at first did not catch my attention, until noticing how few Michigan public universities made this listing and how many neighboring universities did not. Ferris scored highest in engagement (15 out of 20) and right choice (8.92 out of 10), ratings I believe were influenced by positive responses from our students in this survey. It is gratifying to see our University recognized by this survey's criteria and research.

Disability Awareness Month

October is Disability Awareness Month, and an interesting group of speakers will share their experiences on the Big Rapids campus.

- This Wednesday, Oct. 12, Connor Bartz will present "Hidden Struggles" in IRC 120 from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Bartz was born with significant health challenges, many of which were unseen, and persevered despite many challenges.
- Tuesday, Oct. 18, Anthony Ianni will speak in BUS 211 at 6:30 p.m. as part of "The Relentless Tour." Ianni is the first athlete with autism to play Division I college basketball and seeks to eradicate bullying and inspire others.
- Thursday, Oct. 27, Arash Bayatmakou will present "Little Big Steps" in UC 213 at 6 p.m. He will speak about breaking boundaries and positive change after a life-altering spinal cord injury.

The traveling, interactive exhibit "Allies for Inclusion" will be hosted in UC, Room 203, Nov. 7-9. This promotes the inclusion of people with disabilities through respect for others and awareness of disability issues. These events are sponsored by many people and offices across campus. I thank everyone involved in bringing these speakers and events to our campus, and encourage faculty, staff and students to attend.

Family and Friends

Beginning this Friday afternoon, Oct. 14, the University is hosting its first-ever Family and Friends Weekend. Nearly 300 families and more than 1,200 people have registered to join their students on our Big Rapids campus. Organized by the Center for Leadership, Activities and Career Services (CLACS), families will have opportunities to learn how best to support their students, and participate in a variety of activities and sporting events. More information about the weekend is accessible [here](#). A number of groups have collaborated to create this event, including the CLACS office, University Recreation, Enrollment Services, Athletics and others across campus and in the community. Thank you for helping to welcome the friends and family of our students to Big Rapids.

American Democracy Project

Two components of the American Democracy Project will present programs this week. Tonight in Williams Auditorium at 5:30 p.m., the Political Engagement Project presents Gregory Valliere, chief global strategist with Horizon Investments. He will share insights on the global economy, the 2016 presidential election, tax reform and repatriation, among other subjects. Wednesday at 5 p.m. in MCO 210, the Economic Inequality Initiative will host Sunil Joy, senior data and policy analyst with The Education Trust – Midwest. His presentation, Partisan Politics and Literacy, discusses how struggling readers could be impacted by recent legislation.

Strategic Planning and Resource Council

The Strategic Planning and Resource Council (SPARC) will meet Tuesday, Oct. 11, 3 p.m. in UCB 202B. This group will continue the campus-wide discussion of approaches to recruit and retain more students. As part of this meeting, they will review and prioritize the many suggestions

received on how we can boost and strengthen enrollment efforts. If you would like more information on enrollment efforts, have ideas to share on how we can increase enrollment, and/or would like to be part of these important discussions please join us on Tuesday afternoon. SPARC meetings are open to all; you need not be a member to attend and participate.

Survey Reminder

If you have not completed the campus-wide workplace survey, please take a few minutes to do so. Developed as part of our strategic plan, the survey is designed to seek your opinion and help develop a good understanding of employee satisfaction and workplace engagement. The survey takes approximately five minutes to complete and is constructed so your responses will remain anonymous. The survey ends next Monday, Oct. 17. If you are one of the many people who has already completed the survey, thank you for taking time to do so.

United Way Campaign

Last Monday was the kick-off for our annual United Way campaign. Through your efforts and generosity, the monies raised for United Way help our neighbors in Mecosta and Osceola County. The various agencies that receive support from our local United Way help to meet critical and basic human needs in the community, as well as provide opportunities for our youth. Contributions can be made via payroll deduction or a one-time gift. You may also support this campaign through a number of activities on campus: FLITE's chili cook-off, the International Center's bake sale, Timme's soup/chili day and Farm Stand, Prakken, Alumni and West's coin challenge, the holiday silent auction on Dec. 8 and many others.

Faculty, staff and student volunteers are working very hard to help reach this year's goal of \$60,000. Thank you to our United Way campaign co-chairs, Jeanine Ward-Roof and Linda Telfer, for leading campaign activities on campus. Your gift to the United Way supports useful efforts in our communities. I strongly encourage you to support this very worthwhile cause.

Athletics

On Friday and Saturday, the women's volleyball team defeated Ashland and Tiffin by identical scores of 3-0. This was their ninth straight victory, bringing their record to 7-1 in the conference, where they lead the North Division. Saturday evening before a crowd of nearly 17,000 at Grand Valley, the football team rallied from a 28-6 halftime deficit to 28-23 with eight minutes remaining. Despite gaining 570 yards to their opponents 350, the final score was 35-23.

David L. Eisler, president