

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
September 6, 2016

Last week's Founders' Day was one of the best in memory. We were fortunate to have beautiful weather with great crowds from both our campus and the community for activities throughout the day. It is exciting to experience what this celebration has become as we honor Woodbridge and Helen Ferris, reflect on our institution today, imagine what we can be in the future, and enjoy the opportunity to relax with colleagues, friends and family.

There are many people and organizations to thank who contribute to this day. It was good to enjoy lunch on the Quad underneath the large tent. Lori Helmer, director of Dining Services, and her staff work especially hard to serve everyone lunch. They do a superb job, not only on Founders' Day, but each and every day for our students, faculty and staff on campus. Thank you to everyone who had a part in providing lunch for all of us.

Miles Postema, together with the staff from Government Relations and General Counsel and celebrity servers, has made the community Ice Cream Social an activity that engages our students, faculty, staff, their families, emeriti and many people from our community. This event brings together young and old alike, and is one of my favorite events on Founders' Day.

Along with the Ice Cream Social it was great to see so many students on the Quad visiting the tables promoting organizations both on campus and in our community. One of our goals with the beginning of each year is to help students get engaged. With many free gifts, food and prizes this was effective and great fun. I want to thank the volunteers who donated their time to help with this.

Many of you attended my presentation on Ferris State University's past, present and future. The slides from this are posted online at <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/president/presentations/2016-2017/index.htm>. These are annotated with comments and observations using the Adobe "Sticky Notes" feature. To view, download the presentation and open with an Adobe product. I very much appreciate hearing your thoughts, comments and observations on these ideas; please e-mail me at eislerd@ferris.edu.

After lunch there was a wonderful presentation by Dr. David Pilgrim and Franklin Hughes of the Diversity and Inclusion Office. They shared their research on a partnership between Ferris Institute and Hampton Institute, and the role Ferris played in providing college preparatory classes for African Americans beginning in 1910. This is a superb example of how Mr. Ferris embraced education for all. These slides are accessible at <http://ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/president/DiversityOffice/pdf/HamptonFerrisFoundersDay.pdf>. What a wonderful heritage Mr. Ferris established for us, and his efforts are a strong model for us today.

This was the first year Founders' Day activities were combined with athletic events. Head Coach Tony Annese and our football team opened their season in a resounding fashion with a 41-0 victory over Ohio Dominican. This was our first shutout since 2008, and with more than 5,000 people in the stands at Top Taggart Stadium, the atmosphere was electric.

This year's Founders' Day was a meaningful celebration of our history and an enjoyable kickoff to the start of the fall semester. Thank you to everyone who participated in the activities, and to those who played a part in making the day festive for everyone involved.

Enrollment

For the last several years our University's enrollment experienced steady growth despite the sharp decline in the number of Michigan high school graduates. This decline began in 2009 and is projected to continue through 2027. We have been fortunate as a university to grow against this trend, but Fall 2016 enrollment numbers tell a slightly different story, one that we must consider carefully:

- University-wide fall headcount is 14,187, a decrease of 528 students (3.6%).
- University-wide student credit hours (SCH) are down 6,633 (4%).
- In Big Rapids we are down 200 students (2%) and 4,137 SCH (3.4%).
- At Kendall we are down 114 students (8.6%) and 1,236 SCH (8.8%).
- Regional campus enrollment is down 206 students (9.4%) and 1,308 SCH (9.4%).
- Of particular concern are the declines in first-year retention and FTIAC students in Big Rapids.

There are some positive notes in these numbers:

- Overall ACT scores increased from 21.65 to 21.85
- Kendall has reversed its recent trend of declining FTIAC students.

The 4th day enrollment report is posted online and can be accessed at <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/admission/testing/resources/enrollment/fall/Fall16enrlsum.pdf>.

Nearly 75% of our revenue comes from student tuition. With this decrease in enrollment we will need to reduce our budget to meet these revised revenue figures. Later this month I will host a University-wide forum to present additional information on our enrollment and its financial implications.

We are fortunate that there has been much good work already done relative to addressing declining trends in enrollment. Vice President Jeanine Ward-Roof and a group of more than 60 faculty and staff have drafted a strategic enrollment management plan. In addition, our University continues to position itself well by providing unique career-oriented degrees, partnering with community colleges across the state to provide bachelor completion degrees, and providing online courses and degrees. There is no denying that the demographics of Michigan make this a challenging enrollment environment. Going forward we will concentrate on the students who are here and on helping others benefit from the opportunity of a Ferris education. I am confident that working together we will make a difference for these students and our University.

Opportunities for Engagement

Today our Latin@ Center is hosting an open house. If you have a few moments, please come by and greet Ferris alumna Kaylee Moreno as she returns to Ferris as the Center's new director. Join us in IRC 131 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. today.

The University's Strategic Planning and Resource Council (SPARC) will host its first fall semester meeting on September 13th in University Center, Room 202A. This group of nearly 50 people from across our campuses and chaired by College of Business faculty member Spence Tower is critical to strategic planning at Ferris. SPARC meetings are open to all. You need not be a council member to attend.

Thank you again for making Founders' Day a special and memorable occasion. I am excited about the year ahead and look forward to working with you.

David L. Eisler, president