

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

*Office of the President
August 25, 2017*

Today is a crisp, beautiful day in Big Rapids. The University is alive with activity as students move onto campus and into the community. Yard signs are placed throughout campus themed around the concepts of “Welcome Home” and “You Are Welcome Here.” Two of my favorites include “You Were Meant to Be Awesome” and “Practice Random Acts of Kindness,” which is adorned with clothespins holding positive messages for students to take with them.

In watching some students move onto campus, one wonders how so many things can fit in a residence hall room. Perhaps you remember your own experience moving into college or that of helping your son or daughter the first year they went to college. This may bring back memories of multiple trips to the hardware store to assemble a loft or to find the right combination of cords, or the wisdom of having a handcart to help in the move. I enjoy visiting with our students and their families during this time. You can feel both their excitement and apprehension, as a student prepares to live away from home, often for the first time, and parents consider how their lives will be different when this occurs.

I want to extend special thanks to Bulldogs in Action, students from the football, volleyball and basketball teams, Lambda Chi Alpha, American Marketing Association, You Beautiful Black Woman, Student Fashion Alliance and Omega Psi Phi, who help students move into the residence halls. Sponsored by Housing and Residence Life, these volunteers help carry belongings from vehicles to residence hall rooms and answer questions about Ferris and the Big Rapids community. Also helping today are faculty and staff, and a variety of offices including Dining Services, who are handing out water and snacks. Also today, parents and family members can eat at campus dining facilities for free. The entire atmosphere is themed around welcoming students and reinforcing that they will succeed here – a wonderful sentiment. Seeing this in action, I know how appreciative students and parents are for the extra help and support. Thank you for organizing these wonderful services on our campus and welcoming students here.

As you visit with students, please encourage them to take part in the various social gatherings developed for them these first two weeks. Bulldog Beginnings encompasses a series of activities aimed at helping students acclimate to campus life. Events include a movie in the Quad, Meijer Mania, dinner with professors at The Rock Café, Get Acquainted Day and more. Thank you to the Center for Leadership, Activities and Career Services for helping students get engaged on campus and with their peers.

The Big Rapids Downtown Business Association is hosting a special “Welcome to Big Rapids” event on Saturday, Aug. 26. From 3-6 p.m., the 100-200 block of Michigan Avenue will be closed off for student activities including music, miniature golf, sidewalk sales, a rock climbing wall, street performers, free Ferris wheel rides and more. Thank you to Ferris alumnus and supporter Rex Schuberg, DBA president, and all of the businesses for welcoming our students to downtown Big Rapids.

Campus Construction

Earlier this week I walked through much of the construction work on the Big Rapids campus. If you have not yet seen it, North Hall is a wonderful new residence hall. The public areas on the south wing of the first floor are unlike anything else in our housing facilities. This innovative facility, coupled with its location near the Arts and Sciences Commons, FLITE Library and University Center, should be very well received by new and prospective students. Special thanks to everyone from the physical plant, information technology and housing areas who have worked especially hard to have this building ready for our students.

The first floor of the Swan building has been renovated to create a new home for the Architectural Technology program. This project took an underutilized area that needed improvements and turned it into a wonderful new space with stunning results. The Swan Annex capital outlay project is nearing the midpoint, and the final shape of the building is now clear. This will be a challenging year for both Welding and Manufacturing Technology as they continue to teach in the building as it is built and renovated around them. A new entrance to the second floor of the Swan Building from the parking lot to the north will be completed later this year, after the Osprey nesting nearby migrate for the winter.

Finally, I reviewed repairs to the Student Recreation Center, which suffered significant water damage over the Memorial Day weekend when a backflow preventer on a fire suppression line failed. This has required replacement of many motors, control valves and electrical systems that were submerged under the flood of over 100,000 gallons of water, along with wallboard, flooring and paint. While we have re-opened the SRC, the pool remains closed while restoration efforts continue. Special thanks for assistance in repairing this facility go to our employees, skilled trades people and others who have worked very hard to get this building back in operation.

Founders' Day

On Thursday, Aug. 31, we will honor the founding of our University at the 11th annual Founders' Day celebration. The day's events provide a wonderful opportunity for the campus and Big Rapids community to come together and celebrate our founders, Woodbridge and Helen Ferris. No one could imagine what would develop from the humble beginnings of the Big Rapids Industrial School when it opened on September 1, 1884. With an initial cohort of 15 students, a third of whom were women, Mr. and Mrs. Ferris made it very clear their institution would be a place of acceptance and openness to all who yearned for an education and an opportunity to better themselves. While much has changed since our founding 133 years ago, we trace our values, heritage and traditions to these two educational pioneers. Thursday is a day when we can pause, reflect and recognize their many contributions to building the foundation of our University. Here is a list of the day's activities:

- **11 a.m. Presidential Remarks** – My annual remarks on the University's past, present and future in UC Room 203.
- **11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. Employee Picnic** – Enjoy a wonderful picnic prepared by Dining Services under the big tent on the Quad.
- **4 to 6:30 p.m. Ice Cream Social** – Held on the Quad and sponsored by Governmental Relations and General Counsel, this event features celebrity servers, Jones' Ice Cream, and brings together the University and Big Rapids community.

All of the Founders' Day events are free, and I encourage you to attend any or all of these events as your schedule allows. Thank you to everyone who helps make this day special and a true remembrance of Woodbridge and Helen Ferris.

Closing Thoughts

Provost Paul Blake and I had the pleasure of talking with new and returning faculty and staff at all-college meetings on Wednesday. Having the opportunity to see so many faculty and staff in one morning is a powerful reminder of how many committed and dedicated people contribute to our students' education. Paul and I look forward to returning for extended conversations in the early part of this year.

Each of us plays an important role in shaping the future of our students and of Ferris State University. As we prepare for the first week of classes, I want to personally thank you for everything you do for our students and for Ferris.

David L. Eisler, president