

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
January 23, 2017

This past week was a memorable celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s life and legacy. It was wonderful to see the turnout of faculty, staff and students for these events. I believe the group that assembled for Monday afternoon's MLK March through campus may have been one of the largest ever.

At Monday morning's reading session, the Diversity and Inclusion Office honored three very special people with the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Social Justice Award. Franklin Hughes, multi-media specialist in the Diversity and Inclusion Office, and his wife, Jackie, instructional technology coordinator in the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, received the Social Justice Award for their support of homeless and needy students on campus. Wesley House Pastor Devon Harrell received the award for her commitment to tackling the issue of student food insecurity by helping organize and support a student emergency food pantry at the Wesley House near our campus. At Monday evening's Student Tribute, the Office of Multicultural Student Services awarded the Martin Luther King Legacy Award to 2016 Criminal Justice graduate Olivia Johnson. It was Olivia's leadership that created this student emergency food pantry. These four individuals truly exemplify a compassion and a concern for others that represent the best of our University and its values. They directly reflect the words of Mr. Ferris when he said, "The purpose of the Ferris Institute is to make the world a better place."

Food insecurity is an issue students confront at colleges and universities across the nation. At Ferris, we are committed to ensuring that our students do not go hungry and that they have food available to them when needed. Through the leadership of Vice President David Pilgrim, a number of resources, in addition to the Wesley House food pantry, have been created. The Diversity and Inclusion Office recently produced a [brochure](#) listing churches in the area that provide free community meals, along with area food pantries and food trucks. They have also established a Facebook group called [Ferris: There's Food Here](#). This seeks to share food leftover from meetings or other social events on campus. Faculty, staff and students are encouraged to post pictures and information of where and when free food is available on the Big Rapids campus. Each of us can be a part of these efforts by volunteering to assist or providing financial support. If you know a student who is hungry, please share these resources and encourage him or her to contact the Diversity and Inclusion Office for additional assistance. Thank you for helping our students.

UICA Exhibitions

The Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts, Michigan's largest contemporary arts center, is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. To celebrate this milestone and challenge the status quo of the art world, UICA is hosting two exhibitions that reflect and highlight issues of social justice and current affairs across the world. The exhibits feature works created by persons of color who have historically been underrepresented in gallery and museum experiences.

US IS THEM: Art from the Pizzuti Collection runs Jan. 27 through May 14. This exhibit will showcase more than 40 individual contemporary artworks across a diverse range of media including painting, sculpture, photography and video by internationally recognized artists including Nick Cave, Zhang Huan, Wangechi Mutu, Kara Walker, Carrie Mae Weems and Kehinde Wiley. The exhibition is organized geographically, with a section dedicated to artists

with roots in Africa and the Caribbean, which reveals a focus on the persistent legacy of colonialism. Galleries devoted to Chinese artists include works that address individual voices in a vast society. Artists from the Middle East contemplate religious freedoms and fights for equality, while American artists address continuing racism and bigotry.

The exhibit *Here + Now* opens Jan 27 and runs through March 31. It will offer a series of solo exhibitions, a group show, performances and community events. Organized by UICA's Exhibitions Curator Heather Duffy, this exhibit will extend the opportunity presented by *US IS THEM* to emerging and mid-career African American visual artists, spoken word artists, curators and performance artists.

The UICA is located at 2 Fulton West in downtown Grand Rapids. If you have the opportunity, please consider attending these insightful exhibitions. More information can be found [here](#).

Staff Listening Sessions

During the fall semester, I held listening sessions with faculty to hear their thoughts on the University, what they value, their perceptions on the challenges we face and their advice for me. This is something I enjoy, and I learned much from these sessions. The observations and insights provided by our faculty are most appreciated.

Beginning in February I will host similar listening sessions with staff members. These invitations will be sent via intercampus mail and e-mail. As with the faculty, the groups are organized on the length of time you have worked at Ferris. It is my experience that this creates cohorts where there is a similarity of experiences and concerns. However, if your invited day and time does not work for you, we will find an alternate listening session you can attend. Please e-mail Terri Cook at terricook@ferris.edu for other day and time options. Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts about our University. I very much look forward to hearing from you.

University Center Anniversary

Students filled the University Center Friday evening to celebrate the second anniversary of the opening of the University Center. They enjoyed games, food, karaoke and other activities to celebrate what has become the student hub of campus. We are extremely proud of the University Center and the positive difference it has made for students on our Big Rapids campus. Thank you to Vice President Jeanine Ward-Roof and the Student Affairs Office, University Center, Center for Leadership, Activities, and Career Services, Dean of Student Life Office, Dining Services, Student Government Association, Veteran Student Association, American Marketing Association and the Bulldog Sustainability Alliance for organizing this celebratory event. It is an example of the additional events and activities created for the significant number of our students who stay on campus over the weekends. Thank you to everyone who made the anniversary celebration a fun evening for our students.

Arts and Lectures Series

On Tuesday, Jan. 31, Williams Auditorium will host holocaust survivor Martin Lowenberg as part of the Arts and Lecture Committee's Performing Arts Series. We were privileged to have Mr. Lowenberg on campus in 2015 as the keynote speaker for "Remembering the Holocaust," a two-day event designed to raise awareness of genocide. His parents and younger twin brothers were sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp, where they were exterminated, and he was

liberated in 1945 at the age of 17. Now 88-years-old, he has made it his life mission to share his stories about the horrors of the Holocaust and to take a stand against intolerance.

We are very fortunate to have Mr. Lowenberg with us on campus again, as the opportunities to hear firsthand accounts of the Holocaust are dwindling. His presentation will take place from 7 to 9 p.m. Tickets are available at the Williams Auditorium Box Office, or through the Arts and Lectures [website](#).

Athletics Update

Last Wednesday night in Nashville, Tenn., football standout and two-time Harlon Hill Trophy winner Jason Vander Laan was presented the 2017 National Collegiate Athletic Association Today's Top 10 Award at the NCAA Awards Banquet. Athletics Director Perk Weisenburger presented the award on stage to Jason following a tribute video on his accomplishments on and off the field. Jason is the first-ever Ferris State University student-athlete to be recognized as one of the NCAA Top 10 Award recipients. Congratulations to Jason, Perk Weisenburger, Head Coach Tony Annese and our football coaching staff for this wonderful accolade. Video from the presentation is accessible [here](#).

Our men's basketball team celebrated their 10th consecutive victory Saturday with an impressive 102-81 win over Wayne State at Wink Arena. During their last 10 wins they have scored at least 80 points per game. The team is currently 15-3 and holds first place in the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Association standings with a 9-2 league record. Our women's team also claimed a home court victory Saturday with a very exciting 83-80 win.

This past weekend our men's hockey team split their series with Western Collegiate Hockey Association conference leader Bemidji State. This Friday they will face off at home for a televised game against Bowling Green State at 8:37 p.m. Our Student Life Office is organizing a tailgate that will begin at 7 p.m. for students and the community inside Wink Arena. The evening is also a "White Out the Rink" encouraging attendees to wear white to the game. Afterward, there will be a DJ and free ice skating until midnight. A shuttle will provide free transportation from 6:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. for students and will make stops at Venlo, Oakwood, Tioga Heights, Campus Creek & The Rapids. This is a wonderful opportunity for our students and community members to come together to support our team.

David L. Eisler, president