

# President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President  
September 1, 2017

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Yesterday we honored Woodbridge and Helen Ferris at the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Founders' Day celebration. This event provides an opportunity to reflect on the strong foundation Mr. and Mrs. Ferris established for us. It has become a time when students, our greater University community and the Big Rapids community can connect on our campus. Each year I provide a perspective and thoughts on our heritage, the present and the future. If you did not have the opportunity to hear these remarks, I encourage you to download and view the [presentation](#).

We were fortunate to have two very special guests with us on Founders' Day, Woodbridge and Helen's great-great-granddaughters Tammy Smith and Julie Ferris. I am grateful they were able to spend the day celebrating and honoring their great-great grandparents. Mr. and Mrs. Ferris left a legacy for all of us to continue. If they were alive today, I think they would be very proud of what their school has become over these 133 years.

Our Dining Services staff catered a wonderful lunch on the Quad for employees and dinner for our students. Thank you for all of your work on Founders' Day and every day at our dining facilities. Festivities continued with the late-afternoon ice cream social, which brought together alumni, faculty, staff, emeriti, students and community members. It is always good to see the University and Big Rapids community enjoying conversation and fellowship. Thank you to Miles Postema, and Governmental Relations and General Counsel staff for sponsoring this event. Everyone enjoys ice cream and students love the opportunity to win prizes and visit the informational booths to learn more about campus and community organizations.

## Thank You

New students are settling into the residence halls and getting accustomed to finding their way around campus. Residence hall staff, a host of volunteers and student employees did a tremendous job on move-in day and over the weekend. This was especially well organized and efficient. Thank you for making this as easy as possible for incoming freshmen and their families.

While walking on campus this week and interacting with students, faculty and staff, I cannot remember a time when I have seen a more welcoming atmosphere. I would like to thank the members of the First Impressions Committee – Shana Beisiegel, Terri Cook, Mark Eichenberg, Laura Monahan, Angela Palmer, Mark Schuelke and Eric Simone – along with everyone who volunteered at a First Impressions tent assisting students and their families, and being a friendly face in a new environment: Teresa Allen, Richelle Boerma, Charlotte Bongard, Kevin Bunce, Trish Bunce, Jason Bush, Angie Buys, Nick Campau, Jim Cook, Susan Cook, Laurie Daniels, Mark Dunneback, Kim Erickson, Teresa Fogel, Jody Gardei, Mike Grandy, Jody Greco, Sharon Hopper, Tasia Jefts, Michelle Johnson, Karen Kirk, Sandy Larie, Nate Leatherman, Nicole Lintemuth, Jake Martin, Mike McKay, Leah Melichar, Nancy Mettlach, John Monahan, Laura Monahan, Katie Moore, Kristy Motz, Joyce Mudel, Patti Olson, Deb Parrish, Kara Pellerito, Adam Phillips, Linda Randle, Ron Repke, Ann Rescoe, Susan Roberts, Trudy Roersma, Deb Savides, Jerry Scoby, Kaytlyn Sheldon, Dale Skornia, Amber Snow, Deedee

Stakley, Matt Stanke, Lisa Start-Spinner, Sandy Stoddard, Karen Thompson, Deb Tice, Katie Tobak, Michelle Upton, Doug Vandecar, Maggie Walcott, Jenice Winowiecki, Kathryn Woods, Kaitlin Zies and Emily Zoet.

Last Saturday's second annual "Big Rapids Beginnings" on Michigan Avenue, organized by the Downtown Business Association, brought students and community members together for a fun afternoon of sidewalk sales, inflatables, games, and yes, even a Ferris wheel. Thank you to DBA president, Ferris alumnus and supporter Rex Schuberg, the Big Rapids Elks Lodge #974 for providing free hot dogs, chips and pop, and all the downtown merchants for their hospitality. You can view highlights of this event on our YouTube channel, [FerrisStateVideo](#).

This week and next, students are invited to a variety of events organized by Bulldog Beginnings. These are designed to provide students with opportunities to connect, make new friends and learn about the resources available on campus. Thank you to Bulldog Beginnings Committee members Michele Albright, Shana Beisiegel, Richelle Boerma, Karen Bohren, Teresa Brown, Elizabeth Burbatt, Nick Campau, Kevin Carmody, Jon Coles, Terri Cook, Teresa Fogel, Sandy Gholston, Rachel Goldman, Jody Greco, Kara Kosloski, Jessica Ledesma, Loura Monahan, Kaylee Moreno, Amber Morgan, Lisa Ortiz, Angela Palmer, Joy Pufhal, Trudy Roersma, Angela Roman, Rex Schuberg, Mark Schuelke, Eric Simone, Nicholas Smith, Jacob Schrot, Kathryn Thomas, Cinthia VanderSloot, Laura Wernette and Kaitlin Zies for all of your hard work in planning these fun activities and giving students a chance to discover various campus facilities and organizations. They have done a fabulous job.

Many people across campus have worked very hard to facilitate a successful and smooth transition to the start of the academic year. Admissions, Housing and Residence Life, Dining Services, Physical Plant, Information Technology and Public Safety have been very busy ensuring our University is positioned to provide the very best for our students. I want to recognize our faculty, staff and counselors, who guide and teach our students, and give them the tools they need to be successful. Thank you to everyone who has made this a terrific start to the semester.

## **Enrollment**

On Thursday the 4<sup>th</sup> day enrollment count was tabulated. Many faculty and staff throughout the University worked very hard on enrollment efforts this year at recruitment events, Dawg Days, orientation sessions, calling and texting students, helping students secure financial support, and in many other efforts.

While there is an enrollment decline in many areas, this decrease is less than last year. Here is a look at some overall numbers:

- University-wide fall headcount is 13,798, a decrease of 389 students (2.7%) and 5,011 student credit hours (SCH).
- In Big Rapids the decrease is 148 students (1.5%) and 2,740 SCH (2.3%). However, the number of First Time in Any College (FTIAC) students is up 24 or 1.4%. This reverses a declining trend of the past few years. The decline in Big Rapids is in new transfer students (60 or 6.3%) and continuing students (279 or 4.2%).
- At Kendall the decrease is 143 students (11.8%) and 1,465 SCH (11.4%).
- Regional campus enrollment is down 123 students (6.2%) but only 165 SCH (1.3%).
- Online enrollment is up 25 students (2.6%), but down 641 SCH (4.1%).

It is wonderful to see an improvement in first- to second-year retention for our full-time bachelor's degree students, which is at 79%, up four percentage points from this time last year. Other positives include an increase in ACT scores to 22.26 (up 1.9%) and high school GPA to 3.38 (up 3.7%). There are increases in the numbers of Asian (6.5%), African American (2.1%) and Hispanic students (6.3%). There are 92 fewer international students, a decrease of 23.6%.

The enrollment report is posted online [here](#). There is no denying that the current demographics in Michigan make this a challenging time for higher education. I cannot express enough my appreciation for the very hard work of many people at the University in recruiting and retaining students, and in creating a positive experience for our students. We will continue to increase our efforts at retaining our current students and finding new ways to connect with students looking for the education and experience Ferris State University provides.

### **SPARC**

The Strategic Planning and Resource Council will hold its first meeting of the year on Tuesday, Sept. 12, from 3 to 5 p.m. in the University Center, Room 202. Chaired by faculty member Spence Tower, SPARC is a university-wide group focused on strategic planning efforts, current challenges and opportunities, and other timely topics relative to higher education. SPARC meetings are open to all members of the Ferris community, and everyone is welcome. I encourage you to attend, to provide your input and to help guide the future of our University.

David L. Eisler, president