

President's Message to Campus

Office of the President
February 23, 2018

Budget Forums

Thank you to everyone who attended one of the three budget forums this week, either in person or virtually. I want to thank the staff in Information Technology Services, Media Services and the University Center for their assistance with broadcasting the forums online, so those in other locations could participate, and to accommodate the many faculty and staff who participated in person.

We have been talking for some time about the decline in Michigan high school graduates. Over 15% fewer students graduated from Michigan high schools last spring than in 2010. The impact on Michigan higher education has been profound, with nearly 48,000 fewer students at Michigan's public universities and community colleges than five years ago. Excepting the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and Dearborn, and Michigan Tech, all 12 other Michigan public universities had enrollment declines this fall.

Through the first half of this decade we have maintained our enrollment even with a diminishing group of potential students. Beginning in the fall of 2016 this was no longer the case. Reduced enrollments over the past two years have resulted in budget reductions of \$9.25 million in Big Rapids and \$3.48 million over the past three years at Kendall College of Art and Design.

Over the next five years, Michigan high school graduates are predicted to decline by an additional 6.4%. Now is the time to look proactively at our future and to plan for what may be ahead. We will do everything reasonably possible to increase recruitment and retention, but must prepare, if despite our best efforts, we experience continued enrollment declines. This is not just a Ferris problem – this is a statewide problem.

For the next fiscal year we plan to reduce the Big Rapids campus budget by \$5 million and Kendall's budget by \$1.5 million. I have asked vice presidents to begin the financial planning for next year's reduction and the framework for future reductions.

As we look to reduce budgets we will offer an early retirement incentive for employees with 10 or more years of continuous service. This plan has now been approved by our Board of Trustees and will be offered to non-union employees and to those bargaining units that agree it may be offered to their members. Information and details on the plan will be available Monday morning on the [Human Resources Office website](#).

Please take a few moments to [review the slides presented](#) during the forums. They are annotated using the Adobe "Sticky Note" feature. There is also a written Opening Statement available online. If you have questions, ideas or suggestions, please e-mail them to me at eislerd@ferris.edu.

Like you I care deeply about this University, and despite the challenges ahead, I am both optimistic and enthusiastic about our future. I am very grateful that so many people took time to attend these forums. Please know I appreciate you and the work you do every day at Ferris State University. Working together we can and we will overcome this challenge, continuing to build a greater university. I believe the education we provide changes lives, and there is no better place in Michigan for a student to earn a degree that prepares them for a successful career and a bright future.

Senate Testimony

In between Thursday's budget forums I drove to Lansing to present testimony to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education. In my remarks to chairperson Sen. Schuitmaker and subcommittee members Sen. Hertel and Sen. MacGregor, I shared the commitment of our University to build a culture of sexual assault prevention, providing the support survivors of sexual assault need and to educate our campus community on these topics. We saw these efforts affirmed last week when Ferris State University was selected as one of the Nation's Top 25 Safest Campuses by the National Council of Home Safety and Security.

My presentation focused on the unfairness of the \$8.5 million cap on Tuition Incentive Program funding for our students and the devastating impact this has on them. I shared the stories of two current students, both eligible for TIP funding. These young women have much in common - overcoming challenges, success as students, and great dreams for their future. However, there is an important difference between them. One student received TIP funding and the other did not. When she submitted her paperwork, there was no funding available.

The logic and rationale here is simple and straightforward. Our TIP students at Ferris should be treated the same as all other students attending Michigan colleges and universities. They should not be disadvantaged because of our success in working with TIP students. I urged the subcommittee to press for the removal of this cap. Limiting this support for economically disadvantaged students is not in our students' or the state's best interest.

When you have a moment, I encourage you to [read the full text of this testimony](#). This describes in more detail these students' stories. We can do so very much for these students. No student should be denied this funding promised by the state. I will continue to do whatever is possible to advocate in Lansing for our students and our University.

Athletics

Our men's basketball team captured a second consecutive GLIAC Regular Season Championship with two wins in the Upper Peninsula last week. The team won their 15th game in a row, and are now 28-1 with a 117-66 victory over Purdue Northwest at Jim Wink Arena last evening. The men play at home on Saturday at 1 p.m. against Grand Valley. The women, also victorious last evening, play at 3 p.m. In winning the GLIAC Championship, the men are now the #1 seed for next week's conference tournament. They will host a quarterfinal-round game on Wednesday, Feb. 28, at 7 p.m.

The hockey team wraps up their regular-season at home this Friday and Saturday against Lake Superior State, with both games beginning at 7:07 p.m. A playoff spot for postseason play will be on the line this weekend as the Bulldogs lead the Lakers by a single point for the eighth and final spot in the WCHA Tournament.

With men's and women's basketball at home, in addition to hockey, fans attending the Saturday games are encouraged to support "Red Out Wink & The Rink" Day by wearing red to support Healthy Heart Month and the Cardiac Pulmonary Unit of Spectrum Health Big Rapids. This promises to be an exciting day of Bulldog Athletics. Good luck to all our coaches and student-athletes this weekend.

David L. Eisler, president