

President's Message to Campus

Office of the President
February 9, 2018

Higher Learning Commission and HLC Quality Initiative

Ferris State University is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, a regional association that accredits postsecondary institutions in 19 Midwestern and Southwestern states. The HLC last visited Ferris in the fall of 2011, when we received a full 10-year accreditation without additional reporting or visit requirements. Summarized comments from that accreditation visit are accessible [here](#).

Since this last accreditation, the HLC has moved away from the self-study approach used in past reaffirmations. Of the three options available for maintaining accreditation, the HLC's [Open Pathway](#) process, focused on quality assurance and institutional improvement, was best suited for Ferris to pursue. Central to the Open Pathway is the Quality Initiative, which is designed to provide institutions the opportunity to implement improvement projects that meet current concerns and aspirations.

Our Quality Initiative focuses on academic literacies and aligning strategies to enhance retention, learning and the learning environment. Each college is tasked with developing specific projects designed to result in improvements in each of these three areas, with over 160 faculty and staff involved in coordinating and facilitating these projects.

One project example is the Pharmacy and Optometry Scholars in Training (POSIT) Scholars Program. The POSIT Scholars Program helps students seeking to earn admission to the pharmacy and optometry professional programs succeed and grow at Ferris. An initial cohort of students began as first-time freshmen in fall 2017. They were provided with intense interaction with the director and faculty mentors from the Colleges of Pharmacy and Optometry; faculty mentoring for each student; STEM-focused Introduction to the University course (FSUS 100); a STEM living community in North Hall; and a variety of organized enrichment activities. Quantitative and qualitative data has been collected on this initial cohort, in addition to a comparison group who were not involved in the Scholars Program, to identify various perspectives and insights on the living and learning environment on campus.

A second example is the Learning Success Reading Group in the College of Business. This is a faculty-led weekly reading group series for selected students underperforming in College of Business programs. The readings and discussions are focused on the science of learning and personal success, with an emphasis on empowering students to discover their own strengths and weaknesses and use strategies that work for them. The goal of this pilot was to gather qualitative impressions on the student selection model, reading group structure and discussion material.

Last month, project teams from all Colleges, in addition to Extended and International Operations, Retention and Student Success, and FLITE, presented their HLC Quality Improvement Project updates. In these open forums, faculty and staff shared their successes and what they have learned thus far in the process.

The information derived from the college-level projects will help to build a mutually beneficial relationship with the Center for Academic Literacies as identified in the [Quality Initiative Proposal](#). Through these quality initiative projects, education strategies will be explored as ways to both remediate learning deficits and enhance academic capabilities on individual and group levels, as well as to foster innovative approaches at the classroom level.

Thank you to everyone involved in this very important work for our University. I encourage you to learn more about this at www.ferris.edu/hlc/qualityinitiative.

Sexual Misconduct Task Force

Vice President for Student Affairs Jeanine Ward-Roof is chairing a sexual misconduct task force charged with thoroughly examining and reviewing our policies and procedures, and to ensure we are committed to preventing sexual assault, investigating and responding to allegations of sexual assault, supporting survivors of sexual assault, and educating our campus community on these topics. The task force is also charged with reviewing information relative to our current campus climate and our culture of sexual misconduct prevention, timely reporting and effective response.

I would like to thank the faculty and staff serving on this task force: Lindsay Barber, Bruce Borkovich, Kevin Carmody, Nicole DeKraker, Jocelyn Goheen, Annette Jackson, Arrick Jackson, Lisa Ortiz, Victor Piercey, Kylie Piette, Joy Pufhal, Lisa Roach, Cami Sanderson, Perk Weisenburger and Gary Wendlowsky.

SPARC and Strategic Planning

The Strategic Planning and Resource Council will meet on Tuesday, Feb. 13, from 3 to 5 p.m. in the University Center, Room 202B. Shelly Percy and Jeremy Mishler will be leading a discussion on marketing and branding efforts for the University. Everyone is welcome; you do not need to be a member of SPARC to participate.

If you are unable to attend SPARC, Vice President Percy will be hosting an open forum on Thursday, Feb. 15, from 10 to 10:45 a.m. in the University Center, Room 213. Joining her will be representatives from Stamats, a national higher education marketing firm that will be assisting our University in enhancing our brand strategy. All faculty, staff and students are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Strategic planning efforts are moving forward with the newly formed strategic planning committee. Last week Kristi Haik, committee co-chair, asked if she could step away from this role because of the demands on her time in also serving as co-chair of the Higher Learning Commission reaffirmation steering committee. I am pleased Dean Haik will remain as a member of the steering committee, and we greatly appreciate her willingness to serve on both of these important efforts. David Pilgrim was already serving on this committee and has agreed to step into the co-chair position alongside Spence Tower. During our strategic planning in 2008, David played an integral part as chair of the Governing Ideas Task Force. This was the group that drafted and refined our current values, mission and vision statements. It is excellent that Dr. Pilgrim is willing to accept this leadership responsibility. Thank you David, Spence and Kristi, along with all of the committee members who are guiding these efforts for our University.

Festival of the Arts

Events continue throughout the weekend and next week as part of Festival of the Arts in Big Rapids. Upcoming events include Saturday's Cape Breton Fiddling and Dancing at the First United Methodist Church at 7 p.m. A vocal recital, "He Said/She Said," featuring Courtney Gilson-Piercey, soprano, and Sheryl Iott on piano is at 4 p.m. on Sunday, also at the First United Methodist Church. Our students will feature their animation, game design, video production and short films at the Student Film Showcase on Tuesday, Feb. 13 at 7 p.m., in the Business Building, Room 111. Artworks in downtown Big Rapids is hosting Zentangle – With Heart! on Feb. 14 at 7 p.m. Zentangle is a self-help art therapy that can enhance relaxation and focus, taught by Marjorie Goosen. On Friday, Feb. 16, at 7 p.m. inside the University Center Ballroom you can enjoy the musical performance of The Price Sisters, twin sisters who play traditional bluegrass on the mandolin and fiddle.

There is much to see and do in Big Rapids this month. For a complete listing of events happening throughout next week and the rest of February, please visit the [Festival of the Arts website](#).

David L. Eisler, president