

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
January 6, 2005

Welcome back to campus for winter semester 2005. Even with the holiday break it seems difficult to believe that January is already here. As I write this, it is a very snowy Thursday morning and it does definitely feel like winter in Michigan.

At some other universities where I have worked the institution remained open between Christmas and New Years Day. I am pleased at Ferris State University that we close during this period so that you can spend time with family and friends. This also provides an opportunity to rest, relax, and reflect between semesters. As we begin the winter semester, I want to take this opportunity to share with you the progress of our planning and visioning efforts for the University.

Planning and Planning Task Forces

Over the past eighteen months Ferris State University has worked to create a vision for Ferris and its future. This vision has three parts -

- We need to create a Learning Centered University.
- We must work together.
- We must become an engaged campus.

During fall semester 2004 six university task forces were established to examine important components of this University future -

- Professional Development - Kim Hancock, Warren Hills, co-chairs
- Teaching Facilities - Terry Doyle, Susan Jones, co-chairs
- Communication - Sandy Alspach, Shelly Armstrong, co-chairs
- Student Engagement - Raymond Gant, Bill Potter, co-chairs
- Learner-centered Technology - Bill Boras, John Urbanick, co-chairs
- Enrollment Growth - Dan Burcham, Greg Key, co-chairs

The task forces involved eighty members of the campus community. Over the course of two months these groups of faculty, staff and students examined their topic with the charge to -

- Benchmark best practice.
- Identify internal resources and unique strengths.

- Consider diversity implications.
- Recommend strategic initiatives.
- Identify multiple small wins.
- Develop recommendations that are challenging, but achievable.
- Consider how we work together to achieve this.

Task force final reports were presented in well-attended public sessions on December 16th and 17th. Complete information on each of the task forces including membership, charge, presentation, and final report is available at <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/planningtf2004.htm>

The task force final reports represent extraordinary effort and are a wonderful resource for both present and future planning efforts. Working with these presentations and reports, the presidents council has developed a synthesis that will form the core of planning efforts during winter semester. The selected recommendations have been organized in two groups. The first are far reaching ideas that stretch across university divisions and are critical for the future. Development and implementation of these recommendations will begin immediately. These university-wide priorities include the following -

- Renovate and improve classrooms, technology, and furnishings with a goal of addressing all classrooms in a five-year timeframe.
- Initiate a University-wide effort to create a consistent message\identity as part of a truly integrated marketing program for our institution.
- Assess the effectiveness of current student engagement efforts and compare these to national data and models.
- Develop and implement a hardware replacement cycle for faculty and staff computers based on a matching funds incentive program between central and division-level support and the reassignment of replaced equipment.
- Design and implement a meshed wireless network that covers the campus footprint.
- Develop a funding formula which rewards colleges for enrollment growth.

The second group of recommendations will form the basis for the annual Unit Action Planning Process, which will begin in mid-January. These recommendations include task force ideas that are both large and small, and have been assigned to specific divisions for consideration and implementation. To help create collaboration across divisions, in many cases there is shared responsibility for these ideas. These planning recommendations are accessible here - <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/taskforcesynthesis.doc> As developed the planning recommendations focus primarily on the Big Rapids campus.

When you have time, I would encourage you to read the task force final reports. They represent an extraordinary effort by our people and are a wonderful resource for both present and future planning efforts. There are many excellent recommendations beyond those included above that will help guide University efforts for both the present and future.

I am excited about this work and want to express my thanks to each member and co-chair of the task forces. I am very appreciative that they would devote their time and energy to help transform Ferris State University for the future. Building on their efforts and using our resources wisely, I believe we can demonstrate that planning efforts do make a difference for our University and its people.

Campus Facilities and Master Planning

During the fall semester we presented a new draft of the campus master plan for the Big Rapids Campus. This builds upon previous efforts but introduces and emphasizes several important concepts. It is designed to focus the campus on learning, establishing an academic core or center for the campus. As such it seeks to move instruction from former residence hall facilities and establishes priorities for the renovation of existing academic buildings to address programmatic space concerns. The revised master plan also recommends the replacement of existing campus apartments with modern townhouse-style student residences, renovation and improvements to the Rankin Center, and advances the concept of an alumni center on the front door of our campus.

This fall we also presented the initial campus master plan for our efforts in Grand Rapids. This plan considers our revisions to the Kendall College of Art and Design building, our new student apartments in the Commerce Building occupied in Fall 2004, and the conveyance of the Federal Building (current Grand Rapids Art Museum) to the University in 2006. Together these efforts create three contiguous blocks for the University in downtown Grand Rapids in addition to the Applied Technology Center building we occupy on the Grand Rapids Community College campus. This initial FSU-Grand Rapids plan seeks to address and define issues of continued growth, parking, and traffic patterns in the area.

We will present both master plans to the Board of Trustees for approval during their meetings in February. Before doing so I wanted to provide you an additional opportunity to consider these documents and provide feedback. You may access copies of the campus master plan documents here - <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/masterplan.htm>

One of the ongoing needs for University facilities is for minor capital development. This process was suspended during 2003-2004 due to uncertainty

with state support. Working with proposals submitted during winter semester 2003, the presidents council has approved fifteen minor capital outlay projects. These will be funded through a cost sharing approach where 25% of the funding comes from the division and 75% will be provided centrally. This year's projects are accessible in a document located here -

<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/MinorCapFY05.xls>

During winter semester a timeline will be announced for the submission of additional minor capital outlay proposals. These will be prioritized and considered for funding during 2005-2006.

Opportunities for Comment

It is my hope that you will take time to examine and consider the task force recommendations, university-wide priorities, unit action plan recommendations, and campus master plans. I look forward to hearing your thoughts, suggestions, and comments. Please feel free to do this via note or email.

If you would prefer to share your thoughts with me in person, we have scheduled three open, informal sessions during the week of January 10th. On Tuesday, January 11th I will be sponsoring a tabletalk discussion in the Centennial Dining Room at noon. If you would like to do so, consider joining me for lunch as we consider these ideas. Later in the afternoon on January 11th I will host a session in the Rankin Center Room 238 at 2 pm. On Wednesday, January 12th there will be an additional session in Rankin Room 238 at 3:00 pm. I look forward to visiting with you, hearing your comments and suggestions.

Closing Thoughts

If you missed the announcement during the semester break, Ferris State University met its campaign goal of raising \$55,000 for the Mecosta-Osceola Area United Way. This is a significant achievement and I want to express my thanks to Dan Burcham and all the faculty, staff, and students who worked and contributed to this effort. Your kindness and generosity will help make a difference for many in our community.

You may have seen the news report yesterday when Gov. Granholm signed the education bill abolishing the MEAP test. Although not reported in the press this action had a significant impact for Ferris. The bill transferring Freedom to Learn (the 6th grade laptop initiative) from the Michigan Virtual University to Ferris State University was a part of this education action. At present this is approximately a \$3.7 million program and the oversight is now our responsibility. Beyond helping to improve the education of 6th grade students throughout the state, this will help us become a state leader in professional educational

development, and help build stronger working relationships with public schools. Special thanks go to Scott Hill-Kennedy for his work on this action.

I am delighted you are back. It is a pleasure to work with you for the future of Ferris State University. Please accept my best wishes for a successful and rewarding semester.

Sincerely,

Dave Eisler