

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President

January 14, 2008

During the past few months, as a community we have been considering what it means to be an open, diverse, and inclusive institution. These discussions have formed the basis for Ferris' first-ever University-wide diversity plan. I truly believe that once it is adopted, this plan will be critical to the future success of Ferris State University.

It is easy to see positive change when it takes the form of a new building, new program or crowded classroom. However, such physical changes are not the most important gauge of an institution's vitality. The time and effort that we put into making Ferris a welcoming and nurturing place of learning is the real test of our commitment to providing the best environment for all of our members – both current and future. This deeper, more profound vision of who we are – and who we will be – is embodied by this plan.

With the leadership of Chief Diversity Office David Pilgrim and the University Diversity Planning Committee, we have worked very hard to ensure that our entire community has had a hand in fashioning this vision. During the last several months, you have had multiple opportunities to express your opinion about how our University will move forward as a model of educational opportunity. If you are not yet familiar with this document, please go to www.ferris.edu/diversity/plan/DiversityPlan.doc. Although you will see the proposal in more detail there, the four main goals and initiatives are:

- Create a University that is welcoming to diverse populations
- Recruit, retain, and graduate a diverse student population
- Hire and retain a diverse workforce
- Create environments for student learning that are inclusive of and sensitive to a diverse population.

I want to thank everyone who took the time to think deeply about the issue of diversity. By sharing your thoughts, you have helped forge a positive path forward for the University. Please don't miss a final opportunity to review this groundbreaking document before it goes before our Board of Trustees for approval in March.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration

In light of the development of our diversity plan, it is an especially appropriate time for our annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Week celebration. This year our events will begin on Sunday, Jan. 20, and continue through Saturday, Jan. 26. A full list of activities for MLK week is available on-line at www.ferris.edu/htmls/studentlife/minority/mlkweek.pdf.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of Dr. King's assassination, so it is a particularly poignant time to remember the contributions he made to humanity and to rededicate ourselves to the ideals of

equality for which he gave his life. Were he still alive, Dr. King would not yet be 80 years old. The greatest tribute we can pay to his remarkable life is for each of us to help pursue the goals of human rights and non-violence for which he gave his life.

Equity Conference

In this same spirit, the state-wide 18th Equity in the Classroom conference will this year be held on our campus March 30 through April 1, featuring some truly impressive speakers, including:

- Paul Loeb, a social and political activist as well as noted writer. He is the author of *Soul of a Citizen: Living With Conviction in a Cynical Time*. He will be speaking about the difference that ordinary citizens and students can make.
- Mellisa Harris Lacewell, an associate professor of politics and African American studies at Princeton University, and the author of *Barbershops, Bibles, and BET: Everyday Talk and Black Political Thought*. She will speak on “Teaching Race Through the Stories We Know.”
- SST Communications – The Chicago-based theater company who performed at last year’s Summer University will present “Synergy From Others – Cultural Diversity on Campus.”

There will be additional speakers from Ferris and other Michigan universities, as well as opportunities to tour the Jim Crow Museum. You will hear more about this important event as it approaches.

Faculty and Staff Changes

Since my last message there have been several personnel transitions at the University. Among them:

- Matt Chaney has been selected as director of the Office of Multicultural Student Services – Please join me in congratulating Matt on his new position.
- Kristen Salomonson is the new dean of Enrollment Services – Again, congratulations to Kristen on this new challenge.
- At the end of the academic year Kevin Alexander is leaving his position as Dean of the Michigan College of Optometry, to become the president of the Southern California College of Optometry – Kevin’s hard work and dedication to the MOC will be deeply missed.
- Finally optometry professor Walter Betts passed away between semesters – I know I join many of you who knew Professor Betts in extending condolences to his family, students and colleagues. It is remarkable the number of lives Walt touched here on campus and in our community.

Thank you for your past hard work, and for the efforts ahead of us in this New Year.

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler
President