

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
February 4, 2009

Master Planning Sessions

Based on the input of students, faculty, staff and administrators, architects from Neumann Smith have prepared a draft University Master Plan for the Big Rapids campus and will visit Ferris to share their findings. Four informational sessions have been scheduled for the campus community to hear from the architects and to give feedback. These sessions will take place -

- Thursday, Feb. 3-4 p.m. and 4-5 p.m. in IRC 109
- Friday, Feb. 6, 10-11 a.m. in IRC 109, and 1-2 p.m. in IRC 115

To make sure your voice is heard on future campus development, facilities, common spaces, parking, housing and upgrades to the Rankin Center, please join us at one of these open sessions.

The Strategic Planning and Resource Council, chaired by Dr. Robert von der Osten, has done an excellent job of keeping this important task on track and having open, accessible lines of communication. If you cannot attend one of the open sessions, you are invited to the SPARC meeting with the architects at 3 p.m. Friday afternoon in CSS 302. The final shape of the University's Master Plan will impact our campus for years to come. As someone who interacts with the campus on a regular basis, please share your insights.

Provost Search

I want to thank everyone who took the time to attend the open provost sessions and for sharing your views and your opinions of the candidates. If you have additional feedback you would like to provide, please send your observations to committee co-chairs Ellen Haneline and Robert Loesch, or to me. We are checking references and background materials for our finalists as we solicit these final comments.

In addition to Ellen and Bob's excellent leadership, we have been fortunate to have an extraordinary committee who organized an exemplary process. I want to thank Jeff Carney, Cambria DeHoag, Susan Fogarty, Richard Griffin, Warren Hills, Melinda Isler, Maureen Milzarski, Thomas Mehl, David Pilgrim, John Pole, James Rumpf, Roberta Teahen, Gregory Vanderkooi, Shelly VandePanne and Leroy Wright for the extra effort they each made to help this search succeed. An announcement about the new Provost will hopefully will be made in the next two to three weeks, as soon as the successful candidate is chosen and accepts an offer to join Ferris State University.

State Budget Proposals

If you did not see Governor Granholm's "State of the State" address last evening you will likely hear about it. Included in her speech were these remarks -

“First, as we accelerate our push to get more kids to college, we cannot have them priced out of the market by tuition increases. I am asking Michigan’s universities and community colleges to freeze tuition for the next academic year. No tuition hikes during this year of economic crisis.”

The funding shortfall to our University from a tuition freeze for next year would be between five and six million dollars. While this is an issue that will most certainly resonate positively with the public, much is left unsaid in these comments. There is a long way to go between last evening and the eventual approval of the 2010 state budget. This extended time frame is accompanied by significant uncertainties regarding the state budget and the federal economic stimulus package.

As Gov. Granholm and the Michigan Legislature tackle the state’s budget deficit and at the same time seek to preserve essential services, we look forward to taking part in these important discussions. Our main concern is to be able to provide opportunities for students to receive an education and obtain the skills they need both for their own success, and for the state to have the kind of 21st century workforce it needs.

The governor’s desire to assure that students do not get priced out of a college degree is laudable. Tuition constraint is an important issue. Finding solutions to keeping higher education affordable will require hard choices and good communication between the governor, legislature and our university. There are many upward pressures on tuition, from health benefit costs to labor agreements, from unfunded state and federal mandates to energy and technology costs. At present, it is difficult to anticipate how those pressures on tuition can be best controlled without knowing the outlines of next year’s budget and higher education’s place in that budget.

“Food For Thought” Forums

As I visit with people across our campus I both hear and feel your concern about the future and financial pressures the economic downturn is placing on our University and its people. To help provide relevant information to you and to hear your concerns, I have scheduled a series of lunchtime conversations about the budget and important related topics. Each information and discussion session will be scheduled twice, on a Wednesday and a Thursday, so that this can fit more easily into your teaching or work schedule.

The first series of these conversations is scheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 18, at noon and on Thursday, Feb. 19, at 11:30 a.m. These “Food for Thought” forums in the Rankin Center’s Centennial Dining Room will be opportunities for everyone in the campus community to consider budget issues and the future of the University. I hope you will join me for food and light refreshments, but more importantly to engage in a conversation about some of the challenges we face.

I look forward to seeing you at one of these events.

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler
President