

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President

March 3, 2008

The many activities on campus and in our community this past week have shown the level of interest at Ferris for a wide-range of events. For example, last Wednesday, the Dome Room was filled for a lecture on Islam; a panel discussion on sustainability issues moderated by faculty members Scott Herron, Biology, and Denise Mitten, Recreation, Leisure Services and Wellness, attracted a standing room only crowd at the IRC auditorium; and about 45 people attended a presentation on “Form Follows Function,” at Artworks in downtown Big Rapids by faculty member Bruce Dilg, Architectural Technology, in the Festival of Arts.

Saturday our campus hosted a Dawg Days student recruitment event, the regional Rube Goldberg competition, the annual Spaghetti Bridge Competition, and an exciting overtime hockey win over top-rated Michigan. Sunday included an orchestra/community band concert, and the closing event of the Festival of the Arts – the dedication of an amazing sculpture for the City of Big Rapids, created and constructed by our students, with leadership from faculty members Robert Barnum, Humanities, and Dave Murray, Welding Engineering Technology.

These are but a small sample of how our campus and community have become engaged. Even with the challenging weather we have been enduring, the capacity attendance at these and other events says a great deal about our community in terms of its intellectual and cultural curiosity – as well as its resilience.

Senate Testimony

Last Monday, I presented testimony to the Michigan Senate Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee at their hearings in Grand Rapids. In my remarks I thanked the senators for making good on the payment to Michigan universities that was delayed from August to October. In the past, this kind of a delay has led to outright cancellation of funding. This was a significant amount, \$4.5 million, 9% of what we annually receive from the state. Because of the receipt of that payment, Ferris State University was able to remove the contingency fee it had imposed for the Fall 2007 semester and refund that money to students – a total of \$1.1 million. We are the only university in the state that has done this and the legislature recognizes how we have helped our students through their actions.

The hearing was an opportunity to remind senators that we are the fastest growing public university in Michigan. From 2001-2007, our student headcount has increased by 19.7%. Since 2001, student growth at Ferris accounts for 22% of the overall growth in Michigan public university enrollment. During this period Full-Year Equated Students (FYES) increased by 22% and the number of degrees awarded has increased 43%.

The one thing policy makers agree upon for higher education is that more Michigan students need to earn a college degree. My message has always been that if lawmakers want more students to attend college, they should reward universities that demonstrate success in working hard to meet this goal by increased funding based on enrollment growth. Currently, nearly every state in the country funds higher education in this way. Michigan uses this approach for K-12 education. Without this approach, funding from the state actually constitutes a *dis*-incentive to creating the future our state needs and to the kind of success that Ferris is experiencing in attracting students.

We have been doing a wonderful job of educating students and holding down costs. In fact, in 2001 we received \$6,094 per FYES, and today receive just \$4,324 – a decrease of 29%. Despite this, from 2001-07 total educational cost (tuition plus state support) at Ferris has grown less than overall inflation, and much less (11%) than inflation as measured by the Higher Education Price Index. A more equitable funding mechanism would help us offer a Ferris education to even more students.

The good news is that the state is considering an increase in funding of 3% to higher education. This would be the first increase to Ferris during the past seven years.

Finally, the hearing was an opportunity to again stress the need for a new Optometry building. As the only Optometry college in Michigan – and one of only four in the Midwest – a new facility is needed not only to provide the best education possible for students who are currently learning and providing services in a converted residence hall, but for support of quality eye care throughout our state.

A copy of my testimony and supporting documents is accessible at http://www.ferris.edu/president/Senate_2008.htm . I want to thank Budget Director Sally DePew, Communications Officer Marc Sheehan, and Information Systems Analyst Jim Lindsey for their assistance in preparing this material.

Spring Break!

Congratulations to coach Tracy Dorow and the women's basketball team for their 93-89 victory over Northwood in the GLIAC tournament. They play Ashland Friday evening at Michigan Tech in the GLIAC Quarterfinals.

Saturday evening's exciting victory over Michigan was one of the high points of a very successful regular season for coach Bob Daniels and the men's ice hockey team. They finish 5th in the conference behind four nationally ranked teams – Michigan (#1), Miami (#5), Michigan State (#6), and Notre Dame (#11). They have defeated three of those teams, and bested two of them (Miami and Notre Dame) twice. This weekend they host Western Michigan in the CCHA tournament. Friday's game will be telecast on Fox Sports Net.

The weather this winter in terms of both cold temperatures and amount of snow has been like few others in recent memory, and has challenged each of us. With spring break close at hand, the

academic year is almost three-quarters complete. The time from spring break to the end of the semester will be a time of intense activity on campus in a year that already been remarkable. As we move in to that part of the year, we look forward to longer and warmer days, and to the highlight of every academic year – graduating another class of Ferris students, ready to make a difference in their careers and for our state.

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler
President