

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
March 12, 2012

HLC Accreditation

If you have been away from campus, welcome back from spring break.

There is very good news to report from the Higher Learning Commission. After sharing the draft HLC report with you in December, I expressed my concern to the Commission regarding the progress report they had requested on the relationship between Ferris State University and Kendall College of Art and Design. As I reported to you earlier, I felt their findings had been formulated on incomplete information and a misunderstanding of the strengths of our unique relationship. Recently the HLC's Institutional Actions Council reviewed my appeal together with the visiting team's draft report from their site visit last April. The Higher Learning Council has notified Ferris State University that we have received full accreditation for the next ten years without any additional follow up or progress reports. This places our University among the top tier of educational institutions with a clean review and full ten-year accreditation. Our next evaluation is scheduled in the 2020-21 academic year.

Many of the areas the HLC pointed to as university strengths were broad-based, including how the Ferris community is committed to our educational mission, appreciates our history, supports diversity, promotes a global perspective, and both works and plans in a collaborative fashion. Other areas of strength recognized in the report include our curriculum, finances and facilities, the relevance of our approach to learning, our library, and the support we supply to students and learning resources.

The HLC evaluators also identified areas that we should focus on and seek to improve. These include assessment, faculty scholarship, general education revision, graduate education, instructional technology, technology infrastructure, and our relationship with Kendall College of Art and Design.

Our University first began organizing and preparing for this review in 2007 and we have used this process to carefully examine and improve. I once again want to thank everyone who was involved in this process, including those who took leadership roles -

- Steering committee chairs Mike Cairns, Michael Cooper and Chris Vonder Haar
- Self-study editor Sandy Balkema
- Criterion committee chairs Paul Blake, Julia Rodriguez Burke, Cheryl Cluchey, Steve Durst, Abdi Ferdowsi, Doug Haneline, Jennifer Hegenauer, Mike Hughes, Melinda Isler, Ron McKean, Kitty Manley, Carol Quigley, Kristin Salomonson, Wendy Samuels, Caroline Stern and Leroy Wright
- Steering committee members Jeff Boochard, Rick Christner, Rick Griffin, Oliver Evans, Michelle Johnston, Tom Oldfield, Max Shangle, Sueann Walz and Glenn Zobel
- Criterion committee members
- Self-study coordinators Mo Milzarski and Robbie Teahen

Everyone who was involved in the effort leading to this success should take great pride in the outcome. I believe this is the strongest and most positive outcome our University has ever received in this process. Combined with the enrollment growth we have experienced, the innovative programs we have launched and the new facilities we have dedicated, this validation by the HLC is yet another sign Ferris State University is a strong and vibrant institution that is succeeding through the teamwork of its people.

Health Insurance Information Forums

The rising costs of medical care and health insurance premiums are areas of concern for faculty and staff at our University. To help provide additional education, information and perspective to all employees, we have scheduled a series of forums this week on the Big Rapids campus and at the Kendall College of Art and Design. Mike Rask and Jon Snead from Aon-Hewitt will discuss national and Michigan trends, and offer some solutions that employers may adopt to manage these challenges in the coming years.

Sessions will include presentations by our major health insurance providers – Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Michigan, MESSA and Priority Health. Ample time will be allotted at the end of each session for you to ask questions of the presenters.

We will also use this opportunity to announce our plan for a major wellness initiative to be offered to faculty and staff yet this year. I very much encourage you to attend. These forums will take place -

Wednesday, March 14

1-2:30 p.m. Big Rapids Campus Rankin 252 (CDR)

3-4:30 p.m. Big Rapids Campus Rankin 252 (CDR)

10:30 p.m.-12 a.m. Big Rapids Campus (third shift) STR 138

Thursday, March 15

11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Big Rapids Campus SCI 102

3:30-5 p.m. Kendall/FSU Grand Rapids KCAD Room 103

SPARC Committee

As we continue as a university community to tackle the issues of student debt and timely degree completion, I want to thank you for considering this challenge and ways we can make a difference for our students. Affordability is rapidly becoming one of the most important issues facing higher education. I look forward to gathering more of your ideas, and also to working with the Ferris community to identify and implement the best proposals for making a Ferris education as affordable as possible.

The issues of student debt and time to degree completion will be the focus of the next Strategic Planning and Resource Council meeting, which will take place on Tuesday, March 13, 3-5 p.m. at the West Commons Community Center. I encourage you to attend this session and lend your perspective to this issue.

The National Rube Goldberg Machine Competition

Ferris will host the finals of the high school National Rube Goldberg Machine Competition on Saturday, March 17, at Wink Arena. This event is free and open to the public. Introduction of the teams begins at 10 a.m. and the competition itself starts at 10:20. This year the teams have been tasked with creating a machine that uses the largest number of individual steps to inflate and pop a balloon. You can learn more about this unique event, as well as about Rube Goldberg whose cartoons inspired this competition, at www.rubegoldberg.com . If you have not seen this high school competition I believe you will be amazed by the machines these students create.

Athletic News

Our women's basketball team competed this weekend in the Midwest Regional Tournament at Ashland University. They defeated Drury University before falling to the University Wisconsin-Parkside on Saturday. Coach Tracey Dorow and the women's basketball team had a remarkable season. Please join me in congratulating them on their success this year.

Our men's ice hockey team dropped Friday evening's quarterfinal to Bowling Green University 2-1 in overtime. Saturday we came back with four goals in the third period to win 7-4. Last evening we lost to Bowling Green 4-3 again in overtime. This has been an amazing season for Coach Bob Daniels and our hockey squad. We will learn this Sunday whether Ferris has been chosen for the NCAA post-season hockey tournament, and if so where we will play.

Our indoor women's track team participated in the NCAA Division II Championships this weekend at Minnesota State University - Mankato. Led by senior Tina Muir our team finished 16th. Tina earned All-America honors twice during the weekend, first leading our distance medley team to a fourth place finish on Friday and then running a personal best in the 5,000 meters to finish third in the nation. Congratulations to Tina on her continued outstanding success.