

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
April 4, 2007

By now I am hopeful you have heard that our Rube Goldberg team sponsored by Mechanical Engineering Technology Professor Tom Hollen won the national Rube Goldberg contest in Indianapolis. The object of the contest, named in honor of a cartoonist famous for drawing elaborate machines, is to see how many steps can be used to do an ordinary task within a given amount of time. The task this year was to squeeze orange juice. Our team used 345 steps, breaking Purdue University's previous record of 125 steps. Eight teams were in the national portion of this contest including Purdue, the University of Texas, the University of Cincinnati, Texas A&M, and Penn State University. Our team will likely submit their project to Guinness World Records, which recognized Purdue's previous effort. Thanks to their innovative efforts and teamwork, our students are scheduled to appear on the Jimmy Kimmel show on April 20th.

Plans are in the works for a campus celebration where the machine will be demonstrated. I saw this at the regional competition and it is remarkable. Congratulations to our team and the faculty who assisted. Here is some additional information on this -

- An article from Sunday's Indianapolis Star - <http://www.indystar.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2007704010436>
- An article from our archives after we won the regional competition that provides more information - <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/news/news/detail.cfm?ID=619>
- Some video from our archives after the regional competition. You can see close up some of the techniques the students use and see some of the mechanism - <http://www.ferris.edu/news/week/video/rube/>

It was gratifying to learn that Ferris State University has moved from the fourth to the third tier in the *U.S. News and World News* college rankings among master's institutions in the Midwest. Among the strengths that the magazine notes, Ferris ranks high on class size. 50% of our classes have fewer than 20 students, placing us in the top 75 of all schools in the Midwest. Only 3% of our classes have more than 50 students. Our student-to-faculty ratio is 15:1. Ferris ranks high in the percentage of full-time faculty, 86%, 9th highest in the tier.

We also received high rankings in terms of student financial support. The average amount of debt for a Ferris graduating student, \$15,000, is the lowest reported for a Michigan public master's university. We also fared well in terms of the student financial support we provide. The average Ferris student receives \$8,000 in aid (\$3,500 in need-based aid, \$3,500 in a need-based loan, and \$2,000 in merit awards). This is the 7th highest of Midwest public master's universities. These data reflect the importance Ferris places upon student-faculty interaction, high quality instruction, and support for students.

Unit Action Planning

On Thursday and Friday vice presidents, deans and directors shared some accomplishments during this past year and their plans for next year. All of the presentations and plans together with pictures from these two days of activities are accessible from our web pages-

<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/uap200708.htm>

To access specific presentations and plans, you may also use these links -

Academic Affairs

Presentation - <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/Planning/2007AA.pps>

Plan - <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/Planning/UAP2007AA.pdf>

Administration and Finance

Presentation - <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/Planning/2007A&F.pps>

Plan - <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/Planning/UAP2007A&F.pdf>

Diversity Office

Website - <http://www.ferris.edu/diversity/>

Plan - <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/Planning/UAP2007CDO.pdf>

FSU - GR, College of Professional and Technical Studies

Plan - <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/Planning/UAP2007FSUGR.pdf>

FSU-GR, Kendall College of Art and Design

Academic Administration Plan -

<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/Planning/UAP2007KCADevans.pdf>

Administration and Finance Plan -

<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/Planning/UAP2007KCADevans.pdf>

General Counsel and Governmental Relations

Presentation - <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/Planning/2007GCGR.pps>

Plan - <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/Planning/2007GCGR.pps>

Student Affairs

Presentation - <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/Planning/2007SA.pps>

Plan - <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/Planning/UAP2007SA.pdf>

University Advancement and Marketing

Presentation - <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/Planning/2007UAM.pps>

Plan - <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/Planning/UAP2007UAM.pdf>

When you have the opportunity, I would encourage you to read through one or more of these documents, preferably in a division where you do not work. You will be very impressed by your colleagues' accomplishments.

Unit Action Planning is designed to be a grassroots effort that combines sharing of successes and efforts for next year. I appreciate the efforts of faculty, staff, chairs, directors, deans, and vice presidents in assembling these materials and planning. Thank you for your contributions to this effort.

Strategic Planning

Many of you had the opportunity to visit with Dr. David McFarland who is helping to facilitate our strategic planning effort. He has completed the initial stages of his environment scan and will be holding two sessions open to all faculty, staff, students and administrators on Monday, April 16th in the Founders Room between 2 and 4 p.m. He will hold a second open session in the Founders' Room on Tuesday morning, April 17th between 8:30 and 10 a.m. It is not necessary for you to attend a full session, but I want to encourage you to hear some of his findings and to solicit your input on next steps.

Strategic Planning will occupy a major portion of next year. I look forward to our work together as we seek to plan the future for Ferris State University.

Closing Thoughts

The extended weekend provides an opportunity for time with friends and family before the end of classes. I look forward to seeing you over the next three weeks as we celebrate the successes of our people and our students. This is an exciting time, which highlights the difference a Ferris State University education makes for our students.

Since Monday's message my email box has been filled to overflowing. I have been staying late every evening to answer each of these and it is 12:30 am as I finish this message. I want to express my sincere and heartfelt thanks for the many, many messages of support and assistance I have received. Criticisms, both deserved and undeserved, are a part of this position and one learns to accept and deal with them. However, nothing prepared us for the many wonderful things you have written Patsy and me over these past two days. We are both deeply appreciative that you would reach out to both of us in this very special and meaningful way.

Ferris is a very special place and we both consider ourselves fortunate to be a part of this campus and community. It is truly an honor and privilege to serve as your president.

dave