

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
April 13, 2009

Sharing Success

Today is the final session of this spring's "Share Your Success" meetings. It has been a great pleasure to meet with so many of you over the last couple of weeks. Heading in to these meetings I hoped to discover many new examples of the exceptional work people do at Ferris. And I have, learning much along the way. It is impossible to have heard so many accounts of dedicated effort, extraordinary accomplishment and caring for others, and to not come away from this experience with an even deeper appreciation of the wonderful work you do. It is always heartening to see the Ferris community's passion for our educational mission.

Examples are everywhere - shared efforts between Geography students and members of the physical plant to combat Emerald Ash Borer disease on campus; more than 630 students enrolled in Nursing programs throughout the state; multiple collaborative competitions for Engineering Technology students; increased services to veterans returning to campus; humanitarian vision efforts to Dominica; successful efforts to help students with basic skills; health clinics to help the less fortunate in Big Rapids, Baldwin and Grand Rapids; successful accreditation visits, new grants received; and many, many more examples of faculty and staff reaching out to create unique and special learning and engagement opportunities for our students.

Even as we continue to face a very daunting outlook in terms of funding for higher education - and the economy in general - it is still very important not to lose sight of the exceptional work that takes place here at Ferris every day. The continuity of teaching and service that your dedication has made possible during a tumultuous period has been extraordinary. Thank you for sharing your successes with me.

Budget Suggestions

In March deans and vice presidents held a series of meetings at the department level with faculty, staff, and students throughout the University. Together with submissions through e-mail and other means, your budget ideas and suggestions have been collected and compiled into a 45-page list. Everything received has been included as submitted; no items have been omitted. Occasionally, a person's name was replaced by the title of their position. To make this more amenable to review the items have been arranged and grouped under topics and subheadings. This is accessible here -

http://www.ferris.edu/president/strategic/Budget_Reduction_Suggestions2009.pdf

The listing provides a compilation of your thoughts. I did not produce these items, but instead elicited them with the help of others from our campus community. You will find like I did, that there are items on this list with which you can agree. Likewise, there are some items with which you might strongly disagree. And there are some items that in reality may not be budget

reduction ideas at all. It is important to emphasize that this is simply an initial compilation. There are many items we should consider carefully. Others we cannot or should not do.

From this listing I have created a summary of these ideas. With the assistance of the SPARC Committee, we are prioritizing these items carefully, developing an overall plan to address possible future reductions in funding for our University. The intent is to be prepared for future challenges before they occur.

We will continue to share information and materials, seeking both your input and feedback as we proceed. Thank you for your involvement and support. We will need to seek savings over the next several months. The time you took to share your ideas has helped accelerate the search for the best ways in which we can become more efficient and/or develop new revenue sources.

Budget Situation

Despite the effort we have made to remain upbeat and not lose sight of the many good things happening at Ferris, the reality remains that we do face significant budget challenges. The state's high unemployment figures, outward migration and declining revenues mean that we are not likely any time soon to see increases in higher education funding – despite calls from state officials for more college graduates. At the same time we need to help keep college affordable for our students, who are facing some of the most pressing economic challenges of their and our lifetime.

The question we are grappling with is this – by how much can we constrain tuition to help keep a Ferris education within the reach of the widest range of students? To date for next year's budget we have already absorbed a \$1.6 million cut from the state. Beyond this to cover ongoing costs for next year, we would need a tuition increase of about seven percent. In the current economic climate, we will not seek that large of an increase. As we look to limit tuition increases at the undergraduate resident level, each percent of tuition represents about \$720,000 in revenue. So a six percent tuition increase would mean a shortfall of more than \$700,000; a five percent increase would mean a shortfall more than \$1.4 million; and a four percent increase would leave us about \$2.2 million short.

In November we implemented a \$2.5 million base reduction. This month I have asked deans and vice presidents to reduce budgets by additional 2 percent, reducing next year's budget by \$2.5 million more in base reductions. It is my hope that the ultimate reduction will be less, but now is the time to prepare for these shortfalls in revenue.

As a part of sharing information with you we have held four budget information forums. Before the semester ends we will hold two more budget forums, at noon on Tuesday, April 28th and on Friday, May 1st. I look forward to visiting with you and sharing the most up-to-date information on our budget and efforts to deal with the significant economic challenges in Michigan.

Coming Events

With just three weeks of classes remaining in the semester there are many events scheduled to recognize our faculty, staff, and students. This Thursday at 3 p.m. there is a retiree reception in

the Rankin Center Dome Room. Please stop by to say thank you to our colleagues for their many years of service to Ferris State University. Later this month we hold the annual Employee Service Awards on Wednesday, April 29, at 3 p.m. in the Rankin Center Dome Room. To register for this go to - <http://www.ferris.edu/president/forms/homepage.htm>

On Thursday and Friday the College of Engineering Technology is sponsoring their second Alternative Energy Conference. More information and a conference agenda are available here - <http://www.ferris.edu/mec/>

This Saturday our Student Government Association has created an extraordinary effort, The Big Event, a community-wide service project by students for our community. Over 800 students will be doing chores, minor repairs and yard work assisting 100 homeowners. It is amazing to watch how this event has grown and caught the attention of our community and our students. Congratulations to student leaders Clare Gould and Amber Balmer for their outstanding leadership on this effort.

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler
President