

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
April 22, 2005

The past few days have been some of the most beautiful imaginable. It is wonderful to watch our campus and community come alive with spring growth and it seems as if the trees are bursting into bloom over night. The past week has also been filled with celebrations, honors and recognition both for our people and our institution. Special congratulations go to Jana Hurley on her selection as "Woman of the Year" by the Ferris Professional Women. This is wonderful recognition of an outstanding leader for our campus.

Our Welding Engineering Technology program has been named the educational facility of the year as part of the Image of Welding awards by the American Welding Society. Congratulations to Jeff Carney, Ken Kuk and all the faculty, staff, and students connected with this outstanding program. The College of Technology's entry in the national Rube Goldberg competition placed second in the nation, scoring better than entries from Michigan, Michigan State, the University of Arizona, the University of Texas, and institutions from across the country. This year's entry used 56 steps to replace the batteries in a flashlight and was organized around a carnival theme. Congratulations to Tom Hollen and all the faculty, staff and students involved in this project.

This week included a number of memorable events for our campus, including Tuesday evening's address by NPR and Fox commentator, Juan Williams, and the subsequent panel discussion Wednesday evening. These events provided analysis and commentary on the landmark decision, Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education. The personal commentaries by the panel Wednesday evening and Mr. Williams' recollections regarding Judge Thurgood Marshall were truly thought-provoking.

At this time of the year we acknowledge and celebrate student success. Our students seem to be doing especially well this spring, receiving a significant number of national honors and awards and competitive scholarships. We are very proud of our students and excited by the opportunities they have ahead of them. Their success is a direct result of your efforts to help them learn, grow, and achieve.

Finally, this is a time of the year when we reflect on the lifelong contributions of colleagues as they prepare to enter retirement. We express our grateful thanks for their contributions to our campus and the lives they have touched. These are moments filled with the entire gamut of emotions.

Planning Updates

We continue to make wonderful progress on major goals for the university. A test application of wireless technology is currently underway on campus. On Wednesday I spent some time learning about and observing this technology at work. I was both impressed and amazed.

Three small canisters not much larger than a medium-sized birdhouse provide wireless connectivity for the entire Quad. If you look carefully you will see them hanging from the east side of the Rankin Center, the north side of Clark Hall and the west side of Vandercook Hall. More importantly, if you have a device that can access wireless technology, please take a moment and test this connectivity. My understanding is that this test will be available until May 6th. If you do experiment with this technology, please share your experience via the online feedback form at <http://www.ferris.edu/sats/wirelesstest/testhomepage.htm>

One of the other things I learned is that it is best to install wireless technology during the Summer. Apparently leaves and foliage can provide interference for the signal. Based on the success of the test, I believe this technology will be installed throughout campus by the beginning of fall semester.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, Pace and Partners presented their ideas on how we can promote and present Ferris to the public. Their sessions were both well attended and well received. Thank you for taking time at this busy point in the semester to listen and share your thoughts with this team. I am very impressed with how much they have learned about our University and their insight into how our unique educational strengths can be represented.

Five possible messages for the University were presented, along with some creative examples of how these might be displayed. Even if you were unable to attend any of these sessions, we want and need your input. The messages and examples are available online at <http://www.ferris.edu/news/identity>. Please take a moment to consider these ideas and provide your reactions via the online survey. I believe this is an excellent first step in what will be an ongoing effort to raise awareness, understanding, and appreciation for our University.

IRC Renovation

We have received a number of questions regarding the planning, timeline, and scope for the state-funded remodeling of the Instructional Resource Center. The wonderful news is that the state has approved and provided bonding support for this \$7.5 million project. A planning group has been established in academic affairs to help guide this effort and Neumann Smith Architects have been retained to provide professional expertise to this planning. Some of the issues this project will address are how the four large tiered auditorium spaces are reconfigured for more effective learning and how the current occupants of this space are supported. It is my sincere hope that we can also use this project to provide much needed office space for our business faculty, perhaps through an extension from the IRC to the business building.

As it is still very early in this process, there are still many unanswered questions. A timeline for building construction has not yet been developed. It seems to me unlikely that construction on this project will begin before mid-July or early August. This could mean that the majority of the IRC would be offline for fall semester, with a portion returning after the first of the year. I want to stress that this is at best speculation at this point. As plans are developed and a firm construction timeline evolves, we will work to accommodate classes, programs, and people during the construction as effectively as is possible. It is exciting to consider the educational possibilities for this remodeled facility.

2005-2006 Tuition Concepts

Yesterday I held an open forum with our students to discuss preliminary concepts regarding next year's tuition. Even though no decisions have been made regarding next year's tuition, I feel strongly the need to discuss these issues with our students and to answer their questions before many of them leave for the summer. This provides an important opportunity to share with them our plans. I also want to share them with you.

In considering next year's charges, I asked the tuition and fees committee to consider how tuition can better reflect a student's instructional costs. There are three basic ideas under consideration. The first is a movement to a linear, rather than tiered tuition model. The second is a tuition differential between lower and upper division studies. A third is a differential tuition for some colleges. Additional information on these draft tuition proposals is available here - <http://www.ferris.edu/president/planning/TuitionFeesConceptsApril2005.pdf>.

There is still much work to be done before these proposals have been evaluated and final recommendations made. At this point the overall impact of these increases would average 6-9%. For some students the differentials will make these increases higher. I am hopeful that we will be successful in our efforts to eliminate the proposed cut in state funding for next year's budget and to actually increase funding from state. Any increased state revenues will be used to reduce tuition increases for our students. Tuition and fee issues are difficult and challenging. I would appreciate your thoughts and comments on these proposals.

Closing Thoughts

One of my favorite events is the annual student exhibit at the Kendall College of Art and Design. The Kendall students transform the entire building into one large art gallery, with work displayed throughout the facility. Art work flows beyond classrooms to the hallways and gathering areas. It encompasses all media, painting, sculpture, metal, wood, interior and industrial design, and much more. It is a remarkable statement of the creative efforts of these students and the successful educational efforts of Kendall faculty. The show begins Tuesday, May 3rd at 4 pm, is open from 9 am to 9 pm Wednesday through Friday, and is open 9 am to 2 pm on Saturday, May 7th. If you have not seen this exhibition, I strongly encourage you to experience the amazing talent on display. Additional information is available by calling 616-451-2787, x1104 or 1141.

On Tuesday, April 26th, we will honor our employees for their service and commitment to Ferris State University. I am hopeful you will join me at the Holiday Inn from 3-5 pm when we present our employee service awards. For me this is a wonderful occasion to say thank you in a public way for the difference you make.

It seems difficult to believe that the final instructional week of the semester is here. I look forward to seeing you at events and activities around campus and in the community. Thank you very much for your efforts for our students, our people, and our University.

Sincerely,

Dave