

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
May 4, 2005

As semester exams conclude, the end of the academic year has arrived. Commencement is one of my favorite times of the year. I enjoy watching our graduates as they stride across the stage, confident and proud of their success. Their stories about the obstacles they have overcome and the challenges they have faced make me appreciate how important education is to them. As they reflect on their experiences I often hear about how you, our faculty and staff, have made the difference for them, providing support, inspiration, and encouragement.

In the daily life of a university we can become so involved in the present that we forget about the transforming nature of the university experience. A Ferris education truly changes the lives of our students, making dreams a possibility and a reality. Commencement is a time which draws and focuses our attention on the achievements and accomplishments of our students.

Looking Back on Planning

This academic year began with a vision for Ferris State University and its future. The vision has three parts -

- We need to create a Learning Centered University.
- We must work together.
- We must become an engaged campus.

During fall semester six university task forces were established to examine important components of this University future -

- Professional Development
- Teaching Facilities
- Communication
- Student Engagement
- Learner-centered Technology
- Enrollment Growth

I want to thank the seventy-five faculty and staff who considered these concepts over a two-month period and came back with a powerful group of recommendations. This effort was led by a wonderful group of task force co-chairs, Sandy Alspach, Shelly Armstrong, Bill Boras, Dan Burcham, Terry Doyle, Raymond Gant, Kim Hancock, Warren Hills, Susan Jones, Bill Potter, and John Urbanick. Their leadership was critical to the success of this process and is much appreciated.

From the task force reports six recommendations were selected – far-reaching ideas that stretch across university divisions and are critical for our future. Development and implementation of these recommendations began immediately and have continued throughout the semester. These university-wide priorities include the following -

- Renovate and improve classrooms, technology, and furnishings with a goal of addressing all classrooms in a five-year timeframe.
- Initiate a University-wide effort to create a consistent message\identity as part of a truly integrated marketing program for our institution.
- Assess the effectiveness of current student engagement efforts and compare these to national data and models.
- Develop and implement a hardware replacement cycle for faculty and staff computers based on a matching funds incentive program between central and division-level support and the reassignment of replaced equipment.
- Design and implement a meshed wireless network that covers the campus footprint.
- Develop a funding formula which rewards colleges for enrollment growth.

I want to share with you our progress on these goals -

Classroom Improvement – Two groups of classrooms have been identified for improvement this summer together. In addition three underutilized spaces will be converted for instructional purposes. The action plan for the first step of the classroom improvement process is here -

<http://www.ferris.edu/president/planning/LearningFacilitiesApril2005.pdf>

Together with the state-funded renovation of the Instructional Resource Center (IRC), this represents a significant start on improving instructional facilities.

Message\Identity – Through a competitive process, a new partner for campus positioning has been selected. Five potential messages for our University have been developed and presented to the campus. Input and analysis of these ideas have been solicited through presentation surveys and an on-line questionnaire.

Information on the messages is available here -

http://www.ferris.edu/news/identity/fsu_pace.pdf, and the on-line survey will be accessible until May 6th at <http://www.secondwindnetwork.com/surveys/fsu.htm>

It seems likely that over 1,000 people will provide feedback to these ideas. Thank you for taking time to share your opinions.

Student Engagement – To assess the effectiveness of student engagement activities on campus, the National Survey of Student Engagement was administered on campus during winter semester. This measure will help create an objective assessment of engagement efforts on campus. These results have not yet been returned to campus, but additional information on the NSSE is available here - <http://www.indiana.edu/~nsse/> .

Computer Hardware Replacement – Minimum standards for personal computers, laptop computers, and campus software have been developed and adopted. A shared process will replace faculty and staff computers across campus that do not meet this standard. The campus implementation group's report is accessible at - <http://www.ferris.edu/president/planning/PCReplacementApril2005.pdf>

Wireless Network – Wireless technology has been tested in both outdoor and indoor locations and feedback solicited via an on-line survey. This test will be conducted through May 6th and you may provide feedback at <http://www.ferris.edu/sats/wirelesstest/testhomepage.htm>.

Funding Formula – A funding formula based on college enrollments has been implemented and new faculty hired to address enrollment growth. Explanation of the funding formula is here - <http://www.ferris.edu/president/AcademicIncentiveModelMethodology.doc>
The spreadsheet with college allocations is here - <http://www.ferris.edu/president/AcademicIncentiveModel2005.xls>

Many people have worked very hard to move forward on these goals. Beyond these six goals, task force recommendations have provided the basis for unit action planning efforts. The reports from unit action plans are available here - <http://www.ferris.edu/president/planning200506.htm>

The task force approach is effective with helping our campus implement important planning goals. As we begin to consider our plans for the next academic year, I would very much appreciate your thoughts on our planning and implementation efforts over the past year.

Tuition

We continue to work to develop tuition proposals for next fall. I want to share our thinking at this point. There is still strong commitment to a plan that would eliminate the tuition window for 13-15 credits and create a linear tuition model. I believe this is in the best long-term interests of our institution. The

challenge with this is moderating increases for students who elect 13 credits or more. It is clear that this is possible if the change is implemented over a three - four year period.

Two ideas suggested in earlier tuition models seem unlikely to be implemented for fall. The first is the idea of differential college tuition. The second is an upper\lower division tuition differential. While both of these are viable concepts, implementing them together with a move to linear tuition would increase the tuition for some students more than I am willing to support. There is still significant discussion ahead over the next two months on this subject.

Closing Thoughts

Saturday evening's donor recognition dinner was a memorable event. For this occasion the Student Recreation Center was transformed into a tropical theme setting. I was especially impressed by the number of our faculty and staff who have joined our donor societies during this past.

Andrew and Catherine Archer - Presidents Club
Robert and Kim Buckingham - Presidents Club
William (Charlie) and Ruth Carpenter - Founder's Club
Richard and Jennifer Cochran - Old Main Society
Joe and Suzette Compton - Presidents Club
John and Roxanne Cullen - Presidents Club
Dacho and Ruth Dachoff - Presidents Club
Bob and Leslie Daniels - Founder's Club
Beverly DeMarr - Presidents Club
Raymond and Rosemary Dickinson - Old Main Society
Stephen and Elaine Durst - Presidents Club
Donald Edwards - Presidents Club
Don and Cathy Green - Presidents Club
Michael and Tali Harris - Presidents Club
Dale Hobart - Presidents Club
Jacqueline Hooper - Presidents Club
Charles and Geraldine Hurt - Founder's Club
James and Christine Jacobs - Presidents Club
Matthew Klein and Nancy Peterson-Klein - Old Main Society
Richard and Rebecca Kowalkoski - Presidents Club
Maris and Sara Krumins - Presidents Club
Kenneth and Linda Kuk - Presidents Club
James and Annette Maat - Presidents Club
Philip and Madelon Marcotte - Presidents Club
Ian Mathison - Presidents Club
Jim and Cindy Miller - Presidents Club

Janet Nash - Phoenix Society
David and Glenda Robison - Presidents Club
Jim and Mary Saladin - Presidents Club
Rachel Schumann - Presidents Club
Florence Storm - Old Main Society
Michael and Sue Terry- Presidents Club
John and Judith Thorp - Phoenix Society

This generous financial support of our University makes a wonderful difference for our students, programs, and people. It is something that demonstrates your strong commitment for Ferris State University. It means more to me than words can adequately express. Thank you so very much.

If you will be gone for the summer or just on campus intermittently I want to wish you a pleasant, restful, and relaxing summer. For those who work through the summer, I want to remind you of Summer University scheduled for June 13-15. Registration and additional information on this will be available shortly.

I want to thank each of you for your hard work and dedication. Your efforts help create the unique and special educational community we have here at Ferris State University. It is truly an honor and privilege to serve you as president. Thank you for the opportunity of working with you.

Best wishes,

David L. Eisler, President