

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
September 4, 2012

Founders Day

Founders' Day was a wonderful celebration on a truly spectacular late-summer Michigan Day. Thank you for being a part of the employee picnic on the Quad, the Ice Cream Social and the many activities for students. Thursday evening we served more than 2,200 people, the largest crowd in the history of the event. This is a truly remarkable way to commemorate the legacy of our founders, Woodbridge and Helen Gillespie Ferris. It is impossible not to feel the excitement of the semester beginning seeing students, faculty, staff, emeriti and community members together in the center of our Big Rapids campus.

Many, many people work very hard to make Founders' Day the great celebration that it is. Please join me in thanking Lori Helmer, Stan Vallier and everyone in Ferris Catering and Dining Services for the remarkable job they do with our picnic. Miles Postema, Jody Greco and everyone from our Legal Counsel and Governmental Relations Office who sponsored and coordinated the Ice Cream Social with their usual enthusiasm and good spirits.

Thursday morning I offered some thoughts on our traditions, accomplishments of the past academic year, and areas of emphasis for this coming year. A link to the slide show and text of my remarks are available at <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/president/presentations/2012-13.htm> . If you did not attend my presentation, I encourage you to take a moment to consider these remarks. I welcome your comments and thoughts on them. Thank you for taking the time to reflect on the accomplishments of the past year and to look forward to the year ahead.

Student Debt Task Force

A major focus for the year ahead is our continued efforts to address the growing problem of student debt. Last year we held a number of forums to raise awareness about this issue. In each of those forums we identified the underlying causes and took time to solicit your best thinking on how we can help reduce this burden for our students. We received well over 1,000 ideas, proposals and suggestions. These have been refined into 115 statements in four categories and have been reviewed by groups throughout the university, including the Strategic Planning and Resource Council and the Board of Trustees. (This document can be accessed at <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/president/strategic/minutes/> by choosing the file entitled "Student Debt: Draft Ideas and Suggestions for Consideration.")

On Thursday I announced a university-wide task force on student debt. Professor of Education and SPARC Chair Leonard Johnson will chair this group. I want to thank Leonard and task force members Cathy Archer, Dan Burcham, Sara Dew, Fritz Erickson, Doug Haneline, Gloria Lukusa-Barnett, David Marion, Kristy Motz, Bill Potter and Jim Rumpf for agreeing to serve. Their charge is to-

- Identify broad priorities for current efforts
- Consider how to engage the entire university community

- Empower faculty leadership for this effort.

The task force's examinations will focus on three major areas –

- Controlling/Reducing Costs
- Finances and Financial Literacy
- Time To Degree

We cannot delay in moving forward to help our students. The task force will report back to SPARC at their November 13th meeting.

Enrollment

The official fourth-day enrollment figures are in. Enrollment at Ferris State University is essentially flat from a year ago. Headcount for all locations is 14,533 students, 27 students fewer than last year. Student credit hours total 168,457, 1,392 more than last year.

Within these figures are some interesting trends. We are up 69 students at the Big Rapids campus. For years we have worked to enroll more than 10,000 students here and have accomplished this for fall 2012 with 10,039. This is our largest enrollment in Big Rapids in nearly twenty years. Kendall College of Art and Design's enrollment is also up, with an increase of 47 students, for a total of 1,461, also record attendance.

Internet instruction continues to grow, but at a 5 percent rate, more slowly than in the past. The area in which we see decline is at our community college locations which are down 180 students in head count and 1,255 student credit hours. Both figures are about an 8 percent decrease.

Our university continues to become more diverse. This fall includes a 5 percent growth in African American students and a 7 percent increase in Hispanic students. We have also enrolled 96 additional International students, a 42 percent growth. Congratulations to everyone associated with these efforts to attract International students to our university.

The average ACT score for new freshmen is 21.7 and their GPA is 3.22. We retained 70 percent of last year's full-time freshman pursuing a bachelor's degree and 68 percent of those students in associate degree programs. More information is available from the 4th day enrollment report which is accessible here

<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/admission/testing/resources/enrollment/fall/Fall12enrlsum.pdf>

This year's report continues a pattern of favorable enrollment figures. In an environment of financial challenges and declining numbers of high school graduates in Michigan, this reflects the concerted effort of many people at our university. It reflects our commitment to working together as a university community dedicated to creating the best academic environment possible for our students. Thank you all.

Blackboard Learn Transition

Recently, our university completed a transition of on-line teaching resources from FerrisConnect Vista to the more powerful FerrisConnect Learn. This required a revision of essentially every on-line course at the University. I want to thank each and every faculty member who took time to learn this new system and to revise their courses.

This major upgrade could not have been accomplished without the energy and devotion of many faculty and staff. To use the new platform faculty and staff needed to learn and demonstrate their understanding of the Blackboard Learn 9.1 platform. In total, more than 650 faculty, adjunct faculty and staff completed this process.

A project of this scope involving this many people can only be completed so successfully in such a short time through close coordination and teamwork. The core project team for the transition consisted of Gloria Barnett, coordinator of Blackboard 9.1 training; Mary Holmes, project manager, Blackboard 9.1; Jackie Hughes, coordinator of instructional technologies; Todd Stanislav, director, Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning; and Robbie Teahen, project coordinator, Blackboard 9.1.

A group of mentors prepared faculty for the transition. "Master Mentors," (identified by an asterisk) trained, assisted training, worked at the check-off sessions and worked with their mentees. These mentors and master mentors were Stacy Anderson, Gloria Barnett*, Eunice Beck*, James Bender, Allison Bernknopf, Patrick English, Lisa Eshbach*, Clifton Franklund*, Kim Hancock, Sheila MacEachron*, Tara McCrackin*, Emily Mitchell, Elaine McCullough, Peter Raphael, and Randy Vance.

The transition would not have happened without our Information Technology people, who worked diligently to get the systems working. The E-Learning Team, again identified by an asterisk, attended to a wide range of technical challenges, prepared for training and answered many questions: Terry Aldrich, Ed Burns, Mike Cline, Steve Costello*, Vicky Deur, Mary Holmes*, Jesse Klocke, Scott Randle*, Kris Rasmussen, Dave Steffens, Scott Thede, Susan Weaver, Krista Wilcox and John Urbanick. Additionally, Marilyn Bejma, Laurie Daniels, Maureen Milzarski, Lyle Mourer and Andrew Peterson helped in a range of areas to bring this project to its successful conclusion.

Please join me in thanking everyone who has worked so very hard this past year to make this conversion to our new on-line learning management system so successful.

iConnect

Among the many preparations that take place to ready campus for the start of classes, one that is perhaps not as visible is of great importance for our students. A team headed by John Duman, Student Technology Services coordinator, worked 13-hour days on Friday, Saturday and Sunday during move-in weekend assisting new and returning students in getting their computers on our network. This effort, called iConnect, ensures that students have up-to-date anti-virus definitions and all necessary Windows Update files installed. The iConnect team also registers students' machines with Ferris' Network Access Control software. During the move-in weekend iConnect assisted students in getting 1,376 computers and other technology registered and working. The team also assisted with a large number of gaming, hand-held and mobile devices. Besides Duman and Andy Rayburn, computer technician, this iConnect team consisted entirely of students: Chase Canning, Dave Coleman, Jamye Cook, Samantha Gignac, Taylor Hunt, Katie Mourer, Kristie Sexton, Sarah Shirey, Brenden Sider and Mitchell Wierenga.

Congratulations and thanks to the iConnect team for their success in ensuring that students' entrance into Ferris extends to the technology that is so much a part of their lives.

Athletics

Congratulations to head coach Tony Annese and all the members of the Ferris football team who began their season Thursday evening in Illinois with a 35-24 victory over the University of St. Francis, which was ranked 7th nationally in the NAIA. This week the team travels to Ohio for a conference game against Lake Erie College. The home opener for the team is Saturday, Sept. 15th against Ashland University.

Our nationally ranked women's volleyball team opened its season by winning three of its four games in the Ferris State Invitational. Also, our women's soccer team played two very exciting double-overtime matches, falling short by a goal 3-2 to Indianapolis on Friday, and battling to a 0-0 tie with nationally third-ranked Armstrong Atlantic State on Sunday. Athletic contests such as these by women's soccer remind us that there are great athletic events to attend across the range of Bulldog sports. A composite schedule of all of our teams' schedules is available at www.ferrisstatebulldogs.com under the "schedules" tab. I encourage you to come out and cheer for our Ferris student-athletes.

Closing Thoughts

As I have walked around campus this first week of classes I have learned about the extraordinary efforts of many people to help the academic year begin so successfully. If you know of someone or a group at Ferris who is making a positive impact on the lives of our students, please let me know. I very much enjoy learning about their efforts and sharing them with others. Thank you for making Ferris State University a very special place.

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler, president