

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
October 5, 2004
Ext. 2500

It seems difficult to believe that it is October already. We have been fortunate to have one of the most beautiful fall seasons imaginable. The chill of this morning suggests the first touch of colder weather to come. When I look back at September I am reminded of the excellent work of our people. Perhaps you may have had the opportunity to observe some of these activities or efforts yourself.

A year ago you may recall the many challenges and problems we experienced with computer viruses and worms. This created serious problems with the reliability of our network and associated systems. This year has been a huge improvement and results largely from the efforts of our information technology people and network technicians, who have installed systems that scan student computers before they can access additional network resources.

The first football game attracted what is certainly the largest recorded crowd in recent history. Over 8500 people attended on an inclement evening. The entire afternoon and evening were a series of well attended activities, beginning with an alumni football game between FSU and GVSU, continuing with dinner at the stadium, a fine country music concert by Chris Cagle, the football game, and concluding with fireworks. This was a very enjoyable evening. This past weekend we witnessed an amazing performance by running back Andrew Terry, who rushed for an NCAA Division II single game record of 410 yards.

Recently I took my students for a library orientation. One of the academic strengths of every university should be its library. We are truly fortunate to have a magnificent facility, but more importantly a library faculty and staff who are committed to helping students. I was very impressed by the welcoming atmosphere and the desire to assist students. The result of this approach is that when we were in the library it was full of students hard at work.

During September I attended the College of Technology picnic. I very much enjoyed the friendly, collegial atmosphere. Students, faculty, and staff enjoyed live performers at the natural bowl next to their facilities, a hotdog dinner grilled on an amazing barbecue, and interacted outside of the normal classroom setting. It is always good to see our students engaged with faculty and staff outside of class.

These are but a few examples. I see extraordinary work everyday at Ferris and appreciate very much your strong efforts to help our students and to build a strong, vibrant University. I don't know if you have had the opportunity to try the Centennial Dining Room for lunch. More and more faculty and staff are using this as a venue to come together

and visit. I enjoy attending and would encourage you to do so. Thank you for helping to make this successful.

Planning Update

Over the past year we have been engaged in a continuing discussion on the future of our University. This began with a series of over seventy meetings with faculty, staff, and students. In April I shared with you what I learned from visiting with you. In June and then again in August we discussed three vision statements that can help shape our future.

- We Need to Create a Learning Centered University
- We Must Work Together
- We Must Become an Engaged Campus

For the past few weeks I have been studying your responses to what each of these statements can mean. I would like to share some of this with you. In doing so, I want to thank a group of over forty faculty and staff facilitators who guided these sessions. While the analysis and organization are mine, the words are yours.

Create a Learning University Means:

Learning

- Learning is a journey, not a destination
- Creates a “can do” attitude and sufficient skill sets (educating students, staff, faculty for life)
- Getting away from just teaching to focus on learning
- Teach lifelong learning to help guide students after graduation

Faculty and Staff Development

- Faculty and staff professional development opportunities, resource, money, and time
- Developing a strategy for faculty and staff development that is intentional
- Employee career development
- Ongoing professional development we grow, students grow
- Sharing of the best practices – through demos or personal engagement

Learning Is Everywhere

- Encourage out-of-class learning
- Learning is not necessarily in the classrooms but in life’s experiences
- Structured involvement outside classroom

State of the Art

- Keep current with technology/information technology to adequately prepare students, staff, and administrators for industry expectations
- Keep curriculum up to date (APRC)
- New technologies, up-to-date techniques

Assessment

- Assessment should be longitudinal and meaningful
- Benchmark, measures, evaluates
- Continuous assessment + improvement of teaching + learning

Working Together Means:

Collaboration

- Become the people of Ferris, not faculty, staff, administration
- A group of people working and connecting together toward a clear goal
- Collaboration between division colleagues and programs
- Cooperation vs. competition
- Enabling cross-university programs
- Foster win/win attitude between unions and management
- Working to the good of the student/community

Communication

- Communicate! Listen and communicate!
- Knowledge and understanding other areas outside of your own department
- Sharing information

Common Purpose, Values, and Understanding

- Big picture - we all affect a positive/negative outcome for Ferris community
- Bridge faculty, staff and administration/board gap
- Shared goals and working together
- Focus on shared values

Valuing Others

- Create positive trust and respect
- Empowering employees
- Along with sharing who is successful, sharing how they got there
- Learn how to provide a positive environment
- Make work fun, smile, laugh, friendliness - with co-workers and students

Engaged Campus Means

Build Relationships

- Bring campus and community together on projects
- Build/maintain relationships with stakeholders
- Ownership in programs and university of students and faculty

Awareness

- Enhance positive role models through social activities
- Sensitive to diversity

Attendance and Participation

- Attending commencement, sports, evenings, out-of-class events
- Coordination of events around campus and community
- High attendance of events

Engagement and Involvement

- Interested in environment around us, not just the university itself
- Provide social opportunities to enhance learning experience
- Recognize students have other responsibilities outside of FSU teach them the value of participating in the community
- Strong relationship between university and external constituents

I am very impressed with what you developed in our sessions together and believe they can provide the framework for future efforts at our University. Before moving forward I want to solicit your thoughts on these ideas. Toward that end we have placed all the responses received at Summer University and at the Opening of School Convocation on the web. (<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/plansumF05.htm>) This is a significant amount of material. What 5-10 statements would you select for each vision statement from the ideas developed in these discussions? If your schedule permits, please share these with me via email.

As I look forward to receiving your analysis and observation, I also believe it is time for us to move forward. On **Wednesday, October 20th** I will be presenting the next steps in this planning process. I would encourage you to join me **in the Dome Room at 2:00 p.m.** when I will present thoughts on how we can develop strategies to implement these ideas. This session will outline our approach for continued discussions on our future.

Closing Thoughts

Although it is still some time away, I want to share with you the dates for the Holiday break. The University will be closed at the end of the workday on Wednesday, December 22, 2004. The University will reopen on Sunday, January 2, 2005.

Each day I am reminded of the wonderful opportunity we have as a learning community to shape the future of our students. I see this in your efforts, and hear about it from both our students and alumni. Over the past year I have come to both respect and admire how much you are committed to helping our students. I appreciate very much the hard work you do every day to make this possible. It is truly an honor and privilege to work with you.

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler, President