

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
October 27, 2003
Ext. 2500

Over the past few weeks I have had frequent opportunity to visit with a number of our graduates. I wish that each of you could hear our alumni as they talk about the difference education from Ferris State University has made in their careers. It is truly inspiring to hear how actions and support from our faculty and staff have helped change and shape their lives. These are truly very special stories and I look forward to sharing them with you.

At this point in the academic year the tendency can be to become so involved in the daily rhythms of the semester that it is possible miss the result of our collective efforts. I want you to know that you do make a difference and that together we are changing lives. Each of us may never know when what we do makes a lasting impression on one of our students. However I want you to know how much I appreciate your work for our students and university.

From time to time I will provide an update on university efforts from my perspective. It is my preference to do this electronically. However if you know someone who does not have access to e-mail, please let me know and we will send them a paper copy of the university updates.

Vice President for Academic Affairs Search

The search to permanently fill the Vice President for Academic Affairs position is underway. The search committee includes representation from each college and is ably chaired by Dr. Nancy Peterson-Klein, Professor of Optometry. The committee is working with the assistance of Dr. James Appleberry from Academic Search Consultants. Applications and nominations for this very important position will be accepted through November 14th. I want to personally encourage you to nominate individuals you would like considered for this position by emailing Dr. Appleberry at jba1233@insightbb.com.

The search committee will recommend three to five finalists for this position by the end of December. It is our desire to have these candidates on campus in January, with an opportunity for broad campus involvement in the interview process. My plan is to make a final selection in February. Additional information on this position and the progress of the search is available on the search website, <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/vpaa/homepage.htm>.

Planning

Ferris State University has been fortunate to have a well-designed and inclusive planning process. From my perspective it promoted the involvement of the entire campus community, created open communication throughout the university, and worked to connect unit planning to university goals and objectives.

In studying the planning process I came to the assessment that it required significant time on the part of faculty and staff in preparing large amounts of paperwork and creating elaborate presentations. I have worked to find a way that we can continue this process but work more efficiently.

It is my preference that planning be embedded within the administrative structure of the university. In this way I am hopeful that we provide additional opportunities for leadership by deans, directors, and vice presidents. From my perspective, planning involves more than new initiatives, it also includes proposed redirection, continued nurturing, or the enhancement of current efforts. Beyond this I would like to see planning integrated with assessment of ongoing actions and include a select, prioritized presentation of proposed efforts for the upcoming year.

Revisions to the planning process have been developed through consultation and review. As such they are a work in progress, a transition to an approach that I am hopeful will build upon the strengths of previous efforts and provide a mechanism for the future at Ferris. Complete information on this year's planning process will be distributed later this week.

The Economy

Lately news reports have been filled with analysis and speculation on the state's economy and the prospects of an Executive Order from the Governor. There is no denying that there are concerns about the state's economy. However I would encourage perspective in considering some of the daily pronouncements on this. It is important to remember that these news stories are mostly opinions and predictions. In the past I have noticed a tendency for some people to attempt to attract attention through exaggerating the potential size of reductions. As one person seeks to outdo the other, the amount predicted can grow and grow. The truth is that at this point no one knows what the outcome will be and each of us hopes this situation will improve.

At this writing it appears that the governor will first tour the state before beginning discussions with the legislature. This will almost certainly be followed by an Executive Order. As we receive dependable information we will share it with you. Additionally you have my assurance that as we seek to deal with any reductions received you will have the opportunity for both input and discussion. I believe we have prepared for this in a thoughtful manner, have benefited from this fall's enrollment increase, and are in a better financial posture than many other universities in the state.

Hockey Fan Behavior

Recently you may have read a memorandum from our Athletic Director, Tom Kirinovic, and our Hockey Coach, Bob Daniels, regarding fan behavior at hockey games. At the first two hockey games I attended, I was disappointed to hear coordinated cheers of profanity. At the same hockey games I noted children in the stands. While I do not want to do anything to diminish support for our hockey team I do not believe this is appropriate for our university or us.

Candidly I do not believe that this profane behavior intimidates opposing teams whatsoever, but instead reflects negatively on Ferris State University. As a result I have requested Vice President Richard Duffett to work together with Tom and Bob to develop an approach to address this. If you should disagree with this action, I would encourage you to contact me. However, I would ask that you assist in this effort by not engaging in this type of behavior.

In my interactions with the members of our hockey team I have been extremely impressed with them both as athletes and as young men. Further I believe Bob Daniels is the best coach in the country, a fact I found confirmed in a recent story on the ESPN website, http://www.insidecollegehockey.com/7Archives/Features/coach5_0203.htm. I do not want to do anything here but represent our university appropriately and support the team and our coach in a manner they deserve.

Campus Conversations and Beyond

We have begun a process to visit with each faculty member in small group discussions before the end of the semester. This effort will continue with similar opportunities for staff members next semester. I very much want to hear your thoughts, ideas, suggestions, and concerns about our university. They are extremely important to me as I work to understand Ferris State University.

Beyond these meetings there are other opportunities for you to provide input. To date there have not been many visitors for open office hours. Beginning in November we will move these hours to locations around campus to make it easier for you to stop by and visit. Additionally my email, eislerd@ferris.edu, and the electronic suggestion box, <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/suggest/suggest.cfm>, are always available.

An additional part of my introduction to and education about Ferris has been visits to alumni, donors, and off-campus instructional sites. To date these include fourteen trips to Grand Rapids, five days in Detroit, four days in Lansing, three trips to Kalamazoo and Reed City, and two days in Traverse City. I have also visited Brighton, Cadillac, Canadian Lakes, Dowagiac, Flint, Fremont, Gaylord, Howard City, Ionia, Lake City, Petoskey, Rockford, and Shanty Creek. This week we have a visits scheduled to view our educational efforts in Flint, together with additional visits to Grand Rapids and Lansing. If you have suggestions of alumni or potential donors I should meet, please let me know so we can include them in the future. Very soon we'll add a section to our website entitled "Where is Your President Today?" to let you know where I might be found each day.

Closing Thoughts

Although November is not yet here, I am certain that many of you are already making holiday plans. Specifically, some have asked whether the University will be open on January 2, 2004. Here are the holiday break dates:

The University will be closed at the end of the workday on Tuesday, December 23, 2003, and will reopen on Sunday, January 4, 2004.

Today's activities include the signing of the Clerical Technical Association contract. This occasion reminds me of how much we depend upon CTA members for their help and support at Ferris State University. I would encourage you to do as I'll be doing today; expressing my thanks to the CTA for the wonderful work they do at Ferris.

Finally I want to express Patsy and my thanks for the wonderful inaugural ceremonies. We were both touched and moved by your strong display of support. We appreciate so much the way you have welcomed us to campus and to Big Rapids. It is a wonderful privilege to be a part of Ferris State University and to live here in Big Rapids. Thank you for helping make us feel welcome in our new home.

I appreciate each of you and your efforts very much. Thank you for everything you do for our students and for Ferris.

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler
President