

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
December 7, 2004
Ext. 2500

Although it is raining hard today, the first few snows have convinced me that winter is upon us. It seems hard to believe that we are into December and that the end of the semester is here. However the increased pace and flurry of seasonal activities confirms that the holidays will soon be here. As we reach the end of fall semester I want to take this opportunity to share information on our ongoing efforts and activities.

Planning

Over the past two years we have created a vision for the future which includes three main themes -

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

In October we established six planning task forces to address components of this vision. Since that time, over seventy-five members of our university community have been working on recommendations and strategic initiatives regarding professional development, physical teaching spaces, technology, communication, student engagement, and enrollment growth. More information on the task forces, their purpose, and charge is available in my October 20th remarks to the campus. This and additional information regarding the task forces is available from the web at our planning site, <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/planning2004.htm>

These task forces will be sharing their recommendations in open campus sessions on Thursday and Friday, December 16th and 17th, in Rankin room 155. The presentation schedule will be shared shortly in the daily campus announcements. While this is a busy time of the year, I would encourage you to attend those sessions of interest to you. Task force recommendations and materials will be posted on the web and available to everyone in the campus community. These materials will then form the basis for the Unit Action Planning process we will begin in January and for future strategic initiatives.

Holiday Activities

Holidays at Ferris very much reflect the rhythms of the semester. Parties, concerts, and holiday celebrations happen in the context of the end of fall semester and final exams. One of the traditions of the Ferris Institute was a message Mr. Ferris would deliver for the

students and include in his and Mrs. Ferris' Holiday Greetings. These have been gathered into a wonderful booklet by emeriti professor, Dr. Richard Santer. Here are some excerpts from Mr. Ferris' 1914 message -

Of all the days we long for – birthdays, wedding days, gala days – one day looms up brighter and more glorious than all the others, Christmas. This is the day that makes sweet music in the hearts of children, in the hearts of youth, in the hearts of those grown old in service. It is the day of gladness made beautiful in giving. What every age needs most is not the art of accumulating gold, houses, lands, stocks, and bonds, but the art of cultivating patience, courage, trust, loyalty, faith and love, - the treasures of the soul, the symbols of eternal youth. Something to eat, drink, and wear is worth while, but something to give, - a smile, a “thank you,” a good morning, a hearty handshake, - is worth more to the hungry soul... Let all the children of men rejoice in the matchless gift to the world of this day.

These words are as meaningful today as the day they were written and delivered.

This Thursday afternoon is our annual campus community holiday reception. Patsy and I invite you to join us for a few moments of seasonal cheer at the Holiday Inn between 1:30 and 3:00. I understand how busy this time of year can be with the last few days of classes, but if you can find time, we would love to visit and celebrate the season.

Commencement

For me one of the happiest days on our campus is Commencement. For December ceremonies Wink Arena is transformed into a beautiful setting. Poinsettias and fir trees adorn the front of the stage. Best of all the decorations are live plants that will be planted on campus or shared with others. Thus the beauty they provide will continue throughout the season and beyond.

At commencement I enjoy the opportunity to shake each graduate's hand. When you look into their eyes it is easy to see the triumph of achievement they feel and their optimism for their future. I also enjoy watching you, our faculty and staff. I can see your pride at the results of your efforts; the way our education has helped transform these students' lives. Sometimes in the rush of day-to-day activities we can lose track of the life changing power of our education. Amidst the daily bustle we can't see the difference. Commencement brings this into focus and reminds each of us of why we are involved with education. I would encourage you to join me for our commencement activities on Saturday, December 18th.

Congratulations and Best Wishes

Vice President for Academic Affairs Michael Harris has shared with me two administrative appointments which I look forward to taking to our Board of Trustees at their meetings in February. After his successful service as interim dean, it is a pleasure to

congratulate Dr. Matt Klein on his selection as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. This fall the Michigan College of Optometry has been searching for an associate dean. It is a pleasure to announce the selection of Dr. Nancy Peterson-Klein for this position. Nancy will begin these new responsibilities in May.

At the University the holidays are a respite before students return for spring semester, a mid-point in the academic year. It is an opportunity to catch one's breath before plunging back into a new group of classes. More importantly it is a time for each of us to spend time with family and friends, knowing that it is indeed far better to give than to receive. Patsy joins me in wishing each of you a happy, meaningful holiday season and a New Year that is filled with health and happiness.

Best wishes,

Dave