

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
February 10, 2014

Governor's Budget and Capital Outlay

Last Wednesday Governor Snyder released his proposed state budget for fiscal year 2015. In welcome news for Michigan's public universities, the governor's budget includes a higher education funding increase of 6.1 percent. Half of the proposed funding would be distributed proportionally based on fiscal year 2011 funding. The remainder would be distributed based on the state's performance metrics formula. Because of our success in meeting those goals, our increase would be 7.8 percent, or about \$3.5 million in operating funds on a current state appropriation of \$45.6 million.

This is the largest increase any Michigan governor has proposed in my eleven years at Ferris. In doing so, the Governor also talked of the prospect of additional funding next year to return overall higher education support to 2011 funding levels.

It is worth remembering that the executive budget proposal is the first step in the budget-making process. Both the Michigan House and Senate will review the governor's proposal before a final state budget is passed and signed into law. I will continue to push hard in Lansing for support for this proposal and remind legislators of the unfair burden the MPSERS retirement system places on our University. If we can build legislative support for this proposal we will be able to help our students significantly, and recommend a tuition increase significantly below the Governor's 3.2% tuition restraint ceiling.

Under a new objective, merit-based process, capital outlay projects are scored by the Governor and the legislature. The Governor had made clear his support for building renovation, rather than new construction, and for proposals that would help rebuild Michigan's economy. In speaking with him in August, I proposed a \$30 million project which would double the space for our Welding Engineering Technology program and create additional space for a Center for Advanced Manufacturing. In his budget Governor Snyder recommended just one university project for funding – the Ferris welding and advanced manufacturing proposal. It was gratifying to see ours be the top-ranked project as evaluated by the Snyder administration. I want to thank faculty members Jeff Hardesty and Dean Krager who worked with architects and our physical plant to develop this proposal.

As with the budget, this is again the first step toward project funding. Next the Joint Capital Outlay Subcommittee will review by March 1. Here our state Senator Darwin Booher chairs this group. After that, plans would be developed and approved, and a recommendation to appropriate funds will have to be approved by the legislature. While we will work to move this forward more rapidly, it is expected to be a 12-18 month process. Throughout this period we will be in contact with legislators to make them aware of Ferris' nationally ranked STEM programs and how our graduates are a catalyst for our state's recovery.

The governor's proposed budget and capital outlay recommendations recognize the good work we have done here at Ferris, especially in areas of education critical to our state's economic future. While much can happen in the legislative process between now and when the state budget is approved in May or June, we should feel very good about how we are fulfilling our mission, and how our efforts are perceived in Lansing.

Emergency Preparedness

Recently our university had to cancel events and curtail services in response to a search for a suspect in an off-campus shooting. Fortunately, the victim has returned to campus and will recover, the suspect was apprehended later that day and our university was able to return to normal activities. However, this should be a reminder for departments and colleges – and for us as individuals – to be familiar with emergency response plans. While fortunately such events are rare, we do need to be prepared.

If you have not done so already, I would urge you to sign up for our emergency text messages. To do this, go to MyFSU and follow the directions under the “emergency text alerts” heading on the main page. In addition to a link to signing up for this service, there is a link for frequently asked questions about text alerts.

First Lady’s Attic

Since 2008, Ferris students have been able to prepare for upcoming job interviews, internships, or class presentations with the help of the First Lady’s Attic which provides students with business clothes free of charge. This can be a very important resource for students looking to start their careers, or bolster their academic credentials by appearing professional at a presentation, or meeting with clients of a class project.

During this very challenging winter weather, we learned that some students do not have warm winter coats. Recently, David Pilgrim and Patti Terryn began accepting donations of winter coats and also purchased a supply of coats that are available to students through the First Lady’s Attic. If you would like to help with this effort you can join me in making a financial contribution, or if you have a new or gently-used coat you no longer need, please consider donating it to the Attic for our students. Just as importantly, if you should know or notice a student who may need a coat, please encourage them to contact The First Lady’s Attic for assistance.

In addition to this effort to make winter coats available, the First Lady’s Attic accepts donations of all men’s and women’s professional clothing and accessories. Information on how to donate is available at <http://www.ferris.edu/flattic/> .

Latino Americans – PBS Series

The Center for Latin@ Studies is hosting its spring film series by airing a six-part PBS documentary. The Ferris community, students especially, are invited to join this exploration of the extensive history of Latin@s in America and the influence of Latin America on U.S. history. Each episode shows on Wednesday evenings from 6 to 7:30 p.m. and is hosted by a Ferris faculty member. The schedule for the four remaining episodes is

- Feb. 12, “War and Peace” (1942-1954) hosted by Fran Rosen and Tony Baker
- Feb. 19, “The New Latinos” (1946-1965), hosted by Ana Davila and Jessica Cruz
- Feb. 26, “Pride and Prejudice” (1965-1980), hosted by Eric Warner
- March 5 Episode 6. "Peril and Promise" (1980-2000), hosted by Daisy Henderson

This is a free series and refreshments will be served. I encourage you to attend and support the CLS, which is helping expand access to Ferris.

Festival for the Arts

The Festival for the Arts opened with an amazing week of offerings. In attending events last week I was struck by how the Festival attracts people from across our Big Rapids and Ferris communities. This week begins a new feature of the Festival of the Arts, FestLabs. These are described as “laboratories of creativity designed by facilitators to advance personal skills, original thinking, imagination and innovation through genre specific programs.” Monday evening there are five FestLabs for young people. They are repeated Tuesday evening for adults. The topics are wide-ranging and involve Ferris facilitators – Carrie Weiss, Paul Long, and Paul Klatt. Information on FestLab is accessible here - <http://www.brfota.org/labs.html>

Friday evening the Festival is sponsoring a Sky Lantern launch at 6:30 p.m. at The Gate to raise awareness against domestic violence and sexual assault. Some of the other events in the Festival of the Arts this week include

- Monday, 6-8 p.m. – “Northern Bend” Computer Simulation, created by Ferris Digital Animation and Game Design students, IRC Room 120
- Wednesday , 7 p.m. – Cartoons and Comics as Propaganda Tools During World War II, faculty member Pasquale diRaddo, Big Rapids City Hall
- Thursday, 5:30 p.m. – Tuesdays with Todd and Brad Reed: A Michigan Tribute, Business Room 111
- Thursday, 7 p.m. – An Evening of Song with Courtney Gilson-Piercey and Friends, First United Methodist Church
- Friday, 7-10 p.m. – Old-Time Contra Dance with Hawks and Owls String Band, Holiday Inn and Conference Center
- Friday 7 p.m. – Silk Road Acrobats, Williams Auditorium
- Saturday 7 p.m. – Fabulous Foreign Film Festival: “I’ve Loved You So Long,” IRC 120
- Sunday 4 p.m. – The MountainTown Singers in Concert: A Men’s A Cappella Chorus, First United Methodist Church

There are many more events this week than those listed above. Complete, update-to-date information is available at <http://www.brfota.org> . I encourage you to attend and support your Ferris colleagues, students, as well as Big Rapids’ friends and neighbors.

SPARC Meeting

The Strategic Planning and Resource Council will meet this Tuesday at 3 p.m. in the West Campus Community Center. The presentations and discussion will center on proposed strategic areas of focus in the new University Strategic Plan. These include items in the draft plan, and others generated through discussions on campus and in the Commission for the Future meetings. All faculty, staff, and students are invited to attend SPARC. I would encourage you to attend and to add your voice to this very important activity.

Thank you,

David L. Eisler, president