

# President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President  
February 3, 2014

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## **This Past Weekend**

At Ferris we are fortunate to have a safe campus. To that end, we have invested considerable time, energy and resources in systems, training and practice in dealing with emergency situations.

It was a shock this past weekend when one of our students was shot. Fortunately, he was released from the hospital on Saturday and returned to Big Rapids, an outcome for which we are deeply thankful. The event early Saturday morning mobilized people across the university to keep our campus, our students and visitors safe, and to track down the suspect. This collaboration includes several public safety agencies, media relations and outlets, housing, dining, the physical plant, student affairs and student life, information technology, athletics, and countless others.

In this most recent challenge, Big Rapids Public Safety, the Mecosta County Sheriff's Office and the Michigan State Police cooperated with our campus force in a magnificent fashion. The professionalism of these officers and their determination to keep everyone safe and protected should inspire our admiration and appreciation. The need to serve and protect began early Saturday morning and did not end until well past midnight. Please join me in thanking everyone who worked so very hard to assure the safety of our campus and community.

## **Winter Weather**

This is a severe Michigan winter and we are experiencing weather that is a challenge for students, faculty and staff alike. Last Tuesday the temperature dipped into the minus-zero range with significant wind chill. Some state universities closed, while others, like us, did not. A number of people expressed their concern and disappointment that we did not cancel classes in Big Rapids.

Ferris, along with other schools that stayed open, received negative comments and criticism from students who felt classes should have been cancelled. I personally take the safety of our students, faculty and staff very, very seriously. At the same time, many people at our university work very hard to keep the campus open. Once lost, a day of instruction is difficult to make up. Balancing safety with our educational mission is challenging. Last Tuesday was indeed cold. We will review and consider carefully when we should cancel classes because of extreme cold weather warnings. Certainly there are lessons to be learned from this experience.

I want to again thank our physical plant employees for the remarkable work they do to keep our campus open under trying conditions. We can all help our custodial staff whose workload is increased significantly during this season by the small courtesy of cleaning our feet before entering buildings.

## Strategic Planning

Provost Fritz Erickson's "Inside Academic Affairs" on Friday described well the experience of our Commission for the Future events held last week in Grand Rapids, Lansing and Big Rapids. If you did not have the opportunity to read this, it is posted here -

[http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/president/newsletters/memos/docs/Inside\\_Academic\\_Affairs\\_013114.pdf](http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/president/newsletters/memos/docs/Inside_Academic_Affairs_013114.pdf) . These were extraordinarily productive sessions that provided much external review and input on the current strategic plan draft.

Strategic Planning is a university-wide effort. In this we are applying our Core Values in ways relevant to the rapidly changing educational, cultural and technological landscape in which we live and work. If you have not done so already, I encourage you to take time to review the strategic plan draft at -

<http://ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/president/strategic/StrategicPlanPart1.pdf> .

This document was developed from many, many listening sessions on campus held by the Strategic Planning Co-Champions. The leaders for each core value are -

Collaboration	Glen Okonoski and Susan Cherry
Diversity	Jessica Cruz and Michael Berghoef
Ethical Community	Sarah Hinkley and Tamie Grunow
Excellence	Fritz Erickson and Sandy Balkema
Learning	Leonard Johnson and Dean Krager
Opportunity	Paul Kwant and Amy Dorey

Last week was also the first of three campus forums for everyone in the university community to share your thoughts, observations and ideas for the strategic areas of focus attached to each core value. The next two forums will take place this week on -

Tuesday	1-1:50 p.m., MCO 210
Thursday	10-10:50 a.m., IRC 120.

Please attend and participate in this important discussion.

Our goal in continuing to seek review on the plan is to carefully analyze and shape the areas of strategic focus. Your insights will further help determine how we strategically approach our future, creating a university that serves the needs of our 21<sup>st</sup> century students, our state, and the people who work here.

Thank you very much for engaging in this process.

## Black History Month

The Office of Multicultural Student Services is sponsoring a series of Black History Month events throughout February. A range of events will celebrate the contributions of African Americans to our cultural heritage through film, lectures presentations and more. Black History Month gets underway this week with three presentations -

- **Monday, 6 p.m. MCO, Room 210**, screening and discussion of the film "Fruitvale Station," based on the true story of Oscar Grant, a 22-year-old Bay-area resident.
- **Friday, 7 p.m., Williams Auditorium**, the 2014 Image Awards recognize Ferris students, faculty and staff for outstanding work and dedication.
- **Saturday, 12 to 5 p.m. in the IRC**, "My Black Is Beautiful" student conference.

These events are free and open to the public. More information, including a Black History Month flyer, is available on the OMSS website at <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/studentlife/minority/>.

### **Festival of the Arts**

The Festival of the Arts has kicked off its month-long slate of events for its seventh year, offering everything from movies, plays and art openings, to author readings, lectures, hands-on workshops and much, much more. This is an opportunity to brighten up this winter period and to get re-energized through the arts. There is much to see and experience. Consider the many and varied events during this, the Festival's first full week -

- Video Game Design - An Interactive Campus, Nick Pattison and Andrew Smith, faculty along with students from the Digital Animation and Game Design program - Monday, 6-9 p.m., IRC Room 120
- Introductory Welding for Artists, David Murray, faculty - Tuesday 6 p.m., Swan Room 116.
- Floral Arranging Workshop: A Night in the Tropics, Bob Patterson, local florist -Tuesday, 7 p.m., Patterson's Flowers.
- Knitters Anonymous - Tuesday 7 p.m., United Church parlor
- Conrad's White Birch Lodge: A Family Affair, Glen Okonowski, faculty - Wednesday, 6 p.m., IRC Room 120
- Ferris Honors Program Art Show - Wednesday, 7 p.m., IRC Atrium
- Independent Showcase Concert, Mark Kroos, international guitar champion - Thursday, 6 p.m., the Gate
- The Grand Rapids Symphony - Thursday, 7:30 p.m., Williams Auditorium
- Stage M performances of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" - Thursday and Friday, 7:30 p.m., Saturday, 2:30 and 7:30 p.m., Sunday, 2:30 p.m., Artworks
- Salsa Dance Night - Friday, 6:30-10:00 p.m., Holiday Inn
- The Rules of Comedy, Big Rapids H.S. Theatrical Arts Dept. - Friday, 7:30 p.m., Big Rapids H.S. Auditorium
- Winter Fest Band Concert, Crossroads Charter Academy Middle and H.S. Bands - Saturday, 1-5 p.m., Crossroads Charter Academy Auditorium
- Fascinating Flamework - Creating Glass Beads, Kris Miller and Dan Wall - Saturday 1-4 p.m., Big Rapids Public Safety Building
- Crank It Up: The Hardy Dam Ramblers - Saturday, 7 p.m., Cranker's Brewery
- Fabulous Foreign Film Festival: "The Forgiveness of Blood" - Saturday, 7 p.m., IRC Room 120
- Con Brio Voce Chamber Brass - Sunday 4 p.m., Big Rapids H.S. Auditorium

This single week's events could fill an entire festival. I know of no other community our size that puts on an arts festival of this breadth and depth. Beyond what this says about our community's commitment to art and culture, the Festival of the Arts is a tangible and creative outcome of the very positive relationship that Big Rapids and Ferris State University enjoy.

Leading this year's Festival is Carrie Weis, Ferris' Art Gallery Director. In this she is ably assisted by Anne Hogenson, Director of Marketing Client Services; Jerena Keys, Big Rapids

community member; Nickolas Kuiper, Television and Digital Media Production; Ed Mallett, Tuba Bach Chamber Music Festival; Barbara Ross, College of Health Professions emeriti; and Steve Sobers, Big Rapids City Manager.

As in past years, many Festival of the Arts events are free, while other have a very modest admission charge. I encourage you to attend and perhaps choose something outside your usual area of interest, broadening your cultural horizons.

For more information about Festival of the Arts events visit <http://www.brfota.org/> .

Thank you,

David L. Eisler, president