

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
November 24, 2014

Semester Schedule

As we head into the Thanksgiving break this Thursday and Friday, it is remarkable to think that after this short week there remains only one more week of regular classes in the fall semester. After that, we will have exam week Dec. 8-12, with the semester culminating in our December Commencement on the 13th.

This compressed end-of-the-semester schedule can cause extra stress as students hurry to meet deadlines and complete their course requirements. Thank you for going the extra distance during this time to help our students.

We will hold our annual Ferris Employee Holiday Reception in Big Rapids in the Interdisciplinary Resource Center lobby on Tuesday, Dec. 9, from 3-5 p.m. This is an opportunity for the Ferris community to come together, socialize and re-engage with co-workers who you may not have been in contact with recently. This year the event will take place in the IRC as we prepare to open our new University Center to the Ferris community after the first of the year. For more information contact Elaine Kamptner at ext. 2504 or kamptnee@ferris.edu.

If you know of a graduating student who has overcome obstacles to earn his or her degree, or has achieved exceptional distinction in the face of adversity, please feel free to send Elaine or me a note. At each Commencement I like to talk about our students and the remarkable things they accomplish or overcome. This helps remind our audience that it takes a collective effort to successfully educate our students, and there is a story of personal achievement for each of our graduates and the people who have made a difference in their lives.

If you know someone whose story is illustrative of what makes Ferris students special, please e-mail me at eislerd@ferris.edu. I always enjoy visiting with our students and hearing first-hand about their success as they begin their careers having already triumphed over hardships, or achieved distinction.

Budget Forum Information

I want to thank everyone who attended the budget forum I presented last Thursday in the IRC. Over the past few years Ferris, like other public universities in Michigan, has experienced major changes in the level of public funding and the way that funding is awarded. This has been especially important because our state, perhaps more than any other, has borne the brunt of the most sustained economic downturn since the 1930s.

That reality along with some recent encouraging economic news was reflected in the material I presented. This past year we saw a turnaround in the state's priorities in funding higher education, but that has not yet made up for the years in which funding was not simply stagnant, but declined significantly. In addition to current economic trends, the information I presented looked at Ferris' budget, the state's formula for performance-based funding, enrollment, and things to watch as we move forward.

In addition to increased funding for higher education, a bright spot is the improving employment situation in the state. Although we are still well above the national average, the unemployment rate in Michigan is trending downward. Along with this, state revenues are improving.

As in previous years' presentations, I outlined where the university allocates its money. There are several slides that show this allocation in different ways. If you attended one of the recent forums on student debt, you will notice that one of the areas we lag behind other public universities in Michigan is in the area of student financial aid. We have made increasing this a priority at Ferris, along with other strategies for reducing student debt.

Along with the focus we have placed on degree affordability, we will be using this budget information to move forward on our Strategic Plan. Included in this are plans to boost enrollment, to promote student success, and to grow our base of external support.

The PowerPoint slides I used during the presentation along with some explanatory "sticky notes" are available on line at http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/president/budget-pres/forums/docs/Fall_2014_Budget_Forum.pdf . If you were unable to attend the presentation at the IRC, I hope you will take a few minutes to review this information online. Please note that the "sticky notes" work when you save the file and then access it using an Adobe product. It does not function if you access it directly with most browsers.

Having a university community that is knowledgeable about the challenges facing us is a step in achieving consensus on implementing our Strategic Plan. It also helps us continue to improve to best serve our students.

Student Shuttle Bus

The University and the City of Big Rapids have worked together on an agreement to provide an on-campus shuttle bus at no charge to our students. Faculty and staff will also be welcome to ride without cost by showing their faculty/staff ID card.

The shuttle will run class days during spring and fall semesters from 7:45 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 7:45 a.m. to 2 p.m. Fridays. The shuttle is expected to complete a loop around campus approximately every 12-15 minutes. The new shuttle route will include nine stops - one near the University Center, one near FLITE and the Starr building, parking lot 28 west of McDonalds, Bond circle, West Campus Community Center, the Sports Complex, Miller Hall, the Rock Café and the Student Recreation Center. A map of the route is accessible at <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/FerrisFAQ/maps/Campus-Shuttle-Map.pdf> .

This expanded shuttle service can become an important resource for our students over the next few months, helping them avoid walking in some of the worst winter weather, promoting public transport and freeing up additional parking spaces. By doing so, it will help facilitate movement around the campus perimeter in accord with our master plan, which in turn will make our center of campus more pedestrian-friendly.

Please join me in thanking Vice President Jerry Scoby and his team in Administration and Finance, as well as City Manager Steve Sobers and his team with the City of Big Rapids for their work on this project. Their combined efforts put this new resource in place for our students and campus community.

Athletics

Following its very successful fall campaign, which included being GLIAC regular season co-champions, our women's volleyball team began its post-season play with a 3-1 victory over Lewis University in the NCAA Division II Midwest Regional Semifinals last Thursday. This was their third consecutive victory over Lewis in the opening round of the NCAA region tournament. Unfortunately, our team fell to Grand Valley State in a hard-fought semi-final match on Saturday. If you attended their matches this season, you experienced the teamwork and passion with which they played. Please join me in congratulating them on their winning season and the ways in which our student-athletes, along with Coach Tia Brandel-Wilhelm, represented our university.

At Saturday's NCAA regional cross country championship in Evansville, Indiana, the men's team had an outstanding meet, finishing 7th. Top finishers for the Bulldogs were senior Andrew Harper, who placed 19th, junior Lucas Copi, 37th, and sophomore Logan Hammer, 41st. The women's team finished 14th led by sophomore Samantha Humphrey, who finished 55th. Congratulations to coach Jared Kelsh and both teams on the conclusion of their seasons.

After its unbeaten regular season, our Bulldog football team is being recognized for its achievements. Coach Tony Annese has been named the GLIAC Coach of the Year. Coach Annese has helped guide the team to a 15-straight game winning streak – the best in the nation. His three-year record of 26-7 include the team's 11-0 regular-season record this year, which is the best in university history. The team also has established new records for total points and total offense.

Sixteen players earned GLIAC recognition, led by quarterback Jason Vander Laan, who has been named the GLIAC Player of the Year, and who is also a nominee for the prestigious Harlon Hill Trophy for the best player in the NCAA's Division II. With our university's emphasis on academic achievement, I am especially proud that the team placed four student-athletes on the GLIAC first team, six others on the second team, and a further six who earned honorable mentions.

The team is the number-one seed in its NCAA regional playoff. After a first-round bye, our Bulldogs face Ohio Dominican at Top Taggart Field on Nov. 29th in a contest that begins at noon. You may recall that the team defeated Ohio Dominican in a hard fought game earlier this season 34-19. I hope you will make plans to come out and support our student-athletes as they enter the NCAA post-season for the first time since 1996. We wish them well as they seek to continue this very exciting and successful season that they have worked so hard to make happen.

Thanksgiving Break

We are already near the end of our semester as we break for the Thanksgiving holiday. I am hopeful this is a time when you are able to relax, share time with friends or relatives, and prepare for the final days of the fall semester.

Please take care on the roads if you are travelling. This month we have already experienced some severe winter weather, and we are likely to see more in the days ahead. With a fairly short time remaining after the holidays, we will return to a period of intense activity. Thank you for your work this semester, and your efforts you to help our students as we move quickly toward commencement upon our return to campus next Monday.

David L. Eisler, president