

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
November 3, 2014

Student Debt Forums

The issue of student debt is a significant challenge for Ferris. More than 80 percent of our graduating seniors have student debt and, currently, that average debt load exceeds \$37,000. These levels are both the highest of any public university in Michigan. Much progress has been made on student debt since we began addressing this issue in 2012. Working together we have slowed the increase in student debt, but we need to do still better. Our goal should be to not just slow the growth of student debt, but to reduce the debt load of our graduates.

Over the next two weeks I will be presenting five forums on the issue of student debt to the Ferris community. Two open forums are scheduled: the first in Big Rapids on Thursday, Nov. 6 at 11 a.m. in IRC 115; the other in Grand Rapids on Monday, Nov. 10 at 11:30 a.m. at the Kendall College of Art and Design Woodbridge N. Ferris Building room 217. At these I will provide background and analysis of student debt, share thoughts and seek your ideas on how we can act on this issue.

Because time-to-degree is a major contributing factor in student debt, Provost Paul Blake has scheduled three student debt sessions for faculty members. These are in different sites across the university and all are scheduled from 4-5:30 p.m. Paul and I will be working together to elicit your thinking on this critical topic. Faculty may attend any session. The schedule for these faculty-oriented sessions is

- Monday, Nov. 3, in MCO 210 for the Colleges of Health Professions, Pharmacy and Optometry.
- Wednesday, Nov. 5, in Granger Auditorium 102, for the College of Arts and Sciences, FLITE, and Retention and Student Success
- Monday, Nov. 10, BUS 111, for the Colleges of Education and Human Services, Business and Engineering Technology.

At Ferris we are committed to our core value of Opportunity. A Ferris education will not be the pathway to the better future we intend it to be if our students graduate with this level of debt. The burden is even heavier for students who do not graduate.

I very much look forward to working with you at one of these sessions. It is important we gain insight, seek your input, continue our dialogue and act to make a difference for the financial future of our students. Only in this way can we best serve our students and assure that their decision to pursue a Ferris degree is the best decision they will ever make.

Together We Can Make a Difference

News coverage has made it difficult to ignore the impact the Ebola virus has had in western Africa. Our registered student organization, The African Student Union, is seeking to further raise awareness, and funds, to fight the outbreak of Ebola virus in Africa. ASU will begin its two-week effort, "Together We Can Make a Difference: An Awareness and Fundraising Campaign to Address Ebola in West Africa," with an event from 5 to 7 p.m. Friday, Nov. 14, at the West Campus Community Center.

Dr. Harpreet Singh, medical director at Michigan Primary Care Partners, and Professor Daniel Noren, who was born and raised in Congo, will offer remarks. There will also be cultural entertainment and an opportunity to donate to Africans in Medicine, a Chicago-based nonprofit organization that helps provide medical supplies, coordination with other Ebola-response organizations and information about the West African epidemic. ASU will also set up donation boxes at various locations on the Ferris campus as well as at Nawal's Mediterranean Eatery in downtown Big Rapids, through Dec. 1.

I am very impressed with our students and their willingness to make a difference in the battle against this outbreak. Please support their efforts.

Native American Heritage Celebration

This month there is a trio of free public events in celebration of the heritage of native peoples. This series started last month and continues this Friday, Nov. 7, with a Tribal Museum Tour and Tribal Harvest Feast. Participants will depart campus for Mt. Pleasant at 3 p.m. after meeting in the IRC Connector. The trip includes a tour of the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways, and a Ghost Supper with the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe. RSVP is required to attend this limited-space event.

On Wednesday, Nov. 19, at 7 p.m. in Williams Auditorium, Los Angeles-based Will and Company will perform their play, "Native Visions," highlighting the lives of important Native Americans who have shaped our country.

On Monday, Nov. 24, at 5 p.m. in IRC 120, there will be a presentation on "A Native American Thanksgiving: What feasting and feast meals are all about." This will include authentic food, Native American guest speakers, and a display table with items made for sale by the Circle of Tribal Nations. For more information about these events e-mail the Circle of Tribal Nations at tribalbulldogs@gmail.com.

Upcoming Events

This Thursday, Nov. 6, 7-9 p.m. in BUS 111, Big Rapids native Tom Shanahan will share the story of Jimmy Raye, the first Southern black quarterback at Michigan State University, who led them to a national championship under Coach Duffy Daugherty. This is the subject of Shanahan's book "Raye of Light." He will highlight the Ferris connection in Raye's story. His inspiration was Gideon Smith, the first black football player at Ferris Institute and later at MSU. The program, entitled, "Desegregating College Football: Jimmy Raye at MSU and the Ferris Connection," is co-sponsored by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and the Sports Leadership Institute.

On Sunday, Nov. 9, starting at 4 p.m. in Williams Auditorium, the West Central Concert Band conducted by Professor Scott Cohen will present its 12th annual Veterans Day Concert. The Band is comprised of Ferris students, faculty and staff, together with talented musicians from our community. The program includes patriotic favorites and a salute to military veterans. This event is free and open to the public.

Athletics

Our football team continues to have a remarkable season. This past Saturday they prevailed over Lake Erie in a high-scoring game, 66-56, to remain undefeated and at the top of the GLIAC. This victory marked the team's thirteenth consecutive win, which is a Ferris State

University record, the longest streak in Division II and overall the fourth longest college streak in the nation. Special congratulations go to quarterback Jason Vander Laan who set the school record for career offense a week ago in our game against Michigan Tech.

Last week our team was ranked in the top five in all national polls and as high as number one in some polls. This Saturday, Nov. 8 at Noon, they host Northern Michigan University in a Senior Day contest at Top Taggart Field. This will be the last opportunity to see this record-setting team play in Big Rapids during the regular season.

Our women's volleyball squad is also having a remarkable season. They are currently enjoying a five-game winning streak, having defeated both Lake Superior State and Northwood this past weekend. One of the most exciting games in that streak took place last Tuesday when the team defeated Grand Valley State University in an extraordinary home match, winning 17-15 in the fifth set. With this the team is tied with Grand Valley for the GLIAC North Division lead. They finish their regular season with two home matches this coming weekend, first against Wayne State on Friday, Nov. 7, at 7 p.m., then against Saginaw Valley State on Saturday, Nov. 8, at 5 p.m.

Finally, our women's soccer team has secured a berth in the GLIAC tournament and will face Grand Valley Tuesday evening. Congratulations to all of our student-athletes on what is truly a memorable season for Ferris athletics.

David L. Eisler, president