

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President

September 2, 2014

Founders Day

Last Thursday's Founders Day celebration was a wonderful series of events that brought the Ferris and Big Rapids communities together on our campus Quad. To see faculty, staff, students, emeriti, and members of the community interacting and enjoying a spectacular fall afternoon and evening was very gratifying. The energy and good feelings that were apparent are a real testament to the bonds that draw us together and the enduring vision that Woodbridge and Helen Ferris made a reality 130 years ago.

It was a pleasure to see so many of our students getting information from a wide range of campus organizations and area nonprofits, and enjoying the ice cream social, games and music. I'm told our celebrity servers dished out 150 gallons of ice cream. As in previous years, our catering services did a remarkable job with feeding everyone who took part in the annual faculty and staff picnic.

This year we had a special event with the unveiling of a Michigan Legal Milestones plaque presented to the university by the State Bar of Michigan. The plaque commemorates the fire that engulfed the Old Main building, the obstacles this created for Ferris' path toward becoming a public institution and the role played by then Governor G. Mennen "Soapy" Williams. The event inaugurated the new stage/performance area in front of our University Center, which will be a great resource for the many events that take place on the Quad. The written text of my remarks about this important moment in our history is available at <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/president/presentations/2014-2015/index.htm>. An article about these events critical to our survival written by alumnus Steve Savickas for the *Michigan Bar Journal* is available at http://bit.ly/mbj_8_14. The article is on page 18.

Behind the fun and excitement of Founders Day and the start of classes is the hard work of many, many people from across the university. Admissions, Campus Police, Dining Services, Governmental Relations and General Counsel Office, Information Technology, Residential Life, student volunteers and many, many others all played crucial roles in making a smooth start to our fall semester possible. Faculty and staff have worked very hard to make the start of our fall semester truly memorable. It is wonderful to feel our university so alive. Thank you for helping our students.

University Center

As we celebrated the legacy of our past on Founders Day, there was a constant reminder of the change that is our future. It was remarkable to have the new University Center, which is moving into its final stages of construction, in the background. This project is one that is much-needed by our university community. The student center previously had grown piecemeal as demand for its services increased. The resulting maze-like interior of the building made it less than user-friendly, which did not best serve our students, faculty, staff or visitors.

It is easy to grow excited about the resources the new University Center will offer – especially the spaces it will have for meetings and events, the new dining venues, as well as communal spaces that extend learning and collaboration beyond the classroom. You only need to

experience the vibrant atmosphere of the IRC Connector and the Rock to understand how successful these spaces can be. The new University Center will employ the concepts used to redesign the IRC and Rock and take them even further.

This construction has been a disruption for many people whose offices and work spaces have been moved, as well as those who use the University Center for meetings and events. Thank you for your continued patience. Our new facility is scheduled to open in January. When it does, I believe it will transform the way we interact with campus in the same way that FLITE and the Quad were transformative. Building on those previous projects, the entire central campus area will be an outstanding collection of resources that will serve both current and future students and our entire campus community.

Enrollment

The fourth-day enrollment count is completed and shows the number of students and Student Credit Hours at Ferris State University are essentially flat compared to last year. This fall we have enrolled 14,600 students for 165,453 credits. This is a headcount decline of 107 students (7/10th of a percent) and SCH decline of 730.5 (4/10th of a percent). On-campus headcount is down 202 students (2%) and 1,701.5 SCH (1.37%). On-line enrollment is up 87 students (9.7%) and 1,140 SCH (8.7%) Kendall enrollment is flat (down 21 headcount, resulting from a decline in dual enrollment) and up 48 SCH. Enrollment at other locations is up in headcount, but down in SCH. In previous messages I have noted the challenge that a declining number of students graduating from Michigan high schools represents. We are indeed beginning to experience that challenge.

There are some positive numbers in the data. Our university continues to be more diverse. Enrollment by African American students is up about one percent, Hispanic enrollment is up 9.7 percent, international students by 8.7 percent, and students of two or more races up 10.7 percent.

The challenge we face going forward is in attracting traditional full-time students, and that is reflected in the numbers. In Big Rapids, first time in any college student enrollment was down 46 students while continuing students were down 110. There are many other useful data contained in the Enrollment Summary 4th day extract and that is accessible here <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/president/newsletters/memos/docs/fall2014-enrollment-summary.pdf>.

Given the reality we face, these are very solid numbers. We are working on several issues – a new strategic enrollment management plan, improvements to campus and degree affordability – that will help us to remain attractive to that shrinking number of high school graduates. Your involvement in these and other initiatives will help us to show these students what the Ferris degree experience has to offer. It took hard, dedicated effort to keep our enrollment steady for this year and it is much appreciated. Thank you for the work you have done, and will do, on these issues of concern to our future students.

Remember the Titans

On Wednesday, Sept. 10, from 7-8:30 p.m. in Williams Auditorium, the Social Work Association will present Herman Boone, the real-life football coach represented in the film, “Remember the Titans.” You may recall this feature film which tells of his work to bring together a team of both white and black players in Alexandria, Virginia, in the 1970s, ultimately winning the

state championship with them. Mr. Boone will be speaking about issues relevant to a college campus, such as diversity, team work and leadership.

In preparation for Wednesday evening's program, "Remember the Titans" which stars Denzel Washington as Mr. Boone, will be shown Monday, Sept. 8, at 6 p.m. in the IRC 120 auditorium. The film will be followed by reflective discussion. This event is sponsored by the Social Work Association, Office of Multicultural Student Services and Ferris Athletics. It is wonderful to see the collaborative efforts behind this social justice program and I encourage you to attend this outstanding series of events.