

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
April 6, 2015

New Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs

It is a pleasure to announce that Paul Blake has accepted the university's offer to be our provost and vice president of Academic Affairs. As you know, Paul has served in this position on an interim basis since last May. Paul's superior qualifications for this position became very clear to me during the consideration and review of external candidates. A thorough campus interview process affirmed him as the right person to be our next provost.

Dr. Blake joined the Ferris faculty in 1989 and earned promotions from assistant professor to a tenured full professor of English. He has ably served our University as associate provost, associate dean of the College of Education and Human Services, and program coordinator of English education, among other positions. His extensive service to the university includes serving on the Higher Learning Commission Steering Committee, University Assessment Academy Team, University Athletic Advisory Board, University Student Life Committee and Task Force for Academic Advising, among many others.

With his considerable experience at Ferris, Dr. Blake has a unique perspective on our university's strengths, and a deep appreciation of the challenges facing higher education generally, and Ferris in particular. It is my observation that few individuals can serve effectively in an interim appointment and maintain a high level of support from the campus community to be selected to serve on a permanent basis. This is not the case with Paul. The ratings from his well-attended campus forums were the highest I have ever seen for any candidate, internal or external, at our University. Among the many positive comments generated during this process were the description of Paul as a "best listener" and a person "who created safe places for the consideration of ideas."

Dr. Blake earned his Ph.D. in English from Michigan State University. He also holds a Bachelor of Arts in English from MSU and a master's degree in English from Ball State University. He is a graduate of the Management Development Program at Harvard University Graduate School of Education.

As a scholar, teacher and leader, Paul has been an integral part of building Ferris' academic standards and creating approaches to the ways in which our university educates students for success in 21st century careers and in life. During a time of rapid change in the academic landscape, Paul brings to his leadership at Ferris both a sense of continuity and an appreciation for the need to continually innovate.

In this provost search, it has been a pleasure to work with an extraordinary committee throughout this effort. The rigor with which the committee scrutinized all candidates and their willingness to consider seriously an internal candidate as the process unfolded helped lead to this successful outcome. Co-chairs Julie Coon and Rick Griffin provided outstanding leadership for our University on this search. Please join me in thanking them and each committee member for their work:

Gloria Barnett, Professor, Developmental Curriculum, Retention and Student Success

Scott Garrison, Dean, FLITE Library
Tamie Grunow, Associate Vice President, Human Resources
Kim Hancock, Professor, Pharmaceuticals, College of Pharmacy
Robin Hoisington, Executive Assistant to the Provost/VP for Academic Affairs
Amanda Jewell, Student Government representative
Sheila MacEachron, Associate Professor, Nuclear Medicine, College of Health Professions
Ron Mehringer, Professor and Program Coordinator, Electrical/Electronics, College of Engineering Technology
Bruce Morgan, Professor and Director of Residencies, Michigan College of Optometry
Kristy Motz, Associate Professor, FLITE Library
David Pilgrim, Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion
Kristen Salomonson, Dean, Enrollment Services
Carlos Sanchez, Director, Latino Business and Economic Development Center
Dawn Schavey, Senior Academic Advisor, Extended and International Operations
Mischelle Stone, Associate Professor, Criminal Justice, College of Education and Human Services
Spence Tower, Associate Professor, Management, College of Business.

I am confident that you join me in welcoming Dr. Paul Blake as our provost and vice president of Academic Affairs. His appointment to this position becomes official today.

DisArt Festival

This Friday DisArt, the largest-ever disability arts festival in the United States, opens in Grand Rapids. Developed through the visionary leadership of Dr. Chris Smit, festival exhibits will take place in the Urban Institute for Contemporary Art, at Kendall's galleries in the Ferris Building, at the Grand Rapids Art Museum, and at venues throughout Grand Rapids. From April 10 through 25, this celebration of art, difference and culture will challenge viewers' conceptions of dis/ability and identity.

"Art of the Lived Experiment" is the festival's centerpiece exhibition, and a U.S. premier, having originated at the DaDaFest in Liverpool, England. The April 10 opening progresses through all three venues, beginning at 6 p.m. at the GRAM with remarks from organizers. The evening continues with "Art of the Lived Experiment" performances by Brian Catling and Wendy Jacob at KCAD, and by Raphaelle de Groot at UICA. There are many other opening evening events, including an exhibition of work by KCAD alumnus Robert Coombs at the DisArt Hub, 50 Louis St., and the DisArt Local Exhibit, which includes work from Kendall students at 250 Monroe St.

As I have learned more about the DisArt Festival, I have found myself inspired by what it represents. Founder Chris Smit describes the evolution of this extraordinary effort well, "This all started with a simple premise: current imaginations about disability are limited to fear, mystery, and pity, none of which offer Disabled people dignity, power, or authentic identity. So how do you change the imagination? DisArt believes that art and action are the best ways to chip away at well-worn stereotypes."

The Festival will host numerous events over the next two weeks, including the DisArt Fashion Show, the DisArt Independent Film Festival, artist talks, author presentations, and family

activities. For more complete information, I encourage you to download the DisArt Festival brochure at <http://disartfestival.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Final-finalDisArt-Program-FINAL-REV-6-lo.pdf> I hope you will take advantage of the many different offerings during this remarkable festival. This represents an opportunity for each of us to develop the imagination Chris Smit so aptly describes.

Higher Education Budget

Currently, the FY 2016 higher education state budget is making its way through the legislative process. The Senate Higher Education Appropriations Committee on Higher Education proposed a budget based upon Gov. Snyder's two-percent increase to state universities. Because of our favorable ranking in the performance funding formula, this would become a three percent increase in state funding for Ferris. In their budget, the House Higher Education Appropriations Committee proposed only a one-percent increase. This would result in a one and a half percent increase, approximately \$700,000 less than the Senate version. The House proposal has a higher ceiling for tuition restraint, 4 percent, or \$400 for the academic year, whichever is greater. The differences between these budget proposals will most likely be decided in a conference committee between the House and Senate in May, after the May revenue figures are released.

We will continue to work on support for Ferris in Lansing and I will keep you updated on the progress of the state higher education budget. At the same time we will be shepherding approval for our Swan Building Annex project through the legislature.

Michigan Campus Compact

Seventeen Ferris students will be recognized for their commitment to community service during the 19th annual Outstanding Student Service Awards Celebration, April 18, at the Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center in East Lansing. Each year, The Michigan Campus Compact awards students from member colleges and universities for their outstanding commitment to service-learning and civic engagement.

James Young will receive the Outstanding Community Impact Award, which is given to students who have made service an integral part of their college experience. James is one of only six students statewide who will receive this award.

Logan England will receive the Commitment to Service Award in recognition of the breadth of his service experiences.

Wayne Bersano, Stephan Bieszka, Logan Bixman, Chelsea Broekema, Michelle Dunn, Emily Evans, Iva Haven, Jennifer Hoover, Aissa Jackson, Ashleigh LaLonde, Israel Ledesma, Tiffany Schack, Ellen Schafer, Natalie Webe, and Aaron Zebolsky will receive the Heart and Soul Award, given to students to recognize their time, effort and personal commitment to service.

Congratulations to all our MCC award winners. We have a student body that volunteers many thousands of hours every year to advance worthwhile causes and support the Ferris, Big Rapids, Grand Rapids and other communities across the state. While these awards are presented to specific individuals, more broadly they are another indication of the overall engagement of our students. Please join me in thanking our student volunteers, and all of the faculty and staff members who support their efforts.

Athletics

Men's basketball guard Drew Lehman has been chosen as a Division II Bulletin All-American. He is the second Ferris men's basketball All-American in the last forty years. Congratulations to Drew for this national recognition of his outstanding senior season.

Our women's tennis team completed its regular season on Thursday, picking up their 19th win of the season. They are now 19-8, and ranked seventh in the Intercollegiate Tennis Association's Midwest Rankings. The men's squad is 13-5, 5-0 in the GLIAC conference, and ranked fifth in the Midwest Rankings. Congratulations to Coach Chad Berryhill and these tennis athletes on their outstanding accomplishments.

David L. Eisler, president