

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
August 31, 2015

The start of a new academic year always brings with it a sense of hope and expectation that students can remember for all their lives. Looking back on their college years, our graduates often think of this as a memorable, special time in their lives. For many, the freshman year is a time of excitement and discovery, while senior and graduate years are a time looking ahead toward a career.

I want to thank everyone who has contributed to getting our year off to a successful start – from the recruitment, orientation and advising of our new students, the preparation of our grounds and facilities, the move-in and acclimation of students on our campuses, to the preparation for today's first day of classes.

This year, "Project Zero," an initiative to promote recycling during move-in, was a great "tone setter" for responsible living, and was very much in alignment with our strategic plan. Students responded very strongly and positively to "Project Zero," which greatly reduced the amount of trash. I appreciate very much the leadership of our physical plant in this. A good article about the initiative can be accessed at <http://ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/archive/2015/august/recycling.htm>.

Together with our provost, Paul Blake, last Wednesday I very much enjoyed the opportunity to visit with each of our colleges here in Big Rapids. It is affirming to see how many people have committed their time and energies to guiding the education of students. So many people work so very hard to make a difference. Thank you.

Founders Day

This Thursday we will celebrate our annual Founders Day. We are fortunate to be a university founded by a pair of extraordinary educators – Woodbridge and Helen Ferris. The standard of excellence they established is in many respects the yardstick by which we still measure our university to this day.

The legacy of Woodbridge and Helen is a familiar one to many of us who study, teach and work at the university they founded. However, their story is an important one worth repeating – or learning for the first time if you are new to Ferris State University.

When I think about their legacy, the word that first comes to mind is opportunity, followed quickly by dedication, persistence, excellence and inclusion. By the time Woodbridge and Helen established what was first called the Big Rapids Industrial School in 1884, they were already veteran educators. They were teachers, administrators and the founders of other educational institutions. Through experiences with partners who did not always hold the Ferris' high academic and moral standards, by the time they arrived in Big Rapids the partners they trusted and relied upon were each other.

One of the most striking photographs of those early days is Woodbridge Ferris posing with his first class of Big Rapids Industrial School students. Five of the fifteen were women – a clear sign that from the beginning their school would be a place of openness and acceptance. In 1906

Woodbridge announced that “The Ferris Institute is thoroughly democratic – that is to say, it is a school for all people regardless of race or station.”

Helen was a full partner in their school. Her teaching and the standards she set for teachers was essential to the success of what would ultimately become Ferris State University. In a tribute Woodbridge wrote after her death in 1917, he said, “Her love for young people was profound... Her gracious manners won the abiding love of all who came under her instruction. Her students exerted themselves to the utmost simply because they could not summon courage to disappoint her.” His admiration was clear in the words, “Whatever there is in the Ferris Institute that resembles the work of the teacher of teachers, had its origin in the seventeen years of loving service rendered by Mrs. Ferris.”

Because our values are so strongly rooted in our history, we have a strong foundation on which to carry those values into the future. I encourage you to participate in the activities of Founders’ Day.

- 11 a.m. University Center Room 202C – My annual remarks about our university, its past, present and future
- 12 p.m. University Quad – Ferris Employees Founders Day Picnic
- 3-7 p.m. University Quad – Student Founders Day Celebration with games, food, information booths and more
- 4-7 p.m. University Quad – Founders Day 9th Annual Community Ice Cream Social with celebrity servers
- 7 p.m. Williams Auditorium – Entertainment Unlimited will sponsor magician Joel Ward

Please join us in the activities which fit your schedule and interests. Throughout the afternoon and early evening it is always good to see how many members of the university community, their families, and our Big Rapids community friends join in this celebration. I also hope you will keep in mind the reason we undertake this celebration. The egalitarian and inclusive vision set forth by Woodbridge and Helen Ferris is one that still defines our university today – and remains the basis for the university we want to be in the future.

82 Ionia Building

On Friday the Ferris State University Board of Trustees approved a resolution for the Kendall College of Art and Design to place a bid to purchase the building and property known as 82 Ionia in Grand Rapids. This structure is directly across Fountain Street from the Kendall Building and is currently owned by Kent County, which plans to consolidate operations into fewer locations.

The bid process took place in a very compressed timeframe. KCAD President Leslie Bellavance described the potential building well in her message to the Kendall community –

“The proximity to the current KCAD campus makes 82 Ionia very attractive to our college. Specifically we are looking at the potential for student housing and new options for student life activities. That is, we are interested in facilitating experiences outside the curriculum that might be led by student organizations and/or our Student Success Division that would enhance student learning. The fact that 82 Ionia is contiguous to the

Kendall and Woodbridge N. Ferris buildings lends itself to creation of a living and learning environment that would benefit students in art and design in the cultural heart of Grand Rapids.”

Due to the nature of the bid process it was necessary to keep the information about the consideration and development of the bid confidential. On Friday we learned there were two other bidders for the property, both of whom appear to be developers. At this time we do not know if Kendall’s bid will be successful, but the space available at 82 Ionia could create opportunities for a wide range of KCAD/Ferris programs and efforts there. As additional information is available we will share it with you.

Pride Days

The Ferris Pride Committee has announced that Ferris Pride Day will take place every Friday starting this semester. The committee encourages everyone in the university community to show pride in Ferris and support RED (Remembering Everyone Deployed) by wearing red and a Ferris pride button. By wearing a button on Pride Days you are eligible for a 20 percent discount on one logoed item at the Barnes and Noble Bookstore in in the University Center, and a 20 percent discount on your full purchase at The Market and at the UC and IRC Starbucks. Pride buttons are available at locations across the university or by contacting Elaine Kamptner, Pride Committee chair, at ext. 2504 or ElaineKamptner@ferris.edu.

The Pride Committee will facilitate a t-shirt swap (a Ferris shirt exchanged for another college’s t-shirt) at its booth on the Quad during Founders Day, Sept. 3, from 3-7 p.m. They will also be a part of the Homecoming Parade on Sept. 26.

Please join me in thanking the members of the pride committee for their dedicated work. In addition to Chair Kamptner, the members are Nick Campau, Jason DaDay, Sandy Gholston, Carla Hatfield, Kristy Heeter, Tracy Powers Hildy, Geri Johnson, Karen Kirk, Kim Kleeves, Fonda Kuzee, Ami Misoni, Lisa Ortiz, Corey Saladin and Linda Telfer.

Closing Thoughts

As classes begin today, thank you again for your help in beginning this year, our 131st of educating and preparing students for their future. If Helen and Woodbridge Ferris were to visit today I believe they would be amazed and pleased with what our university has become. I look forward to seeing and visiting with you on our campuses and at Founders Day.

David L. Eisler, president