

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
January 26, 2015

Festival of the Arts

This week begins the annual Festival of the Arts, which takes place both on our campus and throughout Big Rapids. The slate of activities for the opening weekend illustrates the wide variety of events the festival brings to our area.

On Friday, Jan. 30 the Festival of the Arts opening reception is in the University Center. It features keynote speaker and musician Fared Haque, who will also perform on guitar with Ed Mallet on euphonium, together with projected images provided by Jeff Gabalis. The annual art show by Honors students will be featured in the building. In the new University Art Gallery will be the show "Disparate Elements: A Steampunk Revolution," with works by international artists as well as Ferris State University and Kendall College of Art and Design students. The evening's events begin at 6 p.m.

There are two events on Saturday, Jan. 31: at 2:30 p.m. an Invitational Bell Ring concert with Jan Wright in the 1st United Methodist Church; and at 5:30 p.m., a dinner with swing dancing to the music of The Flat River Big Band and Fared Haque at the Holiday Inn Ballroom. The dinner/dance is one of a handful of events that has a cost to attend.

The final event of the opening weekend is a reception and talk by Artworks Education Director Chris Kjorness, "Welcome to Idlewild: The Black Eden of Michigan." This takes place on Sunday, Feb. 1, starting at 1 p.m. at ArtWorks in downtown Big Rapids. This event highlights the town of Idlewild, which played an important role in the history of African-American cultural life. More details about these and other upcoming events are available at www.brfota.org. This schedule of remarkable events continues throughout the month of February.

State Budget

Despite continued improvement in Michigan's economy and a reduction in the unemployment rate, news came this past week that for the current year, our state faces an estimated \$325 million shortfall in the general fund. Some positive news is that Governor Snyder has stated he wants to hold education harmless in cuts made to balance the budget. This includes K-12 through higher education.

It is early in the budget-setting process and there have not been similar statements about education from state legislative leaders. Without improvement in revenues, state agencies will be facing budget cuts this coming year, and it remains to be seen how the legislature's view may differ from the Governor's. There will be a great deal of discussion and negotiation before a new budget is agreed upon and signed into law.

We will have a better idea of the starting point for this process when the Governor releases the executive budget proposal on Feb. 11. Last year he stated his commitment to restoring funds in the higher education budget lost to significant cuts made during the recession, but it seems clear this will take longer than originally projected. I believe there is recognition beyond the Governor's office that public university funding in Michigan has disproportionately shouldered cuts that were made to balance previous budgets during the years of the "Great Recession." As this process moves

forward, I will continue to share information about the state budget and its possible impact on our university.

University Center

If you have been in our new University Center, you know what a success it is. Students are coming to the building to relax, study together, share a meal and much more. During the day the main lounge area by the two-story fireplace is packed, as are the different dining venues. The bookstore is now much more accessible and visible to students and visitors to campus than it was previously, and the meeting and performance spaces offer new resources for the entire university community.

Of all the activity taking place, it is especially exciting to see students interacting with each other and working together on their studies and class projects. When the Interdisciplinary Resource Center was redesigned and renovated, the goal was to make that a space where students could collaborate together as well as socialize together. At a great university, learning takes place all across campus. Extending the classroom and learning opportunities through intentional design of our facilities is one of the ways in which we can create more ways in which students learn.

If you have not yet seen the University Center, I look forward to hearing from you when you have time to do so. I encourage you to have lunch, visit the art gallery, or just familiarize yourself with what the UC has to offer. Patsy and I had dinner there last Tuesday in the Quad Café's all you care to eat section, and it was a delightful experience with many choices and delicious food. One of things we learned from the students is that it is helpful to look for a place to sit first, because this is already a popular place to eat.

Along with FLITE and the Campus Quad, the University Center creates a focal point for the Big Rapids campus. It was not easy to be without a central meeting spot for more than a year, but the end result was worth the hardship. I want to thank everyone who was inconvenienced by the construction of the past several months and to the many staff and students who have worked to get the building ready to open. The University Center will have its official dedication on Feb. 19 starting at 11 a.m. I hope to see you there.

Provost Candidate Visits

The Provost Search Committee is sending out university-wide notes about candidates for the position of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs visiting Ferris for on-campus interviews. This week, we have two candidates scheduled. Dr. Michael R. Stevenson will have open sessions today, Monday, Jan. 26 - one at 10-11:30 a.m., and the second from 3-4:30 p.m., both in the University Center, Room 203. To review Dr. Stevenson's resume, please go to <http://www.ferris.edu/fsuintranet/michael-r-stevenson.pdf>.

On Thursday, Jan. 29, Dr. Michael Licari will have open sessions at 10-11:30 a.m., and from 3-4:30 p.m. These will also be in Room 203 of the University Center. To review Dr. Licari's resume, please go to <http://www.ferris.edu/fsuintranet/michael-j-licari.pdf>. These are Ferris Intranet addresses, so you must be connected to the university's network to access the information. I hope you can find time in your busy schedule to attend one of the open sessions to hear from these candidates and offer your feedback.

Athletics

Last Friday the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference announced recipients of the Fall 2014 GLIAC Commissioner's Award. The awards celebrate student-athletes who excel both in the classroom as well as in competition. The Bulldogs receiving Commissioner's Awards are junior volleyball players Danielle Dowd and Alexis Huntley, and junior football players Jason Vander Laan and Justin Zimmer. Both our volleyball and football teams had remarkable seasons, and the awards are a testament to these student-athletes who excel not just on the court and the field, but in their studies. Please join me in congratulating our student-athletes, who collectively brought home a quarter of the GLIAC Commissioner's Awards, more than any other conference university. Additional information is available at http://www.gliac.org/general_news/Awards/Fall_2014_Commissioners_Awards .

Our women's basketball team split its home games this past week, winning on Saturday against Lake Superior. The men's team won Thursday evening against Northwood, but lost a heartbreaker against Lake State on Saturday, 69-67. Our team had won 15 straight games and still shares first place in the conference. Both teams will be back in action at home this Thursday against Hillsdale, with the women at 6 p.m. and the men at 8 p.m.

David L. Eisler, president