

# President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President  
March 2, 2015

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## Provost Search

This past week was a pivotal moment in our search for a new Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. After the search committee helped identify five finalists for the position, the candidates were invited to visit for in-person interviews. At the conclusion of those interviews, I visited with each group that interviewed the candidates, and studied carefully both the survey results and my own notes throughout the process.

Several things became clear to me through this study and reflection. Despite their qualifications, none of the candidates seemed to have the right skill-set, fit and background. Ultimately there was not a candidate who held the level of interest and commitment to the position who also met the high expectations we as a university have for the person who holds this critical leadership role.

As I worked through this review I found myself increasingly comparing the finalist candidates to our current Interim Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dr. Paul Blake. In the process of making those comparisons, it became clear to me that Dr. Blake has the skills, temperament and background we have been looking for elsewhere. That has been evidenced by the work he has done over the last several months as he moved seamlessly into that position.

It is my practice when asking someone to take on the responsibility of filling an interim position that they do so without the distraction of applying for the position on a full-time basis. As a result, Dr. Blake was not a candidate in the search. While it was not my initial intent, considering the insight and comparison this search has provided, I have now asked Dr. Blake if he has interest in the position on regular basis. I am very pleased that he has strong interest in this.

On Friday I first met with committee co-chairs Julie Coon and Rick Griffin, and then with our search committee. I explained my decision not to offer the position to any of the finalists, and then asked them to independently consider Paul for the position. After reviewing Dr. Blake's resume they moved to consider him for the position and have formulated an approach where they will schedule him for an interview this week similar to the "airport" interviews conducted with other candidates. With success in this they would then move him forward to a formal on-campus interview after spring break.

Most importantly, I want to share with you that Paul is not a candidate because of the other finalists' shortcomings, but rather that I have come to learn and believe through this search process that he is by far a much superior candidate. Our search committee did an excellent and thorough job of identifying candidates and vetting them for this position. The thoroughness of that process has led me to see with fresh eyes the strength of an internal candidate. Throughout this year I have been very impressed as Paul has worked through the intricacies and challenges of being Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs. I want to thank the search committee for their work, and thank Dr. Blake for agreeing to apply for this position. The search committee will keep our university community informed as they work through their process.

## Learn Lab

Last Monday, Feb. 23, there was a dinner and sharing session for the initial members of the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning Learn Lab Fellows program. 2014-2015 Learn Lab Fellows are Gloria Barnett, Nick Campau, Christine Conley-Sowels, Roxanne Cullen, Clay Dedeaux, Dan deRegier, Gerald Emerick, Lucas Hedman, Liza Ing, Jennifer Johnson, Bill Koepf, Victor Piercy and Mischelle Stone. These faculty members took part in a year-long program that led to their teaching in the Learn Lab, an active-learning classroom.

The first phase of the program included opportunities for participants to engage in a series of learning activities to advance teaching methods and skills, and to prepare them to teach in the Learn Lab (FLITE 405). The second phase afforded Fellows the opportunity to teach a course, or portion of a course, in the Learn Lab. Collaboration and innovation were supported through the Learn Lab's adaptive environment, which facilitates exploration of new pedagogies and instructional technologies. The classroom has media:scape tables, and an Eno interactive whiteboard, technology from Steelcase. More information on the classroom is accessible here - <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/academics/center/LearnLab/index.htm> .

The work of our faculty using these high-tech tools and the ways in which they facilitated group work, active learning, and engagement in the classroom are extraordinary. I want to offer each of them my sincere congratulations on their work. I encourage you to learn more about this experience by speaking to one of these faculty members or watching a video about their Learn Lab experience available at [http://bit.ly/2014-2015\\_LearnLabFellows](http://bit.ly/2014-2015_LearnLabFellows) . It is my sincere hope that we will establish additional classrooms that can leverage the use of innovative technology at our university in the future.

My understanding is that the FCTL will be recruiting a new cohort of faculty for this experience. If this is of interest to you I encourage you to apply.

## Facilities Master Plan

Vice President of Administration and Finance Jerry Scoby recently shared the most recent draft of the 2015 Campus Master Plan with the Ferris community through his monthly *The Scoop* communication. With help from almost two dozen stakeholder input sessions held last summer and fall, this draft of the Campus Master Plan is available at <http://www.ferris.edu/master-planning> . It is an important document for the future of our Big Rapids campus.

This new Campus Master Plan shows the anticipated development of our Big Rapids campus in both 5-year and long-term timeframes. Please take a few moments to review this document, which lays out a clear vision for how we can develop our campus to best fit both present and future students' educational and residential needs. I encourage you to share your thoughts on this draft with Vice President Scoby at [scobyj@ferris.edu](mailto:scobyj@ferris.edu) .

## Athletics

This past Thursday, our men's basketball team outplayed Grand Valley for a 77-55 victory to conclude their regular season. With this win the Bulldogs are 20-8 overall for the season and 16-6 in the GLIAC. They secured the number three seed for the conference tournament, and will host Ashland in a quarterfinal game this Wednesday at 7 p.m. in Jim Wink Arena. Our team has had a remarkable season and we wish them well as they begin their post-season play. I encourage you to come out and support them.

## **Spring Break**

With the arctic air we have been experiencing, next week should perhaps be considered the university's winter rather than spring break. At this half-way point of the semester we already have had some truly remarkable events with the dedication of the University Center and the announcement of the Hagerman gift to the College of Pharmacy.

When classes resume on March 16, we will be looking forward to the final weeks of our academic year and to spring Commencement. With that in mind, if you know of a graduating senior with a story about achieving excellence and/or overcoming obstacles to earn their degree, please contact Elaine Kamptner or me in our office. I find that it emphasizes the humanity of our educational efforts to highlight one or two stories of extraordinary students during each Commencement ceremony. For me it can be both inspiring and humbling to hear the compelling stories of our students.

If you are travelling during spring break, please do so safely.

David L. Eisler, president