

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
October 12, 2015

Campus Safety

Three different incidents in the past few days remind us of the crucial importance of campus safety. On Oct. 1, near Roseburg, Ore., an Umpqua Community College student shot 18 people, nine of them fatally. Then Friday, there were two incidents - four people shot, one of them fatally, at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, and two people shot at Texas Southern University, one of them also died. For all of us at Ferris State University, these senseless acts of violence are sobering. I know you join me in extending our support to these campuses as they struggle with these tragedies.

Word of the Umpqua shootings brought back for me memories of April 17, 2007, and the tragic incidents at Virginia Tech University. If you were at Ferris in 2007, you will recall that we established three task forces to review our emergency measures and to recommend how we might be best prepared to help keep everyone on our campus safe. Much work was done at that time and continues to this day.

Many of these measures enhance our ability to communicate in an emergency situation. We now have instant messaging capability through computers and mobile devices as well as messaging through both cell and land-line phones. There are expanded electronic sign messaging and outdoor emergency broadcast systems, and communications through Ferris' cable TV system. We installed VOIP phones in classrooms and emergency blue light phones across campus.

Physical changes have been made to campus as well, including installation of swipe cards at residence hall front entrances, and the development of an emergency operations control center. Behavioral response and threat assessment teams have been established and the people who serve on them are prepared to assess and respond when a student is reported as being disruptive or of concern.

Emergency response plans were created for many of the situations that could be anticipated. Collaboration across the university and with emergency responders throughout the community has been enhanced through "table top" exercises that simulate these emergency response plans. Many of us watched videos on how to remain safe in "active shooter" situations.

As we continue to work on our emergency preparedness, please take time to review the emergency response plans in your own area – both to be prepared to help yourself and others, as well as to see if those plans need to be updated due to personnel changes, physical changes to campus, or any other reason. Sadly, the unexpected can happen anywhere. Knowing where to get information in an emergency situation, or knowing what your response options are could make a crucial difference.

This is also a call for us as a university to review our preparedness, make certain our planning is up-to-date, assess what gaps may exist in this preparation, and consider what additional education will help each of us be prepared should the unthinkable occur. With this in mind, I have asked Vice President for Administration and Finance Jerry Scoby to lead an

effort to evaluate our current emergency preparedness. Over the next few weeks, if Vice President Scoby or members of his team call upon you for help in this review, please extend your assistance in any way you can. Thank you for your willingness to support these efforts and to remain aware of how best to respond in an emergency situation. Together we can and will work to keep our university safe.

Strategic Planning and Resource Council

The Strategic Planning and Resource Council will meet tomorrow, Tuesday, Oct. 13 in UCB 202A at 3 p.m. The focus of the meeting will be future residence housing on the Big Rapids campus. This is a very important topic for Ferris and our student recruitment and retention efforts. The last traditional residence halls were built on this campus in 1969. While well maintained, this means most residential housing is 45 years old or older, and for some prospective students these structures no longer meet their expectations. Over the past year a cross-divisional team has been working to develop a vision for the future of university housing. Vice President Scoby and Associate Vice President Jim Hessler will be presenting the team's findings and seeking your reaction to these ideas about the future of housing at Ferris. It is important our university offer not only the academic experience students need, but also provide the physical infrastructure that supports their experience during their years here.

As outlined in the university's master plan, we are looking at a major investment in housing upgrades over the next several years. This needs to be done in a fiscally prudent manner, as our residence halls are self-sustaining in terms of revenue. Making certain we are creating spaces that appeal to students for years to come is both a great challenge and opportunity.

If your schedule allows, I hope you will attend the SPARC meeting tomorrow. The upgrading of our residence facilities is a very important step in the continued development of our Big Rapids campus.

Diversity Plan

This past Thursday David Pilgrim, Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion, presented the university's 2014-15 Diversity Report to our Board of Trustees. This report highlights areas in which Ferris is succeeding in expanding our goal of being a diverse and inclusive institution, and those areas in which we still have work to do. This is accessible here -

www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/president/DiversityOffice/pdf/DiversityFerris2014_2015_final.pdf.

Dr. Pilgrim noted that racial and ethnic groups now account for 20 percent of the student body at Ferris State University. He particularly pointed to the outreach our university has made to the Latino community, thanks in large part to the establishment of our Center for Latin@ Studies, and the center's outreach through the Promesa program, and the increases in international student enrollment accomplished through the efforts of our Office of International Education. While progress has been made, among the challenges that still face us is that we still lag behind our state peers in attracting and maintaining a diverse workforce.

The continued growth of our university as a diverse, inclusive and welcoming community is critical to our future. We look to build upon our successes and address our challenges in the development of a new diversity and inclusion plan. This effort is headed by Dr. Pilgrim, who has engaged a group of more than 30 university participants to help craft the

plan. He also continues to meet with individuals and groups who have ideas about how our university should move forward with this work. A draft plan is expected to be completed by the end of this semester. The completed diversity plan will be integrated with university and divisional strategic plans.

We are making progress with our diversity and inclusion efforts and with your help we will continue to grow as an institution providing opportunity to all. Thank you for your efforts in creating a diverse, global university, and for your efforts going forward to continue to create a university that welcomes and values everyone who seeks a Ferris education.

David L. Eisler, president