

# President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

*Office of the President  
February 15, 2016*

---

## **Governor Snyder's Proposed Budget**

Last week Governor Rick Snyder released his proposed budget for the 2016-17 fiscal year, which contains funding increases for higher education. The governor has proposed a \$61 million increase for Michigan's public universities – a 4.4 percent increase over last year's budget. The proposal would allocate half of this new funding to across-the-board increases and the other half to performance-based funding. Given our success in the past with the state's performance metrics, under this approach we anticipate Ferris would receive a budget increase of 5.6 percent or \$2.8 million.

There is a long way to go legislatively before a budget is approved later this spring, but the Governor has put forward a very positive proposal. It is intended to restore funding higher education lost in the budget cuts of fiscal year 2010-11 when public universities lost 15 percent of their state appropriations. I am cautiously optimistic about this proposed budget.

One area of concern for Ferris is in terms of the Tuition Incentive Program. Looking forward to fiscal year 2018, there is a proposal to cap TIP funds for any one institution at \$8.5 million. In FY 2014-15, Ferris received \$9.1 million in TIP funds. Our mission of providing opportunity attracts exactly the kind of students that the TIP program is meant to help. I believe that Ferris is uniquely positioned to help these lower-income students, and we have a track record of doing so.

All of these funding issues will be under discussion in the coming weeks. We are scheduled to provide testimony to the combined House and Senate Higher Education Appropriation Sub-Committees on February 25<sup>th</sup>. I will share that presentation with you and look forward to keeping you informed as this legislative process moves forward.

## **Sabbatical Leaves**

During its meeting last Friday morning the Board of Trustees approved a number of sabbatical leaves for the coming academic year. I want to extend my thanks to the Board members for their support of this very important action. I also want to extend my congratulations to the following faculty members for being selected to receive this honor - Beverly DeMarr, Management; Stephen Jakubowski, Accounting, Finance, and Information Systems; Bruce Morgan, Optometry; Andrew Suhy, Accounting, Finance, and Information Systems; Khagendra Thapa, Surveying Engineering; Erin Weber, Languages & Literature; and Changqi Zhu, Biological Sciences.

During the Board's Academic Affairs and Student Affairs Committee meeting, Dr. Patrick Bishop and Dr. Jana Pisani both shared materials and results from their recent sabbatical leaves in a very engaging presentation. Drs. Bishop and Pisani both demonstrated the importance of sabbatical leaves as an investment in our faculty and their future. Their help and support is sincerely appreciated. As a university community we are fortunate to have strong Board support for our sabbatical leave program.

## **Festival of the Arts**

Now in its third week, the Festival of the Arts offers programs designed to appeal to the widest possible audience. The festival's offerings this week continue to show a broad range of programming that is both engaging and accessible. Among this week's events are

- “The Feminine Creative Process” panel discussion on Monday, 7 p.m. at the Blue Cow Café in downtown Big Rapids.
- Michigan puppeteer Kevin Kammeraad and the Cooperfly Puppet Troupe on Tuesday, 7 p.m. at the Big Rapids Community Library.
- “Return to the Forbidden Planet” dinner theater presentation by STAGE-M, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, at CK’s Place, 6 p.m., and Sunday at 1 p.m. This is a ticketed event.
- Authorpalooza, Saturday, 1-4 p.m. at The Gate.
- Zu Zu Acrobats, Sunday, 1 p.m., Williams Auditorium. This is a part of Ferris’ Arts and Lectures series and is a ticketed event.
- Grand Rapids Youth Symphony, Sunday, 3 p.m., Big Rapids High School Auditorium.

A full schedule of events along with information about prices for ticketed events is available at the Festival of the Arts [website](#).

### **Black History Month**

Events for Black History Month continue both this week and next.

- “Knowledge is Power,” Tuesday, Feb. 16, 7-9 p.m., UC 202B. The Ferris chapter of the NAACP and the Office of Multicultural Student Services will host this Black History Month trivia contest, which will include light refreshments and giveaways for participants.
- “Truth Brunch,” Thursday, Feb. 25, 11 a.m., UC 202B, presented by Alpha Phi Alpha. This event aims to provide an opportunity for participants to engage with one another and to hear from a guest speaker on the topic of African American culture.

Black History Month events are free and open to the public. Attendees for the “Truth Brunch” are required to RSVP to the OMSS at [omss@ferris.edu](mailto:omss@ferris.edu) or visit FLITE 159.

On a related note it was very good to see that Dr. David Pilgrim’s book, “Understanding Jim Crow: Using Racist Memorabilia to Teach Tolerance and Promote Social Justice,” was among the top 10 Michigan best-selling books for the month of January. If you have not seen this book I recommend it to you highly. I learned much from reading it.

### **Digital Marketing**

Last Tuesday at the Strategic Planning and Resource Council meeting, Shelly Percy and Jeremy Mishler shared some of the new digital marketing approaches the university is using to attract potential students. The move to greater outreach on digital media is a recognition that today’s high school students have grown up in the digital age. For them the Internet has always existed, and they have come of age using social media.

The increased Web traffic we are seeing as a result of this new focus is impressive. For Fall 2015 we had 204,000 clicks-through to [ferris.edu/admission](http://ferris.edu/admission). This has led to a 91 percent increase in user traffic to the admissions website – 77,128 visits, about 37,000 more than during the same timeframe in 2014. Also, unique user traffic to the site increased 121 percent – 60,716 visits in Fall 2015 compared to 27,456 the previous fall.

Slides from the SPARC presentation are available online through this [link](#). This is a synthesis that shows what we are doing in digital media, social media, traditional print media, and other outlets. It provides a good overview of this campaign and the target audience.

David L. Eisler, president