

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
January 11, 2016

Welcome Back

With the start of the new year, we have now passed the half-way mark and are rapidly moving through the major portion of our academic year. I hope the holiday break provided time for you to relax and visit with family and friends.

In December we celebrated the graduation of more than 1,000 students at our commencement ceremonies. It has become a tradition to share the story of a graduating senior who has taken an extraordinary path to earning a degree. I highlighted two such graduates this year, and found their stories as compelling as any I have ever told. You can learn more about their triumphs over significant challenges online at www.ferris.edu/president/presentations/2015-2016/index.htm.

Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration

Next week, Jan. 18-21, we will hold our annual Martin Luther King celebration in memory of Dr. King's central role in promoting civil rights. This is an important opportunity to help advance the work of Dr. King to seek peace, justice and equality. Events next week include –

- Faculty and staff in-service sponsored by the Diversity and Inclusion Office, "Compassion: Making the World a Better Place," Monday, Jan. 18, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. in UC 203
- 30th Annual MLK Freedom March, Monday, Jan. 18, 4-5 p.m., starting at UC Rankin Lounge
- 30th Annual MLK Student Tribute, Tuesday, Jan. 19, 7-8:30 p.m., UC 217
- Tunnel of Oppression Exhibit, Jan. 19 through Jan. 21, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. in Ward Hall
- Featured Discussion, "Your Words Have Power," Wednesday, Jan. 20, 7-8:30 p.m., UC 202 A/B
- Guest speaker Tamika Mallory, former executive director of the National Action Network, Thursday, Jan. 21, 6-7:30 p.m., UC 202C

More detailed information about these events, along with a link to the MLK Celebration Facebook page, is available at <http://www.ferris.edu/mlk/>. I want to thank everyone involved in helping to make these meaningful events available to the Ferris and Big Rapids communities. Sponsors include the Diversity and Inclusion Office, the Office of Residence Life, the Center for Leadership, Activities and Career Services, Office of Multicultural Student Services, News and Social Media Services, and the RSOs Advocacy and Education of General Identity and Sexuality, and Student Michigan Education Association. Please find time in your busy schedule to attend as many of these activities as possible.

Campus Construction

Looking forward, this year we will continue our work to further make Ferris a place where students are academically and socially engaged. Meeting the day before December commencement, Ferris' Board of Trustees approved upgraded housing projects for our students. The first project is already underway, an expansion of the West Campus Apartments, an addition scheduled to open for Fall 2016. The trustees also provided planning approval for our new north campus freshman residence hall project, which will add housing options near the University Center. With planning now underway, this facility is scheduled for opening in August of 2017.

Just before the semester break we learned of progress on our Swan Annex project. The Michigan House and Senate approved a bill advancing planning authorization for this \$30 million project, which Governor Rick Snyder signed. Ours was the only university project in the state to receive planning approval, a strong indicator of the perceived value for this proposal in Lansing. Our plans are to renovate approximately 47,000 square feet and construct a 34,462-square-foot addition. This will allow Ferris to double the size of the Welding Engineering Technology program and create a Center for Advanced Manufacturing. Additionally, it is expected to free approximately 10,000 square feet of Swan's five-story main building to be re-purposed for other engineering technology programs. With students waitlisted for admittance into some programs, this is a much-needed project. Upon completion that will allow us to better and more fully serve students and help build our region's economy. Once plans are received and approved in Lansing we will work with legislators and the Governor for final funding approval.

Ferris Student-Athletes Recognized

One of our December graduates who is the center of much attention is four-year quarterback Jason Vander Laan. A day before commencement he received the news he had won the Harlon Hill Trophy as the best football player in the nation at the NCAA Division II level for the second consecutive year. He is only the fourth player to win the trophy more than once. Jason was also a finalist for the Campbell Trophy, which recognizes the top football student-athlete at any college level in the United States. Jason set many records not just at Ferris, but at the national level. Among others, he set the record for rushing yards by a quarterback in any NCAA division while becoming the first player in NCAA history to gain 1,000 yards both rushing and passing for four consecutive seasons.

At its December meeting, Ferris' Board of Trustees issued three Citations of Merit in recognition of the remarkable fall season of athletic competition by our student-athletes. In addition to recognizing Jason's achievements, the Board cited the achievements of the football and volleyball teams. Both teams were at the top of national rankings, won Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference titles for the past two years, with the volleyball team also winning the GLIAC conference tournament for the past two seasons. In volleyball, the seniors amassed a four-year overall record of 106-16 and a GLIAC record of 65-7. The football team has been undefeated in the regular season for the past two years, and the senior class compiled a record over the last four years of 37-9. Congratulations and thanks go to head coach Tia Brandel Wilhelm, her staff and athletes, and to head coach Tony Annese, his staff and athletes.

Our women's soccer team also had a memorable fall, posting a 14-5-1 overall record and finishing as conference runner-up. Recently we learned they were the only GLIAC program to receive the 2015 National Soccer Coaches Association of American Team Ethics and Sportsmanship Award. The team earned a "Silver" designation after accumulating only five yellow cards over 20 contests played during the season. Congratulations to head coach Andy McCaslin and his team for this meaningful recognition.

Many of our winter sports teams are competing at home this weekend. I encourage you to support our basketball teams at games on Thursday against Michigan Tech (6 p.m. and 8 p.m.) and Saturday vs. Northern Michigan (1 p.m. and 3 p.m.). Our ice hockey team takes on Alabama Huntsville with games Friday and Saturday starting at 7:07 p.m. These will be the only home hockey games until Feb. 12th. Thank you for attending and supporting our Bulldog athletic teams.

David L. Eisler, president