

# President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President  
January 18, 2016

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## Diversity and Inclusion Plan

In 2008 Ferris' Board of Trustees approved the University's first Diversity plan with the goal of creating a University welcoming to diverse populations; recruiting, retaining and graduating a diverse student population; hiring and retaining a diverse workforce; and creating environments for student learning that are inclusive and sensitive to diverse student populations. Now, our University has developed its second Diversity and Inclusion plan, which will help guide our efforts through 2021.

Diversity and Inclusion Vice President David Pilgrim shared these thoughts with our Board of Trustees in his annual update this past fall. He said, "I came to Ferris in 1990. I am still here in 2015, a quarter of a century later. As relates to diversity and inclusion, this Ferris is better. Diversity is one of the University's core values, and it is intimately interwoven into the University's strategic planning. Moreover, most members of our institution accept diversity as integral to our daily functioning. Come to Ferris any week of the year and you will have the opportunity to participate in diversity-related programs; indeed, a visitor would be hard pressed to find a comparable institution that does more diversity programming than does Ferris."

David also highlighted some of the progress our university has made, including the fact that 20 percent of Ferris' student body identifies as a member of a racial or ethnic group. He noted that we still have work to do, including the distance we still have to go to have a more diverse workforce.

Our new Diversity and Inclusion plan will help us to maintain and accelerate the positive momentum we have created and address areas where we need to make more progress. The plan outlines six major goals:

- Create a University that is respectful of differences and civil toward people who are different.
- Build and maintain an infrastructure that supports diversity and promotes inclusion.
- Recruit, retain, and graduate a diverse student population.
- Recruit, employ, and retain a diverse workforce.
- Improve inclusivity by incorporating diversity and inclusion in significant ways in teaching, learning, and research.
- Build upon existing partnerships and create new partnerships that enhance the University's commitment to and work with diverse populations.

This new plan was made possible thanks to the input over the past year by students, faculty and staff who were invited to complete a Diversity and Inclusion Climate Survey, and who took part in campus-wide meetings to discuss the survey's results. I want to thank everyone who contributed their perspective and experience to this process. It is through such broad-based commitment that we can continue to expand opportunities for all members of the Ferris community.

A special thanks is due to the members of the Diversity and Inclusion Planning Work Group, who put in many hours over the past year to facilitate this process. Please join me in acknowledging the commitment of Matthew Adeyanju, Julie Alexander, Tony Baker, Mike Berghoef, Peter Bradley, Sandy Britton, Tracy Busch, Natalia Carvalho-Pinto, Matt Chaney, Leigha Compson, Jessica Cruz, Samri Dave, Donna Ewigleben, Kemi Fadayomi, Jody Gardei, Sandy Gholston, Thomas Gladney III, Greg Gogolin, Tamie Grunow, Scott Herron, Franklin Hughes, Jimmie Joseph, Melissa Klinger,

Sheila MacEachron, Brooke Moore, Vivian Nazar, Matt Olovson, Lisa Ortiz, Tamira Owens, Victor Piercey, David Pilgrim, Bill Potter, Piram Prakasam, Fran Rosen, Kristen Salomonson, Todd Stanislav, Mischelle Stone, Patty Terryn, Spence Tower, Thong Tran, Michael Wade and Leroy Wright.

A current draft of the new plan, entitled “A Diversity and Inclusion Plan, 2016-2021: There is a Home for You at Ferris” is accessible here -

<http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/president/DiversityOffice/pdf/DiversityPlan2016.pdf>.

I encourage you to read this and consider how together we can accomplish what this plan aspires for our University. The spirit of this plan is captured well in the closing words of its preface:

“We value diversity. We recognize that the myriad of ways in which we differ—our races, our ethnicities, our genders, our gender identities, our sexual orientations, our ages, our social classes, our physical abilities, our faiths and ethical values systems, our national origins, and our political beliefs—offer a richness that enhances the university.

“We value inclusion, meaning, proactive behaviors that make each person feel welcome and empowered—those who are rich, those who are middle-class, and those who are poor; people of all religions and people with no religion; people of all colors and histories and people who are a mixture of many; conservatives, moderates, liberals; people of all genders and sexual orientations; people with physical, mental, and emotional challenges who choose to study at our campuses and online; and people who learn in traditional ways and people who don’t. An inclusive Ferris is a community where all those people and others believe that the University belongs to them as much as it belongs to others. This is the Ferris we are creating.”

With that in mind, now is the time to commit ourselves to the work of our new Diversity and Inclusion plan and to integrate these ideas in our work and throughout our strategic plan. As the new Diversity and Inclusion plan notes, “Diversity is not a problem to be solved but rather an opportunity to be pursued.” There are few if any challenges more important to our University and to both our and our students’ future.

## **Enrollment**

The spring semester 4th day enrollment count has been completed and generally shows modest declines across much of the university. Compared with a year ago enrollment has held steady on the Big Rapids campus, where headcount is at 9,618, identical to spring 2015 enrollment numbers, while student credit hours are down 388 or .3 percent. Among many numbers, new freshman in Big Rapids are down 53 in headcount, or 45 percent from a year ago. Continuing students are up 162 or 2 percent.

Outside of Big Rapids there are enrollment declines at the regional campuses where headcount is down 137 or 6.4 percent and SCH are down 850 or 6.6 percent. Enrollment has declined at Kendall College of Art and Design where headcount is down 150 or 10.9 percent and SCH are down 1,528 or 10.74 percent.

Overall university student headcount is 13,829, down 317 or 2.2 percent, and SCH are 157,634 down 2,898 or 1.84 percent from Spring 2015. First year retention has declined somewhat, but remains high, with 90 percent of full-time bachelor degree students and 86 percent of full-time associate degree students continuing from fall.

Our University student body continues to become more diverse. We now have more students who identify as Asian, Black/African American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and of two or more races. The largest increase was among Hispanic students, with that population increasing by 39 or 8.6 percent.

More detailed information on our enrollment figures is available from the Spring 2016 Summary, which is posted at

<http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/president/newsletters/memos/> . We will continue to face challenges from the declining numbers of high school graduates in Michigan, the increasing pressures of

cost, affordability and state support, and the economic challenges that students face. Our spring enrollment numbers point to the fact that these, among other factors, are having a real effect.

### **Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration**

I want to remind everyone about this week's annual Martin Luther King celebration events. These events go to the heart of our core values and the hard work we have done with our Diversity and Inclusion plan.

It is important to remember that even as we make progress – perhaps especially *because* we are making progress – there are still challenges. Last Friday university staff found and removed from three public areas on campus some flyers that contained views that are offensive and antithetical to everything Ferris State University values. These were obviously meant to coincide with our MLK celebration. I mention this with reluctance. There is no indication this was an organized effort and as a community we do not want to empower, through such acknowledgement, something that has no place at Ferris. However, we also cannot pretend that hateful views do not exist. This unfortunate incident only underscores the importance of this week's MLK celebration.

With that in mind, I urge you to attend this week's events. As I quoted in the section above, "Diversity is...an opportunity to be pursued." Please pursue that vision this week by attending:

- 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.

David L. Eisler, president