

Inside Academic Affairs
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What I Learned at Commission for the Future

This past week, I spent time in Grand Rapids, Lansing, and Big Rapids with President Eisler and a couple hundred Ferris stakeholders. We held three days of meetings titled “Commission for the Future” and took advantage of the opportunity to have face-to-face discussions about Ferris’ future, Core Values, and Strategic Plan.

In addition to some very engaged and helpful feedback on our Strategic Plan, there were three things I learned from our discussions.

We have tremendously engaged Advisory Board members. A great number of our guests at these meetings were members of various Ferris programs’ advisory boards, and these members were both anxious and happy to share their thoughts and ideas regarding Ferris’ future. Moreover, they were incredibly respectful. They didn’t try to tell us what we *should* do. Instead, they encouraged to consider what we should *think* about. Reaching from a point of introspection and personal experiences, they shared with us what they have learned through their professional experiences, their knowledge of industry trends, and their forecasts for future directions in their respective fields. These conversations were some of the best examples of civility I have witnessed, and our discussion and opportunity to learn from each other was richer for it. I found myself encouraged, motivated, and appreciative of the ability to continue our important relationships with our Advisory Boards at both a University and college level.

We are partners with passionate people. Several of our attendees were Ferris alumnus. Several were not. Yet, a passionate commitment to Ferris State University was a uniting force at each of the meetings. Our career focus resonates with our partners, and over and over again, I heard how much our partners really like Ferris graduates. They appreciate our hands-on approach to education, our focus on internships, and the students’ connections with our faculty. At one point on Wednesday, I spent some time engaged in conversation with a county sheriff. He shared with me that Ferris graduates were the first people he wants to hire; his simply stated reason: “They’re ready to go.” In fact, one of the biggest complaints I heard was that we are not producing enough graduates in certain areas. I have to admit, I like the challenge that complaint implies.

Our partners join us in our commitment to our Core Values. We spent a significant amount of time discussing our six Core Values at these meetings. Our partners shared their appreciation for our commitment to using our Core Values as a framework to guide our future as a University. They expressed their common sentiment that our Core Values provided an excellent foundation for the education of our students. Without much elaboration or explanation on my part, they communicated their understanding of focusing on practical values such as Collaboration while expressing their support for the meaningful and intentional efforts it takes to achieve more inherent values like Ethical Community. I got the sense that our stakeholders both appreciated

and applauded our holistic and value-driven commitment to developing our future workforce and leaders of society.

I want to continue these kinds of conversations with you. I hope you'll join our Strategic Planning Committee at one of the [opportunities](#) we have planned to present to you the first draft of Part One of our plan and discuss how we will move forward from here.

Thanks for today's minute. Have a delightful weekend.

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