



FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY™

CHARTER SCHOOLS OFFICE



March/April 2026

News and Updates

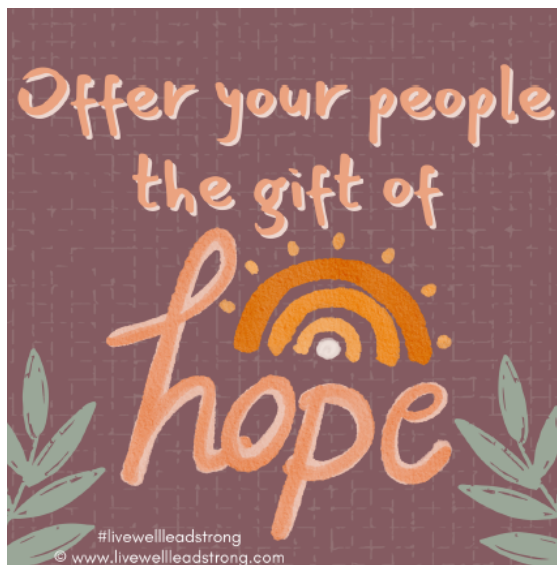
March 13, 2026



When Ferris State University authorizes a public school academy, it is an endeavor to positively transform the life trajectory of the students who attend that academy. The Charter Schools Office holds as its most fundamental goal that all students be prepared for success in college, work, and life. Test scores and knowledge are important but are not enough to succeed in an ever competitive and connected global community.

We believe that students must be able to apply knowledge to new situations, and to seek out new information through research skills and technological competence. To accomplish this, each academy must provide an environment to achieve academic excellence by delivering quality programming and instruction for the students it serves.

Messages from the CSO Associate Director



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Monday Message

I subscribe to a weekly school leadership email created by Debbie McFalone called *Live Well Lead Strong*. Each week includes timely and cutting-edge leadership topics with resources; she even records it if you only have time for a listen! At the end of the month, she provides a summary of her messages to print or share, and I felt that this particular summary encapsulated much of what we discussed and processed during our Elementary and Secondary Days of learning.

If you don't have time or the desire to read leadership books, this summary includes reminders of how to serve our people well with the gift of hope, "if you want to go far, go together," leading with authenticity, and productive conflict. She links aligned videos and resources in her updates that you might find interesting as well.

[Read Summary Here](#)

School Support Meetings

Our CSO Team along with the Field Representative assigned to your school held School Support Meetings in February to review progress and ensure that supports from the CSO are appropriately aligned for all academies. At these meetings, we reviewed academic, fiscal, operations, and compliance support indicators.

Field representatives will communicate with academies through school leaders and board members if there are any recommendations from those meetings. As always, if you need supports that we aren't thinking of, please let us know.

AI For Personalized Learning

If you were lucky enough to attend the March 2, 2026, Elementary Day of Learning, you were part of an introductory presentation from Keith Tramper through Kent ISD on AI in Education. If you can't wait until the 2026 Summer Leadership Conference and want to continue to learn about AI, MAPSA is offering a **FREE** professional development course with the chance to earn SCECHS.

Course Description and Link

Bring the power of AI into your classroom with confidence! This dynamic course brings together AI fundamentals, real classroom benefits, and safe, responsible use, plus hands-on practice with ready-to-use tools. Guided by the LEAP Learning Framework, you'll discover how AI can amplify best teaching strategies and spark deeper student engagement, voice, and choice. You'll practice prompting techniques, adapt a ready-to-use prompt library, and design an integration plan tailored to your goals—leaving ready to make AI-powered personalization a reality.

To join the AI for Personalized Learning space on the MI Charter Mastermind Network, click [here](#). You must have an MI Charter Mastermind Network account to join.



Mid-Contract and Reauthorization Reviews

Congratulations to Creative Technologies Academy and Michigan Collegiate, as the Ferris Board of Trustees have approved our recommendation for reauthorization following our reauthorization reviews in November and December! Reauthorization Reviews were conducted in the fall, and the recommendation of the Charter Schools Office was made at the February 2026 Ferris Board of Trustees meeting for new contract approval.

Our office also finished our last scheduled Mid-Contract Review for this year! Thank you to Joy Preparatory Academy, Battle Creek Montessori Academy, and Benton Harbor Charter School Academy!

The CSO implemented a new process for Reauthorization Reviews and Mid-Contract Reviews this year, and we appreciate your positive feedback and professionalism.

Messages from the School Support Specialist



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2026 Summer Leadership Conference - [DON'T WAIT, SIGN UP NOW!](#)

The **Second Annual Summer Leadership Conference**, hosted by the Ferris State University and Lake Superior State University Charter Schools Offices, will take place **July 21–22, 2026**, at the **DoubleTree Hotel in Bay City, Michigan**.

For the event flyer, click [here](#).

[Register for Event Here](#)

[Reserve a Hotel Room Here](#)

Professional Days of Learning

Ferris State University's Charter Schools Office recently hosted two Professional Days of Learning for school leaders on February 26 and March 2. The events brought together leaders from 15 of the 23 schools within the Ferris portfolio for a day focused on collaboration, networking, and professional growth.

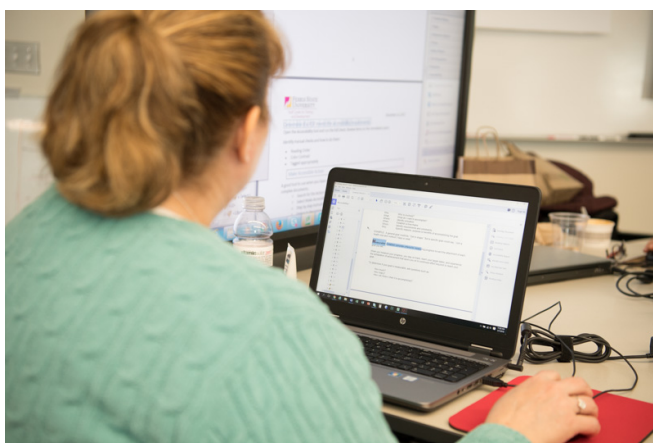
Special thanks to Autumn Mattson and Kate Bialkowski from Creative Technologies Academy for their impactful presentation, *Leading with Intention*. Their session encouraged leaders to reflect on their leadership practices and the importance of building trust within school communities.

We also extend our appreciation to Kyle Luft and his team from Michigan Connections Academy for graciously hosting the event.

We look forward to offering more professional learning opportunities in the future and continuing to support collaboration across our school communities.



Messages from the Compliance & Governance Specialist



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Virtual Board Professional Development Opportunities

The next webinar in the 2025-2026 board professional development series is *Strengthening Governance and Management/School Leader Partnerships*. It is scheduled for Tuesday April 14th at 7 p.m. For more information and best practices, please register for this session. **Board members, look for an email invitation from AirWin Educational Services with registration information.**

In case you missed the previous virtual board professional development sessions, below are links to the recordings.

- [Navigating Your Role as a New Board Member](#)
- [Leading with Purpose: Mission-Driven Decision-Making](#)
- [Strategic Oversight vs Micromanagement](#)
- [Data-Driven Governance for Student Achievement](#)
- [Ensuring Effective Financial Oversight](#)
- [Growth Planning: Expanding Impact, Not Just Enrollment](#)

If you would like a copy of a presentation or handouts, please contact Sharon Hopper at SharonHopper@ferris.edu.



New Michigan Law – Student Smartphone Policy

On February 10, 2026, Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed into law a ban on smartphones in Michigan classrooms. Beginning in the 2026-2027 school year, the school board shall implement a wireless communications device policy that prohibits students from using a wireless communications device on school grounds during instructional time.

The law further states the policy:

- Must provide details regarding enforcement mechanisms that the school will use to achieve the goals of the policy.
- Must provide exemptions for:
 - Medically necessary devices
 - School-owned devices, including but not limited to, school-issued tablets and laptops
 - Devices used for special education programming
 - Devices provided as an accommodation to students under section 504 of Title V of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
 - Devices used as part of an IEP under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
 - Lesson-specific academic assignments, at the limited and direct discretion of a classroom teacher
 - Emergency situations as described in the school's Emergency Operations Plan.
- Must be posted on the school's website.

Messages from the Charter to College Student Support Specialist

This past week, I had the opportunity to do something I've been passionate about for a long time—giving back to my hometown through service. On Tuesday, March 3rd, 2026, I visited Muskegon Montessori Academy for Environmental Change. The moment was surreal, inspiring, and truly fulfilling. It made me proud of who I am today and prompted me to reflect on my journey. Seeing the excitement on the students' faces was genuinely heartwarming.

In my role within the Charter Schools Office as the Charter to College Student Support Specialist, I am still growing and learning, especially since I just started in



Ahmad Wright

December. Even so, I am doing everything I can to understand the work and make a meaningful impact. One of the key opportunities we offer to our charter schools is exposure to Ferris State University.

Charter to College Student Support
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During school visits, I engage in informal conversations with students about Ferris, college life, and higher education in general. These interactions take place before or after school, during lunch, or even just walking through the hallways. I also participate in more formal visits—setting up information tables at community events, attending parent-teacher conferences, and meeting with students who want to learn more. Much of this work focuses on supporting our high school students.

Many of these opportunities extend to the elementary level as well. I visit campuses to read to students, meet staff, and learn about the different academy environments. I am currently developing an **8th-Grade On-Campus Tour Model**, which will serve as a structured plan to help our 8th-grade charter students explore college and get early exposure to higher education.

Another important support we provide is **Ferris SWAG**. We supply our schools with Ferris-branded items that they can distribute to students as part of their PBIS initiatives. These small incentives help motivate students and build a sense of excitement about their future.



Our Mission and Vision Statement

Ferris State University Mission

Ferris State University prepares students for successful careers, responsible citizenship, and lifelong learning. Through its many partnerships and its career-oriented, broad-based education, Ferris serves our rapidly changing global economy and society.

Charter Schools Office Vision Statement

FSU will authorize public school academies that promise to transform the lives of students by demonstrating high-quality performance.

Charter Schools Office Mission Statement

The Ferris State University Charter Schools Office provides quality oversight and support by focusing on the four pillars of academics, finances, operations, and governance/compliance.

Core Values

1. Student Learning
2. A Collaborative Working Environment
3. Diversity
4. Opportunities
5. Excellence
6. Accountability

Contact Us

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[Visit our Website](#)

Ferris State University is an equal opportunity institution. For information on the University's Policy on Non-Discrimination, visit ferris.edu/non-discrimination.

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