



FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY™

CHARTER SCHOOLS OFFICE



January/February 2026 News and Updates January 16, 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 Director



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Starting Strong: Key Focus Areas for the Second Half of the School Year

As we begin the new year, January provides an important opportunity for charter school leaders and boards to pause, reflect, and refocus. While the school year is well underway, the months ahead offer meaningful opportunities to strengthen practices, support student success, and ensure long-term organizational health. As an authorizer, the Ferris State University Charter Schools Office encourages schools to prioritize the following focus areas as they move into the second half of the academic year.

- Board Oversight and Meeting Attendance
- Continuous Improvement in Instructional Practice
- Monitoring Budgets and Financial Health
- Building a Healthy School Culture

[Read More](#)

Messages from the CSO Associate Director



Kelly Buckmaster
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I recently finished reading Brené Brown's latest book *Strong Ground*, and I highly recommend as a tool to hone your own leadership skills and treat yourself to personal professional development.

If you are a fan of Brené Brown, you may have read her book *Dare to Lead* which lays the foundation for courageous leadership including leading with vulnerability, based on your values, and building trust. *Strong Ground*

is about applying that learning with updated research since the 2019 publication of *Dare to Lead*. Brown weaves in many metaphors comparing concepts of leadership with athletes in training which was informative and entertaining.

If you are interested, you can find free downloads of materials and listen to her podcasts on the [Hub for Strong Ground](#).



Out of School Time Grant – MiLEAP

Ferris State University was awarded grant dollars for ten of our charter schools and two other schools as part of a collaborative effort to provide supports for students that would help to improve student outcomes. Individual letters will be sent to participating schools from our office to share the next steps for grant participation, budget and reimbursement requirements, and timelines.

We will be coordinating with the FSU offices involved in this grant to ensure timely and supportive communication.



Charter School Office – Scholarship for Tuition Support

Thank you so much for responding to my survey and for your positive feedback and suggestions. Chris Loiselle and I are working in collaboration with the Dean of the College of Arts, Sciences and Education and the School of Education Department Chair to develop a scholarship/tuition support program for our charter schools' staff.

It is our hope that this will provide opportunities for growth for your team as well as incentivizing working for your schools in regards to continuing education opportunities.

Messages from the School Support Specialist

Virtual Opportunities Still Available

The Ferris Charter Schools Office (CSO) has several upcoming virtual professional learning opportunities available. Participation in prior sessions is **not required**. To register or request additional information, please contact **Beth Taylor**.

- **Special Education Roundtable (10am-11:30am):** January 14, February 11, and March 11
- **Leadership Book Study (10 am-11:30am):** January 21 and February 18
- **NWEA Customized Virtual Sessions:** One-hour, academy-specific virtual sessions available upon request



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Upcoming Networking Opportunities

The **Alternative Education and Strict Discipline Academies** will host their first virtual networking session on **Friday, February 6, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.**

Thank you to **Heidi Cate** of Lighthouse Academies and Hope Academy of West Michigan for facilitating this meaningful discussion focused on supporting this unique student population. Leaders interested in joining this network should contact Beth Taylor.



In-Person Learning Opportunities

In response to leader feedback requesting opportunities for collaboration and shared learning, the CSO is pleased to offer the following **new** in-person events:

- **NEW! Secondary Day of Learning - Thursday, February 26, 2026**

[Learn More](#)

[Register Here](#)

Save the Date: Summer Leadership Conference

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

Additional details and registration information will be forthcoming.

**SAVE THE
DATE**

**2026 SUMMER
LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE**

JULY 21-22 2026

DOUBLETREE HOTEL IN BAY CITY, MI

HOSTED BY



Messages from the Compliance & Governance Specialist



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Public Comments During a Board Meeting

While it is infrequent that a member of the public attends and addresses the board at a school board meeting, it is imperative that the board be prepared and adopt best practices for managing the public comment portion of a board meeting.

A board meeting agenda usually includes two public comment opportunities during the meeting: one for agenda items only and the other for non-agenda items. Most boards include the following statements, or something similar, on their meeting agenda.

[This is a meeting of the Board of Directors in public for the purpose of conducting the school's business and it is not to be considered a public meeting.](#)

Individuals wishing to address the Board of Directors are requested to sign in with the Board Secretary prior to the start of the meeting. Individual comments are limited to no more than three (3) minutes each with a total time allowance for public comment not to exceed thirty (30) minutes. The board will not verbally respond to public comments, but may follow up in the most appropriate and time-effective manner.

[Read More](#)

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
7. Integrity and Trust

Contact Us

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[Visit our Website](#)

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