

## **Our University's Continuing Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

Our University's founder, Woodbridge N. Ferris, was a man ahead of his time. In 1906 he ran an advertisement which read, "The Ferris Institute is thoroughly democratic -- that is to say, it is a school for all the people regardless of race or station."

His words weren't just words on paper or spoken clichés. He fervently sought after men and women of all ages, colors, and backgrounds who yearned for a better life for themselves and their families. In the late 1890s, international students were coming to Ferris Institute to learn English. Woodbridge also recruited dozens of African American men to Ferris from the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute (known today as Hampton University) from 1910 through 1928. Hampton Institute's coursework would have prepared these students for manual labor, which was considered appropriate work for African Americans in the Jim Crow South, whereas Ferris Institute offered education related to fields such as business and healthcare. These men went on to become great leaders in their fields.

As an educator and statesman, his lifelong mission was to provide "education for all children, all men, and all women of Michigan, all the people in all our states all the time." This education, sparked by opportunity, would be the catalyst for making the world a better place.

Today, more than 136 years after our founding, we strive to continue the legacy he established by building and sustaining an environment welcoming to all. An environment that reflects myriad identities, perspectives, and backgrounds where barriers are removed, all have equal access to opportunity and advancement, and everyone feels included, heard, valued, and safe at Ferris State University. The following actions support our University's continuing commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

### **What we have started**

Demographic data on students' contacts with the Department of Public Safety and the Office of Student Conduct are being collected and analyzed.

Student leaders and Ferris employees are working with public officials and residents of Big Rapids to create opportunities for sustained dialogues about racial injustice.

KCAD is assembling an Equity Council of local advisors to assist in moving diversity, equity, and inclusion forward at KCAD.

The Office of International Education is spearheading a university-wide initiative, "One Community; One Book." Using the book, *Haste to Rise*, the initiative seeks to build community while addressing the University's historical commitment to opportunity and racial justice.

## **What we will do in the Fall**

Professional development focusing on diversity, inclusion, and equity will begin in Fall 2020, with sessions for senior leadership. Additional sessions will occur throughout the academic year with other employee groups.

In October 2020, the University will engage the National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates (NACCC) to conduct an audit of students' attitudes regarding campus inclusiveness. The results of the survey will be used to develop a better understanding of the extent to which Ferris State University supports diversity, inclusion, and equity, and to inform and improve support resources, policies, and practices, including those to prevent or respond to discrimination and harassment.

In Fall 2020, Ferris State University will establish a Campus Climate Team (CCT), a group of employees from across the university. The CCT will proactively respond to instances of bias in the following ways: support students who are targets of hate or bias incidents; refer students to available university resources including units that conduct formal investigations; educate the campus community about the impact of hate and bias, and advocate for and promote new initiatives that further a welcoming and inclusive campus. This will be a standing committee.

In Fall 2020, a series of conversations will begin involving the President, Provost, Vice President for Student Affairs, Vice President for Diversity, Inclusion, and Strategic Initiatives, and KCAD President and members of the student body. These conversations will occur throughout the academic year.

## **What we will do during the upcoming academic year**

Review for improvement the recruitment, retention and promotion of minority employees at the university.

Identify gaps in academic achievement and create tailored and comprehensive plans to reduce these gaps.

Strengthen and better align the work done in those offices that work directly with diverse populations.

Identify and adopt additional efforts developed from campus and community conversations.

Begin the process of formulating the university's next diversity and inclusion plan.