

**For Immediate Release**  
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### **Ferris to celebrate dedication of Founders' Room**

BIG RAPIDS -- Ferris State University will celebrate the dedication of the Rankin Center Founders' Room with a ceremony at 11:15 a.m. on Tuesday, March 29.

The event will be held in Rankin-238, formerly the President's Room, and will feature remarks by President David Eisler along with brief founders' recollection readings by members of the History Commemoration Task Force.

Leading up to the event, the task force held an online trivia contest featuring questions about the University's founders and its storied past. Contest winners will be treated to lunch with Dr. Eisler in the Centennial Dining Room immediately following the dedication. The public is also encouraged to dine there after the ceremony as the day's lunch menu will feature historic selections including recipes from Helen Ferris, as well as specialty plates created by the Rankin Center staff.

The Founders' Room features portraits of Woodbridge and Helen Ferris along with panels tracing their lives and the University's history. The entrance to the renamed room features a dedication plaque and a bust of Mr. Ferris. The name change reflects the University's pride of and commitment to this special couple from New York. From their dedication to make the world a better place, they took a chance on starting an educational institution in a small remote town in a relatively unknown lumber region of Michigan.

The Ferris' were born in 1853 and married in New York on Dec. 23, 1874. They visited Big Rapids in 1883 while scouting locations for a new school. In May of 1884 they arrived in Big Rapids and set about recruiting and making arrangements to begin their new endeavor. On Sept. 1 they opened the Big Rapids Industrial School with 15 students in temporary quarters in the Vandersluis Block on Michigan Avenue.

Woodbridge and Helen taught classes and he did the administrative work. Four months later they moved the school to a permanent location at the corner of Michigan and Maple. By 1894 their school had become Ferris Industrial School and the Ferris' had moved it into a new building, Old Main, at the corner of Ives and Oak. Later that year the school was incorporated and four years later the name was changed to Ferris Institute.

Although Woodbridge and Helen Ferris would not live to see later name changes to Ferris State College (1963) and then to Ferris State University (1987), the institution remains committed to the visions and ideals of its founders. Ferris is the only state university that carries the name of its founders and as such has a direct link to their beliefs and philosophies.

It was Woodbridge N. Ferris, educator, twice-elected governor of Michigan, and United States Senator, who said: "My plea in Michigan – and it will be my plea to the last breath I draw, and the last word I speak – is education for all children, all men, and all women of Michigan, all the people in all our states all the time."

Light refreshments will be served at the dedication which is sponsored by the History Commemoration Task Force. Students, alumni, faculty, staff and community members are all invited to attend the event.



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