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Included below is a press release regarding a two-part panel discussion honoring university co-founder Helen Ferris at 4 p.m. Oct. 8 in the Rankin Student Center Centennial Dining Room. Further information is available by contacting Leah Nixon, assistant director of News Services.

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Panel Honors Legacy of Helen Ferris

BIG RAPIDS – Celebrating Ferris State University’s 125th anniversary, the College of Education and Human Services is hosting a two-part panel discussion honoring university co-founder Helen Ferris at 4 p.m. Oct. 8 in the Rankin Student Center Centennial Dining Room.

The first in a series of events commemorating Helen Ferris, the panel will analyze who Helen Ferris was as a person while adding perspective to her role as co-founder of the university.

“What most people don’t realize is that Helen played as much of a role as co-founder of the university as Woodbridge. She was a remarkable woman for her time – an age where it was unusual for women to be in the workplace. Her accomplishments were astounding, but for the most part unnoticed,” said Mary Kay MacIver, panelist and associate director for Advancement Services at Ferris.

Along with MacIver, the first panel will consist of local historians Melinda McMartin Isler, university archivist, and Gary Huey, professor of History at Ferris. They will discuss characteristics typically associated with Helen Ferris such as conscientiousness, integrity and sincerity.

The second part of the panel is composed of Ferris faculty and alumni from the COEHS. Panelists include Christine Conley-Sowels, assistant professor, School of Education; Glen Okonoski, alumnus and assistant professor, Television and Digital Media Production; Kristin Walters, alumna, School of Criminal Justice faculty and director of the Justice Learning Community; and Jill Busey, alumna and Big Rapids Recreation department director. This panel plans to discuss their thoughts on Helen Ferris and what it means to them as inheritors of her legacy, both personally and professionally.

As individual discussions conclude, both panels will come together to discuss how the Ferris community can continue to preserve Helen Ferris’ legacy. Maude Bigford, Ferris Honors program coordinator, will moderate the discussion panels.

Complimentary hors d’oeuvres and conversation will begin at 4 p.m. preceding the panel discussions at 4:30 p.m.

COEHS adopted the memory and legacy of Helen Ferris as their way to join the university in celebrating its 125th anniversary.

“Where Woodbridge was the grand visionary of the university, Helen was the nuts and bolts of that vision,” said Paul Blake, COEHS associate dean. “She provided an incredible balance to Woodbridge’s vision by adding her own sense of practicality.”

For more information on Ferris’ 125th anniversary celebration, visit www.ferris.edu/htmls/alumni/Historical/musicweek.htm.

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