

For Immediate Release
April 25, 2009

Contact Bill Taylor, Asst. Director, News Services
taylorb@ferris.edu, (231) 591-2065 or 591-5604

Ferris-Grand Rapids to graduate first students from two programs

BIG RAPIDS – Graduates crossing the stage for Ferris State University’s May 6 Commencement will include several who are the first to complete two degree programs at the Ferris-Grand Rapids campus.

During the Friday evening Commencement ceremonies for the College of Education and Human Services, Sheila Michael of Coopersville will receive a baccalaureate degree in Elementary Education. Receiving master’s degrees in Curriculum and Instruction with a concentration in Philanthropic Education will be Marilyn Castillo of Kentwood, Barbara Dillbeck of Grand Haven, Kim Fox of Grand Rapids, Greta Hendricks-Johnson of Southfield, Jeanne Prisco of Dearborn and Caryn Yarnot of Muskegon.

The streamlined Elementary Education offering, started by Ferris-Grand Rapids in fall 2002, is a unique partnership with Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC) that permits students to take a majority of their courses at GRCC. The teacher-training arrangement allows students to transfer more than 90 credits to Ferris, cutting the cost of a bachelor’s degree in half.

The extended teacher-training partnership is unique among Michigan community colleges and provides students with a seamless transition. Students can complete their education minors at GRCC and concurrently take Ferris professional education courses as early as their second year. The program is now being employed as a model for other Michigan colleges.

First offered in summer 2002, the Philanthropic Education degree prepares K-12 teachers to develop innovative curricular resources and teach democratic principles of citizen engagement as a part of the core school curriculum. This new knowledge includes links to the Michigan Academic Standards for giving, serving and private citizen action, including service-learning. The graduate program is conducted primarily online with the exception of two, 10-day summer residencies.

Since 1997, the Council of Michigan Foundations has created new educational resources that teach philanthropy as integrated knowledge into the K-12 Michigan Frameworks required for the Michigan Education Assessment Program. The project is called “Learning to Give” (LTG).

The Ferris program was developed in partnership with LTG and the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University. Ferris and LTG are prepared to launch the offering into five other states during the next few years with the potential of growing nationally and even worldwide through distance learning.

“Our intent is not to duplicate higher education, but to innovate it,” said Don Green, Ferris-Grand Rapids vice chancellor and dean. Both degree offerings are examples of several distinctive academic programs available at FSU-GR.