Message: Ferris State University was one of eight institutions in the United States selected to participate in the second phase of the Political Engagement Project, sponsored jointly by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and The New York Times. Further information is available by contacting Leah Nixon

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Ferris chosen to participate in Political Engagement Project's Phase II

BIG RAPIDS – Ferris State University was one of eight institutions in the United States selected to participate in the second phase of the Political Engagement Project, sponsored jointly by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and *The New York Times*, Ferris Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Michael Harris said.

The goal of the Political Engagement Project initiative is the development of pedagogy and research that is focused on increasing political awareness and involvement among undergraduate students. Phase I of the Political Engagement Project was designed to enhance student political engagement through individual courses. Phase II is designed to achieve that goal on a campus-wide basis.

"The emphasis behind the program is to impart the importance of political involvement within the community as a major goal of university education," said Richard Griffin, a professor of Social Sciences at Ferris. "It is our business to educate tomorrow's leaders to become responsible citizens."

The major distinction of a Political Engagement Project course is that it does not require creation of a new course or the complete overhaul of an existing course. Rather, the project requires only that at least one of the course objectives will serve to improve student political engagement in relation to course material by exposing students to real events and players in a political arena. Examples of relevant activities include guest speaker series, attendance at governmental meetings, travel to events away from campus and utilization of current media resources in addition to or in place of texts.

"Ferris students report less engagement with civic and political issues than the national average," said Anthony Baker, an associate professor of Social Sciences at Ferris. "We can complain about the students, or we at the University can renew our efforts to get them

personally connected to their society and the issues of public policy that will impact their lives."

Currently, more than 30 faculty representing eight colleges and 20 degree programs have expressed interest in participating in this program, beginning with the 2006-07 academic year, Harris said. This widespread indication of interest will allow Ferris to take a leadership role in the project by moving the initiative to include a wide variety of disciplines, including Construction Management, Criminal Justice, Automotive Services, Reading, Health Care Systems, Pharmacy and Optometry in addition to the more traditional Social Sciences disciplines.

"The response from the faculty has been amazing," Griffin added.

The Ferris Political Engagement Project is coordinated by Griffin and Baker. Administrative support for this project will be provided by University College Dean William Potter and his staff.

Planning meetings are scheduled May 1 through 3 and will be followed by a Political Engagement Project team trip to a national conference in Snowbird, Utah, in mid-June. Further information about the Political Engagement Project is available by contacting Baker at 591-2753, Griffin at 591-2761 or Potter at 591-2428.

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