



**PRESS RELEASE: Ferris Prepares for Higher Learning Commission
Reaccreditation Visit to Grand Rapids**

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Included below is a press release the upcoming Higher Learning Commission reaccreditation visit for Ferris State University on April 18 to April 20 in the city of Grand Rapids. This visit is the culmination of years of work toward Ferris' reaccreditation through HLC. The process has a component that will be open to the public as people will be able to take a closer look at Ferris and the progress it has made during the last decade as an institution. Any questions regarding this press release can be directed to Sandy Gholston, interim assistant director of News Services.

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Ferris State Reaccreditation Process To Include Grand Rapids Visit

BIG RAPIDS – Ferris State University is scheduled for a critical reaccreditation peer review visit from the Higher Learning Commission April 18 through April 20.

In addition to the visit to the university's main campus in Big Rapids, the HLC team will spend time in Grand Rapids as part of its extended evaluation process of Ferris.

In anticipation of the visit, an HLC Steering Committee was formed in the fall of 2007 and co-chaired by Michael Cairns, associate vice president for Student Affairs, and Christine Vonder Haar, a faculty member from the College of Arts and Sciences. The committee initiated a self-study process to strengthen the university's efforts to earn continuing accreditation. Through the self-study process, Ferris underwent an extensive evaluation and reflection of its effectiveness in fulfilling the university's mission and to recommend any areas that required improvement in anticipation of this month's HLC visit.

“Our efforts were directed toward having an inclusive and transparent process. On both measures, we believe we succeeded, as hundreds were involved, and more information than ever before is readily accessible to all university stakeholders,” said Roberta Teahen, associate provost and self-study coordinator. “The self-study process provides a reflective opportunity for the university to assess its strengths and areas for continued inquiry from a holistic perspective.”

Teahen emphasized that accreditation is important to ensure student access to federal financial aid, transfer of credits and to maintain the distinction of a Ferris degree.

Ferris' self-study process culminated in the production of a major document that details the findings, and includes the strengths identified and the opportunities for continued improvement. The document was completed in February 2011 and delivered to the team that plans to visit the university this month. A complete version of the self-study report is accessible on the Ferris website at <http://www.ferris.edu/hlc/drafts.htm>.

“Our findings were encouraging, as we reaffirmed the many strengths for which Ferris has been known and identified areas needing attention that were not complete surprises, as individuals, groups, and our strategic initiatives are already addressing these,” Cairns said.

The HLC criteria include several major categories: mission and integrity, planning for the future, effective teaching and learning, acquisition, discovery, application of learning, and service and engagement. One component of the self-study process is to extend an invitation to all stakeholders to offer opinions about the university to the HLC. Information about sending comments can be found on the Ferris website at <http://www.ferris.edu/hlc/thirdparty.htm>

The next step in this multi-year process is to have an eight-person peer review team, comprised of individuals from similar institutions, review the self-study findings, interview stakeholders, and form their own judgments about the extent to which Ferris meets the expected standards. As part of its review, the visiting team will be in Grand Rapids seeking input from community members in various public locations. Ferris has a strong presence in the city with FSU-Grand Rapids and the Kendall College of Art and Design. That team will produce a report of its findings within eight weeks from the date of the campus visit.

Ferris' HLC team is confident that the university is well positioned for the visit and review.

“Ferris is a distinctive place that strives to live out its mission and values on a daily basis,” Teahen said. “The extent of commitment, engagement, and relevance are striking assets that often set us apart from other higher education institutions.”

Ferris expects that delivery of the final report from the HLC could take up to six months as the university's self-study documents and the team's report are subject to additional review processes.

HLC is an independent corporation and one of two commission members of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, which is one of six regional institutional accreditors in the United States. The commission accredits degree-granting post-secondary educational institutions in the North Central region. For more on HLC, visit its website: <http://www.ncahlc.org/>.

For more information Ferris' HLC process, visit the website <http://www.ferris.edu/hlc/index.htm>

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