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Included below is a press release regarding the dedication of three sculptures celebrating Ferris State University's 125th anniversary. Further information is available by contacting Leah Nixon, assistant director of News Services.

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Dedication Highlights 125th Anniversary Sculpture Constructed by Welding Students

BIG RAPIDS – If you asked Lowell sophomore Conrad Ruffilo why he volunteered more hours outside of class than he can translate to create a sculpture celebrating Ferris State University's 125th anniversary, the answer would be simple: It gives him a chance to be a part of history.

“Anyone that wouldn't take this opportunity is not in the right program,” the Ferris Welding Engineering Technology major said. “It's one thing to be able to design something like this, but to make something that's lasting...I'm honored and excited to be a part of history.”

Dorr sophomore Patrick Damveld agrees. Also a Welding Engineering Technology major, Damveld and Ruffilo spent the past semester taking a design from paper to a large-scale, public art statement constructed out of steel and aluminum, and finished in rust.

A dedication ceremony is being held at 11 a.m. Friday, May 7, to unveil the sculptures. The event is open to the public and will be held in Lot 2 at the south end of the Swan Building on Ferris State University's campus.

The project is an extension of Festival of the Arts and was designed by Ferris Resident Artist and professor of Creative Arts Robert Barnum.

“These students are writing history and taking my design and making it reality,” Barnum said.

The initial phase of the project includes three sculptures that when completed will stand more than 22 feet tall and weigh more than 2,000 pounds. Organizers hope to construct a fourth sculpture in the future to coincide with another university anniversary.

“The sculptures are a visual narrative that offer a thought-provoking dialogue to the viewer of all ages about the nature and intellectual personality of a place and time,” Barnum said. “This university, as with any school of higher education, is an industry dedicated to goals from the practical to the philosophical that evolves the human race.

“This is a visual presence that will stand for hundreds of years and will require a personal, self-directed response. Each viewer who stands before this sculpture in 2010, and for centuries in the future, will first contemplate and then choose its title, definition and purpose,” he added.

Besides this sculpture, the Festival of the Arts Committee has collaborated with Barnum, Ferris students and Welding Engineering Technology associate professor David Murray to craft two other community sculptures. In 2008, the team created the sculpture located outside of Big Rapids City Hall, and in 2009, they crafted, “Healing Hands,” donated to and located outside of Mecosta County Medical Center.

Now in its third year of revival, Festival of the Arts is dedicated to enriching lives through art and building bridges between Ferris and surrounding communities, festival co-chair Bruce Dilg said.

Added Murray, “This has been fun, eye-opening work for the students, and it helps the community. That’s why we do this.”

Murray noted his students also are working to complete a pergola to be positioned in Pocket Park in downtown Big Rapids this summer.

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FSU.125th Sculpture.jpg

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