

**From:** [Leah D Nixon](#)  
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Included below is a press release regarding Ferris State University's commitment to retraining workers in Michigan. Further information is available by contacting Leah Nixon, assistant director of News Services.

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### **Ferris Gives Displaced Workers a Second Chance**

BIG RAPIDS – Ferris State University's commitment to retraining workers in Michigan, who have been adversely impacted by challenging economic times, is stronger than ever.

Since 2007, when Gov. Jennifer Granholm announced the No Worker Left Behind free tuition program, Ferris has emerged as a leader in the state of Michigan in providing opportunities for displaced workers to reinvent themselves and re-enter the state's workforce better prepared to contribute to the state's economic transformation and global competitiveness.

Among the outlined NWLB features are two years of free tuition at any state community college, university or other approved training program (a one-time offer); a skills assessment administered by Michigan Works!; and the opportunity to pursue a degree or occupational certificate in a high-demand occupation or emerging industry, or in an entrepreneurship program.

The NWLB program is funded through a mix of federal training resources, including monies provided by Michigan Works! for displaced workers and low-income workers seeking retraining.

In fall 2009, 120 students enrolled at Ferris as a result of financing sponsored through Michigan Works! Included among those students were 66 seeking bachelor's, 48 associates and four master's degrees, and two were enrolled in certificate programs. The majority of students (67) attended off-campus sites, with 50 taking classes in Big Rapids and three at Kendall College of Art and Design in Grand Rapids.

Ferris Student Services Representative Nicole Merritt, who works with third-party billing and outside scholarships, said funding is paramount for these students.

“Without programs such as No Worker Left Behind and the financial resources provided by Michigan Works!, most of these students would likely not be attending Ferris,” Merritt said. “This funding helps workers needing retraining get back on their feet.”

Programs within the College of Allied Health Sciences have been the most popular among displaced and low-income workers enrolling at Ferris, Merritt noted. Specifically, she cited

the Health Information Technology and Respiratory Care programs as being top choices. Other programs sought related to technological and management fields.

Ferris Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Fritz Erickson believes Ferris has uniquely positioned itself as a leader in strengthening Michigan's economy now and in the coming years.

"The issue of workforce development and preparing people to enter a competitive economy is what Ferris is all about and has been about since the beginning," Erickson said. "It's our history, it's what defines us and it's what we embrace as a university."

Being able to respond to the needs of the economy is one of Ferris' strengths, he added.

"It's why we have such an incredibly high job placement rate," he said. "We really do anticipate our future and then get out in front of it to be able to meet future needs. As needs change, we change. That's our culture at Ferris State University."

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