

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
March 26, 2012

Hockey

Friday and Saturday were historic evenings for Ferris athletics and the men's ice hockey team. Our men have reached the NCAA's championship "Frozen Four"!! This is the first time for our program since entering NCAA Division I ice hockey in 1979. Our team earned the right to compete in the national finals by winning the regional NCAA tournament in Green Bay, Wisconsin. They defeated the University of Denver 2-1 on Friday, and then prevailed over Cornell University, also 2-1 in a thrilling game Saturday evening. The Bulldogs will face Union in one of the semi-final games at the NCAA national championship on April 5 in Tampa, Fla.

This has been a truly special year for the hockey team, as they have been ranked #1 in the nation and won the regular season championship of the CCHA. They have done an extraordinary job of representing Ferris this year. This is a group of young men who have played together unselfishly as a team all season and richly deserve this success. Congratulations and best wishes to these student athletes and their coaches as they both represent and bring national recognition to our University.

Legislative Testimony

On Wednesday of last week, I presented testimony to the Michigan House Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education. My remarks, entitled "Higher Education in Michigan: Restoring Support, Encouraging Opportunity and Growth," touched upon a number of important issues.

The period since 2003 has been a time of staggering losses for higher education budgets in Michigan. During this time, state funding for Ferris State University has been reduced from \$55.5 million to \$41.3 million, a loss of \$14.2 million, or 25.5 percent. At the same time, student enrollments increased by one third and the number of employees remained level. I also emphasized the precipitous decline in state student financial aid funding. In 2009 the legislature and Governor Granholm eliminated two thirds of the financial support for our students. You may recall the elimination of the Promise Scholarship, and five other scholarship programs. Of the \$99 million in state financial aid, currently only \$1 million is actual state funding. The remainder of this funding is federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families. If the federal support our students receive through these TANF funds is ever removed, the result could be devastating.

This year Governor Snyder has proposed a three percent increase to higher education and presented a series of performance metrics to allocate those funds. Much of my presentation focused on performance-based funding. That analysis and an explanation of the four metrics is available here - http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/president/presentations/2011-2012/Performance_based_funding.pdf.

Ferris State University would fare well under the Governor's proposal, receiving a 6.2 percent increase because of -

- Strong growth in the number of students who are graduating from Ferris

- Our focus on degrees Michigan needs in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and healthcare-related fields
- The large number of Pell Grant students we enroll

The fourth metric deals with tuition restraint and Ferris would receive additional funding if our tuition increase for next year is 4.1% or lower.

While we are grateful for the prospect of this increase after so many years of budget reductions, the reality is the amount proposed for public universities represents only a 20 percent restoration of the funds cut last year. In my testimony I expressed support for the Governor's proposal, but argued strongly that these should be base funds rather than one-time funds. Allocating these as one-time funds introduces additional risk and uncertainty in our funding and makes it more difficult to use them to restrain costs. When time permits I encourage you to look at these materials, which are accessible at - <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/president/presentations/2011-2012/> . I would appreciate hearing your thoughts and reactions. Please write me at eislerd@ferris.edu .

Student Debt and Time to Degree Website

As our university community moves forward to address the issues of student debt and timely degree completion, I want to make sure we are sharing ideas and resources with each other. Elaine Kamptner in our office has designed a website that brings together links to my presentation slides, participants' responses to forum questions, and other resources and articles. The website can be accessed at <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/president/planning/studentdebt.htm> .

The growing crisis of student debt is rapidly becoming one of the most important issues facing higher education. I am hopeful that you have taken some time, as I have, to talk with Ferris students. This is a very real issue they face, and it is growing worse. I look forward to gathering more of your ideas, and also to working together to identify and implement the best proposals for making a Ferris education as affordable as possible.

Mathcounts Competition

On Saturday, March 18, approximately 150 of the most academically talented middle school students from across the Michigan were on our Big Rapids campus to compete in the state Mathcounts competition. Mathcounts is a national enrichment, club and competition program that promotes middle school mathematics achievement through grassroots involvement. Professor Chuck Drake, who was instrumental in getting Ferris chosen as the site of the state competition for these "matheletes," organizes the program locally. Professor Bob McCullough and his wife, Nancy, helped by running the Countdown Round, which was the competition's oral finale. In addition to helping with advancing mathematic literacy, having the Mathcounts competition here introduced these high-achieving young students to the resources our university has to offer. Please join me in thanking Professors Drake and McCullough, and everyone else involved in bringing the Mathcounts competition here to our campus and making the event a success.

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler, president