

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
February 27, 2012

Student Debt

Many have sent ideas and suggestions regarding the problem of the increasing debt of our students. I appreciate receiving these and enjoy thinking through them with you. One of the frequent ideas received is the need to help students and their families become more financially knowledgeable. It was exciting to learn that the Director of Financial Aid, Sara Dew, and her colleagues have developed a website on financial literacy and awareness. The site, http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/admission/financialaid/financial_literacy/financialliteracy.html, provides links to a loan calculator, short videos on Budgeting Basics, How to Be Credit Savvy, and more. It also provides important information on the cost of attendance, financial aid deadlines, loans, scholarships, student employment and more.

This type of initiative is a very good example of the ways we can help our students at Ferris. The more “touch points” at which we can interact with students and make them aware of their choices, the more chance we will have of being good partners with them on reducing the cost of their education and getting them into their careers more quickly.

As you consider this topic, please continue to send what you develop. We will collect these materials for the next month and share them with the campus for your review, prioritization and action. Thank you.

Board of Trustees

On Friday Ferris' Board of Trustees was on campus for committee meetings, a special meeting and working sessions. A priority of the Board is to schedule its meetings on campus, and on this visit they met in the Pharmacy Building. At lunch, board members visited with a group of faculty sabbatical recipients who are also Fulbright Scholars. Faculty members Marietta Bell-Scribner, Rick Griffin and Jim Hoerter shared their overseas sabbatical experiences with the Board and the ways in which these add a great depth of perspective to the teaching.

On Friday the Board approved an agreement for sale of the university's Holiday Inn Hotel and Conference Center to family-owned and Grand Rapids-based Suburban Inns. Suburban Inns operates hotels and restaurants in Grand Rapids, Holland and Midland. When constructed in the 1990s, the facility was an important step forward in the growth of our community. However, in today's environment I believe we should focus more on our core educational mission. I do not want this to become a financial drain on the University in the future, and am therefore pleased that we have reached this agreement.

One of our goals in this process was to make certain this property would be maintained and upgraded. We are very pleased the company plans to invest more than \$4 million to remodel the 118-room property. A second goal was to be sensitive to the people employed at the facility. I am delighted that Suburban Inns will interview each employee who wishes to continue to work there.

In addition to its remodeling plans, Suburban Inns has stated that it plans to build a relationship with our Hospitality Management program by offering internships and work opportunities for students. The regional knowledge that Suburban Inns brings to this purchase

agreement, along with its understanding of the value in maintaining a working relationship with the university, makes this a very exciting prospect for both Ferris and the Big Rapids community in the future.

It is likely that this transaction will not be concluded until mid-May, but we are very much encouraged by this positive outcome. I want to thank Vice President for Administration and Finance Jerry Scoby who has led our team throughout this challenging and intricate process. Jerry has been ably assisted by Vice President and General Counsel Miles Postema and many others throughout the University. I want to thank everyone involved in this project very much for your hard work and diligence.

Friends of Ferris

Last Friday evening, more than 250 people attended the 23rd annual Friends of Ferris dinner and auction, an event which raises funds in support of our university's political efforts. This is a very important time in Lansing for Ferris and all of the state's public universities with issues such as performance funding and tuition restraint very much on the minds of lawmakers – and the public at large. I want to thank the university and community members who came out in support of Ferris and our educational mission. Most importantly I want to thank the Friends of Ferris board and its chair, Chip Issette, along with Miles Postema and his colleagues from Government Relations and General Counsel who worked so very hard to make this event a success.

Festival of the Arts

While a few events remain, including Wednesday evening's FSU Jazz Band Concert, Sunday was the closing reception for this year's Festival of Arts. This has been an amazing month of local and guest artists. The Festival of the Arts has been embraced by people throughout our community and has truly grown into an opportunity to promote our entire mid-Michigan region. Many people work very hard to make this such a success. I want to thank co-chairs Carrie Weiss and Ed Mallett. Scott Cohen, Bruce Dilg, Jerena Keys, Steve Sobers and Trinity Williams provided invaluable support. Their hard work makes it possible for so many of us to enjoy cultural opportunities that would otherwise not be possible.

Ferris Foundation Leadership

Please join me in congratulating University Advancement and Marketing Associate Vice President Carla Miller on being named the Ferris Foundation's Executive Director. Carla's significant experience at Ferris and long-term relationships with the Foundation Board members made this an easy decision. Ferris Foundation Chair, Kevin Cross, and the rest of the Foundation Board look forward to working with her to secure much needed support for the University and its students. More about the Ferris Foundation and its activities is available at <http://www.ferris.edu/foundation/>.

Athletic Championships!

After the women's basketball team clinched the GLIAC North Division Championship with a win over Findlay last Saturday, they ended their regular home season with victories against Hillsdale and Grand Valley this week. The women are in action this Wednesday at home in a GLIAC quarter-final conference playoff game against Findlay. Please come out to Wink Arena and cheer the team on as they look to extend their very successful season.

The men's basketball team bounced back from a tough overtime loss to Hillsdale on Wednesday to defeat Grand Valley Saturday and clinch a share of the GLIAC North Division Championship. The men will play this Wednesday at Michigan Tech in the first round of the GLIAC conference tournament.

Our men's hockey team has attracted considerable regional and national attention. This weekend they secured the outright CCHA regular-season championship. Saturday evening it was a special moment to see our team awarded the GLIAC Conference Championship Trophy and to skate around the Ewigleben Ice Arena rink with it. The team has a first-round bye in the CCHA tournament, and home ice advantage for the quarterfinal round that begins on March 9. Games will be Friday and Saturday evening with a Sunday contest if needed.

It was great to see members of the Ferris football team cheering at both the men's and women's basketball games on Wednesday. The atmosphere at Saturday evening's sold-out hockey game was electric. I encourage you to attend Wednesday evening's basketball playoff and the men's ice hockey games on the 9th and 10th. Tickets are available by going to www.ferrisstatebulldogs.com. Most importantly -

Congratulations to Coach Tracey Dorow and the women's basketball team.

Congratulations to Coach Bill Sall and the men's basketball team.

Congratulations to Coach Bob Daniels and men's ice hockey team.

This is an extraordinary year. They all truly are champions, and we are so very proud of them.

If you have the opportunity to take time away from your work at the University during Spring Break and will be travelling, please do so safely. When possible, this is always a good time to pause before the final weeks of the academic year become increasingly busy. Thank you for everything you do to help our students and to make Ferris State a great University.

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler, president