

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
January 17, 2011

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Today we take time to reflect upon the life and work of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., one of the 20th century's most important leaders and thinkers. Had Dr. King not been assassinated on April 4, 1968, he would be celebrating his 82nd birthday this year. The only thing greater than his efforts to bring about a more just society is the magnitude of the loss our country suffered with his untimely death.

While remembering Dr. King's sacrifice is an important part of celebrating the anniversary of his birth, an even more important part is taking the ideals he championed to heart and acting on them. I believe that this is the way Dr. King would truly choose to be remembered. His was a life of action and commitment. Continuing to work toward the goal of equal opportunity for all is the truest celebration of a man whose life was dedicated to that ideal.

In his 1964 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, Dr. King said, "I accept this award today with an abiding faith in America and an audacious faith in the future of mankind." So often we are faced with news that shakes our own faith in the future. When we think about the violence and inequality Dr. King experienced and which he countered with his own determined non-violence we are reminded that not only can we persevere, our actions can make a real difference. His words are as relevant today as they were then. It is difficult to imagine a time when that audacious faith in the future is more needed.

Please take time to attend one of the several events taking place on campus this week. Check the campus calendar at www.ferris.edu for the schedule. For more information about Dr. King and further resources, visit www.thekingcenter.org.

Opportunities for Engagement

These next two weeks offer a number of opportunities for members of the Ferris community to provide input on issues important to our future.

The Strategic Planning and Resource Council will meet this Tuesday, Jan. 18, from 3-5p.m. in the West Campus Community Center to discuss online learning. A draft summary of SPARC's Dec. 14, 2010 discussion of student engagement, along with supporting material, is available at <http://www.ferris.edu/strategic-planning/meeting-summary.htm>.

Also on Jan. 18 at 1 p.m. in Rankin Center Centennial Room I will be hosting a public forum on the Dashboard - a graphic representation of selected indicators of our University's health and progress developed with assistance of our Budgetary Planning and Analysis Office. The Dashboard is a work-in-progress and your feedback will help its continued evolution.

The E-Learning Management Advisory Team is sponsoring a series of sessions to develop a "next-generation plan" for Ferris' online learning by mid-March. The first sessions, focused on "Student Capabilities," will be held in IRC 156 on Wednesday, Jan. 19, from 3-4:30 p.m. and on Friday, Jan. 21, from 2-3:30 p.m.

On Wednesday, Jan. 26 and Thursday, Jan. 27 from noon to 1:30 p.m. in the Whitney/Young Rooms of the Rankin Center, there will be town hall meetings to solicit feedback on the proposed outcomes for "Personal and Social Responsibility" as a part of the continued review of general education. More information about the committee and its work is available at

<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/academicaffairs/vpoffice/senate/GenEdTaskForce/homepage.htm> .

I encourage you to attend one or more of these opportunities for engagement with our University and its future.

Revenue Conference

On Friday, Jan. 14, Michigan held its semi-annual Consensus Revenue Estimating Conference. The good news is that Michigan has entered a period of recovery. While this is fragile and dependent upon continued improvement both nationally and in auto manufacturing, it is a promising sign. A 6.5 percent revenue increase in the general fund is predicted over the year, compared with a 7.9 percent decrease in 2010. Nonetheless, there still remains a significant budgetary deficit to be addressed this year with predictions for this ranging from \$1.5 to \$2 billion. The amount of this deficit could grow as a result of efforts to repeal the Michigan Business Tax and the MBT surcharge. The next indicators should be contained in the State of the State address by Governor Rick Snyder later this week.

This past week I met with Governor Snyder together with presidents from the other fourteen Michigan public universities. The conversations were upbeat, positive and supportive. The Governor plans to create jobs, grow the economy and increase the education level of our citizens. He sees higher education as a major driver in much of this. There is no question that significant cuts are ahead, as Gov. Snyder works to balance the budget and eliminate the continuing deficit. I came away from the meeting very impressed with his positive attitude and can-do approach.

The Governor plans to release a two-year budget plan in mid-February. As the funding outlook for higher education becomes clearer, I look forward to keeping you informed as to how decisions in Lansing will impact Ferris State University.

Enrollment

For spring semester the University continued its positive enrollment trend with an increase in headcount of almost three percent. The University as a whole enrolled 13,543 students, up almost 400 from spring 2010. Student Credit Hours were also up about one percent, with that growth resulting from enrollment outside of Big Rapids and in Internet classes. The Big Rapids campus grew by 149 students over last spring, but SCH decreased by about 1 percent. Our University welcomed more than 400 new freshmen and 600 new transfer students for spring. A copy of the fourth day enrollment report is accessible here –

http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/memos/Spring2011_Enrl_Summary.pdf .

These figures represent a record high spring enrollment for the University. Thanks are due to everyone in Admissions, to University Advancement and Marketing, our Physical Plant, Dining Services, Financial Aid, and the continued efforts of faculty and staff across our campuses. It is only by working together that our message of providing opportunity resonates with students looking to advance their lives and careers. Looking back over the last several years we see that the arc of our growth has been both strong and consistent. I believe that we are well positioned to continue on the positive path we have built through our cooperative effort. Thank you for your efforts for this sustained success!

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler, President