

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
March 15, 2010

Welcome Back

As classes begin after our spring break week, I want to welcome back faculty, students and staff who used the slower time on campus for some vacation. It is amazing to think that we have just seven weeks left in this semester. As we head toward Commencement and our spring 125th anniversary events, the pace of the semester will pick up rapidly.

This past Monday we discovered that a deionized water pipe in the Allied Health Building had burst over the weekend, allowing water to pour through a second floor computer classroom and into the Dental Hygiene clinic on the first floor. Our physical plant people, faculty and staff worked very hard this past week and the rooms are open today as students return for classes.

I want to thank those involved for their hard work and dedication, which made it possible for students to continue their studies uninterrupted:

Carpentry: AFSCME - Tim Bowman, Bill Benedict, Al Eastlund, Jim Brown, Dave Remus, Ron Patterson, Randy Wheeler, Larry Stephan, Tom Weaver; Supervisor Rich Vanhorn;

Electrical: AFSCME - Terry Pierson, Doug Ginnever; Supervisor Ken Rodenhouse;

Plumbing: AFSCME - Kevin Elliot, Jack Enos, Rick Marek, Phil Balliet, Daryle Youngs, Wes Morrison; Supervisor Kevin Myers;

Custodial: AFSCME - Linda Ferguson, Dorthy Cline, Diana Routley, Greg Vodry, Jim Moore, Rob Doering, John Bush, Tim Hollen, Dan Spedowske, Pam Marvel, Marlene Jehnsen, Diane Maguire, Margie Wright, Carmen Brown, Brian Bowling, Val Harley, Pam Panek, Sue Cook, Lee Adams, Darla Szpiech; Supervisors Rob Kleeves, Jeff Warner and Gary Gawne;

Program/ Users: Annette Jackson, Danette Boyd, Kathy Hotz

AV Group: Jody Gardei, Russ Mishler

Computer Consortia: Michael Johnson & coworkers

Testimony to Michigan Senate Higher Education Subcommittee

On Monday, March 8, Ferris State University hosted a hearing by the Michigan Senate Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee. Held in the IRC, the session included testimony from Central Michigan University, Lake Superior State University and the University of Michigan-Flint in addition to Ferris.

Speaking on behalf of our University, I covered a number of topics in my presentation: Ferris State University's 125 year history of providing opportunity; our current strategies for expanding access and opportunity through community colleges; the economic benefits Ferris provides to the region and state; the development of new degrees; the continued reduction in state funding for higher education; and the precipitous decline in financial aid during this current budget year.

One of the few bright spots in financial aid had been state support for the Tuition Incentive Program, which provides need-based tuition support focused primarily on the first two years of higher education. While this can be the first two years of a bachelor's degree, the large number of associate degrees Ferris offers makes us the largest recipient of TIP funding among Michigan universities. Lawmakers heard from first-year Printing Technology student Melissa

DiVietri about the importance of this program. Melissa told the panel that she will be the first person in her family to earn a bachelor's degree, noting the challenges that face students: "I have two campus jobs and am involved in multiple groups on campus, committees and leadership roles. I am worried that with all the changes that may happen, I won't be able to afford going to school." With no community college in the five-county area around Big Rapids, the TIP program is crucial to providing a path to a degree for thousands of mid-Michigan residents.

The subcommittee forwarded its budget to the full appropriations committee last Thursday. The budget includes a proposed 3.1 percent reduction in higher education funding, or \$1.6 million for Ferris. This is not nearly as bad as it sounds, in that the Senate worked from the total funds we received this year from both ongoing state monies and one-time economic stimulus dollars. As you know, we used the economic stimulus support for financial aid for our students and did not include this amount in our base budget. The result is the Senate approach as adopted would be a \$200,000 reduction. The Senate has not concluded its budget process so it is unclear how or if they addressed the revenue deficit in the general fund for next year, which now is estimated by some to be as large as a billion dollars. Another growing concern is with revenue collections in our state, which this past February were 28 percent below those of the year before.

Most importantly, the Senate committee recommendation restored proposed funding cuts to the TIP program. The reductions proposed for TIP would have had a devastating effect on students (increasing their costs by \$7,350 for next year) and our University (a loss of \$2.3 million in tuition revenue). I want to thank Melissa for her heartfelt testimony to the subcommittee. She will be joining me Tuesday morning when we testify before the House Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee on restoring TIP funding.

It is worth remembering the Senate Committee recommendations need approval first in the Senate Appropriations Committee and then by the full Senate, before moving to the House where they follow a similar path. At that point there are usually differences between the budgets passed by the Senate and the House. These are worked out in conference committee, which returns the budgets for final approval in both the House and Senate, before being sent to the Governor for final approval. We will continue to aggressively make the case for funding need, as the legislative process moves forward.

These remarks, entitled "Higher Education in Michigan: Expanding Traditions of Opportunity and Access," are available along with accompanying charts at <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/senate-2010.htm> .

Good News

A March edition of Good News from our faculty, staff, students, alumni and departments is posted online at www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/GoodNews.htm . Some examples of the exceptional accomplishments include:

- Languages and Literature Professor Andy Kantar's book *Deadly Voyage: The S.S. Daniel Morrell Tragedy*, which will be the featured text for Mecosta County in Spring 2010 as part of the One Book, One County initiative. Professor Kantar will be giving several lectures and book signings co-sponsored by the Michigan Humanities Council and local libraries and Artworks of Big Rapids.
- Languages and Literature Professor Phillip Sterling published the article "The Poet as Tour Guide: Notes on "Ozymandias" in *The Writers Chronicle*, as well as his fiction "Another Fish Story" in *Opium Magazine*.
- Baldwin Family Health Care, Baldwin Community Schools and the Michigan College of Optometry announced the opening of a School-based Participatory Eye Clinic within

Baldwin Community Schools. Dr. Paula Smith (MCO Pediatric & Binocular Vision Resident) saw her first patients at the new collaborative school-based eye clinic in February.

- In addition to publishing a book chapter and a paper, Associate Professor and Biology Education Program Coordinator Scott Herron recently accepted the position of North American Editor for the journal *Ethnobotanical Leaflets*.
- Professor of Biological Sciences Jim Hoerter received preliminary approval by the National Science Foundation to proceed on a grant to establish a national zebrafish training and resource center for undergraduates. Students Ryan Freye, Navjit Kaur and Kreisten Eischens are working with Prof. Hoerter on this project.
- Biology Instructor Cindy Fitzwilliams Heck began a new campus initiative, the Storm Water Protection Project, to mediate storm-water runoff.
- Assistant Philosophy Professor John Scott Gray's "The Stories We Tell: Facebook and the Re-definition of Intimacy" has been accepted for publication in the *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy*.
- For the second straight year, the Baja team won the Big Air competition during the Winter Baja. They also finished 9th and 11th in the endurance race.
- Kendall College of Art and Design increased its United Way Campaign contributions by 50 percent over last year. Also, KCAD grad and admissions officer Kristopher Jones is showing his work at the University of Texas at San Antonio Art Gallery.

There are many, many other wonderful stories of success than are shared here. Congratulations!

Athletics

The Ferris State University men's and women's indoor track and field programs each had one representative compete at the 2010 NCAA Division II Indoor Championships on Saturday in Albuquerque, N.M. Men's senior pole vaulter Greg Burns earned All-America honors by placing sixth overall for the Bulldogs in the pole vault as he matched a personal career-best with an effort of 16-3.25 in the event.

On Saturday our ice hockey team produced an exciting overtime victory over the University of Nebraska-Omaha, scoring on a goal 23 seconds into the first overtime period for a 3-2 victory. The win followed a 3-1 win Friday over UNO, which puts the team into the CCHA Championship semi-final round against Northern Michigan University this Friday at Joe Louis arena in Detroit. The conference final and consolation games are scheduled for Saturday. If you are considering heading to Detroit to see the team in action you may want to consider purchasing tickets soon, as numbers are limited. Ticket information is available at www.ferrisstatebulldogs.com.

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler, President