

# President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President  
November 9, 2009

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## **Promise Grant and Competitive Scholarship Restoration**

As many of you know the recently approved state budget removes or reduces funding for two important state scholarship and financial aid programs, the Michigan Promise Grants and the Michigan Competitive Scholarships. Funding for these programs has been a highly contentious issue as lawmakers struggled to balance the state budget during the current prolonged economic downturn.

Ferris students and our University were notified last March of the awarding of these grants and scholarships, and that support was calculated into student bills for this fall semester. Our students are relying on this support and have made their budgets based on the promise of these funds. For our students and our University this is a significant amount of money, perhaps as much as \$1.15 million across our campuses for fall semester alone.

The Board of Trustees and I believe this would constitute an unreasonable financial burden for our students this late in the semester. Last Friday the Ferris Board of Trustees voted to replace these state funds for the Michigan Promise Grant and Michigan Competitive Scholarships. One-time federal economic stimulus funds will be used to cover the awarding of these grants and scholarships for the fall semester. In the case of Kendall College of Art and Design students, this will be covered by operational funds.

From my perspective this is clearly the right thing to do for our students. I am proud of our University for stepping up and helping our students. This is an important move on the part of the University to help keep a Ferris education affordable. Many institutions talk about how much they care for students. With this action, the University has made it clear that our first priority is the education, well-being and support of our students. I want to thank our Trustees and you for working to support our students during these nearly unprecedented times.

In the development of this year's budget our intent was to use these federal stimulus funds to provide a \$5 per credit rebate for resident undergraduate students. That will now not be possible. Likewise, the University will not be able to cover these unfunded state scholarships and grants for the spring semester. These amounts will be included in spring semester bills and the University will refigure student financial aid awards where this is beneficial for our students.

## **Other Eligible Adults**

On Friday the Board of Trustees also set an implementation date of January 1, 2010 for the Other Eligible Adult program they adopted at their last meeting in July. This is an important step in our continued efforts in diversity and inclusion. As approved this applies to nonunion, benefits eligible employees. Using the program approved by the Board of Trustees as a template the University is willing to negotiate a similar agreement with each of our

bargaining units that desire this benefit for their members. The information may be viewed at: <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/staff/policies/newpolicies.htm> .

In the development and advocacy of this program I want to express my thanks to Alliance for Ferris Employees President Katherine Harris, Chief Diversity Officer David Pilgrim, Vice President and General Counsel Miles Postema, and many others. I also want to express my admiration and thanks to the members of our Board of Trustees for their support of this process.

## **Budget**

Last year I held a number of informational forums to keep members of the University informed of budget challenges and to solicit their input and involvement in this process. In light of an even more difficult environment for higher education this year in Michigan, I will be holding a new round of budget forums to explain the state budget as recently approved and to discuss the current fiscal situation.

Two forums have been set for next week and are open to all members of the University community, faculty, staff, and students. The first will take place on Monday, November 16<sup>th</sup> from 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. and the second on Tuesday, November 17<sup>th</sup> from 1:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Both will take place in the Rankin Center's Centennial Dining Room.

There seems little doubt that we will face significant reductions in our state funding for next year. It is my desire to make this process as open and transparent as possible, sharing what information we have. Please bring your questions, comments and ideas to these informational sessions. Last year's events were well attended and participants had insightful comments and thoughtful questions. I look forward to visiting with and hearing from you.

## **Good News**

Friday evening's Ferris Foundation for Excellence Gala was a wonderful celebration of Ferris State University. Students were actively involved in presenting information about the many diverse programs we offer. Jane Seymour was a powerful guest speaker weaving her remarks around the need to "Keep an Open Heart."

There is much good news to share about the success of our faculty, staff, and students. The latest edition of good news from across our University is available here - <http://www.ferris.edu/president/GoodNews/GN110409.pdf> . If you have not seen it, the *Crimson and Gold* magazine has become the new *Ferris* magazine with a completely new design and format. Besides the print version the *Ferris* magazine is available in an interactive Web booklet. The pages turn and flip similar to an actual book: <http://wwwdev.ferris.edu/htmls/ferrismagazine/> .

It is gratifying to hear of the extraordinary work, accomplishments and triumphs occurring at our University. Thank you for sharing.

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler  
President