

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
September 8, 2009

Founders' Day

Our Founders' Day festivities Thursday were extraordinary. From some of the most beautiful weather we have had all summer, to the faculty and staff picnic, the ice cream social, the history panels, the vintage photo event, and all the informational booths and activities on the Quad, our celebration embodied the kind of vitality that is at the core of college life. It was wonderful to see true community in action with students, faculty, staff, emeriti, community, and family members all taking part.

This event was a huge undertaking. I want to thank everyone involved in making the day such a resounding success. So many people and departments, committees and groups played crucial roles. I want to draw special attention to Mary Kay MacIver, Miles Postema, members of the 125th Anniversary History Task Force, and our Dining Services people. And to everyone who took part – from our security people, to celebrity ice cream servers to volunteers who staffed information booths on the Quad, to those who created signage and helped publicize the events – your contributions made this event truly memorable and special.

Enrollment

Beyond our strong desire and valued commitment to provide access for students to the opportunities a Ferris education provides, enrollment is critical to the financial strength of our University. At Ferris more than 70% of our revenue comes from student tuition. Given the unprecedented economic hardships in Michigan and the uncertainty over state support for promised student scholarships, there were many negative forces to overcome in recruiting and retaining students this fall.

Thanks to your hard work, and by this I mean the efforts of everyone across our University, we have very good enrollment news to report. In sharing these data, I especially want to congratulate Dan Burcham and all of our people in Admissions and Financial Aid. At Ferris State University -

- Enrollment is again a record – 13,865 students system-wide
- In Big Rapids there are 9,865 students, an increase of 198 students
- At Kendall there are 1,385 students, also a record.

These would be noteworthy figures at any time, but they are even more remarkable given the continuing challenges of our national and state economies. Fall enrollment figures also include some wonderful gains in diversity –

- African American enrollment has increased by 5.34%
- Hispanic enrollment has grown by 14.29%
- Native American enrollment is up 15.74%

Thank you for working to make our student body more diverse.

As expected, the number of new freshman students has declined this fall. We are now in the third year of declining number of high school graduates, a pattern that will likely continue

throughout the next decade. Throughout the University system new freshmen enrollments are down by 6.7%. Our growth results from a -

- 5% increase in transfer students
- 7.26% increase in readmitted students
- 4.22% increase in continuing students.

For the future we will need to continue to recruit a student body that is more diverse. We will need to become the transfer institution of choice in Michigan. And we will need to retain more of our students. Given the economic and other pressures our students face, I am especially pleased by the increase in continuing students. This is remarkable. As I tell students, the object is not to go to college, but to graduate from college.

The 4th day enrollment report is accessible here -
<http://www.ferris.edu/president/memos/Fall2009Enrl.pdf>

To better track the enrollment patterns of our students, these data for the first time this year include the breakout of Internet course delivery. On the left side of the page (head count) on-line numbers refer to students enrolled in on-line majors. On the right side of the page (Student Credit Hours) Internet numbers refer to SCH produced by on-line courses. This approach highlights stunning growth - on-line education student credit hours have increased sharply. Clearly, future success will depend upon not only adapting to changing student demographics, but also to changing expectations for the delivery of this education.

At Ferris we place great emphasis on the importance of working together, and these figures show why that kind of teamwork is so important. As we begin our 125th year, I have been struck by the energy and optimism I have sensed on campus in the weeks leading up to the start of classes. This sometimes intangible quality contributes to our being a University where students want to study, live and thrive.

Closing Thoughts

Our 125th Anniversary Celebration continues! Today at 11 a.m., we will break ground on Helen's Garden, in memory of Helen Gillespie Ferris. The ceremony, located between the Prakken and Alumni buildings, will kick off construction of the garden near the site of our original "Old Main" building. Thursday evening we will open "Ferris Through the Years," an exhibition of aerial views chronicling the development of our campus. Join us in the Rankin Center Art Gallery for this fascinating look back at our campus.

Mr. Ferris was an opinionated man who did not mind sharing those opinions. As a result, he has a quote that fits nearly every occasion. In reading through some of his words in preparation for Founders Day, I was struck by his assertion that-

I shall never cease growing.

I am ever searching for truth.

I feel confident this is the noblest attitude a human being can take.

None of us here at the University knew Woodbridge and Helen personally; nonetheless, they continue to exert incredible influence at Ferris. Seeing the vibrancy on display at Founders' Day made me think about how they are a real presence, a metaphor for the daily life of the University.

As we strive to live our Core Values of Collaboration, Diversity, Ethical Community, Excellence, Learning and Opportunity, we are reflecting values the Ferris' established from the very beginning. Growth and success during difficult times are part of the traditions of Ferris State University. Thank you for helping to make Founders' Day not only a wonderful celebration of our past, but also a vibrant statement of our future. I look forward to helping create that future with you.

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler
President