

# President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President  
October 28, 2008

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## College Meetings

Throughout this past summer and into the fall, Bob Carter, John Caserta, Jim Rumpf, Mike Ryan and Janice Weaver from the Ferris Faculty Association have been meeting with Trustees Tom Cook, Jim Havemen and me, looking for new ways of working positively together to help support our faculty and advance our University. Together with outside facilitator Dr. Dale Feinauer, a faculty member from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, we drafted a document entitled "Guidelines for an Improved Faculty-Administration," which contains useful steps in creating a new culture of working collaboratively.

We are in the middle of conducting a number of meetings with college faculty and administrators, talking through the guidelines document, identifying issues of concern, and processes to address them. This week's college meetings are -

Thursday, Oct. 30

College of Education & Human Services, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. in BIS 209

College of Pharmacy, 2 - 5 p.m. in PHR 201

Friday, Oct. 31

College of Arts and Sciences, 8 - 11 a.m. in the Rankin Center, Centennial Room

Michigan College of Optometry, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. in PEN 220

University College, 2 - 4 p.m. in STR 214

We are inviting faculty to attend at least a portion of the meeting, especially the first part if possible. If it is more convenient, they are encouraged to attend another college's meeting.

I want to thank faculty who have already taken part in these discussions and encourage those who have not done so to attend an upcoming meeting. These meetings are very helpful in better understanding faculty perspectives on issues important to them. I deeply appreciate the opportunity to hear as many views and ideas as possible about enhancing faculty-administration relations.

## Master Planning

Our University community faces many challenges, ranging from the local to the global. Fortunately, as we move forward, we have the opportunity to consider how Ferris can best realize the aspirations of students, faculty, staff, friends and visitors. Our visions of how the physical campus provides the most conducive academic environment, including cross-disciplinary interaction, are important in formulating our future plans.

I welcome the Ferris community to explore issues affecting the updating of the Master Plan for our Big Rapids campus with our planning team, Neumann Smith Architecture. The planning team will be on campus Nov. 5-7 to conduct a series of two-hour workshops with the general University community and a number of specific focus groups. Issues reviewed will include current Master Plan Core Concepts, accomplishments to date, and academic trends influencing our physical campus plan. You are encouraged to attend one of the following meetings -

Thursday, Nov. 6

10 a.m. - 12 p.m., University-wide open town hall meeting in IRC 109

2 - 4 p.m., University-wide open town hall meeting in IRC 154

Friday, Nov. 7

9 - 11 a.m., University-wide open town hall meeting in IRC 109

In preparation I encourage you to review our existing Master Plan at <http://www.ferris.edu/president/budget-office/masterplans.htm> . This includes Core Concepts, current and proposed consolidation of academic buildings, expansion of student housing choices, green space, athletic fields, etc.

Workshops will consist of a brief introduction to the Core Concepts, break-out discussion groups on key areas' group reports, and priority assessment.

Some issues that you may consider in anticipation of these workshops include:

- The role of sustainable or “green” design principles in Ferris’ future
- Increase learning and student services activities within the campus quadrangle area and implications for the relocation of existing housing within this area
- The need for renovation and expansion of the Rankin Student Center to maintain its relevance to students in both academic and leisure pursuits
- Programs that would benefit from expansion or relocation to the campus quadrangle area
- Enhancing the “sense of community” within our campus housing district, including services and an increased mix of housing choices
- Creating more locations for informal gathering and study areas and their impact on our campus
- Maximizing campus green spaces and integrating them with intramural sports fields to best meet students’ needs
- Developing efficient, flexible and desirable means of campus transport - including walking, biking, driving, shuttles and others - for students, faculty and visitors

Additional planning sessions will be conducted over the next several months with the goal of presenting updated Master Plan concepts to the Board of Trustees in early spring 2009.

## **Budget Challenges**

In Michigan we have been dealing with the continued economic decline of our state for several years. This situation is now exacerbated by recent downturns in financial markets and a sharp reduction of domestic automobile manufacturing. The extent of the problem in Michigan is still unclear - our state is less than a month into its new fiscal year - but there is indeed a problem. Current estimates put the potential revenue shortfall between \$300 and \$600 million, even though at this time tax revenues are close to expectations and there is a small projected budget surplus from the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>. The projected shortfall is a result of expenditures in the general fund beyond allocations in corrections and Medicare, anticipated declines in tax receipts and continued structural problems in the state budget. It is my opinion that the shortfall will be larger after the November elections than currently announced, perhaps as large as a billion dollars.

While an executive order reducing the state budget appears likely, it is unclear how or when this would happen. In past years executive orders have typically been announced in the Governor's Budget in February. Currently there does appear to be movement toward scheduling an early revenue conference in late November, which could accelerate this schedule. Predicting the timeline or the amount of the shortfall for this year is speculation at this point. Looking further ahead reveals even greater problems; early state estimates for the next fiscal year suggest a 3 percent decline in revenue.

Given these factors I have asked the University's vice presidents to hold back one percent in their budgets to prepare for potential reductions. As in the past we will make every effort to deal proactively with financial challenges in order to protect our employees and maintain the quality of our academic offerings.

While there remains a great deal of uncertainty as to the extent of the problem and possible solutions, I believe it best to share with you the information I have at this time. I will update you with more information as soon as it becomes available.

## **1968 Football Team Reunion**

On a more positive note, it was wonderful to have members of the 1968 undefeated football team on campus for their 40<sup>th</sup> reunion this past weekend. That team had just one victory in their previous three seasons. They were players from greatly different backgrounds who came together under Coach Bob Leach to have an extraordinary season during a turbulent time.

Fittingly, the 2008 team pulled off an exciting last-minute victory over GLIAC rival Northwood in a game dedicated to that 1968 season. My congratulations to both teams for their inspiring play and for being great representatives of the Ferris student-athlete tradition.

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler  
President