

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President

February 11, 2008

Last week in a historic session, the Academic Senate voted to endorse and recommend Ferris State University's first-ever University-wide Diversity Plan. This has been developed by the Diversity Planning Committee under the leadership of Chief Diversity Officer, Dr. David Pilgrim. Our founder envisioned this institution as a truly diverse community that would reflect the broad public it serves. This vision has been affirmed by students, faculty and staff. This affirmation means that Ferris not just passively accept diversity, but actively infuse and celebrate it as a core value. We will be a community where people value individual and group differences, respect the worldviews of others, and communicate openly.

This University-wide plan puts forward the following the definition of diversity -

Diversity is the range of human differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, and political beliefs.

It proposes to advance the following strategic goals -

1. Create a University that is welcoming to diverse populations
2. Recruit, retain, and graduate a diverse student population
3. Hire and retain a diverse workforce
4. Create environments for student learning that are inclusive of and sensitive to a diverse student population

With the adoption of these goals, Ferris commits itself to becoming a truly diverse university that embraces the open access vision of our founder. We serve an increasingly heterogeneous society. Embracing diversity is not only the right thing morally for a public university to do, it strengthens the educational quality of the University by allowing us to produce graduates prepared for living and working in the twenty-first century.

Having a discussion about being an inclusive institution was possible because we are an engaged University community. Throughout this process, we have been impressed by the level of thoughtfulness which everyone involved in this process displayed. We see this process, statement, and actions - some of them already underway - as a real advancement for the University. This historic occasion reflects well the inspiration of our founder, Woodbridge N. Ferris -

My plea in Michigan – and it will be my plea to the last breath I draw, and the last word I speak – is education for all children, all men, and all women of Michigan, all the people in all our states all the time.

This diversity plan is a working document. When opportunities for new initiatives arise, those opportunities will be seized. The University is committed to establishing itself into a truly diverse institution. This commitment will be reflected in University-wide plans, in divisional plans, and in the plans produced by academic colleges and departments. There will be opportunities for further dialogue about diversity, and there will be systems in place for information-sharing, assessment, and accountability. These visible, meaningful, and permanent changes will help assure that our University is the best possible place for everyone who studies, teaches and works here.

We thank all of you for helping to shape this defining statement about our University.

Sincerely,

David Pilgrim
Chief Diversity Officer

David L. Eisler
President