

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President

January 28, 2008

Arts Festival

Many of you will remember when our University hosted a winter celebration of the arts. I am told this began as the part of the 75th anniversary of the Ferris Institute. As we approach the 125th anniversary of Ferris State University the Festival of the Arts returns to Big Rapids. This new incarnation resumes the tradition in a big way, with 60 events over 32 days in 23 different venues. On campus, in the community, and in our schools, there will be cultural and artistic events that range from a foreign film series, to plays, concerts, art openings, lectures and much more. A schedule of events is available by clicking on the Festival logo on the Ferris home page.

The Festival of the Arts is an extraordinary example of the close “town and gown” relationship the University has with the Big Rapids community. Events will take place here on campus (including an opening reception at the Rankin Center Art Gallery and performance of *Tartuffe* in Williams Auditorium on the 31st), as well as at such venues in town as Artworks, City Hall, the Community Library, Big Rapids High School, Crossroads Charter Academy and others. The University has partnered with the City of Big Rapids, the Downtown Business Association, Downtown Development Authority, Artworks, individual contributors and others to make this ambitious schedule of events possible. As part of the festival we are especially excited to welcome the return of the Grand Rapids Symphony to Big Rapids for a free concert on February 17th in the High School Auditorium.

Among the many people who have worked very hard to make the Festival a reality, Architectural Technology professor Bruce Dilg and Big Rapids *Pioneer* publisher Jack Batdorff have played key roles. Thanks also to Bruce’s fellow Festival Coordinating Committee members Scott Cohen, Ferris’ directors of instrumental ensembles; William Donahue, retired Ferris music director and director of the Cadillac Symphony; Mark Gifford, Big Rapids’ Neighborhood Services director; and Ed Mallett of Tuba Bach. Jack Batdorff is co-president with Karl Linebaugh of Artworks, which has been deeply involved in the development of this project.

This is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the arts in our schools, in the Big Rapids community, and our University. Please be sure to attend some of the Festival’s many events.

Provost Search

The University’s Provost Search Committee continues to search for a new leader for Academic Affairs. Recently, the committee held airport interviews in Grand Rapids with four applicants recommended for on-campus interviews. After two applicants withdrew from

consideration, the committee made the appropriate decision to give consideration to additional candidates for the position.

This is an extremely important decision for the University, and I applaud the committee – co-chaired by Ellen Haneline and Robert Loesch – for their diligence in this search. Currently we anticipate that campus interviews for the Provost position will take place in March.

Alumni Successes

A couple of news stories that surfaced in the last few weeks have once again reinforced for me the many and varied ways in which our alumni achieve success. We tend to focus on the success of our alumni during reunions and commencement, but in between those times are frequent reminders of the kinds of doors a Ferris education helps open.

Last fall, Kenneth Theis, who graduated from Ferris' College of Technology in 1989, was appointed director for the Michigan Department of Information Technology. Serving as the state's Chief Information Officer and a member of Governor Granholm's cabinet, Mr. Theis oversees an agency of 1,700 employees who provide technology services to executive branch agencies in the state. *ComputerWorld* magazine recently listed him as one of the country's "Premier 100" technology leaders.

Jon Rosten, a 1994 graduate of what is now Ferris State University's Television and Digital Media Production program, is writer, director and producer of the film "Valley of Angels," which will be released on DVD Feb. 5. The film received the Grand Jury Prize for Best Picture at the New York International Independent Film & Video Festival.

The very different accomplishments of these two alumni illustrate the range of ways in which our graduates excel. Outstanding graduates result when talent and ability are nurtured and encouraged by the collective, good work of all of us at our University.

Thank you...

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler
President