

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
November 5, 2007

For several months now, Governor Granholm and the Michigan legislature have struggled to balance the state budget. Although a budget has finally been passed, this happened only after the state depended on temporary funding for the month of October. Additionally, elements of that budget – particularly the changes in state tax law – remain in some flux. I am especially concerned by the state Senate's action this past week to repeal the service taxes upon which a significant amount of revenue in the budget is based. However, there is some good news.

The legislature made good on its promise regarding the delayed August payment to state universities, which we received in mid-October. Much of the public rhetoric around the higher education budget suggests that we have received a 1% increase. It is worth noting that this increase was applied to last year's budget after we were cut by \$843,000. In reality, with this "increase" we are funded at about \$400,000 less than at this time last year.

Michigan continues to diminish the level of support it provides for higher education. In 2001 Ferris received \$6,100 for each full-time student. This year that figure is \$4,509, which represents a 26 percent decrease. In my five years as president at Ferris, we've now cut \$9.7 million in state funds from our budget.

The other good news is that despite the tuition increases that have accompanied state disinvestment, the education we offer at Ferris continues to attract students. Today our enrollment is more than 13,000 – the most in our history. We have been the second-fastest growing state institution during the past decade and the fastest in the past five years. I will continue to keep you informed of developments in state funding over the next weeks and months.

Provost/VPAA Search

Our search for the position of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs is continuing. I would like to invite you to visit the search site and use your networking skills to encourage qualified candidates who you feel would excel at advancing the academic mission of the University to apply. To read a description of the position and learn how interested parties can apply for the position, go to <http://www.ferris.edu/academicaffairs/VPAAsearch.htm>.

I want to thank the search committee for their hard work in filling this critical position. Particular thanks to committee co-chairs Ellen Haneline and Robert Loesch. I also want to thank Garry Owens of Academic Search for his assistance.

University Action Planning

As part of the Strategic Planning Process, we are reviewing whether there are ways we should change the unit action planning process. Planning at the unit level still remains a vital part of the University process. For that reason, we will continue this year with Unit Action Planning, but begin earlier. The intent is to complete this process by early February. This will allow the focus for the remainder of spring semester to be on the development of the Strategic and Diversity Plans.

The challenges of the current state economy and continued legislative uncertainty regarding the state budget suggest that universities may see state funding reductions during this academic year. In this climate, annual planning will focus on the continued nurturing or enhancement of current efforts. For more information on Unit Action Planning, go to <http://www.ferris.edu/president/uap200809.htm>.

Advising Task Force

Last year, the Academic Advising Task Force studied and reviewed academic advising on our Big Rapids campus. This group was ably led by Paul Blake and Deb Cox. The Committee included faculty members Jay Hettiarchchy, Kent Sun and Ben Upham; counselors Shari Chamberlain, Mary Cline and Mary Steeno; staff members Elise Blacklaw and Jason Daday; and students John Gibbs, Lauren Ogard, Robert Rankey and Paula Stiles. I want to thank the members of this task force for their hard work and careful analysis of advising processes on campus.

Good academic advising is critical to student success. In addition to assessing the general level of student/faculty satisfaction with advising, subcommittees of this task force also looked at how the University advises specific audiences; prepares graduation clearances/degree audits; supports training for academic advising; and provides recognition for advising. The task force has outlined a three-year model for academic advising in Big Rapids. Tom Oldfield has reviewed this document with the academic deans and seeks your comments. The task force's report is accessible at <http://www.ferris.edu/president/PlanningTF2006/AcademicAdvising.pdf>. I encourage you to share your comments with Dr. Oldfield or an academic dean before the Thanksgiving break.

Athletic Success

Even as the fall athletic season winds down, winter sports seem already in full swing. Congratulations to coach Tracey Dorow and the women's basketball team for their exhibition victory over Division I Central Michigan University. Congratulations, also, to Coach Bob Daniels and the ice hockey team, who defeated Notre Dame a week ago and swept Ohio State University in Columbus in both games this past week.

Best wishes,

David L. Eisler
President