

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
October 1, 2007

During the past two weeks we have experienced several incidents – both on and off campus – that have raised questions about safety at Ferris. As a member of the University community, you know that we take campus safety very, very seriously. When incidents do take place, our Department of Public Safety has a close working relationship with local authorities to identify and arrest anyone who may have committed a crime on campus.

We try very hard to make students aware of what they can do to help keep campus safe, especially in terms of locking residence hall doors and not allowing in non-residents they don't know, as well as having an escort when walking alone after dark. An important part of campus security is to help students make intelligent choices. Overwhelmingly, Ferris students take the message of campus safety to heart. In fact, our students have played an important role in lowering the rate of campus crime. Still, we will review the ways we communicate that message to see if we can make it even more urgent and effective.

An important responsibility for college campuses today is notifying the campus community as quickly as possible, so that if there is a threat it will be contained to the greatest degree possible. In these situations time is of the essence and the available information is sometimes incomplete and conflicting. As a result there will be instances when we notify the campus about potential security violations and further investigation will determine that the actual circumstances are significantly different than those reported.

I do not want to minimize recent incidents. We will study these to see what lessons can be learned to make sure our campus remains as safe as possible. In doing so I want to commend the work that Marty Bledsoe and the Department of Public Safety have done in responding to these recent events. I also want to thank our people in Residential Life, the Counseling Center, and Student Affairs, many of whom have worked late at night and early in the morning to provide support to our students. More detailed information about campus safety is available at www.ferris.edu/htmls/othersrv/campussafety/safety.html

There can be no better time to make the statement that we will not tolerate threatening behavior on our campus. Join me on Oct. 3 at 5:30 p.m. on the Campus Quad for the Annual Take Back the Night March and Rally.

Contract Negotiations

It is a pleasure to report that the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees and the University's bargaining team recently reached a nearly 5-year agreement –

effective Nov. 22, 2007, through June 30, 2012. We are delighted that both sides reached this agreement 68 days before the union's current contract expires on Nov. 21.

I want to thank especially AFSCME Union President Tom Weaver and Ferris' Director of Labor Relations Steve Stratton. Both men and their negotiation teams worked diligently in an atmosphere of mutual regard to reach this agreement. Entering negotiations, AFSCME leadership indicated the two key points most important for its members were health insurance contributions by the University and reasonable, across-the-board wage increases. Both sides in the negotiations expressed satisfaction in meeting these goals.

This agreement is a wonderful example of how labor and management can work together to advance the University's mission. AFSCME's 215 local members maintain and repair our campus buildings, feed our students, and make our campus one of the most beautiful in our state. I salute the men and women of AFSCME and their leadership for the difference they make for our University.

I am very pleased to share the agreement reached with the Kendall Faculty Association. This is also a 5-year agreement and reflects the strong working relationship between the administration and faculty at the Kendall College of Art and Design. Strong leadership for these negotiations was provided by Diane Kaczmarczyk, head of the KFA, and Sandy Davison-Wilson, Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance at Kendall.

Negotiation teams worked throughout the summer on difficult issues of compensation and health benefits. Despite the challenge of these issues the negotiations were conducted in a cooperative and supportive atmosphere. This is another example of how negotiations can meet mutual goals while advancing the educational goals of our University. I want to express my thanks to the negotiators and faculty for reaching and ratifying this agreement

Diversity Survey

The University is currently conducting a Diversity Climate Survey through Oct. 18th. This survey will gather data on students' prior experiences with diversity, experiences in classrooms, awareness and use of diversity programs at Ferris, knowledge of expressions of insensitivity and prejudice on campus, a sense of how diversity impacts their learning, and recommendations for change. You can help by reminding students to look for the survey link in their fsuimail accounts. Students who complete this confidential survey will be entered in a drawing for a \$100 gift certificate, a Video iPod and a bicycle or a computer.

After these survey data have been compiled and analyzed, the University community will be able to access the information on the Diversity Office's Web site, <http://www.ferris.edu/diversity/>. There also will be University-wide forums to discuss next steps based on these results.

Michigan Budget

Last Thursday I was in Lansing presenting testimony and visiting with legislators. The level of frustration there is the highest I have ever seen. Nonetheless, early this morning compromise was reached on a 30-day continuation budget so state offices are open today. The central elements of this compromise are an increase in the income tax to 4.35%, coupled with a 6% tax on some previously exempted service, together with teacher health benefit reforms. The list of services taxed is interesting and includes a tax on one of Woodbridge Ferris' interests, phrenology.

There is much work that remains to be done in Lansing. A \$435 million shortfall still remains in the state budget between projected revenues and expenses. At this point there appears to be intent to make the \$4.5 million delayed payment we did not receive in August, and to not further reduce higher education funding. However, we have previously heard support for higher education only to see the state budget balanced through reduced support to public universities. As a result, we will be especially vigilant and active during this period.

It is my hope that this is a first step by the State to finally address the serious structural problems in the budget and that in the future this will be done in a timely fashion. I will be sharing more information on the higher education budget as it is available.

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler
President