

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
August 27, 2007

The residence halls are open; cars, minivans, and pickup trucks packed with clothes and computers are unloaded; new students are getting familiar with campus; and today is the first day of classes. In the past I have said that fall is perhaps the most exciting time of year at Ferris State University, but it's worth taking note of this yet again. I am especially impressed with all the faculty, staff and volunteers who work so hard to make the beginning of the academic year the best possible experience for our students. I want to thank everyone who took part in First Impressions, our student Bulldogs in Action, Orientation, Welcome Week activities, and student counseling, advisement, and registration. You have done so much for all of our students – especially those coming to Ferris for the first time. These are critical factors to help students make the transition to the University.

Arriving students in Big Rapids will find that the University continues to upgrade its facilities to support our focus on learning. The newly renovated Interdisciplinary Resource Center – the former Instructional Resource Center – provides a space for formal and informal gatherings and learning opportunities outside the classroom. Please take the time to tour the IRC if you have not yet done so. We have also renovated and upgraded classrooms throughout the University. Academic Affairs has worked with the Physical Plant to make classrooms more learning-centered. This has resulted in classrooms that promote active participation, collaboration and develop independent thinking. These classrooms stress flexible design, current technologies, and physical spaces where furnishings and acoustics all work together to create the best-possible learning environment. To see a few examples, go to www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/academicaffairs/classroom

Together with faculty member Robert von der Osten it was my pleasure to visit college opening meetings, to make some brief remarks during these meetings, and to answer questions. During the next few weeks I look forward to opportunities to visit each of the divisions in the University for similar conversations. Throughout the year I hope that we as a community continue to engage in the kind of open dialog that helps our University community provide the best possible education for our students.

An important part of that discussion will be our Strategic Planning and Diversity initiatives. These are of critical importance to our University. Higher education has become increasingly complex, as stakeholders with differing visions regarding issues of culture, standards and funding have clashed on campuses, in legislatures and nightly on the news. Your input will assure that change will be a positive force at the University. You will continue to hear about these initiatives as the year progresses. Please take an active part in their success.

One of the special and distinct characteristics of our University is the special heritage with our founders Woodbridge and Helen Ferris. This Thursday, August 30th, we will gather to celebrate this legacy. There will be a picnic lunch on the Quad and an evening ice cream social from 5-7 p.m., also on the Quad. Besides having numerous chances to celebrate the start of a new academic year, Founders Day is also an opportunity to take stock of where we are today as an institution of higher learning, and where we're headed. To this end, I hope you will take part in the University stakeholders' conferences, scheduled at 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Thursday. At 11 a.m. in the Dome Room I will offer a State of the University address looking back at our past, assessing the present, and considering the future. Please join us and become engaged in planning Ferris State University's future.

Last spring a search and screening committee for the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs was established and held its first meeting. This group is ably chaired by Professor Robert Loesch and Dean Ellen Haneline. We anticipate inviting finalists to campus in January and encourage you to follow the progress on this search at the committee's website - www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/academicaffairs/. The Academic Affairs Vice President head will be designated as Provost to reflect the centrality of academics to the University. As we move forward in this process I want to thank everyone involved in the search committee. With the input of the search committee, Bob and Ellen will keep the University informed of the status of the search as the academic year continues.

Your hard work throughout the year means that the University is in a very good position not only to overcome our challenges, but to make the most of our opportunities. Thank you.

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler
President