

## President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President  
December 7, 2006

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It seems hard to believe that this is the end of the semester already. The days since Thanksgiving have been nearly a blur with the rush to the end of the term and a continuing series of events and activities. I am continually reminded of this special time of the season by the holiday lights and the beautiful scene they create on the snow.

As we complete the semester I want to provide you an update on a number of topics. These include the Chief Diversity Officer search, enrollment data, task force reports, and end of the semester activities.

### Chief Diversity Officer

Thank you for the supportive comments many of you have sent regarding the creation of a Chief Diversity Officer. I have also received questions that help me better describe the position. I want to share these responses with you.

The initial appointment for the Chief Diversity Officer will be for one year, but can be renewed if the person is willing to continue in the role and if we are making progress on diversity issues. Improving diversity on campus will require continual efforts over time and I view the creation of this position as a long-term commitment to positively promoting diversity on our campus. There could be a number of people who occupy this position as it evolves in the future. Initially the appointment will be treated as a full-time reassignment and the person selected will have the opportunity to return to their previous position when their assignment as Chief Diversity Officer has concluded.

We have received a good pool of candidates for the position, but if you are considering applying for the position, I strongly encourage you to do so by December 13. There has also been an excellent response to my call for volunteers to serve on a search and screen committee. Members of the search committee include the following people -

Sandy Alspach, Professor, Humanities  
Karyn Benner, Special Programs Coordinator, Minority Student Affairs  
Lisa Besemer, Director, Purchasing  
Christy Brewer, Residence Hall Director  
Cheytaya Brown, Student  
Adnan Dakkuri, Professor, Pharmacy  
Scott Herron, Assistant Professor, Biology

Brian Pacholka, Manager, National Elastomer Lab  
Karen Paine, Secretary, Board of Trustees  
Ron Snead, Trustee  
Todd Stanislav, Director, Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning  
John Thorp, Department Head, Social Sciences  
Leroy Wright, Dean of Student Life

I believe this committee reflects important characteristics of successful diversity efforts. In many ways these people represent a wide cross-section of our University, united to make a difference on something they care deeply about. I appreciate that at this particularly busy time of the year that they would take time to assist in this process.

### **Task Force Reports**

For the past two months we have had four task forces working on areas of importance to the University. I very much appreciate the work of our faculty, staff, and students who have directed both their talents and energies to these groups. Past task forces have done extraordinary work and provided recommendations that have significantly improved our University. I very much look forward to hearing from this year's groups.

Task force co-chairs will present reports on their activities next Friday between 9am and 1pm in the Rankin Center Founders Room. I want to encourage you to attend any or all of these public presentations that interest you. The schedule will be -

9:00 Scholarships - Kathy Lake and MaryKay MacIver  
10:00 Advising - Paul Blake and Deb Cox  
11:00 Health Information and Wellness - Wendy Dodd and Warren Hills  
12:00 Enrollment - Dan Burcham and Pat Klarecki

Both the Advising Task Force and the Enrollment Task Force will be presenting interim reports as their activities will continue into next semester. I understand this is a busy time of the year. If you are unable to attend, we will be posting the presentations and reports on our website.

### **Enrollment**

The importance of our enrollment task force is underscored by the fall data we recently received for Michigan public higher education institutions. Simply put, these numbers are very disappointing. Only six institutions in our state show any growth and for half of them this growth is very small. Here is the percentage change in headcount from last fall to this fall for institutions reporting growth -

Grand Valley State University	3.24%
Oakland University	2.3%

University of Michigan-Flint	1.64%
Michigan State University	.78%
Michigan Technological University	.63%
Ferris State University	.38%

All of the remaining universities experienced overall declines -

Central Michigan University	- .002%
Saginaw Valley State University	- 0.27%
University of Michigan Ann Arbor	- 0.30%
Wayne State University	- 0.47%
University of Michigan Dearborn	- 0.55%
Northern Michigan University	- 1.00%
Eastern Michigan University	- 1.73%
Western Michigan University	- 5.37%
Lake Superior State University	-10.11%

Total enrollment at Michigan public universities is down 884 students from a year ago. Perhaps of even more concern, 1,126 fewer first-time freshmen enrolled this fall state-wide than last year. In enrollment management each high school graduating class has its own characteristics and behavior patterns. It is difficult to know if this overall decline is an attribute of last year's class or a developing trend. In an economic environment where we understand how much of a success factor a college education and degree can be, this is a significant concern.

Hopefully Governor Granholm's current proposal in the legislature providing increased merit scholarship awards for college students will make a difference. This could be an important tool to help more Michigan students take advantage of the opportunities a college education can provide. I appreciate the work of everyone to address both recruitment and retention issues. We can and will do better.

## **Commencement**

Fall commencement ceremonies will be Saturday, December 16<sup>th</sup>. Graduates from Arts & Sciences, Business, and FSU-Grand Rapids will be recognized at 10:00 am and Allied Health Sciences, Education & Human Services, and Technology graduates will be at 1:30 pm. This is a special time of year when we salute our graduates and their accomplishments and celebrate your efforts for them. I am hopeful you will join us to congratulate this fall's graduates.

At our commencement ceremonies I like to share student stories with the audience. If you know of an extraordinary graduate whose story would be of interest, I would very much like to hear about them from you. We will contact the student and only share their

story if they are comfortable with me doing so. Thank you in advance for helping me to emphasize the human values and achievement commencement represents.

### **Seasonal Announcements**

Today is the annual University employee holiday reception. I am hopeful you can take a few moments from your work on this wintery day to celebrate the season and the end of the semester. Please join the vice presidents and me this afternoon, December 7<sup>th</sup>, between 1:30 and 3:00pm at the Holiday Inn. This is a good time to celebrate some good holiday cheer and take a brief respite before exams begin. We look forward to seeing you and hope you can join us.

I believe it was two years ago when we began the pancake breakfast for students. The idea is to provide a late evening opportunity during exams for our students to take a break from their studies. Last spring over 800 students joined us. Frequently they stay and visit with each other for 30-45 minutes. I believe this provides an opportunity for human interaction in the midst of the studies and pressures of final exams. On Tuesday, December 12<sup>th</sup>, between 11:00pm and 12:30am we will again be hosting this in the Rankin Center Westview Dining facility. It is not necessary that you work in the kitchen or serving line to attend. Even if you only have a couple of minutes, I would encourage you to come by and visit with our students. Please contact our office or the Student Government Association if you are planning to serve. If you have the opportunity, I would appreciate you mentioning this to your students. The meal is free and does not require a dining hall contract. I want to express my thanks to the Student Government Association for organizing this and to Dining Services for financial support and assistance.

Over the last week winter has arrived with a vengeance. It is interesting to me that with weather in Michigan it is possible to rake leaves one weekend and move snow the next. At this time of year it is useful to remember that for some employees winter weather creates additional work. If you arrive at the University early in the morning and your lot is being plowed, please park in a space that allows the snow team the opportunity to complete their work. On these snowy days, it is also thoughtful to take an extra moment to clear the snow from your shoes or boots. This helps cut down on the salt, sand, and slush tracked into the buildings and assists our custodians.

### **Closing Thoughts**

I recently received the announcement of Clare Kwant's retirement at the end of December. Much of the beauty of our campus is a direct result of his vision, his passion for plants and trees, and the care he directs to helping them flower and grow. His enthusiasm for this has made an extraordinary difference. While I will miss him on campus, the results of his work will be a constant reminder to me of what his efforts helped create. If you feel as I do, I encourage you to tell Clare how much this is appreciated.

In the hustle and bustle of this time of year, I find it useful to pause for a moment each day to be thankful for the many opportunities I receive. In doing so, I want to extend my special thanks to you for the many things you do for our University, its people, and most especially our students. Thank you for the difference you make in their education and their lives. Please accept my best wishes for a happy and restful holiday break.

Dave Eisler