

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
September 25, 2006

It seems difficult to believe that four weeks of the fall semester are already completed. Over the last few days the trees have begun to turn and some mornings there is already a definite chill in the air. While there are certainly some warm days still to come, fall has definitely arrived.

The University Board of Trustees met on Friday afternoon. I am pleased to report they approved and ratified the collective bargaining agreement between the Board and the Ferris Faculty Association, a four-year agreement from July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2010. I want to express my thanks and appreciation to all members of the campus community who participated in this process and helped us reach this agreement. We will now work to implement the financial and healthcare provisions of this contract and to produce the final contract document for signing.

I want to take this opportunity to share information and issues of importance to the campus community.

Enrollment

In examining this fall's enrollment data there are positive achievements in to be celebrated – the highest headcount in university history (12,575) and the best prepared new students we have ever admitted (21.3 ACT, 3.18 GPA), but there are also areas of concern. In Big Rapids there is a significant decline in new freshman students and out-of-state students. The result of these two factors is that while headcount is higher, student credit hours have declined from last year. As a result of this decline in student credit hours, I have asked vice presidents to reduce their budgets to reflect decreased revenues to the University. For an institution heavily dependent upon tuition, there are serious long-term financial implications for our University if these trends continue.

To deal with this challenge I am forming a Blue Ribbon Task Force on Enrollment. This will begin work immediately, with a charge to provide recommendations that will first boost enrollment for spring semester, and then recommendations on initiatives to reverse these negative trends for next fall. This group will be co-chaired by Vice President for Student Affairs Dan Burcham and Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs Pat Klarecki.

In creating this task force I have asked the vice presidents to recommend faculty and staff from across the University who can bring insight, expertise, and experience to bear on these issues. I am pleased that the following members of our campus community have accepted my invitation to join this Blue Ribbon Task Force –

Shelly Armstrong	Associate Vice President, Marketing & Communications
Amy Buse	Associate Professor, Computer Information Systems
Matthew Chaney	Director, Minority Student Affairs
Michael Cooper	Professor, Marketing
Jason DaDay	Senior Recruiting Officer, Admissions and Records
Jana Hurley	Director, of Residential Life
Leonard Johnson	Professor, Education
Kathryn Lake	Director, Enrollment Services
Michael Ropele	Associate Professor, Auto\Heavy Equipment Mgt
Karen Strasser	Associate Professor, Biology
Charlotte Tetsworth	Software Specialist, Admissions and Records
Joan Totten	Department Head, Developmental Programs & Curriculum
Craig Westman	Associate Dean, Enrollment Services
Debi Whitman	Coordinator, Admissions and Records

Changes in enrollment patterns and trends are rarely the result of one reason, but rather result from a combination of factors. We must identify the causes for this and develop a plan not just to reverse current trends, but to ensure a strong student base for our future. Ultimately each of us can play an important role in helping to recruit and retain students. Often this can be as simple as pausing to speak with a visitor or a student on our campus, assisting someone who may be confused or needs help, or taking a moment to share with others the extraordinary education we provide at Ferris State University and the difference this can make for people's futures.

Beyond these daily acts of kindness and courtesy, I need your assistance in addressing this challenge. From your perspective you see things that we do well and efforts we should do better in recruiting and following up with students. I would appreciate hearing your observations and ideas regarding student recruitment. Please send these to me at eislerd@ferris.edu, so I can share them with the task force.

Engagement

Although we are just one month into fall semester there already have been some marvelous events on our campus. William Strauss' presentation regarding the characteristics of generations was fascinating and provided some interesting questions about the higher education students are receiving now and what we

might expect in the future. Last week our campus welcomed Stacey Allison, the first American woman to summit Mt. Everest.

This week's activities include the initial presentation in the Arts and Lectures series, Dan Verton's "It's a Hacker's World" on Tuesday evening. Dan is a best selling author and expert on cyber security. Wednesday evening features a career tactics presentation by Lance Barrow, "From Golf Caddy to CBS Producer - My Journey." Among other achievements Lance is the producer of the Masters Golf Tournament telecasts for CBS Sports.

This week includes a number of events scheduled as a part of Hispanic Heritage Month, which continues until mid-October. Today also begins Bulldog Prevention Week, sponsored by the Scholar Program. This series of activities throughout the week is designed to help students make good choices in terms of their personal health and to educate them about alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, and sex. Thursday, October 5th Live! At Williams presents Universes, the initial performance in this series of cultural events.

Although we narrowly lost this past weekend, our first home football game the week before was truly an exciting evening. Both the home and student stands were full, with an attendance of over 5,200 and the largest student attendance in recent history. It was as thrilling a game as I have seen, going down to the very last play, when Saginaw Valley failed to score from the one yard line as time ran out. After this final play students streamed onto the field to congratulate our athletes. A number of other fall sports are off to successful starts as well - through Saturday the women's volleyball team is 12-3, women's soccer is 5-4, the women's golf team won the Bulldog Invitational and placed second in three other tournaments, and both cross country teams took second this past weekend. And it doesn't seem possible, but hockey begins Saturday evening. When you have the opportunity I would encourage you to support our student athletes and their coaches with your attendance.

In past memos I have written about the American Democracy Project and the difference I believe these efforts can make for our students. Recently I had the opportunity to learn more about the efforts our University has organized around the Political Engagement Project. Through the strong efforts of our faculty, these projects are wonderful examples of what is possible when we work together to help students. Both are very important efforts to help our graduates become strong citizens and leaders for their communities. If you have not done so, I would encourage you to take a look at the website for the Political Engagement Project. The url is attached at the end of this message.

Students who become engaged and involved in campus activities persist and tend to be more successful. The data on this is quite clear. Beyond the obvious

difference campus engagement makes in student retention, it also helps promotes personal growth and development. Our University calendar is available on our website and reflects the number and diversity of events offered on campus. These are an important part of our vision for the future, To Create an Engaged Campus. Thank you for your efforts to organize these experiences for our students and to encourage them to attend.

Another good source of information for campus information is the alumni e-zine, Bulldog Bytes. The latest issue includes information about Homecoming activities October 8th - 14th and the annual Ferris Foundation Gala on November 3rd. Our special guest for the Gala will be the noted actor, James Earl Jones.

Transitions

Matt Chaney has accepted our invitation to serve as Director of Minority Affairs. I am delighted he is willing to assume these responsibilities and look forward to working with him in this new and expanded role. The State of Michigan has changed the way it disperses funds for minority recruitment and retention efforts. As a result we now participate in a state-wide College Day and Gear-Up Grant. Michael Wade will be joining Matt in the Minority Affairs Office to assist with these activities.

Suzette Compton will be retiring from the University at end of this week. I appreciate the wonderful service Suzette has provided the University as Director of Purchasing and most recently her extraordinary leadership as head of the Banner administrative software conversion project. We will truly miss Suzette and wish her well.

Closing Thoughts

This week you may see a fair amount of national news about a report from the Federal Commission for Higher Education, also called the Spellings Commission. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings is scheduled to release her plan for higher education based on this report on Tuesday. Information on the Spelling Commission and a complete copy of the report is available from their web site.

Last week many members of the Big Rapids campus community participated in the Relay for Life. It is easy to understand the importance of this event when one sees the number of cancer survivors in attendance. This week Ferris State University opens its United Way campaign. The United Way addresses problems right here in Mecosta and Osceola County, making a difference for the youth, the elderly, and those who are in need. For the past two years we have met

our University goal. Thank you for supporting the United Way and its efforts in our community.

We have an impressive group of new students this fall. I enjoy visiting with them and hearing about their commitments to helping others and their hopes and dreams for the future. Thank you for your efforts these past four weeks to help our students adjust to college life and to our campuses. The personal attention you take in our students makes a wonderful difference in their success.

Best wishes,

Dave

Web Links

Dan Verton's home page - <http://www.danverton.com/>

Bulldog Prevention Week poster -
http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/colleges/university/peer/main_page/prevention.pdf

Football rankings -
<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/sports/football/06news/nationallyranked919.htm>

Athletics home page - <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/sports/index/homepage.cfm>

American Democracy Project -
<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/academicaffairs/ADP/>

Political Engagement Project -
<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/academicaffairs/ADP/PEP/>

Campus Calendar -
<http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/calendar/calendars/calendar.cfm?CFID=715344&CFTOKEN=60135977>

Bulldog Bytes - <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/alumni/BulldogBytes/>

Federal Commission on Higher Education -
<http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/index.html>