

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
March 23, 2006

Although spring is officially here, the last few days have certainly felt much more like winter. However some bright sunny days suggest that spring temperatures may be on the way. As we reach the two-thirds point of the semester I want to update you on some ongoing efforts at our University.

State Budget Discussions

Work continues on the state budget. Last week the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee for Higher Education released its budget recommendations. The good news is that despite indications to the contrary, the Senate Subcommittee did recommend an increase in funding. The size of their increase was similar to that recommended by the Governor, but distributed in a different fashion. The Senate Subcommittee's approach favors funding floors, which does not consider differences in program cost and mix. Under the Senate plan we would receive a 1.8% increase for our University, an amount slightly more than \$800,000.

Budget discussions now shift to the House, which last year created a funding formula that recognizes programmatic costs. We will present our funding ideas to the House Subcommittee next Wednesday morning, March 29th. While relatively small, I am pleased that the legislature continues to favor a budget increase. This is a welcome change from the reductions of the past two years. In Lansing, we also continue to work very hard for state funding of the Optometry Building project. I will share more information on both of these efforts as it is available.

College of Technology Dean Search

One of the challenges our University has experienced for some time is securing a permanent dean for the College of Technology. Beginning last fall a search committee has worked to fill this position. From a strong pool of over forty applicants, four very experienced candidates were invited to campus. Each candidate had a two-day interview, meeting with faculty, staff, students, deans, the vice president, and others on campus.

It is a pleasure to congratulate Dr. Tom Oldfield on his appointment as the new dean of the College of Technology. During this past year Dr. Oldfield had truly earned this appointment through his performance as interim dean. I have heard from people both on and off campus about his effectiveness in this role. I believe Tom has worked effectively to bring the college together and there is significant support for his leadership. Perhaps most importantly, Tom Oldfield brings to this role an understanding and strong commitment to Ferris State University.

I want to express my thanks to the members of the search committee – Dan Burcham, Clare Cook, Don Green, Jim Klett, Diane Naglekirk, Brian Pacholka, Mike Ropele, Robert Spiers, Joelle Sawisch, Khagendra Thapa, and Shari Wessels. This group, ably lead by Professor David Hanna, conducted the search in a thorough, professional, and effective manner. Credit for this success also goes to Vice President for Academic Affairs Michael Harris, who has done a wonderful job organizing and guiding this search from start to finish.

Now the challenge is to help Dr. Oldfield to continue to succeed in his role as dean for the College of Technology. I know the strength of Tom's leadership and am convinced that this is an important step forward for our University. In these challenging times for the Michigan economy our College of Technology can be a major catalyst in helping displaced workers prepare for new careers and to help reinforce the manufacturing base in our state. I look forward to working with Tom and the College as we chart a course for their future.

Political Engagement Project

For the past two years Ferris State University has been an active participant in the American Democracy project. This is an unprecedented effort that brings together the combined energies of faculty and students at 210 campuses across the country. As a result of this involvement Ferris State University is one of eight campuses chosen across the country to participate in the Political Engagement Project (PEP). This national project is sponsored by the New York Times, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and the American Association of Colleges and State Universities.

This effort seeks to enhance the political understanding, skills and motivation of students on our campus with special emphasis on first-year students. It also provides the opportunity for our campus to work with Tom Ehrlich, a senior scholar at the Carnegie Foundation and former president of Indiana University. I believe Tom Ehrlich's book, [Educating Citizens: Preparing America's Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility](#), presents some wonderful ideas for what is possible for our student engagement efforts at Ferris. Working with Tom is another Carnegie Senior Scholar, Anne Colby, formerly of

Radcliffe College. Some of their thoughts on this subject are included in a Carnegie Perspective, "The Spirit of Liberty," <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/perspectives/sub.asp?key=245&subkey=583>

Tony Baker, Rick Griffin, and Bill Potter will lead the Political Engagement Project on our campus. I am delighted our University has been selected for this national project and look forward to these efforts for our students.

Good News

Three new departmental leadership appointments have been announced by Vice President Harris. Michael Cooper has agreed to become chair of the Marketing Department in the College of Business. I was very impressed by Mike's leadership as co-chair of this year's technology support task force and appreciate very much his willingness to accept this responsibility for his department and college. In the College of Arts and Sciences, Karen Strasser has agreed to become interim head of the Biological Sciences Department, replacing Jim Hoerter who has accepted a teaching position in the department. Grant Snider has been hired as Department Head in Humanities and will begin on July 1. He comes to Ferris from Point Park University where he serves as the Chair of the Department of Humanities and Human Science. In his position at Point Park he has been responsible for Outcomes Assessment, was the co-director of the Teaching and Learning Center, and a member of the Honors Steering Committee. Department leadership is very important for the continued growth and success of our academic programs. We are fortunate to have three outstanding individuals accept these important leadership positions.

This past weekend was the Spaghetti Bridge Competition, a truly remarkable event that helps encourage science, mathematical, and engineering skills in high school students. For this students construct a model of a historical or architecturally unique bridge and make oral presentation on it. The second day they have an hour to construct a bridge from spaghetti and a glue gun, which is then tested for its ability to hold a suspended weight. I believe the record weight suspended for this is 94 lbs. I appreciate very much the efforts of Bill and Nancy Burmeister and of John Vermeer to support and promote this activity. This event promotes learning in a dynamic, multi-disciplinary and very effective fashion.

As part of our efforts to expand international educational opportunities, the University recently completed a partnership agreement with Fundacao Armando Alvares Penteado (FAAP), a private institution in Sao Paulo, Brazil. This partnership results primarily from the efforts of Luzia Tartari. On April 5th-8th we will be hosting a team including Rector Xuan Tong Vo from An Giang University in Longxuyen, Vietnam. Our relationship and agreement with An Giang University began with visits by Biology Professor Phil Watson.

Closing Thoughts

Many of you are making extraordinary efforts as we seek to implement and adapt to Banner software across our campus. This creates significant changes in our daily business processes. While this can be difficult and challenging, it is necessary as we seek to keep our campus systems up-to-date. This is the third software conversion that I have worked with over the last decade. From my perspective this is the best organized and managed conversion that I have experienced. Nevertheless it does represent a substantial commitment of time and effort. Additional information on the Banner project is available at <http://www.ferris.edu/banner/> Thank you so very much for helping this project succeed.

Next week includes two of my favorite events on campus. Thursday evening is the Fourth Annual Women Investing in Leadership and Learning (WILL) Conference. Sponsored by the Student Government Association and scheduled from 6-9 pm at the Holiday Inn, this year's speakers include Michigan Environmental Council President Lana Pollack; Continental Basketball Association's Michigan Mayhem owner Jannie Scott; and Michigan Supreme Court Justice Maura Corrigan. Friday evening is the Hospitality Management program's annual gala. Entitled "Masquerade," this brings together guest chefs, wonderful food, a silent auction, and entertainment, all planned, organized, and coordinated by our students. Both are very enjoyable events and I encourage you to join me for them.

While it may seem difficult to believe, five weeks remain before the end of semester examinations. As we enter this final third of the semester, I am reminded of the extra effort you make to help our students and our University. Thank you so very much for your assistance and support.

Best wishes,

Dave