

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
January 13, 2006

It is a pleasure to welcome you back to campus. It is exciting to watch the pace and activity of our campus increase as faculty and students return to campus and the semester begins. I am hopeful that the holiday break provided you time with family and friends together with the opportunity to rest and relax. Enrollment for winter semester is at present 11,736 students. This is an increase of 649 students over last winter and represents the largest winter semester in Ferris State University history. Thank you for your efforts in helping increased numbers of students benefit from the education we provide.

As we complete the first week of classes, I want to update you on university-wide planning efforts and other timely information.

University Planning

Over the past two and a half years, Ferris State University has worked to build a vision for Ferris and its future. This vision has three parts -

- We need to create a Learning Centered University.
- We must work together.
- We must become an engaged campus.

During Fall Semester 2005 five university-wide task forces were established to examine important components of our future -

- Grants and External Funding - Jim Hoerter, Karen Thompson, co-chairs
- Student Engagement - Cindy Horn, John Thorp, co-chairs
- Technology Support - Michael Cooper, Scott Thede, co-chairs
- Transfer Students - Pat Klarecki, Deb Whitman, co-chairs
- Accreditation - Mike Cairns, Matt Klein, co-chairs

The task forces involved over seventy-five members of the campus community. Over the course of two months these groups of faculty, staff and students examined their topic with the charge to -

- Benchmark best practice.
- Identify internal resources and unique strengths.
- Consider diversity implications.

- Recommend strategic initiatives.
- Identify multiple small wins.
- Develop recommendations that are challenging, but achievable.
- Consider how we work together to achieve this.

Task force final reports were presented in well-attended public sessions on December 15th and 16th. Complete information on each of the task forces including membership, charge, presentation, and final report is available at <http://www.ferris.edu/president/planningtf2005.htm>.

The task force final reports represent extraordinary effort and are a wonderful resource for both present and future planning efforts. Working with these presentations and reports, the Presidents Council has developed a synthesis that will form the core of planning efforts during winter semester. This document is accessible at <http://www.ferris.edu/president/tfsynthesis200506.doc>. Selected recommendations have been organized in two groups. The first are far reaching ideas that stretch across divisions and are critical for the future. Development and implementation of these recommendations will begin immediately. These university-wide priorities include the following -

- 1) **Develop and implement a Student Technology Assistant Program.**
With the continued implementation of technology across our campus, more support for users is needed. The technology support task force presented an excellent plan for the development of a student technology assistant program. This effort will expand upon the considerable contributions students already make to technology support at the University. It will consider formalized training programs for all computer support students, the establishment of student software experts, facilitating students who provide support across campus to work together more, expand the use of students for support throughout the University, and develop appropriate recognition/reward systems for student assistants.
- 2) **Establish an Office of Sponsored Research and Grants.**
Grants support at Ferris State University needs to evolve from the current business and service unit for faculty members to a university strategic partner, supporting institutional initiatives. The Grants and External Funding Task Force presented a compelling approach to increasing the resources our University receives from external funding. It will not be enough to merely establish an office with this responsibility, for this effort to succeed will require university-wide support for these efforts. Among these should be a mentoring network for proposal writing. In addition, the University should provide incentives and support to enhance and promote grant activities.

- 3) **Launch a major effort to recruit, enroll, and retain transfer students.**
While our University has had success with attracting transfer students, considerable opportunities exist to attract greater numbers of transfer students. Experience shows that we both retain and graduate a high percentage of transfer students. Working together we can make Ferris State University the institution of choice for well-prepared transfer students. Components of this approach include new and increased transfer scholarships. We need to establish a single point of contact for new transfer students, and at the same time eliminate roadblocks and impediments to student transfer. As part of this effort we will work to develop a personalized, customized transfer guide for each student interested in transferring to Ferris State University.
- 4) **Develop a coordinated approach to scheduling co-curricular events.**
The Student Engagement Task Force studied carefully the scheduling of co-curricular events. Their proposal is an excellent approach to guide the overall use of facilities available for scheduling events. A users group consisting of members who schedule these events will work to coordinate arts, lectures, and entertainment programming. Utilizing past scheduling history, they can develop a “typical” academic year of programming as a template for future events.
- 5) **Expand the assessment of student engagement efforts.**
The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is providing important assessment data on the engagement of students at Ferris State University. We need to use the NSSE with both on- and off-campus students. We need to study carefully potential warning signs regarding student engagement found in the first administration of this document.

In addition to this year’s task forces, reports from last year’s task forces, which examined professional development, teaching facilities, communication, student engagement, learner-centered technology, and enrollment growth, have also been reviewed. We will continue with these efforts begun as a result of last year’s task forces -

- 1) Renovate and improve classrooms, technology, and furnishings with a goal of addressing all classrooms in a five-year timeframe.
- 2) Expand the University-wide effort to create a consistent message\identity as part of a truly integrated marketing program for our institution.
- 3) Continue the hardware replacement cycle for faculty and staff computers based on a matching funds incentive program between central and division-level support and the reassignment of replaced equipment.
- 4) Design and implement the remainder of a meshed wireless network that covers the campus footprint.

- 5) Continue the funding formula which rewards colleges for enrollment growth.

A second group of recommendations will form the basis for the annual Unit Action Planning Process, which begins in mid-January. These recommendations include task force ideas that are both large and small, and have been assigned to specific divisions for consideration and implementation. To help create collaboration across divisions, in many cases there is shared responsibility for these ideas. Unit Action Planning will continue throughout the semester culminating in university-wide planning sessions on March 30th and 31st. Complete information on Unit Action Planning and supporting documents is accessible at <http://www.ferris.edu/president/uap200607.htm>. I appreciate your efforts in the Unit Action Planning process and look forward to hearing the results of your deliberations.

Changes and Transitions

Over the holiday break workers from our physical plant completed the next phase of classroom renovation. Through their efforts ten more classrooms have been remodeled, in the College of Business (BUS) Rooms 216 and 316, in the Swan (SWN) Building Rooms 207, 211, and 218, in the Allied Health (VFS) Building Rooms 326A and 328, in the Science (SCI) Building Rooms 112 and 136, and Room 134 in the Starr (STR) Building. I appreciate very much the men and women who worked evenings and weekends, and throughout the break to improve these learning spaces. I have already heard from faculty and students about the difference these improvements make for them. I would encourage you to visit some of the remodeled spaces. If time does not permit, before and after pictures are accessible at <http://www.ferris.edu/president/classrooms2005.htm>. Some of the changes are truly stunning. I would appreciate receiving your thoughts regarding the learning spaces project, please email me, eislerd@ferris.edu.

Another group of staff worked significant hours over the break helping facilitate the conversion of the student information system to the new Banner administrative software. Special thanks go to Suzette Compton, Cathryn Claerhout, Dave Engels, Kathy Fisher, Bruce Gilchrist, Sam Fattore, Rob Wagner, Jo Gerst, Dave Steffens, Lora Caputo, Kim Latendresse, Bobbie Landreth, and Craig Westman. Their extra effort is a significant factor in the success of this project.

At the beginning of this semester we are losing Dean Jacque Hooper, who has accepted a position at Bastyr University in Seattle. We appreciate very much the efforts Dean Hooper has made to expand the College of Allied Health across Michigan. Ferris State University is very fortunate in that Ellen Haneline is willing

to accept new leadership responsibilities as Interim Dean of the college. A nationwide search will be begun in the fall for this position.

Closing Thoughts

Throughout winter semester I will be visiting with staff and students, sharing information, and seeking their thoughts on the values of our University. I am hopeful you will accept this invitation to join your colleagues in visiting with me. This is something I truly enjoy, and I very much look forward to this opportunity.

If you have followed state budget reports out of Lansing for the past week, you have heard about a small budget surplus. While the current state economic projections do not suggest that budget increases are likely this year, the good news is that there is not at this time a deficit. For the first time in three years I believe that we will not experience a mid-year budget reduction. This is certainly very good news. As the state budgeting process proceeds, I will provide updates on our progress.

It is wonderful to have classes back in session. I encourage you to participate in the Martin Luther King events scheduled next week and look forward to seeing you at some of them. It is great to have you back on campus. Thank you very much for the difference you make for Ferris State University and our students.

Best wishes,

Dave