

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
October 20, 2005

This past weekend's homecoming was one of the best I have ever attended. We were fortunate to have wonderful weather and our campus has never looked better. Many of our alumni and friends were back on campus. Events throughout the week and weekend, including the annual parade and especially the homecoming dance, were well attended. The crowd at Saturday afternoon's football game was treated to a high scoring and exciting contest.

In visiting with alumni in a variety of settings, what I hear most often is their amazement at the continued growth of our campus and programs. It is easy to feel the pride our alums have for Ferris State University and the continued connections they feel. This truly was a wonderful weekend and results from the combined efforts of many, many people. I want to express my sincere thanks to everyone who helped make homecoming so successful, whether it be through planning, supporting, or participating. Thank you so very much for making this an extra special occasion.

More Good News and Good Efforts

One of the measures of any campus community is how it comes together to support University events. This past weekend's homecoming events were a wonderful example of this. Tuesday evening's Arts and Lectures concert was another. It was very gratifying to see the crowd for guitarist Tommy Emmanuel's concert. I want to thank the Arts and Lectures Committee chaired by Dan Cronk and the special efforts of Paul Kwant in bringing this extraordinary musician to Big Rapids. I have had the opportunity to hear many guitarists over the last 30 years, but have never heard someone like Mr. Emmanuel. This was truly a remarkable and memorable event. Plainly and simply I have never heard a better concert.

This morning our renovation plans for the Instructional Resource Center were approved by the Joint Capital Outlay Subcommittee. We received no questions during the committee meeting and our project was unanimously approved. The next step in this process is for the legislature to approve a funding bill. We are hopeful this will happen either during October or November. With funding approval we should see construction begin on this project during December or January.

Task Forces

Last year we implemented a planning process which focused the combined efforts of faculty, staff and students from across our campuses. These groups worked to connect action recommendations with our vision –

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

The results from last year's task forces have positively changed and improved our university. In continuing to move forward, I believe it is important we focus on a limited number of efforts that have the most potential for success. I feel strongly that this process must include broad involvement of people from all areas of our campus. The recommendations from these task forces will be embedded in our planning activities this year, both as broad university-wide projects and a part of Unit Action Planning.

Today it is my pleasure to announce the formation of five university-wide task forces, co-chaired by members of our faculty, staff, and administration. Each group will be given a similar charge –

- **Benchmark best practice** - Any planning effort should begin with a clear understanding of what we want to achieve. What is best practice and how can we adapt that for our university?
- **Identify internal resources and unique strengths** – There is a tendency to sometimes look to others for assistance when the best examples and strengths are already here. I believe great organizations focus on their strengths and expand them, looking for the positive rather than negative.
- **Consider diversity implications** – There is a tendency on campuses to focus one planning group on diversity. It is my experience that this can limit responsibility for diversity to that single entity when it is the responsibility of the entire organization.
- **Recommend strategic initiatives** – In a three-year context what can we achieve?
- **Identify multiple small wins** – In each area there are changes we can achieve now. In doing so we will build our institutional confidence through our combined success. Further we will demonstrate conclusively that planning does result in action.
- **Recommendations should be challenging, but achievable** – Many of us have observed well-intentioned planning efforts that lost sight of reality.
- **Consider how we work together to achieve this** – If we are to build a great future for our institution, it will require efforts that are inclusive and create shared responsibility.

- **Report in 60 days** – Planning efforts should be time specific and not create a series of ongoing standing committees. Each group will develop a report which they will present to the campus in open sessions scheduled for December 15th and 16th. The materials developed will be posted and shared on the campus website.

University-wide task forces will focus on the following areas -

#1 - Transfer Students – Ferris State University awards more than 800 associate degrees annually. As a result we understand the challenges of connecting two- and four-year degrees. Experience has shown that we retain 85% of new transfer students and that over 65% of these students graduate. My hope is that this group, chaired by Pat Klarecki from Academic Affairs and Debi Whitman, from Admissions and Records, can help us become the institution of choice for transfer students. More specifically we ask the following -

- How do we provide seamless, one-stop entry for transfer students?
- What roadblocks prevent or impede transfer students from entering?
- Are there regulations or requirements that prevent us from being transfer friendly?
- Where should we focus resources to recruit transfer students?
- What incentives will attract transfer students to our campuses?

Membership for this group includes the following people -

- Pat Klarecki, co-chair – Academic Affairs
- Debi Whitman, co-chair – Admissions & Records
- Dan Burcham – Student Affairs
- Shari Chamberlain – Admissions
- Mary Cline – Education
- Greg Denny – Technology
- Julie Doyle – Business
- Mike Ennis – Education
- Luiza Tartari – Admissions & Records
- Reinhold Hill – Arts and Sciences
- Rod Larson - Pharmacy
- Tracy Powers – FSU-GR
- Jon Shafer – Residential Life

#2 - Grants and External Funding – As state funding continues to decline, we must look to other sources for support. With our unique mix of academic programs and our focus on education that prepares student for productive careers, how do we leverage this competitive advantage into increased funding? This group,

co-chaired by Jim Hoerter from Arts and Sciences and Karen Thompson from Administration and Finance, will seek to answer the following -

- What is the history of grant writing and grants received by the University?
- What have been the successes and are the challenges associated with this currently?
- What are best practices used by other successful grant offices and other institutions to manage this activity?
- How can the University be more successful in accessing State and Federal grant earmarks?

Membership for this task force includes the following -

- James Hoerter, co-chair - Arts and Sciences
- Karen Thompson, co-chair - Administration and Finance
- Penny Bouman - Admissions and Records
- Julie Coon - Allied Health
- Tom Crandell - UCEL
- Sayed Hashimi - Technology
- Michelle Johnston - Education
- Hengli Jiao - Arts and Sciences
- Lori Johnson - Tot's Place
- Michael Klepser - Pharmacy
- Bill Potter - University College
- Manuel Rupe - General Counsel
- Gretchen Spedowske - Academic Affairs

#3 - Technical Support - Last year we made significant progress in providing faculty and staff updated computer hardware and strengthening campus technology networks. We are at the midpoint of a campus-wide conversion to new administrative software. This task force, co-chaired by Michael Cooper from the College of Business and Scott Thede from IS&T, will investigate how we best support our people in using these systems and resources. Specifically we ask -

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of current efforts for technology support for faculty and staff?
- How do we expand on the idea of the technical assistance center and create a virtual help desk and virtual knowledge bank?
- How can the University meet emergent needs for Banner instruction?
- How can the University support increased instructional use of technology both on-line and in the classroom?
- How can talented students effectively supplement the support work of campus professionals?

The members of this task force include the following people -

- Michael Cooper, co-chair - Business
- Scott Thede, co-chair - IS&T
- Lisa Besemer - Purchasing
- Kimn Carlton-Smith - Arts and Sciences
- Susan Cherry - TAC
- Ronnie Higgs - Admissions & Records
- Debra Cox - University College
- William Knapp - Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning
- Yuri Konovalov - Library
- Michael Korcal - Technology
- Tara Lee - Pharmacy
- Katherine Manley - Education
- Marcia Parry - Allied Health
- Stephanie Patton - Physical Plant
- John Urbanick - IS&T
- Randy Vance - Optometry

#4 - Student Engagement - At our University there are many, many examples of student engagement. I hear regularly of the extraordinary efforts of our students, faculty, and staff in helping others. Co-chaired by Cindy Horn from Student Affairs, and John Thorp from Arts and Sciences, this task force will be asked to consider the following -

- Review and analyze data from the initial National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) on campus.
 - What does this say about engagement efforts on and off campus?
 - Are there other survey instruments that should be used beyond the NSSE?
- Review calendaring processes on campus. How do we use, organize, disseminate, and use the university calendar effectively?
- How do we connect and create new connections between
 - the classroom and extracurricular activities?
 - the campus and community?

The members of this task force include the following people -

- Cindy Horn, co-chair - Student Affairs
- John Thorp, co-chair - Arts and Sciences
- Yolanda Barnes - General Counsel
- Karyn Benner - Minority Affairs
- Daniel Cronk - Arts & Sciences and Music Activities
- Beverly DeMarr - College of Business

- Wendy Dodd – University Recreation
- Michael Haggerty – Athletics
- Ted Halm – University Advancement & Marketing
- Kathy Harlan – Allied Health Sciences
- Lori Helmer – Dining Services
- Leah Nixon – University Advancement & Marketing
- Roberta Teahen - UCEL
- Michael Terry – Williams Auditorium
- Joan Totten – University College
- Leroy Wright – Residential Life
- Adrienne Jones – Student
- Nichole Wheelock – Student
- Daniel Campbell – Student

#5 - Accreditation – It is time to discuss campus-wide what our approach will be to regional accreditation when our campus is reviewed by Higher Learning Commission in 2010- 2011. Our University can pursue a traditional approach to this regional accreditation or pursue the AQUIP option. We are asking that this task force engage the campus in a process of information sharing and education on these accreditation approaches. As part of this effort we ask that they provide forums for discussion of the relative strengths and weaknesses of each accreditation strategy. Given the interaction this group will need to facilitate, this report is not requested until March 15th. This task force, co-chaired by Matt Klein from Arts and Sciences and Mike Cairns from Student Affairs is asked to consider -

- What are the potential strengths and weaknesses of Higher Learning Commission accreditation via AQUIP or traditional approaches?
- Which approach has the most potential for positive improvement at FSU?

Members of this task force include the following –

- Michael Cairns, co-chair – Student Affairs
- Matt Klein, co-chair – Arts and Sciences
- James Bandstra – Business
- Richard Cochran – Library
- Daniel DeRegnier – Allied Health
- Yaron Felus – Technology
- Raymond Gant – Minority Affairs
- Kevin Jackson – Physical Plant
- Becky Kowalkoski – Education and Career Counseling Center
- Beth Krueger – Human Resources
- Mary Murnik – Arts and Sciences
- Karen Norman – Education
- Christi Roe – Arts and Sciences

- Greg Wellman - Pharmacy
- John Backstrom - FSU-GR

I am very pleased that so many members of our university community have volunteered their time and talents to move forward on these areas. It is my experience that university planning efforts often do not fulfill their promise for three main reasons -

- **The Reality Factor** - Planning efforts can lose touch with reality and create parallel structures outside of the normal operating processes of the university. To avoid this pitfall these goals are practically oriented and will be embedded into university-wide goals the Unit Action Planning Process.
- **Funding** - Frequently planning results are hampered by no financial support for their recommendations. While these are challenging financial times for our University, we will pull together the one-time resources available to fund the recommendations accepted. When base funds are available, recommendations will be also be considered for this support.
- **Follow Through** - The success of last year's task force efforts resulted from the hard work of the people involved and our willingness to accompany planning with action. We will both measure and assess our progress on each of these efforts.

Grand Rapids Planning Task Forces

I am delighted that our campuses in Grand Rapids have chosen to adopt a similar approach to planning. As a result I am pleased to announce two additional task forces -

#1 - Student Service Experience in Grand Rapids - This task force will analyze ways to improve the awareness of, and services to, the students who attend Kendall College of Art and Design and Ferris State University—Grand Rapids. It will recommend ways to provide more efficient information and other services for students in Grand Rapids. Don Green will coordinate the work of this task force. Its membership includes the following faculty and staff in Grand Rapids -

- Jennifer Amlotte - Marketing
- Katie Baughman - Student Services
- Nicole DeKraker - Admissions
- Jodi Hanberry - Receptionist
- Mary Kolenda - Registrar's Office
- Amanda Mitchell - Student Services

#2 - Faculty and Staff Recruitment - This task force will develop and implement methods of collecting and evaluating perceptions of the search process in Grand Rapids. It seeks to improve search processes both for internal constituencies and for candidates who apply for positions. This task force will recommend improvements which enhance the effectiveness of the search processes. Oliver Evans will coordinate the work of this task force. Its membership includes the following faculty and staff in Grand Rapids -

- Sandy Britton - Enrollment Management
- Sandy Davison-Wilson - Kendall College of Art and Design
- Tom Edwards - Industrial Design faculty
- Bill Fischer - Illustration
- Sarah Joseph - Gallery
- Ward Makielski - Digital Animation and Game Design
- Tracy Powers - FSU-GR

During spring semester a third task force will be formed in Grand Rapids on the Impact of Banner Conversion. Sandy Davison-Wilson will coordinate the efforts of this group.

Closing Thoughts

Many more people volunteered to participate on task forces than could be accommodated on the groups announced today. It has been very gratifying to see how willing people are to serve on these task forces. Last year's results demonstrated that that this broad-based approach to planning is powerful, positive, and effective. I look forward to hearing the results of these planning forces and invite you to join me for these discussions on December 15th and 16th.

As we move into the second half of the semester, I want to thank you for the efforts you make daily to help our students. Ferris State University is an extraordinary place because of you. Your efforts make a difference for our students. Thanks so much.

Best wishes,

Dave