

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
April 4, 2005

After several false starts I believe that spring may actually be here. As we celebrate more sunny days and warming temperatures, I am grateful for the combined efforts of our people on our campus who are transforming and removing the debris of winter, the salt, sand, dirt, and paper from our grounds. It is amazing to see how quickly our campus is greening and becoming once again a physically beautiful place to work.

Campus Events

As the pace quickens for these final few weeks of the semester there will be many opportunities to come together to celebrate, recognize, and to say thank you. I would like to share a touch of some of my experiences at three such events last week. The first was Tuesday at the dedication of the Founders' Room in the Rankin Center. A standing room only crowd listened to comments regarding Woodbridge and Helen Ferris, their thoughts on education and students, and their founding vision for our institution. This was a wonderful effort of our History Commemorative Task Force members. If you have not done so, I would encourage you to see the materials on display and the wonderful insight they provide into our heritage. For me it is an interesting experience to sit in the Founders' Room and have both Mr. and Mrs. Ferris looking down from their portraits on the wall.

Friday afternoon we dedicated the John and Lynda Fenn Digital Photogrammetry and GIS Laboratory for the Surveying Technology program. Through their generosity, the Fenns have created an endowment to replace the materials in this laboratory in perpetuity. These donors were drawn to our institution because of the excellence of this program, the commitment of our faculty, and the success of our graduates. Those attending were moved when most unexpectedly Mr. Fenn publicly offered to match others' contributions to the facility during the next year. This was a truly magical moment. The continued identification and cultivation of supporters for our programs can and is making a significant difference for our academic programs.

Friday evening was the annual hospitality management gala. Entitled "Cuisines of the World," this was a wonderful integrated learning experience where students applied their education in a real world situation. Our students planned the entire event, including the theme, menu, decorations, entertainment, staffing,

and donation items for the silent auction items. They worked extraordinarily hard on multiple tasks, coordinating, cooking, and serving the dinner. Besides being a wonderful meal, it was very impressive to hear about the success of our students and graduates. During the evening I had the opportunity to sit with representatives from Alticor Inc., who are constructing the new J.W. Marriott Hotel in Grand Rapids. George Aquino, general manager for this facility, shared with me the impressive work of our students who researched and designed the theme and concepts selected for the restaurant their corporation will build in the new hotel. What an amazing learning experience this has been for our students.

These were but three events in an amazing week of activities that also included the annual Women Investing in Leadership and Learning Conference, which brought three remarkable women leaders to our campus, a special Fulbright perspective on our world, and a demonstration by our technology students of their latest Rube Goldberg invention. There are many, many wonderful events on our campus and I want to encourage you to attend and enjoy these learning opportunities. More information on upcoming events can be accessed from our home page, or the university calendar at <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/calendar/calendars/calendar.cfm>

Planning Efforts

On Thursday and Friday each university division presented its successes over the past year and laid out unit action plans for next year. I appreciate the involvement of people across the entire University in this process and enjoyed hearing about the progress of your efforts and plans for the future. This year's process was unique in that unit action plans included goals and recommendations set forward by University-wide task forces. It was good to see the number of people that attended each session. If you were unable to attend, or would like to follow up on the materials presented, they are accessible at - <http://www.ferris.edu/president/planning200506.htm>

A few weeks ago I shared with you our progress on implementing major goals that resulted from last fall's University task forces – the implementation of enrollment growth funding and the survey of student engagement on campus. One of the major goals that resulted from the communications task force was to initiate a University-wide effort to create a consistent message and identity. The University has issued a RFP for firms who would assist in this effort and has received fourteen responses. This group has been reduced to four finalists who will be on campus presenting to the Strategic Marketing and Enrollment Committee this Wednesday. The possible messages from these sessions will be shared with the campus community in open sessions tentatively scheduled for April 19th. Possible messages

will also be available via an identity messaging web site with feedback options. Beyond faculty and staff feedback, plans are to seek input from alumni, students, prospective students, and community members. Our goal is the development and implementation of a messaging strategy that reflects Ferris State University's mission, vision and values, that distinguishes our institution, and that speaks to and resonates with our campus and constituents. Continued progress on major goals can be tracked at <http://www.ferris.edu/president/planupdateFY05.htm>

We have begun again the process for minor capital improvements. Examples of minor capital outlay projects include major maintenance and repairs, replacements or alterations to existing University facilities which are not funded by normal maintenance funds. These projects are usually relatively small, but can help address important needs. Complete information on minor capital improvements is available at <http://www.ferris.edu/president/MinorCapsProcess.doc>

Governor Granholm Visit

On Tuesday, Governor Jennifer Granholm will be in Big Rapids. As part of this visit she will be touring our campus for an hour, visiting with students in applied technology and allied health professions. The Governor's activities at Ferris are designed to reinforce the message she presented in her State of the State address, "Jobs Today and Jobs Tomorrow." While the Governor will not be delivering an address on our campus, we are delighted she has chosen to visit our University and learn more about our programs firsthand.

In Lansing I am hearing growing understanding and appreciation for the value of a Ferris State University education and the success of its graduates. Thank you so very much for your continued efforts for our students, our programs, and our University.

Dave