

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
March 28, 2005

Good morning! I am hopeful the extended weekend provided opportunity for you to spend extra time with family and friends. It is delightful to see the piles of snow beginning to melt away. Although the mornings are still cold, I am beginning to believe that spring may be around the corner. I want to take this opportunity to update you about recent activity in Lansing and other items of interest for our campus.

Executive Order

On Wednesday the legislature approved an executive order to balance the state's budget. This includes a reduction in state funding for our current budget of \$859,900 or 1.7% of state funding. These funds will be taken from our 2004-2005 budget, but we will do so from one-time rather than base funds. While there will be some impact from this reduction, we will not eliminate any positions as a result of this cut.

I am not often optimistic about budget reductions, but there appears a reasonable opportunity that this cut may not be imposed. In May, the state will again publish an estimate of its revenue. At that time if an additional \$30 million in revenue is available, the higher ed reductions will be eliminated, and our budget will not be cut. We will identify the funds for this reduction now, but will wait to reduce budgets until June. I am hopeful the state's financial position will improve and this cut will not be necessary.

The challenge now becomes to work with the state on next year's higher education budget. I have spent a significant amount of time in Lansing attending both the house and senate sessions on results-based budgeting, visiting with legislators, and attending the house higher education subcommittee. I sense growing support for higher education, both from the legislature and our Governor. There is recognition and understanding that the future of our state is dependent upon higher education. The legislature is currently on break and will return the week of April 11th. Our presentation to the house higher education appropriations subcommittee is scheduled for April 13th.

Capital Outlay

Partnered with the executive order was \$200 million in capital outlay funding to be spread between 28 community colleges and 15 universities. Our top priority has been and remains a new building for the college of optometry. Late last Monday evening it became clear that our proposal was not included in the outlay bill, and that we would receive nothing from these funds without strong action. In an attempt to gain funding, Tuesday afternoon we submitted a request for \$5.625 million to renovate the IRC building. This building is in need of significant updating and was the third priority on our recently approved master plan. It also reflects our commitment to renovate and improve teaching spaces across campus.

Our Representative Darwin Booher worked with Rep. Dave Farhat from Muskegon to get this project included in the final capital outlay list. Agreement on this was reached in the legislature Wednesday morning. In this effort we also received strong support from our Senator, Michelle McManus, Vice President Scott Hill-Kennedy and lobbyist Manny Lentine. With capital outlay projects the University needs to match one fourth of the cost, making this a \$7.5 million project. As a part of ongoing efforts to maximize resources, we were in the process of refinancing some current bonds. Savings from this refinancing will pay for the majority of our costs for this project.

Vice President Michael Harris will organize an effort to seek user input on the remodeling of this instructional facility. We will need to move quickly so that work on this building can begin once the semester has concluded. I am very grateful for the strong support of our legislators and the excellent work of our legislative team. Four universities received none of these capital outlay funds and that nearly was the case with Ferris. We will continue to work to seek funding for a new optometry building.

Founders Room

The history task force has been working for some time on a project to rename the Rankin Center Presidents Room to the Founders Room. I am very pleased with their efforts, which have created a room which both recognizes and celebrates the vision of our founders, Woodbridge and Helen Ferris. This Tuesday at 11 am we will rededicate this room with a program that includes presentations, readings, and recollections on Mr. and Mrs. Ferris. It will be followed by a special lunch in the Centennial Dining Room featuring items from Mrs. Ferris' menu.

As a part of this rededication the history task force has sponsored a Founders Trivia Contest. The results are available here - <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/alumni/Historical/founderstrivia.htm>. Additional

information on this celebration is available here -

<http://www.ferris.edu/library/instruction/CelebrationFlyer.pdf>. I hope you can join us on Tuesday as we rededicate this room and recognize our founders.

Unit Action Planning

At Ferris we are fortunate to have a Unit Action Planning effort that encourages participation across our campus. I want to thank you for your input, involvement and efforts in this year's process. Division plans will be presented this Thursday and Friday in the Founders Room and I would encourage you to attend these open sessions. The schedule for presentations is as follows -

Thursday, March 31st

- 9:00 Academic Affairs Introduction, Divisional Successes and College Successes
- 10:45 Academic Affairs Divisional Plans and College Plans
- 1:30 University Counsel and Governmental Relations
- 2:15 Ferris State University - Grand Rapids
Kendall College of Art and Design

Friday, April 1st

- 9:00 Administration and Finance
- 10:00 University Advancement and Marketing
- 11:00 Student Affairs

An added dimension of this year's Unit Action Planning process has been the inclusion of recommendations from the university-wide planning task forces. I look forward to hearing your presentations and learning about your thoughts, ideas, and plans for next year. If you are unable to join us for these presentations, documents from Unit Action Planning will be posted here -

<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/planning200506.htm>

Big Rapids Sesquicentennial

During 2005 the Big Rapids community is celebrating its 150th anniversary. Beginning in April and continuing through October, an entire series of events are scheduled. The kickoff event for the sesquicentennial is a dinner party at the Holiday Inn on Saturday, April 23rd. This will feature Craig Zablocki, an improvisational speaker who uses humor in a unique and motivational fashion. Tickets are \$25 and are available on campus from Gary Rasmussen at ext. 3818. Information on the sesquicentennial is available here -

<http://www.ci.big-rapids.mi.us/general/150th.pdf> . Information on Craig Zablocki can be found here - <http://www.positivelyhumor.com/>. I am hopeful you can join with our community as we celebrate the kickoff of this 150th anniversary.

Closing Thoughts

Even with the executive order there is much for our university to celebrate. If you have not seen them, I would recommend to you two features of the Ferris web. The first is a collection of stories about our alumni. They demonstrate in a meaningful way how our education really does change lives - <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/parentinfo/success/stories.htm>

The second is a new calendar of events on campus - <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/calendar/calendars/calendar.cfm?CFID=12642&CFTOKEN=77579972>. I am hopeful you will take time to attend and support those activities which are of interest to you and your family.

Thank you for continuing to share with me the wonderful news on the accomplishments and future opportunities for this year's graduates. Your special efforts truly do make a difference for our students.

Together we are changing lives. Thank so much for your help and support.

Dave