

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
March 16, 2005

It is a pleasure to welcome back to campus faculty and staff who have been away during spring break. Although there is still plenty of snow, and morning temperatures remain in the single digits and teens, there is now just six weeks of instruction remaining in the academic year. As we pass the midpoint of the semester, I want to take this opportunity to share some of our progress on planning and the good work of our faculty, staff and students.

Unit Action Planning

This fall six university-wide task forces worked on the areas of professional development, teaching facilities, communication, student engagement, learner-centered technology, and enrollment growth. Their recommendations have formed the basis for efforts across campus in the unit action planning process. The task force synthesis document is available here - <http://www.ferris.edu/president/TaskForceSynthesis.doc>

Divisional unit action plans will be presented on March 31 and April 1 in forums open to the entire campus. March 31st is scheduled for academic affairs. The morning of April 1st will be for student affairs, administrative affairs, and university advancement and marketing. The afternoon will include general counsel and governmental relations, FSU-Grand Rapids and Kendall. I invite you to attend these discussions, which will be in the Founders Room (RAN 238) in the Rankin Center. Information on unit action planning efforts is here - <http://www.ferris.edu/president/planning200506.htm>

Progress on University-wide Goals

At the beginning of this semester I shared six overarching goals developed from the work of the planning task forces. Throughout the semester we have worked on these goals. Over the next few weeks I will be reporting on each of these initiatives. Today I want to share the progress on two of these efforts -

- Develop a funding formula which rewards colleges for enrollment growth.
- Assess the effectiveness of current student engagement efforts and compare these to national data and models.

Given the uncertainty of state support, sustained enrollment growth is very important to the future of our University. If the university is going to have the capacity to teach increased numbers of students, we need to fund growth in our academic programs. As a faculty member it has been my experience that often successful efforts to recruit and retain students are rewarded with increased workloads and no additional support.

Working with the Vice President of Academic Affairs Michael Harris, we have created an enrollment funding formula for colleges. It is based on a comparison of annual student credit hours against a two-year historical average at the college-level. This approach dedicates a minimum of 25% of tuition dollars from enrollment increases to academic colleges. The implementation of this funding formula will add over \$700,000 in base funding to college budgets. Initially this support will be used to fill open faculty positions and fund additional faculty in areas of strong growth. As a result of this support, academic affairs is currently searching for twenty-six faculty.

A complete explanation of this formula, its implementation, and a copy of the funding spreadsheet is available here - <http://www.ferris.edu/president/planupdateFY05.htm> If you would like additional information on the funding formula, this Friday I will be holding a Table Talk discussion on this topic in the Centennial Dining Room between noon and 1:30. Should your schedule permit, I would encourage you to join me for this discussion.

Student engagement involves people all across our campus and efforts that are both in and out of class, and on and off campus. One of the challenges the student engagement task force identified is assessing the effectiveness of our current activities. Fortunately there is a national measure that we can use, the National Survey of Student Engagement.

The National Survey of Student Engagement is currently administered to over 700,000 students on 850 college campuses across the nation. This survey was created with support from the Pew Charitable Trusts and leadership from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems. The Design Team consisted of nationally regarded leaders in the study of higher education, Alexander Astin, Gary Barnes, Arthur Chickering, Peter Ewell, John Gardner, George Kuh, Richard Light and Ted Marchese. Additional information on the National Survey of Student Engagement is available from their web site - <http://www.indiana.edu/~nsse/>

The National Survey of Student Engagement will be administered in selected courses offered by the Department of Language and Literature. I appreciate very much that these faculty are facilitating this effort by allowing it to be offered during class time. I am very pleased that our University will join this

national dialogue on the effectiveness of student engagement and believe there is much that we can learn from this effort.

Good News and Good Work

Perhaps it is just me, but there seems to be much more snow this winter than last year. When I arrive early on snowy mornings, I see the efforts of our people who clear snow from roads, parking lots, and sidewalks. This solitary, cold work is most often conducted in the wee hours of the morning. I appreciate very much these efforts to make our campus accessible. Likewise I can observe how the winter weather can result in snow, sand, and salt being tracked into our buildings. I appreciate the extra effort of our custodians to keep our buildings clean and presentable.

As we move toward the final month of the semester, I am continually reminded of the extra efforts of our faculty and staff to provide additional learning opportunities both in and outside of class. Whether it is as a part of the American Democracy Project, through contests like the National Student Advertising Competition, honorary efforts like Omicron Delta Kappa, or outreach activities like the Spaghetti Bridge, to name a few, we are truly fortunate to have so many excellent opportunities for our students. I very much appreciate the extra effort you make for these activities and am hopeful that you will share information on these efforts with me.

It seems like nearly everyday I hear of the success of this year's graduating class in finding employment or admission to graduate programs, frequently with significant scholarship support. We need to do a better job of sharing with our campus, community, and the public the life-changing difference of a Ferris State University education. I always enjoy hearing about the incredible accomplishments and opportunities for our graduates. Please share these successes with me.

Closing Thoughts

Initial plans are underway for Summer University. If you will be on campus, please reserve the dates of June 13-15 in your schedule. A major focus of this year's program will be the implementation of Banner software across campus. The Summer University planning team of Mindy Britton, Mike Cairns, Suzette Compton, and Warren Hills are designing a program that I believe will be both timely and informative. Additional information on the Banner Project is available here - <http://www.ferris.edu/banner/>

This has been a remarkable year for our men's basketball team and their coach Bill Sall. Our team won the northern division of the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference and then advanced to the regional finals of the

NCAA Division II tournament. At the same time Bill and his wife Karen welcomed three babies into the world, twin girls and a boy. Last Friday Patsy and I had the opportunity to see these tiny babies and marvel at the miracle they represent.

As many of you know our basketball team lost last evening. They played hard and tried their best, at one point pulling within five points during the second half, but ultimately came up short. One of the strengths of our team has been senior twins from Benton Harbor, the Epps brothers. Carlton Epps has been a scoring leader for our team throughout the season. As the game was winding down to its final seconds Carlton had the ball in his hands and was open for one last three-point basket. Instead of shooting and ending his career with this final score, he instead passed the ball to his brother, Cory, who took the final shot, making a three-point basket. Although this sequence may not have been observed by many, it was a truly unselfish act that made a lasting impression on me.

Working at a university provides many opportunities to help others and to make a difference. I look forward to hearing from you and seeing you at our events over the next month and a half. Thank you so much for your efforts for our students and their education.

Sincerely,

Dave