

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
September 7, 2004
Ext. 2500

It is easy to feel the sense of excitement on campus. Parking lots, classrooms and walkways are full. Students, new and returning alike, are headed to class and extracurricular activities.

Thank you

At the beginning of this second week of the semester I want to take time to thank you for the extra effort you make for our students, your colleagues, our campus, and university. As I walk across campus I see many instances of extraordinary work, of people going far above what is required, making extra effort, and making a difference.

The examples are many. It is easy to begin with our campus. We are indeed fortunate to work on campus that is truly beautiful. The flowers, lawns, and plantings make this a place of which we call all be proud.

The Friday before students began returning I spent the afternoon walking through each of our residence halls looking at rooms, commons areas, and shared spaces. Our residence halls are not new. They were essentially built in three phases, the late 50's, early 60's, and late 60's. As a result the newest rooms are more than 35 years old. It is impressive to see the work that has been done to repair and clean the rooms for our students.

On a warm Sunday afternoon in August students started to arrive on campus to move into their residence halls. A wonderful group of campus volunteers helped students and parents find their way to the right hall and to get checked into their room. It was easy to see many acts of kindness, whether it be carrying heavy, bulky items, or answering any number of questions. College has certainly changed since I was a student. Back then the appliances of choice were a clock radio and a popcorn popper. As our students moved in, some brought an extraordinary collection of things. I am astonished at how much can be fit into a residence hall room.

Over the past two weeks there have been wonderful examples of our people going the extra mile to help students get registered, pay their bills, and learn how to use the many services we provide. I am very pleased at the number of times I saw students leave an office with a smile, their business completed and concerns lifted.

I appreciate that so many of you would attend the Opening of School convocation. It is my hope that over time this will become an annual opportunity to consider our University and the year ahead. Our picnic the following day attracted a record attendance. It is always good to come together under the large tent set up in our Quad.

Last week I walked through the hallways of our classroom and offices. It is good to see our students and faculty engaged in conversation before, during, and after class. It is a wonderful sight to see the excitement of our students as they begin the year.

Special thanks are due to Lori Helmer and the Dining Services. Together with the Rankin Center staff they have opened the Centennial Dining Room as a very pleasant and welcoming place to gather for lunch. The menu is a very nice variety of sandwiches, salads, and soups. If you have not yet tried this, I would encourage you to do so.

On Friday we dedicated the statue "Celebration" in the courtyard between the College of Business and the IRC. Over the past few weeks this area has been transformed by the combined efforts of our people. Beyond the statue, the new seating areas and pavement combined with the plantings has made this a truly beautiful spot on our campus.

These are but a few examples of your excellent work. There are many, many more examples of the extra effort and work you do to help the year get started. Thank you for the difference you make for our students and our campus.

Enrollment

On Friday we reviewed the fourth day enrollment statistics for fall. Our enrollment is essentially flat, with the combined efforts of our campuses down 19 students from a year ago at this time. Overall our students are taking more credits, with combined totals showing an increase of 550 student credit hours. The University budget was based on flat enrollment projections, so no adjustments will be necessary.

Of biggest concern in the enrollment is a significant decrease in the number of first time freshmen, with a system-wide decrease of 295 students from a year ago. While some decline was anticipated, this was larger than expected. Over the next few weeks we will review carefully the factors involved to reverse this decline for 2005. They are some very positive characteristics in our new student profile. The average mean ACT composite is 20.83, up a quarter point over last year. The average entering high school gpa is 3.14, also an increase over last fall. Perhaps most importantly our retention of first year students continues to improve. This year we retained 67% of first year students, up one percentage point over last year. Thank you for your efforts to retain our students.

Planning

At the Opening of School Convocation we had the opportunity to consider a future vision for Ferris State University. This has three parts -

- We Need to Create a Learning-Centered University.
- We Must Work Together.
- We Must Become an Engaged Campus.

With the assistance of faculty facilitators you were asked to articulate what each of these concepts did and did not mean. I want to thank these faculty volunteers who assisted with the group sessions -

Bill Boras, Julie Coon, Roxanne Cullen, Adnan Dakkuri, Rick Griffin
David Hanna, Susan Jones, Anne Kelly, Cindy Konrad, Ken Kuk,
Nancy Peterson-Klein, Bob Loesch, David Pilgrim, Mike Ryan,
Mark Swan, Rosalyn Templeton

We have compiled your responses from both Summer University and the Opening Convocation. With the pace of activities of the beginning of school, I have not completed my study of these materials. However is already clear there are many wonderful observations, ideas, and comments that were developed in your discussions. In the next two weeks I will provide a summary of your responses and a complete text of what we collected.

Closing Thoughts

I very much enjoy the opportunity to visit and talk with you informally. If there is a time when your office or department gathers for coffee or a snack, I would welcome the chance to spend time with you. We are continuing the practice of open office hours with a regular time of Wednesday at 1:00 pm and a rotating

time. In addition I try to have lunch at least once a week in Centennial Dining Room. When the opportunity presents itself I look forward to visiting with you and hearing your thoughts and ideas.

The last few weeks reminds me that it requires the combined efforts of our entire university community to prepare for, welcome, and educate our students. I appreciate very much your work to help this fall begin both smoothly and successfully. Thanks so very much.

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler, president