

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
July 1, 2004
Ext. 2500

This summer has included a number of significant events and I want to take this opportunity to update you on our progress in a number of areas. The new summer schedule and residence hall incentive have been well accepted by our students. Summer enrollment is up over 600 students from last year and the number of students in residence halls has tripled. This represents the largest summer increase ever and makes Summer 2004 the largest in Ferris history.

Moving to this new scheduling format and accommodating this large increase in students has required the efforts of many in our University community. I appreciate very much that you would help support this new approach. As we grow summer enrollment I am hopeful we can move toward providing more programs on a year-round basis.

A Vision for Ferris and Its Future

Two weeks ago we dedicated three days to Summer University. This was an event that involved much of our campus in learning activities planned by our employees. On Monday we began with a visioning session facilitated by Dr. Kim Cameron from the University of Michigan. In small groups you were asked to consider what the proposed vision meant to you and what you could contribute to this process. I appreciate very much your participation in the shaping of our vision for the future. Your input is very important to this process and I have enjoyed reading and studying your comments.

In the planning process we had an extraordinary group of facilitators from our staff. I want to thank Bob Buckingham, Matt Chaney, Suzette Compton, Jim Cook, Deb Cox, Wendy Dodd, Dave Engels, Cindy Greenwood, Lori Helmer, Robin Hoisington, Beth Johansen, Geri Johnson, Karen Kirk, Kelly Marek, Mike McKay, Scott Thede, Chris Vodry, Tom Weaver, Deb Whitman, and Louise Yowitz. Their leadership and participation in this planning effort helped create an atmosphere of inclusion and encouraged active participation.

Our next campus-wide planning activity will be at the Fall Semester Opening Convocation on August 23rd.

Summer University

The second day of Summer University was a series of area tours across our campus. These provided an opportunity for us to visit and better understand the efforts of our colleagues in a variety of areas. I want to thank our people working with Athletics, Auxiliary Enterprises, the Banner Project, Birkham Health Center and Personal Counseling Center, Dawg Days, Dining Services, Student Recreation Center, Governmental Relations and General Counsel, Liaison Committee for Students with Disabilities, Physical Plant, Public Safety, and Student Leadership & Activities for taking time to present their efforts. I have heard many wonderful comments about the presentations and tours.

The third day included an enjoyable participation event conducted by the innovative group, Play Fair. Finally Summer University concluded with an all campus lunch under the big tent set up on the Quad. There is something about setting up the tent and eating together that brings out the wonderful feeling of community we have at Ferris.

I want to thank you for participating in Summer University. Special thanks go to Mindy Britton, Mike Cairns, and Warren Hills for their leadership and planning of Summer University. They were assisted by an able team of volunteers from across our campus. We would very much enjoy hearing your thoughts on Summer University and ideas for programming we can present next year.

The Hometown Bus Tour

Last week we rolled out an innovative concept for Ferris State University, the Hometown Bus Tour. Together with twenty-four colleagues I spent five days on the road, making eighteen stops and traveling over 1400 miles. The schedule was an aggressive one, taking us to Alpena, Brimley, St. Ignace, Boyne Falls, Traverse City, Interlochen, Manistee, Ludington, St. Joseph/Benton Harbor, Dowagiac, Kalamazoo, Lansing, Brighton, Flint, and Detroit.

The Hometown Tour had three main objectives. The first was to attract positive media coverage and community interest in the unique career-centered education we provide at Ferris. Often it is difficult to interest the media in the positive stories of the Ferris experience. However we discovered they would and did cover this tour, with a significant

number of television, radio, and print stories. Some of the coverage actually surprised us, with coverage in newspapers in Houghton and South Haven, communities we did not visit. At each stop our group was able to share about the difference an education based on a strong academic core, with specialized preparation for a career can make in helping graduates be prepared for success. We also emphasized our commitment to small classes taught by faculty, not graduate assistants. We were able to build new awareness for our university, its programs, and people.

The second objective was to strengthen relationships with our community college partners. In our travels we signed program articulation agreements with Bay Mills Community College, Northwest Michigan College and West Shores Community College and emphasized our relationships with Alpena Community College, Lake Michigan College, Southwestern Community College and Mott Community College. Last year Ferris awarded over 800 associate degrees, the eighth largest in our state and many times more than any other university in state. As a result of this commitment to two-year education we understand community college students better and should be the institution of choice for transfer students.

The third purpose was to connect with alumni, prospective students, and students. We renewed connections with our friends and built new relations with supporters all across the state. Throughout the tour over and over we heard how a Ferris State University education had made an incredible difference in the lives of our alumni and their families. It is truly gratifying to see firsthand the support that exists for Ferris across the state.

The success of the Hometown Tour resulted from the incredible efforts of our people, the support we received along the way, and the careful preparation of the tour agenda and events. Each member of the tour deserves special thanks and appreciation for the time and energy they committed to this experience. I especially want to thank Ira Childress and Jeremy Mishler for their work in organizing the tour, and Dave Erskin for his cheerful, wonderful work as our bus driver over many, many miles. For more information and photos from the bus tour, go to <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/alumni/bustour/gallery.htm> This is the result of the combined good efforts of Bill Bitzinger and Marc Sheehan. Along the way I kept a journal of our activities. If you would like to read my account of our week, you may access it at <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/bustourjournal.htm>

Closing Thoughts

Today is the first day on campus for our new Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Michael Harris. I am delighted to have Michael's experience and vision for academics as a part of our leadership team. As you see Dr. Harris around campus please take a moment to welcome him to Ferris State University.

Recently I had the opportunity to spend a morning with some of the skilled trades workers in our physical plant. This was a very interesting experience for me, exploring HVAC systems in FLITE, the Pharmacy Building, and Pennock Hall, crawling through tunnels with our plumbers under Merrill Hall and the IRC, and seeing firsthand the difference a thorough cleaning and a fresh coat of paint can make for our residence halls. While these are areas where I don't go everyday, seeing them helped me gain a great respect for the important work these men and women do and some of the challenges they face everyday. This experience reminds me of how important your efforts are for our people and programs at Ferris.

Finally, next week marks my one year anniversary at Ferris State University. It is a wonderful privilege and honor to serve as your president. Patsy joins me in expressing our thanks to each of you for your continued help and support. Thank you so very much.

Best wishes,

David L. Eisler, President