

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
February 18, 2004
Ext. 2500

Last evening's news broadcasts contained reports of two assaults that happened in two of our residence halls. This unfortunate incident is a cause for concern. I want to provide you additional information on the circumstances and our university's response to assist our students. This is the first incidence of an alleged stranger-to-stranger assault on the Ferris campus in a significant length of time, some think as long as 20 years.

These are the circumstances as I understand them. Three non-students were on campus on the evening and early morning of January 29th /30th. One was a former student and was familiar with our night security and how the buildings were laid out. The other two had not been to campus before. The three explained that they gained access to Clark Hall by waiting outside the back door and entered when someone exited the building. They walked the floors checking for unlocked doors and entered rooms that were unlocked. The three then went to Hallisy Hall where they also gained access. The three entered rooms in Hallisy where their presence was reported and communicated to the Department of Public Safety. They were arrested immediately while still in Hallisy Hall.

The original reports on this incident resulted in less serious charges being filed against three individuals. Several days of additional investigation revealed that more serious offenses may have occurred. With additional evidence available, these charges were filed and warrants issued. At the request of the law enforcement community we did not release any information so that the suspect could be tracked down and caught. The University Police, along with other law enforcement agencies took the suspect into custody yesterday.

Our first concern has been for student safety. As a result, we have conducted a series of meetings on campus regarding campus security and have increased precautions as a result of this incident. We have added additional night security staff to residence halls. Night security are stationed by doors and are asking for identification for those who enter to be checked against the hall roster. There is strict enforcement of the escort policy. Our efforts to provide safety and security are highly dependent on student cooperation. We have stressed the importance of locking room doors, and have asked for students' continued support, patience, and cooperation.

We will continue to work to make Ferris the safest campus possible. Beyond increased security personnel working at night on campus and the posting of safety information throughout the residence halls, we are encouraging everyone to engage in behaviors that promote and communicate personal safety. Community safety is often dependent upon the proactive steps taken by individual citizens. Specifically we have asked our students to observe these basic safety behaviors:

- Take reasonable precautions to protect personal property
- Always lock residence hall room doors when leaving or going to bed at night
- Never prop residence hall doors open or allow others to access a hall inappropriately
- Obtain an escort rather than walking alone after dark
- Report any suspicious activity to hall staff and/or the Department of Public Safety

This is a safe campus and we take security very seriously at Ferris State University. I want to take this opportunity to thank the men and women of the Public Safety Department. They have done a magnificent job in handling this case, apprehending and arresting the suspects, and in improving the safety and security arrangements in our residence halls. I also want to thank our Residence Hall staff who have met with our students, provided important information, answered questions, helped improve safety and security arrangements and resolved concerns. Finally I want to thank our people in University Advancement and Marketing who have coordinated our contacts with the media in a rapidly changing environment.

It is unfortunate that incidents like this happen in our world. Regrettably it is a reality that sometimes confronts us. I appreciate your help and assistance as our University deals with these issues and makes certain that our students have the safety and security they both need and deserve.

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler
President