

## **President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff**

Office of the President

February 11, 2004

Ext. 2500

It is a pleasure to announce that Dr. Michael Harris, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs and Professor of Political Science at Eastern Michigan University, has accepted my offer to become the next Vice President for Academic Affairs at Ferris State University. I will seek final approval from the Board of Trustees for this appointment at their meeting on February 21st.

Dr. Harris brings to Ferris State University a very strong academic background. As a faculty member at Eastern Michigan University he received the University's Distinguished Faculty Award for Teaching, the Alumni Office Teaching Excellence Award, recognition for Excellence in Teaching from the American Political Science Association, and the Michigan Association of Governing Boards Distinguished Faculty Award.

As an academic administrator Dr. Harris has demonstrated a strong interest and concern for students. His efforts have improved first-year student success, strengthened student advising, diversified the student body, created the first student handbook, developed mechanisms that allow students to track their progress toward graduation and improved retention.

Dr. Harris will bring to Ferris a background of experiences that fit precisely many of our institutional needs. He engaged the Academic Affairs Division in the development of a five-year strategic plan. He has worked in the development of off-campus centers. His experience includes an administrative conversion to the Banner software. At Eastern he created and implemented a comprehensive program review process. He led the EMU Campus in successful North Central Accreditation. His background includes special expertise in budgeting and leadership development.

There are many, many more strengths in Dr. Harris' background and experiences. Perhaps most importantly I believe Dr. Harris will provide the strong leadership our University needs for its educational programs. I find his academic vision, knowledge, understanding, and innovative thinking regarding academic programs to be extraordinary. Finally I believe he has the type of engaging personality and concern for others that is necessary to build the strong working relationships needed among faculty, staff, and students at Ferris State University.

As this process reaches closure I want to reflect over the past four plus months that our campus has searched for a Vice President of Academic Affairs. We have been truly fortunate to have an exceptional search committee with strong leadership from Dr. Nancy Peterson-Klein. Working with consultant Dr. James Appleberry, they created a process which was both open and fair. As a committee they worked diligently, developing an advertisement and soliciting applications, reviewing credentials, checking references and selecting a strong pool of eight semifinalists. After telephone conference calls of an hour and a half for each candidate, this group was further

reduced to five finalists, each of whom interviewed for two days on our campus, meeting with faculty, staff, and students in a variety of settings.

At the conclusion of the interview process I visited with thirty-three individuals on campus seeking their observations and analysis of the candidates. Additionally I solicited e-mail responses from those on campus who attended interview sessions and received forty-eight responses. This input together with both the quantitative and qualitative evaluations from each session provided a broad picture and careful analysis of each candidate. Your involvement and input into this process were very important in helping to shape the final recommendation. Thank you for taking time to participate and carefully consider each candidate in this process.

In announcing this appointment I also want to acknowledge and thank Dr. Tom Oldfield for his wonderful work as Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs. Dr. Oldfield will continue in this role until Dr. Harris joins our leadership team on July 1st. I am delighted to report that Dr. Oldfield has agreed to continue as Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs after this date. Dr. Oldfield's leadership and experience at Ferris will provide additional strength and support for our academic programs and for Dr. Harris.

Now that this search has concluded the true work begins. Each of us needs to join with Dr. Harris, welcoming him to our campus, introducing him to our people, helping him to understand the unique characteristics of our program and mission, and doing everything possible to aid in his success. I very much look forward to working with Dr. Harris for Ferris and for you.

Thank you each of you for your help and support in this process.

Sincerely,

*David L. Eisler*  
President