

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
February 9, 2004
Ext. 2500

Last week was especially busy. In addition to our important daily efforts with teaching, learning, and student support we also considered unit plans for next year and a response to the governor's proposal for tuition restraint. I want to take this opportunity to provide an update and additional information on those activities.

Tuition Restraint

On Friday the Board of Trustees approved my recommendation that we accept Governor Granholm's proposal to not raise tuition beyond the rate of inflation. Currently this would mean that tuition would increase 2.4% for next year. In turn as part of this proposal, the Governor pledges to restore 3% of the 5% reduction from December's Executive Order and to not reduce our budget for next year.

For Ferris State University this action does not represent additional reductions to our budget beyond those planned for next year. However it does mean we will need to continue with the 5% base cut already planned for the 2004-2005 budget. The combination of a 2.4% tuition increase and the restoration of 3% is enough to cover expected fixed cost increases for next year. While it will not require additional budget cuts, it also does not provide additional new dollars.

Basically there are two reasons we did this. Clearly these continue to be challenging financial times for our State. For the present there will be few opportunities to receive increased funding from the state. As a result I believe it is very important we avail ourselves of the opportunity to restore state funding to our budget. Beyond this, perhaps the most important part of this proposal is that it shields us from additional cuts for next year's budget. Given the current estimated shortfall in excess of \$1 billion in the state budget for next year, this is significant.

It is also important to explain why we took this action at this time. Governor Granholm's State of the State address provided several opportunities for Ferris. The first is her \$50 million interest-free loan program for engineering and technology students. The second was her connection of the Merit Scholarship with citizenship involvement, which closely parallels our interest in the American Democracy project. The third was the tuition challenge and budget pledge she presented. This is the most supportive action for higher education I have heard since returning to Michigan. I believe when state leaders are trying to help us that we should do our best to work with them. My hope was that the Governor would see this action by our Trustees as strong support from Ferris for her plans to assist higher education. It was gratifying to see Friday's press release from the Governor's Office, where she applauded Ferris and provided some very kind words of

support. (This is accessible from the Governor's website at <http://www.michigan.gov/gov/0,1607,7-168--85964--,00.html>).

Beyond this desire to work with leadership was a pragmatic judgment that the time to receive positive benefits from the tuition restraint decision was very short and would not extend beyond the middle of this week. That is why we made this decision now, rather than in our normal budget cycle.

For me there is a strong additional reason for this decision. Philosophically it reflects my belief that we must slow the rate of tuition increases. I worry about the amount of debt some of our students develop during college. Already our tuition is the fifth most expensive of the state universities. I do not want to see Ferris become unaffordable for future generations of students and financially inaccessible to those who might benefit most from the extraordinary education we provide.

University Planning

Tuesday through Friday last week we listened to unit plans by division. I want to thank everyone who participated in this process, both through plan development and participation in the presentation\discussion process. A significant portion of each session included summaries of the accomplishments for the division. I very much enjoyed hearing about this work. This also was an excellent opportunity to develop a better understanding of each area.

The next step for the unit planning process is for vice presidents to summarize their division plans. We will collect this information and I will share a unified university document with you later this month. At the same time the University Planning Committee will use the assessment portions of each plan to develop an analysis of our success in pursuing the University's Seven Strategic Directions.

This year we attempted to streamline the planning process. In doing so I believe we have significantly reduced the amount of paper and the effort involved. We are also working to embed more analysis and assessment into the process. Over time I am hopeful this can be more qualitative and less quantitative. As we evaluate the effectiveness of these revisions to the process I would very much appreciate hearing your thoughts and opinions on this. If you would like to refer to the planning documents submitted, they are accessible at <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/uaps2004.htm> .

Thank you

I am continually impressed by the quality of your work and your willingness to go above and beyond to help support our university, its programs, and its people. On Friday we were dealing with difficult deadlines in getting information to the public on the tuberculosis case diagnosed on our campus. People in University Advancement and Marketing, Governmental Relations and General Counsel, the Health Center, Telecommunication\Lotus Notes, Residential Life and our office stayed late on Friday evening to get this information distributed to our campus, the public,

and press, place it on the web, and arrange support for our students over the weekend. Thank you for working so effectively and expeditiously.

Saturdays I look forward to attending the Dawg Days student recruitment events. This is truly a remarkable effort. No matter how cold or snowy it may be, our people greet prospective students and their parents in the parking lot, provide an introductory session that is engaging and inviting, and faculty and staff members are present to answer questions from students and parents. Together they create the most effective visitation program I have seen. The result is very successful; I am told that 85% of the students who attend one of these events enroll at Ferris. Behind the scenes on Saturdays I also see people in our admissions area entering student data so that we can keep up with the number of applications we receive. I want to extend my thanks to the faculty, staff, students, and administrators who give their time to help this succeed.

These are but two examples of wonderful work happening everyday on our campus. There are many, many more. Thank you for the difference you make for Ferris, our people and programs.

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler
President