

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
February 13, 2006

It seems difficult to believe, but one third of winter semester is completed. Over the past few years I have learned that at this time of year Michigan residents look for the days when sunshine returns and grayness lifts. Seeing the Olympics featured in this weekend's newspapers brought back many memories for me. Four years ago in Utah we were staging the Winter Olympics and our University was hosting the curling competition. This was truly a once in a lifetime experience with visitors and athletes from many different places.

Let me take this opportunity to provide information and an update on continuing activities -

Transfer Student Initiative

We are moving forward to implement university-wide recommendations from this year's task forces. The first of these is from the transfer student task force, who recommended new and increased transfer student scholarships be established.

While the number of transfer students has increased at Ferris State University, that growth has been in off-campus programs. The number of new transfer students has remained relatively stable in Big Rapids for the past five years, with around 775 students for fall semester, and 175 students for winter. Our experience has shown that both the retention and graduation rates for transfer students are quite high.

To help encourage outstanding transfer students to attend Ferris State University, we have established four new competitive transfer scholarships -

- Academic Excellence - an annual award of \$2,700 for students who have a 3.7 community college gpa and who have completed a minimum of 24 transferable credit hours
- Academic Achievement - an annual award of \$1,500 for students who have a 3.3 community college gpa and who have completed a minimum of 24 transferable credit hours
- Non-Resident Transfer - waives out-of-state fees for outstanding students who have completed a minimum of 24 transferable credit hours

- International Transfer - waives out-of-state fees for outstanding students who have completed a minimum of 24 transferable credit hours

These scholarships are available to transfer students in all undergraduate programs and apply only to the Big Rapids campus. As a part of this transfer initiative, we will work to establish a single point of contact for new transfer students and to eliminate roadblocks and impediments to student transfer. It is my hope that we will develop a personalized, customized transfer guide for each student interested in transferring to our University. With the number of associate degrees we offer and the hands-on, applied nature of many of our programs, I believe Ferris State University should be the transfer institution of choice. I look forward to working with you to make this a reality.

Thank you for your work on implementing task force recommendations in this year's unit action planning process. I invite you to join us for the public presentation of the unit action plans on March 30th and 31st. Throughout the semester we will work to implement additional university-wide priorities. I will share these with you as well as our continued progress with ongoing efforts in the next few weeks.

Executive Budget Recommendations

Last Thursday Budget Director Mary Lannoye released Governor Granholm's budget proposal. The very good news is this budget recommends an increase in higher education funding, calling for an overall increase of 2% in funding for next year. Admittedly this is not a large amount, but unlike past years this document does not call for a reduction in funding.

The executive budget proposes a 2% increase for Michigan, Michigan State, and Wayne State. It recommends 1% for the 12 teaching universities and allocates the second percent through a four-part methodology that does not work to our advantage. We calculate the overall range of increases from a low of 1.55% at Western, to a high of 3.86% at Lake State. Ferris' increase is recommended at 1.74%. Ferris' dollar increase would then be \$843k ~ \$486k across the board; and \$357 from the formula. While I am disappointed by this funding formula, I believe it is unlikely this will be the approach recommended by the legislature.

The Executive Budget also recommends capital outlay, but does not direct those funds toward our optometry building proposal. While this is a disappointment, the introduction of capital outlay this early in the session provides the opportunity to promote our project. It is important to remember that this process is just beginning. There will be a long way to go before the budget is

approved, but I suspect this year's budget will be done by early summer to allow for campaigning. The good news is that the governor has set the bar toward an increase. I will be in Lansing three days this week working with members of the House and Senate. Schedules have been developed for our presentations to legislative higher education subcommittees. I present to the Senate on February 24th in Kalamazoo and the House on April 26th in Lansing. I will provide additional information as it becomes available.

Meetings with Faculty and Staff

Last semester I held 22 meetings with faculty, listening to their thoughts on Ferris State University and our values. This past week we held the first 4 of 37 meetings with staff. Last week I held a meeting with over 425 years of experience at our University. Another consisted of staff who had all worked at Ferris for 32 years or more. It is truly a humbling experience to sit with such a group of individuals, who have made a lifelong commitment to our University. I look forward to visiting with our staff throughout this semester. This is something I truly enjoy and is a wonderful opportunity to learn from you.

Monday evening we begin contract negotiations with the Ferris Faculty Association. I appreciate both the members of our faculty and administration who are willing to commit their time and energies to this process. It is my sincerest hope that we will reach agreement on a new contract before summer begins.

Closing Thoughts

This Saturday is the Friends of Ferris Gala and Auction at the Holiday Inn. This is a very important evening, which raises the support needed to help us make an impact on decisions in Lansing regarding our University. I want to express my thanks to the men and women both on campus and in our community who help organize and promote this very important event. If you have not done so in the past, I would encourage you to join us Saturday evening for what is an exciting and enjoyable event.

During February our admissions office holds new student receptions and financial aid workshops across our state. These gatherings provide an opportunity to visit with students who have been admitted to our University. Our staff provides information for next year's students and help them complete their financial aid paperwork. This is an important way for us to keep in touch and it makes a significant difference in our recruitment success. I appreciate our admissions people who are willing to travel across the state to share their time with our new students. Thanks so much.

With the return of cold winter weather I want to encourage you to be careful about energy conservation. Please close doors and windows to help us keep down natural gas costs. Additionally the slush, sand and salt from outside create an additional burden for our custodial workers. Please take a moment to wipe your feet when you enter a building.

Every day I see examples of exceptional efforts by our faculty and staff, who go above and beyond to help our students. Thank you so very much for the wonderful work you do to ensure that our students and University succeed.

Dave