

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
March 1, 2006

Although outside temperatures might suggest otherwise, it is nearly spring break. This is a week of significant activity on campus, with mid-term exams, performances, and athletic events. I want to take this opportunity to share information on our efforts and activities as we move toward the semester break.

On Monday we learned some very exciting news. The Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation has awarded Ferris State University a \$1,000,000 donation toward a new optometry building on our campus. This gift will be of significant help to our University as we seek to meet our building funding obligations and lobby the legislature to provide state funding for this effort. As designed, the new building will be 91,000 square feet, replacing our current facilities in Pennock Hall. We are very grateful to the Dow Foundation and its board for this support. I also want to thank the strong efforts of Academic Affairs and the College of Optometry in preparing this proposal.

Significant Development Success

We are in the midst of a record year of fund raising success. I am continually impressed with the willingness of our alumni and donors to provide financial support for our University. I also appreciate very much the strong efforts of our people in Advancement, who have effectively reorganized and concentrated their efforts to interact more effectively with our alumni and donors. Together they are helping to create a new culture of philanthropy for our University. In doing so, they create opportunities for people to make significant contributions to Ferris State University. Some of this year's milestones include -

- As of February 8th we had received cash gifts of \$2,493,700 to the annual fund. This represents an increase of 13% over last year with 19% more donors giving to Ferris State University.
- The number of new endowments created at our University has increased from 7 last year to 19 this year.
- Major gift giving to Ferris State University has increased from a total of \$670,875 for last year to \$1,108,851 for this year through February 15th. (Current year figures do not include the Dow gift.)
- Four new planned gifts have been signed this year. These represent over \$1,920,000 in contributions.

In most cases donor support will not create ongoing support for compensation or programs. It does help keep a Ferris State University education affordable for our students and provide support that helps promote excellence in our efforts across the campus. This success represents the high regard our alumni and donors hold for the University. Increased donor support also reflects gifts from many of our faculty and staff. Thank you so very much for helping to make a difference for our students and the education they receive.

Integrated Marketing Campaign

Last year's communication task force recommended the development of a new marketing approach and strategy for the University. Beginning this past fall, our University has rolled out an integrated marketing campaign. Perhaps you have seen one of our billboards in the Grand Rapids, Lansing, and the Detroit area, seen one of our busboards, or heard one of our mentions on National Public Radio. These are examples of targeted efforts to promote our University.

This campaign emphasizes the continued growth and development as well as the quality and excellence of our University. These efforts place a continual emphasis on Ferris State University, rather than Ferris or Ferris State, reflecting the strength of our academic efforts. They also embed our academic emblem of the torch within media efforts, using our distinctive university colors of crimson and gold. Information on these advertising efforts is accessible via the web at - <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/advance/integrated/advertising.htm> This approach also includes the new signature line, "Imagine More." Some examples of how this can be used are accessible at - <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/advance/integrated/targeted.htm>

The integrated marketing campaign is designed to maximize the effect of promotional efforts throughout the University by a common look and feel. To help facilitate this approach, new graphic standards have been developed. You may have already seen some of this in the redesign of entry-level pages on the University website. A downloadable guide to these standards is available at - <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/advance/standards/>

I want to express my thanks to staff in University Marketing for their efforts in developing and implementing this approach. I would encourage you to look at these new materials and would very much appreciate receiving your feedback on them. While it will take time and repetition to establish and reinforce these ideas, we are already seeing positive results and reactions from these approaches. By working together we can all benefit from these combined efforts to promote Ferris State University.

Legislative Testimony

Last Friday was my opportunity to testify before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education. I began with some University highlights, emphasizing record enrollment and retention, the continued success of our merger with Kendall College, our efforts to partner with community colleges across the state, and the continued high placement rates of our graduates.

This was followed by information on the economic importance of higher education and what other states are doing nationwide to grow their economies through support for higher education. Over the past two years, 21 states have increased funding to higher education by more than 10%; nine of these states increased support by more than 15%. Only five states have provided less increase than Michigan. I drew upon a landmark study of California higher education, entitled "Return on Investment: Educational Choices and Demographic Change in California's Future." This report demonstrates clearly the impact education makes upon poverty, crime, and unemployment. It concludes that for every \$2,000 the state invests in a person's higher education, over the life of the cohort, that person will pay \$5,000 in additional taxes and the state will save nearly \$4,000 in decreased support for poverty-related programs.

My core message was on Michigan Higher Education Funding. Last year the Senate chose to adopt a funding approach that looks at minimum per student funding. This ignores the higher costs associated with many of the programs we offer in healthcare and technology. It also funds higher education at the lowest common denominator. Finally I concluded with concerns regarding the rapidly increasing costs our University must bear for the Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System (MPERS). Next year MPERS costs for Ferris State University could exceed \$7,000,000. My request was MPERS costs be backed out of state funding formulas before costs were calculated.

Each time I make a presentation of this nature, I also create a website. The testimony and supporting materials presented to the Senate subcommittee are accessible via the web at http://fsunw3.ferris.edu/~eislerd/senate_2006.htm This site also includes links to the materials used in the development of my remarks. I would appreciate your thoughts on these remarks and materials.

Postseason Athletics

Last evening our men's basketball team defeated Northern Michigan to advance to the semifinals of the GLIAC tournament. They will play the University of Findlay on Friday at 3 pm on the Grand Valley campus. A victory in this contest will place our team in the tournament finals Saturday evening at 8 pm at GVSU.

Last weekend was a very successful one for our men's ice hockey team. Friday evening they tied the University of Michigan here in Big Rapids. Saturday evening in Ann Arbor they came back from a 3 goal deficit to win 4-3 in overtime. As a result we will host Ohio State University this weekend. Games are schedule for Friday and Saturday evening at 7:05, with a third game on Sunday if needed. Friday evening's game will be televised live on Fox Sports Detroit, one of the first times a game has been broadcast on network television from our arena. With success against Ohio State, our team will advance to the semifinals next weekend.

If your schedule permits, I want to encourage you to come out and support our teams and our student athletes this weekend.

Closing Thoughts

This week was an important milestone in our Banner software conversion project as the Financial Aid module went live. It is impossible to emphasize enough how much this success results from the very hard work of employees across our campus. I appreciate very much the extra effort so many of you are making to help this project succeed.

During February the Friends of Ferris hosted a wonderful dinner and auction raising \$31,000 for our political activities. I appreciate the strong efforts of many at our University and in our community who work to provide this support. With their assistance we are able to effectively represent Ferris State University in Lansing. Thanks for your help and support of the Friends of Ferris.

This semester I am visiting with staff and students, soliciting their thoughts about the values of our University. In doing so I am continually reminded of the commitment you bring to your work. It is easy to feel the pride that so many of you have for the difference your efforts make for students and colleagues. Thank you so very much for what you for Ferris State University.

Best wishes,

Dave