

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
April 10, 2006

Yesterday was one of those truly amazing Michigan spring days. Beginning with frost in the low twenties, it warmed to the mid-sixties. This beautiful day was part of a very busy weekend on campus with many events. Sunday's Festival of Cultures was an opportunity to celebrate the international students on our campus as they displayed examples of their culture, fashion, and cuisine. I am always impressed with the number of people from our community who look forward to and attend this unique and special event.

Friday evening was the largest Professional Tennis Management banquet in our history, with 230 people in attendance celebrating the twentieth anniversary of this unique program. This weekend also included the spring on-campus openers for our track and softball teams, and the men's basketball banquet. As we enter the final three weeks of classes, one can feel the pace quickening on campus. I want to take this opportunity to share some of the good news about our people and their efforts at Ferris State University together with updated information on our ongoing efforts.

Planning Presentations

On March 30th and 31st divisions presented the results from this year's Unit Action Planning Process. These reporting sessions provide the opportunity for divisions to share some of their successes over the past year. They are truly impressive!!

Here are some examples of accomplishments that I learned about through these presentations -

Academic Affairs

- Successful national accreditation reviews were conducted for programs in Criminal Justice, Dental Hygiene, Facilities Management, Legal Studies, Mechanical Engineering Technology, Music Industry Management, Optometry, Pharmacy, Radiography, Respiratory Care, and Surveying Engineering. The Masters in Nursing was granted candidacy by the National League of Nursing.
- Allied Health received \$595,000 to develop accelerated healthcare programs in Respiratory Care and Nursing.

- Arts and Sciences student engagement activities include work with the Rawlinson Observatory, Card Wildlife Educational Center, Community Studies Institute, Live! At Williams, The Torch, Crossroads Writing Project, John and Rhea Smith Greenhouse, and The Prism.
- In Business, graphic design students received a national gold ADDY award, the Hospitality Management project for the new JW Marriott Hotel in Grand Rapids has become a national model for the Marriott Corporation, and capstone student teams scored in the top 10-15% in a national competition of over 1100.
- Education is implementing a B.S. in Early Childhood both on campus and in locations off-campus.
- The Library has developed the Ferris Institutional Repository to provide perpetual storage space for digital materials created by and about the University community.
- Optometry increased their entering class to 36 students, with 7.3 applicants for each space.
- Pharmacy reaches out to the community through the Engaged Partners Program (GR), Pharmacist Management of Diabetes (GR), Anticoagulation grant (Marquette) and two nationally funded projects, Lake Co. Immunization Education and Health Literacy (CDC) and Health Literacy for Successful Smoking (HRSA).
- Technology students are competing in a variety of national programs, the Mini-Baja, Formula One, and Rube Goldberg. They also host a CAD summer camp, welding competition, and MathCounts.
- Off-campus student credit hour production grew to 12,000 SCH this year, an increase of 16.3%, with an increase in Traverse City of 22%.
- 325 students will graduate from high schools chartered by Ferris State University and 68% of these graduates have college letters of acceptance.
- Honors students contributed over 15,000 hours of service to the campus and community.
- Educational counselors working with faculty and students produced a Career Pathways DVD for distribution to 5,000 school counselors, teachers, and students.

Administrative Affairs

- The University endowment returned 13.3%, placing its performance in the top 10% of all endowments in the country.
- Over 285 training sessions have been conducted as part of the Banner conversion project.
- IS&T purchased a site license for SPSS software which has been installed on 300 campus computers.
- The Physical Plant completed over 15,000 work orders. Included in this was the replacement of 14,000 square feet of campus sidewalks and curbs.
- The graduation rate for student athletes at our University is 59%, exceeding the national average of 51%. Our student-athlete GPA exceeds 3.05.

- Our University had a 17% reduction in criminal offenses during 2005. This is the third year in a row of marked reductions in these numbers.

Ferris State University - Grand Rapids and the Kendall College of Art and Design

- FSU-GR now has its first University endorsed student club, the International Game Developers Association.
- This spring 12 students will graduate from FSU-GR, its first graduating class.
- FSU-GR enrollment has grown by 25% this year and Kendall's enrollment now exceeds 1,000 students. Kendall has doubled in size since its merger with Ferris State University.
- Through a partnership with Rockford Development, the University offers housing in Grand Rapids. The first 48 beds are filled, with a waiting list of 59 students for an additional 48 spaces that will be remodeled this summer.

Governmental Relations and General Counsel

- As a part of affirmative action efforts, 5,366 applications were reviewed for 329 positions.
- Through the use of mediation and other approaches, during this past year our University had seven step three grievances, a remarkably small number.

Student Affairs

- Last fall's enrollment increase of 744 students and 6.3% was the largest among public institutions in Michigan both in terms of the number of students and the growth percentage.
- Institutional Research & Testing has implemented web-based survey software and used this for nearly 50 different surveys.
- Student Leadership's Fall Speaker Series attracted over 1,700 people to three events. Entertainment Unlimited had 1,550 attend two fall events.

University Advancement and Marketing

- Major gifts to the University this year have increased by 65%, from \$670,875 to \$1,108,851. Major gift officers have doubled their number of personal visits to donors.
- New alumni events in Traverse City, Chicago, Denver, and Phoenix have attracted over 400 alumni who have not attended a previous event.
- The mini-CD distributed with student recruitment materials linked 30,000 prospective students to our recruitment Web sites.

There are many, many more outstanding accomplishments included in these materials than I can list. All of this and much more is accessible at <http://www.ferris.edu/president/uap200607.htm> In listening and reviewing these materials I am very impressed and excited by your many accomplishments throughout the year.

Legislative Testimony

On March 29th I testified before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education chaired by Rep. John Stewart. In my presentation I highlighted accomplishments from our University and tried to help the representatives understand the cumulative effect of state budget reductions. Here is one example of this impact. For students who began four years ago, we now receive 24.2% less from the state for them than when they started. Going back another year increases this reduction to 27.9%.

I encouraged the representatives in as strong a fashion as possible to follow the funding formula they adopted last year. In doing so I pointed out the inequities in the approaches proposed in the Executive and Senate budgets, which do not reward universities for enrollment growth or for offering high-cost\high-need programs. My recommendations to the committee were as follows -

- 1) Use the funding model adopted last year as the basis for the allocation increased funding.
- 2) If not, there are two key components to higher education funding and it is essential you move now to fund these in meaningful ways -
 - **First, fund enrollment growth.**
 - **Second, fund institutions based on programmatic costs.**
 - **Third, if you must use a funding floor, use this same dollar amount per student to fund enrollment growth.**

In my remarks to the House I expanded upon and enhanced my comments regarding the continually increasing costs of Michigan Public Schools Employee Retirement System (MPERS). Since 2002 our University costs for MPERS have increased by \$2,171,308. During that period we have also received a reduction in state funding of \$6,058,810. The combined impact of these is a budget loss of \$8,230,118. Tying these concepts together is especially important in presenting our budgetary needs to the House. For next year the Executive budget recommends an increase of \$826,790, however our MPERS payments are estimated to increase by \$1,086,677. This would result in a net reduction of \$397,144.

Additional information on MPERS is included in my testimony, which is accessible here - <http://www.ferris.edu/speeches/HouseTestimony032906.pdf>
With the assistance of Sally Depew we distributed a history of MPERS that is helpful in understanding how the costs for this program have escalated - <http://www.ferris.edu/president/speeches/MPERS%20timeline%20032906.doc>
More materials on the House presentation are available here - http://fsunw3.ferris.edu/~eislerd/house_2006.htm .

Vietnam Delegation

On Thursday and Friday we hosted a four-person delegation from An Giang University in Long Xuyen, Vietnam. Headed by their Rector (president) Vo-Tong Xuan they visited Ferris State University to seek our assistance in offering a master's degree on their campus. We are also hopeful undergraduate students from their province will study here. Dr. Xuan is a world famous expert on rice production and a member of the board for the Rockefeller Foundation. He has a wonderful vision for how his University can help change the lives of his people. On Thursday, Dr. Xuan presented a talk to students and faculty on sustainable agriculture as part of the annual Fulbright lecture.

This relationship developed from the strong efforts of Dr. Phil Watson who has visited their campus six times. I want to express my sincere thanks to Phil for hosting this trip, to the Fulbright Scholars who hosted the delegation for lunch and dinner, to the faculty and staff, especially in the College of Education, who visited and encouraged our guests, to optometry students and faculty who provided eye examinations for them, and to Vice President Michael Harris and Board of Trustees Chair Art Tebo for their efforts to foster and support this relationship. Ferris State University is the only institution Dr. Xuan visited while in the country. I believe both he and his team left pleased and excited about the prospects for efforts together.

Closing Thoughts

In less than a month commencement will be here. At these ceremonies I like to share with the audience some of the accomplishments of this year's graduates. If you are aware of a student graduating this spring who has overcome significant challenges, who has a special story, or who has extraordinary accomplishments, I would appreciate you sending me his or her name so that I may contact them. While we will not be able to recognize each person, your assistance can help personalize and emphasize the personal success of our graduates. Please send these names to me either via email eislerd@ferris.edu or at ext. 2500. Thanks in advance for your help and assistance.

In attending recognition evenings and dinners I look forward to hearing our students talk about the education they received here and what it means to them. As they do so, I am continually impressed by their maturity, the appreciation they express to others, and by the confidence they exhibit. Each of these attributes is a direct result of your strong efforts and the difference they make for our students. Thank you for helping and caring so very much.

Best wishes,

Dave