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# **Grand Rapids Magazine**

January 2007

## **'Best of' is just the beginning**

Grand Rapids is Grand Rapids because of its diverse group of residents. This city means many things to many people." So says Terry Johnson, co-founder of the Grand group on Flickr.com, an international photo-sharing Web site, for an upcoming feature in this magazine.

The January issue is inspired by the people of whom Johnson speaks. The annual "Best of Grand Rapids" feature is taken directly from our readers and reflects an ever changing list of local hits. It's a "static" snap-shot of this metro area as 2007 begins, and this New Year is greeted with a great deal of excitement and imagining.

This year, the city will mark the opening of many new venues, initiating the "domino effect" of further change. Chief among them is the phased opening of the new Grand Rapids Art Museum next to Maya Lin's "Ecliptic" installation, and the expansion move of Kendall College of Art & Design into the old museum facility, the former Federal Building. As the historic facility becomes integrated into the college, blocks of the downtown will morph, most noticeably with street and pedestrian pattern changes.

As summer ends, the new JW Marriott will reflect a new streetscape and traffic pattern, too, as will the emergence of no less than eight new condominium and apartment projects.

Both the Art Museum and the new Marriott mark the "comeuppance" of River City, but no project or building matches the "comeuppance" of the metro area residents living in one of Michigan's most inventive cities.

The partnerships that continue to provide for strong arts groups (such as the 2006 merger of Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts and Artworks, or the coalitions formed by local filmmakers and IT businesses) and those forged by business leaders are so strong, even the 2006 gubernatorial challenger was refuted for veiled attempts to take any credit, though his name emblazons many of the buildings.

There are hundreds of "things" to celebrate in River City, but the best is the spirit of its residents.

## **Pioneer**

January 23, 2007

### **Ferris will not renew Harris' contract**

Vice President for Academic Affairs Michael Harris will not be returning to Ferris State University as vice president when his contract expires at the end of June.

"Dr. Harris is a person of significant strengths and has made important contributions to our University," FSU President David Eisler said in a statement issued to the University on Jan. 5. "After considerable review I have concluded that he is not the person to fill this position for the long-term and thus have chosen to not reappoint him."

In his time at Ferris State, Harris' duties included oversight of the academic budgets, the appointment of faculty and all academic and curricular matters. He also was a key member of the university's negotiation team.

Professor of English Roxanne Cullen said the loss of Harris came as a surprise and is significant to the University.

"The loss is catastrophic," Cullen said. "For the University to get rid of someone who was making progress and moving them in a positive direction doesn't make any sense."

Cullen added that the reasons behind excusing Harris were not justified and are counteractive to the progress the University should be making.

"Mr. Harris did not, at any point, have the opportunity to defend himself," she said. "Why would you take away somebody who has been so productive for the University?" Cullen also has resigned her position as associate vice president for operations and assessment in protest of the removal of Harris. Some of

Harris' accomplishments at Ferris State include his direction of several initiatives which enhanced the academic environment in areas such as assessment, accreditation and general education requirements.

Harris also was instrumental in obtaining several sizable grants for the University, including the \$9.15 million Freedom to Learn project and a \$1 million grant from the Dow Foundation.

Eisler said a decision to not renew the contract of a vice president is delegated to the president in Board Policy, but does require notification of the board.

Harris was unavailable for interview Monday. Eisler declined comment for this story.

## **Pioneer (Editorial)**

February 7, 2007

### **Support FSU by helping 'Friends'**

The Friends of Ferris have selected a fitting theme for the organization's 18th annual dinner and auction fund-raiser planned for Feb. 17 at the Big Rapids Holiday Inn and Conference Center.

With temperatures hovering well below the freezing point for the past couple weeks, and no end in sight, the "Bulldogs in the Caribbean" theme will at least provide a hint of that warmth so far, far away.

Area residents are encouraged to attend to share a great meal and bid on some fantastic auction items.

Proceeds, of course, will help the Friends, a political action group, promote the mission of a university that has grown up with Big Rapids after the tiny school was opened in 1884 as the Big Rapids Industrial School above a store in downtown Big Rapids.

During its transformation from that tiny industrial school to a state university, the institution has remained true to the philosophy of its founder, Woodbridge N. Ferris, who stressed the need for hands-on training for the occupations of the times.

The University continues to change to fill existing needs with a high success rate for placement of its graduates. But, many of the University's programs are highly dependent on costly equipment and supplies that require more funding for operation than other institutions of higher learning.

Efforts to stay on track over the University's 122-year history have required the help of numerous individuals and organizations. Over the past couple decades, the Friends of Ferris have continued the advocacy of W.N. Ferris' hands-on approach to educating the students of today by making sure Michigan legislators understand the schools' mission and special needs.

Make plans now to attend the 18th annual Friends of Ferris Dinner and Auction on Saturday, Feb. 17 at the Holiday Inn where you'll be able to bid on some prizes that will, at least, bring warmth to your heart, including four box seats to a 2007 Detroit Tigers game, a Saugatuck sunset dinner cruise for 10 people, and a beer and wine making party for six couples.

For a great dinner, great auction items, great fun and an opportunity to help the Friends support the mission of Ferris, get your tickets now by calling any member of the Friends or by contacting Friends of Ferris Board Chairman Scott Whitney at (231) 796-3205.

We're looking forward to seeing you on Feb. 17 for the "Bulldogs in the Caribbean" dinner and auction.

## **Pioneer**

February 8, 2007

### **Band peps up Ferris athletic events with music,**

After a long day performing his administrative duties, Ferris State University President David L. Eisler can often be found performing another crucial service for students - jamming with the school's pep band.

Eisler, currently in his third year as president at Ferris State University, came to Big Rapids with a distinguished musical background as the holder of a bachelor's and a doctorate in Clarinet Performance at the University of Michigan and a master's in Clarinet Performance from Yale University.

It is that background that helps him appreciate Ferris' Athletic Pep Band on a level most college presidents never could.

"They really are a wonderful group that comes to all of these games, throughout the year, and cheers and plays for our teams and that is a great quality," said Eisler, who began his academic career as a musical instructor at Troy State University (Ala.) in the mid-1970s.

Eisler, who along with his wife Patsy shares an intense passion for Ferris athletics, immerses himself in the band culture as an occasional participant. Eisler has developed a unique appreciation for the love affair between the band and the numerous athletic events the group performs at during the school year.

"I've traveled when we've gone to NCAA Tournaments in Findlay, Ohio and down to Indiana, where our pep band was playing, and it is amazing the compliments I've heard from different schools about our pep band," Eisler said. "One of the biggest things I hear, from some of these schools, is they say, 'We want a pep band like you have at Ferris,' and that is a great compliment for this group of young people."

Band members, who come from a variety of academic programs, perform at Wink Arena, for basketball; Top Taggart Field, for football; Ewingleben Ice Arena, for hockey; and occasionally Ewingleben Sports Arena, for volleyball, among the toughest venues for opposing teams.

More than just playing the school's fabled fight song and other tunes, this band also is a fan of the Bulldog Athletic Teams. Whether it is football, basketball, volleyball or hockey - the band is there as the members feed off of each other to generate energy.

"It's contagious," said Sara Tilley, 23, a senior in biotechnology who also serves as band conductor after previously playing saxophone. "The members of our band really enjoy being here and they really get into the games and come out and try to make it a good time for our other fans here."

Whether band members are big sports fans, or not, the feeling of being in that group is a special one they all covet.

"I love being on the drum line and there is just such a great variety of personalities that all come together when we're playing at games," said Morgan Starner, a 20 year-old junior who is in her third year in the band as a snare drummer. "We enjoy playing the music, because that is a big part of our backgrounds, but one of the best things about this band is we are all crazy and we all like to have fun."

The atmosphere, within the band, is family-like.

"I love our band," said Crystal Bakke, a 22 year-old senior scheduled to graduate in May with a degree in elementary education. "The thing about our band is we go out and we have a lot of fun and we really enjoy being around each other being creative with our cheers and our playing and just being musical during the time we're here at Ferris and we're playing in the band."

Opposing teams take notice of the band - particularly at basketball games in Wink Arena where the group is positioned near the visiting bench and behind the west basket.

"Visiting teams notice us a lot because we're very vocal and we're very supportive of our teams," Bakke said. "We do a lot of things to support our teams, but everything that we do is in good fun and everything we do is to have a good time and to help our teams as much as we can."

That supportive atmosphere has been appreciated by athletes, especially the veteran ones like junior basketball star center Rachel Folcik, who could not hide her smile when asked about the Bulldogs' band. The third-year player has participated in enough games in Wink Arena, and enough in visiting arenas, to know how important Ferris' band is for Bulldog athletic teams.

"It's a good feeling knowing they are there ... because the band is so into the game and they bring so much energy to the game and to us when we're out there," Folcik said. "They help us so much, if we're down and we need a lift, and they help keep us going when we're up by giving us even more energy."

Dale Skornia, who is in his first season as band director at Ferris, believes the women's basketball games are especially fun for the group.

"This is a very spirited group," said Skornia, who counts nearly 50 band members on the roster. "They're a hard-working group that is really knowledgeable about the sports. ... I think the group especially likes doing the women's basketball games because a lot of times there are maybe not as many fans and they can have a bigger impact on the game as fans of the team. ... It helps them to really get into those games even more."

The band, like Ferris' athletes, conduct practice sessions of sorts; Skornia says that typically the band will devote a couple of nights a week to rehearsals.

"Our (band members) put a lot of work into it and they really care about what they're doing," Skornia said. "The spirit of our band members is tremendous."

They do what comes naturally.

"The energy that is flowing around our band is infectious," Tilley said. "We get to get in the games for free, we get to have a good time, we get to play music and we get to support our team ... all at the same time.... It's great."

## **Pioneer**

February 8, 2007

### **Friends of Ferris to hold fund-raiser**

Friends of Ferris will be warming up the winter weather with their 18th annual Dinner/Auction Fund-raiser "Bulldogs in the Caribbean," on Feb. 17 at the Big Rapids Holiday Inn and Conference Center.

The fund-raiser begins at 5:30 p.m. with social time and will be followed at 7 p.m., with dinner. Admission is \$50 per person. Checks may be sent to: Friends of Ferris, P.O. Box 1227, Big Rapids, MI 49307.

The Friends of Ferris Political Action Committee was formed in 1989 by Mecosta County community leaders and Ferris State University employees to enhance FSU's position on key issues with state and federal officials, particularly legislators.

"It's really an amazing thing when you think about what the committee does for us," FSU President David Eisler said. "With the challenges that lay ahead of us, it's good to know we have such a great organization backing us."

Friends of Ferris Chairman Scott Whitney said the committee is in place to provide the University with funding in areas where they see most fit.

"Basically we're just a pro-Ferris organization," Whitney said. "We get them the funding to do what they want to do, not what we want them to do."

The main focus of this year's funding will go to maintain a high profile with legislators and the executive branch of the state government. This year's key project is working toward securing a new building for the Michigan College of Optometry.

"Usually we have a facility that is our top priority for capital outlay requests with the Friends of Ferris," said Vice President of Administration and Finance Richard Duffett. "This year the college of optometry is our top priority. It's been a very high priority since the completion of the FLITE library."

In the past, FSU has benefited from several capital outlay projects, including the construction of the Granger Center for Construction and Heating Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration (HVACR), the Timme Center for Student Services, and the Ferris Library for Instruction, Technology and Education (FLITE).

In 2006 construction began on the most recent capital outlay project; major renovation to update the newly-renamed Interdisciplinary Resource Center (IRC).

Board of Directors member Bob Miller said most people don't realize the impact that a committee like Friends of Ferris has on funding for the University.

"Most people just think of tuition and state support as the only sources for funding our Universities," Miller said. "With the amount that the state contributes continuing to diminish, it makes organizations like these all the more important."

The auction highlights a number of items donated by the community and members of Friends of Ferris, including a Caribbean vacation package for two, overnight stay at either Grand Beach or Sugar Beach Resort hotels and autographed apparel by the current Detroit Red Wings.

## **Lansing Bureau**

February 8, 2007

### **Freshman numbers drop at state universities**

The number of freshmen at Michigan's 15 public university campuses dropped for the first time in five years, while the number of overall students dipped a bit, too, a report on fall enrollment shows.

The declines come even as Gov. Jennifer Granholm pushes to get more kids into college by offering \$4,000 scholarships, replacing the high school Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test with the ACT college-entrance exam and requiring college-prep courses for all students.

The universities reported 39,284 freshmen last fall, down nearly 3 percent from 40,407 in the fall of 2005. Nine campuses experienced drops, while six reported increases, according to a report compiled by the Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan.

Overall student numbers were more stable -- 287,747 last fall, down from 288,350 in the fall of 2005 -- a decline of .02 percent.

Mike Boulus, executive director of the Presidents Council, said the drops were disappointing but not alarming. He said the total head count drop was small, and that when combined with fewer incoming freshmen, the shifts mean more students are staying in school and continuing toward graduation.

"I think it's clear that we're doing a better job of retaining students. When you retain more students, you have less capacity to bring new students in. That's what you're seeing here," Boulus said.

Michelle Begnoche, a Granholm spokeswoman, said a drop "underscores the importance of providing students with the ability to attend college." Granholm this week proposed creating "Promise Zones" in areas of high unemployment and poverty, which would guarantee college tuition for high school graduates in those zones.

Also, Begnoche said, students may be pursuing other routes to higher education, through technical training schools or community colleges.

Community college enrollment is up, especially among teenagers. The number of students 19 and younger at the 28 community college campuses hit more than 63,000 last fall, up from 59,000 in the fall of 2005.

Enrollment at the 50 private colleges in Michigan hasn't yet been compiled, according to the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Michigan.

Declining enrollment doesn't appear to be impacting the freshman class -- yet. The Michigan Department of Education reported that more than 118,000 public and private school students in the class of 2006 -- this year's freshmen -- took the high school MEAP test, up from more than 116,000 the prior year.

But a declining college-age population is projected for Michigan. Public high school graduates are expected to peak with the class of 2008, due to fewer births, according to a 2003 report by the Western Interstate Compact on Higher Education, ACT and the College Board.

In the Presidents Council report on the public universities, the biggest enrollment decline was at Western Michigan University, which lost 1,409 students, a 5.4 percent drop over fall 2005. Total fall enrollment was 24,825.

Eastern Michigan University lost 514 students or 2.2 percent when compared with 2005.

Central Michigan, Lake Superior State, Saginaw Valley State and Wayne State universities as well as the Ann Arbor and Dearborn campuses of the University of Michigan each experienced less than a 1 percent decline in total enrollment.

Grand Valley State University had the most robust growth with by 3.2 percent increase while Oakland University grew by 2.3 percent. Northern Michigan had a 2 percent increase, University of Michigan-Flint had a 1.7 percent increase while Ferris State, Michigan State, Michigan Tech, Northern Michigan had less than 1 percent increases.

Cheryl Roland, WMU spokeswoman, said the university is ramping up its marketing campaign to increase student enrollment. She said other universities jumped into marketing before Western because it didn't need to.

Western had more than 4,300 incoming freshmen each year from 1999 to 2003, peaking at 4,669 in 2001.

That number has dropped to 3,610 this year, a 23 percent drop from the top.

"This is a very competitive market right now," Roland said. "We came to the marketing side late in the game."

Eastern Michigan University may require a college orientation class starting in the fall of 2008 to help freshmen succeed in college, said Bernice Lindke, interim vice president for enrollment management. She said there's general agreement among enrollment professionals that such orientation programs help students cope with the pressures of college.

"We want to make sure we have programming to retain students," she said.

Lindke said much of the drop in Eastern's freshmen -- from 2,816 in 2001 to 2,340 last fall -- can be attributed to a loss of students from Ohio. Marketing efforts over the last five or six years have overlooked northern Ohio, she said, adding that the college hopes to start targeting that market again.

Michigan State University and the University of Michigan both had large incoming freshman classes in 2005, but dropped back this year to previous levels.

MSU had 7,256 freshmen, down from 7,485 in 2005. But overall student head count is up.

U-M dropped to 5,399, down from a record 6,115 freshmen of in the fall of 2005. The record was set when more admitted students than usual actually enrolled.

Last fall, more students were admitted than in 2005, but fewer enrolled.

"It's more our normal size," university spokeswoman Kelly Cunningham said of the 2006 freshman class. The Presidents Council report is at [www.pcsum.org/pdfs/EnrollmentReport2006.pdf](http://www.pcsum.org/pdfs/EnrollmentReport2006.pdf).

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## **Pioneer**

February 9, 2007

### **Pilgrim named chief diversity officer**

Ferris State University has announced that Dr. David Pilgrim will serve as the University's first chief diversity officer.

"Diversity is not just the color of your skin, your gender or your sexual orientation," Pilgrim said. "Diversity is the range of human differences and potential that manifests itself in members of a campus community."

Pilgrim has served as a member of the FSU faculty since 1990. He takes on the position recently created by FSU President David Eisler, with the purpose of creating a change in the university's campus environment, which will and celebrate diversity.

"It is a pleasure to have Dr. David Pilgrim accept the invitation to serve as chief diversity officer for our University," FSU President David Eisler Said. "His academic experience as founder and curator of the Jim Crow Museum on our campus makes him an ideal choice."

Pilgrim is a tenured professor of sociology who has been both an author and speaker on a number of issues dealing with racism and diversity issues. He also was one of the original members of the Diversity Counts Committee.

## **Pioneer**

February 14, 2007

### **Ferris Winter Concert set for Sunday**

Winter Orchestra Concert featuring the Ferris State University West Central Chamber Orchestra directed and conducted by Richard Scott Cohen will take place at 4 p.m. Sunday at the Ferris G. Mennen Williams Auditorium.

Admission is free and the event is open to the public. For assistance with attending this event, call (231) 591-3676.

This year's annual Winter Orchestra Concert is entitled "A Really 'Suite' Concert" and features performances of three complete suites of music that are musical works made up of two or more movements or shorter musical pieces by master composers Gustav Holst, Alan Hovhaness and Johann Stamitz.

The program will include the following works: "Brook Green Suite" by Gustav Holst, "Psalm and Fugue, Op. 40a" by Alan Hovhaness and "Sinfonia in A Major" by Johann Stamitz.

Currently celebrating its 40th concert season, the FSU West Central Chamber Orchestra (WCCO) is sponsored by Ferris as part of its "Music for Life!" initiative. It is comprised of FSU students, adult community members and select students from throughout West Central Michigan. Ferris students can earn credit and scholarships for their participation in the WCCO by enrolling in Music 271.

Adult community members and qualified pre-university students recommended by their directors may participate free of charge. This string orchestra rehearses from 7 to 8:30 p.m. every Tuesday evening throughout the school year at the Music Center on FSU's main campus.

All experienced players of string instruments are invited to join the orchestra. Contact director Scott Cohen at (231) 591-2484 or e-mail [rscohen@ferris.edu](mailto:rscohen@ferris.edu) to get signed up.

Cohen is associate professor and director of instrumental ensembles at Ferris. He is director of the FSU Symphony Band, FSU West Central Concert Band, FSU Community Summer Band, and FSU West Central Chamber Orchestra, and he also teaches courses in music appreciation.

A native of Chicago, Cohen a Phi Beta Kappa scholar from the University of Illinois, holds masters and doctorate degrees in conducting from Northwestern University, and he is a former Fulbright Scholar to Spain.

Cohen is active as a conductor, trombonist, composer, arranger, music adjudicator, researcher, author and lecturer throughout the United States and Europe.

## **Michigan Business Review (Posted on mlive.com)**

February 15, 2007

### **Kendall College designs innovative MBA courses**

A new MBA program in Grand Rapids incorporates the kinds of design sensibility that drive business innovation, planners say.

Kendall College of Art and Design now hosts four courses open to master's of business administration students at Ferris State University, its Big Rapids-based institutional parent.

The point is "to look at the ways the strategic thinking, the methodology in design that plays a key role in innovation, helping companies develop new products and new ways of doing things," Kendall President Oliver Evans explained.

That kind of thinking is beginning to take hold in business, he noted. Leadership guru Tom Peters devoted a 2005 book, titled *Design*, to design's importance to innovation.

Kendall could be unique in its close integration of industrial design into an MBA program, he said. As with the Ferris MBA program itself, the courses are only offered online, but they differ in their requirement for two on-campus weekends per seven-week course.

The on-campus segments give students exposure to faculty and outside design professionals, Evans said, and to one another as they collaborate on coursework.

"What's driving the program is the responsibility of design and designers to the larger society," he added. Product designers often are accused of creating waste, but sustainability concepts will be deeply integrated into the courses, "so at the heart of this is the idea of, how does one design responsibly."

The courses aren't related to recent initiatives promoting western Michigan's design community as an economic engine, Evans said, but reinforce the region's reputation as an industrial and graphic design center of excellence.