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Iosco Co. News Herald
March 17, 2004

Tawas Community Band to have guest conductor

TAWAS - Donald Flickenger has accepted an invitation to be the guest conductor at the Tawas Community Concert Band's spring concert.

The concert will be held Monday, April 5, at the Tawas High School gymnasium.

Flickenger is currently academic department head for Ferris State University College of Arts and Sciences Humanities Department.

Prior to his current position, Flickenger was a professor of music, director of bands, conductor of the University Chamber Orchestra and coordinator of the music industry management program.

He has guest conducted throughout the Midwest and has served as a conducting clinician and guest conductor in Australia and Europe.

Flickenger is past president of the Michigan School Band and Orchestra Association and was chosen Band Director of the Year in 1980.

Flickenger has enjoyed a 32 year affiliation with Blue Lakes Fine Arts Camp. He has been a regular conductor for student groups, the Blue Lake Festival Orchestra and Band and the Blue Lake International Symphony Band.

He serves as chairman of the Blue Lake sponsored Leonard Falcone International Euphonium and Tuba Festival and is conductor for the Blue Lake International Adult Community Band, which toured Europe in the summers of 1998-2003.

He is currently the program director for Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp Summer Adult Arts Program consisting of nine four day mini camps in all arts areas each summer. He also is a member of the Blue Lakes Board of Trustees.

Flickenger organized and conducted the West Central Concert Band, a Big Rapids based adult band and is active as a clinician and adult band guest conductor. His primary conducting focus continues to be adult recreational music.

The County Press

March 17, 2004

Students compete in spaghetti bridge challenge

By: Susan Younger

LAPEER-Take two pounds of dry spaghetti, toss in a mystery ingredient like macaroni and frost with glue. What resembles a recipe for a strange meal is actually a list of materials needed to build a bridge.

Local students will compete at the annual Spaghetti Bridge Competition planned for Friday and Saturday at Ferris State University.

This year two groups from the Lapeer County Intermediate School District Education and Technology Center are challenging at least 10 other teams in the fifth-annual contest.

Winners can expect cash prizes and tuition-free scholarships to a summer computer institute at Ferris.

The challenge is broken down into two phases. Before the competition, each team builds an authentic scale model of a real-world bridge using spaghetti and glue.

At the competition, they give an oral presentation explaining the positive and negative aspects of the bridge.

Competitors will have also prepared a written report which includes a detailed description and dimensions and structural characteristics of the bridge. Students research their bridge's country, including the capital, population, primary language and form of government.

Each group has completed an environmental impact statement including a narrative and diagram.

Evening News of Sault Ste. Marie

March 22, 2004

BMCC Wins Second Place in National NASA Science Education Contest

BAY MILLS - Some people still don't know that Bay Mills Community College has a four year teacher prep program in consortium with Ferris State, but BMCC students put their college "on the map" this February.

As first time invitees to NASA's Preservice Teacher's Conference in Alexandria, Virginia, seven sophomore and junior students from BMCC/FSU's teaching program entered a lesson plan contest which called for the integration of science, math, and technology.

Sixty-six colleges and universities from across the country participated, many of whom had been coming to the conference for years.

"We weren't sure exactly what they wanted, so we did our best and figured the first time would be a learning experience," said Wanda Hoolsema, a junior in the program.

When the finalists were announced on the second day of the conference, BMCC's students were stunned to learn they'd made it to the top 10. When the college's name was called for second place on the following day, the group was speechless.

"We would have been happy just to have made it into the finals," said Billy Mitchell, a sophomore.

First place went to the University of Texas at Brownsville; third place went to University of Oregon, and honorable mention was given to Prairie View A& M Texas University.

The lesson plan, which had to be presented on a poster, was actually an 8 week unit plan which guides 8th grade students through a series of scientific investigations, trying to determine if there is a definitive reason that our lake shores fluctuate and seem to be receding.

The purpose of the unit was to teach students to "evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of claims, arguments, or data" as specified in the Michigan Curriculum Framework.

In the process, they would learn how to measure ambient temperature using national standards for precise and uniform measurement (using GLOBE technology developed by NASA). Students would then look for evidence of

global warming by comparing current temperatures with past temperatures, using a national data base.

They would also use Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to produce maps of Lake Superior's shoreline, and they would learn that the level of the water can be influenced by the St. Mary's Locks, the gravity pull of the moon, and a phenomenon called seiches.

The unit plan followed the 4MAT system of lesson development, which provides for specific sequence of activities in a circular pattern and is considered one of the best designs for Native American learning styles.

For the poster, the unit plan was superimposed on the Medicine Wheel, and included opportunities for student to learn Native teachings and prophecies about the water and global warming.

The opening activity featured Framework talks with community elders at the lake shore, and the closing activity involved a parent's night in which students would report their findings, since our shorelines are of interest to everyone who lives on Lake Superior.

The poster will be on display in the library and used as a teaching tool for future classes.

Lake County Star

March 25, 2004

Free room anyone?

BIG RAPIIDS - After experiencing record fall and winter enrollments, Ferris State University officials hope to keep up the momentum by offering students a free private room this summer on the main campus in Big Rapids.

"We believe it is important to keep costs down for our students, and that's why we did not raise tuition for the winter semester and have now decided to invite area students to be our guests for the summer on us," said Ferris President David Eisler.

To take advantage of Ferris' offer for a free private room, students must be enrolled in six or more credit hours at the Big Rapids campus during the summer term at regular tuition rates.

Summer initiative participants also must have a residence hall contract and a meal plan contract for a minimum of 10 meals per week for the duration of their summer occupancy in a residence hall. Other meal plan options are available.

Savings on housing range from \$640 to \$1,920. The per-credit-hour tuition rates are \$250 for undergraduates and \$309 for graduates. Costs for the required meal plans are \$380 for the four-week session, \$785 for the eight-week session and \$1,165 for the 12-week session.

Four-week sessions are offered May 18-June 15, June 16-July 14 and July 15-Aug. 11; six-week sessions are offered May 18-June 9 and June 30-Aug. 11 and are intended for year-long, two-course sequences; eight-week, June 16-Aug. 11; and 12-week, May 18-Aug. 11.

Students will be permitted to live in the residence halls between and/or after early sessions are completed provided they will ultimately meet the summer initiative criteria. "Summers are a great time to be enrolled at Ferris," Eisler noted.

"We offer classes that have a very low student-to-teacher ratio and in the summer, student classes are even smaller than usual. The significant savings on housing costs will help students looking to progress toward graduation more quickly."

In addition to smaller class sizes during summer, outside of class students will have easy access to such extra-curricular activities as biking and roller-blading on the White Pine Trail, tubing on the Muskegon River and hitting the links at Ferris' Katke Golf Course.

Osceola Pioneer

March 29, 2004

Ferris State University Department of Public Safety

The Ferris State University Department of Public Safety provides police services and has jurisdiction on all campus properties. The agency is under the leadership of Director Martin J. Bledsoe, who holds the rank of chief. The next highest administrator is Assistant Director Jim Cook. FSU DPS employs an office staff of six, as well as 14 sworn officers, who have eight cars at their disposal. Officers have defibrillator units and First Aid kits.

"We're a full-service police department we never close. There are always people on duty," said Bledsoe.

FSU DPS works with other emergency service agencies in the area, such as the Mecosta County Sheriff's Department, the Michigan State Police and Big Rapids Public Safety.

"The city and county are excellent help on campus properties when we need them," Bledsoe said.

"The university is a community within a community," he continued, noting his department always tries to be a good neighbor to the surrounding area.

Osceola Pioneer

March 29, 2004

FSU students spend spring break building houses with Habitat for Humanity

BIG RAPIDS - Nine Architectural Technology students from Ferris State University spent their Spring Break in Pittsboro, N.C. building houses through Habitat for Humanity's Collegiate Challenge program.

Liz Wirgau, Lindsey Jankowski, Katie Sparling, Charisse Ford, Brian Farlow, Jim Harwood, Matt Weaver, Josh Rewa and Rob Ryan volunteered more than 270 hours of manual labor.

Students worked in conjunction with volunteers from Chatham County Habitat for Humanity March 8-12.

In addition to donating their time and energy to help build houses, students raised more than \$500.00 for Chatham County Habitat for Humanity.

The donation helped to cover material costs for the three houses currently being constructed.

Collegiate Challenge is a year-round program, coordinated through the Collegiate Challenge Team at Habitat for Humanity International in Americus, Ga.

More than 10,500 students from 700 colleges, universities and high schools will work at more than 200 sites nationwide for Collegiate Challenge: Spring Break 2004.

Collectively, these students have pledged more than \$1 million for the affiliates they are working with.

Pioneer
Tuesday April 6, 2004

Ferris State forms new 'educational partnership'

BIG RAPIDS - Recognizing the need for teacher education and development in the area, West Shore Community College, and Ferris State University have formed a new partnership to expand the base of locally delivered education coursework in the West Central Michigan area.

The result of many months of collaborative planning is the launch of a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education on the WSCC campus beginning the fall semester 2004.

Through the partnership with Ferris and WSCC, all courses required for completing the Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education will be available on the WSCC campus. Some courses will be taught using the online classroom technologies either in part or for the entire course.

It is anticipated the new degree will be offered in combination with a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction (M.Ed.) that has options in secondary and elementary certification and subject area.

The program integrates the courses needed to receive teaching certification in the state of Michigan while providing an opportunity for degreed individuals who also wish to pursue a teaching career.

The subject area option allows practicing teachers to complete continuing education requirements while earning a master's degree in a subject area of their choice.

An informational meeting, describing both programs will be held on April 13 from 6 to 8 p.m. in the MBT Room of WSCC's Campus Center. Ferris and WSCC advisors will be present to provide more details about the program.

Those planning to attend are encouraged to bring a transcript so that specific questions can be addressed.

Pioneer
April 6, 2004

FSU names Pilgrim Distinguished Teacher

BIG RAPIDS - David Pilgrim, professor of social sciences, has been selected to receive Ferris State University's Distinguished Teacher Award. Pilgrim was chosen from a group of 10 nominees for the honor.

The selection was the result of the award committee's year-long efforts, which included classroom visits, administration and evaluation of hundreds of student's surveys and evaluating nominees' essays and curriculum vitae.

"I am honored and humbled because Ferris State University has many top-flight teachers who care deeply about their students," Pilgrim said.

Pilgrim is the primary donor and curator of the University's Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia. He has been widely quoted by such national media outlets as the New York Times, Boston Globe, Los Angeles Times and National Public Radio concerning issues of race and culture.

Also, he is beginning work on the Sarah Baartman Room, which will be devoted to understanding historical and contemporary sexism.

In addition to his teaching duties, Pilgrim also is a consultant to Public Museum of Grand Rapids' Ethnic History Exhibit and was recently elected to the Michigan Museums Association's Board of Directors.

Pilgrim holds a B.A. in Sociology from Jarvis Christian College, and a master's and Ph.D. in Sociology from The Ohio State University. He has taught at Ferris State since 1990.

Pioneer
April 6, 2004

Pineiro to deliver Fulbright lecture at Ferris State

BIG RAPIDS - Aurora Pineiro Carballeda is scheduled to give the Ferris Fulbrighters' 12th annual Fulbright Lecture.

Pineiro is head of the Department of Modern Languages in the School of Philosophy and Letters at the National and Autonomous University of Mexico in Mexico City.

Her public lecture, "Mexico: A Multi-Cultural Nation," will take place at 4:30 p.m. on April 15 in the Instruction Resource Center, room 004.

Pineiro specializes in both English and Hispanic literatures.

Her current interests lie in the use of the Gothic in contemporary literature, and Magical Realism in contemporary Mexican literature.

Last year Pineiro was the first lecturer from Mexico to teach for an entire academic year in Hungary, which is the equivalent of a Senior Fulbright Lectureship, at the Institute for English and American Studies at the University of Debrecen.

In addition to her Fulbright lecture, Pineiro will hold a colloquium on "Magical Realism in Modern Mexican Literature" on Friday, April 16, at 2 p.m. in the Arts and Sciences Commons, room 2082.

Pioneer

Wednesday April 7, 2004

Ferris State student-athletes recognized by NCAA for achievements

BIG RAPIDS - More than 60 Ferris State student-athletes were honored for achievements in the classroom and in their sports.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association held its 17th National Student Athlete Day Tuesday nationwide on campus

The event was conducted Tuesday in Jim Wink Arena as assistant director of athletics Brian Kegler presided over the luncheon and ceremony. Athletes from Ferris' men's and women's basketball, football, hockey, women's soccer, women's tennis, track and field, cross country and volleyball teams were awarded certificates.

"It's nice we have this opportunity to recognize our student-athletes," Kegler said. "Whether our student-athletes realize it or not, they are looked up to by a lot of younger kids in our community."

To be honored by the NCAA for National Student Athlete Day, individuals eligible must have achieved at least a 3.0 grade point average and be involved in the community.

According to Kegler, Ferris State student athletes have been active in Big Brothers/Big Sisters, local care systems and as mentors to young students at local elementary schools.

"Our student-athletes are role models to the younger kids in the community and this is one way for the NCAA and Ferris to say thank you to them for everything they do," Kegler said.

"We recognize them for what they do in athletics as well as for what they do in the classroom and community."

While Kegler was one of the chief organizers of the event, Ferris volleyball coach and Senior Women's Administrator Tia Brandel-Wilheltn was involved as was Lon Green, who is the Faculty Athletic Advisor Committee Chair.

Green was on hand as a representative for FSU President David Eisler and the administration to present a certificate to each student-athlete.

Ferris football player Matt Desmarais, who serves as president of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, also offered remarks to his peers and others.

National Student-Athlete Day was initiated by the National Consortium for Academics and Sports and Northeastern University's Sports in Society.

The yearly event is co-sponsored by the NCAA and National Consortium for Academics and Sports and Northeastern University's Sports in Society. The yearly event is co-sponsored by the NCAA and National Federation of State High School Associations.

More than 1.7 million college and high school student-athletes have been recognized on the day since 1997.

The cross country and track and field programs had the largest group honored with 33 student athletes: JL. Ball, Barrington Dykes, Joseph Klein, Kurt Kramer, Sean Maxwell, Kyle Schuberg, Tom Swartwood, Kristen Balla, Abigag Bearman, Michelle Blanch, Rachel Cox, Crystal Flutur; Jessica Gladding, Jenny Irwin, Kathryn Lange, Molly Machinski, Mary Miller, Michele Vanderhyde, Liz Engle, Darryl Gladhouser and Corey Peyerk.

Men's basketball winners were: Willie Burrel, Jeff Shanahan, Dennis Springs and Nate Wruble.

Women's basketball winners were: Stephanie Benear, Lucie Cenkova, Lucy DeMartin, Sarah Duesing, Bridget Horwitz, Kelly McLaughlin, Erin Miller, Darcie Philp, Molly Potvin and Kristin Reinhart.

Football recipients of certificates were: Desmarais, Tim Gill, Kevin Park, Kevin Teepe and Phil Teeple. Derrick McIver was an award winner from the Bulldog hockey team.

Britta Dahlberg, Carla Gilbertson, Andrea Moma, Shawna Orcutt, Lindsey Pawloski, Anne Simmons, Lisa O'Brian and Lyndsay Sleek were winners from the women's soccer program.

Winners from the women's tennis team were: Molly Basha, Allison Halbert, Barbora Jilkova, Marissa Muchow and Jenna O'Dell.

The volleyball team winners were: Danielle Baucher, Emily Clouse, Brittny Godlewski, Ashley Green, Keagan Krauss, Jamie Palazzolo and Becky Thurau.

Pioneer

April 8, 2004

Ferris to stage crash

BIG RAPIDS - Michigan Driving to Save Lives, Big Rapids area public safety agencies and several students and staff at Ferris State University want Ferris students and the Big Rapids community to realize the seriousness of a motor vehicle crash, and the importance of traffic safety.

In an effort to inform citizens of the dangers associated with a motor vehicle crash, several traffic safety events will take place at the university during the month of April.

The traffic safety events will kick off with a mock motor vehicle crash called "Think Before You Drink, which will be held on April 15 at 4 p.m. at the Ferris State University's intramural fields located on Ferris Drive.

This event is organized by Ferris students and resident advisors Kathryn C. Benner of Freeland, Beth A. Mitchell of Grandville and Jamie L. Rivard of Richmond, with the assistance of Michigan Driving to Save Lives Coordinator James A. Santilli Jr., Ferris Department of Public Safety Chief Martin J. Bledsoe, and Ferris Department of Public Safety Officer Timothy Jacobs.

"Motorists must understand the dangers of drinking and driving and know that zero tolerance means zero chances," Santilli said.

Participating in the mock crash will be the Big Rapids Department of Public Safety Ferris State University Department of Public Safety, Mecosta County Emergency Medical Services, Mecosta County Sheriff's Office, Michigan State Police - Reed City Post and the United States Coast Guard.

Benner, Mitchell, and Rivard also have asked the Big Rapids High School SADD group to participate, have received a vehicle courtesy of Big Rapids Towing and have received funding from the Ferris Residence Hall Association (RHA) to purchase tshirts and pins that promote the event.

"We know we can't stop college students from drinking, but educating them on the consequences is a step in the right direction," said Benner.

All attendees will have the opportunity to tour emergency vehicles and the US. Coast Guard HH-65 Dolphin helicopter, obtain traffic safety materials and also participate in a golf cart and beer goggle demonstration.

Following the "Think Before You Drink" program, Santilli, in the Masselink Hall Study Lounge on April 22 at 7 p.m., and the Bond Hall Lobby on April 26 at 7 p.m.

The multimedia presentations, which will feature videos and pictures of crashes, will focus mainly on alcohol/drugs, aggressive driving, occupant protection and pedestrian safety.

All attendees will be eligible to win gift certificates and items courtesy of Big Rapids Applebee's, Bennigan's, Big Boy, I Burger King, McDonald's, Meijer and Wendy's.

Attendees also will be eligible to win sports items personally signed by Michigan Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land for the Michigan Driving to Save Lives presentations.

The Ferris Department of Public Safety also is taking steps to improve traffic safety. Recently, a pedestrian safety committee was formed.

Serving on that committee are Bledsoe, Santilli, Sonntag, Ferris Department of Public Safety Captain James M. Cook, Ferris Grounds Superintendent Clare KwanY, Big Rapids Public Safety Director Kevin Courtney, Big Rapids Public Works Director Timothy Vogel, Ferris Student Government President Jason A. Granger and employees of the Michigan Department of Transportation.

"While the consequences of a pedestrian accident seem obvious, people don't always take the time they need to think about the impact of a pedestrian crash," Bledsoe said. "We hope to help them make that a priority through education and enforcement if it leads to that."

Recently, all Ferris officers were trained to use radar and laser for speed enforcement. According to the Michigan Department of Community Health, four out of five accidental death ages 16 to 24 are due to motor vehicle crashes.

Pioneer

April 8, 2004

Ferris team places second at competition

BIG RAPIDS - The Ferris Underdogs, a team comprised of nine College of Technology students, took second-place honors at the 2004 national finals of the Rube Goldberg Machine Competition, held on Saturday, April 3; at Purdue University's Lambert Fieldhouse in West Lafayette, Ind.

The competition is named for Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Rube Goldberg, who drew elaborate machines that incorporated many steps to perform simple tasks, such as lighting a cigar or scratching a mosquito bite.

The annual competition embraces the whimsy of those drawings by challenging teams of students to build actual machines in the spirit of Goltlberg's cartoons.

The teams have three chances to get their machines to make two complete runs. The Underdog's machine completed two flawless runs on its first and third attempts.

While the concept may be whimsical, making a working device takes lots of time and planning.

"We got the ball rolling in terms of the overall design for the machine and constructing the frame back in November," said Thomas Hollen, assistant professor of Mechanical Engineering Technology and faculty advisor. After that we had to have a theme, so we came up with the Ferris Bulldog and tried to build the ideas on that."

For this election year, the teams were given the task of constructing a voting machine. Taking their cue from last year's vote to name Ferris' bulldog mascot, the COT students built a machine that incorporated 30 different steps to cast a ballot for one of four names: Brutus, Woody, Rover or Bowser.

The machine highlighted several of Ferris' athletic teams. Some of the steps included a flying caped Bulldog performing a slam-dunk with a steel ball, a hockey player shooting a puck and finally a putter tapping a Ferris golf ball into one of four Plexiglas bins with the possible names.

"The golf course was actually one of the first things we designed," said co-captain Tom Sybrandy. "We started at the end and sort of worked backwards from there."

The Ferris theme also included several of the University's programs: a hammer used to hit a lever that propelled the hockey player is from Ferris' Construction Management program; a nail that when pulled released a steel ball down a zigzag track came from the

Building Construction Technology program; and a wheel from Heavy Equipment Management selected the golf ball used to cast the ballot.

That inclusiveness extended to the team itself, with four different COT programs represented.

"It was fun to watch the four groups of students from different programs work together," said Daniel Wanink, assistant professor of CAD Drafting and Tool Design and faculty advisor.

"Students from my program worked with Mechanical Engineering students, and Plastics Engineering Technology students worked with the Manufacturing Design students."

"It was good to have the different perspectives," said co-captain Jason Cook. "It was a real team effort."

In addition to Cook and Sybrandy, the team consisted of Steve Bar, Matthew Battaglia, Mike Fecteau, Kellie Kulick, Ryan Klunzinger, Justin Terrien and Matthew Tomaszewski.

Host Purdue won this year's competition with a machine that completed 71 steps to mark its ballot, although the machine required human intervention, which cost the team points.

The Purdue University Society of Manufacturing Engineers' team nonetheless came away with \$300 in addition to the first-place trophy for their efforts. The Ferris "Underdogs" received the second-place trophy and \$150.

Detroit News
Saturday, April 10, 2004

Ferris State museum's displays foster racial understanding

Jim Crow era exhibits spotlighted

By James Prichard / Associated Press

BIG RAPIDS — It all started for David Pilgrim with the “mammy” salt shaker.

Now a 45-year-old sociology professor at Ferris State University, Pilgrim was around 13 when, toward the end of the civil rights era, he came across the dispenser at a flea market in his native Alabama.

Some 4,000 similar items he acquired over the years in the name of education are now housed at Ferris State’s Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, which Pilgrim helped put together over the past seven years. Jim Crow is a post-Civil War term of discrimination against, or segregation of, blacks.

The museum’s mission is to help people understand historical and contemporary racist expressions and to serve as a resource for civil rights and human rights organizations.

“As you consider how they use these materials, it’s a powerful, powerful teaching library in terms of tolerance and understanding for others,” said David Eisler, Ferris State’s president.

Pilgrim gave the museum his entire collection of racist figurines, T-shirts, comic books, ash trays, souvenirs, movie posters and other related items. As its curator, he now receives a small budget from the university to expand the collection.

“The same way we use sex to sell items today, we used to use race,” said Pilgrim, who this month was selected as the school’s Distinguished Teacher of the Year. “A disproportionate number of items in here are advertising pieces or had their origins in advertising.”

The room’s display cases are filled with startling, anti-black words and images. The n-word is everywhere, as are caricatures of black children and grown-ups.

“Every group has been caricatured in the United States, but when you deal with Africans and their American descendants, they’ve been caricatured more, more often and, arguably, more viciously,” Pilgrim said.

Cartoons and photos portray black men as either thugs or lazy, inarticulate and easily frightened Stepin Fetchits. Women are depicted as either mummies or lascivious, scantily clad Jezebels.

Drawings show young black children sitting at the edge of a swamp, the words “Alligator Bait” written below them. A tube of “Darkie” toothpaste featuring a black man in a top hat is displayed next to a later version of the same product renamed “Darlie,” now with a white man in a top hat.

There are materials from the Ku Klux Klan, but they aren’t given prominence over any other items because the museum focuses on “everyday racist items,” said Pilgrim, who considers the museum to be a learning laboratory.

He has no problem finding new things to add to the collection at swap meets, art galleries and online auction spots such as eBay. Many of the items are still being made — and being passed off as originals — by companies and individuals.

Only about half the collection can be displayed at one time in the museum’s current quarters in a room in the Starr Building. A fund-raising drive is under way to move the museum to a larger, more accessible on-campus location.

The public may visit, but there are no set hours of operation because access is hindered by the location in an academic building.

Instead, visitors must make special arrangements through Pilgrim’s office or the office of John Thorp, the museum’s director, or be part of a university-approved academic course, workshop or seminar.

Detroit News
Wednesday, April 14, 2004

Colleges prod slow movers

Full-time students get tuition break to speed up graduation

Adnoris Torres is roughly 16 credit hours shy of his political science degree at Michigan State University, and if all goes well, he'll graduate this December - 6 1/2 years after he started.

Torres, 25, doesn't regret the slow course he's plodded. He switched programs, took some math classes twice and has been heavily involved in a student Chicano-Latino group, as well as with his fraternity.

"I've been only taking about 12 credit hours a semester," said Torres of Battle Creek. "There's only so much time."

But as five and six-year graduation rates are increasingly becoming the norm for many college students, more schools are trying to light a fire under slowmoving students with tuition policies that give full-time students a break.

At least five Michigan universities now have some variation of a flat or block rate tuition plan for full-time students, and at least one more is considering it. The tuition plan charges students a flat rate if they take 12 or 16 credit hours a semester, while parttime students continue to pay per credit hour.

University officials say it encourage students to carry heavier course loads, which in turn speeds up graduation rates and opens up space and resources for new students.

Students have mixed emotions. Some say they like paying the same rate for five classes as they would for four. Others, who take the minimum number of hours to be considered full time (typically 12 credits or four classes), say they shouldn't pay for courses they're not taking and shouldn't be forced to hurry and graduate. Part-time students are not affected by the tuition plan and continue to pay per credit hour.

"I would rather take credits at my own pace," said Laura Woloson of Clarkston, a junior at MSU, which is considering adopting a flat-rate system. "Sometimes you have a hard workload one semester and you need to take a lesser workload the next semester."

But proponents of the rate system say the longer students stay in college, the more money they waste paying fees and the more things they miss out on, including jobs.

"I think of this largely as not so much a university issue but an opportunity-lost issue," said Peter McPherson, president at MSU, where students on average graduate in 4.5 years.

"The longer students are here, the more it costs them in room and board, and it costs them in opportunity - both in terms of graduate school and future employment. If they graduate earlier, they gain employment money they otherwise wouldn't have."

Some detractors

Not every institution is a fan of flat-rate tuition plans.

Michigan Technological University in Houghton had one for full-time students for more than 10 years before deciding last spring to switch to a per-credit-hour system.

School officials determined students were signing up for more classes than they could handle and then dropping them, wasting time and resources.

Ferris State University in Big Rapids also has changed its flat-rate tuition plan, shortening the credit block from 12 to 16 credit hours to 13 to 15. Since then, 30 percent fewer courses were dropped during the winter semester, officials said.

Before the change "there was what we called a lot of shopping and dropping of courses," said Sally DePew, director of budgetary planning and analysis at Ferris State.

"We were providing space and faculty for courses students were dropping. It really was an efficiency issue."

Pluses and minuses

Yet other universities stand by their flat-rate tuition policies.

Northern Michigan University in the Upper Peninsula adopted the plan for full-time students in 1996 after administrators conducted a study two years earlier that found some "pretty disturbing trends," said Paul Duby, associate vice president for institutional research.

The study found that students took an average of 14 to 15 credit hours a semester in the 1980s but 10 years later, the average course load had dropped to 12 to 13 credit hours.

Graduation rates also had stretched, the study showed, from 4.5 years in 1984 to 5.5 in 1993. Federal law requires students to take at least 12 credit hours a semester to qualify for financial aid.

"Students had changed in that decade," Duby said. "More and more were changing their majors multiple times."

Since the change in tuition structure, the average course load has inched up to 13.9 credit hours and the average graduation rate is closer to five years, Duby said.

"There are a lot of positives," he said. "Overall, it's been a very very good experience for us." But flat-rate tuition plans don't always translate into larger course loads and quicker graduation rates.

At Grand Valley State University, which charges full-time freshman and sophomore students \$2,824 if they register for between 12 and 16 credit hours, the average student carries 12.9 credits per semester and 49 percent of students graduate in six years. Only 20 percent graduate in four years.

The reason students aren't taking more courses has less to do with the rate structure and more to do with demands on student time, said Matt McLogan, vice president of university relations at Grand Valley.

"Many students tell us they need to work," McLogan said. McLogan insists the flat rate has achieved what it was supposed to when it was established more than 20 years ago—to encourage students to take more courses.

Previously, Grand Valley had a huge commuter student base, with many attending part time and only 1,500 students on campus. Today, approximately 13,000 of the university's 21,000 students live on the university's main campus in Allendale.

"The block tuition rate design was an essential component of that" increase, McLogan said, who added the university also added more housing and recreation to entice more students on campus.

Resources issue

Experts say more public universities, especially in fast-growing regions such as the South and West, are likely to implement block tuition because it's an issue of resources and demand.

The longer older students stay in college, the less space and resources there are for incoming students who also will need campus housing, academic counseling and parking.

"When students are taking five and six years to graduate, to a certain extent, that reduces the amount of space available for new students," said Jacqueline King, director of the center for policy at the American Council on Education.

Jared English, an MSU senior graduating in May, believes there are other ways to speed up graduation rates, namely improving academic counseling so students aren't taking course they don't need and reducing course requirements.

Many programs require students to take prerequisite courses before they can take certain upper-level classes.

Torres, for one, believes every student matures at a different rate, and forcing students to take more classes to graduate could limit involvement in outside clubs, travel or maximizing their college experience.

"If they're maintaining a good academic standing, I don't think they should be rushed out," Torres said.