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The Daily Mining Gazette

March 3, 2007

Education changes (Editorial)

After some thought, I have been disgusted with the current reports of loss of public funding for public education in the state.

Although my point has some validity to its argument about the state of public K-12 and college education in the state.

At a glance I see an obsessive system in the state of Michigan, for instance, Eastern Michigan and University of Michigan are 10 miles apart, Central Michigan, Ferris State and Saginaw Valley State are all in close vicinity to one another.

Do we really need several universities in the state or can we just offer a few regional universities similar to the University of California system? From an administrative point of view maybe we could save some taxpayers money. Should universities start to use their endowment funds for operation expenses and salaries?

The state of affairs for a public K-12 education is also in danger. Should local public schools consider consolidation and break their ties to local politics? Maybe there could be some saving to the local and state governments by employing such tactics.

Maybe my whole problem with public education is that it still lacks in its ability to train the best and brightest students in the nation, just talk to the people who have graduated from MIT, Caltech, Northwestern, University of Chicago and the Ivy League, for example.

The Grand Rapids Press

March 04, 2007

State's 3 top colleges 'arrogant,' lawmaker says

Michigan's Big Three universities are asking lawmakers to fund them separately from the state's other universities, a move some fear would hurt smaller schools.

But the bid is far from a done deal.

"Why should the three universities get more? They're all educating students," said state Rep. Wayne Kuipers, R-Holland. "Why do they feel they deserve more money? The big three are ... a little arrogant."

The pitch surfaced last week in the annual round of hearings in which college presidents jockeyed for their share of next year's financial pie.

Presidents for Michigan, Michigan State and Wayne State universities lobbied legislators to split their money into a different pot from other universities.

Already they get the lion's share of higher education appropriations. This year, the three got 57 percent of the total.

"It's important to recognize the unique -- and I don't use that term lightly -- impact and contribution of the research universities," said Terry Denbow, MSU's vice president for university relations.

The three universities have historically received more money because they focus on expensive research programs. But rapid enrollment increases at other universities have them clamoring for more money, too.

The discussion should focus on how to get more money for all universities, not dividing the existing pot, said Matt McLogan, GVSU's vice president for university relations.

"Public interest is best served when universities find ways to cooperate," he said.

State Rep. David Agema, a member of the subcommittee overseeing appropriations, also would like to see a per-pupil system in which universities are rewarded for efficiency, training, and keeping a work force in Michigan.

"Is it right for the state of Michigan to pay for people that come, study and then leave again?" asked Agema, R-Grandville.

Research universities pay their presidents generous salaries and benefits, while smaller institutions are more efficient, he added.

"Grand Valley and Central have done everything efficiently, and they're being punished for it," he said.

Kuipers said he is not sure any changes will come from the universities' lobbying, but had a warning. "If someone is going to get more, someone is going to get less," he said.

PR Newswire

March 22, 2007

Patrick La Pine of the Michigan Credit Union League appointed to Ferris State University Board of Trustees

Patrick La Pine of Farmington has been appointed to the Ferris State University Board of Control by Governor Jennifer M. Granholm. La Pine is executive vice president of association services for the Michigan Credit Union League (MCUL) and has been with the MCUL since 1999.

Duties of the Board of Control include general supervision and management of the University and direction of expenditures from the University's funds. La Pine has been appointed to sit on the Board through 2014.

La Pine served as director of governmental affairs and vice president of governmental affairs for the MCUL before his promotion to executive vice president of association services in 2006. He has earned a Bachelor of Science degree in political science from Michigan State University and a master's degree in public administration from the University of Michigan.

Organized in 1934, the Michigan Credit Union League (MCUL) is a statewide trade association representing Michigan credit unions. Based in Northville Township with a satellite office in Lansing, the MCUL offers credit unions assistance in the areas of regulatory compliance, legislative advocacy, media advocacy and operational information. For additional information, visit the MCUL's Web site at www.mcul.org.

Worldwide Faith News

March 22, 2007

Five Students receive campus ministry scholarships

Five people working in campus ministry are the 2007-08 recipients of an annual scholarship offered by the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

The agency is providing \$21,000 in assistance through the Bishop James C. Baker Graduate Awards, given through the agency's Office of Loans and Scholarships to students interested in improving their skills as a campus minister in higher education through advanced study, and who are expected to remain in campus ministry.

"Campus ministers and chaplains play a critical role in the development of future leaders for the church and the world," said Angella Current-Felder, executive director of the Office of Loans and Scholarships.

"Often, a campus minister is the sole connection to church for a young adult who is away at college. These awards offer an opportunity for advanced training and study to those campus ministers and chaplains who plan to continue working on campuses."

Newly announced recipients are:

* Jennifer Copeland, a renewal Baker Award recipient, is nearing completion of a doctorate degree in hermeneutics at United Methodist-related Duke University in Durham, N.C. She has served as the Duke University Wesley Fellowship campus minister since 1999. * William Finin, a three-time Baker Award recipient, has served for 27 years as senior chaplain and minister to Southern Methodist University in Dallas. He is pursuing a doctorate in practical theological and ethical issues related to Christian inclusivism within a campus setting at Southern Methodist University. * Robert Hicks, director of the Wesley Foundation at Washington State University, is pursuing his doctorate in leadership studies at Gonzaga University, Spokane, Wash. * Leanne Koughna, a three-time recipient of the Baker Award, is director of the Wesley Foundation at Ferris State University. She is pursuing a doctorate in Psychology at Walden University, Naples, Fla. * Jane Nickell, chaplain at United Methodist-related Allegheny College in Meadville, Pa., is pursuing a Doctorate in sociology of religion at Drew University in Madison, N.J.

The awards, named for the late James C. Baker, are given to campus ministers or chaplains who are continuing their education through a full-time degree program, certified non-degree program or independent studies.

Baker began a campus ministry in 1913 for college students attending the University of Illinois and named it the "Wesley Foundation." The ministry later became the model for denominational ministry at public universities across the United States.

Information about educational scholarships and loans in The United Methodist Church can be found at www.gbhem.org/gbhem/loans2.htm1, by contacting the Office of Loans and

Scholarships, P.O. Box 340007, Nashville, TN 37203-0007, or calling (615) 340-7344 about scholarships and (615) 3407346 about loans.

South Bend Tribune

March 23, 2007

Fight over university funding intensifies in Michigan **Smaller state schools don't like proposal to split budgets from Big 3.**

The debate about how Michigan's 15 public universities are funded is heating up.

Representatives from several of the state's smaller universities are lobbying lawmakers to reject a format that would separate their state aid budget bill from one for the state's three largest universities -- Michigan, Michigan State and Wayne State.

The smaller schools want to keep university state aid budgets in one big bill, the way it traditionally has been done in Michigan. The smaller schools worry that separating the budget bills could lead to a format that eventually gives the larger universities more money at their expense.

"There are very important differences between many of our institutions," Central Michigan University President Michael Rao said Wednesday. "But there are also significant similarities."

Many of the schools are looking at the same pool of students for next fall's entering class, Rao said, and several of the schools now have statewide missions. Each has a role in helping boost the number of college graduates in Michigan, seen as a tool to help the state's economy. The University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan State and Wayne State have presented a united front the past two years during state budget hearings. The three big universities say they are different because they have medical schools that carry higher costs than a typical undergraduate department. They also have technology transfer programs and research and development operations that are far larger than those at the smaller schools.

Those different structures are a big reason why Michigan, Michigan State and Wayne State already get about 57 percent of state aid going to universities for their operations.

Officials at the Big Three contend they aren't trying to divert money from the other universities.

"This is not about anyone being advantaged at the expense of anyone else," Michigan State spokesman Terry Denbow said. "This is not about robbing Peter in Mount Pleasant to pay Paul in Ann Arbor."

Gov. Jennifer Granholm's budget proposal for the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1 calls for each of the 15 universities to get a 2.5 percent increase in state aid. But Michigan, Michigan State and Wayne State would be dealt with in a separate bill, which the smaller schools say would set a dangerous precedent for future years. The nine universities that have joined forces to oppose split bills are Central Michigan, Eastern Michigan, Ferris State, Grand Valley State, Lake Superior State, Michigan Tech, Oakland, Saginaw Valley State and Western Michigan.

Ascribe Newswire

March 23, 2007

Teams Use Creativity, Inefficiency to 'Squeeze' the Most From National Rube Goldberg Competition

It will be a squeeze to the finish as teams of university students from around the nation find new and inefficient ways to get juice from an orange on March 31 at the 19th annual National Rube Goldberg Machine Contest at Purdue University.

The competition rewards creativity and inefficiency by having students come up with interesting and contorted ways to complete an assigned task. This year's task is to take a whole orange, squeeze the juice from it and then pour the juice from a pitcher into a glass using 20 or more steps.

The contest, which is free and open to the public, begins at 10:30 a.m. in the Purdue Armory. Doors open at 9:30 a.m. Lunch will be available for purchase at the event.

A Purdue team has won the national competition for the past four years. The Purdue Society of Professional Engineers team advanced to the national competition after winning this year's preliminary contest on Feb. 24 at Purdue. The team has won the regional competition for three consecutive years and received the People's Choice Award for the past two years.

More than 1,500 people attended the regional competition.

The Phi Chapter of the Theta Tau fraternity at Purdue organizes the contest.

"We are expecting eight universities to bring their Rube Goldberg machines to the national competition," said Dan Kleinbaum, Theta Tau national contest chairman and a senior in the School of Mechanical Engineering from Ann Arbor, Mich. "Every year the students raise the bar on how elaborate and creative they make the machines."

"Based on past years' entries, the competition to design the best Rube Goldberg machine will be formidable. Students work hundreds of hours to make their machines the most inefficient and entertaining contraptions possible."

Teams competing in this year's national competition are: Purdue; Hofstra University, Hempstead, N.Y.; Ferris State University, Big Rapids, Mich.; University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati; University of Texas-Austin, Austin, Texas; Texas A&M, College Station, Texas; Washington State Community College, Marietta, Ohio; and the University of Central Florida, Orlando.

The contest's namesake is the late cartoonist Rube Goldberg, who specialized in drawing whimsical machines with complex mechanisms to perform simple tasks.

While 20 steps is the minimum number required to complete the task, most teams will use many more. For example, the Purdue Society of Professional Engineers used 134 steps to squeeze the juice from an orange and pour the juice into a glass to win Purdue's regional competition.

Winning machines must complete two successful runs, and points are deducted if students have to assist the machine once it has started. Judges award points based on the creative use of materials and related themes.

In previous contests, students' machines have been required to select, clean and peel an apple; toast a piece of bread; put a stamp on an envelope; and drop a penny into a piggy bank. Winners have appeared on television shows nationally, including CBS' "This Morning," ABC's "Good Morning America," NBC's "Today," "Newton's Apple," "Ripley's Believe it or Not," the Fox News Network and CNN. Last year's winner appeared on "Jimmy Kimmel Live."

Chicago Tribune

April 2, 2007

Also ran in The Exponent Online(Purdue's Student Newspaper), The Honolulu Advertiser, The Indianapolis Star, Indianapolis News and Weather, Journal Gazette(Fort Wayne, Indiana), WLUC TV 6, News-Sentinel (Fort Wayne, Indiana), CNET news.com, The Earth Times Online, United Press International, ABC News, Lansing State Journal,

Goldberg variations: Ferris State juiced up after victory

At last Saturday's competition at Purdue University, the underdog team from Ferris State University engineered a major upset that would have made Rube proud

If betting had been allowed at last weekend's Rube Goldberg Machine Contest -- where various college teams created intentionally complex contraptions to squeeze juice from an orange -- Ferris State University's team would have generated some of the longest odds.

The school entered the competition with neither a legacy of victory nor a single corporate sponsor. And its four-man squad was the smallest at the event.

Ferris State's machine parts came courtesy of thrift shops and a pillaged toy chest belonging to their adviser's grandchildren. And while other universities' students were free to test and tweak their machines in the pre-contest hours, the Ferris State team was kept busy explaining that yes, Ferris State is a real school located Big Rapids, Mich.

(The follow-up question - "And where's Big Rapids?" had the well-mannered students repeatedly raising the universal hand-as-Michigan guide and pointing toward their palms.)

In a month when the NCAA men's basketball tournament provided no Cinderella story, the Ferris State foursome supplied a major upset at this year's Rube Goldberg event. In fact, they toppled host Purdue, which won the past four years. And Ferris State's machine possessed a mind-boggling 345 steps -- a world record, according to contest officials.

These annual contests began here in the 1950s as homage to Rube Goldberg, a Pulitzer Prize-winning newspaper cartoonist best remembered for concocting machines that work in the most inefficient, and often humorous, fashion.

"It's the complete opposite of what we're taught in school," said Dan Kleinbaum, a Purdue senior majoring in mechanical engineering and the contest's chairman.

Not that it's just fun and games. Employers also love the Rube Goldberg experience, believing that the process fosters original thinking, thriftiness and team building. Motorola, GE and Lockheed Martin were among the many companies that sent representatives to Saturday's event to act as judges, giving the event the air of a job fair.

That is, when it didn't resemble a spirited soccer match.

Two-minute drills

About 1,000 people packed the campus armory, watched the competition on large, overhead screens and cheered for their favorite teams. Judges and cameras surrounded the students who held their breaths as the machines made runs that had to be less than two minutes.

Each team adopted its own theme to the task of juicing an orange and pouring it into a glass in 20 or more steps. Purdue, no doubt the crowd favorite, chose "The Orange Is Not Enough," a takeoff on a James Bond title, which featured into their design. All in all, cinematic themes ruled, and films played a part in half of the eight machines' story lines. The University of Cincinnati and Hofstra University even chose, by coincidence, the same movies: the Indiana Jones trilogy. Not so for Ferris State, whose "Toy Factory" theme used items such as Matchbox cars, a Frisbee and a Slinky, to create motion (and nostalgia) to juice an orange. From the gadget's first bell, which signified the start of the workday, to its klaxon finale representing quitting time, the machine appeared playful, absurd and dramatic-rare words in the mechanical engineering realm.

Beyond bells and whistles, the Ferris State machine also achieved something no other team did: It actually worked perfectly, never once requiring a reset during competition.

High praise

"That's a work of art," conceded Andrew Arnold, a senior on the Texas A & M team, which finished third, behind Purdue.

Matt Tomaszewski, a Ferris State senior who is the first in his family to attend college, said he and his teammates began dreaming up their contraption on the drive home from last year's competition, where Ferris State's faulty entry failed to place.

"We were on a mission," said Tomaszewski, who gave credit for their success to his dad, a lineman with the local power company, and the team's fifth member, who is deployed to Iraq. He also put Purdue on notice for the 2008 contest, noting that the hometown team had nowhere to travel, but Ferris State required 5 long hours in a van to get home.

Plenty of time, he remarked, to plot again for next year.

Pioneer
April 3, 2007

FFA vote targets Eisler

Faculty union votes on resolution of 'no confidence' beginning Monday

Ferris State University's faculty union is preparing to conduct a vote of no confidence in FSU President David Eisler.

"It's saying there are problems with the current president and he could correct these problems," said Ferris Faculty Association President Mike Ryan, adding the union is willing to work with Eisler. "... Leadership is important -- we want to make him a better leader."

Citing a "climate of secrecy and mistrust " created by Eisler at the university, Ryan said the union has issued a "demand to bargain," a request to clarify its August 2006 contract, on the basis the job functions of the vice president of academic affairs have been substantially changed from its original agreement."

The administration (changed) something without having negotiated it," Ryan said. "We believe they have changed the role of the vice president in our contract."

An FFA meeting set for Monday will discuss the issues surrounding the no-confidence vote. A three-page "Resolution of No Confidence in President David Eisler" has been circulated to union members citing concerns in eight areas: bargaining, enrollment, mismanagement, irresponsible use of public funds, vision for the future, lack of honesty and integrity, fund raising and diversity.

Voting will begin Monday and close Wednesday, April 11, Ryan said.

Eisler said the door to the president's office has been open to the FFA and its concerns. He said he has responded to union concerns brought to his attention and cited in the list. For example, when enrollment concerns were raised this fall, Eisler created the President's Blue Ribbon Task Force to identify ways to improve enrollment. More than 30 suggestions of that group have been implemented, he said. He also cited his actions when diversity issues were raised at the November board meeting, after which he sent a memo to campus asking anyone interested to volunteer to help search for a diversity officer.

"When they are legitimate concerns of the university, I try to address them," Eisler said. "It seems to me I have responded to concerns... I believe I've been pretty responsive to these things."

Calling the vote an "evaluation" of Eisler's job performance, Ryan said, "We're evaluating him now because we're concerned about accreditation issues, about long-term enrollment issues, the planning process that's not working.

"We thought it would be improper, possibly immoral for us as professionals to see this happening to our university - his and ours and the students' and the board members' and the community. We're on the inside track in terms of what's happening and if we would sit back and say nothing when all

these things are happening, then we would have not done our job," he continued. "...It's a report card on the president."

Union leaders emphasize this action is not an attack on Eisler but on his leadership - or lack thereof - of the university. They also emphasize they are not taking this action of their choosing but rather that of their membership.

"It's his leadership we're questioning - his job performance. It's not a personality thing at all. We don't know him particularly well, even though we may have interacted with him, we don't extensively know him," Ryan said. "It's a matter of are you doing the job."

Some faculty suggested taking the no confidence vote during the August contract negotiations, Ryan said, but it wasn't the appropriate time.

"Our purpose was getting a contract and I didn't want to sidetrack it," Ryan said. "Typically, one would expect those issues would wane. If anything, they've gotten worse."

The union executive board has been receiving calls from members asking why a no-confidence vote hasn't been called, Ryan added. The timing of this action - which Ryan stressed was meant to be an internal action on campus - has no relation to the external environment of state funding or any other context.

Other staffers, including administrators, who are not eligible to vote on the no-confidence resolution have expressed their support for the measure, he said.

Overall, the faculty cites concerns with a perceived lack of long-range planning by Eisler for the university and the subsequent damage they think will occur to the institution's accreditation.

Eisler began his tenure as president by first getting to know the university community and then building his plans from input he received from members of that community. He and other campus leaders are in the process of creating a strategic plan for the university.

"I was listening to the university to hear what my vision for the university would be. ... I listened to 1,200 people in groups of 15 to 25 of that year," Eisler said.

From those conversations and others after his first year, Eisler points to the results of 15 task forces over three years, with renovated classrooms and a new marketing campaign. The plan was to conduct three years of annual planning and then begin to form a strategic plan, he said.

"I think it's very important to understand the campus before you begin those processes. You understand much of the faculty concerns, you understand the staff, you've talked with alumni and know the community where your university is," Eisler said.

Some of the issues, however, seem personal to Eisler.

"I have difficulty dealing with the (allegations about) honesty and integrity when the union says it's not directed at me," Eisler said. "I've been in higher education 31 years. This is my 17th year as a full-time administrator. I've built my life and my career around being honest and operating with integrity. I'm no different today than at any point of my career."

The Ferris Board of Trustees is fully behind Eisler.

Board chair Arthur L. Thebo issued the following written statement: "The Ferris State University Board of Trustees supports the work of President David L. Eisler and his leadership at the University. We understand that as president, Dr. Eisler must at times make difficult decisions, but support his right to do so. In August, our board carefully and thoroughly reviewed the work of President Eisler and extended his contract for three additional years. That position remains unchanged today."

Eisler thinks support for the no-confidence vote is being spearheaded by union leadership.

"What's being brought forward is coming from a small group of people. This is from the executive committee of the faculty union. That's a relatively small number of people. ... I don't think it really reflects on the faculty as a whole," he said.

Eisler enjoys his work at Ferris and looks forward to continuing his efforts.

"I'm proud of our university - I'm proud of what we're doing here. We're really happy to be here at Ferris and be part of the Big Rapids community and I'm dedicated to being the president of Ferris State University and leading this university so it continues to be a great institution," Eisler said. "The community has really been fantastic. I'm getting lots of messages of support, both people on campus and people off campus."

FERRIS BOARD OF TRUSTEES STATEMENT

"The Ferris State University Board of Trustees supports the work of President David L. Eisler and his leadership at the University. We understand that as president, Dr. Eisler must at times make difficult decisions, but support his right to do so. In August, our board carefully and thoroughly reviewed the work of President Eisler and extended his contract for three additional years. That position remains unchanged today.

"These are challenging times for Michigan and for higher education in our state. As board members we look forward to working with the President, the administration, and all constituencies of the University in developing a strong, strategic plan for Ferris State University and its future. We believe that the union leadership bringing no confidence votes to the faculty is a poor way to communicate concern and we support constructive dialogue together. We believe the combined results of our efforts can continue the growth and development of our University and benefit citizens throughout the state of Michigan."

- *FSU Board Chair Arthur L. Thebo, in a written statement*

Pioneer

April 3, 2007

FSU students spend spring break in Guatemala

The five Ferris students were able to see how donations have helped a Third World ministry.

A number of students spend their spring break relaxing in a foreign destination or laying out on a beach. Over this spring break, five Ferris State University students took a trip to a foreign land, but with a much different mission.

From March 5 to 12, the students traveled along with St. Paul Campus Parish Pastoral Associate Patrick Herdegen to San Andres, Guatemala, with the objective of witnessing the culture, lifestyle and good works that are occurring as a result of the money and support given by the Newman Center, a Catholic college student youth group at the St. Paul Campus Parish in Big Rapids.

Herdegen labeled the trip as a reverse mission, in which students share and celebrate the successes of what has been accomplished in the partnership between St. Paul and San Andres, their sister parish.

Student Brandy Johnston said the experience taught students about the importance of supporting others.

"Going to a Third World country gives you a different perspective on life," Johnston said. "Whether you can do something big, such as giving money or time, or something small such as praying for the people in Guatemala, everything is helpful. We are so blessed to live in a country that supports us, but we also need to support others by stepping out of our comfort zone."

Student Natalie Wernette said the trip provided important first-hand experience of what is being done in Guatemala.

"Visiting them helps our parish understand where the money is going," Wernette said. "It was good to share these experiences with real people."

During their visit, the students had the opportunity to witness the blessing of new school facilities at San Andres. The school has added about 10 new rooms as a result of funding from organizations like the Newman Center.

"It was a great experience to see and share their successes," Herdegen said. "The whole experience gives you perspective on what you can do with your own life."

The Newman Center is now in its eighth year as a sister parish with San Andres. During this time, students have had the opportunity to experience things like the blessing of a village's water supply and electrical service.

"Seeing our efforts to help their communities showed me how the sharing of a few of our dollars can help them improve so much," Wernette said. "And even though they remain in poverty by national standards, their hearts are certainly not lacking any love or kindness."

Student Nick Pobocik said the experience is something everyone should see first-hand.

"My only wish is that I could offer every single American the chance to visit a Third World country and immerse themselves in the culture of the people," Pobocik said. "If everyone could see what I have seen, the United States would truly be a different place."

Pioneer (Editorial)

April 3, 2007

FFA, do your homework before vote

Ferris Faculty association members will vote Monday on a resolution of no confidence in Ferris State University President David Eisler.

The vote is about the future of the institution, not Eisler, FFA officials say. The FFA claims a "moral obligation" to conduct the vote. This is about business - it's not personal.

Really? Taking a "no-confidence" stand against Eisler is, essentially, asking the university's board of trustees to hire a new president. It doesn't get much more personal than that. After rocky relationships with at least the three presidents before Eisler, one begins to wonder what kind of president the FFA *would* approve of.

More than just a personal indictment, this is a vote of no confidence in the school's business plan. While it might be the organization's right to conduct such a vote, it better have strong arguments to back its "moral obligation." In most organizations, employees don't get to voice an opinion on their boss's performance - they do their jobs or move on to work for someone else.

In a list of criticisms leveled at Eisler in the resolution to be voted on, a lack of honesty and integrity and fiscal mismanagement are among the most shocking complaints. There are few specifics listed in the three-page resolution, however. Most of these complaints are best described as charges, rather than the evidence one would look for to build a compelling case against him.

There is no doubt that the fate of the Big Rapids area is clearly intertwined with that of FSU. We win together, we lose together. That's how it goes in a college town.

The actions of Ferris students can draw positive notoriety to this area - as the success of its Rube Goldberg team did this weekend with a win at the national competition or the dental hygiene students who traveled to Guyana to work with villagers during spring break.

Likewise, bad behavior can draw state-wide, or national, attention that reflects poorly on the institution and the community. The last time the Ferris faculty drew state-wide attention to Rapids was last summer when it threatened to strike.

Does this vote reflect the desire of the faculty as a whole, or just a vocal few? Is this a good business move for Ferris? What is our obligation to the university that employs us? Since the board of trustees has recommitted its support for Eisler, does this resolution do any good for anyone? These are some of the questions FFA members should be asking their leadership. With no classes on Thursday and Friday, it seems that interested faculty members have precious few hours to get their answers before Monday's vote.

So, faculty, the community is asking you to do something you've requested countless times: Do your homework.

“You will be tested this Monday. You need to make sure you are prepared. Your vote will say much about your university. But that is the cost of doing this type of ‘business.’”

Don't think that it's not personal.

The eyes of Big Rapids, and all of Michigan, are upon you.

Pioneer (Opinion)

April 3, 2007

Vote of no confidence in Eisler is disheartening

I am disheartened to learn of the upcoming vote of no confidence in FSU president David Eisler; an effort being led by a very small and chronically disenfranchised faction of the Ferris Faculty Association.

The vote is disingenuous and reflects a dysfunctional approach to demonstrating faculty union leadership during a time in Michigan when collaboration within the academy is critically important.

Ferris is heading in a positive direction, illustrated by increases in enrollment, academic reputation, fundraising, visibility in Lansing and throughout the state, among others - and which calls into question the validity and true motivations of such a vote.

My perspective has been shaped as a student, alumnus, community activist, donor, administrator, adjunct faculty member, and most recently as a voice on behalf of all 15 state universities of Michigan in Lansing. It is from the latter of these vantage points that I have witnessed the university make positive strides in recent years and have seen first hand Dr. Eisler's tireless efforts and persuasive advocacy on behalf of Ferris in the state's capitol.

This is not to say that all is rosy at Ferris, but all organizations, and especially public universities, encounter some turbulence as they grow.

It will behoove the very small cadre of faculty union representatives who for years 'have taken delight in abrasiveness toward the university's administration - whoever that may consist of at any given time - and look beyond the main campus.

What lies beyond is a well-informed and very diverse set of stakeholders who see a continuously improving institution being led by an effective president.

Indeed, faculty should serve as the lifeblood of our universities. However, such an ill-advised proposed vote of no confidence in the Ferris president being spearheaded by a minority faction will only serve to asphyxiate a university that has already been starved by disinvestment in state dollars, and will in the long run only serve to hurt the very hard working and dedicated faculty the vote itself is purported to benefit.

Now is the time for the faculty of Ferris to send a clear message that it is through cooperation, mutual respect, and pride in serving as a member of the professorate that will advance the institution in the midst of a hyper competitive higher education market place.

DANIEL HURLEY,
Washington, D.C.

Pioneer
April 4, 2007

Voicing support for Eisler

Members of the community speak out in defense of Ferris President David Eisler

Community members aren't waiting to be counted - they're standing up in support of Ferris State University President David Eisler after learning of the impending Ferris Faculty Association vote of no confidence.

The upcoming vote was meant to be an internal issue on the Big Rapids campus and not intended for the public, emphasized HA President Mike Ryan.

Once word of the upcoming Monday vote reached the community, several local leaders began to express their displeasure with the decision.

"You just can't sit by and let this happen if you have a leadership role in the community," said Rex Schuberg, a local businessman, Ferris alumnus and past president of the university alumni association. "If you feel strongly about something, you need to speak."

On March 20, the faculty association executive board unanimously approved conducting a vote of no confidence in Eisler and approved a draft of the resolution March 27. Voting will begin following a general union membership meeting Monday and continue until 5p.m. Wednesday, April 11.

Shuberg believes the energy focused on the no-confidence vote would be better used in promoting the university.

"I think the FFA board underestimated the support and confidence the community of Big Rapids has for President Dave Eisler," Schuberg said. "The health of Ferris is the health of us."

In an FFA executive board newsletter dated Thursday, March 29, obtained by the Pioneer, board member Bob Carter wrote "...we are doing it to help, not harm, the university."

Schuberg disagrees.

"This hurts the university," he said. "I think it is in their best interests to cancel the vote."

Overall, Schuberg supports the university and believes in the quality of the faculty there.

"I have two kids going to Ferris and they have some outstanding faculty that have made a real difference in my kids' lives," he said. "What's good for the university - that's what I'm behind."

Union members argue that's also the goal of the vote. In an FFA Executive Board document circulated prior to the March 29 document, Carter wrote, "The faculty of Ferris State University not only has the right to conduct such a vote, but it has a moral obligation to do so."

Administrators come and go at a quick pace here at Ferris but the faculty tends to remain at the institution. We are the lifeblood. We are the institutional memory. We must stand up to preserve the quality of the education that we offer to students."

Kevin Courtney, a Ferris alumnus, adjunct professor and current Mecosta County commissioner, disagrees with the union's assertion it is the lifeblood of the institution. He also disagrees with the position of a no-confidence vote.

"I'm a faculty member at Ferris and I am not the lifeblood," he said. "The students are. Every single employee at the university better think of what's best for students. ... I think Dr. Eisler does that.

"The FFA is like the man who gets married five or six times," Courtney continued. "Every time he gets divorced, he comes up with a list of reasons and wants everybody to believe it was the woman's fault. But the only constant is him. ... The only constant (here) is the FFA. It's not the woman's fault, it's the guy who can't stay married."

The March 29 newsletter references a conversation Carter had with a local businessman about the two options the faculty union has to combat what it perceives as problems with the university's direction:

"I told the business person that the faculty basically has only two arrows in its quiver: 1) a job action [strike], and 2) a vote of no confidence. Since we are under contract not to strike for the duration of the current agreement, we have only one arrow that we can use at this time."

The newsletter later asks union members to share the following information if they are approached about the vote by a member of the community:

"Inform them that this is not personal.

"Inform them that this is about the long term health of the university as an institution of higher education.

"Inform them that this is about the quality of our academic programs, the learning that takes place in these programs, and the graduates that these programs turn out."

The long-term health of the university will be impacted by the vote, said Carlleen Rose, a local businesswoman.

"While the union representatives might feel this is a simple internal situation, it will affect the entire university," she said. "Any time the university is put into the newspaper and media in a negative light, it makes the decision-making of students and parents a little more difficult. When you question the abilities of the president, you make people think twice about coming to the university."

Calling the faculty "absolutely fabulous, hard-working, dedicated professors," Rose emphasized her support of the teachers at Ferris, but she also made it clear she supported Eisler's leadership.

"We also have an extremely hard-working and dedicated president of the university," she said. "We have a committed business community and we all should work together as a team to

guarantee our university is the best it can be for the students. ... What all of us do reflects on each other."

Rose said in the past, professors have approached the community when there were problems on campus.

"I find it alarming this situation seems to be one of 'let's quietly do this,'" she said.

Pioneer

April 4, 2007

A vote of no confidence in FFA leadership (Editorial)

Since the 13-year reign of former Ferris State University President Robert Ewigleben ended in 1984, only the university's interim presidents have been able to escape the threat of a "no confidence" vote from the Ferris Faculty Association.

J. William Wenrich. Helen Popovich. William Sederburg. Wenrich was the only one actually tagged with a "no confidence" title. But threats of no confidence votes against the other two were certainly detrimental to the performance of their duties and to the image of the university.

And, now David Eisler is enduring a similar fate as the FFA membership prepares to meet Monday night to discuss slapping the unenviable tag on the four-year president of the "college on the hill."

The vote is a weapon the faculty union says it must use to send its message of dissatisfaction to Eisler and the university's board of trustees.

In a document obtained by the *Pioneer*, Bob Carter of the FFA's executive board explains why the vote was called: "... the faculty basically has only two arrows in its quiver: 1) a job action (Strike), and 2) a vote of no confidence. Since we are under contract not to strike ... we have only one arrow that we can use at this time."

University presidents do make good targets, but we question the real motives at play here.

The FFA executive board is charging Eisler with everything but responsibility for Michigan's economic ills. Indeed, one of the criticisms of Eisler is that he failed to secure funding for its proposed optometry building project.

This is the same President Eisler who this newspaper featured in our Weekend Edition leading a group of Big Rapids and Ferris dignitaries to Lansing to again lobby for the project and press for its funding.

The only thing potentially standing in the way of breaking ground on the project is the \$900 million deficit the state legislature is, unsuccessfully, grappling with.

Is that his fault, too?

Other faculty complaints leveled at Eisler include: he's been ineffective and disruptive in the bargaining process; that he is responsible for stagnant enrollments on the main campus; that he mismanaged university funds; that he used university funds to hire consultants whose advice he ignored; that he funded ineffective recruitment trips; that he's failed to create a vision for the future, threatening the university's accreditation; that he's been an ineffective fund-raiser; that he and other administrative officials have created an adversary relationship with the faculty; and on and on and on

Frankly, we've seen no real evidence to support these charges. In fact, these allegations smack of arrogance - another weapon the FFA wields with brutal precision.

Make no mistake, this rancor goes well beyond Eisler.

Wenrich was a popular leader in the community and the college when he served as a vice president under Ewigleben. But, it didn't take him long to earn the wrath of the union once he came back to serve as president.

Popovich, who orchestrated board-requested cutbacks during her five-year reign, had no difficulty at all earning the threat of a "no confidence" vote; and Sederburg, who was credited with bringing the university back from the cutbacks of the Popovich era, couldn't please the FFA either.

Now, it's Eisler's turn to wear the bull's eye and with deep regrets in the general community where he has become more involved than any president in recent history.

A "no confidence" vote will, in our opinion, damage the efforts to rebuild the university's image over the past 15 years and could sway legislators to invest limited dollars for universities elsewhere.

Across the nation, higher education has been forced to make cutbacks due to state fiscal difficulties. As some of FSU's own economics profs could point out, Michigan is going through an unprecedented economic crisis. That Ferris has a stable, and growing, enrollment and will be able to weather a proposed \$2 million funding cut this year is a testament to its efficient, thoughtful operation. Things might not be perfect on campus, but there has been no offense by Eisler that has warranted this attack.

We urge faculty members to dig beneath the surface of the laundry list of complaints they will be presented with at their meeting Monday night. Ask questions and seek out independent answers rather than accepting hysterical rhetoric presented by union leaders.

Pioneer

April 4, 2007

Community support for Eisler (Opinion)

On March 20, 2007 the Ferris Faculty Association Executive Board unanimously voted to conduct a "vote of no confidence" in the leadership of President David Eisler. Most of the professors who are on the FFA Executive Board I've known and have respected for many years.

Today, I am extremely disappointed in them ... this is the reason why.

David Eisler and his wife Patsy have embraced and become involved in our community like no other president in the 53 years that I have lived in Big Rapids.

As a long time business person I have seen many positive changes under President Eisler's leadership and I resent the wasted energy and time this "vote of no confidence" has taken out of everyone's day when there are so many more important issues in front of us as a community and University.

Evidently, the FFA Executive Board feels that they have no choice but to bring this issue to the general membership meeting on April 9. I question the wisdom and the timing of this meeting on several fronts. Please think about what I am saying and urge the Ferris Faculty-Association executive board to direct their energies elsewhere.

First of all, our state is in a fiscal mess and the budget negotiations are entering a critical stage. How is it going to help Ferris State University to choose to go through with a "no confidence vote?" Shouldn't we all be working together to be a united front?

Several business men and woman and city government officials spent the day in Lansing away from their business's to be with President Eisler to share the strong points of our University. Using leadership skills is a better use for our time and energy instead of mulling over old grievances. The faculty contract negotiations were completed months ago. We can work together as a community instead of turning off parents and kids because of newspaper headlines of "no confidence".

Secondly, there is a serious effort to split the universities into categories with separate funding streams - the big three research institutions and then the rest of the higher learning institutions. I would think that the union of representatives would be more concerned with the serious challenge that represents!

Another local businessman told me that some community colleges are going to award bachelor degrees for nurses. What effect do you think that will have on our university?

Want some good news? Since 2003 the value of the Ferris Foundation has increased from \$18.5 million to \$34 million, as of January 2007.

That sounds like a lot of confidence in Ferris state University under the leadership of David Eisler to me!

Grand Rapids Press

April 4, 2007

Faculty targets Ferris president

Anger over contract talks leads to call for vote of no-confidence

For months, tension mounted between Ferris State University President David Eisler and the school's union leaders last year as contract talks dragged.

Now months after the contract was signed, and just after Gov. Jennifer Granholm appointed two new members to FSU's Board of Trustees, union leaders are calling on faculty members to voice their displeasure with Eisler by passing a vote of no-confidence.

While the resolution would have no practical effect on the president's status because he reports directly to the board, it would make it clear that Ferris faculty want a change in leadership. Faculty Association President Mike Ryan said they want to help the president see the mistakes he has made so he can improve.

"This is an internal evaluation of the president," Ryan said Tuesday. "The students are evaluated. The faculty is evaluated. We thought it's time the faculty evaluated the president. We've raised this issue over the last few years and there's not been a significant change."

Ryan said some of the faculty's problems with Eisler were brewing before last summer's contract talks. As time went on without them being resolved, the faculty decided now was the time to raise the issues.

"We would like to see the president improve his leadership skills. Hopefully, the president can see there's some legitimate concerns that can be dealt with in an open manner."

Eisler, hired in 2003, said the move did not come as a surprise, but the anger behind it did.

"I've been surprised at the amount of anger (among faculty members) after negotiations. It hasn't dissipated and maybe people are stirring the pot, trying to keep those feelings alive. We need to find a way to step beyond those feelings," Eisler said.

He believes the union and Ferris administrators can work out their differences, adding he doesn't see the call for a no-confidence resolution as reflecting the majority of the faculty.

"This is just a small group of the officials of the union. It doesn't reflect the entire union and certainly doesn't reflect the entire faculty," he said.

Monday, the union will ask its members to approve a three-page resolution that focuses on eight areas where it believes Eisler has failed to provide leadership or has done a poor job. Members will be able to vote through Wednesday, with the results available April 12.

The union's resolution claims:

- Eisler's negotiating strategy made it harder for parties to reach a contract agreement last year.

- He has failed to increase enrollment.
- He has done a poor job in fundraising.
- He has wasted taxpayer funds.
- He lacks a plan for the university's future.
- He has not made diversity a priority.

But Eisler on Tuesday called those claims inaccurate. He pointed to fundraising as an example.

Since 2003, the value of the Ferris Foundation rose from \$18.5 million to \$34 million, he said. This year, the university has received \$3.1 million in cash contributions - a up 24 percent from last year - in addition to \$3.8 million in in-kind gifts, up 55 percent.

In a written statement, Ferris' Board Chairman Arthur Thebo said the board supports Eisler's work.

"We understand that as a president, Dr. Eisler must at times make difficult decisions, but support his right to do so," he wrote.

School enrollment

Student numbers have been on the increase

School Year	enrollment
2001-02.....	10,930
2002-03.....	11,074
2003-04.....	11,822
2004-05.....	11,803
2005-06.....	12,528
2006-07.....	12,560

SOURCE: Presidents Council of Michigan Universities Annual Report

Pioneer
April 5, 2007

Concentrating on class

FSU students pay little attention to FFA vote controversy

With word of the Ferris Faculty Association's vote of no confidence beginning to circulate throughout the campus, students and faculty are just now beginning to discuss the union's move against Ferris State University President David Eisler.

On March 20, the faculty association executive board unanimously approved conducting a vote of no confidence in Eisler and approved a draft of the resolution March 27. Voting will begin following a general union membership meeting Monday and continue until 5 p.m. Wednesday. The Ferris Board of Trustees released a statement last week stating their united support for Eisler's leadership of the university.

"This has been something that has been going on for a while," Professor of English Roxanne Cullen said. "The FFA isn't going into this vote blind. This vote is about the lack of leadership by the president."

Cullen, who was one of the most outspoken critics of Eisler's decision to not renew the contract of Vice President of Academic Affairs Michael Harris, said she doesn't believe the FFA's vote was based on the Harris decision.

"The FFA was getting calls from members of the faculty since August, so I can't see how they are related," Cullen said.

Overall, students who were aware of the situation viewed the no confidence vote as a possible setback for the university.

FSU Student Government Treasurer Dave Stevens said the timing of the vote could be harmful to the University and its relationship with state government.

"I understand the importance of the FFA voicing their opinion, but I feel that its bad timing with everything that is going on with state funding for the university right now," Stevens said. "We want to present a unified university to state government. Ferris' opinion could mean less in state legislature if we're not seen as a unified university."

Cullen said the vote was unavoidable and that the timing shouldn't be a factor in improving the university.

"There's never a good time to conduct a vote like this," Cullen said. "Leadership has been giving Eisler their blind support, hoping that these problems will go away. The point is trying to make the university better, but if we don't act now, we can't make it better. "

Stevens added that the situation should have been kept internal.

"This will obviously get the spotlight put on the FFA and the case that they want to make," Stevens said. "But I think it's important to keep internal struggles internal, while expressing ourselves to state government in a positive light."

Student Government President Libby Schmidt was contacted for this story, but was not available for comment as of press time.

With the Ferris State Torch newspaper not being published until Wednesday, along with the upcoming Easter break, Torch Editor-in-Chief Sarah Lundgren said most students have not yet grasped the importance of the vote.

"I think at this point most students are either apathetic about the vote or they just aren't aware of what's going on," Lundgren said.

Student Dan Campbell said being informed of the no confidence vote is difficult for students.

"There's no other medium for students to really educate themselves on this issue, other than a memo regarding the vote that has been circulating," Campbell said. "You don't like to see this sort of thing happen, especially after you saw the budget cuts that were made last week. But looking at all the progress that has been made in the past four years that I've been here, this could be an impediment to future positive direction for Ferris."

While most students said the matter was not being discussed in the classroom, some said that teachers have been vocal about the no confidence vote.

"Two of my four teachers have said they didn't appreciate some of the decisions he (Eisler) has made or where he's taking the university," Campbell said.

Lundgren added that while the Torch doesn't plan to editorialize on the vote, she believes there are some feelings of animosity between faculty and administration.

"At this point I don't think the vote is the right action to take," Lundgren said. "But I think there has to be some feelings of animosity on President Eisler's part. Who would want to be president of a university whose faculty doesn't like them, if that ends up being the case?"

Assistant Professor of English Erin Weber said the purpose of the faculty vote is now to make a decision that is best for the University.

"I truly hope we get good participation with this vote," Weber said. "Our role as a faculty is to voice our opinion on President Eisler's performance."

Pioneer

April 5, 2007

A vote of no confidence in ourselves? (Opinion)

I am very proud to say that I have been a member of the Architectural Technology faculty at Ferris State University for over 20 years. It has been a real privilege to be a member of this university and this community.

Like any organization Ferris has its strengths and its weaknesses. On balance I believe that the consultant that we brought in several years ago to study communications on campus said it best when he said "after two years of work here, whether it has been alumni groups, the legislature, or employer groups to whom I have spoken, everyone is in total agreement about Ferris and the types of students that it produces. Everywhere I go people like Ferris, except here on campus. You guys don't like yourselves very much."

As I have observed the life of Ferris over the past 20 years through many presidents, vice-presidents and deans I have seen a consistent pattern of accusations against the administration, always resulting in Ferris losing these people. Certainly some of them are better off gone. However I am convinced that until we quit circling the wagons when something is at issue, and then proceeding to shoot inward, we will never achieve our full potential as a university.

It is my opinion that this is what we are again doing through the proposed "no confidence vote" concerning President Eisler.

Is he really the source the perceived problems or is it a matter of not taking a hard look at ourselves as the potential source of the problem? Do we not like ourselves very much and are dead set to prove we are not worthy by continuing to disrupt the university?

I believe that these are very serious questions that each of us must ask ourselves.

BRUCE C. DILG,
Associate Professor,
Ferris State University Big Rapids

Pioneer

April 5, 2007

Is this what professors do with their time? (Opinion)

It would appear that some folks at Ferris have too much time on their hands. Perhaps a 40-hour work week would be in order.

Ferris Faculty Association leader Mike Ryan should concern himself with his students and the FFA members. Dr. David Eisler was hired by the university Board of Trustees to run the university.

I believe the following passage is in order. "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?" Matthew 7:3

BILL RICHARDS

Paris

Pioneer

April 5, 2007

Chamber members support Eisler (Opinion)

Many of us in the Business Community are calling upon the Ferris Faculty Association Executive Board to reconsider your "vote of no confidence" in the leadership of President Eisler. After Rex Schuberg called and questioned the FFA E-Board about the particulars surrounding the upcoming vote of no confidence, he was told that the faculty has only two arrows in its quiver ...a job action strike or a vote of no confidence. As local businessmen and women, we would think communication would also be an option.

President Eisler has earned our respect with the improved relations we have experienced through the town-gown relations. Better communication and kinship is something that he has fostered since the very moment he became President of our University. President Eisler chose to have part of his Coronation held at Big Rapids City Hall, and it meant a lot to all of us.

This is what the business community recognizes as just a few of Ferris State University's sign of success since President Eisler came on board.

- This year FSU has moved from the fourth to the third tier in the U.S. News and World Report rankings among masters institutions in the Midwest.
- 50 percent of the classes at Ferris have fewer than 20 students; this is among the top 75 of all schools in the Midwest.
- Enrollment is at record levels for the past four years in terms of percent; Ferris is the fastest growing public university in the state in terms of headcount, and second fastest growing for credit hours.
- Ferris is attracting better prepared students: Fall 2007, students are the best prepared in history with an average ACT of 21.3 and entering GPA of 3.18.
- Ferris is attracting more transfer students: 43% of new students in the fall semester were transfer students.
- Ferris is retaining more students: A record high of 88% of new freshman students for fall returned for spring semester.
- Last spring Ferris awarded 2,798 degrees up 14.5% since 2003.
- Since 2003, Ferris State University's budget has been cut by \$8.2 million.
- Despite budget reductions, the size of the teaching faculty has steadily increased: 37 more full-time faculties presently work at Ferris.
- Since 2003, the value of the Ferris Foundation has increased from \$18.5 million to \$34 million, as of the end of January 2007.

President Eisler has earned our support, friendship, and admiration through his continued leadership at Ferris State University. In order to keep our moral obligation to be good citizens and leaders lets work together to solve all grievances for our students who live, and reside in our community.

ANJA WING

Executive Director, Mecosta County Area Chamber of Commerce and on behalf of Mecosta County Area Chamber of Commerce Board including: President ERIC O'NEIL Past President KARL LINEBAUGH and Board Member STEVE SOBERS

Pioneer

April 5, 2007

Vote broadcasts wrong message about FSU (Opinion)

In May 2000, I met a parent of a Ferris State student in Providence, Rhode Island who shared with me his concern that the faculty union at FSU had tarnished the reputation of the university "beyond repair" and thus, the value of his son's diploma.

At the time, I had never set foot in the state of Michigan and knew of Ferris State by name only. How's that for damaging the reputation of a fine university!

There are always those who have a problem with leadership of any kind, successful or otherwise. They are particularly weary and threatened by successful leadership, especially when it is not of their own making. Unfortunately, a few of this sort have wiggled their way into positions of authority at Ferris State, and the yeoman service and extraordinary leadership of President Eisler is an imminent threat to their own sense of self-esteem.

I hope this plays out like a TV movie where all the unpropitious motivations of this small group are exposed for all to see. This harmful behavior must come to an end, and I pray that the faculty, president, and trustees find a way to expose it for what it is, once and for all.

BOB MILLER
Big Rapids

Pioneer

April 6, 2007

FFA makes case for vote

Ryan explains charges made against Eisler in no confidence resolution.

A three-page "Resolution of No Confidence in President David Eisler" has been drafted to list the charges of the Ferris State University Faculty Association in the upcoming no-confidence vote.

The resolution lists charges in eight different areas: bargaining, enrollment, mismanagement, irresponsible use of public funds, vision for the future, lack of honesty and integrity, fund raising and diversity.

The *Pioneer* spoke with both FFA President Mike Ryan and Eisler to obtain the reasons behind each charge and the response to each. Those previous interviews have been summarized to outline the arguments for readers.

On March 20, the faculty association executive board unanimously approved conducting a vote of no confidence in Eisler and approved a draft of the resolution March 27. Voting will begin following a general union membership meeting Monday and continue until 5 p.m. Wednesday.

Ryan emphasizes this was meant to be an internal discussion among the union members. He characterizes it as a job evaluation, an effort to improve Eisler's leadership and the overall direction of the university.

"This is not a personal thing," Ryan said. "I can see where people outside the academic community would say, 'Oh, this is just terrible.' At some point in time, we all can't simply whisper amongst ourselves about structure and the way things are being led. This is the way faculty does their housekeeping. We're having an evaluation - maybe the president will see this as an opportunity to make some changes. ... We're giving him an opportunity to grow and we'll see what happens."

Eisler, while he understands he wears a target on his back as head of the Ferris, thinks the union's allegations are hitting and hurting more people than just himself.

"I understand the officials in the (FFA) executive committee are taking a vote of no confidence in me as their president, but when they do things like that, they're also casting aspersions about the people who work here," Eisler said.

Union concerns span several divisions of the university, including student affairs, admissions, financial aid, recruitment and others, Eisler noted.

"I am very disappointed they are doing these things that raise questions about the work of our people all across the campus - staff, faculty and students - and that's truly unfortunate," he said.

Bargaining

The no-confidence vote does not stem from the negotiations last fall, but is a part of the overall issues. Union members would like to see the development of a better way of bargaining contracts, Ryan said, that would not result in threats of a strike before an agreement was reached. He acknowledged the union and the university have had similar problems with negotiations before Eisler became president, but they wanted to see Eisler do something new.

"We were hoping for a different outcome," Ryan said. "And seeing as how he fell into the same process as before, after the negotiations were over we said, 'We have a contract. Let's find a better way.' ... We're saying he's not responsive to the idea that there ought to be a discussion about a better way of negotiating contracts at Ferris."

In response, Eisler noted contract negotiations are not under his complete control.

"The reality of it is the negotiations between the faculty union (and the university) are with the board," he said. "I am a part of it, but ultimately, those negotiations are with the board."

The board directed the decision to call a mediator and the selection of the chief negotiator, Eisler said.

Enrollment

Ryan claims the loss of hundreds of potential students was due to a management problem with a new computer system, Banner, that the university has been implementing. The union is concerned with the reduction of full-time, on-campus students.

"We think there was too slow a realization it wasn't working," Ryan said.

Computer issues led to a loss of students.

"We don't think that was anything other than our own doing in terms of the loss of students," he said.

Eisler claims there are many factors affecting enrollment, including increasing admissions standards. Referring to enrollment trends since 2001, when standards began to rise, he said student numbers tend to stagnate or even drop slightly after each "ratcheting up" of admissions standards.

He acknowledges a concern about the loss of full-time equivalent students for the fall semester and said he addressed that with a task force.

"We reversed the decline we saw in student credit hours," Eisler said. "We did it from fall to spring! I didn't think that was possible. I hoped we could do it from fall to fall. ... We're doing the best of anybody in the state when it comes to enrollment."

Mismanagement

In the resolution section entitled "mismanagement," concerns are raised about the university's fund reserves, Banner implementation and leadership in the Academic Affairs office.

They point to an \$832,000 reduction in the Academic Affairs budget to cover the \$1 million lost due to enrollment decline that effectively shut down faculty searches. The fund reserves could have been used to cover that shortfall, Ryan said.

"He took the money out of the hides of the people that are doing the work and yet he had the money sitting around in the background. He didn't have to do that," Ryan said.

Eisler contends surplus or reserve dollars are one-time funds, and the university needs an ongoing funding stream to operate. Last fall, he ordered \$2 million cut from the budget to counter the \$1 million loss of anticipated tuition dollars for the fall semester and to safeguard against a looming state budget shortage now coming to a head. The amount each division was cut was proportional to its overall share of university dollars, Eisler said. Academic Affairs had the greatest cut because that division has the greatest share of the budget; additionally, that division had \$600,000 in "new funding" that could be applied toward the cut, making the actual amount to be reduced \$200,000, Eisler said.

"The state is planning to withhold \$2.277 million from our budget in August and I'm prepared to cover that so our people get paid and so the things are ready for students when they arrive here in the fall," he said. "I think that's very skillful financial management."

Irresponsible Use of Public Funds

The poor use of funds Ryan and the union leadership point to in the resolution involve hiring consultants, summer bus trips and land purchases. The bus trips are a waste of money because they have "negligible" results on enrollment and money used to buy a trailer park and a credit union would be better spent elsewhere.

Eisler calls the allegations "pretty amazing" and notes the university's state funding has been reduced \$8.2 million since he came to Ferris, yet there are more faculty teaching today than October 2003 when he arrived.

As to the bus trips, the annual event has more purposes than enrollment, he said. Those trips create positive media attention, partnerships with community colleges and recruit new donors as well as students.

Vision for the Future

A lack of visible planning on the president's part and the "dismantling" of the previous planning process will endanger the university's accreditation, Ryan said.

Since Eisler came to the university, he decided to have three years of annual planning and then work on a strategic plan for the long-term. Work has begun on that strategic plan, which Eisler admits he intentionally delayed beginning until after the faculty contract negotiations were com

"Having seen what happened at Ferris in past negotiations, I didn't know if contract negotiations were the right time to begin a strategic plan," he said.

Lack of Honesty and Integrity

"He's not giving information that we believe is truthful information," Ryan said. "We don't think the trustees are aware of all that's going on, and they need to be aware."

The union wants Eisler to be more "transparent in terms of facts," Ryan said.

Eisler said he has based his entire career on honesty and hasn't changed since coming to Ferris.

As a president, the pieces you present have to be backed with data," he said. "There are complete audits, financial audits, reviews of what happens at the university."

Fund-raising

Union leaders claim the increase in unrestricted funds at the university are due to surplus operating revenues and not fund-raising efforts, an allegation Eisler says is false.

They also point to the lack of a promised capital campaign and no state funding for the new College of Optometry as Eisler's shortfalls in fund-raising.

"He hasn't gotten it. It hasn't been funded," Ryan said of the optometry building. "He seems to vision himself as an expert in all kinds of things, including fund-raising ... but he seems to take control of it so that others around him who might be able to help aren't able to help, and it seems to be a frustration."

The optometry building project was included in the most recent capital outlay bill in Lansing because of "personal efforts" with legislators, Eisler said, adding he has worked "tirelessly" for a new facility. Gov. Jennifer Granholm vetoed the entire capital outlay bill in the fall, citing concerns about the state budget situation.

Diversity

Despite the recent appointment of a chief diversity officer, Ryan said the union is not convinced of Eisler's commitment to furthering diversity on campus. He raises questions of the length of time for which the diversity officer was appointed and the funding and resources allocated to the position.

"It's not a university commitment when you have one person working really hard," Ryan said. Eisler admits the university needs work to work on diversity, which was why he created the chief diversity officer position.

"My personal commitment wasn't enough," he said. "I saw a wonderful opportunity for Ferris State University to make a strong statement about its commitment to diversity."

Eisler also pointed out statements in the union resolution about his failure to address diversity publicly until recently. It's simply not true, he said, pointing to his inaugural speech, his first convocation address and his speech to campus in April 2004 on a vision for Ferris.

In that April speech, he said, "We must challenge ourselves to expand on the concept we call diversity. ..."

