

March 23, 2007 – April 10, 2007

# **Media Packet**

---

- **Gallery showcases Mexican wood carving**
- **Walter Brown Reappointed to BH Charter School Board**
- **Company injects new technology into manufacturing**
- **Ferris State students intern at Doral**
- **Spreading the word**
- **Winning the hard way**
- **Gant left to advance career; not because of Eisler**
- **Let's support a great university president**
- **Rube Goldberg team to appear on the 'Today,' Kimmel shows**
- **Vote should be last resort, not first strike (Opinion)**
- **In defense of Ryan's time, character (Opinion)**
- **Be fair when criticizing teachers' time (Opinion)**
- **Resolution of no confidence in Eisler**
- **Vote means Ferris will be 'evaluated' for a long time (Editorial)**
- **Time to work through problems (Opinion)**
- **FFA vote begins today**
- **Eisler's memo to FSU faculty, staff**
- **Eisler is the best thing to happen to FSU in years (Opinion)**
- **FFA should base decisions on facts and what is best for the community (opinion)**
- **FFA voting begins**
- **Pioneer coverage diminishes FFA process (Opinion)**

## **Grand Rapids Press**

March 23, 2007

### **Gallery showcases Mexican wood carving**

A unique style of wood carving is gaining popularity around the world. Known as Alebrije carving, it has sprung up in the past 25 years in the Mexican state of Oaxaca. Alebrije woodworks feature surreal animal shapes painted in a colorful, psychedelic manner. Alebrije carving began with a farmer named Manuel Jimenez in the early 1980s and has evolved into a popular art form that involves entire families in the region. While a modern development, it draws upon the rich legacy of the pre-Columbian Zapotec civilization, which flourished between 200 and 500 A.D., and the Olmec and Mixtec cultures before it. Components of the paint include such ingredients as tree bark, honey, lime juice and insect larvae. Two experts in this imaginative art form, Jacobo and Maria Angeles, will discuss and demonstrate it during a four-day stay in Grand Rapids in conjunction with the opening of an exhibit of their work in the Kendall Gallery at Kendall College of Art and Design. The Angeleses, from the Oaxacan village of Tilcajete, will bring 25 of their carvings for display through April 20. The couple will appear at the exhibit's opening reception, from 5 to 7 p.m. Tuesday, and perform carving and painting demonstrations in Kendall's first-floor Atrium from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday. All events are free. Call 451-2787, or visit [kcad.edu](http://kcad.edu).

## **Benton Spirit News**

March 23, 2007

### **Walter Brown Reappointed to BH Charter School Board**

The Ferris State University Board of Trustees approved the re-appointment of Walter Brown to the board of directors at Benton Harbor Charter School during its regular meeting on March 14, 2007. Brown will serve a term through June 30, 2011.

## **Grand Rapids Press**

March 27, 2007

### **Company injects new technology into manufacturing**

Building plastic-injection molded products cheaper, faster and with higher-tech content is a formula for growth at Erwin Quarder Inc.

The German-owned business, 5101 Kraft Ave. SE, employs 80 workers and anticipates 20 percent growth each of the next three years, President Mark Reister said.

Electric connectors molded into auto parts is a big business for the local supplier. One growing business taps Quarder's expertise at creating connectors for back-up sensors on vehicles.

By late May, Quarder's engineers will employ a newly patented process that combines tandem molding, where parts are formed on alternating molds, with a lightweight plastic infused with microscopic nitrogen bubbles. The technology developed in Germany goes by MU-cell and is "lighter weight and less expensive," Reister said.

Quarder landed in West Michigan in 1998 and helps with courses in advanced mold technology at Ferris State University.

"People are looking for cutting-edge technology," said Reister, who is hoping to broaden the customer mix.

This month, his company ships its first injection-mold machinery to a new Quarder plant in Puebla, Mexico.

"We're focusing on difficult things, with high sophistication and complexity. We need to be close to our customers," Reister said.

The new plant will supply mostly German subsidiaries that have sites in Mexico, he said.

"Our idea is to grow this company here in West Michigan," Reister said of the business, which is adding medical devices to its product mix, making parts for a surgeon's mask with built-in communication capability.

Its automotive products include parts that control the accelerator, window lifters, door handles and ventilation fins.

Many parts are created on the tandem molds developed in Germany. The technology provides a longer cooling cycle and a faster turn-around for the parts.

## **Detroit News**

March 28, 2007

### **Ferris State students intern at Doral**

Four students from Ferris State University's golf management program are interns at Doral Resort and Spa in Miami.

They are Jason Conlin of St. Clair, Jeffery Galaska of Manchester, Bradley Young of Mt. Clemens and Adam Rhoades of Ottawa Lake.

"It's a seven-month internship," said Nathan Stith, the resort's head golf professional who began his career as an intern. "They have one more semester to complete. They will finish in May and graduate in December."

When they go job-hunting, Stith is confident one or more will end up back at Doral. "I'm sure we'll snag them back in January," he said.

The internships are a perfect fit for Doral, where the high season is October through May. "They've all worked in all areas of the operation," Stith said. "They have great attitudes and they work hard." Ferris State, in Big Rapids, offers one of the nation's leading golf management program studies.

## Pioneer

March 31 & April 1

### **Spreading the word**

**Ferris State University officials look to Lansing to help gain support for the university's latest plans and its long-term future**

State Rep. Ed Clemente, D-Lincoln Park, is a prime example of why Ferris State University took a busload of employees and community leaders to Lansing on Tuesday for an informal buffet luncheon with legislators.

Clemente, a 1979 Ferris graduate with a degree in public administration, is one of the three alumni in the state legislature. While Clemente was familiar with Ferris in the late 70's, he is no longer aware of what the buildings are like on the inside today and problems faced by programs it now specializes in. His visits to campus since graduation have been limited to sporting events and little else.

As a state rep. Clemente could help speak out on behalf of the university's initiatives, such as the construction of a new optometry building. Yet, he is probably less aware of FSU's plans than the average sophomore who reads the student newspaper, The Torch. Other legislators are even less familiar with Ferris than Clemente.

"I am amazed how many unique programs Ferris State offers. I think it's unfortunate that many in Lansing are not aware of the innovative curriculum Ferris offers," Clemente said Thursday in an e-mailed statement.

That's a problem for Ferris State.

"In Michigan, each university is autonomous. That means funding from the state is directly dependent on our ability as a university and a community to represent ourselves in Lansing to the legislature and the governor," said Ferris President David Eisler. "The goal (of the trip) is to put Ferris in people's minds, to reinforce our need for a new optometry building.

To help update Clemente's knowledge of what is happening at his alma mater and to increase the university's profile in legislators' minds, Ferris uses a variety of methods to help spread their message.

The university is a client of full-time lobbyist Manny Lentine, who spends his time in Lansing speaking with legislators. In addition, Geri Johnson, part of the administrative assistant team for the vice president of governmental relations and general counsel, acts as an informational liaison with legislators and their staffers in Lansing from her Big Rapids office and tracks pending legislation for the university, including bills on higher education, capital outlay and the budget. Eisler himself spends one or two days a week in Lansing, meeting with legislators.

Eisler considers his work "effective," offering an example of his recent testimony before the House Higher Education Subcommittee.

"I had visited with the members of that panel in their offices before my testimony," he said. "That wasn't the first time they'd heard from me."

Rep. Geoff Hansen, R-Hart, is familiar with Eisler and his efforts to bring Ferris State's plans and concerns to legislators.

"Woodbridge Ferris would be proud of President Eisler and his team for promoting FSU as a leader among Michigan's universities," he said Thursday in an e-mailed statement.

Eisler's efforts have definitely made an impression on Rep. Michael Sak, D-Grand Rapids, who is familiar with Ferris from his work on higher education funding and joint capital outlay committees. When Sak talks to other legislators on his committees, they also know what Ferris is, he said.

"(Ferris) provide(s) exceptional education opportunities for students from across the state," Sak said.

Eisler believes Ferris is perceived positively in Lansing by both the legislature and the governor and that they see the value of programs the university offers. "I think they see us as a place where students get a strong education, where they graduate and are prepared for careers and where they find a job," Eisler said. "I think they see us as a place that is committed to helping students and committed to helping move Michigan forward."

Another way the university tries to make legislators more aware of its presence and its needs is to host events in Lansing. Tuesday's informal meet-and-greet lunch is an example.

Before the luncheon, the group received a tour of the floor of the House of Representatives from Sak, the current House speaker pro tempore. Sitting on his desk in the House chambers are several miniature flags. Next to the Stars and Stripes and the State of Michigan flag sit two others - Michigan State University and University of Michigan. Sak told the group he needed a Ferris flag to display alongside them. The group members promised him he would get one.

The kind of recognition and presence afforded to those schools - both in the chambers of the state Capitol and on the street - is what Ferris is seeking.

Ferris's lunch attracted 33 legislators and staffers from 15 other legislative offices out of a total 148 state legislators. Those people were able to speak to area leaders, see the floor plans for the proposed optometry building and have their eyes tested for glaucoma by Ferris optometry students. Ferris has one of 16 optometry schools in the nation and the only one in Michigan. The program is in need of a new facility to replace the aging, renovated dormitory currently serving as the Michigan College of Optometry. Local government leaders, including Mecosta County Administrator Paul Bullock and Big Rapids Township Supervisor Maxine McClelland, who attended Tuesday's luncheon were also doing their part to help convey that need.

"The university is the biggest employer in the city and education is the future of the state of Michigan," said Steve Sobers, Big Rapids city manager. "For both reasons, it's important for the city to support both the people at Ferris and the upgrades that have to take place."

Rep. Darwin Booher, R-Ewart, said events such as the luncheon were useful in terms of getting the school noticed.

"When you bring the students right in, when (legislators) can see (what the students have learned) and have their eyes tested, these things become very effective," he said. The more knowledge and background a state representative has, the better and easier it is to make a decision."

Tuesday's event may have had the desired effect on legislators, but only time will tell.

Kevin Alexander, dean of the College of Optometry, thought the luncheon went "very well."

"I've been to a number of these and I've never felt more support for our building project than I did at this one," he said.

Eisler, based on conversations he has had since the event, also thinks it worked.

"This was the best one we've ever had, by far," he said. "You look at the number of legislators, the number of staff, the number of association people and how long they stay. ... The people I talked to thought it was great."

McClelland had a different view of the event. She doesn't think there were as many legislators present as have attended in years past and was particularly surprised by some absences.

"I did see some of the higher ed (committee members), but I was really surprised (Sen.) Tony Stamos (R-Midland), wasn't there because he's the chair of the higher ed committee in the Senate now," she said.

Though money is budgeted annually for similar functions, this is the first such event FSC has hosted in several years. This year was targeted for an event because Eisler believed it to be "a pivotal year in terms of the questions of funding and the budget shortfall," he said.

Those problems make Ferris' need for a new optometry center more complicated. This past week, when Ferris hosted its legislative luncheon, the governor began speaking publicly about a possible shut-down of state government due to the budget shortfall.

Even among some of the university's staunchest supporters, the current budget climate creates problems for any construction project, including the optometry building.

"Until we're convinced the state has enough money to be able to do it, you probably won't see any action on very many capital outlay projects at all," Booher said.

Still, Eisler, Lentine and others are still trying to convince lawmakers the project is necessary.



No matter the methods, the question remains to be answered if Ferris has reacquainted Clemente with his alma mater; if it has planted a flag on Sak's desk; if it has successfully created a presence in the minds of legislators drafting capital outlay legislation.

More telling than a miniature flag on a desk will be the first shovel in the ground for the new optometry building.

## **Pioneer**

April 2, 2007

### **Winning the hard way**

**Ferris State Rube Goldberg team takes home national win at Purdue University.**

The vehicle carrying the Ferris State University Rube Goldberg machine contest team was a little more crowded on the way back from Purdue University in Indiana - team members had to make room for the national trophy.

Ferris captured first place and set a new record with a perfect run of its 345-step machine designed to squeeze and pour a glass of orange juice. The 19th annual national Rube Goldberg Machine Contest took place on Saturday and featured eight teams from around the country.

"It was some pretty tough competition," said Thomas Hollen, team advisor and Ferris professor of mechanical engineering.

The Purdue Society of Professional Engineers took second place and the Texas A&M team placed third. An estimated 1,500 people attended the event, according to a news release from Purdue University.

Hollen expects to hear from the Guinness Book of World Records in the coming weeks. Officials there will look over the documentation he provided to determine if Ferris State will be listed as the creator of the largest Rube Goldberg machine. The previous record was held by Purdue, set last year with their 215-step machine, Hollen said. Ferris already is planning for next year.

"We know we've got to take it up another notch," Hollen said. "We're kicking around ideas for the theme."

The contest is named after cartoonist Reuben Lucius Goldberg, who died in 1970. Goldberg's cartoons showed complex machines designed to complete simple tasks in order to showcase his belief that most people prefer to do things the hard way, rather than by the simplest method.

The contest began between two engineering fraternities at Purdue and has since grown to include teams from across the country. Ferris has entered the competition each year for the last four, taking second place at the national level twice, Hollen said.

## **Pioneer**

April 6, 2007

### **Gant left to advance career; not because of Eisler**

**FFA will clarify resolution language prior to Monday's vote.**

Raymond Gant is not happy with a Ferris Faculty Association claim that he left FSU because of the failure of President David Eisler to help advance cultural diversity.

Nor is he happy with steps taken at FSU to improve cultural diversity. But he spreads the blame to the employees of the university.

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 will continue until 5 p.m. Wednesday.

In a no confidence resolution, under the heading "Diversity," the FFA leadership wrote:

"Whereas, President Eisler has failed to support the efforts of the Minority Affairs Office in enhancing the cultural diversity of the institution, resulting in the resignation of the Special Assistant to the President and Officer of Minority Affairs, who noted on his departure that Ferris State University has "become an institution whose focus has been on the interests of a few." This paragraph refers to the comments made to the Ferris State University Board of Trustees in November by Gant, the former director of the minority Affairs office.

It "misrepresents" his position, Gant said, emphasizing the only reason he left the university was to advance his career.

FFA President Mike Ryan plans to clarify the passage, which he called "confusing," at the union's general membership meeting Monday.

"All we were trying to say was we are concerned about diversity," Ryan said. "It was an error of interpretation and we will clarify it to our membership."

Though his reasons for leaving have little to do with Eisler, Gant is unhappy with the state of diversity on campus.

"I'm not satisfied with the progress made under the leadership of President Eisler," Gant said Thursday. "But that was not my primary reason for leaving. I'm as committed to Ferris as I've always been."

Gant believes the problem with diversity on campus is the failure of people in positions of authority to make decisions that would move diversity forward.

"The state on campus is everybody seems to be comfortable as it is," Gant said. "(Eisler) is responsible because he's the president, but organizations move forward because of the employees."

He would like to see efforts to recruit more minority employees and students, as well as increases in other kinds of diversity.

"Personal agendas, inflated egos and self-motivated greed and control has become the true leader at Ferris. With all that said, I remain optimistic and confident enough in people to believe that Ferris must and eventually will change, but only when faculty and staff develop an environment of trust and integrity preceded by honest and forthright dialogue which is rooted in the belief that the best interests of the students of Ferris State University must remain central to all conversations, decisions and actions," Gant wrote Wednesday in an e-mail explaining his position.

"We're falling short of the mission to serve students as best we can," he said Thursday.

## **Pioneer**

April 6, 2007

### **Let's support a great university president**

I had a grandfather on my father's side who couldn't afford to go to college.

So he read and reread two books: the Bible and the dictionary. As a boy, I scoured the dictionary for words that he couldn't define waiting to earn a \$10 bill if I found one. I never got that \$10, but he gave me a piece of advice I've never forgotten.

"There are words and words," he said, "but there are four that stand high and above all the rest. When you've found someone you can look straight in the eye and know they're there, you've found someone special."

The words? Passion. Honesty. Dedication. Courage.

I would use each of those words to describe Ferris State University President David Eisler.

I've been in Big Rapids a fairly long time. I lived here right after I was born in the late 1930s and came back here in 1961. I have lived here ever since.

When I first arrived here, I used to lunch once a week at Country House Restaurant with two very incredible people: Vic Spathelf and Top Taggart.

Vic was a very special person. When you sat with him it was obvious that those four special words by grandfather has instilled in me just exuded from his presence. After Vic retired as Ferris president he was followed by John R. Smith, another person that although his position was only interim, was a slice off Vic's persona.

Then in 1971, Robert Ewigleben took the reigns until 1984 when - J. William Weinrich came aboard for four years. Roy Tiede served as acting president until 1989, when Helen Popovich was chosen as president. She left five years later when William Sederburg was brought on board. And in 2003, when Sederburg left, Scott Hill-Kennedy was appointed interim president until David Eisler was chosen later that year to head the university.

As I've said, I've known them all. Each was hired by the board of control to do a particular job - and each of them did that job whether we agreed with their actions or not.

The reason for this column goes back to the opening of this piece and those four special words.

I've respected all of our Ferris presidents, but when I look at those four words only two people stand far above the rest - Victor Spathelf and David Eisler.

Vic was the rough carpenter. Bob Ewigleben was the finish carpenter. Weinrich was brought back because of his knowledge of Ferris and the community when he was vice president under Ewigleben. Popovich was the person brought in to carry out the agenda of the board of control. Sederberg was the man with the connections in Lansing and the legislature.

Finding Eisler was the icing on the cake. He stabilized enrollment and raised Ferris Foundation funding to new heights. But the most important thing he did, as far as I'm concerned, is bring harmony back to a town where town-gown relations were severely strained. He also helped put Ferris back on the map as a major player in Michigan education.

David did whirlwind tours of the state bringing Ferris's name to the front page in a blitz of media awareness and cognizance. State leaders suddenly became aware of its educational mission and what Ferris was all about.

In January, Gov. Jennifer Granholm toured Ferris State University while addressing the Michigan Press Association as a university already on the cusp ... the leading edge ... of technical training.

And all during this time, he and his wife Patsy became engrained in the community ... pledging a life-long commitment to Ferris and Big Rapids.

So it absolutely makes me sick to think that the Ferris Faculty Association Executive Board - just because they "only have two arrows left in the quiver" meaning to strike (which they can't under contract) or requesting a vote of no confidence - have put the steps in motion to request the latter before a full FFA faculty vote on Monday.

Frankly, I think it's time the community let its voice be heard. Continue to write letters to the editor. Let Eisler (and the faculty) know this community is behind him. Talk to your faculty neighbors and express your feelings.

I further urge the FFA to think twice about what it is about to do. Ferris has come a long way and is on an uphill climb. With the Michigan economy where it is, I don't want to see Ferris, and the community, slide back down to where it was prior to Eisler's taking the helm.

Think it over. Know what you're about to do will affect the future of this university, and Big Rapids. For once, let's act as one and work to solve these grievances together.

Remember those four words: Passion. Honesty. Dedication. Courage.

And know those words are what makes David Eisler such an incredible leader and community member.

## **Pioneer**

April 6, 2007

### **Rube Goldberg team to appear on the 'Today,' Kimmel shows**

**The team will be featured on TV twice, Sunday and April 20.**

Ferris State University's Rube Goldberg team will travel to New York this weekend to appear on NBC's "Today" show at 8:30 a.m. Sunday.

They also will appear on the Jimmy Kimmel show on Friday, April 20.

The team won first place in the National Rube Goldberg competition held at Purdue University on March 31. The team won first place over Purdue University, University of Texas at Austin, Texas A&M, Penn State University, University of Cincinnati, Hoffstra University and Washington State Community College.

Traveling to the shows will be co-advisors Tom Hollen of Grand Rapids, associate professor of Mechanical Engineering Technology, and Dan Wanink of Ironwood, associate professor of CAD Drafting/Tool Design; and team members Tom Sybrandy (captain) of Holt, Matt Tomaszewski of Byron Center, Mike Dunakin of Grand Rapids and James Travis III of Cedar Springs.

They will be accompanied by Assistant Director of News Services Leah Nixon. The team's fifth member, Fred Reinecke of Muskegon, is unable to be at the shows due to being stationed in Iraq.

The College of Technology students incorporated such items as a toy train, a Slinky, a jack-in-the-box, dominoes and a hobby horse, among other items, in a 345-step process to make freshly squeezed orange juice, thereby setting a world record and beating out previous record holder and four-time defending champion Purdue University to win the annual competition.

"We've come to the competition for the past four years, and after last year's disappointment when our machine had a malfunction, we really wanted to come back and win this year," Sybrandy said.

Purdue had previously held the world record for most elaborate device with a machine that incorporated 125 steps. Ferris' effort, in which the team invested more than 3,000 hours, is being submitted to Guinness Book of World Records, which recognized Purdue's previous effort for "Largest Rube Goldberg."

"At the beginning of the year we set the goal of 300 [different steps]," Tomaszewski said. "We wanted to win as well as the set the world record for the most steps."

Despite the whimsical nature of the event, the competition requires students to apply a wide-

range of engineering skills and work closely together to problem-solve the many ways in which their intricate contraptions can fail to achieve their end result.

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, team chemistry, flow of machine and the theme of a machine.

"As team advisor, I could not be more pleased with a team that made it their goals to win and set a new record, and then met both of those goals," Hollen said.

"We want to thank all the people in the University and College who helped these students achieve success."

The team is also the subject of a documentary film, which has been in the works for the past year. An independent film company from California has been following and filming the team since last year's competition. They came to Big Rapids to follow the team to Purdue.

The competition is named for Rube Goldberg - a cartoonist made famous by his elaborate drawings of imaginary devices requiring many steps to perform simple everyday tasks. The challenge of the 19th annual event was to take a whole orange, squeeze the juice from it and then pour the juice into a glass using 20 or more steps.



## **Pioneer**

April 6, 2007

### **Vote should be last resort, not first strike (Opinion)**

I wish to compliment the *Pioneer* on its news coverage of the Ferris Faculty Association's debacle which has been launched at Ferris. I agree that it is a very unfortunate and ill conceived move by the FFA Executive Board.

In my view, it reflects adversely upon the union board and the faculty it represents rather than upon Dr. David Eisler. Unfortunately, the university suffers in the process despite Bob Carter's view of the action.

One has to understand that the university is a very complex structure comprised of a number of schools, more numerous programs, as well as an even greater number of staff. Any of these will tell you that they need more budget, more space, more equipment, more instructional support and more time in order to achieve the quality of instruction for which they strive. For the academic programs to function effectively, it calls for a maturity of judgment, and for thoughtful and open minded discussion of these needs, as well as a willingness to compromise wherever possible on a progressive solution if one's total interests cannot be fully satisfied.

The process starts generally with the faculty or the university support staff when needs or problems arise. Confrontation and acrimony seldom, if ever, lead to solutions. The FFA board action reflects adversely upon the faculty unless they have exercised every alternative avenue open to them to address their grievances.

The FFA Executive Board appears to have tailed this test, or otherwise desires to disrupt or destroy the image of a university that is functioning as well as possible in an adverse state economic climate and a highly competitive budgeting period within the state. More to the point, the student growth compared with other universities is outstanding. Dr. Eisler's leadership in addressing the university's needs legislatively and publicly are well known. He maintains an open presidency and has proved a positive spokesman for the university.

I would hope that the faculty body rejects this action by the union board, and acts in a more mature and supportive manner in addressing their grievances, where such exist.

JOHN FLEMING

FSU Professor Emeritus Big Rapids

## **Pioneer**

April 6, 2007

### **In defense of Ryan's time, character (Opinion)**

I would like to respond to the Bill Richards' letter published in the Thursday edition of the *Pioneer*.

No response is necessary for the people who know Mike Ryan, but since he was the only faculty member mentioned by Mr. Richards, I would like to respond to his remarks.

Mike Ryan has a dual contract responsibility to Ferris State University. He is a biology professor who teaches hundreds of students each semester. He also is president of the Ferris Faculty Association - representing more than 400 faculty. I am sure that Mike would be happy to assume the 40-hour work week that Mr. Richards recommended. This would be like a vacation to Mike. I know for a fact that Mike works at least twice that number of hours per week. Again simply stated, in the unnecessary defense of Mike Ryan, there is nobody on the Ferris campus who works harder for the welfare of all members of the Ferris community.

I am proud to have him as a colleague and friend.

Just one comment on the upcoming vote of no confidence in David Eisler. Every faculty member at Ferris is required to be evaluated by their students each semester. We are being evaluated by the people who see us every day in class. The faculty perform this internal process without the aid of a media blitz from the *Pioneer*, Chamber of Commerce, etc. trying to win the favor of the vote. I am never afraid of this process because I trust the opinions of my students. Hence, I do not understand the fear and the shock on the part of David Eisler for this process.

JOHN LINNEN  
Big Rapids

## **Pioneer**

April 6, 2007

### **Be fair when criticizing teachers' time (Opinion)**

It would seem by Bill Richards' letter to the editor, published in the Thursday edition of the *Pioneer*, that he doesn't know what Ferris professors do with their time.

I think I am qualified to inform him, being the son of a retired professor at Ferris as well as a retired school teacher here in Big Rapids.

Mr. Richards, it takes lots of time and preparation and skill to get up and speak in front of people all day everyday, something I don't do but have observed those who have to. They don't work 40-hour work weeks, it's probably more like 80-hour work weeks. The way I see it, it takes an hour of preparation to get up and speak sensibly in front of a group of students for an hour, and maybe two hours of preparation for two hours of speaking/ answering questions, etc. What about all day everyday?

And having been a Ferris student myself, I have seen the grief they deal with from students and administrators too. They spend a lot of time at home preparing and that goes for school teachers too, preparing tests and quizzes, changing the tests for those who like to cheat, etc.

Mr. Richards, why don't you be fair and ask what administrators do up at Ferris with their time as well, seems your frustrations are all aimed at the professors. Your suggestion of a 40-hour work week just doesn't fit, if we paid them for the time they spend working at home too ... the price of education would go way up. My parents were both teachers and were directly or indirectly involved with being responsible for putting a lot of people to work. How many people have you put to work lately Mr. Richards?

And what do you do with your time?

After all, it's all about time ... isn't it?

KEVIN CUSHWAY  
Big Rapids

## **Pioneer**

April 6, 2007

### **Resolution of no confidence in Eisler**

*The following is the exact Ferris Faculty Association resolution that union members will vote on Monday through Wednesday.*

#### **Bargaining**

- Whereas, President Eisler directed a negotiating process between the FSU Bargaining Team and the FFA Bargaining Team that created months of turmoil in the university and the community, and that resulted in an eleventh-hour settlement prompted by the threat of an inevitable faculty strike; and
- Whereas, President Eisler prematurely directed the intervention of a State mediator, a decision that brought to a halt face-to-face negotiating by the teams and impeded any good-faith bargaining between FSU and the FFA Bargaining Teams; and
- Whereas, President Eisler directed a negotiating process that refused to discuss major contractual issues such as an increase in the numbers of promotions, summer pay, discipline, tenure issues and tenure review, and workload; and
- Whereas, President Eisler engaged the services of an adversarial and disrespectful chief negotiator, unnecessarily prolonging the negotiating process and creating anxiety for faculty and their families; and

#### **Enrollment**

- Whereas, President Eisler has failed to provide leadership to remedy stagnant student enrollments on the main campus, as evidenced most recently in the loss of over 200 first-time-in-any-college students during the 2006 Fall Semester, resulting in a shortfall of \$1,000,000 of funding to the university; and

#### **Mismanagement**

- Whereas, to cover the above-mentioned loss and despite a twelve-million-dollar operating surplus in the preceding year, President Eisler mandated that \$832,000 be taken from the Academic Affairs budget thus eliminating monies that could have been used to fill the 29 vacant FTE tenure track faculty positions, and to Support other pressing academic program needs: and
- Whereas, President Eisler has created havoc in the division of Academic Affairs, dismantling its leadership and inhibiting its day-to-day functioning; and
- Whereas, President Eisler has repeatedly ignored issues related to Banner implementation which has confounded university processes across divisions and squandered millions of dollars; and

#### **Irresponsible Use of Public Funds**

- Whereas, President Eisler has committed public university funds for a host of outside consultants (including Cameron, Hubert, Mehaffey, Strathe, Diekema, Posner) whose advice has been consistently ignored; and
- Whereas, President Eisler's refusal to address key issues raised by these consultants, issues related to an "imbalanced" and "dysfunctional" administrative structure, marginalizes academics and exacerbates disrespect for the faculty; and
- Whereas, President Eisler has committed approximately \$300,000 of public university funds for presidential bus trips to community colleges for recruitment purposes but with negligible positive results; and
- Whereas, President Eisler, in a time of academic budgetary constraints, used university funds to purchase a trailer park and a credit union building; and

### **Vision for the Future**

- Whereas, after four years under President Eisler's leadership, Ferris State University still has no coherent vision or strategic plan for the future; and
- Whereas, President Eisler dismantled a planning process once praised by the Higher Learning Commission for its broad-based, inclusive, grassroots scope, and announced his preference for a model, in his own words, "embedded in the administrative structure," thus excluding a majority of the faculty from the process; and
- Whereas, President Eisler has put at risk the accreditation of Ferris State University by refusing to address key criteria of the Higher Learning Commission, specifically ongoing discussion of mission, institutional structure, strategic planning, and vision for the future of the university; and

### **Lack of Honesty and Integrity**

- Whereas, President Eisler, on many occasions, has equivocated and provided misleading information to the FFA, to faculty, and to the Board of Trustees on issues such as enrollment, negotiations, budget, tuition increase, and planning; and
- Whereas, President Eisler has created an atmosphere of mistrust, forcing the FFA to invoke the FOIA on at least nine occasions, and this refusal to be forthcoming about public information has intensified an adversarial relationship between administration and faculty; and
- Whereas, President Eisler has supported the position that the Affirmative Action Office should function as the primary investigator of complaints against campus employees, a clear conflict of interest which has resulted in superficial, one-sided, in-house investigations; and
- Whereas, President Eisler has misused the Office of the General Counsel by allowing for unjustified investigations of employees, ignored written complaints about hostile work environment, and effectively deprived individuals of their right to due process; and

### **Fund-raising**

- Whereas, the increase in the University's unrestricted funds in the past four years has been the result of net operating revenues and not external fundraising efforts by President Eisler; and
- Whereas, President Eisler has produced no visible or effective fund-raising structure and no Board-approved capital campaign as promised in his inaugural statement; and
- Whereas, President Eisler has failed to generate sufficient funding for the College of Optometry, which has subsequently delayed other needed capital outlay projects such as new facilities for the College of Education and Human Services and the College of Technology; and

### **Diversity**

- Whereas, President Eisler has failed to make diversity a priority and to ensure the recruitment of a diverse student body, and recently appointed a diversity officer with a one-year appointment, only after insistent pressure from the faculty and the Board of Trustees to address diversity issues; and
- Whereas, President Eisler has failed to support the efforts of the Minority Affairs Office in enhancing the cultural diversity of the institution, resulting in the resignation of the Special Assistant to the President and Officer of Minority Affairs, who noted on his departure that Ferris State University has "become an institution whose focus has been on the interests of a few"; and
- Whereas, during President Eisler's tenure, the number of minority students has declined significantly: and
- Whereas, President Eisler has failed to articulate a commitment to diversity in any public statements until recently pressured to do so by the Board of Trustees;

Now therefore, be it resolved that the Faculty of Ferris State University expresses its lack of trust and confidence in the leadership of President Eisler.

## Pioneer

April 7 & 8, 2007

### **Vote means Ferris will be 'evaluated' for a long time (Editorial)**

Nice guys always finish last? We shall see. One thing is clear - no one comes out a winner if Ferris State University President David Eisler loses the confidence of his faculty.

But there could be a way out of this mess.

On Monday the Ferris Faculty Association votes on the proposed vote of no confidence in Eisler's leadership. And make no mistake, Eisler is a truly nice guy who has done a lot of good for Ferris and for Big Rapids.

This "no confidence" tactic is retribution that should be reserved only for the most criminal or criminally incompetent. Eisler is neither.

While things at the university aren't perfect, there are a fair amount of success stories at the university that should have those associated with the FSU bursting with pride - such as the 2006 Wall Street Journal story that featured FSU's thriving welding program. It is ironic that the day before the FFA vote, the Rube Goldberg team will bring the university national notoriety when it appears Sunday on NBC's "Today" show for its solution-solving genius.

There are no villains here, however. The FFA folks are nice guys, too. I can't think of any other way to describe a group of people who have dedicated their lives to education. It's not uncommon for the faculty and administration of a university to be at odds. Strategic planning, smoking policies, who gets tenure - these are all issues that have divided good people with good intentions.

At the heart of all of this is a very pure goal. Everyone wants Ferris to be successful now and in the future. No one, it seems, can agree on how to achieve this.

FFA honcho Mike Ryan floated this interesting explanation for the vote: Students are evaluated, faculty are evaluated, therefore the president of the university should be evaluated. The FFA will offer its "grade."

Make no mistake, Eisler is continuously evaluated: by parents and students who decide whether Ferris is worth their time and money; by faculty looking make that next career move; by members of the community; by donors who invest money in Ferris's future; by the board of trustees who the president reports to.

The faculty are in an enviable position. If most of us took a vote of "no confidence" in our bosses or "evaluated" them in order to help them become "better leaders," as Ryan put it this week, we (the non-union, non-tenured types) would be fired, or to borrow an academic term: Flunked.

At the same time, Eisler clearly has underestimated the unhappiness on his campus. If this indeed is a fraction of the faculty leading the charge, that's a problem. It shows that many feel they either have no voice on campus or are too detached to care what happens outside of the

classroom. If the number of votes cast shows the majority of the profs feel the university is headed in the wrong direction, Eisler will need to do something to try to reconnect with their concerns, explore some of their ideas and pursue some of their goals.

One side will likely lose as a result of the close of the FFA vote Wednesday. But there is one way both sides could potentially win. Vote to cancel the vote. Call it off.

One thing won't change, however. Eisler will still be the boss and his bosses the board of trustees clearly supports him. Ferris will have to figure out some way to keep moving forward, together. And you all will be evaluated - by students, by parents, by this community and by the entire higher education community - every step of the way until you learn to communicate with each other.

If you botch that lesson it will be Ferris that flunks.



## **Pioneer**

April 7 & 8, 2007

### **Time to work through problems (Opinion)**

The current situation at Ferris State University is once again an embarrassment. I worked at FSU for 24 years and continue a close relationship with the university. During way tenure, I was a union member and was embarrassed time and time again by the rhetoric and the actions of a few that emerged as union leaders.

One can't help but contract what is taking place at Ferris with the emergence of near-rival Grand Valley State University. At Ferris, I served under five different presidents in 24 years, and during the same period Grand Valley State rallied around one president.

The university that started in a field outside of Grand Rapids now has 23,000 students and has made an impact nationally with its fine academic programs while Ferris struggles to keep its identity. GVSU has done it with its faculty working together and without the distraction from a faculty union.

Before arriving at FSU, I was employed and enjoyed working at three different institutions of higher learning. I learned before arriving at Ferris how a professional educator works within the system. My observations were that many of the outspoken union members - who seemed to speak for the faculty - came to the university with little or no experience as educators. They had little or no frame of reference which could allow them to respond as a professional educator should when working with administrators. The result was obvious. Every Ferris president, it seems, has had to deal with what is again happening at FSU.

My observation is that the university is beginning to flourish under the leadership of Dr. David Eisler. However, leaders do make mistakes (Even the new Pope began his first years making several mistakes). The union has seldom worked productively with any president, with many leaving frustrated

Meanwhile, the GVSUs of the world flourish while Ferris is stymied.

Professional educators realize how difficult it is being a college president. Tough decisions have to be made. It is time the "silent majority" of our faculty shake off the influence of the few.

Professional educators who have a broad working experience in their chosen field don't overreact when things become "tough!" They attempt to work through the problems.

Why can't the Ferris faculty do the same?

DEAN DAVENPORT  
Ferris State University Emeriti  
Big Rapids

**Pioneer**  
April 9, 2007

**FFA vote begins today**

**Union members vote on no confidence resolution of Ferris President Eisler through Wednesday**

Some seven days after word began to leak out into the community about Ferris State University Faculty Association's vote of no confidence of FSU President David Eisler, it's finally time for the voting to begin.

The faculty vote takes place at 5 p.m. today, following a general union membership, through Wednesday.

On March 20, the faculty association executive board unanimously approved conducting the no confidence vote in Eisler and approved a draft of the resolution March 27.

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

Eisler said the week has been a testament to the tremendous amount of support he has received from both faculty members and the community.

"It's been very humbling," Eisler said. "I've received emails, phone calls and even flowers of support. It's difficult to describe how wonderful everyone has been."

One of the people Eisler mentioned was former FSU Director of Minority Affairs Raymond Gant. Gant was unhappy with the FFA claim that he left FSU because of the failure of Eisler to help advance cultural diversity.

"I can't tell you how much I appreciate him coming out and saying what he did," Eisler said. "It was a very honorable and courageous thing to do. He's a role model, and I can't tell you how many students he has helped."

Eisler said despite the distraction of the vote, he has managed to take care of the university's business.

"I haven't spent a lot of time defending myself, because people have done it for me," Eisler said. "Right now we're spending time on legislature and the effects that might have on the university."

FFA President Mike Ryan said he hopes all FFA members are able to vote on the important issue.

"The purpose of this vote isn't to have the president removed," Ryan said. "We want the vote to say `this is what our evaluation of him is.'"

Ryan said that while the opinion of the staff is varied on Eisler, he believes going forward with the no confidence vote is the right thing to do.

"You've got 450 faculty members with 450 opinions," Ryan said.

"But we've had faculty members talking about doing this for a year and a half. We have made an argument with eight points, and we can back each one of them up."

Ryan said the vote will be conducted at four different polling locations throughout campus, with absentee ballots sent out ahead of time when appropriate. The voting begins following the union membership meeting today. Polls also will be open for six hours on both Tuesday and Wednesday.

"This is a formal process," Ryan said. "We want to make sure that every member is given the opportunity to vote."

Eisler said he is optimistic, and hopes that the university can move forward following the vote.

"FSU has a wonderful faculty, and sometimes faculty concerns can attract attention," Eisler said.

"What I know is these are people who care about students, teaching and the university. The challenging part will be how we find a way to pick up the pieces and work together."

## **Pioneer**

April 9, 2007

### **Eisler's memo to FSU faculty, staff**

*EDITORS NOTE: Ferris State University President David Eisler released this statement to FSU faculty, staff and students early today. The Pioneer is publishing Eisler's open letter in its entirety.*

Today, members of the faculty are scheduled to begin voting on a resolution of no confidence in my leadership. As that process begins, I want to take this opportunity to address the allegations raised in that resolution, as well as my view of the state of the university generally.

The greatest disservice I believe this action brought about by union officials has done is to provide a distraction from the many remarkable things that are taking place at Ferris State University.

For example, yesterday four of our students from the College of Technology who won the national Rube Goldberg competition appeared on the "Today" show. Along with faculty advisors Tom Hollen and Dan Wanink, and a fifth student who is currently serving in Iraq, these students not only bested reigning champion Purdue University, they are acting as prominent representatives for the kind of education and opportunities Ferris provides. My thanks go to Rube Goldberg team members Tom Sybrandy, Matt Tomaszewski, Mike Dunakin, James Travis III and Fred Reinecke.

Reinecke's service in Iraq reminds me of the other kinds of service that Ferris students provide to our own community and communities in need. In just the last few weeks alone, our students have taken part in alternative spring breaks building houses with Habitat for Humanity in New York, and for people in New Orleans still recovering from Hurricane Katrina; Optometry students and faculty took part in a mission trip to Mexico to provide eye care services there; and players from both the men's and women's basketball teams helped raise funds for the local Special Olympics program with their second annual Head-to-Head and Hand-in-Hand Game. These are only a few of the many charitable activities our students perform every year.

Recently, one of the faculty union officers called faculty members the life-blood of the university. Certainly teaching is at the very center of Ferris State University. Our founder, Woodbridge Ferris, was himself an educator who along with his wife, Helen, taught the first classes here. However, there are so many other groups at the university who work every day to make learning possible. From clerical staff to grounds people, from admissions to technology assistance, from professionals who provide health and counseling services to the many employees who feed and house our students, countless dedicated people provide a supportive environment where learning can flourish.

I believe our students are the life-blood of Ferris State University. From the freshman who enters Ferris directly from high school, to older workers acquiring new job skills to compete in a changing economy, the university exists to shape minds and transform lives. That is the

reason we are here. Providing education is a noble calling. I believe all of us at our university are fortunate to be a part of this profession.

Several articles of the no confidence resolution are so vague as to make factual refutation difficult, so let me make this general point. I have worked very hard to advance the mission of Ferris State University. The outpouring of support both Patsy and I have received from the campus and Big Rapids communities has been indescribably heartening. While we feel personally grateful for this support, more important is the way the messages I have received underscore the deep feelings that students, staff, community members, alumni, and yes, faculty have for this institution. Our increased enrollment, increased alumni participation and increased fund-raising all point to a Ferris community that is growing in size, in appreciation and in support,

Finally; attached to this letter is a document that goes through the no confidence resolution point by point and gives factual, information that refutes the various charges. They also are posted online at [www.fsunw3.ferris.edu/~eislerd/response.pdf](http://www.fsunw3.ferris.edu/~eislerd/response.pdf).

Please take the time to review this information. I believe that when the facts regarding the allegations being leveled against me are examined, they will demonstrate that my leadership of Ferris State University has been thoughtful and well-reasoned, especially in regards to current challenges, while embracing a vision of Ferris State University that will provide new and exciting educational opportunities for generations of students to come.

Very soon we will confer degrees upon our newest graduating class. They are the professionals and innovators we need to tackle the social and economic challenges that face our state today. I am confident they will make a positive difference in the world. I am confident that Ferris State University will continue to make a positive difference for our students.

On behalf of the students we serve, I thank you.

## **Pioneer**

April 9, 2007

### **Eisler is the best thing to happen to FSU in years (Opinion)**

I've just finished reading several articles on the Ferris Faculty Association (FFA) executive committee's "vote of no confidence" for Ferris State University president Dr. David Eisler. I am both saddened and angry by this arrogant stance of the FFA's executive committee. They claim the vote is not a personal attack however, impugning the honesty and integrity of an individual looks very personal to this person.

First and foremost, I wholeheartedly support Ferris State University President Dr. David Eisler. I do so as a Ferris State alumni, Alumni Board of Directors member and the recipient of an honorary Doctor of Science from FSU.

I have known Dr. Eisler for the length of his presidency. He has been a breath of fresh air of Ferris, the best thing that has happened in years. He has been open, honest, and always willing to listen. His door has been open, I know I have knocked and he has answered. I have never not gotten an answer to a question no matter how trite. His values, integrity and credibility are beyond reproach.

To say that he has no plan for the future of Ferris is a slap in the face of myself and the 70 or so others who gathered in Grand Rapids in November for a "Commission for the Future" of Ferris. A very diverse group worked very hard during the all day session to take a look at where Ferris should be in the future.

He has and does walk the campus and listens to the students. He has met with faculty, students, administrators and alumni to get their vision for Ferris, so that it could be incorporated into a forward looking vision for the university.

One last thought, Ferris is about the students. Woodbridge N. Ferris believed "...in the education of all the people all the time." Dr. David Eisler believes the same thing. Ferris is about the students and their education.

JOHN H. ENGELMAN  
Racine, Wisc.

## **Pioneer**

April 9, 2007

### **FFA should base decisions on facts and what is best for the community (Opinion)**

Once again Educational Unions such as the FFA under the leadership of Mike Ryan have reaffirmed to the community that their decisions are based solely on salaries, benefits, control and not by facts or what is best for our community, Ferris State University or the students. Point of fact is Ferris Faculty Association executive boards (quiver of arrows-2 strike or vote of no confidence) which doesn't include mutual respect, understanding and compromise. FFA members, you have a chance to change this. To be a part of a solution, not the problem with a vote of confidence. Then let's work together for our community, Ferris State University and most important the students, our future.

JIM ZIELSK  
Big Rapids

**Pioneer**  
April 10, 2007

**FFA Voting Begins**

**Union members asked FSU President Eisler to meet with them before voting.**

Just before Ferris State University faculty union members were to begin voting on a resolution of no confidence in FSU President David Eisler, he was invited to speak with them.

Eisler requested others be allowed into the meeting as well, including members of the media. Union officials did not wish to open their internal meeting to everyone Eisler suggested, so he did not meet with them.

On March 20, the Ferris Faculty Association Executive Board unanimously approved conducting a vote of no confidence in Eisler and approved a draft of the resolution March 27. Voting began following a general union membership meeting that began 7 p.m. Monday and will continue until 5 p.m. Wednesday. About 410 people are eligible to vote on the resolution.

Voting will be done by paper ballot in four polling locations on campus, as well as by absentee ballot for faculty members stationed off campus, said FFA President Mike Ryan.

Eisler has responded to the union's eight areas outlined in the resolution and posted his responses at <http://fsunw3.ferris.edu/~eislerd/response.pdf>.



## **Pioneer**

April 10, 2007

### **Pioneer coverage diminishes FFA process (Opinion)**

David and Patty Eisler are indeed two of the finest persons that I know. Yes they are an asset to our community.

It is a shame that the press chose to sensationalize the issues going on at FSU. Student, faculty and administration performance evaluations happen quite often. I am thankful that a few of mine did not appear in the *Pioneer!* Most of the time we use them to improve ourselves and further enhance the quality of education and the environment for the students.

For "outsiders" to pass judgement on one side of the issue or the other can be damaging and dangerous. You will never get the full picture of this issue from editorials and letters to the editor.

For the most part everyone at FSU works together for the betterment of the university and the community of Big Rapids. The faculty and other employees at FSU invest heavily in our community and are as concerned about the "reputation and growth" as anyone else. They spend most of their income, volunteer time, church time and much more here.

Let's not be too hasty to condemn them for a process that is meant to grow, improve and sustain quality at FSU.

Dr. Eisler will weather this storm and be a stronger, more capable leader in the end.

**BILL ROUTLEY**

FSU Alumni, Professor Emeriti Big Rapids