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Grand Rapids Press

May 2, 2006

College town is more accurately 'colleges' town

Nearly two dozen schools have presence in area

Grand Rapids isn't a typical college town. It's more like a town of many colleges.

More than a dozen schools have campuses here. Even though many of the universities in Grand Rapids have main campuses elsewhere, a college town atmosphere is emerging in some parts of the city, with students packing bars and coffee shops.

The area's largest school - Grand Valley State University - is anchored 20 minutes away in Allendale Township. The school has a bustling downtown Grand Rapids campus.

Also nestled downtown: Grand Rapids Community College.

Other state universities with a presence here: Ferris State (based in Big Rapids), Western Michigan (Kalamazoo), Central Michigan (Mount Pleasant) and Michigan State (Lansing).

Grand Rapids also is home to Kendall College of Art and Design and Cooley Law School (Lansing).

Private schools in the region include the Christian schools Aquinas, Calvin and Hope colleges, Cornerstone University and Reformed Bible College.

Davenport University has some programs downtown, as well as a campus in Caledonia Township.

In the following list, tuition is the annual full-time equivalent for undergraduates. Prices are from the 2005-06 school year, except where noted.

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

Grand Rapids campus: Applied Technology Center, 151 Fountain St. NE, 451-4777

- Vice Chancellor: Donald Green
- Enrollment: 967
- Tuition: \$265 per credit, undergraduate; \$327 per credit, graduate
- Connect: <http://www.ferris.edu/grandrapids>

KENDALL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN OF FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY
17 Fountain St. NW, Grand Rapids, 451-2787

- President: Oliver Evans
- Enrollment: 1,036
- Tuition: \$11,880, undergraduate; \$9,654, graduate
- Room and board: \$6,800
- Connect: <http://www.kcad.edu>

Saginaw News

May 11, 2006

Charter school planned in city

Three Saginaw County residents have plans to open a charter school, the International Academy of Saginaw, within the city limits in August 2007.

Officials with Eden Prairie, Minn.-based SABIS Educational Systems Inc., an educational management company, are scouting for a location in the city and hope to find a suitable spot before the end of the year.

"The level of need (in Saginaw) is clearly high," said Jose Afonso, SABIS director for governmental affairs.

"There's a definite desire for high quality, safe educational options. Saginaw's parents want the best for their children." Officials hope to attract about 600 students in kindergarten through sixth grade for fall 2007, said charter Board of Directors member Gina M. Eggers, a financial adviser with Smith Barney.

Leaders plan to add a grade level each year until 2013, with enrollment topping out at 1,250 students in kindergarten through 12th grade.

"I'm positively optimistic," said Eggers, a Saginaw Township resident who has college-age and adult children. "I've talked to parents in the district who are not happy with what they're getting."

Jimmy Greene, chief executive officer of Total Solutions Group, a Saginaw-based telecommunications company, and Priscilla Denney, a project engineer specialist for Dow Chemical Co., also are Board of Directors members.

Seeking another member, the trio has interviewed a retired Saginaw teacher but she has not yet accepted the offer to join, Eggers said.

The school's bylaws will call for assigning students to grade levels based on their "test scores and skill sets" rather than their ages. So, a student enrolled as a fourth-grader in another charter school or district could test out as a second or third-grader.

SABIS operates 31 charter schools in 11 countries, seven of those in the United States, including the International Academy of Flint. The Genesee County facility, which opened in 1999, has 730 students in kindergarten through 12th grade.

Saginaw School-District leaders, who have closed several buildings since 2003, have no plans to offer the vacant schools to a potential competitor.

"That would be a definite no," said district spokesman Michael Manley.

Bay Mills Community College plans to charter the International Academy of Saginaw, but "it isn't a done deal," said Patrick Shannon, director of charter schools for Bay Mills in Brimley.

Finding the right site and state Department of Education approval are two potential roadblocks, Shannon said.

The Upper--Peninsula-based college operates 28 Charters across the state in urban areas such as Benton Harbor, Inkster and Highland Park.

"You won't find us in the burbs so much," Shannon said. "That's not our target." Benito Juarez Academy, which closed in 2002, was the only other charter school in county history to have served high school students.

Opening a charter school that serves such a wide range of students presents several challenges, said Ronald Schneider, director of school and university partnerships at Saginaw Valley State University, where he oversees charter school progress.

"You've got three different cultures in one building, and parents may not want that," Schneider said.

"High schools are inherently more expensive and bring more problems that people may not want the middle or elementary school students exposed to."

SVSU charters the Saginaw Preparatory Academy in Buena Vista Township.

Often, charter schools pose a greater threat to public school districts than to other charters, said Jimmie Rodgers, director of the Office of Charter Schools at Ferris State University in Big Rapids.

"The district schools are more concerned than another charter would be," Rodgers said.

"Charters are a little more flexible in dealing with student loss."

City school leaders apparently aren't concerned about, another charter school' encroaching on their territory.

"I don't spend any time with what other people are trying to do," said Superintendent Gerald D. Dawkins:

"My whole focus is on serving the kids of this city."

Muskegon Chronicle

May 11, 2006

Wordmeisters gather in Ludington for poetry fest

Notice they don't call this a poetry festival.

The people in charge call it the Ludington Poetry *Feast* -- "a tasty banquet of Michigan poetry" served up festival-style over a three-day period.

"Our hope is to draw poetry lovers from all over the state to our small town on the big lake, to hear and meet these wonderful Michigan poets," said George Hila, director of Ludington Visiting Writers.

Among the poets to read their work will be Judith Minty, a nationally acclaimed poet and visiting professor from Ithaca; Thomas Lynch, the "coroner-poet" from Milford; and Jack Ridl from Hope College.

Poets from colleges and universities around the state include Patricia Clark and Ander Monson from Grand Valley State University, Robert Haight from the New School of Kalamazoo Community College, William Olsen of Western Michigan University, Phillip Sterling from Ferris State University, Keith Taylor of University of Michigan and Diane Wakoski of Michigan State University.

Other poets on the agenda: Jackie Bartley of Holland, Elinor Benedict of Raisin River, Anthony Butts of Detroit, Linda Nemecek Foster of Grand Rapids, Vievee Francis of Detroit, Mary Jo Firth Gillett of Pleasant Ridge, Dawn McDuffie of Detroit and Lynne Yotts of Royal Oak.

Besides the readings, the Poetry Feast will feature poetry workshops, panel discussions, receptions and book sales. A finalized schedule of events will be available in May at **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**

Since 2001, Ludington Visiting Writers has sponsored a Reading Series, annual writing conferences and a 2004 Poetry Festival.

"Gatherings like these are extremely rare," Hila said. Ludington Poetry Feast 2006 is sponsored by the Ludington Visiting Writers and supported by a grant from the Rural Arts and Culture Program of the Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs.

Pioneer

May 23, 2006

Ferris State graduate works on NASCAR crew

Bryan Smith never imagined he would be working with race cars, let alone working for NASCAR star Tony Stewart.

Smith graduated from Ferris State University in 1986 with an automotive degree and he figured he would work at a car dealership.

Instead, he is in his fourth year as a setup mechanic for Stewart. "It's great," Smith said. "This definitely wasn't what I thought I would be doing, but I love it." Smith's path toward the NASCAR world started in his home.

Race cars were always a part of his life because his father built and worked on cars. But Smith really became attracted to the sport in 1992, when he started to watch races at Spartan Speedway in Mason, near his hometown of Holt.

It didn't take him long to realize he wanted to be around race cars. So, Smith contacted Scott Diehl, a friend from Ferris who was a heavy equipment worker for Joe Gibbs Racing in Huntersville, N.C.

"(Diehl) knew a guy and he got me a job," Smith said.

For the next lo years Smith traveled with several teams in NASCAR's minor league, the Busch Series. In 2002 he got a job as a setup mechanic for Gibbs' son, Coy, and then moved to Stewart's team in 2003.

Smith works on Stewart's primary and backup cars at the Joe Gibbs Racing headquarters. He adjusts the front and rear alignment, including the alignment of the tires and the height and weight of the car.

Todd Foster, a setup mechanic and rear tire changer for the Stewart racing team, said the work Smith puts into the car's dimensions is a rigorous process. Smith usually adjusts the car two weeks prior to a race.

"Bryan's our primary setup guy," Foster said. "He thinks things through and weighs all the options. We go to him a lot about the widths of the tires and the wheel spacing. He decides how far to the left or right the tire should be depending on the track"

Smith's schedule is as demanding as the seemingly never-ending season for NASCAR drivers. He said he works six days per week from January to November, with a break for Christmas.

But he said he still finds more than enough time to spend with his wife Penny, and their two children, Bradley and Alyssa at his home in Mooresville, N.C.

"It's actually better than it was when I traveled for 10 years with the Busch teams," he said. "The last two years I've spent a lot of time with my family."

Smith just missed being a part of Stewart's championship season in 2002. But when Stewart won his second title in 2005, Smith reaped the benefits.

He attended a victory banquet in New York City, went to the Washington Redskins training facility and met President George W. Bush at the White House.

"It was great; we had the car up on the White House lawn," Smith said.

Being part of a championship team has been a thrill for Smith, something which was far from his mind 20 years ago at Ferris.

"It's been a lot of fun," he said. "Everybody is really dedicated, but we have a good time. They're the best."

Pioneer

May 23, 2006

Big Jackson school students learn about dental hygiene

In a courtesy photo: On April 25, Ferris State University dental hygiene students Jenna Wildey and Megan Eves presented a program on proper dental hygiene to the students of Big Jackson Public School.

They shared important information and reminders of how to take care of your teeth and maintain proper dental health. The students were given demonstrations, shown slides, and also bags filled with a toothbrush, floss and toothpaste. Thank you Jenna and Megan!

Pioneer

May 24, 2006

Bill would nix Merit Award for out-of-state colleges

LANSING (AP) - Next year's high school graduates would not be eligible for a \$1,000 scholarship if they attend out-of-state colleges under legislation passed Tuesday by the Michigan Senate.

The bill to eliminate the Michigan Merit Award for those going outside Michigan was part of a budget deal reached last year by Republican legislative leaders and Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm. It passed on a 27-11 vote.

The move is expected to save the state between \$3.5 and \$4.5 million and could affect an estimated 3,500 to 4,500 students.

The legislation now goes to the House.

Students qualify for the Merit Award by scoring well on Michigan Educational Assessment Program tests.

Sen. Bruce Patterson, who voted against the bill, said he would prefer that students attend Michigan colleges but argued that the state shouldn't dictate where they end up.

"It's a merit scholarship, and students are earning something," the Republican from Wayne County's Canton Township said. "I don't think we should attach unnecessary strings."

Pioneer

May 26, 2006

Lay, Skilling convicted in Enron collapse

David Nicol, dean of Ferris State University College of Business, said former Enron Corp. chiefs Kenneth Lay and Jeffrey Skilling's convictions Thursday were the result of poor ethics. It is not an indictment of corporate American, but rather an individual instance, he said.

"I think this speaks to individual motivation and conduct," Nicol said. "What I think it says is, Managers need to assume more responsibility." Lay and Skilling were convicted of conspiracy and securities and wire fraud in one of the biggest business scandals in U.S. history. The verdict will serve as a wake-up call for other companies, Nicol said.

"I think the decision is going to send a very loud message," he said. "It will definitely cause people to think... They totally rationalized the situation. They said, 'Everybody is doing it.'"

Nicol also said it will cause managers to pay more attention to a company's financial records. "The problem is numbers can still be manipulated," he said. "You accurately reflected what happened that day."

The verdict put the blame for the 2001 demise of the high-profile energy trader, once the nation's seventh-largest company, squarely on its top two executives. It came in the sixth day of deliberations following a federal criminal trial that lasted nearly four months.

Lay was also convicted of bank fraud and making false statements to banks in a separate, non-jury trial before U.S. District Judge Sim Lake related to Lay's personal banking.

Nicol said he was surprised by the verdict, not because he thought Lay and Skilling were guilty, but because light punishments handed out in previous cases involving companies such as Adelphia and Tyco. "This was somewhat grayer," he said. "They were oblivious to the consequences of their actions." Nicol also said the verdict was a small victory for Enron's former employees, some of whom lost their retirement funds.

"Had they been found not guilty, the greater impact would have been to the common man because it would suggest they're all going to be held to a different standard," he said. The conviction was a major win for the government, serving almost

as a bookend to an era that has seen prosecutors win convictions against executives from WorldCom Inc. to Adelphia Communications Corp. and homemaking maven Martha Stewart.

The public outrage over the string of corporate scandals led Congress to pass the Sarbanes-Oxley act, designed to make company executives more accountable.

Enron's demise alone took with it more than \$60 billion in market value, almost \$2.1 billion in pension plans and 5,600 jobs.

"The jury's verdicts help to close a notorious chapter in the history of America's publicly traded companies," said Rep. Michael Oxley, R-Ohio, chairman of House Financial Services Committee and co-author of Sarbanes-Oxley.

Pioneer

May 27 & 28, 2006

Ferris Bus Tour to meet with college partners, alumni

BIG RAPIDS - Ferris State University President David L. Eisler and lead administrators will visit nine cities and four community colleges during the third annual Presidential Bus Tour of Michigan June 5 through 8.

The tour will give Ferris administrators an opportunity to meet with local higher education officials to discuss ideas for collaboration, current and future program offerings, as well as meet with alumni and friends.

"The bus tour provides an excellent opportunity for Ferris State University to interact with our community college partners, our alumni, our donors and the communities we serve across the state;" Eisler said.

The tour itinerary begins in the Tri City area the first day with subsequent stops in Detroit, Livonia and Birmingham on June 6; Detroit and Dearborn on June 7; and Kalamazoo and St. Joseph on June 8.

Ferris and community college officials will discuss articulation agreements, sharing resources and mutually beneficial partnerships from 9 a.m. to noon on June 5 at Delta College, from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. on June 6 at Schoolcraft College, from 9 to 11:30 a.m. on June 7 at Wayne County Community College and from 9 to 11:30 a.m. on June 8 at Kalamazoo Valley Community College.

Since 1974, Ferris has taken higher education to the citizens of Michigan through partnerships with local entities, particularly community colleges. With the heightened awareness of the need for education beyond high school and the recent recognition that Michigan lags the nation in baccalaureate degree holders, Ferris has expanded its efforts to offer distinctive baccalaureate-level certificates or degrees at more than 26 different sites throughout the state.

Through these partnerships, the community college will offer up to three years of the required coursework leading to a baccalaureate from Ferris. To complete their bachelor's degrees, students will enroll for 30 or more credits through Ferris, depending upon the specific educational backgrounds, making the cost of higher education more affordable.

Four new competitive transfer scholarships will be available this fall to transfer students in all undergraduate programs, assisting students in their transition to Ferris. The scholarships offer anywhere from \$1,500 to \$2,700 per academic year or in-state tuition for non-resident or international students. They are two-year scholarships with an option for a third-year renewal.

"Our goal is for Ferris State University to be the transfer institution of choice," Eisler said. "Ferris already has a number of 2+2 degrees in place, where students first earn

an associate degree at their community college or Ferris and then their bachelor's degree.

"These scholarships are an added incentive to help students with their educational costs and also provide the means for us to strengthen our partnerships with community colleges," he added.

The university also recently introduced the Military Veterans Scholarship Program. Effective in January 2006, the program provides a \$1,000 annual scholarship and waives out-of-state tuition fees for qualified veterans enrolling at Ferris. Veterans entering school in either freshman or transfer status are eligible for the scholarship.

The scholarship is renewable for three additional years and the out-of-state tuition waiver continues as long as the student-veteran meets the program requirements.

African American News & Issues

May 31, 2006

MY NIGGAS"!!! Stop Using This Word!!!

Youth Take Anti-Violence Message to Dallas Streets

Youth have been at the heart of movements that have impacted and changed the course of African American history.

With the history of African Americans filled with trails of blood and death at the hands of slave masters, ruthless bounty hunters and ambitious auctioneers who saw Blacks as nothing more than "Niggers," over 50 African American youth in Dallas took to the streets to change history in South Dallas-Oak Cliff in a march against violence and using words like "Nigger," "Niggaz," and "My Niggas" to raise awareness about the related trouble the words nurture.

"We are here to draw the line and stop the violence," said Renecia Smith, 15, of Dallas.

"The N-word has pushed violence to the limit and it needs to be stopped. These words are living symbols of racism and death. It killed us then and it will kill us now unless we change."

Using megaphones and loud voices, the teens surrounded Southwest Mall with placards and protest signs and marched up Camp Wisdom Road chanted "Stop the Violence!

Start the Peace! Stop the Hate! Start the Love... Peace, Love, not Violence, not Hate!"

"This march is to let the people know that we are intelligent young Black people doing something with our lives," said Tacovia Braggs, 18, one of the student leaders of the N-Word Free/anti-violence youth movement. "This is not a positive label, it is a negative label and it is at the center of all the fights, friction and violence going on among our youth. Our children do deserve better."

During the Civil Rights Movement, it took youth to give energy to a movement that would lead to changes in federal laws and better civil and voting rights conditions around, the country. In the summer of 1958, the first sit-ins were conducted by NAACP Youth

Council to win concessions in a Southern State in modern times occurred in restaurants in 'Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

National sit-in campaigns were initiated in February 1960 when four (4) Black students from North Carolina A&T College sat down at Woolworth's lunch counter in downtown Greensboro, North Carolina. The students, Joseph McNeil, Izell Blair, Franklin McCain, and David Richmond, purchased several items in the store before sitting at the counter reserved for white customers.

When a waitress asked them to leave, they politely refused; and to their surprise, they were not arrested. The four students remained seated for almost an hour until the store closed. The following morning about two-dozen students arrived at Woolworth's and sat at the lunch counter.

The Greensboro protesters eventually agreed to the mayor's request to halt protest activities while city officials sought "a just and honorable solution," but Black students in other communities launched lunch counter protests of their own. By the end of the month, sit-ins had taken place at more than 30 locations in seven states.

In 1962, a youth led a series of sit-in demonstrations and passive resistance movements in Cairo, Illinois. The demonstrations against segregation in swimming pools, skating rinks and other public facilities continued for several months until city leaders were forced to make changes.

In modern times, preserving civil and voting rights remains a priority, but some of today's youth have a new vision that involves working to save themselves and make a difference in a world that continues to see African American youth at a disadvantage and experiencing high drop out rates and higher arrest and incarceration rates than White and Hispanic counterparts.

"We are out here, because we want to bring to the attention that we are more than just "Niggers" and "Niggas," said 16-year-old Cameron Ferguson. "We are proud African American men and we are tired of the stereotypes and suspicions surrounding African American Black youth and men."

In the 1600s, slaves were brought to North America and the verbal abuse, beatings, sale, "rapes and lynching were common until slavery ended in 1865. Millions died during the Middle Passage and hundreds of thousands were killed at the hand of racist caretakers.

Even after freedom, Blacks faced continuous intimidation, torture, torment and abuse by racists who refused to accept federal laws.

"This term is degrading to our Black people. Whites whipped us and beat us behind this word," said 11-year-old Chandler Ferguson. "What we are doing is positive and stopping this word should create a more positive image for African American males."

Whatever its origins, by the early 1800s it was firmly established as a racist term. For over two centuries, it still remains the chief symbol of white racism. The word nigger carries much hatred directed toward Africans and African Americans.

The historical relationship between European Americans and African Americans was shaped by a racial hierarchy, which spanned three centuries. Anti-black attitudes, values and behavior were common during that time.

In 2001, Dr. David Pilgrim, Professor of Sociology, and Dr. Phillip Middleton, Professor of Languages and Literature, Ferris State University studied and noted in a report that the N-Word has defined, limited, and mocked African Americans throughout American history.

For youth protesting using the N-Word, the priority is on rebuilding self-esteem and pride in a generation and people who have been deprived of the knowledge of their rich culture, heritage and history.

"This word is harsh and comes from the age of slavery," said 15-year-old Mariah Hunter.

"I use to use the word all the time until I got an understanding of what it means and what it is doing to our people. Young people don't understand how dangerous this word is and the damage it does to our self-esteem."

It's about raising youth above the slave mentality and "Willie Lynch" thinking that has all but gutted futures and dashed hopes and dreams of escaping the traps that leave us scratching at the bottom of the barrel just to survive.

"Saying Nigger is not ok. Youth try to justify it by saying they changed the meaning around, but you cannot change the 'meaning of a word like this," said 15-year-old Deunbria Ivory.

"If we as youth went 'through what slaves went through, we would better understand why being violent and derogatory to one another is not good for us as a people. I am sure Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. is not pleased."

Dallas teacher Curtis Ferguson started the "Flowers in the Dirt" N-Word Free Campaign.

Earlier this year, Ferguson camped outside just off Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard in Dallas and went on a hunger strike to make a point and bring attention to the derogatory use and acceptance of the word.

Since that time, youth have taken up the fight and the Dallas Independent School District is even considering a ban on using the word in schools district wide. The district also wants student and teacher sanctions for violations that involve training and other measures to prevent its use.

Parents like Felinda Ross and Clem Hunter participated in the march and support the youth's effort to take the lead and charge of their futures and for their work trying to save fellow students.

"As a Black mother raising three kids alone, I don't want my kids to fall to violence and other negative influences," said Felinda Ross. "I had a great grandmother and mother who suffered greatly because of this word. I am working hard for them to get a good education and have high self-esteem."

Hunter added, "We do not want kids to say bad words or do negative self talk amongst one another. It is very important for them to learn and know the history and heritage, so that the mistakes made before will not be repeated among our own people."

Pioneer

May 31, 2006

Soldiers ready to deploy

Members of Company E of the 125th Infantry Echo Company prepare to leave their families and jobs to serve 1 year in Iraq.

BIG RAPIDS - Jesse Melka's parents were unable to attend Tuesday's spaghetti dinner for National Guard troops at the Big Rapids AMVETS post, but he still had plenty of friends there to wish him well.

Melka's mother lives in Oregon and his father lives in the Upper Peninsula, making his friends at Ferris State University and the troops of Company E, 1st Battalion 125th, Infantry Echo Company his family away from family.

"It just goes to show there are that many people supporting us and keeping us in their prayers," he said.

Melka, 29, is originally from Oregon and moved to Ishpeming before going to Ferris.

He served in the military from 1997 to 2001 before taking 18 months off. Then he decided to join the National Guard and recently re-upped for six more years.

He and about 170 National Guard soldiers from the dinner will train at Fort Dix, N. J. for 3 months before going to Iraq for 1 year.

"It's just one of those things you want to do," Melka said. "You want to be there for your country."

The spaghetti dinner Tuesday was another instance of Melka having to be farther away from people close to him. In addition to his parents, he also will leave behind his friends at Ferris, where he just finished his junior year in civil engineering, and his fraternity brothers at Delta Chi.

"This is just another hump in the way of being away from them," he said. "(My parents and fraternity brothers) couldn't be here tonight... but they're supporting as best they can from a distance."

Marcy Simmons, president of the family readiness group of Echo Company, said the dinner gave the soldiers' family members a chance to exchange names and phone numbers so they could support each other.

"They guys take care of themselves over there; over here we'll take care of each other," she said. "... It's a time for the families to get to know each other so that when the troops are gone they can help one another and offer each other support. It seems like a long time when a loved one is over there. I know because my husband is serving Iraq now."

A send off ceremony will take place at 8 p.m. today at the armory. Buses led by the Patriotic Riders will leave the armory at 10 p.m.