



Included below is a press release regarding Ferris State University's nine-point improvement in graduation rates – the 15<sup>th</sup>-best improvement in the nation according to a recently-released study from *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Sources for this story are cited below and any questions can be directed to Sandy Gholston, interim assistant director of News Services. As Ferris is on winter break beginning at 5 p.m. Wednesday (Dec. 22), I can best be reached through a reply to this e-mail address - ghol1@ferris.edu

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### **Ferris Officials Salute Significant Rise in Graduation Rates**

BIG RAPIDS – A recent study released by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* showed that Ferris State University graduation rates, during a six-year period from 2003 to 2008, experienced a nine-point rise in percentage points – the 15<sup>th</sup>-best improvement in the nation.

The graduation rates, according to a study released Dec. 5, are calculated as the percentage of all first-time, full-time students entering in the fall semester pursuing bachelor's degrees who completed their bachelor's degrees within the six-year period. As part of the study, *The Chronicle* compared graduation rates at four-year institutions for a six-year period that ended in 2008 with the rates at the end of 2003. In 2002, Ferris' graduation rate was listed at 28 percent. During the six-year period, Ferris' rates were 34 percent in 2003, 35 in 2004, 34 in 2005, 32 in 2006, 37 in 2007 and 43 in 2008. That change from 2003 to 2008 is illustrated by a nine-point rise.

Ferris President David Eisler sees the results of the study as indicative of students capitalizing on statewide academic opportunities the university offers students.

*The Chronicle* also cited Ferris as having become “more” selective in admissions even as it achieved higher graduation rates.

“We are very pleased with the increased retention and graduation rates for our students,” said Eisler, who noted that the improvement since 2002 is even more dramatic. “They reflect the commitment of our people to student success and the hard work of our students in completing their degrees.”

The U.S. Department of Education noted that Ferris has a 35-percent transfer-out rate, which has an impact on graduation rate, for students who move on to other institutions, but continue their

education.

Fritz Erickson, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs at Ferris, cited a university-wide collaborative effort to improve graduation rates for students who receive a hands-on educational experience highlighted by the university's theory-meets-practice approach to education.

“Raising graduation rates from 34 percent to 43 percent in six years does not happen by accident,” he said. “It takes a dedicated faculty and staff committed to academic excellence and student success to make that happen”

*The Chronicle* study focused only on schools classified as research, Master's or baccalaureate colleges (arts and sciences) by the Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching in 2005. These graduation rates were calculated as “the percentage of all first-time, full-time students entering in the fall seeking bachelor's degrees who completed bachelor's degrees within six years.”

“While we continue our efforts to keep increasing our graduation rates, it is nice to see that our efforts are paying real dividends in the lives of our students,” Erickson said.

Colleges typically describe their graduation rates using a similar but slightly different set of data, which includes students who completed any degree program, such as associate degrees. The Education Department recommends examining only students seeking bachelor's degrees when comparing four-year institutions because it facilitates consistent comparisons and because producing bachelor's recipients is a core mission of those institutions.

Ferris State University is a four-year public university with campuses in Big Rapids, Grand Rapids and satellite campuses across the state. Ferris offers more than 170 educational programs, including doctorates, master's, bachelor's and associate degrees, through nine academic colleges: Allied Health Sciences, Arts and Sciences, Business, Education and Human Services, Michigan College of Optometry, Pharmacy, Engineering Technology, Kendall College of Art and Design, and the College of Professional and Technological Studies. Ferris also has a University College that provides students with instruction in study skills, reading, career exploration and features an Honors Program.

Sources:

U.S. Department of Education:

<http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?q=ferris+state+university&s=all&id=169910>

The Chronicle of Higher Education (subscription):

<http://chronicle.com/article/Graduation-Rates-Fall-at/125614/?inl>

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