

# President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President  
January 14, 2013

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## Welcome Back

My hope is that the holiday break was a time of rest and rejuvenation for you. We know the coming months will be a time of great activity and transformation. The renovation of the Rankin Student Center will provide the opportunity to create a space that will facilitate collaboration, learning outside the classroom, and a greater sense of community for students, faculty, staff, and citizens of Big Rapids. On a smaller scale, we have seen how the redesigned IRC corridor has made that space into a hub of activity for the campus. The success of that project gives us a glimpse into what an important resource for the university a new University Center will be. Throughout the semester information on the University Center project will be available at <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/adminandfinance/physical/renovation/index.htm>.

As we prepare for spring semester and the challenges of this and other projects – including our efforts to make a Ferris education as affordable as possible – I want to thank you for your work during the last semester and say how much I look forward to our continued work together as the pace of the academic year increases.

## MLK Day Celebrations

Ferris will celebrate the life and achievements of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with a series of events Monday, Jan. 21 through Wednesday, Jan. 23. The “We Are” themed celebration is sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Student Services, the Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, Student Government, Entertainment Unlimited, and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Many events have become traditions at Ferris: the in-service program of readings, the annual Freedom March and the MLK Student Tribute. New events this year: a Soup Kitchen, a Student Government-hosted symposium, and “Race Off with Teja Arboleda” at Williams Auditorium. The extraordinary resources of the expanded Jim Crow Museum will be used for special presentations and tours of the museum.

I want to encourage you to help celebrate the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. on this day by volunteering. Volunteer opportunities on campus are accessible at <http://www.ferris.edu/omss/mlkinfo/> and Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/FerrisMLK](http://www.facebook.com/FerrisMLK). Additionally, these links have the full schedule of events and provide access to audio recordings of Dr. King’s famous “I Have a Dream” speech, as well as a series of videos of Ferris students reflecting upon Dr. King’s legacy. I want to thank everyone who has worked on these special commemorative activities.

Our expanded Jim Crow Museum brings the intolerance Dr. King fought against into painfully sharp focus. However, this resource and others is only valuable to the extent that people learn from the past and make use of it. As Dr. King famously said, “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’” Please plan on getting involved in this year’s MLK events.

### **Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award**

Ferris State University recently received a 2012 *INSIGHT Into Diversity* Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award from *INSIGHT Into Diversity* magazine. In accepting the award for Ferris, Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion David Pilgrim noted the work our university has done in expanding the Jim Crow Museum, establishing our Center for Latin@ Studies, and attracting international students and students who qualify for the Tuition Incentive Program. Ferris was one of 48 colleges and universities nationwide to receive the honor.

While there will always be work to do in terms of creating an inclusive and tolerant society, it is also important to recognize steps that have been taken to make positive difference in this area. My thanks to David Pilgrim and everyone in the Diversity and Inclusion Office, Matt Chaney and everyone in Multicultural Student Services, and everyone at the university who has made diversity and inclusion a priority.

### **100th Anniversary of Gov. Ferris' Inauguration**

Ferris State University is commemorating the 100th anniversary of its founder, Woodbridge Ferris, being sworn in as governor of Michigan. "Celebrating the Legacy: Gov. Woodbridge N. Ferris" will take place at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 16, at BUS 111. Associate Professor of Music Harry Dempsey will portray Gov. Woodbridge Ferris, and discuss some of the changes in politics and the state that have taken place between then and now with Big Rapids Mayor Mark Warba. Commemorative t-shirts will be handed out and refreshments served in the IRC Connector following the celebration.

It is rare for a public university to be named after its founder, and we are extremely fortunate to have been founded by a great man with a true passion and vision for education. The Ferris community has a rare sense of history regarding its university, which I believe helps to provide a sense of context not just for its history, but for its present and future. The hands-on, experiential educational philosophy Woodbridge Ferris established still guides the education we offer today. This is a great opportunity to pay tribute to our founder.

I want to thank the members of Ferris' History Task Force and Political Engagement Project who organized this event, which is free and open to the public. Thanks, also, to Harry Dempsey and Mark Warba for their roles in the celebration. More about the event and a link to Gov. Ferris' inauguration speech is available at

<http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/archive/2013/january/ferris.htm> .

### **Academic Senate Leadership**

We begin spring semester with a leadership transition for the Academic Senate. Professor Doug Haneline has agreed to be interim head of the Languages and Literature department. This new responsibility means that he will be stepping away from his duties as president of the Academic Senate. Doug has a long history of serving Ferris State University. He was a senator for a total of 12 years, senate secretary in 2005-06, and elected president in 2010, '11 and '12. Doug also chaired Academic Program Review from 1994-99 and from 2005-10. He has done exceptional work with the Senate, and will be replaced by Professor Mike Berghoef, the Senate's vice president.

We look forward to Mike's leadership as the senate represents the voice of the faculty on academic programs and policies, seeking to maintain and develop high quality programs for our

students. On behalf of the Ferris community, I want to thank Doug for his many years leading the Academic Senate and for his willingness to apply his experience and expertise to yet another leadership position at our university.

### **In Memoriam**

Ferris suffered two very sad and tragic losses over the semester break – Associate Professor of Pharmacy, Dr. Lucy Ngoh, and student, True Whitsey. Professor Ngoh, who joined Ferris in 1992, died in a bus accident while visiting relatives in her native country of Cameroon. True was the victim of a senseless shooting in Detroit while visiting his family over the break.

A Memorial Mass for Dr. Ngoh will be held at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 16, at St. Paul Catholic Chapel. More information about Dr. Ngoh and her contributions to the university is available at

<http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/archive/2013/january/ngoh.htm> .

Please join me in sending deepest condolences to the family, friends, colleagues and fellow students who benefitted from knowing Dr. Ngoh and Mr. Whitsey.

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler, president