

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
January 28, 2013

University Center and Transportation Study

Preparations are well underway for the renovation of the current Rankin Student Center to become our new University Center. This is a project that has been envisioned in the university's Master Plan for many years. The early stage of the renovation planning was a visioning process, which was co-chaired by Vice President for Student Affairs, Dan Burcham, and Professor of Social Work, Wendy Samuels. Thanks to their leadership, this campus-wide effort identified the programs and services to be enhanced by the renovated building. Next, a broad-based program planning committee, chaired by Mike Hughes, Associate Vice President for Physical Plant, moved the process forward. This group consisted of 12 individuals including faculty, students and staff. Now, a smaller planning group is preparing specifications for bidding the many parts of the project. I want to thank all the members of these groups and all the individuals who have provided input into this planning process.

The University Center upgrade is a complex project involving detailed renovations to nearly every part of a building that achieved its current configuration in three different phases dating back to its initial construction in 1957. In addition to these physical challenges, the building houses many diverse programs and services that will have to be maintained during the renovation. We are committed to redesigning this building to be welcoming and accessible, greatly increasing its usefulness for student organizations, commuter students, faculty and student interaction, campus events and much more. The current building will close at the end of spring semester and most likely be ready to open in its new form for the start of spring 2015 semester.

A web page has been created for this project and is updated regularly to serve as a resource for project information and progress. This can be accessed at <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/adminandfinance/physical/renovation/>, or by simply going to the Ferris homepage and searching for "University Center." At the website you can view draft schematic designs for the building, including newly added artist renderings and floor plans. Please keep in mind that this web presence and the material it contains are conceptual drafts. There will certainly be changes as we move forward. We will continue to share information as this project evolves and progresses to help keep you as informed as possible.

In addition to renovation of the Rankin Center, there will be major changes to the northeast part of the campus. These will include demolition of Masselink and Carlisle Halls, the addition of parking spaces east of the renovated University Center, and the need to reduce or eliminate vehicular traffic between the University Center and adjacent parking. We recently completed a transportation study to help inform decisions about parking and traffic flows on the northeast part of campus. As part of the University Center project, the campus drive between the University Center and the expanded parking lot to the East will be closed and a new route created from the South. Vehicles moving northeast past Birkham and Johnson Hall will be routed to the east along the top of the hill north of the Swan building connecting to Ives Street, south of Magnolia. In the next few weeks, Vice President of Administration and Finance, Jerry Scoby, and Mike Hughes will host a meeting with off-campus residents who live east of Ives Street to help explain the University Center renovation project and related site work.

To continue to attract and retain students to Ferris State University, I believe we will increasingly need to think of our campuses as destinations, as places that attract students because of the sense of community we create and provide there. Just as the FLITE library has helped build a center for academics in Big Rapids, I believe this University Center can help create a greater sense of place and community for our campus.

Please take a few moments to visit the renovation web page and see the outlines of how these changes will shape our future campus. The artist renderings are very dramatic and give a wonderful sense of how this project will further invigorate the heart of our campus.

Graphic Design: Now in Production

Using the facilities of the renovated historic Federal Building, this week Kendall College of Art and Design is partnering with the Grand Rapids Art Museum to present “Graphic Design: Now in Production,” a traveling exhibition co-organized by the Smithsonian Institution’s Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, New York, and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

“Graphic Design: Now in Production” focuses on recent innovations in the ways designers work. It reflects how graphic design has expanded from being a specialized profession to a broadly understood practice and a widely deployed tool. Embracing this shift, many designers have become producers, utilizing their skills as authors, publishers, instigators and entrepreneurs.

This show will run from Feb. 1 through April 21 and is a wonderful example of a growing spirit of cooperation in the arts that Kendall College of Art and Design and its President, David Rosen, is seeking to foster. It is exciting to see a joint show between Kendall and the GRAM. This provides a new level of resource to the arts community in Grand Rapids.

Festival of the Arts

Although it seems hard to believe, this is the sixth year of the resurgent Festival of the Arts in Big Rapids. At Ferris State University we are so very proud of the Festival and its support of artistic and cultural endeavors in the area. Since 2007, the Festival of the Arts has celebrated scores of musicians, artists, writers, actors, lecturers and performers of all sorts both from our community and beyond. The Festival has exceeded everyone’s expectations, establishing an extraordinarily rich artistic experience with the quantity, quality and range of its offerings.

The Festival of the Arts is a remarkable embodiment of the power of the creative spirit to bring people together. With more than 60 events, the size and magnitude ensure that no single individual will attend every event; however, whatever your interests are, you will find many things in this year’s slate of concerts, gallery shows, films and more to grab your attention. For me, one of the most exciting aspects of the Festival is the element of surprise or discovery. Choose something you might not normally attend – a literary reading, a dance recital, a lecture, or participatory workshop on an unfamiliar topic. The 2013 season is poised to continue its history of expanding horizons with varied and compelling events.

The Festival of the Arts kicks off Friday evening at 7 p.m. with an opening reception at Artworks in downtown Big Rapids. Saffell Gardner and Marion Hayden, an artistic couple from Detroit, will talk about their work in keeping the arts alive and well in *their* community, and the importance of keeping the arts alive and well in *our* community. They will return at the end of February to work with students in Big Rapids and close the Festival with a performance featuring Marion Hayden and her jazz ensemble, and the live creation of a piece of music-inspired art by Saffell Gardner.

There are twelve different events during the first weekend of the Festival, including a Saturday evening performance by the Happendance troupe from Lansing at Crossroads Charter Academy, and a performance by the a cappella singing group from Grand Valley, GV GrooVe!, on Sunday afternoon in the Dome Room. Please join me in thanking the Festival Board - Jerena Keys, Robert Krueger, Barbara Ross, Steve Sobers, and co-chairs Ed Mallett and Carrie Weis - for the hard work it takes to put on such a large and varied series of presentations.

The Festival of the Arts is timed to offer a slate of high-quality, life-affirming performances and shows during a time when many of us are beginning to wish for an early arrival of spring. This is a remarkable opportunity to see excellent stage productions, lectures and visual art, which in most cases are offered free or for a nominal fee. To find out more about the Festival of the Art and see a complete schedule of events, visit <http://www.ferris.edu/festival/> .

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler, president