

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
October 8, 2012

Student Center Renovation

For the past two years our university has been considering a major renovation of the Rankin Student Center. The current facility was built in 1957 and expanded in 1960 and 1987. Over the years it has been adapted to meet conflicting needs. For example, some of you may remember when the building housed a bowling alley. This evolution has created a building that does not have the benefit of a congruent design. To understand this, one need only stand at the Dome Room entrance and try to explain to a visitor how to get to the bookstore without going outside. Downstairs there is a triangular hallway layout that defies logic. The Rankin Center is clearly in need of significant renovations to align its designs with the needs of 21st century students, faculty, staff and visitors. The university's master plan lists this as a top priority and you have confirmed this through survey data.

This past year Professor Wendy Samuels and Vice President Dan Burcham led a team to create a vision to replace the Rankin Student Center with a modern University Center. They worked with the consulting firm of Brailsford & Dunlavey, who surveyed university stakeholders. Their findings and the documents created lay the groundwork for this project. This visioning document found that a renovated facility should serve as a recruitment tool for incoming students, better meet the needs of commuter students, and facilitate interaction between faculty, staff, students and community members. The study envisions the building architecture as equaling that of FLITE, thereby completing the transformation of the Campus Quad area.

One of the challenges of the current Student Center is parking. While creating much needed space, development of the main Campus Quad removed the major parking area for this facility. As part of the University Center project, both Masselink and Carlisle Residence Halls will be torn down. Masselink is the oldest residence facility on campus and has the smallest room size of any housing facility. Carlisle is dependent upon Masselink for its mechanical systems. Both buildings are vacant this year. The basement of Masselink Hall was the entry point for nearly all campus technology media systems including telephone, Internet, emergency communication and television. A project to move these systems to the portion of the Student Center that formerly housed Judicial Services and Housing will be finished this spring.

Currently a transportation study is underway to help us best plan for the new traffic patterns that will be created. Given this major change to campus, we will be looking at pedestrian and vehicular needs, parking lot locations and related issues. The logistics of this project will be very challenging. Construction will require current Rankin Center occupants to be relocated to other facilities.

The project has now moved from visioning to planning. There will be multiple opportunities for input and comment throughout. To help share project information, a website has been established. It includes information on the planning committee, the Visioning and Market Analysis report described above, a project timeline and other information. Once the scope of the project and the budget have been finalized, a comprehensive proposal will be presented to our Board of Trustees for approval. Project information may be accessed at <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/adminandfinance/physical/renovation/index.htm>.

Space Issues Task Force

The scope of the University Center renovation project will create space allocation or reallocation issues, often involving more than one division. Since we currently do not have a specific department, office, or individual responsible for this, Provost Fritz Erickson and Vice President Jerry Scoby have charged a new task force with being a clearinghouse for space-related matters. It will consider and evaluate requests, identify and evaluate alternate meeting spaces for use during 2013-14 while Rankin is closed, and present allocation recommendations to divisional vice presidents.

While the need for such a group may well exist beyond the University Center project, rather than establish an ongoing committee now, the intent is to create a task force that operates through August of 2014. At that time we will reevaluate whether to extend the duration of the task force, convert it to a committee, or dissolve the effort.

I want to thank the members of this initial task force – Paul Blake, Jim Hessler, Mike Hughes (chair) and Mark Schuelke – for agreeing to help with this important challenge.

Kendall and ArtPrize

At Friday's ArtPrize Winner's Event Kendall President David Rosen announced the College has made a significant, long-term commitment to ArtPrize, including exclusive sponsorship of the ArtPrize Juried Grand Prize for the next five years. Additionally, Kendall has committed to being an ArtPrize Exhibition Center and Premier Leadership Sponsor through 2017. In making the announcement, President Rosen said, "We are grateful for the invitation to participate as an Exhibition Center, and for the opportunities this international event provides for celebrating the art of our students, faculty, staff and alumni."

In addition to the sponsorship announcement, Kendall celebrated the announcement that the art work SiTE:LAB, curated by Kendall professor Paul Amenta, was awarded the juried award for Outstanding Venue for their installation at 54 Jefferson Ave., the former home of the Public Museum of Grand Rapids.

Kendall also enjoyed recognition on several juror's short lists. Kendall senior Robert Coombs' black and white photography entry, "Disabilities and Sexuality," was named a Two-Dimensional Award finalist by juror Tyler Green. Coombs, a C4-5 quadriplegic, was the only student entry to be recognized by the ArtPrize jurors.

Several pieces in Kendall's Role/Play exhibition at the renovated Federal Building also received recognition. "Mr. Weekend" by Mike Simi of Seattle, Wash., was selected as both a Three-Dimensional Award finalist and as a finalist in the Time-Based and Performance category by juror Cathy Edwards. Edwards also placed "Whole" by Hillerbrand + Magsamen of Houston, Texas, on her short list. Finally, earning a spot on the public's top 25 list, was "Plexus No. 18" by Gabriel Dawe, a Houston-based textile artist.

I want to congratulate President Rosen on this announcement and join him in thanking the hundreds of volunteers who dedicated thousands of hours to making ArtPrize such an extraordinary event for Kendall, Ferris and the City of Grand Rapids.

SPARC Meeting

The Strategic Planning and Resource Council will meet this Tuesday at 3 p.m. in the West Campus Community Center. The focus of this meeting will be mentoring, a critical component in student success. Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion David Pilgrim will present on this

topic. SPARC meetings are open to all and you are encouraged to attend, especially if you have interest in learning about and expanding mentoring programs at Ferris.

Ferris Wins Anchor-Bone Trophy in Weekend Athletic Action

It was a memorable weekend for head football coach Tony Annese and our men's football team. Saturday evening on the road before over 13,000 people they defeated the number-three rated team in the nation, Grand Valley State University. After falling behind 17-0, they dominated the game, winning convincingly 40-24. This is the first victory by Ferris over Grand Valley since 1999. We are delighted to have Tony Annese leading our football squad and congratulate him and the team for this signature achievement.

This past weekend our women's volleyball team won its seventh and eighth matches in a row, extending their record to 14-3 and 8-1 in the GLIAC Conference. Friday they defeated Ashland 3-0, and Saturday they downed Lake Erie 3-0. The team is ranked 21st in the nation. Congratulations to coach Tia Brandel-Wilhelm and her team for their continued success.

On Saturday our women's cross country team took top honors at the Lucian Rosa Invitational at the University of Wisconsin - Parkside. The team's score of 60 bested a field of 18 colleges and universities. The men's team placed second in the same competition. Last week the women were ranked 8th in the nation and our men were ranked 18th. Congratulations to coach Steve Picucci and our women and men's cross country student athletes.

Homecoming

This coming Saturday, Oct. 13, Ferris holds its annual Homecoming celebration. This is a long-running tradition at our university and attracts many alumni back to campus. The annual Homecoming parade through downtown Big Rapids starts at noon, and our men's football team plays Hillsdale at 2 p.m. at Top Taggart Field. Congratulations to our Homecoming Grand Marshalls, Criminal Justice Professor Terry Nerbonne, and alumnus Andrea Nerbonne, Director of Public Safety for the City of Big Rapids.

During this week there are many Homecoming-related events, including a comedy concert at Williams Auditorium on Thursday, Oct. 11, 7-9 p.m. One of the traditions I look forward to is the Chili Cook-off sponsored by the College of Engineering Technology. Events like this are a wonderful way to welcome our alumni back to campus. A full schedule of Homecoming events is available online at <http://www.ferris.edu/alumni/homecoming/>.

My thanks to everyone who works very hard to put on this entire slate of activities, especially the Homecoming Committee, which consists of students Steven Balkema (overall chair), Derek Austin, Herman Brooks III, Luke Edington, Melissa Hanson, Aby Harrold, Paige Most and Shannon Ramso. Thanks also to committee advisors Amber Balmer, Brandi Behrenwald, Christa Bull, Kim Erickson, Teresa Fogel, Jeremy Mishler, Mary Kay MacIver, Elvira Rajala and Angela Roman. I want to thank all faculty and staff for the efforts you make to welcome alumni back to our campus and to make homecoming a special time at Ferris State University. It is always meaningful to talk with our alumni and learn about the success that their education at Ferris began for them.

Sincerely,

David L. Eisler, president