



Included below is a press release regarding the Ferris Youth Initiative at Ferris State University. Further information is available by contacting Leah Nixon, assistant director of News Services.



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**A Smooth Transition: New Ferris Initiative Fosters Success**

BIG RAPIDS – Some would say that life is a series of details; for college students, it is often viewed as a sequence of transitions – moving from one role and phase of life to another. A new initiative at Ferris State University is dedicated to focusing on these transitions and helping orphans and foster youth find a home as they settle into their new stage of life as Ferris students.

The Ferris Youth Initiative was launched this semester to aid eligible students by providing academic support, faculty mentoring, life and wellness training, and financial assistance. Eligible students are those who are either parentless or have aged out of the foster care system.

“From its inception, Ferris State University has been committed to providing educational opportunities to all students,” Ferris President David L. Eisler said. “Our university is uniquely capable of providing education that connects students with bright and successful futures. Providing support to students in need is very much in the tradition of who we are.”

Hoping to give them the skills to live independently, connect socially and do well academically, this program will strive to make this happen through mentoring opportunities with faculty members and a special scholarship that will assist them financially.

Dean of Student Life Leroy Wright will serve as the initiative's advisor. Wright attended the Michigan Teen Conference in June, where he was able to learn about the circumstances of foster youth and the parentless, and about the current trends in the foster care system.

"Annually, more than 20,000 youth age out of foster care across the country, and well over 1,600 do so in the state of Michigan," Wright said. "When they leave this system, they face the challenge of figuring out how to live independently; they're going to face some transitional issues that are unique."

Eisler and Ferris Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion Dr. David Pilgrim recognized there was a need to help these students and developed the Ferris Youth Initiative to focus on helping them settle in to college life, Wright added.

"These students are here saying, 'enough is enough' – I want to be valued. I want to be appreciated. I'm willing to go through these changes, but I need to know that I have your support," Wright added. "This program is concerned about making sure that they do."

The program is open to both new and current orphaned and aged-out-of-foster-care students who attend Ferris full-time, live on campus and are 24 years old and younger.

"This program is consistent with Mr. Ferris' charge that we – the staff, faculty and students – always look for ways to make the world a better place," Pilgrim concluded. "Our goal is to make sure that these young people have greater access to college, and equally important, that they are graduated. Each semester I – and many others – will serve as mentors; and I promise you this: we will do everything we can to make sure that these young people are successful."

For more information about the Ferris Youth Initiative, visit [www.ferris.edu/diversity/fofyi](http://www.ferris.edu/diversity/fofyi).

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