

President's Memorandum to Faculty and Staff

Office of the President
November 21, 2011

Ferris Student Mourned

Last week Ferris was deeply shocked and saddened by the death of Demia Marie Davis, an 18-year-old student from Madison Heights. Our Department of Public Safety was dispatched to Clark Hall last Monday, Nov. 14, after Ms. Davis' roommate found her unresponsive. Our Counseling Center has made its services available to students and others affected by this tragedy. I want to thank everyone who has helped our University community through this difficult period.

The sense of vitality and potential that our students bring to a college campus is one of the reasons why many of us choose to work in education. We are all saddened when a young person does not have the opportunity to realize that potential. I know that you join me in extending our deepest condolences to Ms. Davis' family and friends.

Budget Forum Materials

My thanks to those of you who attended my budget forum last Thursday. While we continue to face many challenges at both the state and national level in terms of higher education funding, there is also some cause for optimism. As I noted in my presentation, Michigan has a balanced budget and ended FY 2011 with a \$500 million estimated surplus. Because of this improved fiscal outlook I do not anticipate we will face a mid-year funding reduction this year and while it is too early to be certain, there are prospects that we may not receive a reduction for next year. It has been some time since I have presented a budget forum without asking for further budget reductions. Throughout this period everyone at our University has been asked to conserve resources, reduce budgets and assume more responsibilities. Thank you for your ongoing extra efforts.

Significant concerns and uncertainties do remain. The slides from my presentation point out the increasing dependence of our students on Pell Grants. These awards currently total more than \$25 million and are at risk of being diminished with the uncertain budget situation in Washington. There also remain substantial economic challenges in Michigan, with our unemployment rate of 11 percent, the third highest in the country. During this spring's upcoming legislative session we will face the prospect of a funding formula for state universities, as well as the possibility of community colleges being allowed to offer bachelor degrees. Both would have a major impact on Ferris.

While there are more reasons this fall for optimism, there are also troubling long-term trends in the rapidly rising costs of health care coverage, tuition rates and the average debt load of our students. These are topics I will return to in budget sessions next semester. The slides from the forum are accessible here http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/president/budget-pres/forums/docs/Budget_Presentation_111711.pdf. If you were unable to attend, I hope you will take a moment to look at some of this material. As always I encourage and look forward to your comments.

Ferris Magazine

In my last University-wide message I included a link to *Ferris Magazine*. Hard copies of the magazine are being mailed, and you should have a copy soon if you have not received it already. In addition to coverage about the new Pharmacy facility in Grand Rapids, I want to mention the remarkable story of student Jordan Lindsey. Instead of gaining the “freshman fifteen,” this young man lost 100 pounds during his freshman year eating at The Rock and working out at the Student Rec Center. I’ve had the opportunity to visit with Jordan. He is an impressive young man. My congratulations to him, and also to Dining Services and Student Recreation for their work on behalf of our students.

If you have not yet received the print edition of *Ferris Magazine*, the online version is available at <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/alumni/ferrismagazine/> . This publication is beautifully done and a source of pride for our University. I offer my congratulations and thanks to all associated with it.

Commencement Stories

After Thanksgiving vacation there remain only two weeks of classes and the exam period before Commencement. This very busy fall semester has passed quickly. Please contact me if you know of a student graduating this fall with a compelling story. This might include significant achievements or accomplishments, overcoming challenges, or making important contributions to the University or community. Each year at this time I look forward to the opportunity to visit with exceptional students and to feature some of their stories during commencement exercises. These examples of student success help illustrate the very human nature of the work we do here at Ferris. If you know of a noteworthy graduate, please e-mail me at eislerd@ferris.edu or call our office at extension 2500. Thank you!

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is a traditional time to visit with family and friends. Soon, many of you will be traveling during this very busy period. Please drive carefully and return home safely. The Michigan Department of Transportation has an interactive map that shows construction, lane closures and other information and helpful links. The site is accessible at <http://mdotnetpublic.state.mi.us/drive> . I am hopeful the Thanksgiving break will provide time for you to visit with family and friends.

Best wishes for a happy and restful holiday.