



PRESS RELEASE: Center for Latino Studies to Lead Diversity Excursion to Grand Rapids

Betsy L Musolf to: Archive

09/26/2012 04:38 PM

Here is a press release about a cultural diversity excursion planned Friday, Sept. 28 in Grand Rapids offered to administrators, faculty and staff by Ferris State University's new Center for Latino Studies and the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning. It will be led by Sociology professor Tony Baker, the center's interim director and a member of the Grand Rapids Public Schools Board of Education.

Any questions about this release can be directed to Sandy Gholston, News Services and Social Media Manager.



Ferris Cultural Diversity Excursion.doc

To read the online version of this release, visit:

<http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/archive/2012/september/latino.htm>



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For Immediate Release
Sept. 26, 2012

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Center for Latino Studies to Lead Diversity Excursion to Grand Rapids

GRAND RAPIDS -- A group of Ferris State University administrators, faculty and staff will connect with three Grand Rapids communities that students call home during a cultural diversity

excursion on Friday, Sept. 28.

The trip to Grand Rapids is being offered by Ferris' new Center for Latino Studies and the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning as part of the university's continuing efforts to enhance its "cosmopolitan" culture, said Sociology professor Tony Baker, the center's interim director. A mix of faculty members, deans and associate deans have signed up to attend, Baker said.

"My primary goal is to decrease the distance between Ferris and these Grand Rapids neighborhoods, or rather, our individual biographies and those of our students, and embrace a connection to community," said Baker, who also is a member of the Grand Rapids Public Schools Board of Education. "We must establish these relationships to be a culturally diverse campus."

Baker will lead Friday's day-long excursion that will include stops at:

- Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Academy, where principal Tricia Mathis and GRPS communications director John Helmboldt will lead a tour and discuss why the southeast-side school is one of the district's most successful.
- Messiah Missionary Baptist Church, the city's oldest black church, near Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Academy.
- The Hispanic Center of Western Michigan, on the city's southwest side, where Martha Gonzalez-Cortez and her staff will discuss the challenges and assets of the bilingual, multi-cultural community. The Hispanic Center is a primary community partner in Ferris' efforts to create collaborations in the Latino community.
- Ferris' Kendall College of Art and Design, where President David Rosen will lead a tour of the newly-renovated historic Federal Building and acquaint participants with the downtown arts community. Kendall is a partner in the effort to better connect with diverse communities in Grand Rapids and West Michigan. The visit also will include an introduction to ArtPrize, the hugely-popular international art exhibition. Ferris and Kendall are sponsors.

"We will identify many distinct communities as we travel through Grand Rapids," Baker said. "Ferris has and is a community here."

Ferris established the Center for Latino Studies last summer to provide educational, social engagement and leadership-development opportunities within Latino communities throughout the Midwest. Programs, such as an excursion to Chicago with Spanish Club students to visit Latino communities, are in the works as well as potential development of a Spanish major at Ferris.

"We will be focusing on figuring out ways to connect our university to these communities – developing ways for our Social Work majors to work with migrant workers or our Pharmacy students to develop outreach opportunities in black and Latino communities," Baker said. "We need to determine what the communities can use and enhance our programs to address those needs."

Baker will serve as the center's founding executive director until a permanent executive director is hired. His staff includes associate director Jessica Cruz, student resource coordinator Natalia Carvahlo-Pinto and two student program coordinators. The center will be housed in an office in the Interdisciplinary Resource Center by November, Baker said.

For additional information on the center, visit

<http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/academicaffairs/latinostudies/homepage.htm>.

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