In this August issue you will find some updates on a number of projects and services underway in Administration and Finance.

- If you have been on Ferris Drive recently you may have noticed the *new resurfacing all the way from State Street to Perry Street*. This was an interesting project from the prospective that the university owns a portion of this street and the City owns the balance. There was outstanding collaboration between the City’s facility staff and our Physical Plant including joint bidding, collaboration on the scheduling to make sure it was done before students returned and the bid leveraging by doing both portions of the project at the same time.

- If you have been on Ferris Drive recently you may have noticed some work being done on the outfield of our *intercollegiate softball field*. While this field serves our team well in a number of ways the outfield holds water in the spring, and as a result there are a number of games each year where it is difficult or impossible to play on portions of the outfield. Athletics and Grounds are collaborating to raise the elevation and improve the drainage of the outfield to make this more useable for student athletes.

- Many of you are well aware that the university and some of our employees have been working hard over the last couple years to identify some changes in *health plans* to continue to provide health insurance that meets the needs of our employees, and at the same time has some sensitivity to cost containment, affordability and sustainability. As part of this journey we launched the new HealthyU wellness program in the summer of 2012. During the summer of 2013 we moved from some earlier self-funded medical plans for staff to some new self-funded plans through Priority Health.

- One of the analyses provided to the university provided by our benefit consulting partner in July showed some macro-level health plan cost trends for our Priority Health plans. These trends included the cost trends for medical, prescription drugs, plan administration and stop loss expenses. I was very pleased to see that all five of the factors featured had lower costs for 2013-14 than they did in 2012-13. If you participated in the design of our wellness program or participate as an employee in the wellness program, thank you! If you had a hand in helping with the redesign of some of our health plans in the 2012-13 for the July 2013 launch, thank you! If you are an employee that has Priority Health health insurance through the university, thank you for your efforts to be a good consumer of health care to not only make sure that your and your family’s health care needs are taken care of but done in a cost effective way to help control your costs and the university’s health care costs. Thank you!

- *University Center project* continues to progress nicely. If you have been in the north Quad recently you have noticed that the new glass wall on the west side of the University Center is nearing completion. With a majority of the building enclosed, substantial work has been done on the interior of the building. This is going to be an outstanding new facility for our students and the entire university community. You may also have noticed that the construction fence on the west side of the building has now been moved from out in the Quad back closer to the building making the new permanent stage and more of the quad available for campus activities.
While many departments are busy during the summer our facility and information technology staff members are racing to the finish line to complete as many of the summer projects as possible before the opening this week. Both areas have many projects in progress and will be wrapping up some of these projects throughout this week getting ready for the residence halls opening on Friday and for the start of classes on Monday. A big thank you to these staff members!

In the weeks leading up to the opening of each of our major semesters, IT puts a major focus upon making sure that classroom technologies are ready for our faculty and students. This staff is in the final stages of these readiness efforts for classes to begin on Monday. A big thank you to these staff members as well!

Some of you may recall the communications in the late winter about the Governor including the Swan renovation as the single project for higher education Capital Outlay included in his budget announced in February. President Eisler and selected faculty and staff continue to work hard to position this project in a way to increase the probability of this project being approved for planning and even potentially for construction authorization in the next round of Capital Outlay. As part of that process our Board of Trustees approved in May the authorization for us to spend up to $275,000 on the next phase of planning to have this project as far down the planning pipeline as possible so we can demonstrate readiness to quickly move this project forward. Significant additional planning will be underway between the Physical Plant and representatives from the College of Engineering and Technology to take this planning to the next level by the first of December.

For those of you that are familiar with the brickwork being done on the west side of the Science facility, this project is advancing nicely. The current estimated substantial completion date for this project is mid-September.

Information was shared in the July edition of The Scoop on the university’s plan for implementation of the new minimum wage rates for students. At that time we were still evaluating how we would approach this with the few staff members that are paid an hourly rate under the new minimum wage rate of $8.15 per hour. At last count we had 13 such individuals in part-time temporary positions. To the extent these individuals are still working for the university on September 1 their pay rates will be adjusted up to the new minimum wage rate.

Earlier versions of The Scoop noted our plan to update our Big Rapids and Grand Rapids Master Plans. Given some turnover in senior positions a decision has been made to move forward with the Big Rapids plan and delay the update to the Grand Rapids plan a couple years. As a result of a competitive bid process, Neumann Smith has been selected as our master planning partner for this effort.

Over the last year leaders in our division have put a lot of time and energy into a Housing Plan for the institution, with the primary focus being on housing facilities. The document is nearing completion, and will be an input document into the university’s master planning process. It looks at issues of overall capacity, age and replacement planning for our housing facilities from 2015-2025.
Like other divisions, Administration and Finance has been working on our **major initiatives for the coming year**. These have been documented and will be on our Vice President for Administration and Finance website by the first of September. In addition, we have also launched our efforts to refresh our divisional Mission/Purpose statement, Vision statement, and Strategic Plan. While these statements are in second draft form and are not ready to be shared publicly we will be inviting a number of individuals to review drafts and provide input this fall to make sure that we are appropriately focused on serving the needs of students, faculty, and staff. Our current goal is to complete our divisional strategic plan late in 2014.

A couple of years ago Public Safety and IT implemented a new registration system for parking permits. This on-line registration process has significantly improved the efficiency of that process and has substantially reduced the August waiting lines in the Public Safety Office. You may recall that this system also has given us the opportunity to provide on-line temporary parking permits for guests. The latest enhancement to this system to be launched this fall is a new feature for **on-line bicycle registrations**. Thank you to Sgt. Wing for submitting the idea, and to June Swanson, Bruce Borkovich and others that have been engaged in this latest enhancement for the campus!

In contrast to the view from the public that those of us in education have the summer off, many individuals in our division work harder, have more that must be accomplished, and have tougher deadlines during the summer than they do during the academic year. As a result, I am pleased to share with employees in our division that as a small token of our appreciation for a lot of outstanding work that has been done over the summer, we will have our **4th Annual Administration and Finance Thank You Tailgate party** before the September 20 football game against Grand Valley. More information will follow to our Administration and Finance employees but please accept my appreciation and gratitude for the vast amount of work that has been done this summer to take care of business and to ready the campus for the launch of another great semester at Ferris!

_I am very appreciative of our staff and student employees, who make the difference in the projects and services we provide for you. I want to extend a big thank you to the many dedicated employees in Administration and Finance who work hard each day, throughout the year to provide quality services to the campus!_

_Jerry L. Scoby_

Jerry L. Scoby
Vice President for Administration and Finance