December 2014

The Scoop
on Projects and Services in Administration and Finance

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

✓ The temporary shuttle service instituted in partnership with the City’s Dial-A-Ride system while the University Center renovation project was underway will end on December 12. Given how popular this has been with our students we have had numerous conversations this fall with the City Manager’s office to design an ongoing shuttle system that would run during the hours that would be most helpful to students and would be cost effective for the institution. The expanded and ongoing on-campus shuttle will go into effect on Monday, January 12. During the spring semester it will run from 7:30 am – 7 pm Monday through Thursday, and from 7:30 am – 2 pm on Friday.

✓ The new campus shuttle route and stops locations can be found at: http://www.ferris.edu/HTM/LS/FerrisFAQ/maps/Campus-Shuttle-Map.pdf. While our goal was to see the shuttle go downtown and west on Perry Street to some of the retail venues, we were not able to work out the details for those stops in time for a January launch, and will be given further consideration by the City for the future.

✓ The Master Plan input sessions held during September, October, and November have been completed and the partners from Neumann Smith are synthesizing the information received during those input sessions. The next step in this process is for them to provide the university with the first draft Master Plan later in December.

✓ Given the Mecosta County culture, the Administration and Finance division is running a second annual Biggest Buck contest with the culminating celebration and presentation of awards on December 5. This context includes prizes for the biggest buck, the second place runner up prize, prize for the ugliest buck, and open categories for a drawing for any other buck entries in the contest as well as any doe entries. This is the beginnings of what hopefully will be a fun longer term tradition for employees in our division.

✓ The Concur system has now been in place for two years. During this period we have received feedback from individual users that really like the system and we continue to receive feedback that many users, and in particular infrequent users, find the system very difficult to use. We are committed to making this system more user friendly and are in the process of implementing a number of changes to that end. One such improvement is what is referred to as the Concur User Interface which simply means the look, feel, and functionality that you see when you enter the system. Concur has informed us that this change must go into place by January 31, 2015. Some users have already moved to the new version of this system as early adopters. If you are interested in being an early adopter too, please contact Linda Randle at LindaRandle@ferris.edu. Over 20 other simplification items are being evaluated to help make the system easier for you to use and here are a few examples:
The Finance area has purchased some enhanced mobile functionality for users and will be rolling this out over the next four months.

Historically all employees (with the exception of student employees) have been loaded into Concur however, an employee was not eligible to be active in the system until their department went in and activated a code. Finance staff is reconfiguring the Concur system so that when employees are loaded into the system they will be active and the user department will not need to take the additional step to active the new hires.

Through a recent process improvement initiative it was identified that new university Pcard users have four or five brief videos they need to watch and then two quizzes with approximately 65 questions between the two quizzes. This process is being simplified and the number of questions in the quizzes will be reduced dramatically to 10-15 questions.

While still in the evaluation stage one of the initiatives being undertaken is to try to identify additional expenditures where the dollar threshold for required receipts can be increased so that users will have fewer receipts that they have to load into the system. We will obviously need to balance this user convenience with reasonable and responsible financial controls.

The Finance staff is studying the feasibility of defining a geographical radius for “local travel” whereby employees traveling in the “local area” would not need to submit a request. Currently any travel requires a request if there is going to be a reimbursement request to go along with that travel.

As part of the preparation for the planned Swan Annex renovation and expansion, the Osprey platform above the parking lot south of the building will be moved to the north side of Swan. The goal is to complete this relocation this month.

With the University Center opening on January 5 the bookstore will be beginning their set up work in the new bookstore this week. The bookstore will continue to serve the campus community at the current location south of the campus through and including December 16. They will open the new store in the University Center for business on January 5.

The new dining venues in the University Center will go through some invitation-based soft openings the week of January 5 with a full opening with the beginning of the spring semester on January 12.

The university is an active supporter of the Mecosta County Chamber of Commerce as one of the local organizations to help make Big Rapids and Mecosta County a vibrant place for businesses and residents. As part of that relationship the university is hosting a Chamber Rise and Shine on February 26 from 7:30-8:30 a.m. to help introduce members of the Chamber community to the University Center. Our membership with the Chamber is a university membership and so if you have interest in attending the Rise and Shine networking experience please save the date on your calendar and plan to join us!
✓ Some of you may have noticed the new sidewalk on the west side of campus from the parking lot on the east side of the softball field to the Pharmacy building. This is just one more enhancement to make the campus safer and more pedestrian friendly.

✓ The Automotive department, Academic Affairs, and Physical Plant have been in the planning stages throughout the fall to renovate the southwest wing of the Automotive Center. The project scope includes a renovation of the faculty offices, departmental office, fuels lab, and other supporting spaces in the southwest wing. The work on this approved project should be complete the first of August for use in the fall semester.

✓ Some of you are aware that the Athletic department moved the skate rental and sharpening operation from its former location just east of the ticket box office in the Sports Complex to have it co-located in the retail store further east in the same concourse. This vacated space is being converted into a wireless lounge and meeting room with a primary focus being for use by parents and family members of skaters using the Ewigleben Ice Arena. This renovation will include a new window between the room and the concourse, new paint, new ceiling, new floor covering, new lighting, and a new flat panel screen to be used to support the multiple uses of the space. This room should be available beginning in mid-January.

✓ As we look ahead to razing Helen Ferris Hall in the summer of 2015 and the two story East Campus Apartments and South Campus Apartments in the summer of 2016, we are planning to build some additional town houses as part of the West Campus Apartment complex. A recommendation is going to the Board of Trustees on December 12 to add up to four new buildings as part of Robin Court, and if approved we will plan for this project early in 2015 with the intention of opening them in the summer of 2016.

✓ The Timme first floor lobby has three kiosks with 12 public computers for use by students to inquire into their accounts, for use by prospective students and their families when they are in the building for admissions or financial aid activities and have also been used historically for orientation. These computers are dated and are being replaced with 6 new touch screen computers to modernize the functionality in the very important high traffic area with students and guests. This replacement project was approved in late November and the 6 new computers will be in place in January.

I greatly appreciate all the work by 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

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Vice President for Administration and Finance