Call to Order

President David L. Eisler called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

In Attendance

Amber Balmer, Dan Burcham, Dave Eisler, Karen Obermier, Miles Postema, Jerry Scoby, Allen Sutherby, Tom Weaver and John Willey.

Discussion Notes - the discussion notes from February 4, 2009 were reviewed. No changes were noted.

Dave Eisler welcomed Jerry Scoby, Vice President for Administration and Finance, to his first Leadership Council meeting. Jerry extended his appreciation to the President and noted he was looking forward to co-leading and collaborating with us.

AFSCME update - Tom Weaver extended his appreciation for the efforts of Rick Christner during his interim position as Vice President for Administration and Finance. Tom noted that work ramps up during the summer, which will positively affect the workers. However, he extended his concern regarding the cutting of overtime hours. They need to keep up with maintenance. He expressed his concern that if we cut services there will be a detrimental effect when we open the dorms up. He extended his appreciation that Rick Christner allocated funds to bring retirees back. However, bringing them in instead of providing the skilled trades with overtime may not be the most efficient and effective action. He expressed concern regarding the Rock Café renovation. Although a very positive thing, students are more engaged on campus during the weekends. Tom extended his concern about not having enough manpower to handle the workload. He noted that today is Election Day and there will be a lot of activity at tonight’s meeting. He extended concerns regarding employees transferring between dining services to custodial and offered suggestions to help out dining services (buses to take people to the Rock, train custodians to be dining services workers). He noted it would be helpful to have the Rock open 5 days.

Budget update - Dave Eisler noted that SPARC will be taking a first pass at the budget ideas. He had asked the Deans and others to get ideas about budget reductions. That produced a document that is 45 pages long, including some items that people will like and some that people will not like. The document will be released to campus. From that solicitation, he produced a summary from the ideas that came forward. Consideration must be made at different levels of cutting, which of the ideas do you want to cut? How much are we willing to constrain tuition to help our students? The budget will be a self-inflicted budget cut. It does not impact on auxiliary services because they are self-funded. Discussions will continue in the fall. The good news is we have already cut $2.5 million out of our budget, but another 2% needs to be cut. That may be enough to get us through. Three things need to happen: we need a broadly-based group that is going to look at major approaches to the budget - to say “do these things first.” Then we need a group that is going to manage the process - leaders. The third part is the public perception of what is happening. The circumstances are significantly different than the early 90’s.
Student Affairs update – Dan Burcham noted many positive activities happening in Student Government. He noted that Amber Balmer has been very engaged and very effective. On April 18 we will see something that will reach national levels, and it will be an exciting weekend. It is coming down to the last Dawg Days. The last one filled up the College of Business auditorium. It looks like the Pre-Pharmacy program is going to be very big. But if you can’t get into the program, you can still be admitted at Ferris. The numbers look good, better than they were last year. Orientation is up. Many continuing students are having issues such as their parents losing jobs, etc. We are making phone calls – the colleges are calling their students. We are doing the best we can with our yield rate and have the very best numbers as we go into summer.

Academic Affairs update – Dan Burcham indicated he has talked to the colleges about their successes. For the College of Arts & Sciences, they could have used a much larger room. There is a great deal of research going on, even though we are not a research institution, and we are nationally known in many of these areas. We need to get that information out. 83% of our students receive financial aid. There is a group of students here that we serve through the TIP program. They are eligible to get free tuition after a certain amount of months. Our students are basically middle class. We also have veterans, non-traditional students, and FTIAC students higher than before. We are working on a rolling basis to find money for the students. We need to be able to communicate to the state that we are going to do that. 29% of our students are Pell Grant eligible.

Clerical Technical update – Allen Sutherby inquired if there is anything that can be done, such as some kind of legislation where the people can re-do their FAFSA mid-stream? Dan Burcham responded that there is; however, the challenge is how long it takes to get done. Allen noted that we need to find a way to announce that. He indicated they are working on the new purchasing card and noted the higher level secretaries are having to put their names on the cards. He is working with Steve Stratton and Human Resources on this. He extended his appreciation to the President in allowing the Vice President to run their divisions regarding the cases where individuals are trying to work out various schedules in their areas, such as four 10-hour days, etc.

Governmental Relations and General Counsel update – Miles Postema reported on the Friends of Ferris event. They had approximately 260-270 guests and raised about $25,000. Last week was the Legislative Luncheon, an event with 175 attendees with 38 legislators this year. They kicked off their Ferris Advocacy Network with 13-14 attendees.

Student Government update – Amber Balmer reported that this will be her last meeting. She noted that the WILL conference was a success with over 250 in attendance. They partnered with the Office of Minority Student Services. Next Friday they have their first meeting of the committee for the Blues and Barbecue event. They have booked this event during the Grand Valley State University football game on September 19 and are looking at 6,000 in attendance for this event. They are taking all the ticket money and putting it toward scholarships. Their goal is to have a Foundation scholarship in the next two years. Amber provided an update on The Big Event community service project. They thought they were going to do 75 houses, using 500 students. They have 78 houses set up with 10 houses on hold. They now have 720 students signed up. The problem is they will still have six teams on hold that don’t have anywhere to go that day. It is possible to have 100 houses. Dave Eisler indicated that Steve Sobers will be at the opening ceremony. Amber noted that some of the faculty would like to use this event as an in-service project. The date is April 18 from 6 am to 2 pm. Pancakes with the President has been set for May 4 from 11 pm to 12:30 am. They have started a new project this year regarding the refunding of their fees. They are working with student services and the student fees committee on a campaign for educating students on the fees and what happens when the fees are refunded. Their mission is to have fewer fees refunded each
year. Amber reported on the ABS Notebooks project. They will be handing out 12,000 notebooks. Ads are in the notebooks, and they get an 8-page spread. They plan to have a mission-values-vision page; notes from the Student Government President and President Eisler; a page of 125-year histories information; a resource page (technology); an annual events page; a page for student leadership and activities; a page for student life; and a Student Government page as well. They will try to get the seal for the front of the notebook. Use of the seal was approved by the President.

Administration and Finance update – Jerry Scoby noted that the bond issue is scheduled to close next Tuesday. They are working on room and board rates and getting ready for the demolition of the East Campus Apartments.

University Advancement and Marketing update – John Willey reported that where his area is trying to go is framed by the 125th Anniversary idea. He explained the approach of tying the 125th anniversary into their marketing efforts. He provided additional information regarding the effect of every 100-point drop in the DOW meaning a $108.5 billion drop in annual philanthropy. He noted that those that make over $250,000 per year contribute $186 billion in philanthropy every year. In the Ferris Foundation, 40% of the endowed scholarships are beneath their original value so they are not awardable. Some will be at reduced levels. They have been working on getting a handle on understanding what the gap is to target for filling in the near term. He noted that we also have significant perceived needs from students. We will use this as an opportunity to build understandings of individual philanthropy. For the Opportunity at 125 we will start here on campus and take it outside with gift officers for 2-3 fiscal years. He noted that endowments are spent on an average of 12 quarters. As a strategy, we are going to be committed to annual resources to offset what we know are structural problems in the Foundation’s assets. We have a perfect time to do it with the 125th.

President’s update – Dave Eisler noted that the visits to the divisions have been very successful and insightful. On a recent visit to the College of Optometry he learned about world-class research they are doing on eye issues. Especially impressive is their work with VOSH, taking eyeglasses donated, taking big lenses and making new lenses from them, making frames for men and women, and then giving these to the needy in countries where they provide eye care. The learning experience from hearing of people’s successes was very valuable. These are extraordinary people that care in ways that even the people that work here don’t know about and their enthusiasm is contagious.

Dave extended his appreciation to all for taking the time to meet. He indicated they will address the budget this afternoon.

At 9:44 a.m. the meeting adjourned.

Submitted by: Karen K. Obermier