Ferris State University
Presentation to the Senate Appropriations
Higher Education Sub-committee
May 13, 2005

Ferris State University is a leader in economic development and in the preparation of Michigan’s citizens for successful careers. We provide the unique kind of education essential to enable the state’s workforce to meet the demands of future employment. From programs that train the builders of buildings, operators of heavy equipment, computer information systems professionals, electronics engineers, manufacturing engineers, nurses, healthcare professionals, pharmacists, optometrists, and so on. Ferris provides programs that are hands-on, experiential and that may be four years or less. These unique, equipment and practical experience intensive programs are key to the jobs of tomorrow.

Ferris impacts economic development through education and training.

- Ferris provides programs that are unique in the state, some that are even unique in the nation.
- Last year Ferris awarded over 830 associate degrees, eight times more than any university in the state. This strength at both the associate and baccalaureate levels allows the University to create innovative 2+2 degrees, where students first earn the associate and then the bachelor degree.
- To help support the Workforce Investment Act, Ferris State University has created 56 training programs, four times more than any other university in the state. These range from 12 credit hours credentials to 2-year and 4-year programs.
- Ferris is working with Montcalm Community College to help workers in Greenville and has offered its services to assist with displaced workers at Steelcase facilities in Grand Rapids.

Ferris provides jobs for Michigan citizens.

- Ferris State University is the largest employer in Mecosta County with 1,333 full-time employees, 573 part-time employees and 2,731 student employees; a total workforce of 4,585. The University is the largest employer for a five-county area.
- Our impact as the largest employer in the West Central area, where small cities and towns are the norm, is significant. The benefits to the local economy, education and other partners cannot be overstated.

Ferris spurs economic development through partnerships with business, industry, and government.

- The College of Allied Health has created 3 certificates to support Michigan Works! Ferris is working with the Dow Foundation on a major redesign of workforce education.
- It is estimated that the economic impact of Ferris optometrists is over 1/3 of a billion dollars a year.
- Through Freedom to Learn, Ferris State University is actively working to integrate technology in instruction in Michigan schools.
- To help address the nursing shortage in Michigan, Ferris has created clinical faculty workshops to train staff nurses as instructors for pre-licensure nursing programs. It has begun a masters program to educate additional nursing faculty and begun three additional RN to BSN nursing cohorts around the state in Traverse City, Niles, and Flint.
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1. What is your university’s mission statement? What does your university do exceptionally well? From an out-of-state perspective, which five or six universities would you consider to be in your peer group?

Mission: Ferris State University will be a national leader in providing opportunities for innovative teaching and learning in career-oriented, technological and professional education.

Supporting that mission, Ferris focuses on teaching with over 85 percent of all instruction performed by full-time, tenure track faculty. No graduate assistants are used for instruction. This provides students the many benefits of having skilled, dedicated teaching faculty in the classroom. Ferris also performs exceptionally well in responding to Michigan business and industry needs by maintaining current, relevant curricula which produce graduates with the hands-on skills that allow them to be productive employees from the first day of employment. Ferris also provides real-world relevancy to its curricula by requiring curricular related internships in over 90 percent of its degree programs.

Peer Institutions: Ferris’ peer group includes the following institutions.

- Central Missouri State University
- Clarion University (Pennsylvania)
- Pittsburg State (Kansas)
- University of California-Pomona
- University of Minnesota-Duluth
- University of Wisconsin-Stout
- Weber State University (Utah)
- Western Illinois University
- Wright State University (Ohio)
2. What factors demonstrate that a university is successful in fulfilling its mission? What outcomes indicate the success of your university, and how would you measure those outcomes?

The major factor denoting success at Ferris State is employment. That employment comes at a couple of time during a Ferris student’s academic career. Obviously, employment follows graduation. At Ferris, 98 percent of students seeking employment find jobs following graduation. Ferris is extremely proud of our strong graduation rates. This rate is tied directly to our curricular relevancy. Employers seek out Ferris graduates because our graduates have the hands-on experience that allows them to be productive from the start. Employment many times comes before graduation for Ferris students. Because of the hands-on skills students learn from their first year in college, students are sought out by business and industry even before they graduate. Students may leave the University before graduation for gainful employment. Even though that isn’t reflected in our graduation statistics, we view that as a strong measure of success for our students.

Ferris is also successful in fulfilling its mission through national recognition of its faculty and students.

3. On what basis should universities be funded? For example, does the size of enrollment or enrollment growth play a role in this? How about graduation rates? In-state/out-of-state students? Universities with copyrights, patents, and trademarks? Medical schools? The life sciences? Should the cost of more expensive classes be considered? Do you believe the state of Michigan should have a funding formula for its universities?

Michigan universities should be funded based on data involving enrollment and cost. Enrollment should definitely be a part of this. Given the differing abilities of students, if graduation rates are used as a measure it should be based on improvements to graduation rates. State funding should be used for in-state students. Out-of-state students should pay the full cost of instruction. The accompanying paper presents strong evidence of the relationship between high cost degree areas and employment needs for Michigan’s economy. Additional funding should be directed to encourage growth in these areas. Michigan needs a simple, straight-forward, and understandable approach to higher education funding. This must set expectations for funding of Michigan’s Universities and revive this state’s economy.

4. What is the placement rate of graduating seniors from your university? In which disciplines are your graduates finding the greatest success in job placement (i.e. nursing, engineering, etc.)? Conversely, in which fields are your graduates having the most difficulty finding employment? What fields do you consider to be vital to Michigan’s economy as we look to the future? Forecasting ahead, what areas of employment do you see as the greatest need in Michigan for the next five years?
The placement rate at Ferris State University is 98 percent. Ferris has a 100% placement rate in the following areas:

Health Professions (every Ferris program had a 100% placement rate)
Examples with 100% placement rates:
- Optometry
- Pharmacy
- Dental Hygiene
- Health Care Systems Administration
- Medical Record Administration/Technology
- Nuclear Medicine Technology
- Nursing
- Radiography
- Respiratory Care

Computer Information/Business
Examples with 100% placement rates:
- Information Systems Management
- Professional Golf Management
- Professional Tennis Management
- Accountancy

Education and Social Services
Examples with 100% placement rates:
- Education (all secondary disciplines)
- Television Production
- Recreation Leadership and Management

Technologies
Examples with 100% placement rates:
- Architectural Technology
- Automotive and Heavy Equipment Management
- Automotive Body
- Automotive Service Technology
- Building Construction Technology
- Computer Networks and Systems
- Electrical/Electronics Engineering Technology
- Facilities Management
- Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning Technology
- Manufacturing Engineering and Manufacturing Tooling
- Plastics Technology
- Rubber Engineering Technology
- Surveying Engineering/Technology
- Welding Engineering/Technology
With an overall 98% placement rate, there are very few disciplines where students are struggling to find jobs. Only five disciplines have placement rates below 85 percent: Applied Biology, Psychology, Applied Speech Communication, Social Work, and Printing Management. Even here the lowest placement rate for Speech Communication is 75%.

Fields vital to Michigan will continue to be in the health professions disciplines, technologies and engineering, and in information systems. These are the areas where business and industry is demanding workers and where graduates enjoy excellent employment results.

Over the next five years, Michigan’s graduates must mirror the diversification required to sustain our economy. Those will continue to be in the health professions areas, in information technology, in sales, and in the service sector.

5. What would be your definition of a research university? Do you consider your university to be a research university?

Research universities depend upon faculty to generate significant amount of external support to carry on study in their academic fields. At research universities faculty frequently have significantly reduced teaching responsibilities. To compensate significant numbers of sections are taught by teaching assistants and class sizes are frequently much larger. While some faculty at Ferris State University do excellent research, we are not a research institution.

6. What percentage of your freshmen return for their sophomore year?

Ferris retains 67% of entering freshmen for the second year of study. Retention is a significant focus for our institution and this figure has increased 8 percentage points (13.6%) over the past five years.

What percentage of your incoming freshmen graduate after four years? What percentage returns to graduate in their fifth year? Sixth?

The technical nature of our programs and the required internships are such that very few students graduate in four years. Currently that rate is 25% for all programs. We have instituted a process to reduce the number of hours to graduation, to ease student transfer, and to encourage increased summer enrollment to address this. In bachelor programs 37% of students graduate in five years and 41% graduate in six. Graduation rates are challenging numbers for two major reasons. First, Ferris’s role as a community college for our area brings a number of students who are exploring their future and have not decided on an academic major or area of interest; and second, the number of students who are employed prior to receiving their degree.
7. How much financial aid were you able to give to your students in the 2004-2005 academic year? How much financial aid do you anticipate being able to provide in the 2005-2006 academic year?

For FY 2005, Ferris budgeted $7.1 million for institutional financial aid support. Our actual expenditure will surpass that budget. Next year our plan is to increase our financial aid budget by 12 to 14 percent to respond to the increased aid pressure this year.

In addition to institutional funds, Ferris students receive financial aid from State and Federal sources resulting in almost $6,500 per student being available from those sources to support a Ferris education. In 2003-2004, Ferris students received almost $67 million in financial assistance ($7 million institution, $5 million State, and $55 million Federal.) This ranks Ferris second among the fifteen public universities in financial aid (all sources) per students.

8. Have you given any consideration as to what new degrees your university may begin offering in the future? If so, what are these programs?

Ferris State University is actively working on a number of new degree programs to address ongoing needs in areas where we have instructional expertise. Examples of these include the combination of technical and healthcare fields within the Masters of Business Administration, one example of this is a degree program that combines the Pharmacy doctoral degree with an MBA, new degrees in Homeland Security, new degrees in Sustainable Design and Manufacturing, and new certification areas in Teacher Education,

Additionally Ferris State University continues to examine different methods and locations for delivery of its programs.