1. What is the fundamental mission of your university?

The mission of Ferris State University is to be a national leader in providing opportunities for innovative teaching and learning in career-oriented, technological and professional education.

As Michigan continues to struggle through serious economic changes and experiences significant job loss in traditional industrial strengths, there has never been a greater need for the type of focused higher education Ferris State University provides. We take seriously our responsibility to prepare students in the health, technical, and professional areas in which we excel.

2. In which areas of study would you like to see more students? In which academic areas are there perhaps too many students?

The need for increased numbers of well prepared college graduates was clearly identified in the Cherry Commission Report and last year’s legislative discussions. The call has gone out across the state to better prepare students in high school, to enroll greater numbers of students in college, and to graduate significantly more students with bachelor degrees. Unfortunately Michigan remains one of the few states, if not the only state, in the nation that does not fund enrollment growth in higher education. Each additional student Ferris State University enrolls reduces the state funding we receive per student. The cumulative impact of no funding for enrollment growth and state budget reductions is sobering. Today Ferris State University receives 24% less in state funding for our senior students than we did when they arrived as freshmen students three years ago.

As Statewide HEIDI data reveals, career-oriented professions are far more expensive to educate. The cost to prepare a student in health, computer information, engineering and engineering technologies is two to three times the cost of providing instruction in psychology, history, and general liberal arts programs. The areas in greatest demand by the State and region are, in most cases, those disciplines that are the most expensive to provide education. It is critical Michigan adopt a funding methodology that reflects the differing costs for education in different academic disciplines. Failure to adopt this approach provides an incentive to increase the number of students in lower cost programs, rather than in those areas of the highest need.

Our State and region would benefit from more graduates in the health and technical areas where strong job growth is projected. We need to produce more graduates in
these areas and we would like to meet this need. Unfortunately the reality is that many of these areas have long waiting lists. This is most acute in the health professions, perhaps the fastest growing sector of the state’s economy. In pharmacy and optometry we receive five times as many applicants as we can accommodate. For example, our pharmacy program is one of the largest in the nation, accepting 150 students annually. Last year we received 759 applicants.

Thus the answer to your question is a particularly perplexing one. The areas where we should produce more graduates in this time of economic crisis for our state are in many cases the same as those where we have more students than we can accommodate. To attempt to address these we continue to reallocate resources. During the last two years we have eliminated three programs, shifting those funds to areas of great need. Now more than ever we need your help and support to adopt an enrollment-based funding model that recognizes and encourages growth in high-cost, high-need disciplines.

3. What do you foresee as the “hot” jobs over the next 10 years? What can be done to encourage students to study in those areas of need?

Demand for graduates will remain strong in health sciences and technology. According to the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Development, there is strong demand in technology, engineering and engineering technology, health, corrections, and public safety, and in service sectors. These are core areas of strength for our University.

These areas are in strong demand at Ferris State University and are fields where we have excellent job placement rates. Nearly all Ferris State University graduates are employed at graduation. Our placement rate for graduates is 98%.

In addition we see new and emerging careers in high technology areas that will provide excellent job opportunities for graduates. Examples include -

- Health technicians – Anesthesia, cardiac, vascular, cytogenetic, polysomnographic, and others.
- Information technology – Data communications analyst, data warehousing manager, disaster recovery planner, graphical user interface programmer, internet/intranet manager, messaging/e-mail/groupware specialist, network administrator, computer privacy/security analyst, telecommunications engineer technician, voice analyst, web administrator/developer/designer
- E-commerce – Business analyst, marketing manager, programmer, advertising sales manager
Ferris State University has a strong tradition of supporting Michigan workforce needs. Our academic approach is designed to make certain that our educational offerings are cutting edge and up-to-date. We do this through advisory committees of professionals working in the field, who review and advise our programs and faculty on developments in their areas of expertise. Additionally Ferris State University has one of the largest internship programs in the country. Nearly all of our students will experience one or more internships working at companies, businesses, or industries in their field of study. This ensures that our students have hands-on real life experiences working in the field. The experience of many of our students is that they receive job offers from one or more of their internships.

At our University we emphasize the strong job placement that results from receiving a degree in educational fields that are in demand and assist students in making a career choice that is right for them. This is an approach that seeks to find commonalities among a student’s interests, abilities and future prospects for the field. We would be strongly assisted in these efforts if the state would establish loan funds for high demand fields of study. These loans could have forgiveness options for graduates employed in those fields who are working with Michigan companies.

4. Does a university have any responsibility to encourage and direct students to study in those academic areas where there is the most need for graduates? What is your fundamental responsibility to the students of your university?

We believe Universities have a responsibility both to the State of Michigan and to their students to provide educational opportunities in fields vital to Michigan’s economy and its future. As an institution we are committed to providing education that will meet these needs and result in meaningful employment for our graduates. In matching students with areas that need graduates, it is worthwhile to remember that an undergraduate degree requires a minimum of four years study. During that period workforce and employment needs may change.

The fundamental responsibility of our University is to provide students an education of the highest quality. In doing so we must ensure they have the following -

- A broad-based education that develops analytical and critical thinking, an understanding of our world, both written and verbal communication skills, and the ability to work effectively with others
- Career specific education that prepares students for initial entry into the working world, but beyond that provides the necessary tools for growth and success
- A desire for lifelong learning that helps students and graduates understand and adapt to a workplace that is global, technologically enabled, and rapidly changing
Experiences that will graduate students who understand the importance of volunteerism, service to others, and civic involvement, and who are prepared to be responsible and involved citizens.

5. How does your university track the job placement rates of its graduates? What are your university’s job placement rates for the most recent year for which you have records?

All Ferris State University students are surveyed nine months after graduation. A Graduate Follow-up Report is produced on an annual basis for the University community and other external audiences. It is available on the Ferris State University website at http://www.ferris.edu/admissions/testing/followup/GFS20022003.pdf

For 2003-2004, the most recent report, Ferris State University’s overall graduate placement rate was 98 percent. Ferris State University had 100 percent job placement in many programs including the following areas -

- Optometry
- Pharmacy
- Technical and Professional Communication
- Ornamental Horticulture
- Dental Hygiene
- Medical Records (Administration and Technology)
- Medical Technology
- Diagnostic Medical Sonography
- Medical Laboratory/Technology
- Respiratory Care
- Education (Business, Career and Technical, Technical)
- Automotive Body
- Automotive Service
- Building Construction Technology
- Construction Administration
- Computer Networks and Systems
- Electrical/Electronics Engineering/Technology
- HVACR
- Manufacturing/Quality Engineering
- Mechanical Engineering
- Product Design
- Plastics Technology
- Rubber Technology
- Welding
6. What is your university’s role in driving the local economy? What impact does your university have on the economy of the State and the nation?

Ferris State University is the largest employer in Big Rapids, Mecosta County, and our five-county region. Our annual payroll of over $100 million is the major economic factor for our city. Beyond financial impact, the social and cultural opportunities the University provides for our region cannot be overstated. Student internships, service learning projects, and volunteer activities are all valuable assets to our community.

The degree offerings and focus of Ferris State University are unique among higher education institutions in Michigan. In addition to graduates from our bachelor, master, and professional degree programs, last year the University graduated over 840 students with associate degrees. As a result Ferris State University has the opportunity to provide workforce education and training to Michigan citizens displaced through job cuts and layoffs through Michigan. We have developed five unique programs through which workers can earn an entry-level certificate in a high-demand field, and while employed continue study toward an associate and ultimately a bachelor degree.

Ferris State University responds to the training and educational needs of our state. We are currently involved in two regional skill alliances educating healthcare workers. As an academic community, we continually develop new programs to meet the needs of a rapidly changing world. Examples of these include degrees in industrial and technology management to provide bachelor degrees for students graduating from apprenticeship programs, graduate certificates for information technology professional who manage outsourced operations, a combined pharmacy and MBA degree for pharmacists with significant management responsibilities, innovative approaches to design at Kendall College and a bachelor’s degree in digital animation.

More than any other University in the state, Ferris State University has reached out to partner with community colleges across the state. During the past two years we have developed programs at Lansing Community College, Macomb Community College, Northwest Michigan College, Oakland Community College, St. Clair County Community College, and Schoolcraft College. In doing so, we bring the unique programs of our University to many locations around our state, and ensure that community college students who are place-bound have access to a high-quality bachelor’s degree program.

Ferris State University’s impact on the State and nation is significant. With over 100,000 alumni throughout the region, our graduates help support and lead local and national economies. In some professions this impact is especially profound. Within Michigan Ferris State University graduates over half the practicing pharmacists and all of the optometrists. We believe that you cannot purchase an automobile manufactured in North America that has not been touched by one of our welding
engineering technology graduates. At M-TECHs and community colleges around our state both the faculty and the leadership for technical programs are graduates of our career and technical education programs.

7. What is your university’s reputation in your region? What have you done to enhance your university’s standing in the community?

We believe Ferris State University has an excellent reputation in our region and in Michigan. This strength and quality of our education are confirmed by employers who compete to employ our graduates. As we visit with people around the state we hear acknowledgement and appreciation for the mission, purpose, and success of our University.

Quarterly our University hosts a town and gown meeting where we meet with the leaders of our city, townships, county, school system, local business, industry, and civic leaders. At these meetings we share information on our current efforts and future plans. These gatherings provide an opportunity to consider how we work together to create a better community and university. The relationships between our community and University are strong and productive. We frequently hear appreciation for the tens of thousands of hours that our students volunteer in our community. Our University benefits from the many members of our community who attend classes, participate in sporting and cultural events, and who make a significant difference for our students and programs through gifts of both their time and financial support.