1. What measures has your University taken to expand access to your degree programs. In what areas/fields are you expanding?

Ferris State University recognizes that many Michigan citizens are place bound and unable to relocate to Big Rapids to benefit from the unique degree programs provided by our University. These are degree programs at associate, bachelor, masters, and first professional level that are designed to prepare for immediate placement and success in the working world upon graduation.

To address the educational needs of these students Ferris State University has developed strong partnerships with community colleges across the state. Working with our community college partners, we provide seamless paths for continued growth by offering bachelor degrees on the community college campus. Over the past three years we have implemented new programs at –

- Delta College
- Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn
- Lansing Community College
- M-TECH in Howell
- Macomb Community College
- North Central Michigan College in Petoskey
- Northwest Michigan College in Traverse City
- Oakland Community College
- Saint Clair County Community College in Port Huron
- Schoolcraft College in Livonia
- West Shore Community College in Scottville.

These efforts build upon successful programs already in existence at –

- Bay de Noc Community College in Escanaba
- Grand Rapids Community College
- Mott Community College
- Muskegon Community College
- Southwest Michigan College in Dowagiac and Niles
- University Center at Gaylord
Currently Ferris State University provides its unique career-based education at twenty-five locations throughout Michigan. Future partnerships are under discussion for Alpena Community College and Wayne Community College. The degrees we provide throughout Michigan are designed to supplement rather than duplicate degree offerings currently available throughout the area.

Additionally Ferris State University has increased on-line enrollments and offerings by nearly 60% during the past three years. This year we have been authorized by the Higher Learning Commission to offer any of our current degree offerings through the Internet without additional review by the Commission. Currently we offer the bachelors degree in Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning on-line. Our Masters of Business Administration is essentially offered as an on-line degree.

Ferris State University educates over 50% of the pharmacists in Michigan. Over the past four years we have increased admissions to this program from 100 students annually to 150 students, meaning that 600 students are currently enrolled in the pharmacy program at Ferris. Working with Regional Skill Alliances we have created additional spaces in our nursing and respiratory therapy programs. We have created special programs to educate nursing preceptors in hospitals and look to expand our program in nuclear medicine. We began a master's degree in Nursing two years ago.

To meet the state’s needs for law enforcement and criminal justice graduates we have expanded access to these programs throughout the state at both the bachelor and masters levels. To provide a career path for students with associate degrees from apprenticeship programs we created the Industrial Technology Management degree which we offer throughout the state.

Additionally we have supported expansion in our accounting, architecture technology, automotive technology programs, construction management, electronic animation and game design, forensic biology, graphic design, hospitality management, and jewelry programs.

2. What efforts has your university taken to recruit and graduate adults seeking to complete post secondary credentials?

Many of these efforts are described above. Through its partnerships with community colleges and other partners across the state Ferris State University provides its unique degree programs to students where they live, eliminating for many the need to drive to or relocate to Big Rapids. This commitment is reflected in the average age of our students. In Big Rapids this is 21 years of age. In other locations the average age is 26.
In these locations throughout the state the course schedule is designed to meet the needs of working adults, with classes in the evenings and weekends. Additionally we have developed cohort models that offer classes when students can attend and succeed through a combination of on-line learning and weekend campus classes.

3. What unique role does your institution play in your community?

Ferris State University is the largest single employer north of Grand Rapids, south of Traverse City and west of Mt. Pleasant. As such we are more than an educational institution in Big Rapids, we are the single largest economic stimulus in a depressed economic area. As a result it is frequently necessary to discern the boundary between university campus and our surrounding community.

In addition to the significant economic dependency of Big Rapids and surrounding areas on Ferris State University, we are also a major source of cultural, arts, and sports programming for our area, as well as function as the area's community college. We are truly fortunate to be located in a community that is strongly supportive of our University and the unique mission we fulfill for the state.

4. In order to measure what progress the State has made in terms of achieving its higher education goals, it is essential that the State track a student throughout the student’s educational career. What obstacles do you see in implementing such a tracking system?

The following is our analysis of the strengths and challenges of a state-wide student tracking system –

Challenges to expanding data collection to include more tracking -

- Implementing a tracking system for higher education students may result in a heavier data burden to institutions having to provide unit record data on a regular basis to the State. This data is in addition to what is already required by the Federal government and other agencies.
- A discussion of the tracking system and its implications for public university autonomy is needed to clarify issues concerning access, proper use, and the like.
- How will we identify students for tracking purposes? Will we use the social security number? At some institutions providing the social security number is voluntary.
- There is a question in terms of whether the data could be used in a punitive manner. Will future appropriations be impacted by the results?
Advantages to expanding data collection to include more tracking -

- Implementing a tracking system for higher education students could produce higher quality data on patterns of enrollment, retention, and graduation rates among our students.
- With increasing budgetary pressure and growing demand for greater accountability better data may improve decision-making.
- A tracking system would assist in refining graduation rate calculations because students who enroll in multiple institutions before attaining a degree would be addressed. Many students attend one school, go to another, then return or transfer to a different institution. First-time student cohorts miss these populations under the current system.
- Steps to collect a more complete set of data on students may increase confidence that higher education is doing its job. It is a problem when public universities and the State are unable to answer simple questions about the progress of students.

As an institution we believe a state-wide tracking system will improve measures for student success, retention, graduation and transfer. This process will make peer comparisons more detailed. At the state level this will provide better justification for state programs, track participation and mobility in the State, provide better understanding of enrollment patterns, and help institutions better target financial aid programs for intended beneficiaries.

Ferris State University strongly supports the adoption, development, and implementation of a state-wide tracking program. Additionally we volunteer to be one of the initial Universities involved with the development and implementation of this project.

5. Given the current economic crisis our state is experiencing, taxpayers expect all state programs to exercise fiscal restraint. Please describe what cost-saving measures your university has undertaken recently.

Each year Ferris vice presidents are required to report on annual operating efficiencies. The full report is provided annually to the State as a component of our operating budget request. Cost containment and efficiency enhancements have been ongoing operating principles at Ferris for many years.

Ferris actively participates in a number of consortia and coalitions to enhance efficiencies and reduce costs. Examples of these efforts include:
- Michigan Universities Coalition on Health (MUCH) – Ferris is one of thirteen universities that participate in this coalition. Coalition purchase of health insurance, savings in administrative fees, and deeper network discounts result in lower costs for health care. As a specific example, a year ago Ferris, Michigan State, and Central Michigan joined in offering medical insurance “third-party” administration for its self-insured medical program (which was negotiated by the Michigan Universities Coalition on Health). For the first six months of the plan year, administrative costs were reduced by $10,000 per month.

- Michigan Universities Self-Insurance Corporation (MUSIC) – A number of years ago Michigan universities formed their own corporation to provide liability and property insurance. The corporation provides savings through group purchase and self insurance. Annual savings by purchasing through MUSIC rather than the commercial market can be as much as $750,000.

- Ferris State, Central Michigan, and Saginaw Valley State have a joint purchase agreement with Office Depot resulting in savings on office product purchases.

- Other joint collaborative purchasing efforts involving statewide or local contracts include Steelcase (Educational & Institutional Cooperative Services), Haworth (State of Michigan), Herman-Miller (US Communities), Global (Educational & Institutional Cooperative Services), AllSteel (Hospital Purchasing Service), Gordon Food (Hospital Purchasing Service), police vehicles (State of Michigan), road salt (State of Michigan), lab supplies (Hospital Purchasing Service), pharmaceutical supplies (Hospital Purchasing Service), Sherwin Williams (Hospital Purchasing Service), dormitory mattresses (Michigan State Industries).

- Ferris was instrumental in developing the State’s Natural Gas Purchasing Consortium that purchases natural gas on behalf of the University in order to reduce costs.

- Ferris State, Central Michigan, and Saginaw Valley also collaborate by purchasing electricity through a local cooperative, taking advantage of deregulation to reduce electrical costs.

- Participation in CURB (College and University Resource board), a cooperative organization of self-operated college and university dining services, allows the university to work collaboratively to find purchasing efficiencies for food stuffs.

- Ferris pools resources with other Michigan libraries to realize the benefits of reciprocal resource sharing.
- Our Pharmacy college partners with Kalamazoo Center for Medical Studies and Grand Rapids - Medical Education and Research Center (MERC) to provide distance learning opportunities which reduce instructional costs. This includes sharing of facilities and computer technicians.

- Michigan’s participation in the Midwest Higher Education Consortium (MHEC) provides Ferris with affordable access to computing resources, telecommunications products and services, among other benefits.

In addition to such collaborative types of efforts, Ferris’ ongoing efficiency efforts have been numerous.

- Ferris has strategically increased summer enrollments to assist students in completing degrees sooner and to better utilize facilities.

- Volume purchase agreements are in place with a number of entities to provide price breaks on computers and other goods and services.

- Increased use of adjunct faculty alleviates the higher costs of full-time appointments and reduces costs.

- University departments have reduced costs for travel, telephones, and supplies.

- Enhanced partnerships with businesses and industries that employ our students results in donations of equipment and supplies thus saving university resources. For example, Leica Geosystems provides state-of-the-art surveying and mapping equipment and software valued over $360,000 as a consignment to the University. Xpiron, Inc. has donated their on-line reservation system to our Professional Tennis Management program.

- Across the university staff are using cell phones and calling cards to reduce telephone expenses.

- Through business process reviews, the University continues to streamline operations focused on improving services and efficiency.

- Posting university information on the Web reduces printing costs and streamlines a number of processes such as on-line registration, orientation sign-up, financial aid acceptances, planning forms, internal reports to departments, and many others.

- Campus departments and/or functions are being combined to save on managerial costs.
- The University has outsourced services to reduce costs including the bookstore operation.

- Partnering with the Meceola Central Dispatch, Ferris was able to become one of the agencies eligible for upgraded computer for emergency response.

- The University outsourced processing of credit card payments to take advantage of proper firewalls, safeguards, and required uptime, saving university resources while being more efficient.

These are several examples of Ferris’ ongoing efforts to become more efficient. The complete Annual Report on Operational Efficiencies is available upon request.

6. In order to grow the State’s economy, creation of jobs is critical. Please describe how your university is creating new jobs in this 21st century economy.

Ferris State University creates jobs in a variety of ways in our local community, region and state:

- On campus we employ between 4,000 and 5,000 students annually helping to provide financial support and valuable experience as they attend school. With the raising of the minimum wage in Michigan, these jobs now pay as well as or better than similar employment opportunities in our community. Many of these employment situations allow students to put into practice what they are learning.

- Ferris State University has one of the largest internship programs in Michigan. Through partnerships with businesses and industries throughout the state students are employed in their field of study and gain real world experience while still learning about their profession.

- Enrollment growth, even in times of reduced funding from the state, means that we must grow our faculty so there are sufficient educators to teach our students. These are excellent positions for highly educated people, who will become leaders in our communities. These opportunities attract applications nationally and internationally.

- The education we provide at community colleges and with other partners across Michigan create additional employment for faculty and support staff at these locations. While these may frequently be part-time rather than full-time opportunities, they do allow Michigan citizens to share their professional expertise with our students and supplement their income in this process.
- On campus we are currently mid-way through an $8.5 million project to remodel our Instructional Resource Center Building. This project employs architects, engineers, and construction workers. It is our sincere hope that the legislature will partner with the University to provide support for a new optometry facility, increasing this investment in our community and region.

- A variety of campus projects create employment opportunities for people throughout the state. Examples of these include significant classroom renovations to make learning facilities “state-of-the-art,” investments in the campus physical infrastructure, renovations to residence hall and classroom buildings, and the establishment of a wireless computer network throughout the campus.

- Enrollment growth at Ferris State University has created a significant housing boom in Big Rapids. In the past two years over 600 apartment units have been created by private developers in our community.

- In Grand Rapids our rapidly growing digital animation and video game program has created a start-up incubator for companies that create and maintain Massive Multiplayer Online Games (MMOG). This allows our students to gain valuable experience and is helping to foster a growing community of game designers.