It is an honor to say a few words about the truly invaluable ways in which Ian Mathison has served Ferris State University for nearly 35 years. When you think of it, Ian has served students at Ferris about as long as Woodbridge Ferris did when you consider the time our founder spent away from campus as Michigan Governor and U.S. Senator. But for Ian his constituents were always his students, his college and the pharmacy profession. Unequivocally he served them extraordinarily well. And Ian, I want you to know that I am doing my best to set the record straight for you. The stories suggesting you knew Mr. Ferris well and that you started the pharmacy program for him are just not true.

There is little question that the College of Pharmacy at Ferris enjoys the excellent reputation it has today because of Ian’s leadership. For someone to serve as a college dean for as long and successfully as you have is the achievement of a lifetime. This is even more remarkable when you consider the considerable changes that took place both in the profession and in academic standards during the past three decades.

Ferris’ College of Pharmacy was extremely fortunate to have someone of Ian’s energy and intellect to see it through this dynamic period of growth and development that took place between the mid-70’s and today. Among many, many successes, Ian met the challenge of implementing the six-year Doctor of Pharmacy degree. In doing so he worked collaboratively to establish Ferris State University’s innovative multi-campus model. The profession of Pharmacy has become much more complex during Ian’s tenure, and he did more than simply keep pace with those changes, he was one of the innovators who moved the profession forward.

When one chronicles the efforts of distinguished educators, frequently one speaks of the hundreds and hundreds of students they impacted. In thinking of Ian’s contributions at Ferris, this description is inadequate. It is more accurately the thousands and thousands of pharmacists whose careers he has helped launch. We have seen him encourage Pharmacy grads to become innovators and entrepreneurs, playing a vital role in the growth of the profession and our economy. I cannot even begin to imagine how one quantifies the number of people who have benefitted from his graduates, and their knowledge and dedication as pharmacists in Michigan and across the country. This is truly a record of uncommon impact and accomplishment.

In a career at Ferris that has spanned 35 years, Ian has served as dean under five University presidents and two interim presidents. I am quite certain he has many, many stories to tell. And I suspect that there are many stories to be told and shared about Ian this evening. But those will come from others, not from me. As Shakespeare’s Falstaff suggests, the better part of valor is discretion. This is doubly true when one is the first to speak.
Ian is everything you want in a leader and a colleague – someone who is professional, insightful, witty and gracious. Ian, it is impossible to think what the College of Pharmacy, and Ferris State University would be without your contributions. One of the things I remember best about your efforts was your passion for creating and funding student scholarships. In that context I think of no more fitting tribute than to be gathered here this evening to make certain this passion is captured and celebrated, not just for now, but for generations to come.

On behalf of all of our faculty, staff and students at Ferris State University and the many, many people who have benefitted from your leadership, your education, research, and example, thank you so very much.