Good morning and welcome to the 5th annual Michigan Energy Conference sponsored by Ferris State University. I am David Eisler, president of Ferris State University.

As we begin I want to thank the Michigan Energy Conference steering committee for their work in putting this event together. Please join me in thanking Co-Chairs Debbie Dawson and Brian Craig, along with the committee members Brain Brady, Debra Fisher, Tom Hollen, Jennifer Johnson, Sandy Kerridge, Arn McIntyre, Ron McKean, Shanee Ramsey, Dan Sovinski, David Steenstra and Deb Tice. I would ask they stand and be recognized.

I also want to thank the many sponsors of this conference. A full list of those sponsors and exhibitors is in the back of the brochure, but I want to make special note of the support supplied by our Platinum-level sponsors Consumers Energy and DTE Energy.

It is very exciting to be here for the fifth year of this conference, and a pleasure to have it held this year at the Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park. Being here at Meijer Gardens one can’t help but be reminded that effective energy efforts preserve the beauty of the world around us. It is a great honor this morning to introduce Grand Rapids Mayor George Heartwell. Mayor Heartwell has led Grand Rapids since 2004 and is now in his third term of distinguished service. Here in Grand Rapids, George has shown that increased use of alternative energy sources and the careful stewardship of energy usage can take place hand-in-hand in times of economic hardship and growth.

As leader of a city of more than 188,000 residents, Mayor Heartwell is familiar with the challenges and opportunities in finding energy solutions that work in the real world. The mayor has overseen the city’s increased use of renewable resource energy, alternative fuels, and attention to environmental protection and energy conservation. These achievements and others led the United Nations to recognize Grand Rapids as a “Center of Expertise” in sustainability in January 2007. He has done all of this during a time of historic economic challenges for our cities and state. I think you’ll agree with me that he is uniquely qualified to speak to this year’s theme of “Research to Reality.”

It has been my pleasure to work with Mayor Heartwell on Ferris State University’s renovation of the historic Federal Building in downtown Grand Rapids. There is no finer partner anywhere. His understanding of the opportunities possible, enthusiasm for our project, and ability to find solutions were major factors in our success in transforming this magnificent facility. His involvement, foresight and inspirational leadership helped move this from the project that could not be done to a project that had to be done.

In addition to the responsibility of leading the state’s second-largest city, Mayor Heartwell also serves as President and CEO of Pilgrim Manor Retirement Community. I cannot think of anyone better positioned than Mayor Heartwell to kick off the many discussions that will take place during this conference about energy, sustainability and growth. Please give a warm welcome to the Mayor of Grand Rapids, someone I am truly honored to call friend, George Heartwell.