Please join me in thanking Matt Moresi and the Ferris Jazz Quartet for sharing their musical talents with us.

Good morning and welcome to Ferris State University. This is a wonderful day for the Ferris community. For many years we have wanted to renovate our student union to best serve both our students, faculty, staff and visitors. This marvelous, beautiful University Center is the result.

As we marvel at this new facility and imagine what it can be to future generations, I encourage you to step back with me into the past. The original student center was constructed in 1957 when enrollment at the Ferris Institute was 2,350. Some of you who are here today may recall that at one time that building had a bowling alley, and a single dining option called The Pug.

That building was expanded in 1960 and 1987. If you don’t remember the bowling alley, you will probably recall this building became a real maze. If you were at the Dome Room and someone asked how to get to Westview Dining or the Bookstore, the easiest way was to direct the person to go outside, circle the building, and enter on the other side. Generations of programs have struggled with the difficult acoustics of the Dome Room. As a university with over 14,500 students we had long out grown the facility.

This University Center project has some less visible components. Both Masselink and Carlisle Halls were brought down and Campus Dr. was rerouted to create parking and easy entry to this building. Masselink Hall was the entry point for much of the technology infrastructure of the university – Internet, cable television, fire and other systems emanated from that building. When this project began, over 7,000 campus telephone lines began in Masselink. These all had to be updated and moved, before Masselink Hall could come down, a massive undertaking for our IT staff.

At the same we began a visioning process for what this building would become. Our goal was to transforming the Rankin Student Center into a state-of-the-art, sustainable and safe learning, living and working environment. At the time I wrote that future elements of the building could include better spaces for lectures and artistic events, improved meeting and gathering spaces, a variety of food options, and more.

Before work could begin here, the people and offices in this building needed to be moved temporary quarters. Many of these were in adjacent Helen Ferris Hall, a building without air conditioning in the summer.
Then we watched as the student center was demolished, wondering many times in the process if any of it would be saved. Mounds of brick and concrete were recycled and became the base for the new east side parking lot. From a few remaining pieces this building rose like a phoenix and we watched as it took shape and form.

The old building is gone and oh, how it has changed. The dome room, Westview Dining and the maze of disconnected rooms and corridors are all gone. In their place we have this wonderful atrium area where students can meet, study and collaborate. We have state of the art dining options for our students, staff, faculty, and visitors. This building offers flexible, functional meeting spaces that will encourage learning and interaction out of the classroom, build the type of interaction that is a home for our students, and welcome the greater community to our campus.

What you see around you is the result of a long process of visioning, planning and construction made possible through the efforts of many, many people. Through this we have transformed this entire section of campus. The completion of the University Center is a milestone in that transformation.

As a student facility this project was not eligible for state funding. And with our commitment to restraining costs, we have done this without additional cost to our students in either tuition or fees.

In recognition of this very special day we have received a proclamation for our Governor Rick Snyder, who congratulates Ferris State University and everyone engaged with this process.

None of this would be possible without the leadership and support of our Board of Trustees. It is my pleasure to welcome Board of Trustees Chair Paul Boyer to offer some remarks.

Paul Boyer offers remarks.

Other Board of Trustees members in attendance
  ○ Vice Chair Erin Brown
  ○ Secretary Lori Gwizdala

New trustees
  ○ Ana Ramirez-Saenz
  ○ Rupesh Srivastava

Trustee emeriti
  ○ SueAnn Walz

President Eisler thanks companies and individuals involved in University Center project.

This has been a large and complex project that required extraordinary effort on the part of many different companies and individuals. I would like to take a moment to thank some of the people and partners that were instrumental in making this facility a reality.
Our project architect was Neumann/Smith Architecture. With us today from Neumann/Smith are Joel Smith, Stan Cole, Emil Sdao, Nathan Bessette, and Jamie Millspaugh

KSS Architects served as our design architect. From KSS Architects we have Pam Rew, J Shermeta, and Becker Raab

From our construction manager, Christman Company, I want to recognize Patrick Zawacki, Dan LaMore, John Brechtelsbauer, Aaron Van Tatenhove, Brian Zimmerman

From Hubbell, Roth and Clark, our civil engineers, we have with us Gary Tressel, Tom Biehl, Matt Slicker, Jim Miller

From Michael J. Dul & Associates, our landscape architect, I want to recognize Patrick Funke

Desai/NASR were our consulting engineers

From Peter Basso Associates, our structural engineer, we have Kelly Sugg, Brian Runde, Paul Potapa, Terry Cleis

Our acoustical consultants were Acoustics by Design

From Porter Khouw Consulting, our food service consultant, we have David Porter

From our partner Gordon Food Service, we have Dan Hamilton, and Tom Mohl

Here at the university, this project has touched the lives of virtually everyone who works and studies on the Big Rapids campus. Many, many dedicated Ferris employees made today possible. Of necessity, this is partial list of those who were critical to making today possible.

Vice President for Administration Jerry Scoby has led this project throughout, making certain decisions were made effectively and keeping the project pointed toward an on-time and under-budget opening.

Associate VP Physical Plant & University Center Planning Committee Chair Mike Hughes, has been involved in virtually every facet of the University Center project.

UC Director Mark Schuelke has been instrumental in making the transition from the previous building such a successful one.

Working very closely with Mark throughout this process has been UC Reservation Coordinator Shana Beisiegel.
Our Telecommunications department, including Director James Maat, continued working in the University Center during its renovation. Also, related to technology, Craig Roach in Telecomm was involved in many University Center issues. Joe Strohkirch from IT was involved in many of the buildings audio/visual items.

Director of Dining Services Lori Helmer and the entire Dining Services staff have helped create the exciting new dining options students have in the University Center.

Karen Bohren and the bookstore staff had to relocate the entire store during the renovation.

Vice President for Student Affairs Jeanine Ward-Roof has worked hard with her people to make certain this new University Center is a welcoming place for students. In doing so she has led the plans for the student opening in January, the formal dedication today, and the increased programming for our students this building allows.

Our Dean of Student Life, Leroy Wright, has also been instrumental in keeping the focus on the needs of Ferris students from the initial visioning of this project to its completion.

Many other departments had to relocate during the construction. I want to thank everyone who works in the University Center who had to move to temporary quarters while this remarkable building was under construction.

Our history task force, chaired by Mary Kay MacIver, has done wonderful work in support of this project.

I also want to thank the many staff members who worked over the holiday break to make sure this facility was ready for the start of this semester.

On behalf of all the students who have truly embraced this new building, thank you for your hard work and dedication to the Ferris mission.

There are so many other people who deserve to be thanked by name. However to do so would take up much of the next hour. To everyone who has worked so very hard to make this magnificent building a reality, I say thank you on behalf of Ferris students, faculty, staff alumni and all the visitors to our Big Rapids campus.

**President Eisler introduces Khagendra Thapa.**

Our new University Center is designed to extend the classroom by providing spaces that are as conducive to learning and collaboration as they are to socializing. With that in mind, it is my pleasure to introduce Academic Senate President Khagendra Thapa.
President Eisler introduces Student Government President Andrew Kalinowski.
Although our University Center is a place that is welcoming to many different groups of people, including our faculty, staff, alumni, and community members, the most important group of people it is designed to served are our students. Please welcome Student Government President Andrew Kalinowski.

President Eisler introduces Bob Eastley.
Before we have our formal ribbon-cutting, I want to invite College of Engineering Technology Associate Professor Bob Eastley for a very personal perspective on today’s dedication.

President Eisler presents final comments/ribbon cutting.
Thank you for being here for this historic occasion. Today we have helped dedicate something that will be a part of the educational and social fabric for generations of faculty, staff, students, and visitors in the years ahead. As our founder said

“Awaken students to a realization of what it means to live and they will have little difficulty in performance.”

In observing out students in this marvelous facility, we each can see this happen every day.

Your presence today has helped make this a memorable, special occasion for our university. Please stay and experience more of this remarkable facility. There will be organized tours of the building for those who are interested and dining examples in the ballroom.

I invite our stage party to join in as we cut the ribbon to formally dedicate Ferris State University’s new University Center. Thank you.

Ribbon Cutting/Photos.