

FFA

BARGAINING ISSUES

Bargaining Team

Jim Rumpf, *Eng Tech*
Bob Carter, *Optometry*
Mike Ryan, *A & S*
Holly Schalk, *A & S*
Janice Weaver, *A & S*
Pat Bolen, *MEA*

Executive Board

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Mike Ryan, *Past Pres*
John Caserta, *VP*
David Russell, *Sec*
Ron Shepler, *Treas*
Clayton Rye, *MEA/NEA Alt*
Sandy Burns, *Allied Health*
Fran Allegretto, *A & S*
Jim Nystrom, *A & S*
Janice Weaver, *A & S*
Dick Hansen, *Business*
Jay Hettiarachchy, *Business*
Nathaniel Tymes, *Business*
Mark VanLent, *Counselors*
Virginia E. Hines, *EHS*
Blaine Danley, *EngTech*
Greg Denny, *EngTech*
David Murray, *EngTech*
Ann Breitenwischer, *Library*
Bob Carter, *Optometry*
Gregg Potter, *Pharmacy*
James Bandstra, *At-Large*
Adnan Dakkuri, *At-Large*
Gary Huey, *At-Large*
Mary Murnik, *At-Large*
Bill Papo, *At-Large*

A message to faculty from your FFA bargaining team and executive board:

During the next few weeks, you'll receive information about each major bargaining issue and its implications. These issues matter individually and practically to FFA members: they affect our day-to-day ability to do our jobs effectively, contribute to our communities, plan our futures, and take care of our loved ones.

But the issues also matter as part of a fundamental difference in values and vision. Faculty envision Ferris as a community of learning in which all community members' voices should be valued and all efforts aimed at enhancing the quality of the education we offer students. We are bargaining to preserve that vision.

On the next page, faculty member Fred Heck details the troubling nature of the administration vision of the university. This is not a new problem. During the last bargaining crisis in 2006, another colleague warned us about a similar attack on core values. In 1997, then-faculty member Wendell Mott wrote a letter addressing the same broad themes. (You may view both earlier pieces at www.ffaonline.org).

The effort to protect our community of learning and the faculty's vital role in determining its course is, unfortunately, a continual struggle

Beyond the day-to-day practical considerations, this is why the issues matter.

Dear Colleagues:

We should all be concerned about the ongoing, deliberate effort by the administrative leadership of Ferris to erode the fundamental principle of shared governance, most especially as it relates to the quality of education. This effort has manifested itself in the administration's approach to contract negotiations. It is seen specifically in the refusal of the administration to even discuss at the bargaining table issues of academic integrity that faculty are gravely concerned about.

For example, faculty have real concerns about the explosion of on-line courses that is taking place with very little in the way of checks and balances to assure the quality of those courses or of those who may teach them. The administrative leadership refuses to even discuss these concerns much less codify procedures that would begin to ensure the quality of on-line offerings.

For faculty, the granting of tenure requires a rigorous process of observation and evaluation to achieve. The administrative leadership, however, simply refuses to discuss similar requirements for administrators returning to faculty ranks, preferring instead to award them tenure with no assurance of their academic credentials or abilities to teach.

The academic quality of any university is directly proportional to the quality of the faculty who teach there, and for whom there is now a competitive global marketplace. To attract and retain high quality faculty, and thereby maintain and improve academic quality, an institution must be willing to offer salaries and benefits that are competitive in that global marketplace. The Ferris administration has steadfastly refused to make the financial commitment necessary to continue attracting high quality faculty from around the world. Without this commitment to continue bringing a high quality and globally diverse faculty to campus, the core values of our own institution, Diversity and Excellence, ring hollow.

This outright refusal to discuss issues essential to the continued academic health of the institution is exacerbated by the administration's refusal to even sit in the same room with faculty during these negotiations, preferring instead to have a third party shuttle back and forth with messages. Rather than sit face-to-face and attempt in a collegial manner to rationally discuss these essential issues of academic quality, the administration chooses to completely ignore yet another of our own institution's core values: that of **Ethical Community in which** "Ferris recognizes the inherent dignity of each member of the University community and treats everyone with respect. Our actions are guided by fairness, honesty, and integrity." The administration has been grievously unethical in its behavior at the negotiating table.

Altogether these behaviors by the administrative leadership send a clear message to the entire university and broader community that there is no real desire to have faculty participate as equal partners in decisions of academic quality and that financial considerations are more important than maintaining the academic integrity of the institution. If the university were struggling financially, then one could begin to understand these behaviors by the administration, but in fact there is a burgeoning general fund of tens of millions of dollars available for discretionary

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spending. Academic quality clearly takes second place to finance in the minds of the administrative leadership.

These behaviors by the administration are not those of a leadership that values the principle of shared governance between equal partners. These are instead the behaviors of an authoritarian leadership that would see its will imposed rather than have open, transparent discussion about what should be common goals of improving the academic quality of our community of learning. These behaviors are the antithesis of the Academy as a microcosm of democratic values and discourse. They are a clear warning sign that the Ferris administration is actively moving the university away from the core value of shared governance and toward a model of authoritarian governance that will inevitably lead to a decline in the quality of education at this institution.

Fred Heck
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