

## **Legislative Testimony**

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Distinctive among Michigan's state universities, Ferris has a 125-year history of developing talent for the workforce. With about 170 programs, ranging from certificates through professional degrees, Ferris prepares individuals to take leadership roles in a range of industries--from dental hygiene to welding, plastics, accounting, nursing, pharmacy, biotechnology, optometry, technical communications, automotive, music industry management, hospitality management, television and media production, professional golf management, and many, many more. It is hard to imagine any Michigan business or industry that would not employ graduates like those graduating from Ferris. In fact, I think you will be surprised to learn just how many Ferris graduates are serving you now – start to ask.

In each year for the past several years, Ferris has graduated more than 2,500 individuals. In 2007-8, 3,259 individuals were conferred Ferris degrees. Here are some examples from last year:

- 60 earned baccalaureate degrees in Health Care Systems Administration
- 54 earned associate degrees in Dental Hygiene
- 48 earned associate degrees in Radiography
- 55 earned baccalaureate in nursing
- 36 earned degrees in accounting
- 114 completed baccalaureates in business administration
- 198 earned the BS in Criminal Justice
- 76 completed the BS in elementary education
- 50 completed the BFA in Interior Design
- 37 earned the BS in Automotive Engineering Technology
- 44 earned their degrees in Automotive and Heavy Equipment Management, while
- 71 completed the baccalaureate in Construction Technology with an additional
- 49 earned the associate degree in Building Construction Technology

I offer this to convey the breadth of the programming and its relevance to the needs of Michigan industries. The list goes on.

Not only is Ferris distinctive because of its programs that produce work-ready graduates, but our programs are distinguished by real-world connections through clinical rotations, internships, and other work-based learning opportunities. What do Michigan employers say about Ferris grads? Most often they say they “hit the ground running,” “they know how to work,” and “they have the skills we need in our business.” The majority of our career-oriented programs require internship or other work experience.

Even through the recent economic downturn, Ferris graduates remain in demand. You will note on the chart that 74 of our programs have averaged 100 percent placement rates. For the three most recent yours for which we have data, our placement rates have averaged 98%. What *has* changed is that more of our graduates are forced to seek employment in other states. Working with you, we intend to turn this situation around. Michigan employers need Ferris graduates to remain competitive for the future.

Our programs prepare work-ready graduates because our faculty remains actively engaged with the employer communities. Each of our career programs has an active advisory committee that advises concerning changes the industry needs to see in its next generation of workers. These same advisory board members often also serve as internship sites; portfolio reviewers; practice interviewers; and program advocates and supporters.

Not only does Ferris keep current and adapt to changing demands, but Ferris is a statewide leader in taking education to the people of this state. We offer baccalaureate completion, masters, and certificate programs at more than 20 sites throughout Michigan, almost always in partnership with community colleges. We work collaboratively with our partners to assure that students are best served. In recent years we have expanded the number of options available fully online – to serve those who previously had to make choices between continuing their education and staying employed. Now, more than ever, individuals may choose to do both as we offer more flexible options.

As of this week, Ferris lists 84 separate advisory committees providing guidance on more than 100 programs with in excess of 1,130 members from companies throughout Michigan and beyond.

As Ferris evolved from its historic roots as a technical institute, it has incorporated an increasing amount of general education and theoretical education. It has never forgotten the importance of context and relevance, so programs emphasize how general education skills are utilized in the “real world.” Ferris graduates produce writing that serves them well in the workplace as well as in further education. Throughout our curriculum, as our vision statement reveals, theory meets practice. Graduates are prepared to use technology, communicate effectively, work with diverse groups, work in teams, be creative, and solve problems.

Our legacy is at risk, however, if the state fails to invest as it must in the development of the skills so vitally needed for Michigan to regain its historic place in the world economy. Education is not just an *expense* in the present but is more appropriately characterized as an *investment* in the future. We urge you to continue to make that investment a Michigan economic and human development priority.

Our track record demonstrates that we are good stewards of your investments. Our graduates get jobs that are in demand. Our faculty and staff adapt regularly to the changing demands of the workplace. Our students are confident of their abilities to be successful in their careers. In a pilot study of 12 leading national universities of varied types, Ferris seniors reported not only that they had more experience in many key employment areas – such as working in teams, solving problems, and making persuasive arguments – than the other institutions, but they also reported that they had higher confidence in their ability to use these skills in the workplace.

Ferris gets results. We need your support to continue to make that difference. I invite your questions and your thoughts.

