Ferris State University is in its second century as one of the nation’s premier technical and professional universities. Ferris provides practical, “hands-on” education necessary to make its graduates immediately employable in a diverse array of fields.

The institution was founded in 1884 by Woodbridge N. Ferris, a former Governor of Michigan and a U.S. Senator. His intent was to provide a practical education for any person with the motivation and potential to benefit.

Today, Ferris State continues to teach technical skills and applications focused on solving real problems, and produces a work force that is prepared to meet the world of high technology. The University offers more than 120 academic programs, designed to respond to the changing needs of manufacturing, business, health care and other industries and professions which are critical to Michigan’s economy.

With a student-to-faculty ratio of approximately 16-1, students at FSU receive the individual attention necessary to prepare them for their careers. Additionally, Ferris boasts a placement rate for graduates of 98 percent, one of the best in the Midwest.

The scenic Big Rapids campus is located along the banks of the Muskegon River in the gentle rolling hills of west central Michigan.

Initially, Ferris was known as the Ferris Industrial School, but in 1899 the title was changed to Ferris Institute. It was privately owned and operated until 1931 when it became a non-profit, non-stock education corporation. In 1949, Ferris became a state college, and the school was officially renamed Ferris State College in 1963 and Ferris State University in 1987.

“Education is life. It involves growth, development and training.”
— Woodbridge N. Ferris

Quick Facts

- Nine of 10 employed Ferris graduates are in occupations related to their major field of study.
- Approximately 98% of FSU nursing graduates pass the national boards and the Nursing Program is accredited by the National League of Nursing. Job placement is 100%.
- Ferris offers the only two-year associate degree program in Heavy Equipment Technology in Michigan and has the largest facility for teaching the curriculum on the North America continent (52,000 sq. ft.).
- In printing management, Ferris graduates on average earn 150% of their starting salary five years after graduation and 200% after 10 years.

Mission Statement

Ferris State University will be a national leader in providing opportunities for innovative teaching and learning in career-oriented, technological and professional education.
Dr. William A. Sederburg has positioned Ferris State University for a promising period of significant change and growth. President Sederburg became the University’s 16th president on August 1, 1995, after serving a year as interim president. Prior to then, he taught at Michigan State University, served in the Michigan Senate, and was a vice president of Public Sector Consultants, Inc. of Lansing. Under Dr. Sederburg’s leadership, Ferris State University has been transformed and is now even better positioned to deliver its mission of serving as a national leader in career-oriented, technological, and professional education. From the expansion in the number of academic programs, to an increase in enrollment, to a comprehensive capital outlay and facility renovation plan, the University has witnessed a renaissance in the short duration of the past half-decade. As the University’s number-one champion for providing a “customer-friendly” approach for FSU employees, Dr. Sederburg has led the drive to make the delivery of student services more friendly and efficient. His strategies have included partnering with industry-leading companies and to incorporate information technology at the University. A University Web Policy and a comprehensive Ferris Digital Initiative have put Ferris State at the leading edge of higher education institutions. Dr. Sederburg’s concern for individuals’ personal and career development reaches beyond students and includes the University’s employees as well. At his direction, a comprehensive University-wide employee professional development program titled “Ferris Summer University” was launched in 2000 as was the innovative Ferris Employee Leadership Development Program. His contribution to workforce development reaches well beyond the post-secondary level. The Partnership for Career Decision-Making in Technology and Health Sciences, which he co-chaired with Michigan Lt. Governor Dick Posthumus, has provided the business and education communities with valuable research which addresses the issue of how young adults determine their career interests. Ferris State University has received a remarkable facelift in the past five years. More than $100 million in campus infrastructure and building construction and renovations have taken place. Dr. Sederburg has been instrumental in gaining capital outlay funds and private sector support for an ambitious campus expansion and renovation campaign that has included such projects as the National Elastomer Center (1998), Student Recreation Center (1998), Top Taggart Field renovation (1999), Student Convocation Center (2000), Professional Golf Management Learning Center (2000), The Dow Center for Art, Design, and Technology (2001), Ferris Library for Information, Technology, and Education (2001), Center for Student Services (opening July 2002), and the National Heating, Ventilation, Air-Conditioning, and Refrigeration (HVACR) and Construction Technology Center (opening 2003). One of the more ambitious projects undertaken by President Sederburg has been the merger of Ferris State University and the Kendall College of Art and Design, a nationally renowned private art and design school located in Grand Rapids. The merger between the two schools, which became official in December 2000, has brought about innovative synergies among art, design, and technology. Active throughout the State and nation, Dr. Sederburg serves as chair of Cyber-state.org, a Michigan-based information technology advocacy group, and Art Serve Michigan, an arts advocacy council. As a State Senator, Sederburg served the 24th District (Ingham County -greater Lansing area) from 1978-91, chairing the Senate Health Policy Committee and Senate Appropriation Subcommittees on General Government and Higher Education, and Senate Select Committees on the Future of Higher Education and Tuition and Affordability. He also chaired the Midwest Council of State Government’s Task Force on Higher Education. He was Public Sector Consultants’ vice president for public policy and director of its Public Opinion Research Institute (1991-94), president of Survey Research Company (1974-91), executive director of the Michigan House Republican Caucus (1977-78), and director of research and programs as an education specialist for the House Republican Caucus (1975-77).
Ferris State University continues to build and remodel a number of campus buildings, including numerous athletic facilities. The result is high-quality facilities which benefit athletes, students and the Big Rapids community.

Encompassed among the many projects on campus was the renovation of the Health and Physical Education (HPE) Building, resulting in the creation of the state-of-the-art Student Recreation Center. Construction, which began in March 1998 and was completed in January 1999, resulted in four multi-use courts, a four-lane elevated track, two aerobic studios, a six-lane, 25-yard pool, a 13-person whirlpool, 40-foot climbing wall, fitness center, free weight room, locker rooms, class rooms and administrative offices.

Figures provided by University Recreation show that more than 1,000 students use the facility daily.

The closure of Jim Wink Arena with the HPE Building meant a move for the varsity men’s and women’s basketball programs. The result was the 2,600-seat Sports and Convocation Complex, which shares an expanded lobby with the Ewigleben Ice Arena. Construction on the complex was completed in the fall of 1999.

In addition to the new lobby, concessions, pro shop and rest rooms, the Ewigleben Ice Arena features a 4,580 square-foot addition which serves as the new home for Bulldog hockey. The locker room, constructed with university funding and money raised by the Bulldog Hockey Pride Committee, includes a player’s lounge, film study room, equipment room, training room, coaches’ offices and sauna.

Other Ewigleben Ice Arena improvements include a new expanded press box and a hockey locker room for Big Rapids High School.

Katke Golf Course, a university-owned 18-hole course situated on the western side of the Ferris campus, opened a new three-hole practice facility in the spring of 1999. Suggested by the Professional Golfers’ Association of America to benefit FSU’s Professional Golf Management program, the facility includes an expanded driving range, six target greens and a chipping green with bunkers. Also, a new golf clubhouse opened in the summer of 2000.

The many new facilities, supplemented with existing ones like Ferris State’s Racquet and Fitness Center, allow athletes to train and enhance their performance capabilities in the best possible facilities.