

FERRIS FACULTY ASSOCIATION
FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

1215-B Maple Street
Big Rapids, MI 49307
Phone: 231-591-2586
<http://www.ferris-faculty-association.org>

Affiliated with MEA/NEA

FFA FORUM

April 2018

President

Charles Bacon

Vice President

John Caserta

Secretary [Interim]

Ann Breitenwischer

Treasurer [Open]

At Large

Tracy Busch
Connie Randle-Morcon
James Rumpf
Meral Topcu

Arts & Sciences

Scott Herron
Connie Meinholdt
Holly Price
Chris WesterKamp

Business

Dan Cronk
Aaron Waltz
Dan Wanink

Counselors

Mark VanLent

Education & HS

Virginia Hines

Engineering Technology

David Murray
Gary Maike
Paul Long

Health Professions

Sandy Burns

Library

Ann Breitenwischer

Optometry

Josh Lotoczky

Pharmacy

Greg Wellman

**Retention & Student
Success [Open]**

Grievance Committee

John Caserta
Charles Bacon

SMA Officer

Aaron Waltz

Communications

Ali Konieczny

Membership Chair

Ali Konieczny

MEA UniServ Director

Kurt Kline

A Message from the President

Charles Bacon, PhD., FFA President

Gearing up for Bargaining

The Michigan constitution reads “The legislature shall appropriate moneys to maintain...Ferris Institute...by whatever names such institutions may hereafter be known...The board shall have general supervision of the institution and control and direction of all expenditures from the institution’s funds.”

The purpose of quoting the constitution is to show that the university is a self-governing entity controlled by a Board of Trustees. When the administration claimed that we were governed by state law PA 152 during the 2013 contract negotiations they knew that was incorrect. In fact, they told us that we could challenge them in court, but they would tie us up for three to five years with no contract in the interim. In retrospect, we probably should have gone down that road. However, at that time the harm to us was theoretical, but since then it has become actual.

Since the implementation of the 2013 contract, you, the faculty, have generously contributed over nine million dollars to the university via your employee health care premiums. The actual number is

- **\$ 9,319,742.14**

Ok, I’m being facetious with the idea that you had a choice about your contribution. The point is that David Eisler doesn’t believe that he should have to pay for this benefit, and that you are already paid enough.

During the same period of time from 2013 to 2018, Eisler’s compensation increased 29.83% or about 6% per year.

- **2013 - \$287,088.00 to 2018 - \$372,734.26**

These are big numbers so let’s make it more concrete by doing an example calculation. Consider an assistant professor making \$60,000 in 2013. Including the signing bonus, that faculty member would have a 2018 salary of \$68,737.18, a 14.56% increase over five years or a 2.9% increase per year.

- **2013 - \$60,000.00 to 2018 - \$68,737.18**

That same faculty member who is enrolled in a family health plan would have paid **\$39,690.40** in health care premiums during the life of the current contract (2018 amount is truncated at June 30, 2018, if we went to the full year it would be \$44,000).

I know that readers understand these numbers and comparisons, and that we present them as a means of highlighting the inherent unfairness in the manner we are being treated. It is not my intent to get into a debate on how much any employee at Ferris makes, but rather to ask you if you think that you should be treated better than this. Before you answer that question, ask yourself what you and your family might have done with an extra \$40,000 over the last five years. I'm fairly certain that you were not given a university vehicle to drive around in like Eisler, so that money could have been a new car or your child's college tuition.

Some faculty will argue that we have it very good, and I will not disagree with them. But does that mean it couldn't be better, and that we shouldn't be rewarded for what we do? David Eisler received an overload payment of

- **\$101,000** in 2017,

and that was \$6000 more than in 2016. What was your reward? Eisler was rewarded last year with a **\$58,000** bonus. You got to contribute nearly **\$12,000** to your health care premium.

Ultimately each of us must decide why we will stand up for a better contract. As you trade the hours of your life for the compensation package the administration offers, your reasons may be varied and diverse. Maybe your reason is to make a difference in your students' lives and better resources will help you do that. At the same time you have normal life issues that we all have to deal with that take time and money. So your 'why' can be both professional and personal, which boils down to how the institution allocates its resources. When too much of those resources are squandered at the top by nonproductive bureaucratic busy work, we all suffer professionally and personally.

Part of my 'why' is to try to make sure that young and/or new faculty still have the same opportunities and advantages that I had early in my career at Ferris. Those opportunities would not have been available without the FFA. A paternalistic and condescending administrative culture has existed at Ferris for decades and has not changed under the current leadership. So as we continue to advocate for you, think about your 'why' during the contract negotiations and stand together with your colleagues.

Why is Dave Hiding?

John Caserta, FFA Vice President, Grievance Chair

On June 30, 2018, the current Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Board of Trustees of Ferris State University and Ferris Faculty Association will expire. The past three negotiations under President David Eisler have resulted in contracts that have stripped away the benefits and salaries of the faculty at Ferris State University. Under Eisler, outside professional negotiators have been used "behind the scenes" at the bargaining table to undercut faculty benefits resulting in faculty bearing higher and unaffordable medical costs. In addition, the faculty have had to settle for stingy and parsimonious salary increases, while Eisler and the upper-level administration have received generous and indulgent salary raises.

Eisler has refused to sit face-to-face with the faculty at the negotiating table, preferring to hide behind high-priced attorneys--to whom he and the university have paid hundreds of thousands of dollars to screw us. Rather than make that money available to the faculty for salary increases and medical benefits, Eisler's tact has been to pay his negotiating attorneys with the tax dollars from Michigan citizens and revenue from students' tuition with the end intention of leaving the faculty with bare-bones contracts.

On February 21, 2018, the FFA was informed that Jim Greene, the attorney used behind the scenes in past negotiations, would be the chief negotiator for Eisler and the university. He has made the decision to send in

Jim Greene to do his dirty work again. He again refuses to sit across from us at the negotiating table and explain the reasons for not providing us with a fair and equitable contract. Eisler’s message is clear--he does not respect the work and service faculty do for the students and the university. This is the same man who, in 2017, received an “overload pay” of \$101,455--which was added to his salary of \$271, 279.

	Eisler Base Salary	Eisler Overload	Overload as Percent of Base
2013	\$ 248,588	\$ 38,500	15.5%
2014	\$ 250,877	\$ 85,339	34.0%
2015	\$ 256,699	\$ 90,260	35.2%
2016	\$ 263,632	\$ 95,257	36.1%
2017	\$ 271,279	\$ 101,455	37.4%

Consider the recent 2017 contracts negotiated under Eisler for the Police Officers Labor Council and ASFME. Eisler succeeded in weakening medical benefits of the police contract and attempted to do the same in the ASFME contract until their members fought back against his proposed medical insurance--SCOBY CARE (as it was labeled). In the 2018 final negotiations with the Kendall faculty contract, Eisler has stripped away many of their benefits, leaving them to burden more medical costs and settle for a beggarly wage schedule. Hence, a true measure emerges of Eisler’s intent of what the FFA faces in the current negotiations with him.

Make no mistake. These negotiations and the contract that ensues is Eisler’s contract. The faculty cannot allow him to hide behind Jim Greene as he has done in past negotiations, negotiations Eisler directed which created months of turmoil at the university and in the community. And now, as in each of the past negotiations, Eisler has been busy spending the last several months manufacturing a money crisis hoping to convince faculty that he and the university have no money, that faculty again must sacrifice. He needs to come to the table and bargain fairly with us. Eisler must put aside his cowardice and do what is good and right for the faculty. The FFA has reserved a chair for Eisler at the negotiating table. Will he show up or will he remain spineless?

What to Expect When You’re Expecting (a Contract)

Jim Rumpf, Past FFA President, Representative at Large

Before we all scatter to the four winds for the summer, it’s well worth a few column-inches to think about what we should and shouldn’t expect to encounter during our fight for a fair contract this summer. To that end, I’ve put together some points to keep in mind as Charles and our FFA negotiating team work on our behalf. I’m not a member of the bargaining team this year, but based on my experience on past teams, here’s what I see ahead:

I **EXPECT** Dave and the board’s bargaining team to float proposals, but not engage in what most people picture when they hear the words “bargaining” or “negotiations.” We will see them comply with the barest minimum letter of the law requiring good faith, but I **DON’T EXPECT** any real bargaining to go on at the table between our team and their team, with no substantive movement from their predetermined positions, no real problem solving, and certainly no debates on the big issues. They and we both know from experience that they would lose such debates miserably. Based on my experience, I would be surprised if they act like they even care if we reach an agreement any time before the second or third week of fall semester, regardless of whatever public statements they release. Instead, they will utilize every legal maneuver they can to impose their will and avoid any semblance of collaboration.

Along those lines, I **EXPECT** fake news throughout the process from various administration sources, some official and some not. And not *fun* fake news like The Onion; think more like Info Wars, intended only to sway those who can’t or don’t dig for facts. For example, we’ve been told many times that the university has no money. The reality of the situation is that the university has plenty of money, just none that Dave and the board

want to share with us. Ferris funds, with a few exceptions, can move freely between accounts, and significant amounts have been moved to appear to be less available than before. And even if funds are ostensibly earmarked for one purpose, they have been in the past and can be in the present and future repurposed for almost any other use that Dave and the board desire. I **DON'T EXPECT** Dave and the board to say if we can find it we can have it, because they know that between the business experts on our faculty and MEA's forensic accountants, we'd find it.

Also, I **EXPECT** to hear at least a few incredibly-stupid statements from administrators that will leave you shaking your head in amazement that these people hold positions of responsibility. Statements like, "We have to make more than faculty, otherwise you wouldn't respect us" and "We believe you are appropriately underpaid". I **DON'T EXPECT** anyone on Dave and the board's team to satisfactorily explain why administrative ranks have swollen over the last decade, keeping Ferris's tuition in or near the top five highest rates of Michigan's 15 public universities, while faculty numbers have stagnated and faculty salaries have languished in the bottom third.

I **EXPECT** at least one prominent townspeople (likely someone who spends some serious time in the president's box at Bulldog sporting events or otherwise benefits from associating with members of upper administration) to echo Dave and the board's talking points in the local media about how we are so well-paid compared to other residents of Big Rapids, and how we should be concentrating on "serving the students", "pulling together with the community", etc. In that same statement I also expect them to conveniently omit any admission that well-paid Ferris faculty buoy the local economy by spending those salaries supporting Big Rapids businesses. A passing mention of how we drive community service organizations like ArtWorks and others, raise standards in the local schools, and contribute to the community in so many other ways may be made, but will likely be underplayed. I **DON'T EXPECT** anyone on Dave and the board's side to admit that taking good care of the people who directly deal with the students is *how* to best serve them. Townspeople should realize that without a strong faculty presence at Ferris, the university's very future is threatened and there may be no Big Rapids as they know it for their kids and grandkids to live in going forward.

I **EXPECT** we will be simultaneously high-roaded (again, "serve the students") and low-balled ("there is no money in the budget"). They will conveniently not mention that they are the ones who make the budget. The high-roading may take the form of deflection, e.g., someone will decry my alliterative "fight for a fair contract" statement in my intro paragraph as combative, confrontational, or some other term implying a less-than-collaborative attitude. I **DON'T EXPECT** any tangible signs of respect, just words. Nice, cheap words. Once again paying their usual outside attorney well into six figures puts to rest the myth that Dave and the board actually respect either us or the process (otherwise they'd do their own negotiating, as we do, and keep all that money on campus). And how does keeping us at the lower end of the pay scale help the university attract, retain, and motivate the best and brightest classroom talent to serve the students? Such shortsightedness does very little to encourage anyone contemplating coming here to think of Ferris as a long-term positive career move.

Likewise, I **EXPECT** we will again be told that since other groups on campus have previously settled for less, it would be unfair for us to get more than them, and therefore we can't have it either. I **DON'T EXPECT** them to admit that one important difference is that while many staff positions can be filled from the local workforce, faculty talent must be recruited at the national level, nor do I expect them to admit to anything else that differentiates us from other groups on campus unless pressed.

On the plus side, I do **EXPECT** private support from the many administrators who are on our side, as they know that what is good for faculty is good for the university. However, I **DON'T EXPECT** more than the few who are very secure in their positions to publically express that support, since they are at-will employees, and could be fired for voicing their conscience and siding with us. By his contract, not even board members can

publically criticize Dave. But everyone knows that a bad deal for faculty will hurt every Ferris family member except those few at the very top of the organizational chart. At the lower ranks, even Dave's Faves will get hurt.

Make no mistake about it: as sure as the Koch Brothers buy congressman, Dave and the board could be sowing salt in Ferris's fields that will affect their fertility for years. And for all of the talk about how important schools like Ferris are to meeting the state's critical need for talent, they sure don't seem willing to show it by trying to ensure that the academic engine that powers the organization stays strong. They must realize that if faculty members can't recommend Ferris to professional colleagues as a good place to work, we certainly can't convince students that this is a good place to come for an education.

RESPECT

Gary Huey, Professor of History

I wrote a document similar to this over a decade ago and, alas, things have not changed much in that time. I have been at Ferris since 1986 and throughout this time I have observed little respect for the faculty and staff and there is still little respect for either group today. New buildings and refurbished classrooms are, of course, important for any institution of higher learning, but the heart of any college is the people—particularly the faculty and staff.

Years of dedicated service and invaluable contributions by countless faculty have been continually ignored by our administration. Oh, we are praised on occasion and told how valuable we are, but when contract time comes, we become a problem. These same administrators who say how important we are have, in the past, accused faculty of “caring only for money and not the students” (A quote in the *Pioneer* from a university spokesman). This attitude continues to shape policy at Ferris State University.

The faculty are still portrayed as greedy and uncaring. If we were greedy, we certainly would not have chosen education as an occupation. On a daily basis we build this institution with our actions and efforts. Good administrators would recognize this and respect us, but they do not. We are reminded of this lack of respect every day.

- Would an administration that respects its faculty have more administrators than faculty? From the latest salary list 445 tenure track faculty, 470 administrators.
- Would an administration that respects its faculty hire a mean-spirited, union busting attorney for its chief bargainer for the upcoming contract negotiations?
- Would an administration that respects its faculty and staff expect them to take on more work with fewer personnel while the president accepted a \$58,000 bonus?
- Would an administration that respects faculty dramatically reduce funding and course offerings for summer school without consulting the faculty?
- Would an administration that respects its faculty impose PA-152 on the faculty forcing our health care premiums to rise significantly, up to an additional \$3,200 a year, while other state institutions refused to do this and have not been punished for their decision?
- Would an administration that respects its faculty offer a new buyout that is much less generous than the one contained in the contract, and when the faculty voted down this proposal, refuse to offer the buyout which we bargained for?

As a faculty we seek genuine respect, which we hope will translate into a fair contract negotiated in an atmosphere of collegiality. The only way this will happen is if we stand strong both as individuals and as a collective group. With this in mind, we must support our Union and our bargaining team and expose the hypocrisy of our upper level administrators. We must make it clear that lip service and scare tactics are unacceptable.

A Statistics Lesson (Misleading Eisler Graph)

by Holly Price, FFA A&S Representative

Over the past few months, President Eisler has been giving presentations regarding the ‘crisis’ in our enrollment, Chart (1) was used in his presentations. In addition, this graph was printed in the Feb. 28, 2018 edition of *The Torch* entitled, *Big Budget Cuts*.

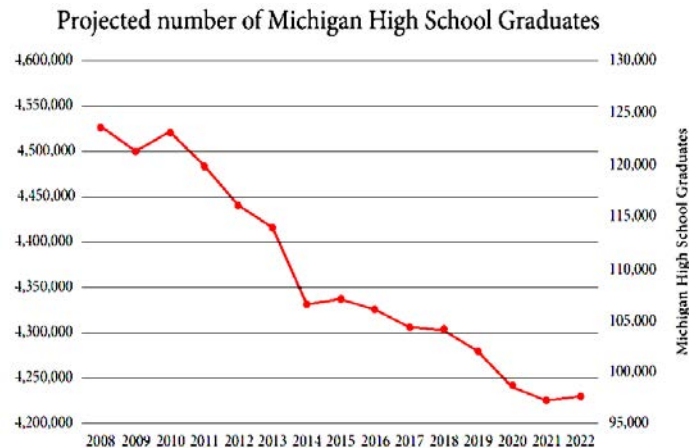


Chart (1)

I mostly teach MATH 251, *Statistics for the Life Sciences*. The second learning outcome of the course is that “students will be able to interpret and create visual displays of data,” and part of our content involves deceptive graphs. I decided to turn Eisler’s deceptive graph into a learning opportunity for my students. One student, and I confirmed the data, created Chart (2) based on data obtained from the National Center for Educational Statistics. (<https://nces.ed.gov/>). Note: the vertical scale starts at 0.

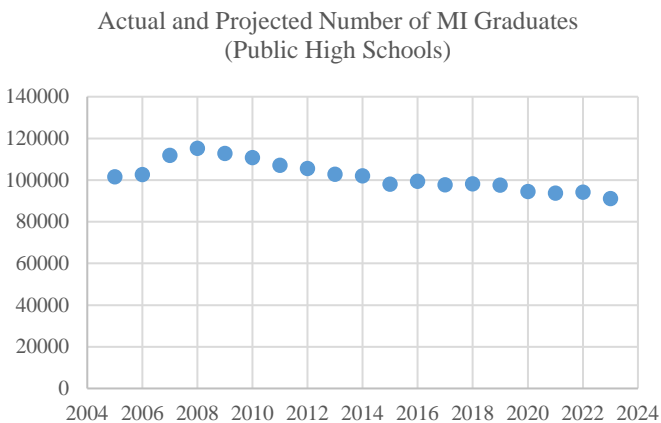


Chart (2)

Now, suppose that I wanted to exaggerate the rate of decline, I could simply truncate the vertical axis like in Chart (3) which is based on the same data as Chart (2).

Actual and Projected Number of MI Graduates (Public High Schools)

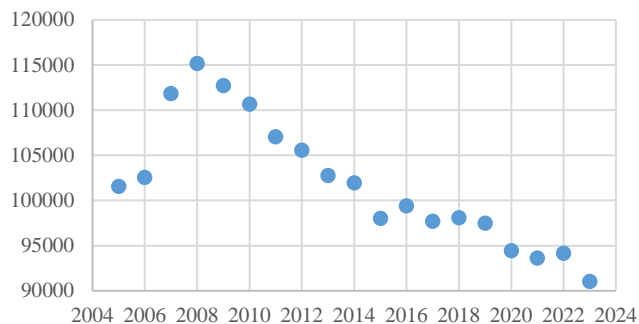


Chart (3)

Next, suppose that I ‘cherry-pick’ the years of the data. Why? I don’t know. Perhaps, I want to distract you from the possibility that the recent influx of students was related to high unemployment rates; nonetheless, check out the result in Chart (4).

Actual and Projected Number of MI Graduates (Public High Schools)

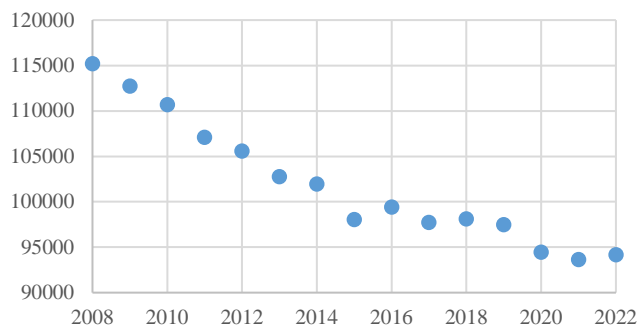


Chart (4)

Admittedly, I didn’t exactly recreate Eisler’s graph but, to be fair, I didn’t have his data source. The point is, look at statistics carefully! D. Huff refers to graphs like Eisler’s as “The Gee-Whiz Graph” in his book entitled *How to Lie with Statistics*.

I fell for the ‘crisis’ in 2010 while I served on the 2010-13 FFA contract negotiation team. During that time, state cuts were the ‘crisis’ and they did exist. As a result, we (the FFA) agreed to a \$50,000 cut in our SMA funds for the first year which would’ve been shared by about four hundred FFA faculty. Before the expiration of the very same contract, the Board awarded Eisler with a \$50,000 raise (not bonus). **The Board took our sacrifice and they gave it all to a single administrator, President Eisler.** I will not be fooled again.

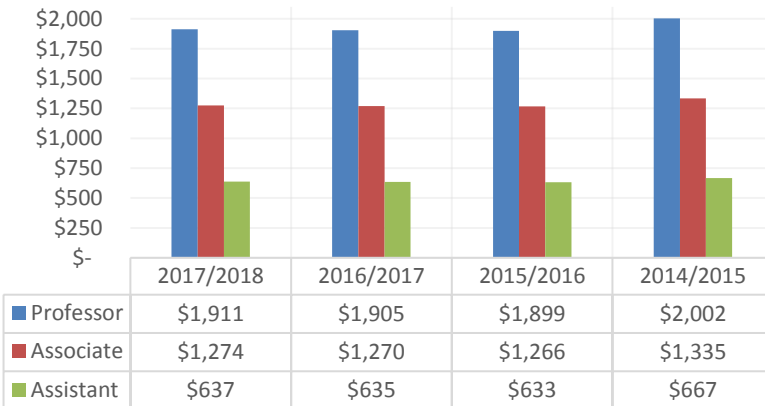
Special Note: I didn’t discuss the second/unlabeled vertical axis in Chart (1) that just adds confusion. Why is Eisler confusing or misleading us? Does he have a motive? Is he just ignorant to basic statistical analyses?

The Supplemental Market Adjustment (SMA) process and what it means to Ferris Faculty

Aaron Waltz, FFA COB Representative, SMA Officer

The Supplemental Market Adjustment (SMA) was established by the FFA in 2002 to benefit Ferris Faculty! It is defined in section 14.3 of the Faculty Contract and states: **“The Employer recognizes that to attract and retain qualified faculty it is necessary to make efforts to offer and maintain salaries that are competitive.”**

HISTORICAL SMA INCREASE



This provision of the contract has allocated \$300,000 annually to be distributed to eligible faculty members. The specifics are defined in greater detail in section 14.3 and explains how faculty members are eligible for this annual salary increase. The basic provision of SMA eligibility is calculated by comparing each faculty member’s current fiscal year salary against the national averages in accordance to seniority group listing published data from the relevant survey company (CUPA-HR, ASEE, ASCO, AACP and ASAHP).

If a faculty member’s current salary is below the national average in their discipline /

seniority group, they are eligible for a portion of the calculated increase. The Historical SMA Increase chart illustrates the annual increases by rank for the past 4 fiscal years.

Over the past few months, I have received several inquiries in regard to SMA increase and how it compared to other colleges at Ferris. The diagram below shows the distribution across campus by college. It’s important to note that 55.2% (249) of all faculty received an SMA increase this fiscal year. Over the past 4 fiscal years, an average 55.1% of all faculty have received increases. The SMA process is an essential part of the faculty contract and requires administration to increase undercompensated faculty members’ base salary.

SMA Increases by Colleges F2017/2018

College	Increase	No Increase	Faculty	College	Increase	No Increase	Faculty
Arts & Science	77	57	134	Health Professions	31	16	47
	57.5%	42.5%			66.0%	34.0%	
Business	37	35	72	Optometry	18	2	20
	51.4%	48.6%			90.0%	10.0%	
Education & Human Service	20	10	30	Pharmacy	29	15	44
	66.7%	33.3%			65.9%	34.1%	
Engineering Technology	23	55	78	Retention & Student Success	7	0	7
	29.5%	70.5%			100.0%	0.0%	
Enrollment Services & Fin Aid	0	2	2	Student Services & Counseling	3	1	4
	0.0%	100.0%			75.0%	25.0%	
FLITE	4	9	13	Total	249	202	451
	30.8%	69.2%			55.2%	44.8%	

Faculty Strikes

There have been three faculty strikes: 1978, 1986, and 1997



The FFA hopes that contract negotiations will progress smoothly, finding Ferris Faculty with a strong contract that came about without even the threat of a strike in 2018!

Our contract expires June, 30!
Stay tuned!
Updates will be made available
through email, the FFA webpage,
and social media!