

House Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education and Community Colleges

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Preserving Our Students' Futures:

TIP Financial Support Fosters
Student Opportunity, Access and Success

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Chairman Frederick and members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education and Community Colleges, thank you for taking time from your busy schedules this morning to hear from Ferris State University. It is an honor to appear before you today and I thank you for this opportunity to do so.

In speaking with you I am talking with our friends and supporters. You are our advocates in Lansing. We need your help and support more now than ever, and I look forward to working with you.

Students come to Ferris from every county in Michigan, and many are from the districts you represent and serve:

- Rep. Steckloff – 33 students
- Rep. Brabec – 57 students
- Rep. Green – 122 students
- Rep. Frederick – 204 students
- Rep. Johnson – 376 students
- Rep. Brann – 386 students
- Rep. Slagh – 418 students

These students are your constituents. They are our next construction managers, designers, police officers, nurses, optometrists, pharmacists, and welders; all future leaders for Michigan. Thank you for representing their interests in Lansing.

At Ferris State University, we are fortunate to have a strong Board of Trustees, and I want to recognize each of them. These are committed citizens who have an interest in our state's future and who are advocates for higher education and our students. Our trustees include:

- Amna P. Seibold of East Grand Rapids – Chair
- Ana L. Ramirez-Saenz of Grand Rapids – Vice Chair
- Rupesh K. Srivastava of Wixom – Secretary
- George K. Heartwell of Newaygo
- Kurt A. Hofman of Grand Rapids
- Michael D. Ryan of Big Rapids
- Ron E. Snead of Stanwood
- LaShanda R. Thomas of Grosse Point

In 1884, Woodbridge and Helen Ferris founded the Big Rapids Industrial School as a place to provide displaced loggers, subsistence farmers and others an opportunity to learn the skills they needed to make a better living in a changing economy. The Ferris' educational philosophy was both practical and visionary. It was also inclusive.

Women comprised a third of the first class of 15 students and the school accepted students of color early in its history, reflecting the Ferris' egalitarian vision that guides the University today.

Mr. Ferris founded his school around opportunity. Today we celebrate and embrace that value, remembering his words delivered in 1916 as he was concluding his second term as Governor of our state -

*"My plea in Michigan -
and it will be my plea to the last breath I draw
and the last word I speak -
is education for all children, all men and all women of Michigan,
all the people in all our states, all the time."*

In 1884 our area's primary industry, lumber extraction, had peaked, forcing many people to retrain for new jobs - some of which were not yet even in existence. Replace the demise of the timber business with the rise of automation, information technology and artificial intelligence, and you have a pretty good description of what our students face today. In retrospect it is easy to see how education was crucial not just to improving the lives of individuals, but to the state as a whole. That truth remains the same today.

Opportunity and Success

At Ferris State University we understand the opportunities our education can provide for students. I hear this from our alumni, who often begin a reflection on their Ferris experience with the words, "If not for Ferris..." We know that many of our students come from poor or modest backgrounds and are looking to their Ferris degree as a vehicle to create a better future for them. Two recent national studies, ThirdWay.org's Economic Mobility Index and CollegeNET's Social Mobility Index, rank Ferris State University at the top of colleges and universities in Michigan in terms of economic and social mobility for our students.

ThirdWay.org's Economic Mobility Index builds upon research focused on generational mobility, especially the work of Harvard economist Raj Chetty. The study developed two primary metrics. The first, a Price-to-Earnings Premium, calculates the time it takes students to recoup their educational costs based on the earnings increase they obtain by attending the institution. The second looks at the proportion of Pell Grant students the institution enrolls. On this index Ferris ranks #3 among Michigan public universities, after the University of Michigan Dearborn and Wayne State University. The Price-to-Earnings Premium calculation is remarkable, with 1.82 years for a Ferris graduate to recoup their educational costs. From this study Ferris State University is ranked #118 in the country. More information from this study is accessible at ThirdWay.org.
(Slide One)

CollegeNET's Social Mobility Index utilizes five metrics – tuition, economic background, graduation rate, early career salary and endowment, with the first two factors weighted about 30% each and second two weighted about 16%. In this Ferris ranks second out of 41 Michigan colleges and universities in educating more economically disadvantaged students (family with incomes below the national median) at lower tuition and graduating them into good paying jobs. Nationally we rank #200, which is in sharp contrast with our competitors, Central Michigan University (315), Grand Valley State University (473), Michigan State University (551), Western Michigan University (611) and the University of Michigan (1040). You can access these data, the rationale and methodology at [Social Mobility Index](#). (Slide Two)

The CollegeNET study provides a comparison on Michigan colleges and universities and their average student debt. For people from backgrounds of economic hardship it is essential to limit student debt. In this survey Ferris students graduate with an average debt of \$21,591, the second lowest average debt of Michigan public universities. (Slide Three) Student debt is a challenge we have focused on for the past decade, and in this effort lowered student debt. We have done this through a commitment to constrain cost and provide financial support to our students.

For first-generation and economically challenged students, college affordability is critical. This is more than just tuition charges. It is net price, the actual amount students pay for their education (tuition, fees, room and board, books, travel and incidentals, minus the average award of financial aid). (Slide Four) Viewed over the period from 2009-2020, the results of our efforts to keep college affordable for our students are readily apparent. During this period, the net price has declined -

- Students from families earning less than \$30,000 now pay 48.5% less
- Students from families earning between \$30,000 - \$48,000 pay 34.2% less
- Students from families earning between \$48,000 - \$75,000 pay 21.9% less
- Students from families earning between \$75,000 - \$110,000 pay 5% less

Over this period the average net price for Ferris State University students has declined by 12.1%. In comparison the average for Michigan public universities during this period is an increase of 21.8%. (Slide Five) Not only are we helping our students graduate, we are helping them do this with less debt.

It is gratifying to see what we know to be true to be validated by two national studies. At Ferris we truly do make a difference in the lives of our students and help create the opportunity of a bright and successful future. In this we capture the spirit of our founders in our efforts today.

Tuition Incentive Program

Over my 19 years as president of Ferris State University there have been many opportunities to testify before legislators. As I reflect back of those years there is no more important conversation than the one we have today.

The successes I have shared and the futures of thousands of Ferris students are at risk. This challenge to their future comes from proposed changes in the Executive Budget to limit support for them from the Tuition Incentive Program.

Because of Ferris State University's unique history of providing opportunity and our strong associate degree programs, we are a top choice for first-generation and economically challenged students. As president, I cannot stress enough the importance of the Tuition Incentive Program (TIP) funding in helping these students.

TIP is a state program funded primarily through the federal TANF program. Students in grades 6 through 12 who are Michigan Medicaid-eligible for 24 months in a 36-consecutive-month period can qualify for TIP. TIP provides an incentive to students to complete high school and go on to college by pledging to pay their tuition and fees for an associate degree or certificate program (Phase I), as well as up to \$2,000 toward a bachelor degree (Phase II). This is a promise made by the state to these students and is something they depend upon to make college possible.

This year Ferris enrolled 1,611 TIP students; 1,188 in Phase I and 423 in Phase II. Helping these students is at the core of our mission. With our career-oriented degree programs Ferris is uniquely positioned to help lower-income students be successful and find employment in high-demand, high-paying fields. At Ferris students first earn their associate degree and many continue on to earn a bachelor's degree. In doing so, we help them escape the endless cycle of economic poverty. Because of our focus on student success and our experience with first generation students, in the past nine years TIP students at Ferris have earned 2,883 degrees - 1,344 associate degrees and 1,539 bachelor degrees, and a remarkable 519 degrees during 2019-20. (Slide Six)

The TIP program personifies the opportunity we provide at Ferris State University. Please remember that we serve as the community college for students in our five adjacent counties. We attract extraordinary people to our campus, students who are determined that education is their pathway to the future. Once these students arrive, we go to exceptional lengths to help ensure their success. We have a full-time TIP coordinator dedicated to working with these students, and college success coaches, upper division students who work as peer mentors. As a result, our TIP students graduate and graduate at a higher rate than any community college in the state. Most importantly, our TIP students graduate with work-ready degrees - over 78% in high-demand careers. No other institution in the state has this record of success. (Slide Seven)

You can learn much about TIP by seeing how many students it helps, but it is in hearing the individual stories of our TIP students that its true value becomes clear. Hanna Pollard, a junior student from Rockford, is here with us today. I have asked Hanna to share her story with you.

Hello, my name is Hanna Pollard. In 2019 I graduated from Rockford High School and chose to attend Ferris because when I visited campus as a prospective student, it felt like home. Now a junior at Ferris, I am one of hundreds of students who receive TIP funding.

My parents divorced when I was six or seven. My custody arrangement was 50/50, meaning I would spend equal time with each parent regardless of what my sister and I wanted. My dad wasn't in the picture very much, and my mom provided most of my financial and emotional support while growing up. She never dated or got remarried; she was raising two kids on a single income. When I was a freshman in high school my mom was unable to work due to an injury. We almost lost our house and car. I had to sell chicken eggs in order for my mom to have gas money to bring my sister and I to school on the days she had us. It was at this time that my sister and I became eligible for TIP. To be quite honest, as a freshman in high school I knew I had to go to college, but I had no idea how I would pay for it – or if I would get any help.

As a senior in high school, my academic counselor told me what TIP was and that I qualified. On that day, I had hope for my future. I could actually start looking at going to college. My dream has always been to make sure that everyone who speaks is heard. My dream came true today for the first time, as I am here advocating for current and future TIP recipients, with the hope that other people may have the chance to fulfill their dreams. I am here to advocate for the students at Ferris State University, and my little sister, who too wants to attend Ferris.

Without financial support from TIP, I would not be here today, and I mean that literally. I support myself 100% financially and work on campus. My little sister started driving in October. She is starting to look at schools, and like me, she is heavily dependent on TIP funding for her education. The TIP program is making my dream of an education a reality. I hope it can for her, too.

When I graduate next year with my bachelor's degree in criminal justice, my goal is to work with children who need an advocate. I chose this line of work because I understand what it feels like to be screaming in the middle of a silent crowd and nobody seems to hear you. I plan on making sure that everyone I help is heard.

Thank you Hanna for that compelling testimony. You make each of us here today proud and hopeful for the future of our state and nation.

The National Conference on State Legislatures' publication "The Path to a Degree," asserts that, "Prioritizing and preserving college access for underrepresented students can improve the state's economy; increase per-capita income; improve individual lives; and fill workforce needs." For TIP students Ferris State University provides -

- Increased degree program options for students
- A safe geographic location option for students from larger cities and small towns alike
- The chance to live on campus and participate fully in campus life
- A full array of recognized academic support services
- Unlike other institutions, full-time dedicated support specifically for the TIP Scholars program

- High-quality instruction from full-time faculty who are teachers and experts in their fields
- Small class sizes which allow for more individual attention and assistance
- Higher retention rates from year one to year two.

For these reasons, the Tuition Incentive Program is exactly the type of program Michigan needs during these challenging fiscal times. The simple truth is that at Ferris State University the TIP program works and works extraordinarily well.

The proposed language in the Executive Budget puts this success in graduating economically challenged students prepared for success both in a career and in life at risk. The restrictions are a blunt instrument attacking the futures of TIP students at Michigan public universities that offer associate degrees - Ferris State University, Lake Superior State University, and Northern Michigan University. The proposed changes would be devastating for our programs and our students. If this becomes a reality, students like Hanna next year would be forced to pay the difference in tuition previously funded by the TIP program, \$4,650 for next year. Simply put this will be unaffordable for them and you will make impossible their dream of a college education.

Closing Thoughts

This is the eighth time since 2010 that I have testified in Lansing, working to preserve opportunity and access for our TIP students. In reflecting on this experience, I am drawn back to the students who have assisted me by sharing their stories before committees like this one today. (Slide Eight)

Each student's story is special, and I would like to relate each of them to you. For today, I will share four.

Melissa DiVetri accompanied me during my testimony in 2010. At the time she was a 21-year old freshman who came from a family of seven adopted children. She has a rare disease called sacral agenesis, which limits her ability to walk, but it no way limits her spirit which fills up a room. Today she is a successful entrepreneur and resides in Miami, working with an all-female team that spans the globe developing international music and art festivals throughout North America, Central America, Europe and Asia.

In 2017 I shared Kaylia Ervin's story with this committee. Kaylia was a foster child who earned her degree in criminal justice from Ferris with no family support whatsoever. Her junior year she took in her sister from an abusive foster situation so she could graduate from high school. I know Kaylia well as she worked in our office. It was a proud day when she earned her law degree from Michigan State University.

Miranda Roberts testified with me in 2018. She qualified for TIP funding and the state assured her she would receive this. However, because the budget passed in 2017 capped the amount any institution could receive in TIP funding at \$8.5 million, Miranda did not receive the TIP funding she was promised her last year of school. In order to afford her last year at Ferris, she had to give up everything she could not afford - access to the campus health services, our recreation facilities and more. She feared as a commuter from Baldwin that she would not complete her degree. She was determined she would live on campus. To do this, she gave up her meal plan and worked two-part time jobs while going to school full-time. Miranda persevered and earned her associate degree. She has since completed her undergraduate degree in health sciences at Indiana University South Bend and is now applying to graduate school for occupational therapy and working full-time.

Last year Logan Evans shared his story with you via Zoom. He recalled how he spent the majority of his childhood in the foster care system, living in unstable environments, never finding a place to call home. He knew that in order to change his future, he needed to attend college. In his words he said, "TIP is a drop of water in a well of opportunity. It has created options that ripple outward, impacting every aspect of my life. But most importantly, TIP gave me hope when there was none."

There is a commonality in these stories – life-changing success. Despite obstacles and a lack of support that would deter many of us, they are changing the trajectory of their future. Ultimately, education is about people and the incredible power knowledge has to change lives. Students like Melissa, Kaylia, Tekarra, Dymend, Miranda, Shae, Logan and Hanna personify what makes Ferris State University a great American university, committed to opportunity and to access. Each of us in this room understands the crucial difference access to higher education can make and the opportunity it has created for us. We can and will succeed in this effort with these students, but we need your help because we cannot do it alone.

When you consider funding for our students please remember these stories. Students come to Ferris because of the support we provide, the degrees we offer, and the in-demand career opportunities our TIP students receive. We know we can help TIP students break the cycle of poverty and become successful, productive citizens. Just like Hanna who is with us today, our students need and deserve this support.

If the proposed limit on TIP support to Ferris State University students is not lifted, sadly more of these future success stories will not become a reality. Limiting this support for severely economically disadvantaged students is not in our state's or our students' best interest.

Hanna said this well -

As a senior in high school, my academic counselor told me what TIP was and that I qualified. On that day, I had hope for my future.

Without financial support from TIP, I would not be here today. The TIP program is making my dream of an education a reality.

I am here advocating for current and future TIP recipients, with the hope that other people may have the chance to fulfill their dreams.

Help to preserve this future, these dreams, for our students. Working together we can provide them the support our state has promised them and that they so desperately deserve. On behalf of these students both now and in the future, thank you so very much.

These materials are accessible online at
<https://www.ferris.edu/president/presentations/homepage.htm>

Logan Evans - 2021

Good Morning. My name is Logan Evans. I am an engineer, a son, a Ferris State Bulldog. And an optimist. I testify before you today to share my story. As I do, I encourage you to keep in mind that I am not an anomaly. My story is but one among hundreds of equally inspiring stories across our beautiful campus.

My childhood was spent in the foster care system. I spent ages 3-10 living nomadically, moving house to house, family to family, town to town, never finding a place to call home. It was difficult growing up in an unstable environment, especially during the most formative years of life. I developed identity issues and lacked a sense of belonging. Ultimately, and most detrimentally, I lost hope.

It is difficult to summarize two decades of adversity in a short recitation, though the fact that I speak before you today is a good indication that I found the hope I so desperately needed.

After high school I had three tenets that directed my future: I want to help as many people as I can. I want to be a great husband and father. And I want to break the generational misfortune that plagued my biological family.

I decided in order to accomplish these goals, I needed to attend university, specifically on campus at Ferris State University, with the help of the Tuition Incentive Program. TIP has been so fundamental in my success, I decided to stay for four years. As a peer success coach, I've spoken to hundreds of TIP students on campus, and I would like to redefine what the Tuition Incentive Program is aside from numbers in a budget.

TIP provides the opportunity for a better future, as it allows students to obtain a life-changing education.

TIP's benefits to mental health rival that of any prescription. With TIP, students spend less time worrying about finances and more time becoming the highly trained employees our workforce depends on.

TIP is a doorway to exposure, providing students the ability to see a world outside of their hometowns, create connections and experience diversity.

TIP is a tool that is wielded by growing minds to build communities and ideas that they lacked in their youth.

Finally, the Tuition Incentive Program is a drop of water in a well of opportunity. It has created options that ripple outward, impacting every aspect of my life. TIP provided me an avenue to earn my bachelor's degree in four years. It has given me friendships, connections, and the family I longed for. Having this support has broadened my horizons and sense of empathy. But most importantly, TIP gave me hope when there was none.



Logan Evans, cont.

I am humbled to share my story with you, but my story is only a chapter. Hundreds of students on campus receive TIP funding, and their stories are just as powerful as mine. The Tuition Incentive Program has changed our lives for the better.

With this said, I am helping people, I am going to be a great father and husband, and I am going to break my family's cycle of misfortune. Thank you.

Shae Gibbs - 2020

You can learn much about TIP by seeing how many students it helps, but it is in hearing the individual stories of our TIP students, that its true value becomes clear. Shae Gibbs, a first-year Environmental Biology major from Grand Rapids is with me today. I've asked Shae to share his story with you.



Good morning. My name is Shae Gibbs, and I am a graduate of C.A. Frost Environmental Science Academy in Grand Rapids. This is my first year at Ferris State University, and I am majoring in Environmental Biology.

I was adopted at a young age. It was challenging, being adopted. There were times when I felt like I didn't fit in, or was accepted. Heading into high school, I was not sure college was in my future. My parents said they wanted me to go to college, but they never pushed me to. Also, no one in my immediate family has gone to college, so it was a completely new concept for me.

Later in life I had the opportunity to meet my birth parents. They were struggling financially and not in a position to encourage me to attend college or help me financially. However, I knew that in order to break this cycle I needed to pursue higher education. Hearing that Ferris State University had a really good science program, and how much they help their students, I decided to apply to Ferris. This was 100% my decision. I wasn't sure how I was going to pay for tuition, or how I would pay for living on campus, but I knew this is what I was meant to do. As the financial aid deadline neared, I was shocked to learn that I was eligible for the Tuition Incentive Program – and that all of my tuition would be covered by this program. I am still in shock, honestly, that I have this opportunity.

I have five younger siblings, and my personal goal is to be the first in my family to graduate from college, to set an example for them, to encourage and help them get to college, so they too can have an opportunity to succeed. My career goal is to graduate with my bachelor's degree in Environmental Biology and help find ways to make our earth's resources more sustainable for the future. I am off to a great start, making over a B average and doing well living on campus.

Without TIP funding and the other financial aid I receive, I would not be able to attend Ferris State University. Or chase my dream of an education so I can make a better life for myself and my family someday. There are many TIP students at Ferris, who like me, need this support to make a college education possible. Your help will make an important difference for them and for me.

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to share my story with you.

Miranda Roberts –2019

Allow me to share one such example with you of how important TIP funding is for our students and the difference a Ferris education can make.

After graduating from high school, Miranda was ready to attend college. However, she was not sure she could afford the tuition, room and board, and books. Her parents encouraged her to apply, as her brother found success after graduating from Ferris. Interested in a STEM career, Miranda enrolled at Ferris.

She qualified for TIP funding and the state assured her she would receive this. However, because the budget passed in 2017 capped the amount any institution could receive in TIP funding at \$8.5 million, Miranda did not receive the TIP funding she was promised her last year of school. Even though she had received TIP support the previous year, there were no funds left for Miranda when she completed her paperwork.



Imagine the impact on any student, especially one from an economically challenged family, when they discover they have an \$8,000 bill and no means to pay it. Our Financial Aid office dug as deep as they could to help this young student, and her community helped also. Miranda made the sacrifices to stay in school to get her degree. She worked two part-time jobs, in addition to going to school full-time. During the week, she traveled back and forth home to work in the high school gymnasium in the evenings, and during the weekend, she worked at a healthcare center there.

It literally would break your heart to hear this young woman's story. In order to afford her last year at Ferris, Miranda had to give up everything she could not afford - access to the campus health services, our recreation facilities and more. The one thing she knew was important to her future was the living environment on campus. She feared as a commuter that she would not complete her degree. She was determined she would live on campus. To live on campus, she gave up her meal plan.

"I was devastated when I found out I would not receive TIP funding," Miranda said. "I didn't think I had any other options, and living on campus was important to me. I already had a lot of loans, but I wasn't going to give up. Most of the kids I knew who left school didn't return ... I didn't want to do that." This past May, Miranda earned her associate degree and she continues to do well today.

Miranda is an example of how funding decisions made at the state level impact our students, creating obstacles they should not need to face. In helping Miranda, we were fortunate that she was from Baldwin. Even though Lake County is among the poorest in our state, the rural Baldwin community is one of the state's exemplary Promise Zones, and the Baldwin Promise is a source of great pride to this area and to our state.

Dymend Ross - 2018

Dymend, from Detroit, grew up largely in a single parent household. Her dad passed away after a lengthy illness, and her mother, who has disabilities, was left to raise her and three younger siblings. Although she had attended three different high schools, she maintained her grades and graduated in the top 25 students in her class. She is the first to graduate from high school in her family, and also the first to attend college.



Before her high school graduation, she initially had her sights set on attending another university. However, when she realized the cost of tuition, in addition to room and board and books, she began to think college was not in her future. Disappointed, she spoke with her high school counselor. She encouraged her to look at Ferris State University, because Ferris offers the Tuition Incentive Program. After her visit to Ferris, she applied and was accepted.

She says that without TIP funding, she simply would not have been able to afford college. With what her mother receives each month on disability, she was not able to help with college expenses.

"I value the TIP funding I receive so much," she said. "This will help me achieve my dream of becoming a nurse, so I can help others like the nurses helped my dad when he was sick."

Dymend, in her second semester as a freshman, is already thinking ahead for summer. She plans on taking 12 credits at a local community college so she can continue her studies toward her nursing degree.

When she is not studying she regularly volunteers on campus. Dymend is a College Positive Volunteer with our Office of Multicultural Student Services, interacting with middle and high school students who visit Ferris, providing them with information about college preparation, paying for college, career selection and financial resources. She also volunteers with the University's GEAR UP program, which provides an opportunity for underrepresented students to discover first-hand the potential of a college education. She is also the vice president of the suicide prevention Registered Student Organization Flutter.

Dymend is a wonderful example of how the Tuition Incentive Program gives students a chance at an education they might not otherwise have and of how at Ferris State University we help these students succeed.

Tekarra Coleman -2017

I want to introduce Tekarra Coleman. She is earning her associate degree in Health Information Technology and has 3.42 GPA. Tekarra...

Hello. My name is Tekarra Coleman and I am a sophomore at Ferris State University. I am a full-time student and am enrolled in the associate's degree program in Health Information Technology and Health Information Management. When I'm not at school, I live in Battle Creek, Michigan with my Grandma. I have one older sister, two younger brothers and a younger sister. I am the first person in my family to go to college and I will be the first person in my family to earn a college degree.

When I was in high school I lived in Kalamazoo, so I qualified for the Kalamazoo Promise which would have paid for my first two years of college. But, because I moved to Battle Creek to live with my grandma, I didn't graduate from a Kalamazoo school, which meant that I did not qualify for the Kalamazoo Promise after graduation. I felt like I had lost my chance to go to college.



When I was feeling like college might not be an option for me, I went and met with my high school counselor, Mrs. Townes. She helped me to see that college could still be in my future. Mrs. Townes told me about the TIP Grant and the Pell Grant and how they could help me to go to college. She told me about Ferris and how I could use TIP at Ferris. I had already applied to other schools, but something about Ferris stuck out to me. Mrs. Townes helped me to overcome my fears and uncertainties about going to college and I will always be grateful for that.

The summer after graduation, my grandad and I decided to take a trip up to Big Rapids and visit the campus. The first thing that I noticed was how small the town was. I told my grandad that the town was too small and it didn't even have a mall. He talked to me the entire way home about how going to school was to further my education and get a career and not about how big the town was or if there was a mall there. My grandad told me that as long as I could get a good education that the town was a great place to be and that my education was all that mattered. My grandad was right.

I applied and was accepted to Ferris State University and today, I am proud to be a Bulldog. I qualified for the TIP Grant and a full Pell Grant which is how I am able to attend college. Without these grants, I would not be able to afford college.

When I first got to Ferris, I was a bit nervous, but the advisors and teachers made me feel more comfortable and helped me to believe that I could be a good college student. I started in the General Studies Program at Ferris so that I could improve my reading and writing skills and when I was ready, transferred to the College of Health Professions at Ferris to work on my degree in the health field.

Tekarra Coleman, cont.

Being a freshman at college is hard, but I had a lot of support from my advisor and teachers. At Ferris, all freshmen are required to take a freshman seminar class that teaches you how to be a college student and about the resources at Ferris. Shelly VandePanne was my seminar teacher and she was amazing. She worked with me from the time I came to campus for orientation and helped me to explore career options, which helped me to decide on my program that I am in now in Health Information Technology and Management. I am so grateful for her support and that she cared about helping me and for getting me that head start I needed to be successful in college. She helped me to see what steps I needed to complete which put me on the path to my future.

My associate degree from Ferris will prepare me to get a good job right after college. Getting the TIP Grant and Pell Grant has made my life a bit easier since I have help paying for college. I don't have to worry about graduating from college with my associate's degree with major debt. My goal is to graduate and get a good job and go back to school for my bachelor's degree. I will graduate next year with my associate's degree. Without TIP I wouldn't be able to attend college and earn a degree that will make a difference in my life. I am very thankful to have this type of assistance to go to school and better myself. I know that TIP helps not only me but thousands of other students who need help as well.

Thank you for letting me tell you my story.

Kaylia Ervin - 2017

I want to introduce Kaylia Ervin. At our commencements I share student stories, and in May 2015 it was my honor to tell Kaylia's story. Kaylia was a student in our Foster Youth Initiative and represents the 3% of foster youth who graduate from college. I talked about Kaylia in my testimony last year, but wanted you to hear from her firsthand. Kaylia...

Good morning and thank you for granting me the opportunity to elaborate on how the TIP Program has impacted my life. Ever since I was a child I knew I wanted more for my life. I was raised in and out of the foster care system and although I was intelligent and well-mannered I was still considered just another ghetto project kid. There weren't many role models in my community and I hadn't known anyone who had ever been to college other than my teachers. However, I knew my dream of obtaining more was possible.



It wasn't until my senior year in high school that I began to think of how I would achieve more. I knew nothing about college or the process of getting accepted. My foster parents did not seem to care much about what I did upon graduating high school. I will never forget the six-word conversation my foster mother and I had about college. She simply asked "are you going to college?" And I replied "yes" and we never spoke of it again. She didn't know what college I would go to, how I was getting there, how I was going to pay for it, or what I would major in. I guess she assumed since I was a foster child the State would write me a check to whatever college I decided to attend. Either way I was lost in the process and had no idea where to start.

I filled out a FASFA and applied to Ferris State University since it was my only school of interest without an application fee. Upon receiving an acceptance letter, I was given a \$2,000 scholarship from Ferris and notice that I would receive a Pell Grant of just over \$5,000. At the time it seemed like a lot of money and I was certain my aspirations of becoming a lawyer were on the verge. However, I was ignorant about how much college actually cost. With no family help or savings, I was told to look into loans.

One day after coming home from school I received a letter stating that I was eligible for the TIP Program. I spoke about it with my case worker and found out the program would cover my tuition in full for two years, leaving enough money for a room and board plan. I was ecstatic to learn that the only thing I needed to do was pack my bags and find a way to get to Ferris.

I said all this to say that today I have graduated from Ferris and I am now in my second year of law school at Michigan State University.

Kaylia Ervin, cont.

It was possible because the TIP Program saved me from having to finance my undergrad tuition completely in student loans. I had no other way of paying for college.

I worked all four years of my undergrad education and I can say with all certainty my minimum wage job would not have put a dent in my tuition fees. Three of my closest friends in college had to drop out mid-semester because they could no longer afford to pay for college. Millions of other students struggle each month to pay back outrageous student loan debt. I am sincerely grateful for a program like TIP. It gave me a chance to complete my bachelor's degree and continue my education.

Melissa DeVietri - 2010

I am joined today by one of our TIP students, Melissa DiVietri, a first-year Printing Technology major. She has driven from Big Rapids so she could share her story with you.

Hi everyone. My name is Melissa DiVietri, 21 years old, a first-year student at Ferris State University. I am from Traverse City and raised in Jackson, Michigan. I'm a Print Management major and eCommerce minor, so I am studying for my Bachelors of Science and a Certification. I want to go to Ferris for the next four to five years. I know exactly what requirements I need to fulfill my education for my dream career.



I will be the first person in my family to get a Bachelor's degree. I am seventh of eight children and only three of us went to college and two graduated. My mother has an associates and my father went to a tech school. College is supposed to be my 'safe zone' before I begin working at a career level. The plan is to successfully get my degree at Ferris and enter the career field with that 'cushion' of having the education as well the college experience. I have two campus jobs and am involved in multiple groups on campus, committees and leadership roles. I work for Ferris as a student employee working on the Ferris website, updating pages and links. Being a student employee working in the field I am studying is giving me that extra bonus of education & work at the same time.

I attended Jackson Community College in 2007 using my C.A.R.E. scholarship, which funded my entire education. JCC didn't offer the programs that I needed, and I chose Ferris because they offered the classes with the equipment, technology and resources that were helpful towards my career. Ferris State is the third best university in the country for the printing program. I use the TIP Scholarship as well as other forms of financial aid to pay for my education and living arrangements. I have been looking for more scholarships on top of what I already have to help pay for my tuition, books, computer equipment and not to mention my apartment. I live off campus to avoid paying the room & board (meal plan) and I use the payment option at my apartment complex for my financial aid to pay a majority of my rent cost. That's very helpful, it saves me a lot of stress, but yet there isn't enough money for everything I still need. I am constantly looking for aid. My degree is the always-changing 'technology,' and is constantly updating and I am at a lack of resources to use on my own.

If this scholarship changes, I may have to leave this university and go to a community college. I am worried that with all the changes that may happen, I won't be able to afford going to school because there isn't enough money to pay for everything I need. I am happy and very accommodated at Ferris. Ferris has helped me with my accommodations, education, and social involvement. I am learning it all here, at Ferris State University. If I have to, I'll do everything possible to stay here because I know the community colleges could not offer what I need to be successful in my education.



FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

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Tuition Incentive Program (TIP) Funding

Ferris provides students a career-oriented education.

- Ferris State offers a significant number of career-oriented associate degrees (see reverse).
- This year Ferris enrolls 1,611 TIP students.
- Our success rates with TIP students far exceed the state average.
- Because of our focus on student success and our experience with first generation college students, in the past nine years TIP students have earned 2,883 degrees at Ferris.
- Ferris TIP students graduate with work-ready degrees and over 78% in high demand careers.

TIP aligns with the role and mission of Ferris State University.

- The opportunity mission and career orientation of Ferris State University are an excellent match for TIP students.
- Because we offer both associate and bachelor degree programs, we serve as the community college in our area.

TIP students at Ferris depend on this support.

- Our TIP students have been told by the State they qualified for TIP funding and that Ferris was a school they could attend.
- They are arriving on campus depending on this support.
- A change in TIP support would be devastating to their success once classes have begun and they have no financial means to replace this funding.

Our Request

TIP is an important, successful program that helps students escape what can be an unending cycle of poverty and economic hardship. Please do not limit the opportunity Ferris State University can provide them by limiting the TIP support they can receive. **Our students need and deserve this support.**

Thank you for making this difference for them. It truly can and does change their lives.

David L. Eisler, president



Ferris State University

- 96% of Ferris graduates find employment or pursue advanced education
- 89% of Ferris graduates find jobs in their field of study
- Top 20% of all institutions nationally in critical skills areas with annually more than 1,700 degrees awarded
- Ferris graduates more students in critical skills areas than any other public university except Wayne State, Michigan State and the University of Michigan

Selected Associate Degrees

- Allied Health Sciences
- Architectural Technology
- Automotive Service Technology
- Building Construction Technology
- CAD Drafting and Tool Design Technology
- Civil Engineering Technology - Highway Emphasis
- Computer Information Systems
- Criminal Justice
- Dental Hygiene
- Diagnostic Medical Sonography
- Digital Media
- Early Childhood Education
- Graphic Communications
- Health Information Technology
- Heavy Equipment Technology
- HVACR Technology
- Industrial Chemistry Technology
- Industrial Electronics Technology
- Information Security and Intelligence
- Manufacturing Technology
- Marketing
- Mechanical Engineering Technology
- Medical Laboratory Technology
- Nutrition and Food Service Management
- Plastics and Polymer Engineering Technology
- Professional Brew Management
- Radiography
- Respiratory Care
- Restaurant and Food Industry Management
- Surveying Technology
- Welding Technology