



# The Ferris State Torch

94 YEARS OF ILLUMINATING THE TRUTH

Big Rapids, Michigan

Week of Jan. 29 - Feb. 5, 2025

www.fsutorch.com

# MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.



**pg. 2** Marching for justice  
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Graphic by: Hailey Nye | Production Assistant

## News

The Martin Luther King Jr. March which was rescheduled for last Thursday. Participants marched around campus in honor of MLK. **PG. 2**

## Culture

Ferris students share their top tips for staying warm in the freezing temperatures, from layering up to the best gear brands for battling the cold. **PG. 2**

## Opinions

Who has the best bar burger in Big Rapids? Classic cheese burgers from seven different Big Rapids bars are put to the test and ranked based on appearance and taste. **PG. 8**

## Sports

The Bulldog softball team will kick off their season next week, as they travel to Hawaii for a road series. **PG. 11**

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# News

Ember St. Amour | News Editor | stamoue@ferris.edu

## Michigan

Ember St. Amour  
News Editor

The Department of Natural Resources warned goose hunters about exposure to the bird flu.

“Since December 2024, there has been an uptick in HPAI wild bird mortality, primarily in Canada geese, trumpeter swans and scavenging birds,” the DNR said.

According to the Detroit Free Press, while birds can carry the virus without appearing sick, the DNR advises against harvesting birds that you can tell are sick or dead.

## Global

Ember St. Amour  
News Editor

Poland- President Andrzej Duda warned Poland that they should not restart gas flow to Russia.

According to BBC News, Duda wants the pipelines to be taken apart.

“I can only hope that European leaders will learn lessons from Russia’s aggression against Ukraine and that they will push through a decision to never restore the pumping of gas through this pipeline,” Duda said.

The pipeline was shut down in 2022 and never reopened.

## National

Ember St. Amour  
News Editor

Washington D.C.- Within his first week in office, President Donald Trump has signed several new executive orders.

According to the New York Times, Trump signed orders that dealt with a variety of subjects including gender, immigration, the environment and trade.

Some of these changes include ending the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion program, having federal agencies look into trade practices and withdrawing from the Paris Agreement and the World Health Organization.

## Marching for justice

Community unites for 39th annual march



Photo by: Shaunti'ara Reynolds | Torch Photographer

**Despite the MLK march being postponed, students braved the weather to show support.**

**Blase Gapinski**  
Culture Editor

The 39th annual Martin Luther King Jr. March on Jan. 23 wasn't just a campus walk; it was a powerful statement of unity, justice and the ongoing fight for equality.

Despite the freezing temperatures, over 50 students, faculty and staff gathered in the David Eisler Center to honor King's legacy and continue his work in today's politically and socially uncertain times.

Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion Dr. David Pilgrim kicked off the event with an inspiring address.

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,” Pilgrim said. “This campus belongs to all of us, and these values are embedded in our strategic plan. Belonging is about more than acceptance, it's about community.” Pilgrim emphasized collective responsibility, urging the crowd to recognize that the fight for justice is personal.

“When other people are hurt, I should hurt,” Pilgrim said. “We as a community must share the responsibility to fight injustice.”

His words resonated deeply as he discussed the current challenges facing diversity, equity and inclusion efforts, particularly in light of recent political shifts. As Pilgrim

noted, the rollback of federal DEI initiatives serves as a stark reminder that the fight for justice requires courage.

“It takes courage now,” Pilgrim said. “Are we going to live out our core values, or are we going to be moved?”

The event was organized by the Office of Multicultural Student Services with Marcia Alger, the office's administrative assistant, playing a key role in coordinating the march. Alger explained that her team worked closely with campus groups to ensure the event was accessible.

“The march helps build a sense of belonging,” Alger said. “It helps to have these types of events to make sure that people feel welcome on campus. It's all about creating a community where we support one another.”

This year, OMSS partnered with Career and Professional Success Services to encourage more student involvement, and Alger noticed a significant increase in engagement.

“We definitely have more student involvement this year,” Alger said. “We hope to keep growing the scope of these events. This year, we had three days of activities, but next year we want to extend it to four days.”

Business administration junior and OMSS student assistant Jaala Irvine shared

the march's significance from a student perspective. Irvine, who helped promote the event on social media, expressed pride in being part of the march.

“I'm just grateful to be a part of something like this,” Irvine said. “In a predominantly white institution, it's heartwarming to know that we have a community where people care about the cause, not just people of color, but everyone.”

Irvine emphasized how the march fosters solidarity and community on campus.

“It shows that we have each other's backs,” Irvine said. “We may not know each other personally, but we share a common goal, and we're here to reach it together.” Irvine also noted that the march was a reminder that the fight for justice doesn't end with King's legacy. She encouraged students to take an active role in making Ferris a place where activism and inclusion are at the forefront year-round.

“We still stand for the same values he fought for,” Irvine said. “No matter what's happening politically.”

The march wasn't just symbolic, it's part of a larger effort to amplify underrepresented voices and encourage ongoing social justice engagement. Irvine stressed the importance of events that

go beyond celebration and focus on education.

“We need events like Women's History Month and Black History Month to be both fun and educational,” Irvine said. “It's about remembering the cause, not just the celebration.”

As the march ended, Pilgrim's words stayed with participants: “Are we going to be moved or not?”

The event reminded everyone that the fight for justice, equity and inclusion is ongoing and requires both courage and community.

For students like Irvine, the march was more than just a walk; it was an opportunity to reaffirm the university's commitment to diversity and belonging.

“This is a place where we have each other's backs,” Irvine said. “And it's important to keep showing up and supporting one another.”

With events like the MLK Jr. March, Ferris is not just honoring King's legacy, but continuing the work he began, reminding everyone that justice requires all of us to stand together.

With Black History Month coming up, the OMSS plans to keep the campus calendar updated with information regarding their planned events.

# Students experience X Games

Three day experience in Colorado



Photo courtesy of Ferrisstateu Instagram

Hospitality management majors participated in the operations of the X-Games, an annual sports festival that features extreme sports competitions.

**Kate Babel**  
News Reporter

Seven students chosen by the hospitality management program went on a trip to the mountains to work at the X Games and gain work experience in the real world.

Part of hospitality and management is learning how to work in the service industry, including large and small events. From Jan. 21-24, these students, from different majors ranging from hospitality management to business, got a chance to put the skills they have learned from their classes to the test in Aspen, Colorado.

Hospitality management senior Sierra Cechura is one of the seven students selected and shared her thoughts about the trip.

"I am hoping to gain more of an understanding of how large events work for one and then also see how to work with other people that are like either international or from different schools or even just people from Ferris that I don't personally know so much in a professional manner as is this," Cechura said. "We will be working it so it is a job we are getting paid to do so that will be cool too. That is what I'm hoping to gain out of, it is to learn how to be more professional in a professional setting just like an internship would but this is jammed pack and only four days."

Cechura explained her plans to go into working events after she graduates.

This event gives students firsthand experience while working on large events and how they are structured.

With the X Games, competitors and visitors come far and wide to watch or compete in extreme sports. Each student worked a full day in their assigned posts, making sure the event ran smoothly and a safe environment for everyone. While students were there for the work experience, they showed their Ferris State pride by raising the crimson and gold bulldog flag in the freezing cold mountains.

Business administration junior Benji Zorn enjoyed his experience with the X Games and his experience working there.

"This was an incredibly fun event as well as a complete test of endurance and mental fortitude. I say that because athletes are doing jumps and tricks all around as tens of thousands of spectators roam and experience all while you are putting in 15+ hours at the event," Zorn said. "Your feet get cold, your legs are aching but you are around the best winter athletes in the world. It is a hard feeling to describe but one that I really enjoyed feeling."

Working behind the scenes of this major winter event, the seven students, including Zorn, had to embrace being on their feet and face the bitterly cold weather. The hospitality department has done trips to large events for over a decade, and depending on the field, students who are chosen get to experience

what their major would look like when applied in the real world.

Cechura gave her thoughts about what she wanted to do after graduation.

"I kind of wanna go into events once I graduate, working the X Games helped me because this is where I see firsthand large events, so something that includes athletes, so this is something to be a part of and to witness before I even graduate and go out to my career," Cechura said.

This trip provided some key factors that are different from the standard classroom setting. For both hospitality management and business majors, large-scale events require preparation, focus, teamwork and adaptability. Overall, it is not just about the hard work these students put in, it's the chance for them to build themselves up.

"This is one of those events that I will be able to talk about for the rest of my life as a result of this being such a unique opportunity. Living in Big Rapids, the opportunity to help a nationally recognized brand in any sort of event is pretty rare, I feel this will drastically help me when applying for jobs as well as using the knowledge I learned at Ferris and in the workforce," Zorn said.

As these students come back they are left with fond memories, determination and confidence in their skills.

## Ferris State Torch Corrections

**In the Jan. 22 print edition of the Torch, the issue ran with the wrong date range. The date should have been "Jan. 22 - 29, 2025" instead of "Jan. 22 - 29, 2024."**

Corrections can be submitted through email at [torch@ferris.edu](mailto:torch@ferris.edu)

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# Defining genocide

Humanities and mathematics colloquium aims to bring awareness to genocide studies



Photo by: Kate Babel | News Reporter

Students and faculty attend the presentation to gain a better understanding of genocide and the prevention efforts put in place to prevent it.

**Kate Babel**  
News Reporter

The humanities and mathematics departments gave the second of two projects to tackle genocide studies to increase awareness and prevention efforts.

A colloquium was on Jan. 23 inside the David Eisler Center. "A Data-based Operational Definition of Genocide" is a presentation that combines the use of data analytics and history to find similarities between genocides throughout the past and use those similarities to spot the signs of genocide before it happens.

Mathematics professor Dr. Victor Piercey discussed how different perspectives, whether from a victim, perpetrator, witness or otherwise, have a common ground when exper-

riencing genocide first-hand.

"What we're finding is that a lot of genocidal events have a lot in common in the lived experiences of people who experience genocide in one way or another and we think that can help us to improve how we define genocide, which in turn will lead to better prevention efforts," Piercey said. "The enforcement is difficult because we as in terms of our world order is very much based on sovereignty, so it's hard to find the will to intervene in another country, but its definition is an even more fundamental problem."

During the presentation, Piercey talked about the two projects conducted in their search for an operational definition of genocide, the Shoah Database Analysis and the Edinburgh-Brown

Guidelines.

The Shoah Database Analysis uses testimonies from genocide survivors. Using this research, the humanities and mathematics departments formed keywords relating to the violence that comes before genocide. These keywords are found in interview questions and answers from genocide survivors, which can piece together a pattern.

The Edinburgh-Brown guidelines described the entities of genocide as well as the intent, target groups, the role of coercive control and the process behind the existential threat.

Piercey explained how using data science, genocide similarities could be found based on the length of time of a conflict or the number killed in a mass atrocity.

"For what it's worth, data

science is largely thought of as the intersection between mathematics statistics, computer science and then some area of application that we call a domain area," Piercey said. "So in this case, genocide studies."

Prevention efforts went back to the Early Warning Project, a system designed to acknowledge and assess mass atrocities in countries all over the world. The presentation showed that crimes, including war crimes and crimes against humanity, are smaller indicators before genocide begins.

Examples of historical genocides include the Holocaust, Rwanda, Cambodia, Guatemala and plenty more. The challenges were finding similarities between these genocides, what led to them and what people experienced

during them to understand how to stop them from happening.

History professor Dr. Tracy Busch talked about the importance of being aware of situations that could potentially lead to genocide.

Busch later discussed how the mathematics and humanities departments support each other and what each of them does.

"I think if you can just raise awareness, like noticing what's happening before it actually happens, then you're in a better position to defend human rights, right before people lose their human rights," Busch said. "If you could maintain that level of you know civil society where there's free press and open information, you can kind of see the factors that can lead to this othering right? The

language that's used to de-humanize other people that upstreaming part of it is really, really important."

Social work senior Yvette Muhoza shared her thoughts about the presentation.

"I think it's amazing that they're doing this research because there is a lot of stuff that they want to prevent and people they want to talk to, to see how it affected them, whether it's like the victims, the perpetrators and all that," Muhoza said. "What I took from this is that they care and they do want to do more research and they want to know what they can do to help the victims that experience the genocides and just I thought it was really cool."

Busch plans to have a panel discussing genocide and memory on Zoom on March 4 to bring further awareness.

## ON THE RECORD

Ember St. Amour  
News Editor

### Shattered glass

Jan. 23, 10:30 p.m. - A student reported that their car's rear window was shattered. Officers could not determine if the cause was intended or from the cold air. The case was closed due to lack of leads.

### Domestic violence warrant

Jan. 23, 11:19 p.m. - Officers responded to East Campus Suites after getting a warrant for a domestic violence case that occurred on Dec. 4. The suspect was arrested.

# Culture

Blase Gapinski | Culture Editor | gapinsb@ferris.edu

## Winter fashion choices

How are Bulldogs bundling up?



Photo by: Shaunti'ara Reynolds | Torch Photographer

**Many students opt to bundle up during recent weather, while others brave the temperatures without winter clothing.**

**Max Sorek**  
Freelance Reporter

With a winter storm sending our thermometer plummeting past zero, the Ferris campus is turning up the heat and pulling out its snow gear.

Once again, it has arrived. Winter decided to sink its teeth in and really get down to business by blanketing our campus with nearly six inches of snow and bringing temperatures down to negative 13 degrees.

While campus closed on Tuesday, students were still out and about, going to work or completing assignments, bundled up in various layers of winter gear. Whether you're staying in or heading out into the cold to start your day, here are some tips from Ferris students on how to stay warm and weather the winter weather.

Layers are most important when it comes to the Michigan wind. Adding a flannel

shirt or a sweatshirt underneath your coat can often do wonders for keeping your core warm.

Automotive management sophomore Jon Rodriguez provided some insight into his winter gear.

"I usually throw a hoodie on under my coat. I've got one of those big, brown Carhartt jackets," Rodriguez said.

When it comes to working outdoors in the winter, Carhartt seems to be one of the most beloved choices. It's easy to layer several thinner shirts or jackets beneath their coats if needed, and their products are made to last. The closer to the lake you get, the more layers you need to protect yourself from that bitter wind.

Another popular winter gear brand is The North Face, which radiography junior Margaret Bowman stated as her cold-weather choice.

"I have one of those North

Face jackets, and I usually have gloves on too," Bowman said.

While Carhartt seems more focused on creating items made for durability, The North Face has put more work into making sleek outdoor sports gear. Both have various insulation choices, including fleece or down filling, but The North Face's polyester outer shell is woven to deflect water.

Carhartt's more canvas-like outside layer soaks in water but prevents it from reaching the skin with extra wicking material. Whichever one strikes your fancy, both brands have similar materials and both easily keep your core warm.

Keeping your hands and feet warm is equally as important as your core. Mittens are proven to insulate your fingers better than gloves, but many people prefer the freedom gloves offer. Many brands now produce gloves that can interact with phone



Photo by: Harmony Goodman | Production Manager

**The cold temperatures are felt inside with students dressing according to the outside elements rather than in buildings.**

screens, which we can never be without.

Since their introduction by Aglove in Colorado in 2010, touchscreen-compatible gloves have become an international favorite. Now, with so many varieties available globally, it's hard to choose just one. Companies like Amazon and Meijer offer a variety of brands, such as Timberland, The North Face and Moshi.

On the other hand, keeping your feet warm and dry is difficult. As soon as you

encounter slush, your socks are soaked. Double layers of socks are recommended for the cold winter months, as are boots or water-resistant shoes.

Nuclear medicine sophomore Hannah Kieda likes to mix it up sometimes with Ugg boots.

"I walk to class in my Eddie Bauer parka, a sweatshirt and Uggs or shoes," Kieda said.

While this beloved 2000s brand may seem like an unusual choice for winter, Uggs

are pre-treated to be both water- and stain-resistant. The sheepskin inner lining is an excellent insulator and keeps your feet warm.

Keeping your face out of the wind is also recommended, so picking up a scarf or face mask doesn't seem out of the question for Ferris students. If the wind keeps blowing as bitter as it has this week, better put on a hat.

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# Voices of change

Ferris alumni Mike Sears performs spoken word poetry



Photo by: Sam Mulder | Torch Photographer

In the honor of Martin Luther King Jr., Ferris alumni and author Mike Sears spoke to students about his life experiences through spoken word.

**Grace Heethuis**  
Freelance Reporter

Ferris State was filled with events celebrating Martin Luther King Jr. and his enduring legacy.

One of the highlights was a spoken word event titled "Metamorphosis: A Time To Change." Author and Ferris alumnus Mike Sears shared several spoken word pieces honoring King while calling for social change. Throughout the performance, Sears contrasted his own life with that of King.

Born on the East Side of Detroit, Sears grew up in a community plagued by violence and drug addiction. These challenges shaped his desire to pursue education and contribute to the positive change he believes is necessary. "What I learned, even at an early age, is that challenges are part of life. We have to find ways to overcome those challenges," Sears said. He

credits God as the force behind his mission to help others.

After graduating high school, Sears attended Ferris' School of Technology. It soon became clear to him that his true passion lay elsewhere, and he switched his major to business before eventually settling on music industry management, earning his degree in 2000.

Through his spoken word pieces, Sears emphasized the transformative power of change, encouraging people to rise above their circumstances. His words, filled with inspiring language, called for personal growth and social progress.

"What comes from the heart touches the heart," Sears said.

The theme of metamorphosis and the power of change has been life-changing for Sears. The change propelled him out of difficult circumstances and empow-

ered him to inspire others to do the same.

"One challenge was leaving the neighborhood, coming to college, getting an education and being able to turn around and help educate others," Sears said.

Although Sears enjoys sharing his work with the world, the performance is not the most important part to him.

"I love just hearing people's responses and how they enjoyed it and appreciate it because it's never about me," Sears said. "So when I can hear other people express their gratitude or being able to receive something from anything that I've done, it's rewarding."

The event also featured several young poets, each presenting original pieces carrying powerful messages about the need for inclusion and social change.

Among them was Jakail Strickland, a junior at Big

Rapids High School. Strickland, a member of the school's Diversity Initiative Club, plans to attend Ferris after graduation. He was excited to speak at the event.

"I'm really passionate about speaking on Black history and including everyone, no matter their color, race or gender," Strickland said.

Strickland also cited his faith in God as a key motivator for his efforts to improve the lives of those around him. This belief drives him to spread love and help others.

"Everyone falls short of God's will, but luckily, he forgives us and knows we're going to make mistakes," Strickland said.

The event centered on diversity and inclusion, with Sears' spoken word pieces, serving as the main focus. His personal story resonated deeply with many in the audience.

There was also the presentation of the 2025 Dr.

Martin Luther King Jr. Social Justice Award to Ferris' Dean of Student Life Lina Blair. The award recognizes Blair's significant contributions to social justice efforts at the university, particularly in providing relief for Ferris students in need.

"This is a space to build community and for people to reflect on what's being shared, as well as, in this case, get motivated to become action-oriented," Blair said.

Among those in attendance was Dr. David Pilgrim, Ferris State's vice president for diversity, inclusion and strategic initiatives. Pilgrim is also the founder of the Jim Crow Museum at the university. He was moved by Sears' words and the event's powerful message.

"There is a lot of trepidation right now in the culture, especially among groups that have historically been mistreated. Events like tonight

are designed to encourage people and give them hope," Pilgrim said.

The power of unity was showcased through shared ideals, including personal and social change. Through his spoken word, Sears demonstrated the importance of growth and change, drawing parallels between his journey and King's. Both Sears and King share a passion for helping others and striving toward the social progress necessary for peace and unity.

The event marked just one of many tributes to King's life and work while underscoring a critical message: the journey toward social progress is not only collective but deeply personal, urging each of us to embrace change in our own lives to build a better future for all.

# A need for scrolling

Temporarily jumping ship from TikTok



Logos courtesy of RedNote, TikTok and Triller

**TikTok, a popular streaming service, has been removed from app stores in the United States, causing users to turn to other social medias apps like Rednote (left) and Triller (right).**

**Aiden MacLean**  
Culture Reporter

In the world of social media, no app has replicated the cultural impact of TikTok. Its addictive short-form content, infinite scrolling and endless creativity made it a global phenomenon.

While banned, users immediately scrambled for alternatives. Those tense 14 hours without TikTok, though brief, exposed a deep truth: a collective need for the instant gratification and connection social media provides. Apps like RedNote and Triller saw a surge in popularity, capitalizing on the opportunity. For many, the switch wasn't about loyalty or preference but urgency.

Students like nuclear medicine technology sophomore, Morgan Bowman downloaded the app as a replacement for TikTok. The language barrier was a notable difference to her, and it took her some time to figure out how to receive videos in English.

"The time that TikTok was banned wasn't horrible considering I was asleep for half of that time, but when I woke up I tried to open the

app a few times out of muscle memory," Bowman said. "People are definitely too reliant on apps like TikTok and I am one of them. It's my main source of entertainment and I know I'm not the only one."

People needed something to scroll through, a digital outlet to maintain their routines. Although she has moved back to TikTok, Bowman said she will keep RedNote incase TikTok goes down anytime soon.

"I am not using RedNote anymore since I never deleted TikTok from my phone," Bowman said. "TikTok is more tailored to my sense of humor already and I get more content relevant to me and where we live"

The need to fill downtime, distract from stress or feel connected was universal. TikTok's brief absence revealed how deeply social media had become a habit, a reflex and a source of comfort for many.

As users shifted to other platforms, frustration grew. Posts didn't feel as well curated, communities weren't as established and trends lacked the same viral momentum. Still, millions flocked to apps like RedNote

to recreate the experience they were losing out on.

This shift created surprising connections between users in the U.S. and China, with people from both countries sharing content and engaging in meaningful conversations.

For example, in an episode of the Weekend Editon podcast by National Public Radio, Tylir Russ, a farmer from Virginia, talks about how she gained thousands of followers from China after posting videos about her life on the farm, sparking mutual interest and connections. RedNote allowed for direct communication between users in both countries, bypassing the usual digital barriers caused by censorship in China.

For some, the change was less about the content and more about the structure of social media as a coping mechanism. Scrolling through curated streams of videos, sounds and trends had become ingrained in daily life. Platforms like this have seemingly re-wired how users seek interaction, making digital connection almost as essential as in-person contact.

This temporary migration

underscored how dependent modern society is on platforms that blend entertainment and community. People didn't just lose an app, they lost a digital space where they felt seen, heard and inspired. The void highlighted how intertwined social media has become with identity, creativity and belonging.

At the same time, the shift sparked an interesting behavioral change. With fewer established communities and looser algorithms, platforms like RedNote encouraged more experimentation.

In some ways, this forced reinvention helped people reconnect with more playful, less commercially driven aspects of social media. On RedNote, for example, users could explore unfiltered creativity, experimenting with quirky, low-budget video edits and off-the-wall soundtracks that wouldn't necessarily fit the polished, brand-focused environment of TikTok.

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# Opinions

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## EDITOR'S COLUMN:

# The best of the beef

Hunting for Big Rapids' best bar burger



Photos by: Dylan Rider | Editor in Chief

**Burgers featured at Big Rapids' bar all vary in appearance, flavor and price.**

**Dylan Rider**  
*Editor in Chief*

It's been on my mind about who has the best burger in town for a while now.

I love a good cheeseburger. A lot of people do. The art of a cheeseburger is an incredibly American idea. Any stereotype of an American has a burger associated with it somewhere.

It seems that I am no better than the stereotype. In three days, three friends and I tried seven burgers from seven different bars in Big Rapids. Our rating system varied from person to person (either a scale of 1-5 or 1-10), but the rankings stayed quite similar. For our ratings, we took note of the taste, its appearance and how much it'll cost you.

Before we get into it, let's set the ground rules. First, the burger has to be from a bar. The establishment can be a restaurant, but if there's no bar to accompany it, no dice. Second, no chains and or fast food restaurants. This one fits a little bit with rule one, but I want the epitome of a small town that I cannot get anywhere else. Finally, it's gotta be a basic cheeseburger. Whatever that entails is decided by the restaurant, but it has to be pretty much

a basic burger.

Also, days two and three were done by my lonesome. This means that day one (so five of the seven burgers) are the only ones that were ranked by three others. Keep in mind that none of us are burger aficionados. Our opinions are not more important than any other patrons. At the end of the day, this was purely done for fun.

Our first stop was at Schuberg's Bar and Grill, a place known for its burgers. Their basic burger is a \$9 creation with ketchup, mustard, olives, onion and pickles. It's not surprising that it tasted good, as it scored between a 3.5/5 and a 4/5 for us. However, the appearance just wasn't there and that's reflected in the 2/5 to the 3.5/5 range it got. Bad by no means, but not the best we had.

Cranker's Restaurant and Brewery came next on our journey. We were much more pleased with Cranker's \$12 burger's appearance than our last stop. The proportional build of the burger, lettuce, onion and pickles earned it a range of 3.5/5 to 4/5. It was the taste that sullied our rating. The burger itself left a lot to be desired, carrying a charred aftertaste that didn't sit right. This resulted in our

taste ratings being between a 1/5 and a 2/5.

The next establishment took us off guard. Sztot's Bar and Grill offers a \$7.50 burger with onions, lettuce, pickles, ketchup and mustard. Both our appearance and taste ratings ran high on this one. Appearance scored a 3.5/5 or higher, while the taste test received a 4/5 or above. With our lowest-priced burger of the hunt, we did not expect this to score so highly with us.

Sawmill Saloon was our penultimate stop on day one. We nearly missed a burger from here, as they had just closed their kitchen. A massive thank you to their staff for being willing to cook us up one. This burger ends up in the middle of the pack, however. The sandwich, which ran at a \$8.21 price and had onions, lettuce, pickles, ketchup and mustard, scored between a 1.5/5 and a 2.5/5 on appearance. The taste rated a little better, scoring at a 3/5 to 3.5/5.

Gypsy Nickel Lounge, our final stop of day one, divided us the most. The appearance score of their \$13.99 burger meal was near unanimous, fetching a 5/5 from three of us. The toppings of this burger included lettuce, tomato, onion and mayo. For the

taste, it ranged from 2/5 to 3/5. That's not a large divide numerically, but it affected where my friend ranked Gypsy Nickel in the final standings.

For these last two stops, this is where I was the only one to try them. The sixth stop was Paz Pub and Grill. For me, this burger defined what I considered "in the middle." Both appearance and taste collected a 3/5 from me. Not bad, but not at all the top, especially with an \$11.99 price tag.

To end this three-day journey of beef consumption, Star Shooter's Bar and Restaurant was my last stop. Their basic cheeseburger is deluxe, which comes with two patties. This is the most different aspect between all seven burgers eaten. This one is in the upper echelon for me. The appearance was a 5/5. It was one of the best, if not the best, looking burgers. The taste did its job and got a 4/5 there. It's definitely worth the \$8.

Before I get into the final ranking, both mine and my friends, I'd like to acknowledge subjectivity and a possible shortcoming.

These rankings are not definitive. Food is one of the world's simplest joys. Different palates are everywhere,

making this entire article an opinion piece. Also, not everything in cooking is consistent. All it takes is a cook having an off night for something to be different from the norm.

In my friends' final rankings, all three had Sztot's as No. 1 and then Schuberg's as No. 2. Spots three through five varied. Two of the friends had Sawmill at No. 3 while the other had Gypsy Nickel in third. Sawmill, Gypsy Nickel and Cranker's all received a fourth place ranking each. Finally, Cranker's received two fifth-place finishes while Gypsy Nickel got one.

Keeping my list separate, as I have two more joints compared to my friends, here are my final rankings in order: Sztot's, Shooter's, Schuberg's, Gypsy Nickel, Paz's, Sawmill and then Cranker's.

With these rankings, our three-day excursion into the best beef in Big Rapids comes to a close. When was the last time you consumed seven different burgers in 72 hours? Believe it or not, it's a good time.

*Opinions editor Jackie Moglia contributed to the reporting of this article.*



# Publishers versus demand

## “Onyx Storm” release day leaves many readers disappointed



**Harmony Goodman**  
Production Manager

This week Target’s book sections were raided by readers trying to get their hands on the special edition of “Onyx Storm” with lines forming outside hours before opening.

Those who didn’t get their copy of the book left stores disappointed, while the fans who managed to get their hands on a copy came home only to be disappointed with how the publishing companies handled the hype.

Ever since “Book-Tok” gained popularity, TikTok’s reading community, author Rebecca Yarros’ “Fourth Wing,” otherwise known as the “Empyrean Series,” quickly became one of the most-read books of 2022.

In my Media Minute last year about “Fourth Wing,” I talked about the adult fantasy novel and how it became a bestseller with over two million copies sold worldwide. Based on the lines outside of Target and the small bookshop release day parties, it’s clear that the hype hasn’t died down. It’s gotten much worse, with resellers hoarding copies to sell on sites like eBay or Mercari for anywhere between \$100 and \$225.

We live in a world so heavily run on mass consumerism. When a new popular product, such as a Yeti water bottle, hits the shelves, we all scramble to add them to our carts without even taking into consideration the fact that

we already have four other water bottles at home. The same can be applied to special edition books.

I have a few cool special editions, but they’re expensive. However, most special editions come out after a book release, leading some fans to buy yet another copy of the book to have the special edition. This is basic mass consumerism at work.

Thankfully this wasn’t the case for “Onyx Storm,” but with the money and the time people spent waiting outside for hours in lines and hosting events. It’s very disheartening to see how publishers handled the demand.

One of the first people on social media to draw attention to this was shaesicles\_bookwurm on Instagram. In her videos, she explained that every single Target special edition book had been warped. Unfortunately, this wasn’t the only thing she spoke about. The Target special edition book was marketed as an edition with sprayed edges and exclusive artwork throughout the book.

However, all it took was a quick reverse image search to discover that the exclusive artwork was just stock artwork edited to fit the book’s theme.

Although the book was never marketed as having original artwork, readers were hoping for more. The creator explained in her video how the artwork could’ve been a competition for fans to submit their fan art to be

put in the book. We’ve seen publishers and magazines do these things before so it’s not unheard of.

While I believe that stock images are resources, we’ve used them here for the Torch many times, but to edit this artwork and only credit the person who edited the artwork feels a little shady.

So, I can understand why fans are upset that the exclusive artwork they were promised isn’t original. It’s disappointing as an artist to see publishers use stock images and market them as originals to gain more money from fans. When being promised an exclusive purchase, we can only hope that our products actually are exclusive.

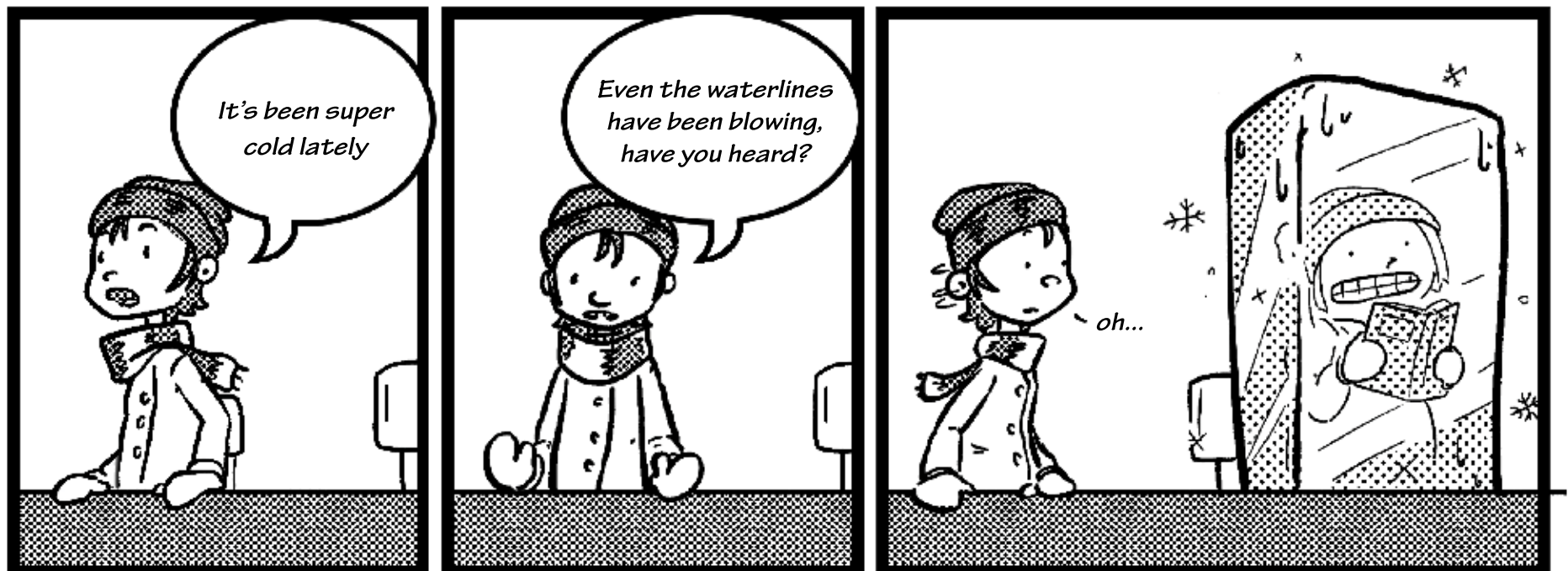
I pre-ordered the U.S. special edition, but unfortunately, many small bookstores have yet to see any copies of “Onyx Storm.” With small businesses missing out on the original releases when they were hosting and making a great deal off of events, it shows where the publisher’s priority lies. Considering Target, a large corporation, got warped books just so that they could receive them on time.

I have yet to see my special edition in the mail because of print delays. I am grateful that I decided to wait a few days to get my hands on “Onyx Storm” because the other alternative would’ve been more disappointing than any possible ending this book could leave me with.

Photo courtesy of Thebookislibra from Instagram Threads

Concerns about book and shipping quality have arisen with the new release of the third Empyrean fantasy romance series, “Onyx Storm”.

## Water pipe hazard



# Sports

Connor Grypma | Sports Editor | grypma@ferris.edu

## Claerbaut twins bolster Bulldogs

Ferris basketball's brothers contribute to Bulldogs' 18-3 start



Photo by: Abe Kraus | Torch Photographer

**Nathan Claerbaut (pictured) did not have a starting role with the Bulldogs until this season.**

**Caden Hofmann**  
Special Editions Editor

Brandon and Nathan Claerbaut have spent their entire lives doing everything together, so there was no question whether the twins would try to play together in college.

Playing their high school ball for Zeeland East, both enjoyed a successful high school career, being named all-conference and a part of the MLive dream team.

After their dad decided to put them in the Amateur Athletic Union the summer before their freshman year, college coaches began to reach out to them both.

Having one another share the same interest and passion for basketball made them push each other to work harder.

"We always grew up playing one-on-ones and always pushed each other to make us as best as we could be," Nathan said. "Having him share that same goal pushed us to where we wanted to be."

During an AAU tournament in Milwaukee in their sophomore year, Bulldog head coach Andy Bronkema was able to watch them play and liked what he saw enough to offer Nathan. Brandon's offer

would come a year later after their junior season.

After offering them both, Bronkema gave the twins a deadline to either commit to Ferris or to keep moving on with the recruiting process.

"Ferris was really the first and only school that wanted both of us," Brandon said. "After he gave us the deadline, we both agreed that it was the best decision."

As most incoming freshmen do for Ferris, they both redshirted their first season.

Neither saw much playing time during their first two seasons as a Bulldog; they only played spot minutes and were not a part of the rotation. Neither of them became discouraged by the lack of playing time and used it as a time to improve their game and become stronger.

This was evident with Nathan, coming in as a thin-framed seven-footer, he knew he needed to put on weight to compete at the DII level.

"Those early years were extremely valuable to me," Nathan said. "Coming in, I knew I wasn't the right weight, so it gave me the time to condition myself and prepare myself for the speed and physicality of the game."

The hard work has paid off for both of them, Brandon

has appeared in 14 games this year and started in two of them and Nathan has become one of the best centers in the conference and a force on defense.

Nathan had never started before this season but has cemented himself in the lineup after starting 20 out of the first 21 games.

He is third on the team in scoring with 9.9 points a game, in addition to the scoring he pulls down 6.9 rebounds per game and leads the GLIAC in blocks per game with 2.6.

His play has secured him GLIAC Defensive Player of the Week on two separate occasions this season.

Nathan has accepted this new role and embraces it; Bronkema has loved Nathan's growth as a player after sitting his first few seasons.

"Nate has been huge for us all year," Bronkema said. "Coming into the summer we sat down and told him that we wanted him to take that leap and he has done that so far. He does exactly what we want from him."

Their contributions have led the Bulldogs to an 18-3 start and a tie for the lead in the GLIAC.

After making the Elite Eight last season, the Claer-

bauts think this team is more together than in previous years.

"Everybody is so bought in this season, we all just want to be here," Brandon said. "We don't let anything

on the outside disrupt us, we all hang out all the time and are best friends. We all share the same goal of a national championship."

As the Bulldogs' season pushes forward, Nathan and

Brandon will continue to grow together and continue their strong play as Ferris competes for a conference and national championship.



Photo courtesy of Nate Claerbaut

**The brothers after winning the midwest regional championship in 2024.**

# Softball swings into action

## Ferris softball eyes upcoming season



Archive Photo by: Sam Mulder | Torch Photographer

**Ferris softball looks to make a comeback this season, as they went 25-27 in their last campaign.**

**Nolan Matthews**  
Sports Reporter

As Bulldog softball opens up their season, they have their eyes set on the GLIAC championship and is rolling into the 2025 campaign with one of the youngest rosters in the conference.

Following a solemn ending to their 2024 season, where they lost six of their last eight games, the Bulldogs will have to capture the title without the help of their star workhorse pitcher Aryn Gallacher, who graduated last year. Head coach Jake Schumann has a plan for filling that role this upcoming season.

"Before the beginning of last season, we lost Catherine O'Donohue to a knee injury before we even started GLIAC play," Schumann said. "Before this, she had our number one spot in the starting rotation, so hopefully we will have her back by the time we start GLIAC play. Not to mention we have a local product, Riley Haist, who is just now gaining her confidence after a great fall."

Junior pitcher Catherine O'Donohue has the stuff to be the number one starter in the rotation. In her fresh-

man season, she threw 106 innings with a 3.49 ERA and 67 strikeouts. O'Donohue showed her skills last season before her injury. In just 36 innings, she struck out 37, which was over half of her total from the season prior. She allowed only nine runs, walked only 11 and had a 1.73 ERA and a 1.10 WHIP.

Ferris brought in an excellent recruiting class last fall, signing six incoming freshmen, but coach Schumann believes Jayden Marlatt of the 2023 class will make an immediate impact. The Johannesburg, Mich. native was a two-time all-first-state player and was nominated for D-4 Michigan Miss Softball.

For the 2024 class, the most notable person is third baseman Emma Herremans. She was named MLive Muskegon Area Player of the Year, Catchmark Player of the Year, has three all-state marks and is a two-time all-regional team member in her time at Ravenna High School.

After a 2024 season that saw the Bulldogs finish in fourth in the GLIAC, while sitting near the bottom of every major offensive and defensive statistic in the confer-

ence, Schumann has many improvements he wants to see this upcoming season.

"I think defensively we need to make some better adjustments," Schumann said. "We moved some kids around and put them in different positions and get them some more success. Last year we made a lot of errors from the shortstop position, so we are moving Emma Gillard to right field because she has such a good bat that we do not want to lose in our lineup. With the athlete that Jayden is, we are really hoping that she will make our defensive numbers improve."

The biggest strength for this team is the infield, the best of which being the finalist for the NFCA Freshman of the Year, now sophomore first baseman Alexis Kozlowski. Kozlowski had a .361 batting average, 25 extra base hits, six home runs, 48 RBIs and a .647 slugging percentage, all of which were top five in the GLIAC last season.

Kozlowski expressed her excitement for the upcoming season.

"I'm looking forward to taking the field with this team again and winning a lot of games," Kozlowski said. "This team is extremely de-

termined and selfless. Also, it's not every day you get to go to Hawaii to play softball, so I'm pumped for that."

Schumann shares this sentiment and believes the infield is the team's biggest strength, saying the infield is

"one of the best in the country, both offensively and defensively."

Junior infielder Jadyne Joseph doubles down on Schumann's comments.

"Our defense is strong and I'm confident in our abil-

ities," Joseph said. "I think that our team chemistry helps improve our performance."

The Bulldogs' season begins on Monday, Feb. 2 in Hawaii against the Hillsdale Chargers.

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# Bulldogs continue conference slate

Key aspects to watch in Ferris basketball's Lake Superior State matchups



Photo by: Abe Kraus | Torch Photographer

Ferris women's basketball beat the Michigan Tech Huskies 75-49 during their most recent match.

**Devin Wardrop**  
Freelance Reporter

#### Women's basketball

The Bulldog women's basketball team and the No. 8

ranked men's basketball squad will head to the Upper Peninsula to play the Lake Superior State Lakers in their ninth straight GLIAC matchup.

The women (14-5, 8-2 in GLIAC) are looking for their seventh win in January, with their two losses in the month being against Northern Michigan and rival Grand

Valley State. The men's team (18-3, 8-2 in GLIAC) are looking to win their seventh in January, with their losses in the month being at Wisconsin-Parkside and home against Michigan Tech.

#### Women's basketball

The women will play again without the GLIAC's leading scorer, senior guard Kadyne Blanchard, who's been out the past six games and will be out the rest of the season with an ACL tear. Blanchard averaged 17.5 points in 13 games before her injury.

However, with Blanchard out, junior guard Mia Riley has stepped up, averaging 16.2 points per game and 6.4 rebounds in the last six games.

The key to winning is for the Bulldogs to stifle the No. 9 Lakers' (5-12, 2-7 in GLIAC) leading scorer, junior forward Grace Bradford. With 14.1 points per game, she sits sixth on the GLIAC leaderboard. However, she struggled in January, averaging 10.6 points per game, scoring less than ten points in two games.

Head coach Kurt Westendorp highlighted Bradford and Lake Superior State as

a team.

"They're always a very tough team to play at their home gym," Westendorp said. "Lake State always plays very well at home. Grace Bradford is a very tough matchup for the entire conference, so we're expecting her to be at her best, and we know that we have to be at our best."

#### Men's basketball

The men claimed a win over Northern Michigan last Thursday but will look to bounce back after a tough overtime loss to Michigan Tech on Saturday. Head coach Andy Bronkema talked about the keys to bouncing back after a loss like the one against the Huskies.

"The key is just to stay consistent with the things you believe in, whether you win or lose," Bronkema said. "So that's what we'll do. Just try to stay consistent, find areas to get better and stay the course. It's halfway through the conference season, and our record are records, so we'll have to just keep going one game at a time."

The No. 8 Bulldogs are led in scoring by senior guard Ethan Erickson, who's third

in scoring in the GLIAC with 17 points per game. However, Erickson has averaged just 14.7 in January.

Lake Superior State (16-3, 7-2 in GLIAC) is led by senior guard Tyson Edmondson, whose 16.2 points per game are fifth in the GLIAC. In January, Edmondson has been averaging 15.1 points per game and he's coming off a 23-point performance against Northern Michigan.

Coach Bronkema talked about the keys heading into the Lake Superior State game.

"Unfortunately, the keys to that game aren't complete yet," Bronkema said. "So, I will say this about Lake Superior State. They're a very well-coached team, and they got veteran stars, meaning there's going to be several different keys. Tyson is a heck of a player, so we're going to have to try slowing him down."

Ferris State women will play at 5:30 p.m. and the men will play at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 30. Both games are up in Sault Ste. Marie at the Norris Events Center.

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