



The Ferris State Torch

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Big Rapids, Michigan

Week of Jan. 14 - 21, 2026

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BACK TO BACK NATIONAL CHAMPIONS 2025



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News

Blase Gapinski | News Editor | gapinsb@ferris.edu

Michigan

Blase Gapinski
Editor in Chief

Traverse City, MI - Last weekend, around 1,200 people gathered on Sunday, Jan 11, across downtown Traverse City to protest U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) practices. The protest started at the Grand Traverse Civic Center, stretching down Front Street. Local organizers, Traverse Indivisible, stated that the protest was held due to the fatal shooting of Renee Nicole Good, an unarmed American citizen and mother, who was killed by ICE agents in Minneapolis on January 7.

Traverse Indivisible also highlighted reports that show how more than 20 people were killed by ICE or died in ICE custody in 2025, as well as two additional shootings involving ICE agents in Portland earlier in the week.

National

Blase Gapinski
Editor in Chief

Washington D.C. - Federal prosecutors have launched a criminal investigation into Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell over his congressional testimony about a \$2.5 billion renovation of the Fed's Washington headquarters.

Powell responded publicly, saying the probe stems from his conflict with the Trump administration over interest rates, not the renovation itself. He described the investigation as part of broader political pressure to influence Fed policy, stating on Jan. 11, "The threat of criminal charges is a consequence of the Federal Reserve setting interest rates based on our best assessment of what will serve the public, rather than following the preferences of the President," Powell said.

Powell warned that threatening criminal charges for policy disagreements undermines the Fed's independence. President Trump has continued to look into Powell and has vowed not to renominate him while arguing that the president should influence interest-rate decisions.

Global

Blase Gapinski
Editor in Chief

Iran - After three weeks of protests, it has been reported that more than 500 protestors in Iran have been killed. There have also been reports that around 10,700 people have been arrested as anti-government protests continue.

These protests have been ongoing across all 31 of Iran's provinces, which marks the biggest threat that the current regime has seen in years.

Protests in Iran began two weeks ago in Tehran's bazaars over soaring inflation and shortages of basic goods, then spread to more than 180 cities, evolving into broader anti-regime demonstrations. Sharp price hikes for essentials like cooking oil and chicken, compounded by the central bank ending access to cheaper dollars for importers, forced price increases and shop closures, triggering nationwide unrest.

U.S. President Donald Trump has threatened to get involved and attack if Iran's security forces continue to respond with force against protestors.

Rebuilding and rising

A season of growth and leadership amid change



Photo courtesy of Ty Chase

Members of the speech and debate team posing after the Marshall U Memorial Tournament.

Blase Gapinski
Editor in Chief

After losing their long-time head coach and much of their roster, the Ferris State speech and debate team is rebuilding, alongside searching for a permanent coach, yet they are still finding momentum.

The team began the academic year with just three returning members and no permanent coach after its previous coach departed last spring. Despite those challenges, the team has grown its roster this semester and continues to compete in tournaments across the region.

Information security and intelligence program senior Seth Brott and physical sciences senior Rose House are among the team's returning members who have taken on expanded leadership roles this season. They are each serving as the team's co-presidents, mentoring novice members and helping guide the team through the transition.

Brott and a few others on the team described the current season as a rebuild year, a period he said is focused on recruiting new members and helping them gain experience before moving into more competitive settings.

"Starting this last semester, we went from three members, and now we're right around nine members," Brott said. "We've taken quite a few people to their very first tournaments this last semester,

and hopefully will take them to some national tournaments later this semester."

Brott said this year there have been some challenges with the sudden departure of the team's previous coach, who he described as a central figure in the program. The team also lost more than half of its members to graduation, leaving few returning competitors to carry the program forward.

Stepping in as interim coach is Dr. Kristi Scholten, a Ferris communication professor with over 20 years of experience in speech and debate coaching.

Scholten previously coached the team from 2013 to 2019 and has returned temporarily while the team prepares to conduct a national search for a full-time coach.

Balancing a full teaching load and family responsibilities, she said her goal is to support the team in whatever ways it needs while the co-presidents help guide new competitors.

"I'm happy to fill in and help keep the program moving forward," Scholten said. "But the team deserves a full-time coach who can give them the attention and energy they need."

Despite a rebuilding year, Ferris State's speech and debate team is already making its mark. On Nov. 15, varsity members House and Brott earned 2nd place in the Duo event, which was a two-person dramatic performance, at

Marshall University. At Saginaw Valley State University on Dec. 6, House placed 2nd in Informative Speaking, 2nd in Duo, and 6th in Impromptu Sales, while Brott earned 2nd in Duo and 5th in Impromptu Sales. House also captured a 2nd place individual award, recognizing top performance across all three competition genres.

"These are great varsity members," Scholten said. "They're go-getters, encouraging, motivating, and selfless, so not only are they focused on their own events, they're mentoring novice students. It just goes to show that success isn't only about the accolades, that it really is a team endeavor."

House, who serves as co-president alongside Brott, said leadership this year has meant helping the team relearn the basics and guiding new members through competitions.

"Speech and debate is still very important to all of us, and it's helped so many of us and past members who've graduated in so many different ways, and we want to be able to keep that going for others," House said. "Even though we don't have a permanent coach, we're remaining members from previous years know enough that we can help out where our coach is not able to at the current moment."

She emphasized that the team's success this year isn't just about competition results, but about growing

the supportive culture they've continued to build off of.

"We're all friends, and everyone trusts each other. If someone needs help, they know they can come to us," House said. "It's not just about winning, and it's really about helping people get better and amplifying the messages they care about."

With a growing roster and a culture built on mentorship and support, the Ferris State speech and debate team is proving that a rebuilding year can still be a successful one.

The team is still in season, looking forward to finishing the year strong. With the spring semester starting, they will begin preparation for their national tournaments.

"Right now, we're preparing for two national tournaments," Brott said. "We want everyone to feel confident and ready, whether it's their first tournament or they're veterans like Rose and me. We're also making sure the team is set up for success next year, with a plan for finding a new coach and a strong leadership structure so everything can keep running smoothly."

Anyone who is interested in joining the speech and debate team can attend their weekly meetings on Thursdays in Johnson Hall, room 102, at 7 p.m. No previous experience in speech and debate is required. Students can also reach out to Dr. Scholten, Brott, or House for more information.

Ferris offering new AI course

New gen-ed class aims to give students across all majors exposure to AI



Graphic by: Hailey Nye | Production Assistant

Davaria Pharr
News Reporter

Ferris State University's new Artificial Intelligence for Everyone course will be coming to campus in the fall of 2026.

Students can find this course labeled under ARTI 200, and it will count as a general education and social awareness credit.

The course will be taught by the director of cybersecurity and data science at Ferris, Dr. Greg Gogolin.

Gogolin has worked in the information technology field for about 15 years prior to becoming a professor at Ferris State.

"Students can take an AI class and add it to their program without adding an additional class because they can use it as one of their gen eds," Gogolin said.

He explained that the AI for Everyone course is designed to give students exposure to a variety of different AI technologies where students can apply these skills to a wide range of different scenarios. Some students may find this course beneficial for industries such as marketing and health care.

Gogolin began developing the AI program five years ago and has made continuous enhancements throughout that time.

"In the beginning, we had

to focus a lot more on ground-work because five years ago, nobody was familiar with AI," Gogolin said.

He said it was not until ChatGPT was released that people began to understand the possible uses of AI.

When the program first started to launch, Gogolin explained that students had to code from scratch to get a starting point, whereas now there is significantly more support to help refine and debug applications quickly.

"The technology that supports the application is much stronger than it was five years ago," Gogolin said. "So you can make a more robust application."

He explained that the technologies students will learn in class could help with employers and future job prospects.

Students will learn about AI applications in different subsets, including machine learning, deep learning, natural language processing and large language models.

"Employers still don't understand AI technology and how it fits into their business cases," Gogolin said.

He explained that there are not many people who have graduated and gone back to develop AI skills.

Gogolin said if students have taken at least one AI course, they have the potential to be more knowledgeable in AI than just about

anybody they will be working with.

There are many businesses and organizations around the world that have tried to dive into AI implementations before they are ready. Gogolin described AI as a tool that changes workflows by making processes more efficient.

Students may not be aware of the changes AI will bring to the workforce. Gogolin expressed that companies are laying people off, and the general consensus from the public is that AI is taking over their jobs.

"Companies often use AI as a scapegoat to cover up general layoffs," Gogolin said.

However, Gogolin said AI will not be replacing jobs, at least not anytime soon.

"Not in the near future," Gogolin said. "That's just not the case."

He explained that companies would have to completely restructure their data for it to even be feasible, adding that applications using that kind of data would take years to develop.

On the other side of the issue, Gogolin acknowledged the strong need for an AI-focused course.

He said companies are not spending enough time training employees on emerging technologies.

Gogolin explained that by understanding these concepts, students could help

prevent companies from making costly mistakes.

Another reason for implementing this course is due to Gogolin's concerns over the impact hackers could have on cybersecurity. He explained how individuals interested in sophisticated hacking could use AI to develop enhanced methods.

"Myself and other faculty members thought we'd bet-

ter get an AI course started because it's so important not only for business but for the future of cybersecurity as well," Gogolin said.

He said if you're going to have adversaries using AI on the offensive side, you'd better have the skills to combat that.

Students can find this course listed as ARTI 200 with Dr. Gogolin being the

main instructor. This course can count as a general education credit for any program, and for students interested in cybersecurity, more information can be found on the Ferris State University website.

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Hundreds gather to celebrate victories

Jan. 12, 2026 declared Bulldog Spirit Day



Photo by: Blase Gapinski | Editor in Chief

Community members gather to celebrate the recent football National Championship victory and volleyball Midwest Regional title.

Blase Gapinski
Editor in Chief

Monday, Jan. 12, marked the start of the 2026 spring semester, along with Bulldog Spirit Day, a celebration of the recent successes achieved by the football and volleyball teams.

The event brought students, faculty and staff together in the David L. Eisler Center to celebrate another historic year of athletic achievements while also setting the tone for the new semester. Attendees had the opportunity to engage with the student-athletes, take photos with the national championship trophy and hear from football and volleyball head coaches Tony Annese and Tia Brandel-Wilhelm.

Ferris State's football team finished undefeated and won the NCAA Division II national

championship, its fourth in five years, while the volleyball team captured the Midwest Regional title and reached the Elite Eight for the second consecutive year.

Annese credited athletic administrators and fellow coaches for fostering a connected environment, mentioning how the department's unity has played a key role in the university's broader success and visibility.

"I've been at six different places as a head coach," Annese said. "I've never really been more connected with a coaching staff than I am here at Ferris."

The emphasis on culture and connection was a recurring message throughout the celebration.

Brandel-Wilhelm echoed Annese's sentiments, highlighting the sense of pride and purpose that comes with representing Ferris State ath-

letics.

"Being a part of the Ferris State Athletic program is an honor and I say it's like a coaching clinic every day," Brandel-Wilhelm said. "Every coach here is so on top of their game, they are learners and always working to get better. They're always trying to do things in just the right way."

That sense of support and unity was also felt by the athletes the celebration was honoring. For the players, Bulldog Spirit Day was a reminder of how deeply supported they are by the Ferris State community.

Mechanical engineering senior and defensive lineman for the Bulldogs, Alefio Saipaia, highlighted just how much the Ferris State community supports and motivates the team.

"When you get to know the community, you get out here

and just see how much joy it brings people when we win," Saipaia said. "There is a lot of love here, so Ferris is a special place. It just makes you want to play harder for them, too. These people really care and genuinely care about us as people, and that's just an amazing feeling."

Even with back-to-back national championships and coming off an undefeated season, the reality of what they accomplished hasn't fully sunk in for Saipaia.

"It's amazing. I mean, the amount of people out here, I'm not surprised, because they are the same people who came out and supported us all year and this is a great community," Saipaia said. "I'm glad to be a part of it, and especially not being from Michigan, and coming here and just being welcomed in. It's just so surreal."

University leadership also

weighed in on the event, focusing on its importance beyond athletics.

President Dr. Bill Pink described Bulldog Spirit Day as a way to reflect Ferris' commitment to student success and community engagement.

"One of the nice things about today is that it's a great way to celebrate the renewal of another semester, but it's also a great thing to have that celebration right around the successes that our university has achieved," Pink said.

"The idea that we build champions around here isn't just about volleyball, basketball, football, hockey; it's about everything we do on this campus, all of our students are champions."

This event provided a chance to recognize student-athletes for their achievements both on the field and in the classroom. He added that Bulldog Spirit Day

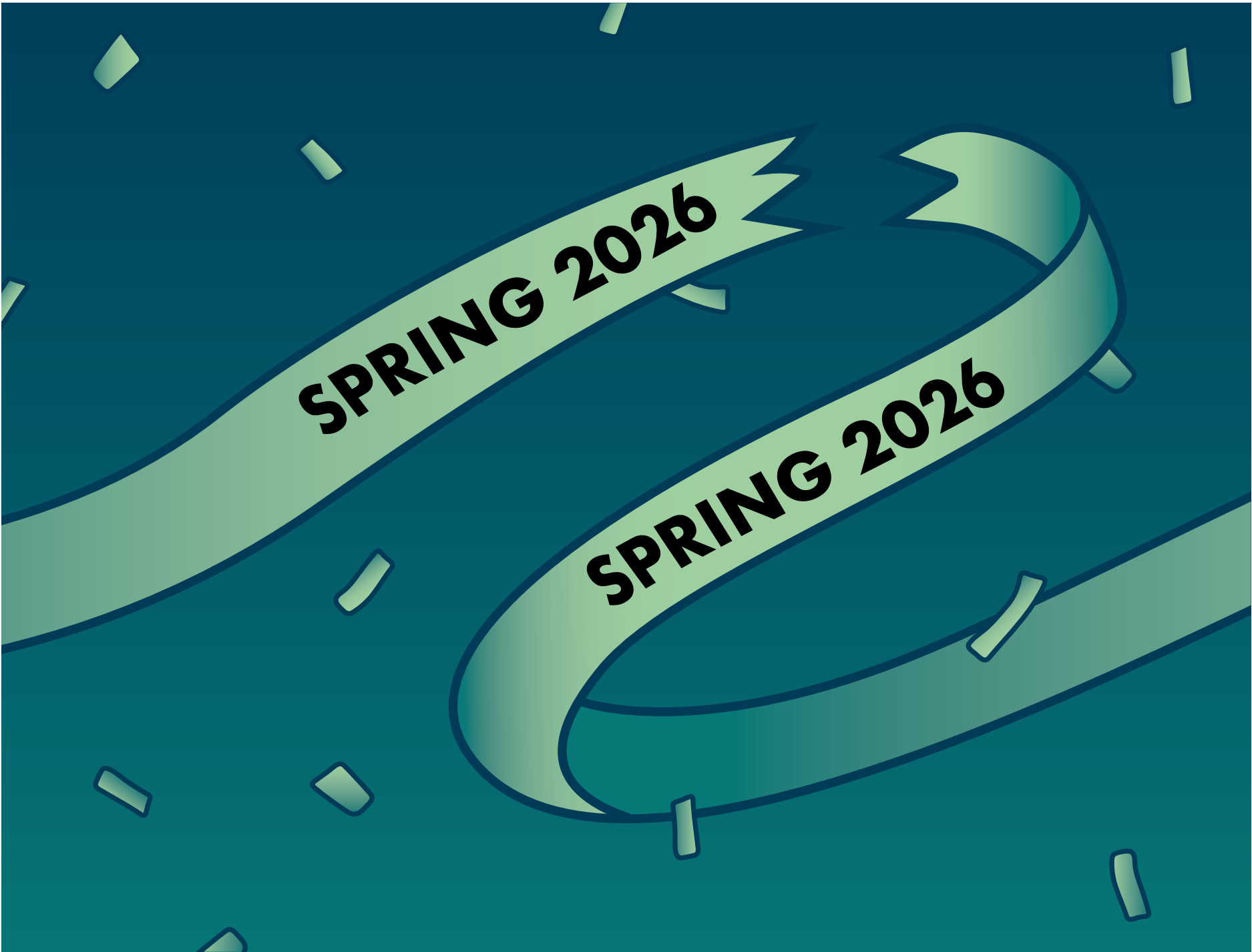
also serves as a reminder of the shared pride and connection that unites the Ferris State community.

"I look forward to this semester of having more opportunities to bring our community together and celebrate and say, here's what we're all about. We're all Bulldogs, we support each other and we do things that help each other be successful, and we celebrate each other," Pink said. "That's what being a Bulldog is all about."

The excitement from the football and volleyball programs promises to carry throughout the coming months, both on campus and in the community. Fans and students can look forward to a celebration parade honoring the Bulldogs' back-to-back national championships, set to take place in the spring, with an exact date still to be determined.

New semester gets started

Professors come with their goals and preparations as the semester gets underway



Graphic by: Hailey Nye | Production Manager

Tate Zellman
Culture Editor

As the 2026 spring semester gets underway, faculty and staff are setting their goals and preparing for the upcoming semester.

Coming off a month-long break, not only are students preparing for the upcoming academic year, but professors are as well. The start of a new academic year allows professors to reflect on what they've learned in past teaching years and depict what they view as beneficial teaching methods for their students.

The start of a new academic year also allows professors to set some goals that they hope to achieve during the semester.

Adjunct instructor Hannah Jablonski, who teaches vari-

ous sections of English 150, expresses one of the goals that she brings to each of her classes.

"One of my major goals is giving students grace," Jablonski said. "Instructors need it. Students need it. And without grace we can't produce the best work or the best quality of our work. I really pride myself in giving students tools to become better readers and writers but they're things I'm going to help them discover. Every one of them possesses these talents, and as their instructor I really want to give them the grace and the tools to find the talent and skill within them to become these future readers and writers."

The goals that professors make can be related to what's best for their students and not what's best for the

professor individually. Professors allowing themselves to exploit their goals onto their students can help them with their academics.

As important and rewarding as teaching is, there are many challenges that impact a semester. Debora Borba, a lecturer in the English, literature and world languages department, believes that every year presents multiple challenges, but that those challenges in academics can be impacted by the environmental and political worlds.

"I think every year has its own challenge," Borba said. "The academic life can be very fulfilling for teachers and students but it has multiple challenges as well. The environment can definitely interfere with the ways that we teach. As a Hispanic teacher it's impossible to ig-

nore what's going on like big conflicts and discussions. So I feel challenged to keep a good classroom environment academically and intellectually."

Students and professors who come from international backgrounds can struggle with these things, as conflicts in their home countries can be distracting as well as concerning. The thought of something concerning a student's home country can raise a challenge to help the student perform well in academics.

Preparation differs between professors who have taught for a while and those who haven't taught as long. Amy Kavanaugh, a professor in the school of education, still experiences moments of anxiety preparing for the semester despite teaching

at Ferris for over a decade.

"I still get nervous and experience some anxiety even though I spend a lot of time preparing," Kavanaugh said. "But I think part of that is just the excitement of getting started. It's the anticipation of getting back into the swing of things."

The feelings of excitement and nervousness don't just come from the professors, but they also come from the advisors, as they also do a lot to ensure that students are doing well.

Professional advisor Dave Schrock, who also teaches FSUS classes, applies both his teaching and advising skills to helping his students achieve their goals.

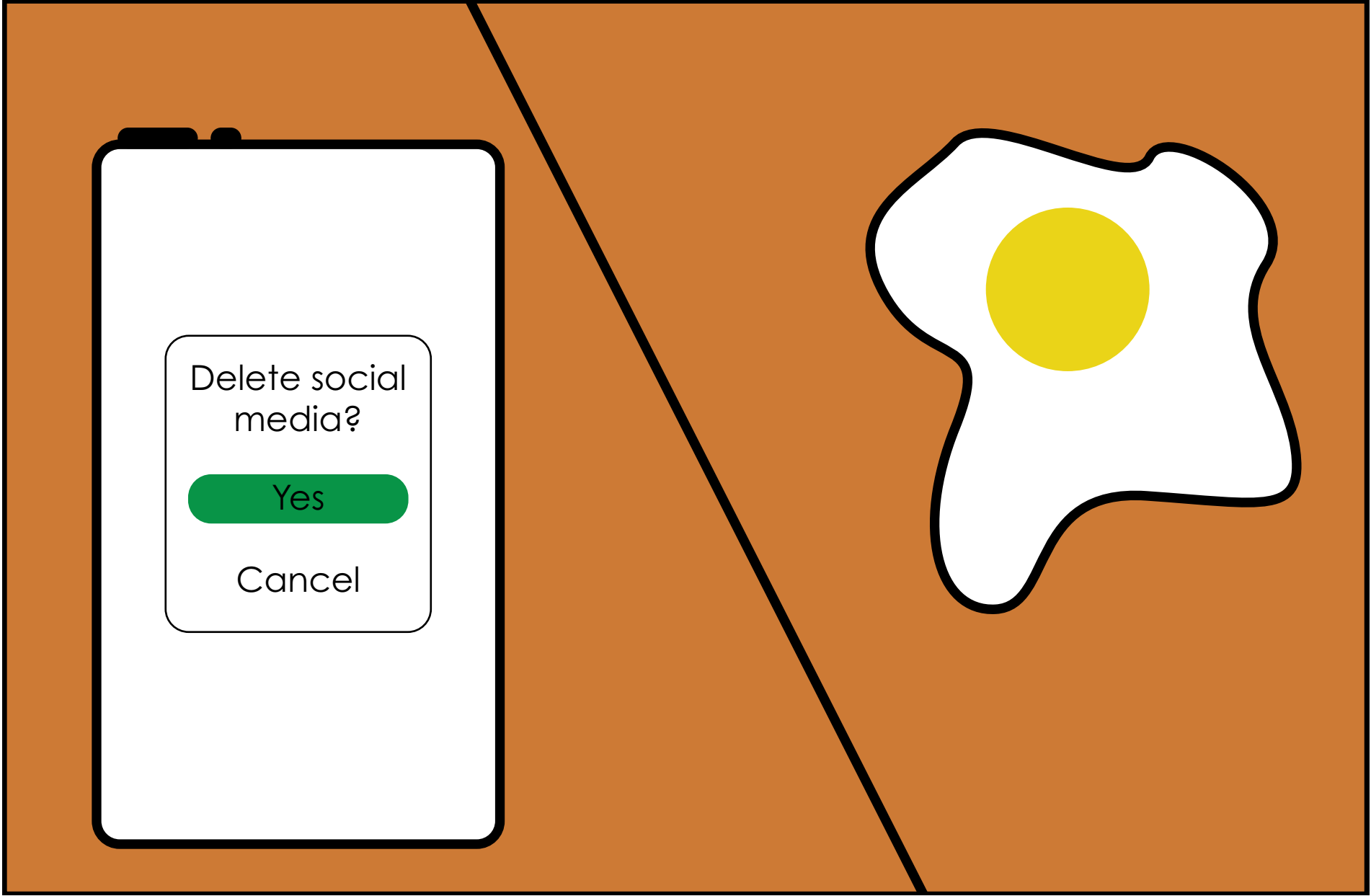
"I think you got to keep in mind that most students do pretty well, but again there's a good chunk of students

where to them the start of the semester is a huge transition," Schrock said. "Everybody's in a different spot and the timing is different for everybody. There's certain things that they need to work on more than others and for some it's just a lot. So this semester is more of a recovery semester."

Ensuring that the academic year is off to a good start is not solely on the professors. Students also play a huge role in terms of preparation, their confidence levels and how much they care about their education. Professors set their goals, expectations and preparations in hopes that their students can succeed as the semester progresses.

New year, new Bulldogs

Students reveal their New Year’s resolutions



Graphic by: Harmony Goodman | Production Manager

Grace Heethuis
Culture Reporter

With the new year comes New Year’s resolutions... for some people. While many people set ambitious goals for the next year of their lives, others don’t quite get the hype.

Students on campus are preparing for 2026 in various ways. Many are being intentional about tackling their goals, while others are simply trying to go with the flow.

Junior design major Lane Guzniczak has decided against New Year’s resolutions for 2026, but has a couple of goals for the year.

“I don’t have any New Year’s resolutions, but recently we decided we’re gonna start going to the gym more, and I decided I’m gonna try and eat healthier, like include more fiber in my diet,” Guzniczak said.

Prioritizing health is a common New Year’s resolution for many people, including students at Ferris.

Senior forensic biology and biotechnology major Isabel Henige discussed her plans to improve her health in 2026.

“I want to be more consistent about going to the gym and eating healthier,” Henige

said. “Just being more mindful that I’m putting real food into my body instead of boxed mac and cheese and stuff like that.”

Other common New Year’s resolutions involve cutting back on or deleting social media.

Junior radiography major Emily Heintzelman has several New Year’s resolutions for 2026.

“My New Year’s resolutions are to stay off social media, read more books, and just spend more time outside,” Heintzelman said. “I feel like social media kind of consumes my free time and I don’t like that, and I want to appreciate the outdoors more.”

Many question the usefulness of New Year’s resolutions. While some people see their value, others are hesitant to believe they are actually helpful.

“I think if you’re a motivated person, it can be very helpful,” Guzniczak said. “But I don’t know, I just don’t ever do it. I feel like making an idea of ‘I’m gonna do something better,’ but not making it a New Year’s resolution is more helpful.”

According to some students, success in sticking to New Year’s resolutions de-

pends on many factors, including whether people take them seriously.

“I think they can be helpful if people are serious about it,” Henige said. “But if they’re just making one to say they made one, it’s obviously not going to do anything. I think it has to do with the person more than anything.”

Some people believe that New Year’s resolutions aren’t the best way to achieve goals and that there are much better strategies for self-improvement.

“I think they’re good, but I think people pressure themselves too much in the new year when they can start anytime,” Heintzelman said. “I feel like people aren’t successful with it because they limit themselves to start on this date and end on this date when they can start whenever.”

Another complaint is how so many people fail too quickly and give up on their New Year’s resolutions. Many people make big plans for the new year, but give up shortly

after.

“I think many people stick to theirs maybe about a month or two, then they just go back to life as normal,” Guzniczak said.

Many students see how short-lived their peers’ New Year’s resolutions are, which leads them to believe it is kind of pointless to make them.

“I really have never met someone that actually makes New Year’s resolutions, and the people I know of that do, I feel like they fizzle out within

a month,” Henige said.

Some students have weighed in on what kinds of New Year’s resolutions people actually stick to, if any.

“I think they stick to it if it’s something that’s only going to benefit them, and that’s about it,” Heintzelman said.

While many people make New Year’s resolutions each new year, it seems that many bulldogs aren’t so fond of the tradition. However, that doesn’t stop them from being ambitious about achieving their 2026 goals.



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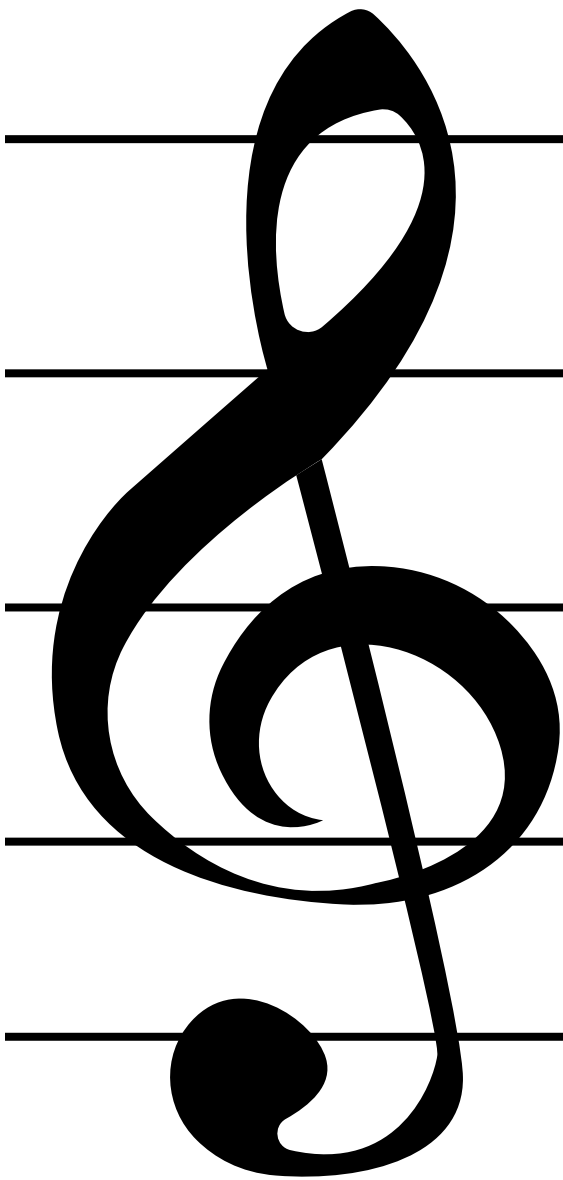
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Contact The Torch Editor-in-chief Blase Gapinski for questions and more.

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Torch tunes

Editorial staff songs of 2025



Scan the code above
on Spotify to listen

Graphic by: Harmony Goodman | Production Manager

Harmony Goodman
Production Manager

For our first Torch Tunes of the year, a small group of our editorial staff has decided to share their favorite song of 2025, or a song they feel represents 2025. Below is the list of song recommendations from our playlists to yours.

Nolan Matthews | Sports Editor: Bad News by Zach Bryan

My top song of 2025 is a song that most people can relate to in this political and social climate, and that song is Bad News by Zach Bryan. In this day and age, where everyone is nervous about what they are going to see next on the news, such as the ICE raids. There is a line he wrote saying, "I heard the cops came, cocky motherf*****s, ain't they, and ICE is gonna come bust down your door."

This country is in a tumultuous time, America is seeming to stray further and further from what this country is supposed to be. Bryan encapsulates this perfectly with the line, "I got some bad news, the fading of the red, white, and blue."

I am one of those people who are nervous about what is to come next, and I am happy that there is someone whose music I have been a massive fan of for years who agrees with me. As there aren't many people in the country music business who write songs like these and I can relate to a song like this.

Tate Zellman | Culture Editor: Crazy Train by Ozzy Osbourne

My top song is Crazy Train by Ozzy Osbourne. I have always enjoyed listening to that song, but I chose to listen to it more this year due to the passing of Osbourne himself. It is one of his most famous songs, and I chose to listen to it more to honor his memory. But the song in general is just so good. Its hard rock and upbeat tempo are good motivators to get my day going, and the song pumps me up to do more if I've been lazy. It's still an amazing song, and I know I'll continue to listen to it for a while.

Blase Gapinski | Editor in Chief: Luther by Kendrick Lamar feat. SZA

"Luther," by Kendrick Lamar featuring SZA, is my top song of 2025 because of how beautifully it captures the idea of finding meaning

and beauty in imperfection. Lines like "In this world, concrete flowers grow, heartache, she only doin' what she know," stayed with me and reminded me that love can exist and even thrive in harsh conditions. The song feels like two people confiding in one another, choosing trust and vulnerability despite the pain the world brings. I'm also a sucker for classic samples, and I enjoyed Kendrick's use of Luther Vandross and Cheryl Lynn's "If This World Were Mine." I feel like it's the perfect blend with Kendrick and SZA's vocals harmonizing so well and their modern perspective. It made the track feel both timeless and deeply personal.

Harmony Goodman | Production Manager: The View Between Villages by Noah Kahan

"The View Between Villages" by Noah Kahan was a song I really connected with this past year. This song is about the love for your small hometown, which holds both beautiful and painful memories. In the extended version of this song, Kahan features two voice memos from elderly locals from his hometown, discussing why they have such a strong affection for

their hometown and the people they grew up with there. A song like this is endearing, and I found myself listening

to it when my great-grandpa was sick during the summer. It helped me process the emotions I couldn't. It's a

great reminder that no matter how far I go, I will always have my hometown.



Opinions

Jackie Moglia | Opinions Editor | mogliaj@ferris.edu

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EDITOR'S COLUMN: Paper trails of the mind

How I was able to fall in love with writing again



Graphic by: Hailey Nye | Production Assistant

Blase Gapinski
Editor in Chief

Throughout this winter break, I found myself constantly reading and writing, but it didn't really feel the same as it once did.

Although these are activities I typically enjoy doing, I found myself burnt out from the previous semester, yet I still had to keep going to remain successful throughout the wintermester course I was taking.

The fall semester was pretty intense for me, so I had been looking forward to taking a break from my duties at the Torch and with school. I knew it wasn't a good sign that I was no longer looking forward to my academics or even writing, which was something I once loved.

We all need a break sometimes, but I had already reached my breaking point.

I found myself becoming saddened when it came time to start reading the material and taking notes for the week, letting it eat up the downtime I did have between assignments, questioning if I was doing enough. While reflecting on this, I realized something: It had been quite

some time since I had done any reading or writing for myself.

From there on out, I made sure to spend the rest of my break taking time to start writing whenever I felt overwhelmed or like I wasn't doing enough.

By filling this time in with my journal and pen, I was able to empty my thoughts and feelings from my head and leave them on paper.

Doing this gave me a sense of fulfilment and reassurance. I was surprised by how much better I felt after just taking an hour to write for myself.

I found myself enjoying this process of writing again. Taking the way I feel about something and using words to express it across the lines on the paper made me feel excited and like I was actually creating something meaningful, despite no one being there to read it.

In some way, I really was clearing the thoughts and emotions that plagued my mind and was storing them in my journal, somewhere that only I had access to.

This sense of clarity is one of the main reasons why I advocate for writing, even

if it is something you don't think you are good at. You don't have to be exceptional at reading or writing to take what you are feeling and express it on paper.

The best part for me was feeling relieved from these thoughts and building these positive habits that help me keep stress, anxiety and emotions regulated throughout the day.

Don't just take it from me. There is even research that suggests journaling will help you control emotions and improve mental health.

The University of Rochester Medical Center cites many improvements for your own well-being, being as managing anxiety, reducing stress and even coping with depression.

If you are someone who struggles with controlling some of these emotions, the URMCM says actively journaling your thoughts and feelings can help you prioritize problems, fears and concerns. Not only will it help with managing those overwhelming feelings but it can help you identify triggers that may be causing these feelings to arise.

This is where the aspect

of journaling has benefited me. By putting my thoughts out on paper, I was able to see how little there actually was to be stressed about or anxious of.

At the end of my journals, I typically like to follow the URMCM's last tip, which is to provide myself an opportunity to practice positive self-talk. Anyone who knows me knows I have struggled with this for so long.

These journals I create give me the sense of security and belonging that I need. I realized I am doing everything I can and I won't be able to solve every single one of my problems at once.

I decided to discuss this topic for my first column of the year because I knew there were others out there who felt like they weren't doing enough with their time, either.

One thing I enjoy doing in my free time is going back and reading previous editors' columns from the Torch. Not only does it inspire me but it also allows me to tap in and attempt to get a glimpse of what some of my former editors-in-chief were thinking about.

While looking through the

opinions section, I came across an article from Jessica Okaes, who was our EIC in the 2023-24 academic year.

A line that really stood out to me from her article was: "I find it too easy to fall into a cycle where I'm too tired outside of work and school to be active with my time. We become passive consumers every hour we aren't productive for someone else."

When it comes to writing and artistic endeavors, she is someone I have always looked up to throughout my time at the Torch.

Reading this line over made me realize I have the power to be proactive with my team and create meaningful work that I can be proud of, whether it is written for academics or for my own mental clarity.

Writing brought me back to myself when I needed it most. As this semester begins, I'm choosing to protect that space for my own well-being. In choosing to write for myself again, I learned that being proactive doesn't always mean doing more. Sometimes it means slowing down and creating with intention.

A second home

My college experience has become essential for my well-being

Tate Zellman
Culture Editor

Heading into the second semester as a fourth-year student, the university has felt much more like a secondary home compared to my first year.

As time has gone by, I've adjusted to the life of going to college, hence why the experience has improved for me year after year. But the university isn't a second home because of my time as a college student. It's a second home because I developed a home while being at the university.

Throughout my time at Ferris, I have made sure I've done multiple things to ensure that I feel like I'm part of a community. I've developed friendships that will last me a lifetime, I've attended sporting events like football and basketball games and attended campus events like second chance prom.

Doing all these things has helped me look forward to the upcoming semesters. I have things to be excited about and people to see. It's better to find your people and find the entertainment aspects of college instead of just going there to get your education, even though that is still very important.

Getting myself out there and keeping myself engaged and involved on campus was not just for entertainment, but for the sake of overcoming my homesickness, which is something I experienced early on during my time as a Ferris student. Developing college as a second home has made me appreciate college a lot more and has helped me worry less about missing my family and the next time I will be returning home.

Speaking of home, it was important for me to make my college experience one I would remember because it would be the first time I would be living away from home. Even though my hometown is only an hour and fifteen-minute drive from the university, I still had to ensure I knew the campus and developed my community of people because I knew my parents wouldn't be there for me if I needed something.

Making friends at college has been a lot easier compared to making friends in high school, which is one of the many reasons why I'm enjoying my college experience more than my high school days. I know that if I hadn't made the friendships I have right now in college, my over-



Photo courtesy of Tate Zellman

Zellman and some of his college friends enjoying a meal at the Gypsy Nickel Lounge.

all experience wouldn't be as memorable or enjoyable.

Your friends are your community.

All students can make their college campus a secondary home if they take the approach and keep themselves active and involved on campus. The college experience provides numerous opportunities that can all feel like home away from family.

What's great about Ferris is

that the university has a lot of athletics, having multiple sports seasons take place in the fall, winter and spring. Bringing a friend or two to the sporting events provides opportunities to have fun with your friends, cheer on your fellow student athletes and put aside the academics.

If students are curious about attending a campus event, they're never too hard to find, whether posted online

or on the walls of dorms or campus buildings. Campus events occur year around giving students multiple chances to attend something that sparks their interest and to be with their community.

I want to encourage every student at Ferris to take the opportunities to make college feel like a home away from home. Even with all the homework, there are still many ways that students can

create a second home for themselves. Students should not be focused on their academics for the entirety of their college careers.

Every student should feel like college is a home away from home. College should not just be enjoyed and remembered in terms of preparing for your future, but for creating memories that will last a lifetime.

Bury your tropes

The importance of a happily ever after



Graphic by: Hailey Nye | Production Assistant

Jackie Moglia
Opinions Editor

Growing up, queer characters never got to truly be happy, so imagine my surprise when Heated Rivalry came out.

For those who aren't aware, "Heated Rivalry" is a Crave original based on books by Rachel Reid, following two of the top hockey players in the book's league, Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov. The two meet the

summer before their rookie season, and the storyline follows their hidden romance and eventual relationship.

Also, for those who aren't aware, hockey is a notoriously unaccepting sport. I love hockey, I always have, which is why I've written about the culture issues within the sport before. The National Hockey League, or NHL, has specifically banned pride tape and jerseys in recent years.

It's also one of the only

professional leagues with no out players, both current or retired. Luke Prokop is the exception, a prospect playing in the AHL who came out publicly in 2021, but has yet to play in the NHL.

Note: Heated Rivalry spoilers below this line.

Episode six of Heated Rivalry sees longtime player Scott Hunter, who publicly comes out after winning the cup, deliver a raw speech about how lonely it is to be in a sport where he knows he's

different and about when he started to wonder if he was one of those things that hockey players throw around as an insult.

Trying to imagine that happening in the "real" world feels impossible. But the reaction in the series is completely different. It's a world where he is able to both be with the man he loves and play the game he loves. It's a fantasy so many people desperately want to get lost in.

This is followed up by one of the most impactful coming-out scenes that I've seen. Shane finally comes out to his parents, but a conversation he has with his mom was particularly gut-wrenching, not because it is sad, but because of how lovely it is.

Getting a world where people are accepting is so much more important than people realize. Numerous cast members have discussed how agents or players in various leagues have reached out to them regarding being closeted in leagues not ready or willing to accept them.

It feels so rare to get to see two queer characters happy, riding off into the sunset to-

gether, knowing that they're loved and able to love each other.

Watching characters come out and talk about how lonely it was to be hiding just really hit home. Watching these scenes made me feel 14 again, listening to girls in the locker room whisper about who in the league they thought was a part of the LGBTQ+ community. It made me feel 16 again, feeling like I had to constantly defend my relationship. I was even 20 again, watching the NHL decide that pretending to care about the LGBTQ+ community was too much work.

My only issue with the show isn't with the series itself, the actors or directors, it's with the fans flocking to the NHL, blissfully unaware of how the league treats people that aren't part of the "in group".

I'm all for growing the game; it's a sport I've loved since before I could walk. My problem with this influx of fans is the way the league is profiting off of this love story that it knows it would never accept. An NHL spokesperson told the Hollywood Re-

porter that this was the most unique way the NHL has acquired new fans, and "see you all at the rink".

Right.

It's so incredibly frustrating to watch the NHL play into the series as if they're in on some sort of joke. It's frustrating to watch major sports outlets make jokes about the show for engagement because that's all it's about for them. Engagement. They couldn't care less about the new fans, let alone the current LGBTQ+ fans.

Regardless of how the NHL is profiting from the show, LGBTQ+ fans get to profit as well. To see a relationship normalized where one of them doesn't get killed off to "further the plot" is a refreshing breath of fresh air, especially considering the political climate of the time.

Regardless of the real culture surrounding hockey, having a show about a love story that doesn't end in tragedy, with the way the world is at the moment, is a glimmer of hope. Happy love stories deserve to exist, especially stories like these.

Sports

Nolan Matthews | Sports Editor | matthen4@ferris.edu

What you missed

What happened with Ferris athletics over winter break



Photo courtesy of Ferris Athletics

The volleyball team celebrates after winning a set in the 2025 NCAA DII Quarterfinals against the University of Tampa.

Nolan Matthews
Sports Editor

While you were at home enjoying the holidays and not worrying about schoolwork, Ferris athletics were still traveling and playing their respective games. Here is what you missed over break.

Ferris football defeated Harding for the program's fourth championship in five seasons.

The Bulldogs once again handily won the NCAA DII football national championship against the Harding Bison by a score of 42-21 in McKinney, Texas, on Saturday, Dec. 20. The Bulldogs came out of the gates quickly in the first quarter, with two four-yard rushing touchdowns from redshirt freshman quarterback Wyatt Bower to make the score 14-0. Bower threw a 23-yard touchdown to senior wide

receiver Cam Underwood to make the score going into halftime 21-14.

Ferris came out of halftime quickly, with sophomore quarterback Chase Carter on a designed quarterback run for a 64-yard rushing touchdown, but the Bison struck right back on the ensuing kickoff, to make the score 28-21. That was the final points the Bison would score, as the Bulldogs would score twice more to cap off the first 16-0 season in DII history and the fourth national championship in program history.

Head coach Tony Annese gave his thoughts on the game.

"The Bison are a super program, give credit to coach Simmons and his staff, a very unique style and a very difficult style to play against," Annese said. "They are a very prideful group of young men;

they play the game the right way. I have mad respect for Cole Keylon; you could tell he was playing hurt, that was pretty incredible."

Volleyball made a run to the DII NCAA Quarterfinals

After losing to Wayne State in the GLIAC Tournament Championship by a score of 3-1, the Bulldogs were hoping to get a berth to play in the Midwest Region Quarterfinals. The Bulldogs got selected as the three seed, and they took on Quincy in the quarterfinals. Quincy quickly got out to a 2-0 lead on Ferris before Ferris won the next three sets to move on to the semifinals to face off against Rockhurst University.

The Bulldogs handily defeated Rockhurst in the semifinals by a score of 3-0. Sophomore outside hitter Emily May led the team in kills with 13 on 26 total attempts for 13.5 points, while

sophomore outside hitter Gabby Piazza had 12 kills on 27 total attempts for 13.5 points.

Ferris moved on to the Midwest Region Championship to play the University of Indianapolis, in which they took down the Greyhounds by a score of 3-1. Piazza led the team in kills with 18 on 47 total attempts for 20 points, while senior outside hitter Emma Bleacher had 12 kills on 27 total attempts for 16 points.

Then Ferris had to take on the 32-0 one-seeded University of Tampa, which saw the Bulldogs come from behind after losing the first two sets by scores of 25-15 and 25-17, before winning the next two sets to take it into a deciding fifth set. Tampa ended up defeating Ferris in the fifth set by a score of 15-11.

Both women's and men's basketball went a com-

bined 9-4

Women's and men's basketball started off the month with the same opponents, and ended with the same result for both games, with the first game for both teams being against Purdue Northwest, with both teams winning their game, women's winning 97-43, and men's winning 73-68.

Both teams then took on Wayne State, with women's losing by a score of 84-71, and men's losing 98-77. Women's then traveled to Hawaii for the HPU Shark Tank, which saw the Bulldogs lose to on Dec. 18 to West Texas A&M by a score of 68-54, but then took down Alaska Anchorage on Dec. 20 65-59. Women's then went on to win their next two games, the first of which against Roosevelt on Jan. 3 by a score of 78-70 and then Wisconsin Parkside on Jan. 5 by a score

of 96-90.

Men's took on Lewis on Dec. 16, taking them down narrowly by a score of 66-64, before losing three days later to McKendree 75-70. Then on Dec. 30, the Bulldogs dominantly defeated Grace Christian 110-74, before winning against Roosevelt on Jan. 3, 82-68, and Wisconsin Parkside two days later, 74-72.

Over the break, the player who showed out the most for men's was senior Mykel Bingham, who averaged 15 points, 7.2 rebounds, 2.2 assists and one steal a game in those seven games.

For women's, the player was senior guard Mia Riley, who over the six games during break averaged 19.3 points, 5.1 rebounds, 1.6 steals and 2.1 assists.

One last ride

Jalen Jones talks key plays in championship



Photo courtesy of Ferris Athletics

Jalen Jones celebrates after a pick six against Northwood in the first round of the 2025 playoffs.

Devin Wardrop
Sports Reporter

In his senior season, safety Jalen Jones was a key factor in the Bulldogs' fourth national championship run. Growing up in Mattawan, Michigan, Jones began playing football at the age of eight, initially as a quarterback. With his dad's help, who played football at Adrian College, Jones fell in love with the sport. Jones was a multi-sport athlete growing up, playing basketball up until his freshman year of high school, when he decided to focus on football since he had more success in the sport. On the court, Jones was an

all-conference selection. On the football field, Jones was named to the Kalamazoo Gazette Football Dream Team, as well as earning multiple varsity letters on the gridiron. Jones talked about his journey and how he got to Big Rapids. "I got offers from Division 3 and NAIA schools, but nothing more than that," Jones said. "My cousin Xavier played at Ferris, and I wanted to follow him. I went to camps, didn't get any offers, so I decided to walk on to the team to play with X [Xavier]." Jones walked on at Ferris State with the intention of being a quarterback, being listed as an "athlete". When he saw the Bulldogs had too

many players at that position, he decided to change to the defensive side of the ball and play safety, thinking that would give him the best opportunity to get on the field and play. In his freshman year at Ferris, which ended with a National Championship win, Jones played in 10 games and had four tackles, as well as one forced fumble. Jones' best statistical season came during his junior year in the 2024 season, where he was responsible for 57 tackles, nine tackles for loss, one sack and five interceptions. Jones started his senior season hot, getting two tackles, a sack and an interception in the 34-17 win

at home against Pittsburg State. Unfortunately, an injury paused Jones' season, returning for the 38-31 win against rival Grand Valley State, where he was responsible for two tackles, before sitting the rest of the regular season and returning for the playoff run. Jones talked about watching the Bulldogs' regular season run from the sidelines. "It sucked being on the sidelines," Jones said. "Going into the year, I felt as though I could get All-American. I split reps last year, and I definitely felt that this year was my year." Senior defensive lineman Sio Saipaia praised Jones' leadership.

"Jalen is a leader on our team and sets a high standard with his performance and character," Saipaia said. "He was always a voice that people listened to and respected. Jalen is also just a good person who always brings a positive atmosphere. He's a friend and teammate that I couldn't be more proud of through the adversity he faced and how he still was a strong leader through it all." Luckily, Jones was able to return for the Bulldogs' playoff run. In the four games leading up to the National Championship, Jones logged 14 tackles, with four interceptions for 19 yards. In the National Championship

game in McKinney, Texas, against Harding, Jones had three tackles and two tackles for loss, something he said felt that it was great to make game-changing plays in front of his friends and family, who made the trip down to Texas to watch him. The next step for Jones is unclear. Jones might do a Pro Day, or he might go get surgery on his shoulder and foot. Whatever happens next, Jones is excited for the next opportunity.

Transfer portal frenzy

The transfer portal hits Ferris football



Photo courtesy of Ferris Athletics

Carson Gulker sprints in for a touchdown against Harding in the National Championship.

Nolan Matthews
Sports Editor

Just over three weeks removed from the Bulldogs capturing their fourth national championship in five seasons, many key Bulldogs have decided to test the transfer portal to move to the next level of college football. College football's transfer portal officially opened at midnight on Jan 2, and by midday of that day, more than 4,500 players had entered the transfer portal, and those players have until Jan 16 to enter their name to transfer. So far, 10 Bulldogs have entered their names into the portal: on the defensive side of the ball, sophomore defen-

sive backs Tre' Rigby and Ahlston Ware, redshirt freshman Devon Strobel, freshman defensive lineman Kaiel Stewart, and senior linebacker Isaiah Byars. Ware and Byars were both high-impact starters for the Bulldogs. During the 2026 season, Byars had 91 total tackles, 7.5 tackles for loss, and five interceptions while also securing first-team All-GLIAC. Ware was just as good, as he had 58 total tackles, 1.5 tackles for loss, and two interceptions while also being named first-team All-GLIAC in 2025 and earning second-team in 2024. The offense has taken the biggest losses to the transfer portal as they have seen junior receiver Taarik Brett, ju-

nior offensive lineman Dayne Arnette, senior receiver Jeremiah Lee, and junior H-back Carson Gulker. Brett was a huge part of the offense for the 2025 season, rushing 86 times for 583 yards and six touchdowns, while having 47 catches for 533 yards and nine more touchdowns. Brett was also a key player on special teams, having 504 return yards and adding another touchdown. Two of those players have committed to a school already, those being Gulker and Arnette. Gulker had offers from Texas Tech, LSU, West Virginia, Duke, and SMU, and Michigan State, and he ultimately chose Michigan State. Arnett had

many offers, the biggest of which being South Carolina, Michigan State, Iowa State, Colorado State, and Toledo and he chose South Carolina. Gulker was a highly impactful player during his time at Ferris, mostly being used as a quarterback until this season, during his time as a Bulldog he threw for 1,591 yards, 16 touchdowns, and only four interceptions. During the 2025 season his role changed, being used all over on the offense, he ended up running for 541 yards and five touchdowns but also being a big part of the receiving game, catching 34 passes for 548 yards and seven touchdowns. Gulker spoke about his

reason to transfer. "It was honestly such a hard decision for me," Gulker said. "It was so hard to leave a place you have so much love for. I just felt like I needed to give myself the opportunity to play at a higher level if it presented itself, and it did, and I chose MSU because I think that what they do offensively is a great fit for my skillset." The Bulldogs have also received a big commit from the transfer portal, receiving a commit from former Michigan State offensive lineman Rashawn Rogers. Rogers hails from Ottawa Hills High School, he did not receive many offers out of high school, with his only official offer coming from

Wayne State. Rogers decided to enroll at Michigan State and walk on to the team, and ended up earning a spot. Rogers did not see a snap while playing at Michigan State, and this was his main reason for transferring to Ferris. "I transferred for an opportunity to play," Rogers said. "I want to play for someone who actually wants me, I will get the job done no matter what the cost is, go dawgs!" With only a couple days until the transfer portal closes on Jan. 16, we may see a few more Bulldogs enter the portal.