



The Ferris State Torch

95 YEARS OF ILLUMINATING THE TRUTH

Big Rapids, Michigan

Week of Jan. 21 - 28, 2026

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A year of changes

Businesses coming to Big Rapids in 2026



Photo by: Blase Gapinski | Editor in Chief

The former TCF Bank and Huntington Bank located at 110 Perry Ave. is set to be demolished once weather clears up to make way for a Chipotle.

Blase Gapinski
Editor in Chief

Several new businesses are set to open in Big Rapids throughout 2026, bringing expanded dining options, redevelopment projects and long-awaited returns to the community.

One of the most notable additions is a new Dunkin' Donuts that is set to be constructed inside the Walmart located on 21400 Perry Ave. The Big Rapids store is one of 14 that are included within Walmart's "Store of the Future" project.

The Dunkin' location is expected to open at the end of May, with the store's grand reopening. This new shop marks the return of Dunkin' Donuts to Big Rapids, as a previous location operated

downtown until 2008.

A hiring event for the remodeling process was held on Jan. 19 at the Walmart location.

Downtown Big Rapids will also see the addition of a Cottage Inn Pizza, which is set to open at 126 S. Michigan Ave.

The pub-style restaurant expects to open in late summer or early fall. Located just minutes from campus, the new pizza spot will offer students and residents another late-night dining option in the downtown area.

Another major development for the city is the upcoming Chipotle restaurant planned for 110 Perry Ave.

This multi-story building was the former site of the TCF Bank and Huntington Bank building, with demolition of

the existing structure being delayed due to harsh weather conditions.

Once demolition of the current structure is complete, construction on the new location will begin.

The store will be a one-story building and will include a drive-thru. The restaurant is expected to open before the end of the year.

In addition to new dining options, entertainment is returning to the city with the renovation of the Big Rapids Theater.

The Big Rapids Theater will stay at its former location on 213 S. Michigan Ave., and will undergo major renovations.

Among the most notable upgrades, the theater will become only the second in the country to feature the new-

est luxury seating from Irwin Seating of Grand Rapids.

These developments reflect the ongoing growth and investment of the Big Rapids community, as it continues to expand.

Students are looking forward to visiting these additional businesses and the opportunity that they provide for the community.

Radiology freshman Josie Harrison mentioned how these places will bring more choices when it comes to employment options for students.

"I am definitely excited for the new food places coming up, both as job opportunities for college students and some quick bites," Harrison said. I haven't heard about the upcoming movie theater, but I've always wondered why

we don't have one. I am super excited for all these new amenities."

A complaint from many students is that there are not enough choices when it comes to dining in Big Rapids.

Radiology freshman Luke Zinke shared this belief, mentioning how the additional options will prove to be positive contributions to the community.

"I think that sounds pretty cool," Zinke said. We have a lot of restaurants already but nothing interesting sounding, so bringing in a Chipotle or Cottage Inn Pizza will be a great thing for Bug Rapids. Also, finally having a movie theater again would be great instead of watching movies in a dorm room or on campus."

With some of the business-

es set to open in late spring, students are eager to see these new implementations within the community and experience them with friends.

Mechanical engineering freshman Ryan Knechtges discussed how he doesn't see enough people getting out in town, so having more options in the area will help improve that.

"It will be nice to have more variety in town and more things to do," Knechtges said. "The new food places and the movie theater will give people more reasons to go out, try new things, and meet new people."

As construction moves forward and a few of the openings are set for late spring, students see the projects as a sign of continued revitalization in Big Rapids.

News

Big Rapids faces a severely cold, snowy winter week, with sub-zero temperatures, intense wind chills and above-average snowfall forecasted. **PG. 2**

Culture

Check out this week's culture section to learn more about RSOs, college preparation for the workforce, and how Fallout Season 2 may be worth the watch. **PG. 5**

Opinions

Building connections in college is crucial for everyone, but building connections with your professors might be more impactful than you think. **PG. 8**

Sports

Sophomore dual athlete Tae Boyd is back at it a month after winning his second championship, this time appearing on the court for men's basketball **PG. 10**

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News

Blase Gapinski | News Editor | gapinsb@ferris.edu

Michigan

Blase Gapinski
Editor in Chief

Hudsonville, MI - On Monday, Jan. 19, there was a reported 100-car pileup in the Hudsonville and Zeeland areas, causing multiple exits to close on I-196.

At the time of writing, numerous injuries were reported, yet none were known to be fatal, deputies reported.

Dispatchers said the crash occurred amid the heavy snow and windy conditions due to the harsh weather that is expected to continue throughout the week.

Ottawa County Sheriff's office has encouraged motorists to avoid traveling within the area or at all unless necessary.

The National Weather Service in Grand Rapids has also issued a warning to drivers, saying that "travel is not recommended."

Authorities are urging any drivers who are involved in an accident or stranded to remain in their vehicles until first responders arrive at the scene.

National

Nolan Matthews
Sports Editor

Minnesota, United States - The Pentagon has ordered around 1,500 troops to be prepared to deploy into Minnesota amid intensifying anti-ICE protests after the fatal shooting of Renee Nicole-Good.

On Monday, Jan. 19, President Donald Trump has threatened to invoke the Insurrection Act, which empowers the President to deploy U.S. Armed Forces nationally in states under specific circumstances.

Two battalions of the 11th Airborne Division were placed on prepare-to-deploy orders in case he does so. Minnesota has been entangled in protests for the last two weeks since around 3,000 federal agents were deployed to the city of Minneapolis.

Global

Nolan Matthews
Sports Editor

Adamuz, Spain - Spanish Police said on Monday morning, Jan. 19, that at least 39 people are confirmed dead after a high-speed rail collision that occurred Sunday Jan. 18.

The crash occurred on Sunday night around 7:49 pm when the tail end of a train jumped the track, which caused a passing train heading in the opposite direction to derail.

The crash tossed the second train off the track and sent it down a 13-foot slope, Andalusia regional president Juanma Moreno said, describing the wreckage as a "mass of twisted metal." Efforts to recover more bodies will continue throughout the week and the death toll could continue to rise as the week continues.

Cold front to hit Big Rapids

Ferris students prepare for winter weather ahead



Photo by: Blase Gapinski | Editor in Chief

Students can expect snowfall late into the spring semester, a familiar site for the Big Rapids area.

Nolan Matthews
Sports Editor

Big Rapids and Ferris State are in for a classic Michigan winter week, full of single-digit temperatures with some of the coldest temperatures of the winter season and plenty of snow.

Ferris students will be in for a tough week ahead. The coldest temperatures of the week will come this weekend, while on Saturday, it will be a high of four degrees and a low of -15, with it expected to be around -25 with the intense wind chill to come. Sunday will be no better, with a high of seven and a low of -10.

Automotive engineering technology freshman Evan McDonald spoke about how he prepares before class during these cold temperatures.

"I would typically leave 10 minutes earlier than I would

in the spring in case I am snowed in, or my car doesn't want to start right away," McDonald said. "I think classes should be cancelled after a certain threshold, for some who drive, these kinds of temperatures can cause cars to resist starting, and to walk in below zero temperatures is miserable, especially for those who have to walk across campus for classes."

The weather will warm up when Monday comes around, with Monday warming up to 20 degrees and a low of seven and Tuesday having the warmest temperature of the week at a high of 24 and a low of zero.

Cold temperatures aren't the only thing that will be coming, as plenty of snow will be expected as well. So far this winter season, Big Rapids has recorded 26.6 inches of snow, which is 6.8 inches higher than the average of 19.8 inches at this point in

the season.

Psychology freshman Spencer Poritt believes it is crucial to find things to do outside of your dorm or apartment during these cold and snowy times.

"I think the most important thing is finding ways to get outside of your dorm or apartment," Poritt said. "It is easy to get cooped up inside, but finding somewhere else to go, whether it be in the Rec center, the library, or even a friend's dorm or apartment. It just helps make life much more fun when you can't go outside and have fun."

Even though all this inclement weather is ahead, do not expect a snow day, as Ferris State is known for not calling many snow days. Approximately in the last 15 years, Ferris has had only about five snow days.

From 2013-2018, Ferris had only had one snow day, which came in 2013, but in

2019, Ferris had two snow days in the same week on Jan. 28 and Jan. 30, with the next snow day coming around 5 years later in 2024, when campus closed on Jan. 12 and Jan. 13.

In 2025, there was only one snowday which was on Jan. 21st, due to heavy snowfall.

Business analytics senior Teddy Fanco gave his opinion on what to do when these storms are in the forecast.

"Stock up on items from the store," Fanco said. "Try to preemptively buy whatever you need whenever you see cold, snowy weather on the forecast. You don't want to put yourself in a position where you need to leave to get something when you could have gotten it earlier."

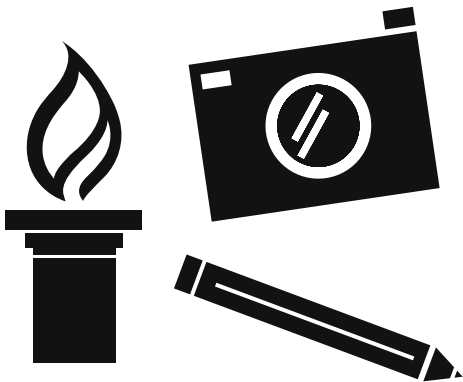
Make sure to stay warm, bundled up, and stay safe during the cold front to hit the campus in the coming week.

Why work for the Torch?

The Ferris State Torch is an entirely student-run publication created by students and for students. We publish 27 Wednesdays throughout the academic year and serve as a platform for student voices. From covering campus news to community stories, our mission is to inform, engage and represent the Ferris community while giving students hands-on experience in journalism and media. We pride ourselves on welcoming any student who is interested in working for the Torch, regardless of prior experience in writing or media. Whether you are an experienced writer or someone looking to try something new, the Torch provides an inclusive learning environment where students can grow their skills at their own pace. Our staff members gain real-world experience in reporting, interviewing, editing and photography while learning the core values of journalism, including accuracy and integrity. Reporters for the Torch have the freedom to choose what they want to cover, from campus news and Ferris athletics to student organizations, events and issues that matter to the community. Working for the Torch is an opportunity to build your portfolio, develop professional skills and actively contribute to campus life while being part of a collaborative, student-led team.

Positions we have open include:

- Copy Editors
- Photographers
- Reporters (Freelance and full-time)
- Section Editors (News and Managing Copy Editor)



For more information and inquiries, reach out to
Blase Gapinski @gapinsb@ferris.edu

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Harlem Globetrotters make their way to Ferris

Jim Wink Arena set to host 100th anniversary tour stop



Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

The Harlem Globetrotters plan on making their second trip ever to Jim Wink Arena at Ferris State as a part of their 100th anniversary tour.

Davaria Pharr
News Reporter

On Thursday, Jan. 22, the Harlem Globetrotters will head to Ferris State University's Jim Wink Arena as a part of their 100th anniversary tour.

The Harlem Globetrotters are a nationally recognized basketball team best known for blending their basketball skills with entertainment, comedy and theatrics. This marks the second time the team has made a stop at Wink Arena.

Their most famous moves include the magic circle warm-up, the 4-point shot, and their iconic trick shots.

The Harlem Globetrotters originally started out as a top-tier competitive basket-

ball team that helped break racial barriers in the 40s and 50s.

Showcasing Black athletic excellence when segregated, integrating the NBA by beating white teams, and using entertainment to break down racial barriers.

The team was formed in 1926 when Black players created a league to prove Black athletes had the skill-set to play basketball. They made their statement on the game by winning the World Professional Basketball Tournament in 1940.

In 1985, the Globetrotters signed the first woman to play for a legendary men's team, Lynette Woodard. Woodard paved the way for a broader movement and recognition of women in basketball.

As students are returning to campus after a long winter break, some may be struggling to get back into the routine of things.

Business freshman Michael Johnson talked about how events like this can prove to be beneficial at the beginning of the semester.

"It's the first week of classes, and a lot of students may still be getting used to college life. Having the globetrotters come to school may ease some of their minds."

Johnson explains how inspiring it is to have a nationally known basketball team come to school.

He explains that with the stress of classes and responsibilities, the globetrotters encourage him to take a break and not be so serious all the

time.

Business Senior Neal Clayton expressed a similar sentiment. One thing that surprised him was that they would be performing at Wink Arena.

"I think it's really a cool opportunity for students and community members to even be able to see a team that doesn't normally come somewhere like Ferris."

Clayton said he immediately bought tickets when he found out they were coming to town and expressed excitement to be able to attend.

For some students, this isn't just a typical visit; it takes them back to a moment of simpler times and childhood memories.

"I saw them when I was a kid, and just the nostalgia

of it makes me reminisce on good times," Clayton said.

Many students, like marketing senior Tyler Christie shared stories about how the Globetrotters provided these fond childhood memories and a sense of nostalgia.

"When I was little, I went to a game, and it was actually really cool. Seeing them made me want to play basketball more."

Christie talked about how, as a kid, he really used to like basketball, and seeing them at a time when he didn't play the sport as much helped inspire him to get on the court.

Students like Clayton leave a bit of advice for others who are unsure whether to attend the game or not.

"This might be the only opportunity to see them cause

its like their 100th anniversary tour, and they might not be on tour much longer," Clayton said.

He said it's just a great opportunity because there aren't a lot of teams that do what they do.

Other students like communications sophomore Caleb Render, say it's okay to have fun but to remember that school should come first.

"I would say make sure you get your homework done," Render said. "I mean, the Globetrotters would be fun to go see, but make sure your grades are good before you go."

The game is set to begin at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 22 and ticket packages can be purchased through the Ferris State Athletics website.

Culture

Tate Zellman | Culture Editor | zellmat@ferris.edu

Connecting over common interests

Spring RSO Fair: An occasion to seek new members



Photo by: Shaunti'ara Reynolds | Multimedia Editor

Many students visit the spring RSO Fair looking for groups and people that share similar values or interests, helping them build peer connections.

Tate Zellman
Culture Editor

To kick off the first week of the semester, students had a chance to explore the Spring RSO Fair and check out the student-lead organizations.

The fair was hosted in the David L. Eisler Center ballrooms on Thurs., Jan. 15 and over 60 student organizations set their tables in hopes of recruiting new members. The organizations also took opportunities to connect with students to why they should become members of their specific groups.

With it being the start of a new semester, students can now seek an opportunity to join an RSO that sparks their

interest, involves similar interests or makes them feel more connected to life on campus.

Some of the RSOs are fraternities, giving new students to seek a fellowship involving common professions and interests as well as mutual support from the current group members.

Criminal justice junior Mike Wilkowski who is the president of Pi Kappa Alpha gave his input as to why students should join his specific RSO.

"A lot of times people view fraternities as organizations on campus that party and get into trouble," Wilkowski said. "Something that sets out from the others is our

brotherhood that we have. There's not surface level knowledge we have of each other. We just have a really deep bond that keeps us all together."

Every semester, RSOs put together events and extra-curricular activities to give new and current members to have fun and strengthen their friendships.

Wilkowski mentioned one yearly event that's beneficial for the RSO's current members and alumni.

"We do this thing every year called 'International Work Day,'" Wilkowski said. "That's a day where we get with our alumni. Our present members show out and we work on our house. We

clean up our yard, we trim the bushes and we repaint the house. It's a great way to interact with our alumni and gain some practical knowledge of how to fix a house up."

Not every RSO has to consist of a fraternity, sorority or a club sport. Some RSOs can start with a common interest and then expand into a group that bonds over that common interest.

Hospitality management senior Talia Vermiglio, who is the student leader of RealLife, expressed that being a part of her specific group has meant a lot to her personal life and her time at Ferris.

"Being a part of this community has brought me so

much joy," Vermiglio said. "I get to be in a community where I'm with people who love the lord so much. To be able to connect with them and to have them put me on the right path towards the lord to growing my faith and my community has been my favorite part about being a Ferris student."

RealLife is a Christian campus ministry RSO giving students opportunities to grow closer to God through events and meetings with members who want to grow stronger with their faith.

While exploring the numerous RSOs, students chose to members, take fliers or sign up for the groups that sparked their interest.

Professional tennis management freshman Kohen Hill signed up for the baking and figure skating RSOs to feel more connected to the Ferris community which was what he's been seeking as a freshman.

"A lot of people here are new to the university," Hill said. "Having clubs that everyone has the same interest in helps a lot."

For more information about Ferris' RSO, students can visit the Ferris360 website or the Center for Student Involvement in the David L. Eisler Center. Additionally, students can check the Center for Student Involvement on Instagram at csferris to learn more as well.

Does college prepare students for the workforce?

Perspectives from a professor, a professional and a student



Photo courtesy of Miles Postema

Brandon Wirth (left) on the sidelines during the 2023 Anchor-Bone classic at Lubbers Stadium in Allendale, MI.

Grace Heethuis
Culture Reporter

There has always been debate over whether college is worth the money. Many argue that it is unnecessary or a waste of money. Others point out its value for earnings and education.

Do students who choose to attend college feel adequately prepared for their future jobs? Do those who have attended college feel that it was worth it? What do professors have to say about higher education?

Ferris professor Josh Brady has taught for about 5 years, including part of that time at Ferris. He reflected first on the positive aspects of college.

“College can give you a lot of skills that will guide you as

you work or as you join the workforce, especially rhetorical and analytical thinking skills, not to mention STEM skills if you’re going into a STEM field,” Brady said.

He also spoke about the specific elements that he believes colleges don’t prepare students for.

“What it doesn’t prepare you for, I think, is the application process, per se, and the process of actually gaining experience and then employment,” Brady said. “I think internships are better for that, as well as any real-world experience you can get.”

Brady discussed the benefits of college, as well as what it lacks, as students prepare for their futures. Additionally, he revealed what he thinks colleges could do better.

“I’d say more guidance

on career searching and resume writing, hard skills like that, are what students really need,” Brady said. “Schools do have career centers for that kind of thing, but I’m not sure all students are terribly aware of these services.”

While almost all colleges have career centers to help students find jobs, internships, and more, not all students know about these resources.

Ferris State University graduate and former Torch employee Brandon Wirth explained what he does for a living and how it all connects to his college experience.

“My main job I do day to day is I’m a director of news and sports at a local radio network of four stations in Big Rapids Daily News,” Wirth said. “Then on the other side,

I do communications as an athletics communications assistant at Ferris for their sports teams and media. I am also a facilitator at Eagle Village, mostly during the summer.”

Wirth received his bachelor’s degree in sports communication and his master’s degree in business administration. He revealed that his career is, in some ways, how he imagined it would be in college.

“I pictured myself doing quite a bit of sports broadcasting and journalism, which is my day-to-day life,” Wirth said. “Now, I didn’t imagine, as much, getting involved with local government and development as I am right now.”

With such a wide variety of experiences in college,

including different majors, classes, advisors and jobs, it is difficult to name what factors determine how prepared students are from their college experiences.

“I think there’s quite a few factors that play into it. I think it definitely depends on your studying, what your major is,” Wirth said. “I personally believe there’s only so much you can teach from a textbook compared to what you need to learn from in person, and in the field.”

Students recognize the ways in which they are prepared, as well as what colleges can do better to help them succeed in their future careers.

Freshman elementary education major Aurora Furlong stated what she believes colleges could do to help

students feel ready for their careers.

“I think there’s a lot of people that are in their profession or retired from their profession, so they could tell you straight what it’s like when you go in,” Furlong said.

Honesty about what students are getting themselves into is important, according to Furlong. Many professionals, whether active in their fields or retired, have a wealth of knowledge about career preparation.

Career readiness depends on many factors, but most people agree that college is at least somewhat valuable in preparing for the future.

Media minute

“Fallout” Season two



Graphic by: Lucas Gill | Web Editor

Lucas Gill
Web Editor

Dec. 16 was the premiere of “Fallout” Season two. Led by showrunners Graham Wagner and Geneva Robertson-Dworet for Amazon Prime Video, the series is based on the role-playing video game franchise of the same name.

The show’s narrative takes place two centuries after the Great War of 2077, a global conflict that saw a nuclear holocaust and the collapse of civilization.

The second season doubles down on what most video game adaptations get wrong, in my opinion. “Fallout” respects the source material without being trapped by it. The series tells a unique story that takes place within the world of the games while honoring its overall themes and tone.

We continue to follow the same main trio we got to know during the previous season.

Ella Purnell stars as Lucy MacLean, a former resident of Vault 33—one of the many underground shelters constructed by the pre-war corporation Vault-Tec. After the isolation of her society is shattered and her father, Hank MacLean, is kidnapped by raiders, Lucy sets out to the surface in hopes of finding him.

Walton Goggins returns to play Cooper Howard, oth-

erwise known as the Ghoul, a pre-war Hollywood actor turned mutant bounty hunter after extensive exposure to radiation. By the end of the previous season, the Ghoul chooses to aid Lucy in her search for her father, whose connections to Vault-Tec may hold crucial answers about the fate of his own family.

The two characters offer an interesting and engaging dynamic during the first half of the season. Lucy’s wide-eyed optimism and apparent moral compass sharply contrast with the Ghoul’s hardened cynicism, shaped by two centuries of surviving in the wasteland.

Maximus, performed by Aaron Moten, is the series’ third central character. A member of the Brotherhood of Steel, a militaristic post-war faction hellbent on preserving order in the wasteland through the hoarding of pre-war technology, he rounds out the core of the show through his perspective.

After meeting and traveling with Lucy in the previous season, we see Maximus’ rise in the Brotherhood’s ranks and the many new responsibilities he has to bear. Moten’s performance makes Maximus feel grounded yet compelling. His character acts as another audience surrogate to life on the surface.

Season two expands the thematic scope, the narrative focus shifting between power

struggles among wasteland factions and the actions of prewar corporations whose influence sealed the world’s fate long before the bombs fell.

As an avid, long-time fan of the game series, I believe “Fallout” is able to walk the middle ground when it comes to presenting its world and necessary background information in an easy, digestible way for newcomers, while sprinkling in tasteful fan-service for devoted players.

Besides its story, one of the show’s strongest aspects is its phenomenal art direction. “Fallout” proves itself to be a masterclass in set design, creating a wasteland that feels tactile and real. The show’s environments are steeped in decay. And the abandoned towns the characters explore look convincingly lived-in and aged.

The costume and prop design are also in a league of their own. The stark contrast between the vibrant blue vault dwellers’ suits and the weathered armor worn by the surface dwellers are examples of great visual storytelling, while the various weapons and items the characters use are translated from the games to live-action outstandingly.

The culmination of these elements functions as both the story’s backdrop and a means of enhancing viewer

immersion.

I would be remiss if I didn’t mention the show’s soundtrack. “Fallout” continues the use of upbeat mid-century songs to juxtapose the violent, harsh reality of the wasteland that was pioneered in the games.

The show isn’t without its flaws, however.

My main criticism so far is the early pacing, as the overall narrative drags while the season’s subplots wait to ful-

ly take shape. Nonetheless, the strength of the series’ ensemble largely makes up for this, keeping the story engaging even when momentum slows.

Overall, “Fallout” Season two is a phenomenal continuation. The franchise has always been a commentary on the cycle of war and a critique of late-stage capitalism, and the show embodies these qualities very well in my opinion.

The second season maintains the tone of its predecessor while continuing to explore its characters and world in interesting ways.

If you enjoyed the first season, I highly recommend you check out the second season before its finale, which is slated to release for streaming on Feb. 4.



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Opinions

Jackie Moglia | Opinions Editor | mogliaj@ferris.edu

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Torch Staff

Editor in Chief Blase Gapinski gapinsb@ferris.edu	Copy Editors -
Production Manager Harmony Goodman	Podcast Manager -
Production Assistant Hailey Nye	Videographer -
News Editor -	Cartoonist Blake Flanery
Culture Editor Tate Zellman	News Reporters Davaria Pharr
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Managing Copy Editor -	Photographers Shaunti'ara Reynolds Clark Vance Delaney Stewart

Advisor
Scott Kowalewski
ScottKowalewski@ferris.edu

EDITOR'S COLUMN: Don't believe the rates

Taking a chance on my professors led to the most meaningful relationships



Photo by: Blase Gapinski | Editor in Chief

Blase Gapinski (back row) during a trip to The Zekelman Holocaust Center, where he was able to connect with faculty.

Blase Gapinski
Editor in Chief

Spending the amount of time that I have on campus has allowed me to become familiar with some of the faculty and staff and if it weren't for them constantly supporting me, I might not have been here as long.

I have been fortunate to have many classes with some of the same professors throughout my time at Ferris. They showed up consistently, offering guidance when I felt unsure and encouragement when I doubted myself. Their support helped me grow not only academically, but also personally.

Looking back, I realize how fortunate I have been to learn in an environment where people truly cared about my growth, even when I struggled to see it myself.

Not everyone feels this same way that I do and often-times it feels like I am hearing more students complain

about their professors rather than lifting them.

I recognize that many students I go to school with do not share the same positive experiences with professors that I do and I have heard some stories that are generally troubling. Hearing these perspectives has helped me better understand how differently faculty interactions can impact students.

I'm sure all of us here have used Rate My Professors, whether it was to check the reviews for a professor or write one of our own.

The reviews generally seem to be overwhelmingly negative, to the point that people are changing their schedules or worrying about going into a course because of these negative comments.

That right there is a problem, in my opinion.

I am not saying that people can't have negative thoughts about a professor or that there weren't valid reasons for them to write that review.

But as students, we need to take this information with a pretty big grain of salt.

I say this because we all learn differently. We shouldn't be altering our course schedule, classes we spend money, on because of a review on a free access website.

As I said previously, there could have been valid reasons for these students to write a negative review but there is no way to know for sure.

These could be students who didn't even engage with the course or lectures, or may not even be students at all.

There hasn't been a time when I have been worried about going to go my classes after getting acquainted with my professors. Why did I have any worries initially? I believed those reviews when going into classes myself.

Letting go of this method of allowing complete strangers to determine what professor would best fit my educational needs allowed me to meet

the wonderful instructors who have made me proud to be a student.

A personal reason I believe we need to take any outsider reviews of professors with a grain of salt is that Ferris has some of the most understanding, caring and genuine people teaching our students.

Sure, it might be biased because I go here but all of the professors I have had fostered such a caring environment and I still feel like I can go and talk with them today, even if I don't actively have their class.

I feel comfortable bringing my concerns to them, sharing work from other classes with them and can even just have genuine conversations with them.

I have made the joke that I spend more time talking with my professors outside of class than I do with my friends. Sure enough, that joke has kind of become a reality but one that I am okay with.

That is the type of relationship we should be able to have with our professors.

We should be able to connect with them and feel like we can go to them with any concerns, goals or even achievements we make throughout our academic careers.

If you don't already communicate with your professors or other faculty outside of classes, I encourage you to do so.

Take advantage of their office hours, even if you don't have any questions or concerns within the course. Use the time they are providing you to talk with them and really learn from them.

I am deeply grateful to the dedicated staff and faculty who have guided me and challenged me throughout my academic journey. Their constant support and belief in me have meant a great deal and have played a significant role in my growth.

Country music is surprisingly political

The forgotten political history of country music

Nolan Matthews
Sports Editor

Many people look at country music and think about its stereotypical conservative values shown in songs such as Jason Aldean's "Try That in a Small Town" or Toby Keith's "Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue." But I believe that country music has more to it than just that.

Country music has deep roots in anti-government sentiment and progressivism, becoming popular in the 1920s and 1930s with the rise of Woody Guthrie.

Guthrie penned many protest songs, such as "Deportee," which was for Mexican farmworkers, "Old Man Trump," which was about President Donald Trump's father, Fred and his racist housing practices. Arguably, his most popular of them all, "This Land is Your Land," which criticized the inequality of the time.

I find it incredibly interesting that almost 100 years later, this music still rings true to this day. Guthrie was really ahead of his time, creating a song about President Trump's father and showing that the Trump family is still quite divisive, almost 70 years after writing that song.

After the 1930s, country music began to turn towards Nashville and began to try to appeal to the predominantly white audience of the radio stations and live venues of the South. As the progressive 1960s and 1970s rolled along, the rise of artists such as John Prine, Kris Kristofferson, Johnny Cash and Willie Nelson came to the forefront

of country music.

Prine is often seen as the greatest songwriter in country music history, penning many anti-war songs such as "Your Flag Decal Won't Get You into Heaven Anymore." Other songs of his tell the story of a Vietnam veteran becoming addicted to drugs after the war or have anti-establishment messaging, such as warning of the dangers of mining companies.

Kristofferson, who is also seen as one of the greatest songwriters, wrote protest songs about social injustices. His songs discussed topics from the abuse of authority and the misuse of the legal system to tribute songs to figures like Martin Luther King Jr.

Nelson's song tackled issues like voting, immigration and social justice. His song "The Border" supported open borders and criticized harsh immigration policies. In others, he has encouraged people to use their vote and urged a change in government, and has even vocalized his support of LGBTQ+ rights in the song "Cowboys Are Frequently, Secretly Fond of Each Other."

This style of music started to fall out of popularity in the late 1990s and early 2000s and country music began to sit at the forefront of conservative values.

Artists like Keith, Aldean and Darrel Worely characterized the post-9/11 patriotism and rural conservative values; these songs emphasized themes of American exceptionalism and support for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.



Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Woody Guthrie is seen as one of the greatest musicians and activists in American history.

Once the mid to late 2010s and 2020s came along, so did the new rise of artists with their own values. There were many who weren't scared to express them through their music, such as Jason Isbell, Tyler Childers, Jesse Welles

and Margo Price.

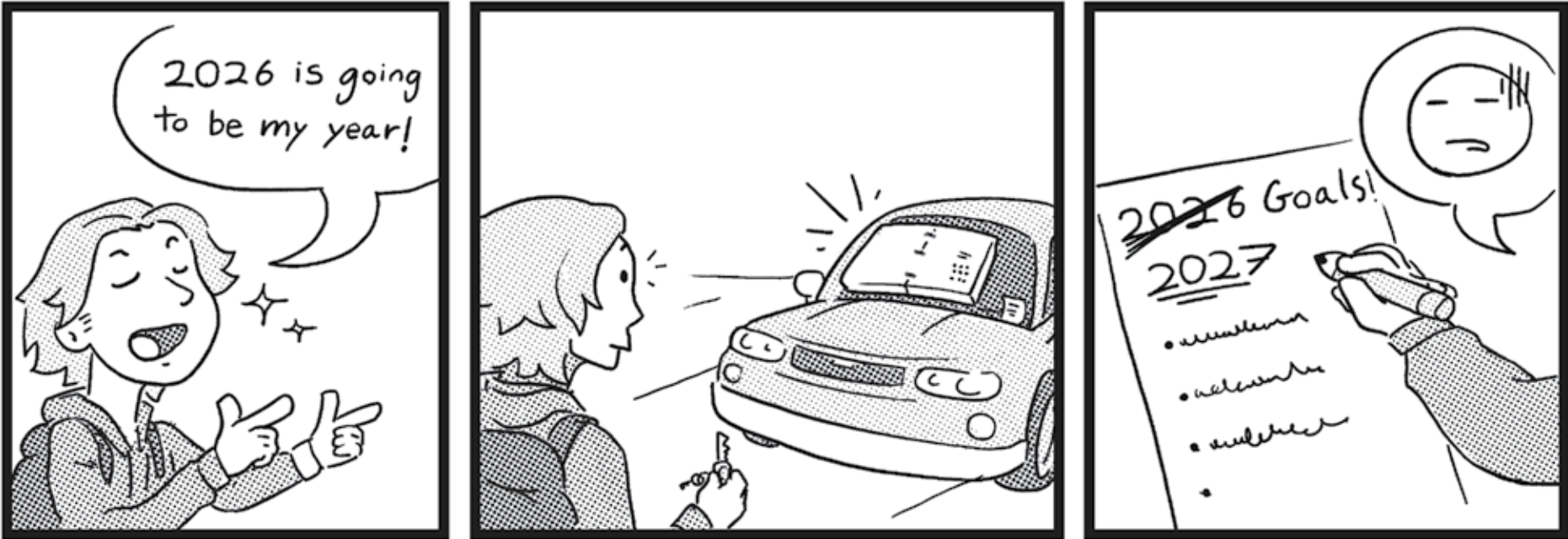
Childers released an album in 2020 called "Long Violent History," which is a protest album centralized around the title track against racism during the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020,

while Price released her song "Fight to Make It" in 2022, which protests the stripping of reproductive rights in America and the high maternal mortality rates.

While many people's first instinct for country music

is generally to think of it as a music for conservatives, I believe that is completely untrue and if you just dig into the history, you will also see that it is untrue.

Year of the barnacle



Comic by: Blase Flanery | Cartoonist

Sports

Nolan Matthews | Sports Editor | matthen4@ferris.edu

Dual threat

Tae Boyd gets right back at it after winning his second national championship



Photo by: Clark Vance | Photographer

Tae Boyd drives against a Grand Valley defender on Monday, Jan. 19.

Nolan Matthews
Sports Editor

Only a month removed from winning his second national championship, sophomore Tae Boyd is already back at it, helping his team win games, just this time not on the gridiron, but on the court.

Boyd has always played multiple sports and been surrounded by success, dating back to his high school days, when he hails from Grand Blanc. In 2021, his team won the Division 1 Boys' basketball state championship over Ann Arbor Huron. As for football, in Boyd's senior season,

his team went 12-1 before falling to Rochester Adams in the state semifinals by a score of 40-20.

Coming out of Grand Blanc, Boyd knew he wanted to play both sports, and Ferris was one of the schools that recruited him for both.

"It was kind of a long but good process for me," Boyd said. "I had offers for both football and basketball from Ferris, and they were really one of the schools that offered me both and really pursued it in a way of showing me that they really cared and wanted me to be here."

Boyd came to Ferris focusing on football initially, with

his first season starting in 2024. He had only 2 catches for 41 yards and a touchdown that year. However, 2025 would be the season when he would earn a bigger role. In 2025, Boyd had 18 catches for 447 yards and five touchdowns, averaging 24.8 yards per reception, with his best game coming against Northern Michigan, where he had three catches for 131 yards and a touchdown.

Boyd did not play basketball for Ferris until the 2025-26 season. He spoke about his decision to make his debut on the court.

"It's something I was

thinking about for awhile," Boyd said. "I had reached out prior to both football and basketball seasons starting and just kind of waiting to feel it out. Coach Fodness had reached out to me after the national championship game, and so that kind of helped me to pursue my decision a little bit more, but it was just something I have always had in the back of my mind."

Boyd made his debut on the court on Jan 10 against Michigan Tech, he shot 4-8 from the field for 12 points, while also securing six rebounds and an assist. His next game against Northern

Michigan, he shot 2-5 for six points, before making a large contribution in his first collegiate basketball win. Against Davenport Boyd shot 5-10 for 13 points, three rebounds, three assists, and two steals in the 82-69 win.

Interim head coach Alex Fodness spoke about what it means to have a player like Boyd join his team.

"With our roster being really banged up, we're missing a guy who can make plays and do some stuff off the balance and just be a dynamic athlete," Fodness said. "So far he's been exactly what we have been missing. He's been a shot in the arm for

us, he can make plays when there's really any play to be made. He's a great defender, obviously super athletic, and that's really what we've been missing with these guys getting injured."

Boyd looks to continue to make a big contribution to his squad, as they look to right the ship after a slow start to the season. Boyd's next game coming up being on Jan 24 at Wink Arena against a team that offered him out of high school in Lake Superior State.

Women’s basketball hosts GLIAC foes

Bulldogs play first round of conference teams



Photo courtesy of Ferris Athletics

Mia Riley drives in for a lay up, fighting a Roosevelt defender on her way to the basket.

Devin Wardrop
Sports Reporter

After a weekend against Davenport and Grand Valley, the Ferris State women’s basketball team hosts Lake Superior State University and Saginaw Valley State University.

No.22-ranked Ferris State (12-4, 5-2 in GLIAC) comes into these matchups with a 4-1 record in January, including back-to-back wins in the Upper Peninsula with a 73-64 win at Michigan Tech followed by a 70-52 win at No.13-ranked Northern Michigan.

Senior guard Kadyn Blanchard is confident in

where the team is at this point in the season.

“I feel like our team is a great spot at this point in the season,” Blanchard said. “No team wants to be peaking right now; we want that to be in March. Every day, I see growth from our team, and I’m really happy with the progress we have been making. Trying to see our growth on a day-to-day basis can be hard, but when I look back at all our preseason practices, it’s crazy to see how far we have come. I’m so proud of everyone, and I wouldn’t want to spend this last year with anyone else.”

The Bulldogs are led in scoring by Blanchard, who’s

averaging 15.6 points per game on 45.1% shooting, as well as averaging 5.7 rebounds and 4.1 assists per game.

Blanchard is one of four players averaging ten points or more, including senior forward/center Mya Hiram, who’s averaging 11.6 points per game on 50.4% shooting while leading the team in rebounds with 6.5 per game.

Senior guard Emma Schierbeek leads the team in 3pt percentage with 40.3% from behind the arc.

Schierbeek talked about how she feels about the team going into these two games.

“I am feeling good about

where our team is at this point in the season,” Schierbeek said. “We just came off two huge wins against Michigan Tech and Northern Michigan, which put us in a good spot. Getting two wins over LSSU and SVSU would also be huge for our team because they are scrappy teams, and any team can win on any given night, so we have to be confident in ourselves and each other to come out with wins against both opponents. I am looking forward to it, though.”

Lake Superior State (4-11, 1-6 in GLIAC) comes into this matchup with a 1-4 record in the new year, with the win being a 57-52 win at Roos-

velt. Senior forward Grace Bradford leads Lake Superior with 14.5 points per game on 42.4% shooting, as well as 10.7 rebounds per game and 2.2 assists per game.

Saginaw Valley State (4-11, 2-5 in GLIAC) is also 1-4 in January, with the win, 91-79 at home versus Purdue Northwest. Junior forward Megan McCalla leads the team in scoring with 14.4 points per game on 45.0% from the field and 14.7% from three.

Hiram is confident in the team and where they’ll be in March.

“I’m very pleased with the way our team has been able to perform the last couple of

weeks. After returning from Hawaii, where we dropped a game, I think we spent some time reflecting on what the end goal of this season is: a championship run in March,” Hiram said. “We are all confident in our capabilities, and I have no doubt that we will keep this adrenaline moving. I’m even more pleased with our recent trip to the UP & how we were able to overcome adversity & lock in as a team.”

The Bulldogs’ next games will both be at home at Wink Arena, hosting Wayne State on Saturday, January 31, at 1 pm and Purdue Northwest on February 2 at 5:30 pm.

Division rivals come to town

Ferris men’s basketball hosts Lakers and Cardinals



Photo courtesy of Ferris Athletics

Justin Asi shoots a free throw during the Bulldogs first stretch of home games of 2026.

Devin Wardrop
Sports Reporter

After a weekend against Davenport and Grand Valley, the Ferris State men’s basketball team hosts the

Lake Superior State Lakers and the Saginaw Valley State Cardinals. The Bulldogs (7-8, 4-4 in GLIAC) enter the weekend with a 3-3 record in January, having won against Roos-

velt, Wisconsin-Parkside, and Davenport. Ferris State is averaging 77.3 points per game on 44.6% shooting and 33.3% from three-point range, as well as averaging 38. 3 rebounds and 14.8

assists per game. Junior Justin Asi believes the team is in good shape as the GLIAC schedule starts to heat up.

“I think it’s a good win for us,” Asi said. “After losing two last weekend, I think this one’s gonna help with our confidence, and we got our rivals GV too. How can we not go out and do it? So I’m ready for that.”

Ferris is led in scoring by senior Mykel Bingham’s 11.7 points per game on 53.9% from the field and 33.3% from behind the arc. Bingham also leads the team with 7.3 rebounds a game. Asi leads the team in three-point percentage with 50% shooting.

Interim head coach Alex Fodness knows how hard these GLIAC matchups will be.

“They’re gonna be tough games,” Fodness said. “Obviously, there are no easy games in the GLIAC, and winning at home is almost just as tough as winning on the road some nights. So we just got to be ready to go, that’s really what it’s all about. The conference is one that doesn’t matter what team you play against;

if you show up and you don’t play well, you have a chance to lose. Lake Superior is going to be really tough and physical, Saginaw is going to be really tough and physical, and they have one of the leading scorers in the conference. So they’re going to pose some same challenges and different ones. But we have to focus more on what we’re doing and continue to try and be tougher.”

Lake Superior State (8-8, 2-5 in GLIAC) is 2-3 in January, with its wins coming at home against Purdue Northwest by a score of 85-68 and at Roosevelt, 59-52. The Lakers are averaging 84.9 points per game on 46.7% from the field and 35.3% from three. The Lakers also average 37.0 rebounds per game and 16.4 assists per game. Redshirt sophomore forward Omar Suleiman leads Lake Superior in scoring with 16.5 points per game on 42.4% shooting and 34.9% from three.

Saginaw Valley State (9-6, 3-4 in GLIAC) is 2-3 in the new year as well, beating Wayne State 65-62 at home and Roosevelt 93-68 on the road. The Cardinals average 78.7 points per game on 45.2% shooting and 32.6%

from deep, as well as averaging 39.6 rebounds per game and 14.1 assists per game. Saginaw Valley has three players averaging ten points or more, and is led in scoring by redshirt sophomore guard Xavier Thomas. Thomas is averaging 18.0 points per game on 40.5% shooting and 32.4% from three-point range.

Senior Brandon Claerbaut believes the momentum will carry into future games.

“I feel like every GLIAC win, it brings momentum within ourselves,” Claerbaut said. “So, we got a big one Monday versus Grand Valley, hoping to take care of that. But just going into next week as well, it’s nice having all six home games in a row now. So, I feel if we just stay the course, not get too high, and stay level headed, we’ll be confident throughout.”

The Bulldogs’ next games will both be at home at Wink Arena, hosting Wayne State on Saturday, January 31, at 3 pm and Purdue Northwest on February 2 at 7:30 pm.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

INFORMATION NIGHT & OPEN HOUSE

SAVE THE DATE: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2026

WHAT TO EXPECT:

- **INTERACTIVE TOURS:** Bring your child to experience our warm, faith-based environment firsthand.
- **MEET THE STAFF:** Meet our certified, experienced, and passionate St. Mary early childhood educators.
- **PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:** Learn about our engaging preschool and kindergarten options.
- **FAITH & ACADEMICS:** Discover how our Catholic education combines systematic faith formation with outstanding academics

OUR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMMING CURRENTLY CONSISTS OF:

- Preschool – Ages 3 & 4
- Kindergarten – Age 5

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www.stmaryschoolbr.org

Discover the faith-filled and enriching educational opportunities at St. Mary Catholic School! Our Early Childhood Information Night & Open House welcomes families to explore programs designed for children aged three and four, and those entering Kindergarten.

Join us on Tuesday, February 17, 2026, from 5:00 – 7:00 PM to meet our dedicated staff, tour our classrooms, and learn how we support students' growth in faith, knowledge, and character.

OUR MISSION: St. Mary School educates students to know, love, and serve God through Catholic spiritual development, academic pursuits, and service to the community.