



The Ferris State Torch

95 YEARS OF ILLUMINATING THE TRUTH

Big Rapids, Michigan

Week of Feb. 18, - 25, 2026

www.fsutorch.com

Ferris wetland conservation group helping feathered friends

Ducks Unlimited building habitats in local wetlands



Photo courtesy of Ducks Unlimited

Members of the Ducks Unlimited Club at Ferris have began to implement duck boxes within the surrounding forests.

Gannon Thomas
Freelance Contributor

The Ducks Unlimited Club of Ferris State has initiated a project to enhance the number of wood duck habitats in local wetlands and marshes.

The Ducks Unlimited Club of Ferris State, a group dedicated to educating students about the importance of conserving North American wetlands, has recently initiated a philanthropy project to enhance habitats for wood ducks in local wetlands around Mecosta County. The national organization's Ferris Chapter has begun constructing homemade artificial duck habitats and they are hoping to install more of them in local ecosystems later in the

spring.

These wood duck habitats are handcrafted by the group from cedar boards, a material chosen due to its sturdiness and rot-resistant properties.

Some of which have already been implemented in 10 different locations at the Haymarsh Lake State Game Area, near Haymarsh Lake, located northwest of Big Rapids.

The Ducks Unlimited of Ferris State has enlisted the help of the local DNR to ensure that these artificial habitats are implemented successfully and ensure the effectiveness of the overall project.

William Somsel, Treasurer of Ducks Unlimited of Ferris State and a sophomore con-

struction management major, spoke about what they do each year for the Michigan DNR.

"Once a year, we take and send pictures of the boxes and make a report that we give to the DNR," Somsel said.

The Group will not only implement these boxes to increase habitats but also use them to study local wood ducks.

Brady Purtill, Recruitment Chair for Duck Unlimited Ferris State chapter and sophomore Construction management major explained how implementing them in the wild works.

"With the recordings we have taken through the years, we learn which spots

the ducks prefer the boxes to be placed," Purtill said. "We hold a box clean-out event where we replace the wood shavings and also record the activity in each wood duck box."

The purpose of these boxes is to provide habitats for wood ducks, which are extremely vulnerable to habitat loss and degradation because of factors like urban expansion and historical over-hunting.

Wood ducks require certain nesting conditions, preferring to make nests in tree cavities as opposed to most ducks, which nest on the ground. This means wood ducks often need to rely on artificial habitats to nest, as natural habitats don't meet

the population demand.

Purtill spoke about wood duck boxes and how they help the ducks themselves.

"Wood duck boxes like ours increase the success rate of a hen's hatch by about 60-80%, which is a huge deal," Purtill said.

These duck boxes allow the group to study environmental trends in local wetlands, which plays into the group's overall goal of wetland conservation and preservation.

Purtill explained how the idea was inspired by his father's love of watching ducks and his struggle to build quality habitats for them.

Ducks Unlimited of Ferris State's President, Cody Sype, who is a junior in the weld-

ing engineering technologies major, explained how integral wood ducks are to the environment.

"They help spread seeds, control insect populations, and contribute nutrients back into the ecosystem," Sype said. "They're also an important part of the food chain, serving as prey for other wildlife."

Protecting and supporting wood duck populations plays a very important role in the conservation of wetlands. Ecosystems rely on wood ducks and other types, so a decrease in population could have major impacts.

Sype explained how crucial wood duck populations are to the local environment.

"If wood duck populations started to drop it would definitely impact the food chain as predators rely on wood ducks and their ducklings as a food source," Sype said.

The Ducks Unlimited chapter of Ferris State has existed for five years and their goal is to inform students of the importance of protecting North American wetlands and teach students on an individual level what they can do to help the environment. They seek to preserve wetland habitats for future generations.

Wildlife Biologist Pete Kailing, who works for the Michigan DNR spoke about how important wildlife conservation is and how people need to care more about it.

"Wildlife conservation depends on people who care about it at a local level," Kailing said. "Without that we wouldn't have much we need people who care about nature and hunting and wildlife."

The Ducks Unlimited Chapter of Ferris State will be holding a spring banquet, raffle and auction on March 28, at the Big Rapids Eagles Banquet Hall.

News

Shimmy Miller discusses her career as a coach, analyst and former athlete with students at Ferris State, highlighting the importance of representation and opportunity in women's athletics. **PG. 4**

Culture

Cultures from around the world had their chance to shine at the International Festival of Cultures event on Feb. 15. **PG. 5**

Opinions

Is physical media a dying art? Why it's more important than you would think to own physical versions of your favorite media. **PG. 8**

Sports

Senior forward Gavin Best looks to cap off his final two games of his collegiate career, read about how his career has gotten to this point. **PG. 10**

News

Blase Gapinski | News Editor | gapinsb@ferris.edu

Michigan

Nolan Matthews
Sports Editor

Grand Rapids - A 40-year-old man from Macomb County has been sentenced to 10 months in prison for making threats against Governor Gretchen Whitmer and DTE Energy shareholders. In January 2025, Steven Conway from Center Line called a DTE Energy call center in Wisconsin and said he planned to "hunt down" and "target for assassination" the company's shareholders and employees, the U.S. Attorney's Office said. According to the U.S. Attorney's Office, Conway posted threats against Whitmer only a few days later on an online dating site, and said on the post that the governor was "marked for assassination."

National

Nolan Matthews
Sports Editor

Racine, Wis. - A ship that went under the waves 153 years ago has been found 20 miles off the coast of Racine, Wisconsin, in Lake Michigan. The Lac La Belle carried 53 passengers and crew when it encountered a fierce storm in mid-October 1872, killing eight people in the wreck. The ship was discovered by Paul Ehorn, an Elgin, Illinois, shipwreck hunter who has found several wrecks in the past. Ehorn will be presenting the discovery in person at the 2026 Ghost Ships Festival at the Inn on Maritime Bay in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, on March 7.

Global

Nolan Matthews
Sports Editor

Tel Aviv, Israel - Israel will begin a contentious land regulation process in a large part of the occupied West Bank. This could result in Israel gaining control over wide swaths of the area for future development, according to a government decision on Sunday. This continues the resumption of "settlement of land title" processes, which had been frozen in the West Bank since the Mideast War in 1967. This means that when Israel begins the land registration process for a certain area, anyone with a claim to the land must submit documents to prove ownership of said land.

Ferris Board of Trustees meeting updates

Developments on new degree programs, buildings and finances



Photo courtesy of Ferris Athletics

Many student athletes were recognized during the meeting for their accomplishments.

Davaria Pharr
News Reporter

A meeting was held by the Ferris Board of Trustees on Friday, Feb. 13, in the David L. Eisler Center from 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. to discuss new initiatives, degree programs and the university's finances.

The Board of Trustees consists of eight members who govern Ferris State. They have general supervision and control over all the institution's decisions.

The Board votes on things such as approving the budget and tuition rates for the year. They host meetings four times a year that are open to the general public alongside students, staff and faculty.

The board approved a new Bachelor of Science degree program in Science Education and an Associate of Applied Science in Mechatronics degree program. Both programs will be available to students starting the fall semester of 2026.

Ferris State University is launching several new initiatives aimed at expanding career opportunities and improving academic outcomes for students, with programs expected to roll out in 2026.

The College of Pharmacy is introducing a pharmacy regulatory certificate designed to expand job opportunities for pharmacy students in regulatory fields. The college will also implement an empathy survey at the beginning and end of each clinical rotation. Faculty members will use the survey results to assess whether students' empathy levels improve over time.

The university is also establishing new partnerships with more community colleges, expanding their initiative to create a smoother transfer process for students enrolling at Ferris State.

In downtown Detroit, the university is developing a Career and Success Hub that will collect and share career outcome data from graduates. Alumni will be able to submit information about their employment history, career progression and salaries. Students, staff and faculty will have access to the data, allowing users to review career trajectories in specific fields, such as accounting, to help inform academic and professional decisions.

The hub will also allow alumni to create mentorship profiles. Current students will be able to browse available

mentors and request connections for networking and professional guidance. Internship opportunities will also be included, allowing students to sign up for interviews through the platform.

Additional details about the initiatives are expected to be released as the 2026 launch date approaches. University board members and faculty members have expressed support for the changes.

Finance Committee trustee LaShanda Thomas explained why it is crucial to build the learning hub in Detroit.

"The Detroit learning hub is very exciting, we have been trying to build it for eight or so years," Thomas said.

Since she joined the board in 2018, her goal was to make a Ferris State presence in the city of Detroit. As a native of the city herself, she is excited to see that vision come to life.

She said the learning hub affects not only the city of Detroit but the surrounding areas as it gives students the opportunity to network with alumni.

Other faculty and staff left the meeting knowing that their work is making a difference at the university.

Dean and professor of Public Health in the the college of health professionals, Lincoln Gibbs, spoke about the meeting.

"It was an excellent meeting," Gibbs said. "A big piece for me is the transparency of what's happening and the great things we are doing on campus, just hearing about the progress we're making as an institution."

He expressed that it's very important to reach out across the state to educate others regarding the upcoming learning hub in development.

He said he takes pride in making an impact in students' lives even from a distance.

As the university moves forward with new degree programs, expanded partnerships and the long-anticipated Detroit learning hub, board members emphasized their commitment to transparency and student success. With the next meeting set for Friday, May 8, the Board of Trustees will continue shaping initiatives aimed at strengthening Ferris State's academic offerings and community impact.

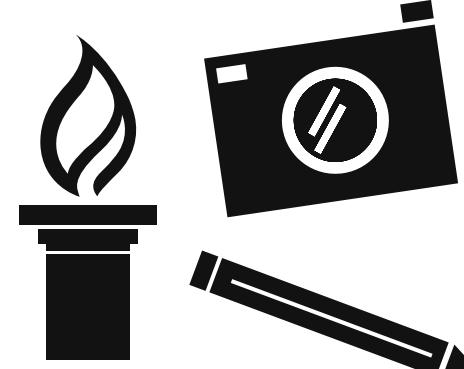
being yourself seem wrong. Even as a child in elementary school, my peers treated me differently. Looking back, as a child, if the some made. That weird children have they're are thereing school or most tra weiging over. A lot with the the ch didn't c my tea pansexu year of h the anti- in theolo forced to influences negative. One of t's experie realizi a fresh. Each y class nt calle st. Th marily meant to the practice of ce and the Chris... bright light in my Catholic school was that I managed to gather a few que... your struggle. Friends are made in the most unlikely of places.

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)

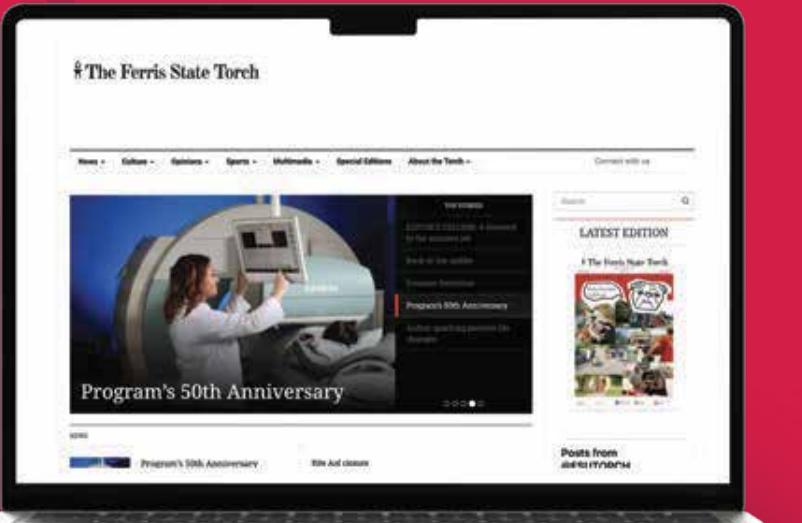


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Blase Gapinski @gapinsb@ferris.edu

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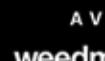


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Sports speaker series returns

Shimmy Miller teaches the art of the pivot

Blase Gapinski
Editor in Chief

The sports speakers series made its return to Ferris on Monday, Feb. 16, in the David Eisler Center ballroom, where students and faculty gathered to hear from featured speaker Shimmy Miller.

Miller, a Flint native and former University of Michigan basketball player, spoke to students at Ferris as a part of the sports speaker series held by the Ferris State Sports Professionals Association. Miller reflected on her journey from a first-generation college student in Flint to a professional athlete, Division I coach, and nationally recognized sports analyst. She shared her story in hopes of inspiring the next generation of sports leaders.

The sports speaker series is a way for the SPA to connect with prominent figures within the field of Sports Communication and share their story with students who may have similar goals or aspirations.

Miller serves as an analyst for the Big Ten Conference, providing expert commentary and insight on basketball games, drawing from her experience as a player and a coach. She also works with the Chicago Sky in the WNBA, breaking down games and offering analysis that highlights both strategy and player development.

Sports communication senior Jonathan Hart introduced Miller to the audience and explained why the speaker selection was especially meaningful to him.

"It is truly an honor to be able to introduce someone who represents excellence, leadership, and longevity into



Photo by: Shauntiara Reynolds | Multimedia Editor

Professional basketball analyst Shimmy Miller discusses overcoming failure throughout her career journey.

the world of basketball," Hart said. "It was one of those experiences that reminds you how powerful dreams and persistence can be."

Hart long admired her journey in athletics, seeing in her a role model who turned ambition and perseverance into a lasting career. Welcoming Miller to the sports speakers series was a full-circle moment.

Hart's introduction set the stage for Miller to share her own experiences and insights with the audience. Reflecting on her journey from Flint to the national stage, Miller encouraged students to embrace challenges and pivot

when faced with obstacles.

Growing up in Flint taught her how to generate her own opportunities and pivot when life doesn't go as planned. She shared the story about how she took the news when she found out her head coaching contract wasn't being renewed at St. Louis University. Miller didn't let that experience define her and used the turning point as an opportunity to grow.

"Taking that time to create a little separation and reverse pivot helped me to land a job as an assistant coach at the University of Nebraska," Miller said. "Some people look at that as a step backwards.

It wasn't a setback to me because I know how to control the controllable. I control my attitude, I control my energy and I control my effort."

This was not the final pivot of Miller's career, as she had to do one more. Miller believed she had outgrown coaching and decided to move into the field of broadcasting.

She started by applying for an internship at the Big Ten Network, Miller spoke about her decision to apply.

"I was scrolling Twitter one day when I saw that the Big Ten Conference was offering an internship for former Big Ten student-athletes," Miller

said. "It was for if former student-athletes are interested in a career in broadcasting, and so I applied for it."

This began her transition from coaching, to being a leading analyst for the Big Ten Network, as well as the lead analyst for the Chicago Sky, where she is at today.

Coordinator of sports communication, Dr. Jen Coburn, who hosted the event, spoke about what it means to Ferris to be able to have Miller to speak to the students and faculty.

"Somebody of Shimmy Miller's caliber, to take time out of her day to talk with us, for me, is amazing," Coburn said.

"She broadens our horizons, Shimmy showed us all of her, she spoke about her personal life, she spoke about her professional life, and spoke about her life as an athlete."

Miller strived to encourage students to continue taking reps and not back down when you face pressure. The art of the pivot is an art that is hard to learn but Miller perfected it and strives to teach others that they can do the same.

ON THE RECORD

Blase Gapinski
Editor in Chief

Caught lacking

Jan. 30, 7:15 p.m. - Residence Life staff conducting a fire drill in Miller Hall discovered alcohol inside a student's room. The resident was found to be under the legal drinking age. The incident was documented and referred for follow-up through the university's conduct processes.

Lock your car!

Jan. 30 - A student reported a wristlet missing from the center console of her vehicle while parked in various campus lots between October and early November. The student was unsure when or where the item went missing and reported the incident to assist campus police amid recent vehicle-related theft concerns. The case was documented, but there was insufficient information to pursue further investigation.

Doing time

Feb. 7, 10:32 a.m. - A student was arrested in Travis Hall after officers discovered an active warrant while returning found property. The warrant was confirmed through dispatch, and the student was taken into custody without incident and transported to the Mecosta County Jail.

Lock your room!

Feb. 8 - Campus police are investigating the reported theft of a MacBook Pro from a residence hall room in Henderson Hall. The student reported the laptop missing after returning from being away for the weekend and discovering the room door unlocked. The case remains under investigation.

Culture

Grace Heethuis | Culture Editor | turnek29@ferris.edu

A moment of cultural celebration

International Festival of Cultures showcases cultures from around the world



Photo by: Shaunti'ara Reynolds | Multimedia Editor

Student volunteers serve a traditional Nepal dish to students, which was a favorite amongst those in attendance.



Photo by: Shaunti'ara Reynolds | Multimedia Editor

Brutus joins the drum circle to celebrate unity.

Tate Zellman
Culture Reporter

By including various cultures and backgrounds, the International Festival of Cultures gave students the opportunity to have their cultures recognized on campus.

More than 20 cultures were represented and recognized at the festival held on Feb. 15 at 4 p.m. in the David L. Eisler Center. The festival featured several performers, ensuring multiple cultures were represented. More than 200 members of the Ferris and Big Rapids communities attended to show their support for all cultures.

The festival featured numerous student volunteers, each representing their respective cultures.

Computer information systems junior Lucy Tran values the opportunity to meet people from diverse cultures.

"I can see a lot of differences in people's backgrounds and where they come from," Tran said. "But I don't see the distance in the difference. I see the beauty of it, and it's so beautiful to see everyone be so different

and so unique."

In addition, each culture had a homemade dish made for everyone to try. One of the dishes was Bulgogi, which represented South Korea. It consisted of only five ingredients: sliced beef, onion, green onion, Korean BBQ, and white rice.

Members of the Ferris community had the opportunity to perform songs representing various cultures.

School of Digital Media associate professor Vaarun Singireddy performed songs with lyrics in multiple languages, including Spanish. Performing not only meant a lot to him but also to the students in the digital animation and game design program.

"If you look at the number of students we have in different populations, countries and nationalities that we have represented today, it means belonging," Singireddy said. "Events like these mean a lot to me and students in my program."

The songs Singireddy performed at the festival were those he felt best represented his culture.

"So India is a culturally

diverse country," Singireddy said. "Our model of the country is unity and diversity. In India, there are over 1,600 dynamics spoken, and there are multiple languages like English, Hindi and Arabic and that is very cultural to me."

Not only did staff and faculty have opportunities to perform, but students did as well. When students took the stage, they either sang or danced to songs from their culture.

One of the student performers, senior biology major Wayne Ling, really appreciated the opportunity to perform not only for his culture but also for all other cultures.

"We want to bring the whole world together," Ling said. "Everybody may have disagreements with each other, but the best way to share those disagreements is to bring everyone together in an exclusive way, which is this way. We can sing and dance together, we can entertain together and enjoy the happiness."

Some of the songs Ling performed included "Gangnam Style" by PSY and "APT." by Rose and Bru-

no Mars.

Students from the United States were exposed to the cultures of international students. Senior nursing major Hannah Fry found the festival a valuable opportunity to experience diverse cultures.

"I think it's really exciting to see all the cultures that are on campus," Fry said. "When you're in a [nursing] major like I am, you have the same people all the time, and you don't get to see all the different cultures that are on campus."

Other activities during the festival included the Ferris marching and pep bands performing the Ferris theme song and songs such as "Fireball" by Pitbull. There was also a drum core where Ferris and Big Rapids members could play drums that came from various countries.

Students should not feel ashamed of representing their cultures and home countries. Student's culture is part of their identity, and they should never be afraid to express it.

International adventures

Students reveal their favorite travel destinations



Graphic by: Hailey Nye | Production Assistant

Grace Heethuis
Culture Editor

Where in the world have the Bulldogs gone? Turns out, they've been everywhere from our northern neighbors to the Caribbean region with Canada being the most talked about destination.

Travel has a lot to offer any college student, and many colleges even offer study abroad programs for this reason. Colleges see significant value in experiencing different parts of the world.

By traveling the world, students have had opportunities to experience cultures and ways of life different from those at home and to appreciate how people from different parts of the world live.

Junior accounting major Emerson McKale reported traveling to Mexico and the Bahamas. McKale talked a little bit about what traveling to the Bahamas taught him.

"[It taught me] how different countries work," said McKale. "The majority of the

actual island wasn't that nice, except for the actual resorts, so clearly their economy was based on tourism."

Being able to experience life very different from his own was a vivid memory for McKale, and he talked about the importance of seeing different parts of the world.

"It gives you a different perspective," McKale said.

"You know, obviously, there's a lot to see. No one's ever gonna see it all or know everything, but there's a lot to learn from different cultures, you know, just different ways of life, as well as, I think it's just really cool."

Other students have enjoyed vacationing farther north in Canada and, despite its close proximity to the United States, have observed differences between the two Countries.

Senior risk management insurance, business and community leadership major Ikela Halo reported Canada as her favorite place she's visited.

"I went for my 19th birthday. I went to Windsor. It was really nice," said Halo. "Went to Caesar's Palace, a few restaurants over there, and two lounges."

For Halo, it was the perfect opportunity to celebrate another year while exploring Canada's rich cultural history and sampling various foods.

Halo's time in Canada also taught her the value of visiting places far from home and witnessing how people live there.

"I think [it's important] to just experience different cultures, just diversity, really," Halo said.

Other students have reminisced about their adventures in Canada, enjoying many tourist attractions and fancy dining spots.

Junior computer information systems major Timothy Ormond also named Canada as his favorite place that he's visited. He shared a little bit about what made his time in Canada so memorable.

"I went to a rooftop dinner spot," Ormond said. "There was the little sky tower, but I was scared, though."

Additionally, Ormond briefly discussed the atmosphere in Canada, noting how many people there are compared to where he lives in the United States.

"I would say Canada is very

busy, like the downtown area, [so I learned] how to function with a lot of people around," Ormond said.

Finally, Ormond explained why he believes it is important for people to travel and experience places outside their comfort zones.

"I feel like you will get to know yourself more if you go

see things that you never saw before," Ormond said. "How do you know if you like something if you never experience it?"

Students have reported that they greatly enjoy traveling and experiencing cultures different from their own when the opportunities arise.



Media minute

Bad Bunny's Super Bowl LX performance



Graphic by: Harmony Goodman | Production Manager

Blase Gapinski
Editor in Chief

Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio, more commonly referred to as Bad Bunny, performed at the Super Bowl on Feb. 9, where he gave viewers a glimpse of his Puerto Rican roots.

Ocasio is a Grammy-winning rapper, singer and producer, who is the most-streamed artist in the world. He was selected to be the lead performer for this year's Super Bowl as the National Football League looks to shift their half-time shows towards a younger audience, and because of the reach Ocasio has around the world.

The performance lasted around 13 and a half minutes and left behind a powerful message that all people can reflect on. Throughout his set, he performed all of his songs in Spanish, on one of the most-watched stages in the world.

In the first frame of the performance, we are transported to a sugarcane field, a scene that evokes Puerto Rico's agricultural history and symbolizes the island's enduring resilience and cultural roots. Alexander Mercedes, an artist from the

Dominican Republic, starts the show by saying "Qué rico es ser latino. ¡Hoy se bebe!" while dressed as a Puerto Rican farmer. In English, this translates to "how wonderful it is to be Latino," and "today we drink!" which set the tone immediately.

Ocasio walked slowly through the pass as he began the show with "Tití Me Preguntó." He was first surrounded by Puerto Rican laborers cutting sugarcane, and as he kept moving forward, the people around him wore more modern clothing.

As Ocasio continued to pass through the set, the backdrop shifted to familiar scenes of Puerto Rican daily life, including coco frío and piragua stands, showcasing the community spaces that shape much of the island's cultural identity.

Viewers were also shown younger women spending time at the nail salon, a place in Puerto Rican culture rooted in self-care and bonding with others. We also see elderly people playing dominoes, which is very popular on the island, and also represents how all people are accepted, regardless of age.

"Tití Me Pregunto," concluded with Ocasio ducking

under two boxers who are facing off, each of them wearing shorts that represent the Mexican and Puerto Rican flags. As he is about to transition into the next song, a street vendor selling jewelry gives Ocasio a ring, which he passes along to a man who proposes to a woman.

The journey through Puerto Rican life continued as Ocasio made his way towards la casita, a small, intimate set piece that is supposed to represent the warmth of a neighborhood home and the shared cultural spaces where music, storytelling and community thrive. Outside of the casita, he was joined by a mix of Puerto Rican and Latinx talent while he performed "Yo Perreo Sola" and "Safaera" on the roof.

Some of the icons showcased on the set were Jessica Alba, Pedro Pascal, Karol G, Young Miko, David Grutman, Cardi B and Alix Earle, bridging the gap between local roots and global influence.

The moment signaled not only the global reach of Latin music but also a broader shift toward greater cultural representation in mainstream American entertainment.

"MONACO," featured dozens of violinists who emerged from the sugarcane field playing the iconic melody. He began speaking directly to the audience while the symphony continued. He shared an inspiring message, all still in Spanish.

"My name is Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio, and if I'm here today at Super Bowl 60, it's because I never, ever stopped believing in myself. You should also believe in yourself. You're worth more than you think. Trust me."

This message was pretty much all we could hear from "MONACO," but it definitely added a unique element I wasn't expecting, and I felt hopeful after reading the translation.

The camera pans from Ocasio to a wedding ceremony, where a real couple was married during the Super Bowl. After they share their first kiss as husband and wife, everyone from the ceremony quickly clears the way to reveal Lady Gaga.

She was wearing a light blue dress and a large Flor de Maga brooch, the official national flower of Puerto Rico. The combination of colors she wore, red, white and light blue, also represented

the original flag that declared Puerto Rico's independence from Spain.

That flag was banned from 1947 to 1953 as Puerto Rico became a U.S. territory. The flag was altered around that time as well, with a darker shade of blue added to make it more similar to the American flag.

Lady Gaga wearing these colors while salsa dancing was such a beautiful moment as she sang a salsa version of "Die With a Smile." I think the live band accompanying her really sold the performance for me.

"NUEVAYoL" was one of my favorite songs throughout Ocasio's set list. Seeing everyone dancing so passionately to this track on the field was electric. This song always makes me want to dance, and it was cool seeing that acted out by the performers as well.

Towards the end of Ocasio's performance, he said three words in English, which were "God bless America," as he and other performers were followed by the flags that make up North, Central, South America and the Caribbean to highlight Pan-American unity.

With the words "The only

thing more powerful than hate is love" glowing across the jumbotron, Ocasio chose to close with "DtMF," a powerful finale that reinforced the show's themes of love, memory and cultural pride.

"DtMF" stood out to me because its themes of regret, cherishing loved ones, and longing for home added an emotional depth to the performance that went beyond celebration and spectacle.

Hearing Ocasio reflect on missed moments and nostalgia for Puerto Rican culture made the show feel more personal and intentional, reminding me that embracing your roots also means holding tight to the people and memories that shape who you are.

By combining his high-energy hits with deeply personal moments, viewers were reminded that music can honor heritage and bring people together regardless of a language barrier. Ocasio represented what it means to be an American by celebrating diversity and showing how different cultures and experiences come together to shape the nation.

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
Davaria Pharr

Cartoonist
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- -

Managing Copy Editor
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Photographers
- -

Advisor
Scott Kowalewski
ScottKowalewski@ferris.edu

EDITOR'S COLUMN: Physical media is forever

Owne the art, not the license



Photo courtesy of Jessica Gapinski

Gapinski's collection of records that are on a constant rotation when studying or working at home.

Blase Gapinski
Editor in Chief

We have become so comfortable with enjoying our favorite media without actually having ownership of those art forms.

This really isn't anything new either. Throughout my generation's lifetime, we have seen a big shift in how media is consumed.

When I was younger, to watch a movie at my house, I had to go to our basement to either grab a VHS tape or pull out the black binder DVD case. When listening to music in the car, we had sleeves of CDs that my parents would burn at home.

By the time I was in middle school, it felt like Netflix and iTunes had taken over these rituals in most households, including my own.

Something that concerned me was how quickly it felt like people moved away from

physical media. Sure, it is very convenient, but I think physical media has its place and is something that is valuable even in a world where everything seems digital.

Relying on these streaming services doesn't guarantee that they will always have some of your favorites. The streaming services all seem to have some sort of rotating slate which makes it hard to watch what you love.

We've grown so accustomed to streaming whatever we want, whenever we want, that we rarely question the fact that we don't actually own the art we love; we're simply borrowing it at the mercy of shifting licenses and subscription fees. In prioritizing convenience over ownership, we risk losing not only guaranteed access to our favorite media but also the deeper connections these physical forms of content provide.

It's not like I am someone who has a physical copy of every piece of content I am consuming or I am telling you that you need to be doing that too. I use a select number of streaming services for movies and music and even the console I own only allows for digitally downloaded games to be played.

Finding exactly what you want to watch can be brutal as well. If you have a certain movie in mind but don't have the service it is streaming on, you either have to fork over the money to subscribe or just watch something else.

There might be another avenue some might suggest taking if you don't want to pay for a movie but I won't go into that any further.

A good friend of mine still has one of those cases filled with DVDs, along with a DVD player and was kind enough to share one of their favorite movies with me. It worked out

perfectly because it brought the two of us together to enjoy a movie and because I didn't have any services that it was streaming on.

One reason I have become so interested in physical media is that I love the feeling of collecting records that I enjoy on vinyl. There is something so exciting to me about going to the local record store in Traverse City while I am visiting home and browsing through their selections.

I don't always leave with a new record but I often leave the store with more knowledge about artists or songs by talking with the people who run the shop. I don't get these feelings or social interactions with people who are also just as passionate about music by browsing Spotify's catalog.

To me, it feels like we have this fixation on digitalizing everything in our lives for sheer convenience.

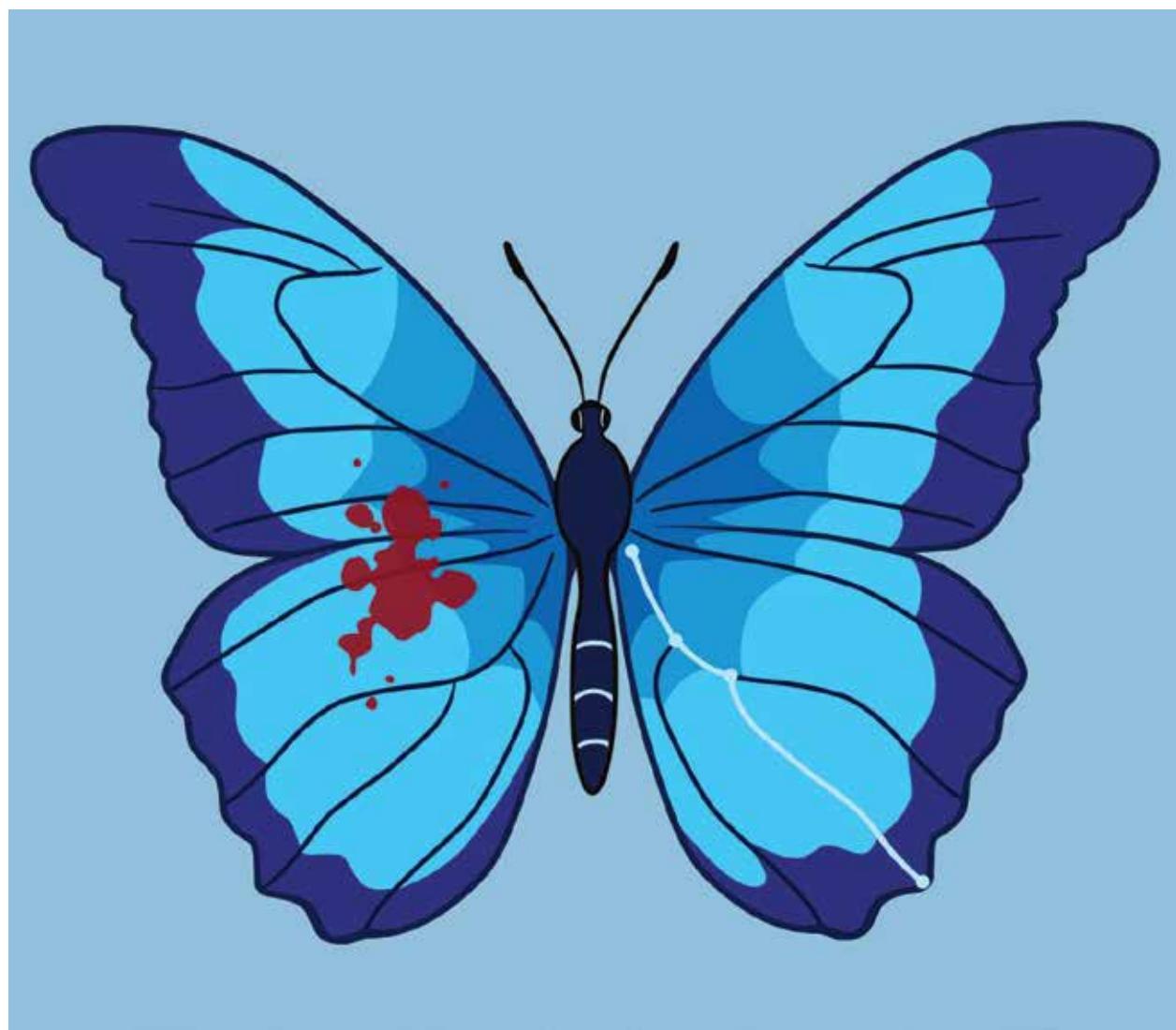
This is a bit out of my lane but we even have devices dedicated to reading books on a digital platform. This makes it easier to purchase books and have them instantly at your fingertips. Although just like the rest of the content we talked about, if you have the subscription service, your options are limited and you aren't guaranteed that your favorite book will always be there.

Building that physical library, whether it be books, music or movies, is the ultimate way to enjoy your experience. It is a way to connect and tap in with media in a whole new way.

It is so important that we continue to buy and support physical forms of the media we love. This is one way art is kept alive. Being able to actually hold it in your hands and share it with people you love.

A retrospective of “Until Dawn”

Why the game still matters ten years later



Graphic by: Lucas Gill | Web Editor

Lucas Gill
Web Editor

Like many members of my generation, video games have played a big part in my life. I enjoy video games for the same reason I like movies and TV shows: They're a great vehicle for showcasing creativity and, most importantly, telling a good story.

A video game's narrative will always come first for me. Fun gameplay mechanics and striking visuals are one

thing, but if a game's characters or plot falls flat, I can't bring myself to enjoy the project as a whole.

One game that I always return to is “Until Dawn.” Given that the game reached its ten-year anniversary last year, now is as good a time as ever to express my love for it and discuss why it's still worth playing today.

Released by developer Supermassive Games for the PlayStation 4, “Until Dawn” is an interactive survival hor-

ror game that follows a group of eight friends who are trapped on a remote lodge on Blackwood Mountain. Being stalked by a mysterious psycho living on the mountain and wendigo, man-eating monsters, dwelling in its abandoned mines, the main cast has to survive over the course of ten hours and wait for rescue to come.

The core of “Until Dawn’s” narrative and gameplay is its “Butterfly Effect” system, where every player choice

has the potential to significantly alter the story. Decisions that seem relatively small, like backing down in an argument or discovering a hidden item, can come into play later in the game.

The game's cast members live or die depending on the choices you make, whether it be from dialogue decisions, your performance during quick-time events, or how you choose to explore its environments. With eight characters to play as across ten

chapters, this leads to there being over 250 variations of its ending.

“Until Dawn” is relentless in its intensity, rarely giving you a break from the horror. Even on replay, whenever the “Butterfly Effect Updated” effect appears in the corner after making a choice, I feel either a sense of relief or a sinking dread.

When your decisions cause a character to die, you're left to dwell on it and question what you could have done differently.

That's what makes it so effective.

The game makes you responsible for this cast of characters. Their relationships, dynamics and survival are in your hands.

Speaking of the cast, another notable aspect of the game stems from the phenomenal performances.

“Until Dawn” brings together a tightly knit ensemble cast, showcasing standout performances from Hayden Panettiere, Brett Dalton, Jordan Fisher, and future Academy Award winner Rami Malek, amongst many others.

The cast allows these teens, who initially seem like standard horror movie character archetypes, to gradually reveal more depth through a variety of emotionally impactful moments. I deeply admire how realistically each member of the main eight is written. One can easily relate to and sympathize with them in their predicament.

The game's performances are elevated by the revolutionary facial animation and motion capture (or mocap) technology used at the time, allowing for impressively detailed character models. The game's visuals still hold up

today, being rich in dynamic lighting and creepy atmosphere.

In nearly every way, I would describe “Until Dawn” as lightning in a bottle. Even a decade later, Supermassive Games hasn't quite recaptured what made it so special in their later releases.

I tend to agree with the common sentiment online that their newer titles, such as “The Dark Pictures Anthology” and “The Quarry,” don't reach the same highs. To me, their branching narratives feel more linear, with different choices leading to similar outcomes.

To be fair, “Until Dawn” set an insanely high bar in terms of story cohesiveness, immersion and meaningful moments. While it sounds pessimistic, I don't think we will see another choose your own adventure game that can live up to its quality for quite some time.

The game was remastered in October of 2024, making slight improvements and updates to its animations and lighting. After years of anticipation, the remaster was also made available to play on PC, meaning that more people have the opportunity to experience the game for themselves.

Overall, “Until Dawn” is a game that I would recommend to practically everyone. The game is a love letter to the classic slasher films and horror tropes that embraces the genre's themes without feeling cliché.

It is a tense, dramatic, choice-driven horror experience that delivers a gripping story where your decisions genuinely matter.

Valuable time



Comic by: Blake Flanery | Cartoonist

Sports

Nolan Matthews | Sports Editor | matthen4@ferris.edu

The Best around

Gavin Best talks hockey career



Photo by: Clark Vance | Photographer

Gavin Best fights off a defender against Lake Superior State.

Devin Wardrop
Sports Reporter

Growing up in Richfield, Minnesota, senior forward Gavin Best started playing hockey at a very young age.

With his dad being a hockey player and living in Minnesota, Best and his brother grew up around the rink. Best had the skates on starting at a very young age, skating on local rinks and playing pond hockey in the winters.

As a kid, Best was very well-rounded in the sports he played.

"I played a lot of sports growing up," Best said. "I obviously got into hockey very young. I also played baseball, I dabbled with football, and dabbled with soccer. I started playing golf since my dad and grandpa were both big golfers, so they got me into it at a young age. I did a little

bit of everything."

Once he got to high school, Best made the decision to step away from baseball and focus on hockey and golf, which he said were both a lot of fun.

After high school, Best played for the Minnesota Magicians, which is a junior-level team in the North American Hockey League based out of his hometown of Richfield. Best's junior experience wasn't the regular experience. With the rink being five minutes from his house, Best was able to live at home. Having his family be able to attend the games easily worked out great.

His first year, he had 16 points on 12 assists and four goals. In his second year with the Magicians, Best was awarded an assistant captain role and totaled 54 points on 20 goals and 34

assists. Best talked about what he learned from his junior experience.

"I think I learned a lot during those two years of juniors," Best said. "Obviously, my first year, having it be a big transition and struggling a little bit, that was kind of my first real hardships and struggles that I've gone through in my hockey career in terms of not playing and not playing where I wanted to. I definitely learned a lot about myself that first year, and then in my second year, I started to play some good hockey and felt pretty confident going into the second year. My coaching staff believed in me and gave me a good role, and giving me a letter helped me with confidence on the ice and my voice in the locker room."

Best went to Michigan State after juniors, playing in

10 games for the Spartans and winning both the team's Most Improved Player award and American Hockey Coaches Association All-American Scholar. In his sophomore season, Best appeared in two games and was an Academic All-Big Ten.

After his sophomore season, Best decided to part ways with Michigan State and enter the transfer portal. Ferris State reached out to Best, who was able to connect with former Bulldog Travis Shoudy. Best met with Shoudy a few times, who helped show Best around campus which was a big reason for him transferring to Ferris.

In his junior season and his first season with the Bulldogs, Best appeared in all 36 games and finished fourth on the team with 19 points and second in goals with 10.

In the 2024-25 season, Best registered his first collegiate point, goal and multi-point game. Best also had two different three-game point streaks.

First-year head coach Brett Riley loves the type of player Best is for the program.

"Gavin is the ultimate leader," Riley said. "He leads in a lot of ways, but most importantly, he leads by example. He has the respect and admiration of everyone in our program, and he has backed that up consistently with his play on the ice. From a coaching perspective, he's been instrumental for us, especially as our staff has transitioned in this year. He's helped set the standard every day and has been a tremendous resource as we've gotten acclimated. We're very fortunate to have him in our program."

Sophomore forward Jack Silich has nothing but good things to say about Best's leadership.

"[Gavin] is the type of person everyone wants to be around," Silich said. "The type of leader everyone wants to model themselves after. He's an unreal person and an all-around great hockey player who always has the team's best interests in mind. [Gavin's] a great friend, and I wish him the best going forward."

In his senior season, Best is looking to lead the Bulldogs down the stretch and into the playoffs but ultimately looking to leave a lasting impact on the team and the organization.

Best's plan after college is to pursue professional hockey and make his future decision from there.

Bulldogs set for final homestand

Ferris basketball hosts Wildcats and Huskies



Photo by: Clark Vance | Photographer

Mia Riley puts up a shot from beyond the arc against Grand Valley.

Devin Wardrop
Sports Reporter

As the seasons come to a close, the Ferris State men's and women's basketball teams host the Northern Michigan Wildcats and the Michigan Tech Huskies in the final homestand of the regular season.

The women's team looks to carry its momentum into the playoffs, while the men look to jump in the standings

Women

Ferris State (19-4, 12-2 in GLIAC) is currently on a six-game win streak and they are 3-0 in February. The Bulldogs are averaging 79.4 points per game, as well as averaging 40 rebounds per game and 19.3 assists per game.

Senior guard Kadyn Blanchard leads the Bulldogs in scoring with 16.5 points per game, while also averaging 5.8 rebounds and 4.1 assists. Hiram leads the Bulldogs in rebounds with 7.0 per game and field goal percentage with 50.7%. Senior guard Emma Shierbeek leads the team with a three-point percentage of 38.9%.

Blanchard talks about how important these last few games are before the playoffs begin for herself and the team.

"As the season comes to a close, these next couple of games are crucial, especially for GLIAC tournament seeding and national tournament seeding," Blanchard said.

"Hosting the first few games is a big advantage and one we would definitely like to have. Personally, I'm trying not to think about the if and ands nad I'm just trying to enjoy these last few regular season games with my teammates and the last games in Wink Arena."

Northern Michigan (20-5, 11-4 in GLIAC) is 3-1 in February. The Wildcats are averaging 73.8 points per game, as well as averaging 41.2 rebounds and 13.9 assists. Senior guard Jacy Weisbrod leads the team with 16.6 points per game and a three-point percentage with 41.1% from deep.

These two teams last played in Marquette on Jan. 12, with the Bulldogs winning 70-52.

Michigan Tech (14-8, 8-6 in GLIAC) is 2-0 in February. The Huskies are averaging 67.0 points per game and are led in scoring by sophomore guard Ella Mason. Mason is currently averaging 14.3 points per game on 40.5% shooting and 35.5% from three-point range.

Sophomore guard Kendall Standfest leads the team with 6.3 rebounds a game.

These two teams last played in Houghton on Jan. 10, with Ferris State winning 73-64.

Bulldog senior forward Mya Hiram likes how the girls have been playing this season.

"I'm very pleased with the way our team has been

playing," Hiram said. "We've been constantly improving, and people have been stepping up in big moments. I think we still have more left in the tank and that's what's going to propel us into the postseason."

Men

The Bulldogs (9-12, 6-8 in GLIAC) are 0-3 in February and are on a four-game losing streak. Ferris is averaging 77.7 points per game, 40 rebounds per game, and 16 assists per game.

Senior Mykel Bingham leads the team in scoring with 13.1 a game and rebounding with 8.3

Senior Brandon Claerbaut is excited for the last few home games of his Bulldog career.

"I'm super excited to play the last few games as a Bulldog," Claerbaut said. "I've been very grateful to be at Ferris these last five years and appreciative of all the relationships I've been able to build. I'm excited to play in front of the home crowd one last time, and I don't take it for granted whatsoever."

Northern Michigan (21-4, 12-3 in GLIAC) is 2-1 in February and is averaging 82.9 points, 39.3 rebounds and 16.5 assists per game. Graduate forward Dylan Kuehl leads the Wildcats in scoring with 19.7 a game on 54.3% shooting. Northern beat Ferris when they last played in Marquette by a score of 95-66.

Michigan Tech (21-4, 12-3 in GLIAC) is 3-0 in February. The Huskies are averaging 73.9 points per game, as well as 38.4 rebounds and 13.4 assists per game.

Senior guard Marcus Tomaszek leads the team as the only player above ten points with 21.5 a game. To-

mashek also leads the team with 2.9 assists per game. The Huskies beat the Bulldogs when they last played by a score of 81-72.

Ferris State will host Northern Michigan on Saturday, Feb. 21, with the women playing at 1 p.m. and the

men at 3 p.m. The Bulldogs will then host Michigan Tech on Monday, Feb. 23, at 5:30 p.m. for the women and 7:30 p.m. for the men in the final two home games of both teams' regular seasons.



Photo by: Clark Vance | Photographer

Sophomore Joey Cabana puts up a three pointer against Grand Valley.

Softball hits the road

Bulldog softball heads to Illinois for Dome Invitational



Photo courtesy of Ferris Athletics

Catcher Emily Killion hits a line drive against Grand Valley during the 2025 season.

Nolan Matthews
Sports Editor

After losing three of their four games during the Swamp Fox Sizzler Invitational, the Ferris State softball team looks to get back on track when they take part in the Dome Invitational.

The Swamp Fox Sizzler started rough for the Bulldogs, playing three games against the No.10-ranked Francis Marion, and losing all three, being outscored 22 runs to five.

Ferris was able to pull out a win in their fourth game, this being a 9-1 win over the Tusculum Pioneers, with freshman outfielder Ava Gardner being the standout player from this game. Gardner went 2-3 with two RBI doubles in the game, with freshman pitcher Katie Shuboy earning her first col-

legiate win, pitching five innings and only allowing three hits, one run, one walk, and striking out six.

The Bulldogs (3-5, 0-0 in GLIAC) will now travel to Rosemont, Illinois, to play four games, one of each against Bemidji State, Minnesota Duluth, Quincy, and Missouri S&T.

Head coach Jake Schumann is confident in his squad and believes that this team has grown from last season.

"I'm super optimistic about this team," Schumann said, "We had an outstanding fall season, and after last weekend and beating the number 20 team in the country, it gives our staff great hope for the season. We ran out of pitching and the bats went cold the last week of the season last year. We have added pitching depth

and a talented roster of hitters in the hopes we can improve that this season."

On Thursday, the Bulldogs will match up against the two Minnesota teams, with the first coming against Bemidji State. The Beavers are off to a slow start this season, losing all four of their games this season, with three of those losses coming during extra innings.

The two squads match up well, as both are a contact first team, and do not hit for much power. As during the 2025 season the Bulldogs hit six home runs as a team and a .357 slugging percentage, while the Beavers also hit for five home runs as a team and a .345 slugging percentage.

On the mound for the Bulldogs, a standout player for them this season has been freshman Sally Leask. Leask

has pitched 11.1 innings, allowing 15 hits, seven runs to the tune of a 3.71 ERA, while striking out four and walking four.

The second matchup on Thursday comes against the Minnesota Duluth Bulldogs (4-3, 0-0 in NSIC). Minnesota Duluth is coming off a season where they went 39-17 but failed to make the playoffs.

A standout player for Minnesota Duluth would be freshman outfielder Daphne Evans. Evans has 11 hits in 26 at bats for a .423 average, while hitting two doubles, two home runs while knocking in six RBIs and having a .731 slugging percentage.

The first of two Friday matchups comes against the Missouri S&T Miners (8-3, 0-0 in GLVC). The Miners come into this game 4-1 in

their last five games, outscoring their opponents 18 runs to two runs in the four victories.

The Miners are led on offense by senior catcher Trista Grobe, who has 17 hits in 36 at bats for a .472 average, while hitting six doubles, two home runs, and totaling seven RBIs.

On Friday, the second of two games comes against the Quincy Eagles (2-6, 0-0 in GLVC). The Eagles have had a rough couple of seasons, last season going 8-40, 2024 the team went 15-35, and in 2023 the team went 22-22.

Quincy is coming into the matchup riding a three game losing streak, during that streak the Eagles have been outscored 22 runs to four.

The Eagles standout player would be freshman pitcher Hailey Platt. Platt has pitched

13 innings, allowing eight hits, only one earned run, while striking out six and walking five.

The Ferris State softball team will travel to Rosemont, Illinois to take on the Bemidji State Beavers and Minnesota Duluth Bulldogs on Thursday, Feb 19. Before taking on the Missouri S&T Miners and Quincy Eagles on Friday, Feb 20.