



The Ferris State Torch

95 YEARS OF ILLUMINATING THE TRUTH

Big Rapids, Michigan

Week of March 18, - 25, 2026

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Big Rapids Library receives grant for a native pollinator garden New Pollinator Pathway will support wildlife and educate the community



Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Pollinator gardens and paths are a great way to introduce native flowers, plants and wildlife to the area.

Gannon Thomas
News Reporter

A grant to build a native plant garden designed to support local pollinators and educate the community has been given to the Big Rapids Community Library.

The Wildflower Association of Michigan granted the Community Library funding for a Pollinator Pathway project. The pathway, which will be planted with native flowers and plants, is an initiative aimed at raising environmental awareness and supporting biodiversity in the Big Rapids area.

The Community Library is working with the Mecosta County Conservation District to help plan and design the pathway. The Conservation District is providing expertise on native plants and pollinator habitats, helping ensure the space will properly support local species.

District Administrator of the Mecosta County Conservation District, Brook Baumann, was a part of the initial startup process for the pathway.

“Our staff wrote the Wildflower Association of Michigan grant that will help fund the project, designed the planting concept, selected the appropriate native plant species, and will develop the interpretive educational signage along the pathway,” Baumann said.

Pollinators play a crucial role in ecosystems by helping plants reproduce. Unfortunately, in recent years, pollinator species have declined due to factors such as the spread of invasive species and the overuse of pesticides, putting native plant life at risk.

These Pollinators are vital to the ecosystem, and their loss could have grave repercussions.

“Native plants support a wide range of wildlife that depend on them for food, shelter, and nesting habitat,” Baumann said. “By adding a roughly 1,000 square foot native planting in a highly visible public space, the project helps strengthen the local food web and increase biodiversity within the Big Rapids community.”

The Pollinator Pathway will educate the community on native plant species and give insight on how you can plant native flowers in your own yard or garden, showing the community how they can do their part to help out local pollinators.

Native plants are not only good for pollinators but are very simple to take care of. Often requiring very little maintenance due to having evolved for local climates.

President of the Wildflower Association of Michigan, Carolyn Miller, mentioned just a

few of the perks of having the pathways.

“You don’t have to mow it, you don’t need to apply pesticides, it sequesters carbon, it mitigates these heavy downpours, and it’s supporting biodiversity, and sometimes that is just enough,” Miller said. “We have got to become stewards that support our native fauna, you know, be it birds, be it insects, that is what we have to do.”

The Pathway will be installed on library grounds, where it will serve as a visual example of how native landscaping can benefit both wildlife and the local community. The space will encourage visitors to spend more time outside while also learning about native plant species.

Projects like the Pollinator Pathway expand learning opportunities at the library beyond just books.

Director of the Big Rapids Community Library, Lauren

Perkins, talked about the benefits outside of helping local wildlife and pollinators

“The pathway, our community garden, and our Story Path through the park will have educational resources on display,” Perkins said.

Plants will be planted and treated by the local community and library staff.

“I think that the pollinator pathway will beautify the path in the park, encourage pollination in our community garden, and teach the community about plants that attract pollinators and why we should plant them,” Perkins said. “The planting date is the same as the Native Plant Sale, which is Friday, June 5.”

Once completed, the Pathway will be part of future programs and events for the public. The planting of the Pathway will coincide with another community event.

Projects like the Pollinator Pathway show how even

small community efforts can play a huge role in supporting local ecosystems. Planting native species and creating spaces that support pollinators gives the community a chance at helping rebuild habitats that many insects rely on.

The Pathway will be installed on June 5, and community members are encouraged to participate in the planting. The Library will also be hosting a Native Plant Sale the same day, allowing you to take home your very own native flowers, trees, or shrubs.

For any questions about the Pathway or to find out how to volunteer, please visit the Big Rapids Community Library website or call at (231)-796-5234.

News

Learn more about the new exercise science program and what current students enrolled in the program so far are thinking. **PG. 2**

Culture

Harry Styles just dropped his new album “Kiss All The Time. Disco, Occasionally.” Tune in for a breakdown of the songs with an honest review. **PG. 5**

Opinions

Most people growing up hear how important college is, but it’s not just about the degree so much as it is about the experiences you gain. **PG. 9**

Sports

Ferris softball returns home for the first time of the 2026 season, read how they match up against the Cardinals and Warriors **PG. 11**

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News

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Michigan

Nolan Matthews
Sports Editor

West Bloomfield- The FBI is investigating a car ramming attack on a large West Bloomfield synagogue that occurred on Thursday, March 12. The suspect was a 41-year-old U.S. citizen who was originally from Lebanon, named Mohamad Ghazali. Ghazali drove through the front doors of the synagogue, when almost immediately, he was engaged in a gunfight with synagogue security, before Ghazali fatally shot himself. West Bloomfield Township Supervisor Jonathan Warshay told NBC News in a statement, "The Temple Israel security staff took swift action to prevent civilian casualties," Warshay said. "Our thoughts are with the members of Temple Israel and their families."

National

Nolan Matthews
Sports Editor

Countrywide- Chaotic weather from the East Coast to the West Coast in the U.S. has put more than half of the U.S. population in the path of extreme weather on Monday, March 16. From heat waves in California, to damaging winds in Washington D.C., and even blizzards burying parts of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Airport delays and cancellations for more than 3000 flights across the eastern half of the U.S. due to various storms have halted spring breakers and travelers from across the East Coast.

Global

Nolan Matthews
Sports Editor

Paris, France- France's government is bolstering the country's military presence in the Middle East, dispatching its aircraft carrier and other ships. President Emmanuel Macron has been engaging in talks with key players of the Iran War, including Iran, in a bid for France to position themselves for future diplomatic talks. Macron said that France's military involvement is strictly "defensive" and aims to avoid making the country a party to the war. He reaffirmed that position after one French soldier was killed Thursday in a drone attack in Iraq. Even still, with the deployment of the French military, this has made France the European nation with the most prominent presence in the region.

First look into the exercise science program

New program added last fall will help students build more confidence in their careers



Photo courtesy of Ferris State University

Exercise science program coordinator Marla Jones will be teaching classes alongside new professors in fall of 2026.

Harmony Goodman
Production Manager

The new exercise science program was launched this past year in the Fall of 2025.

This new program has been under discussion for the past two years and was finally approved last fall. Back in May of 2024, Ferris hired Marla Jones, chair of Health Administration and Health Information in the College of Health Professions, as the program coordinator. Since her employment, Jones has been working towards building the science exercise program curriculum and getting it approved.

"I've been working for nearly two years on putting the curriculum together. It was a pretty involved process in terms of following all the procedures," Jones said. "When a new program is started, it needs to be approved both within your own department, college, and the

university itself, and finally by the state. The whole process took about ten months to get approved."

Since the approval, major classes for the program and other courses were able to be taught in the fall of 2025. Including a total of 19 new courses specifically related to the program, with a prerequisite in biology, specifically anatomy and physiology.

The program is built to be a four-year program, with one internship requirement in order to get students prepared to work or attend grad school to pursue a specialization.

"We currently have 42 declared majors, which isn't bad considering were only in the second semester of this program. We also have a lot of interest from freshmen who have been admitted and will hopefully be new to Ferris next fall," Jones said.

Third year in the exercise program, Elaina O'Riley was originally in the pre physical

therapy program here at Ferris, but decided to switch over to exercise science.

"Exercise science was what I originally wanted to go into after high school, but Ferris didn't offer it. I really loved Ferris as a school, and so when this new program appeared, I knew I wanted to switch over," O'Riley said. "I knew it would open up a bunch of new options for me; instead of just going into physical therapy, I can go into occupational therapy and personal training."

One of the main outcomes of this program is to build student confidence in the material by providing lectures as well as hands-on learning opportunities. With real client experience, with the help of the ROTC program at Ferris, students are able to help them with their pre-screening and fitness assessments.

"Switching programs was a huge shift," O'Riley said. "I knew that I loved what I

was learning, and I would get to continue to learn about things that are going to be useful for me both in class and in my career. I know I'm learning what I love, which is nice."

Sophomore in the exercise science program, Gabby Piazza, had a similar experience with the introduction of this new program at Ferris.

"I was on the pre-physical therapy track, and I was talking with my coach about my options," Piazza said. "She told me that there was actually an exercise science program that was starting up. My coach got me in contact with Marla [Jones] right away. I was one of the first interested in the program. After talking with [Jones], I knew this was something I wanted to do as a major if it got passed, and it did."

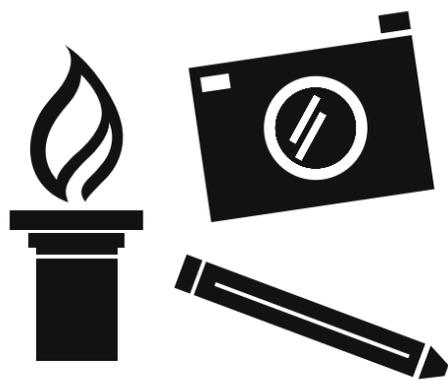
CONT. ON PG. 4

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)

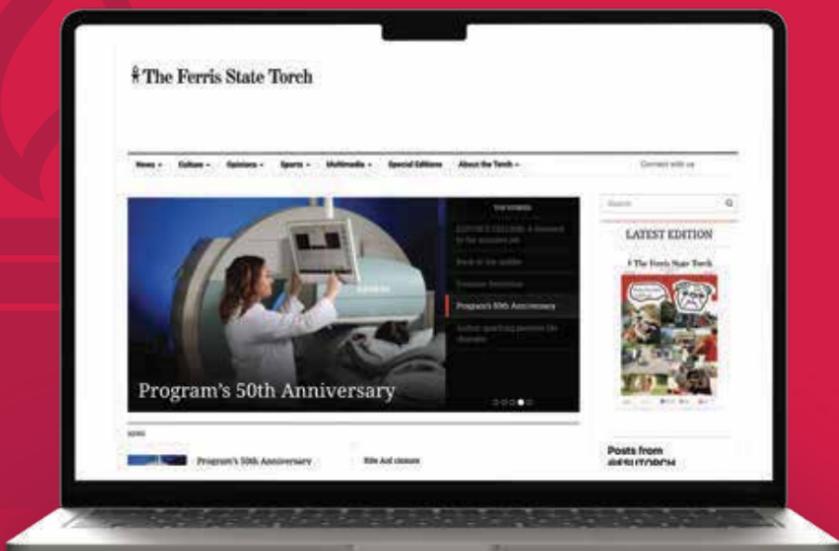


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Photo courtesy of Ferris State University

Students in the new exercise science program will be given hands on learning opportunities to build their skills.

EXERCISE SCIENCE PROGRAM CONT.

One of the frustrations Piazza had faced before the new program addition was the number of classes she was taking that never felt like they applied to her or her career.

Piazza knew that she had a passion for learning about the human body, but more often than not found herself in classes that didn't have anything to do with one another. Switching to the new exercise science program felt like the right choice.

"Marla does a really good

job at making sure we all have success in this program, in exercise science, all of my courses are connected and build off of each other," Piazza said.

Dean and Professor of Public Health, Lincoln Gibbs, worked in collaboration with Marla to get the program ap-

proved and started at Ferris.

"We're proud to bring the Exercise Science program to the College of Health Professions at Ferris State. There's a growing need for professionals who can help people stay healthy, prevent chronic disease, and improve overall fitness and performance, and

this program will help prepare our students to meet that demand," Gibbs said. "Our goal is for Ferris graduates to be ready for careers in areas such as strength and conditioning, cardiac rehabilitation, and corporate wellness, or to continue their education in fields like physical therapy,

athletic training, and other health professions."

Those looking for more information on the program can learn more at ferris.edu.

ON THE RECORD

Blase Gapinski
Editor in Chief

Parking lot drama

Feb. 23 - A student reported ongoing verbal harassment and threats from another student following a personal dispute. The incidents occurred in campus parking areas and involved confrontational and threatening statements. No physical assault occurred. Officers contacted the involved student and advised no further contact. The matter has been referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Student Life.

Friend or foe?

Feb. 23 - A student reported a former friend for spreading rumors and making unwanted comments following a personal dispute. Both parties were contacted and advised to avoid further interaction. The incident was documented and closed.

Bad day to be a bottle

Feb. 23, 5 p.m. During a routine health and safety inspection, Community Advisors observed alcohol in the apartment's common area. An underage resident was advised of the violation and disposed of the alcohol while staff were present.

Catch me if you can!

Feb. 22, 12:06 a.m. - Ferris DPS officers assisted Big Rapids DPS with a retail fraud investigation involving a male who attempted to evade officers by crawling under a semi-trailer in a motel parking lot. The individual refused commands and resisted efforts to be taken into custody. After repeated commands, officers secured and handcuffed the subject without further incident.

I got them keys, keys, keys!

Feb. 22, 5:47 p.m. - A student reported a key fob, lanyard and keys stolen from an unlocked vehicle parked on campus overnight. Surveillance video showed an unknown individual entering the vehicle during early morning hours and leaving shortly after.

Culture

Grace Heethuis | Culture Editor | turnek29@ferris.edu

Torch tunes

Torch staff comfort songs



Graphic by: Hailey Nye | Production Assistant

Tate Zellman
Culture Reporter

As we're midway through the semester, our staff has decided to share songs that we listen to for comfort.

They represent some of our favorite artists and favorite genres of music. Additionally, these songs give us comfort in times of need and stress, helping us continue working hard. Feel free to give them a listen and maybe even add them to your playlist.

Tate Zellman | Culture Reporter: Mirrors by Justin Timberlake

Being a Justin Timberlake fan for many years, a lot of his songs give me comfort, pleasure and joy. One song in particular that just hits right is "Mirrors." First off, Timberlake's vocals in this song are just amazing. I love the range he expressed in this song. Also, the song's mid-tempo pop and progressive pop are just miraculous. I love the overall beat and tempo of the song. With it being released in 2013, I feel both a sense of comfort and nostalgia when I listen to it. Additionally, this song has extra value to my personal life. My 21st birthday was on June 19th, 2024. My birthday present

from my older sister was two tickets to see Timberlake perform at the United Center in Chicago. The two of us went to the concert and "Mirrors" was the last song Timberlake performed. The crowd went crazy as Timberlake performed the song, standing on top of a moving platform held by strings. Not only does "Mirrors" bring me comfort, but the song also reminds me of my favorite concert I've ever been to.

Blase Gapinski | Editor in Chief: I Love You So by The Walters

It really didn't take me long to come up with the song I wanted to include in this piece. "I Love You So" by The Walters has been a song I keep revisiting whenever I need a pick-me-up. It is an indie-rock track that is soft, melodic and helps me reflect on the person I once was. The lift and bridge in this song is what gives me comfort with lyrics like "I'm gonna pack my things and leave you behind. This feeling's old, and I know that I've made up my mind." It helps me realize that it is okay to forget about things that have happened in the past or people who have done you wrong, packing them and leaving them behind to become a better,

happier version of yourself.

Harmony Goodman | Production Manager: Knowing by Tessa Violet

I spent a lot of time on the internet as a kid; call me chronically online. Tessa Violet is an artist I grew up watching on YouTube. This song is a part of her upcoming album, "There Will Be Joy." This single is a self-love song about starting a new chapter and being patient with yourself. One of my favorite lyrics from this song is the outro, which features the powerful lyrics, "I will give myself the grace to try again", which is something we all need to tell ourselves sometimes. I believe the music we enjoy plays a part in our everyday lives and mental health. That being said, my goal is to start listening to more comforting songs.

Grace Heethuis | Culture Editor: Steadfast by Josh Garrels

This is the comfort song that I listened to all the time when I was pregnant with my son. It's slow and calm and always seems to bring me peace when I'm feeling stressed or anxious. It immediately relaxes me when I turn it on. Usually, my husband turns it on when he notices that I am feeling

stressed or had a bad day. I first discovered this artist when he opened for another concert I went to. Turns out, I actually like him more than who I went to see in concert. This song reflects on the Steadfast nature of God, which is very comforting to me when I'm struggling.

Nolan Matthews | Sports Editor: Coast of Marseilles by Jimmy Buffett

Jimmy Buffett is my comfort artist. I always listen to him when I'm feeling down or when I'm working. This song has been one of my favorites lately. This song has a great instrumental, with the first half featuring just Buffett and a guitar. Then the bridge hits with Buffett's harmony, a harmonica solo, and the strings. It's just so beautiful.

It's an all-around beautiful song by an incredibly underrated musician.

Lucas Gill | Web Editor: Lovers Rock by TV Girl

TV Girl's debut studio album, French Exit, has remained one of my favorite albums for the better part of the decade. The band's unique blend of lo-fi hip hop beats and distinct sampling of audio from 60s and 70s media makes their music feel otherworldly. TV Girl has a way of capturing the various aspects of navigating relationships when you're young, especially through their melancholic lyrics. "Lovers Rock," to me, represents TV Girl at their best and it's the song I always come back to whenever I'm in the mood to listen to them.

Blake Flanery | Cartoonist: On Melancholy Hill by Gorillaz

"On Melancholy Hill" was one of the first songs that got me into music when I was younger. I had no idea what Gorillaz was at the time, but I eventually followed everything they put out. In addition to the song's slower pace, I find Damon Albarn's (the singer) vocals both reminiscent and soothing after years of listening, which is why it's comforting to me. As I keep exploring various genres and artists, I'll always be able to come back to this band for something new and to remember where I've been. I suppose songs like this help keep me grounded.

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Bulldog spring bucket list

Must-do activities to celebrate spring



Photo by: Blase Gapinski | Editor in Chief

Students look forward to spring in Big Rapids, as it is a chance to enjoy everything the city has to offer before the end of the semester.

Grace Heethuis
Culture Editor

With spring fast approaching, Big Rapids will begin undergoing numerous changes.

As the snow melts, local spots will begin to bloom and attract visitors. For students, this means the end of the semester is nearing, and for some, graduation. Spring is an exciting time for many students, as some are planning for the next chapter of their lives after graduation and others are planning for next semester when they return.

One thing most of them have in common is their effort to make unforgettable memories during their college years. Below is a spring bucket list designed to minimize boredom and maximize fun college memories at Ferris.

Visit The Card/Riley Conservation and Wildlife Education Center: Learn about how to preserve and conserve nature and wildlife by taking a short trip here. The center features numerous habitats and specimen displays, along with a Kids' Activity Area.

Walk the Big Rapids Riverwalk Trailhead: Walk along

the trailhead and look for signs of spring approaching. Listen for birds returning for spring and enjoy a peaceful walk along the river. Observe wildlife in action and get lost in nature while allowing yourself a break from schoolwork.

Explore Northend Park: Follow the Riverwalk Trailhead all the way to Northend Park. This park features a playground for kids, a beach volleyball area, and ample room to enjoy activities with friends. There is plenty of room to explore and just sit and chat with friends.

Check out the new arcade at Crusted Creations: Located inside this pizza shop, it spans two entire rooms filled with arcade games. Additionally, they are offering free pool with the purchase of any food or drink. It is the perfect spot to enjoy downtime with friends and family.

Catch a movie at the Big Rapids Theater: The theater is set to open the week of March 20 and plans on showing a variety of both older movies and new releases. Make plans to go catch a movie this spring and enjoy the break from studying.

Bike The White Pine Trail: Hop on a bike and go enjoy the sounds of nature while getting some light exercise.

pad. Additionally, a trail runs through the park that is perfect for hiking, biking, skateboarding and more.

among locals. Several other local spots offer delicious food and quality entertainment.

tures outdoor games that let people enjoy the warm weather.

Media minute

Long awaited album “Kiss All The Time. Disco, Occasionally,” releases

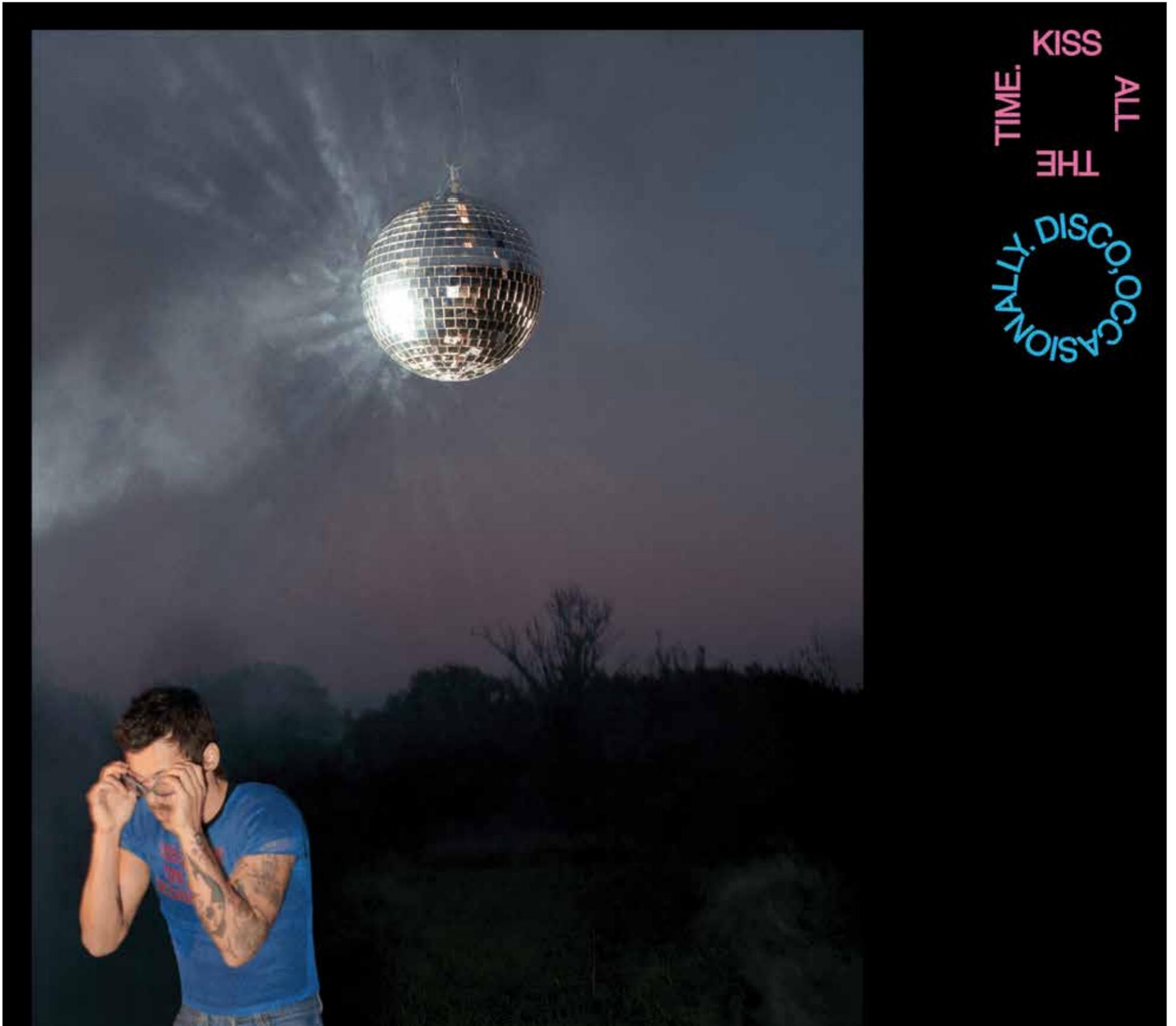


Photo courtesy of Wikipedia

Styles fourth solo album “Kiss All The Time. Disco, Occasionally,” since the One Direction split up.

Harmony Goodman
Production Manager

Pop artist Harry Styles dropped his fourth solo album, “Kiss All The Time. Disco, Occasionally,” on March 6, 2026.

The album features 12 tracks, each with its own unique sound, drawing inspiration from techno, ballads and disco. The album received a 4-star rating from Rolling Stone and surpassed the sales of Styles’ previous album, charting at number one in the UK.

Despite the album name, the “disco” comes from the instrumentals rather than the lyrics and vocals. It’s no surprise that Styles decided to mash together different

genres and styles, as we’ve seen him do this plenty of times in past albums.

Aperture: The opening track features a gradual instrumental and a slightly LOFI beat. The visual art for this song is included on streaming platforms such as Spotify. It contains a scene of Styles going up an escalator, which, in my opinion, is a great visual for the song. The gradual instrumentation makes it feel like a slow progression, similar to an escalator.

American Girls: Throughout the album discography, Styles touches on the lonely side of stardom. In the song “American Girls,” Styles reflects on how it feels to watch all of his friends fall in love and settle down while still searching for

“the one”.

Ready, Steady, Go!: With a driving beat, this song skips through gradual openings and jumps right in. This track was inspired by Styles’ time in Italy, where he incorporates the phrase, “Pronti, Quasi, vail!”

Are You Listening Yet?: Written during his last tour, Styles wrote this song based on his experience performing night after night. The song is meant to feel hectic and fast-paced, similar to how he felt on tour.

Taste Back: The lyrics of this song follow the story of an ex reaching out from Paris and reflecting on their relationship and their regrets. The song asks, “Did you get your taste back or do you

just need a little love?” suggesting the ex isn’t actually reminiscing on who he was but is instead just lonely and looking for easy love.

The Waiting Game: In this song, Styles tries to capture the feeling of a never-ending cycle of romanticizing his own shortcomings rather than working towards self-improvement. Creating the “waiting game”, where those around him and he keep waiting for improvement that never lasts.

Season 2 Weight Loss: One of the most interesting titles on this album, “Season 2 Weight Loss,” is just a metaphor for change. Following “The Waiting Game”, Styles reflects on his self-improvement journey and how he has

changed through seasons, almost feeling reinvented. Asking “Do you love me now, or did I let you down?”

Coming Up Roses: Teased during a show at Alexandra Palace, this song features a variety of string instruments. The song teaser added to the anticipation of the album.

Pop: As the name suggests, this track is the most pop feeling song on the album. The song references addiction and the process of getting clean.

Dance No More: Inspired by an emotional night out in Berlin. The song is meant to be a commentary on the feeling of standing alone in the middle of a dance floor.

Paint By Numbers: The second-to-last song on the

album highlights what it’s like living in a pre-determined framework, where you feel the constraints of expectations.

Carla’s Song: Concluding the album, this song is for a friend named Carla who got really into Paul Simon’s music. This sweet song reflects on the joys of discovering something new and how it feels to watch that new discovery become a part of you.

My personal rating of this album is a 6/10. As someone who enjoys listening to albums, I didn’t find myself saving as many songs to my playlists. The most memorable tracks are “Aperture”, “American Girls” and “Ready, Steady, Go!”, with the most streams off the new album.

Opinions

Jackie Moglia | Opinions Editor | mogliaj@ferris.edu

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EDITOR'S COLUMN: The root of human struggle

Why I value certain athletes over others



Graphic by: Hailey Nye | Production Assistant

Blase Gapinski
Editor in Chief

In the world of sports, there have always been conversations about who the greatest athlete of all time is and why they deserve our respect.

Personally, I am not just looking at athleticism or championships when having these conversations. For me, the things they do on or off the court or field are just as important as championships and athletic ability.

I started thinking a lot more about this idea after the Miami Heat's center, Bam Adebayo, recorded 83 points, becoming the second player with the highest points in a single game, which was previously held by the late Kobe Bryant.

The discourse I saw online regarding this milestone of an achievement that Adebayo had just achieved was already being met with belittling statements, saying the performance was shameless or that he should have been taken out of the game out of respect for Bryant.

While I can understand this argument, because Bryant did so much for the game of basketball that it would only seem right to keep his

legacy cemented as one of the greatest to ever do it. At the same time, many people put him on such a high pedestal without even taking into consideration some of the heinous things he has been accused of.

People who deserve our respect typically should have a good character, which I think most people would agree on.

One person that I always bring up when asked who the GOAT is is Kyrie Irving. Irving is a player I grew up watching and have always loved his game, even though he hasn't played for the Detroit Pistons.

Most basketball fans would agree that Irving's game is special. His tenure with the Cleveland Cavaliers, the team he was drafted number one overall by and where he spent six seasons, speaks volumes to how phenomenal an athlete he is.

Most NBA fans know how special Irving is. He is widely considered to be one of the greatest ball handlers of all time and one of the most prominent scorers when it comes to finishing under the rim.

Irving also won rookie of the year in 2012 and has made so many games iconic with his ability to turn around a tight game when neces-

sary. A recent example was his performance during the first round of the 2024 NBA playoffs against the Los Angeles Clippers (Sorry, Connor). He went from shooting 1-6 in the first half, only scoring two points, and finished the game with 30.

I could talk about how much I love watching Irving's game all day and try to justify how great he is but that is what the highlight tape is for.

One of the main reasons I love Irving is how he has portrayed himself since he first stepped into the league. He has never claimed to be perfect or claimed that he is better than anyone else.

Even when there were moments of uncertainty or conflict about his character, he did his best to remain calm and was able to admit he was in the wrong and had made a mistake.

Though there may have been some stubbornness with this initially, he took the necessary steps to show people he was remorseful, acknowledging that he was wrong for sharing such hurtful information, despite not trying to directly promote those ideas.

Obviously, I do not agree with the hateful misinformation he had put out there a

the time and agree with the criticism and backlash he received. The reasons I have considered Irving to be one of my role models for some time are his views on mental health and how he has actively advocated for seeking help and healing effectively and positively.

Irving's openness about emotions and how it is normal for everyone to feel differently they come off from person to person. He shared a message along the lines of when we feel, it may look different but it is actually one of the biggest commonalities between humans.

These athletes already have so much pressure on them as they are at the forefront of the media, while also trying to compete at the highest level in their respective sports. They are constantly facing scrutiny from others, all while trying to navigate their own emotions and life.

During a post-game press conference, while Irving was still with the Brooklyn Nets, he was asked by a reporter if he was motivated to change any of the perceptions people have of him and he responded with a message that has stuck with me since I initially heard it.

"That's another route of human struggle, worrying about other people's perceptions of who you are," Irving said. "Why would you ever care about that, you know? I think I fell victim to that in my past, of worrying about things that I can't control ... Human beings have mood swings ... it's okay to be human. I don't have to be perfect for anyone here, nor do I have to be perfect for the public. So I'm not here to dispel any perception, I'm just here to be myself."

This has been a clip I revisit quite often because of how impactful it really is. When I hear the stars and faces of the league advocating for self-growth and mental health, I can't help but question who we really should be looking up to: those who make an impact on the court, or those who strive to do their best off of it?

Of course, some players have made a bigger impact on the game and have solidified their legacies in other ways.

I admire Irving for putting forward the message to control what you can control and that it is okay to feel, even if it doesn't fit the perceptions that people have of you.

Why college is so important

I never learned so much and failed so much at the same time



Photo by: Blase Gapinski | Editor in Chief

Main stretch of campus, where Pharr has been studying.

Davaria Pharr
News Reporter

When I graduated from high school in 2023, during

my junior and senior years, I didn't want to go to college.

I thought I'd just go to trade school; it's simple, cheap and guaranteed.

Only one thing changed my mind: a historically Black college tour I went on when I was in those formative years of school.

They took us across the country to a different college. Spelman College, Clark Atlanta University and Alabama State University. By talking to those college students, I learned why going to college was important.

I didn't attend those schools, obviously, but it got me thinking. The experience is really once in a lifetime, and maybe if I want to be a doctor or a lawyer, I can.

Seeing people who looked like me be successful changed my life.

Now I stand here two years later, so grateful that I took that opportunity.

College is important because it teaches you so many things outside the classroom. Believe it or not, experience is the best teacher, and I've learned far more outside the classroom than in it.

What I mean by this is my peers. You're put in a dorm room with strangers and have to figure out how to get along with them. You meet people from all kinds of backgrounds with different mindsets and approaches to life.

They expose you to everything. The good and the bad and during that time, being in those crazy situations, you learn to find who you are.

College is a place where you are guaranteed to fail at a test, an assignment or

even in a relationship. You will make many mistakes, but that's when you learn.

College taught me I was capable of more than I imagined and how to build something from scratch and make it into something beautiful.

I will never be the same person I was when I first walked into Ferris State University.

When you're young and you just turned 18, you think you know everything, just to find out you know nothing, and that this isn't even the person you will ultimately be. College taught me how to conduct myself in a business manner, how to behave when you're at a job, how to get what you want out of a job, how to spend money and how to negotiate salaries.

It sets you up for life. The resources and people you have access to put you in a direct position to win. They have partnerships with companies and colleagues, and they care about your future.

I'm simply saying college gives you not just a career but the education and credibility to have multiple careers.

I am now a sophomore graduating with my associate's degree in Integrative Studies this May. I will be continuing to a bachelor's in Journalism and Communications at Arizona State

University.

None of this would be possible if I hadn't taken that step in going to college and believing in myself.

I walked into college not knowing who I was and not loving who I was. I walked out being the person I always wanted to be.

Every failed exam, every late-night study session, and every time a friend left me disappointed, I learned. That's the beauty of it. No matter what happened, I learned, even when I didn't want to.

Your years after high school count, and I wish someone had told me this sooner. Your 20s determine the rest of your life and making poor decisions will lead you to live a poor quality of life.

I don't want to look back on my life and regret anything, so I always live for me and live for the moment.

The only thing that matters is my future, not my past.

I appreciate everyone at Ferris who has helped me along the way: my professors and classmates. Thank you, Ferris State, for showing me what life is really about. I'm on to my next adventure soon.

Working a broken system

The employment turmoil of an university student

Shaunti'ara Reynolds
Multimedia Editor

After completing my first year at Ferris, my mother made it clear that she did not intend to lighten the financial load that came with being a university student.

Thankfully, I was fully covered by my financial aid at the time but I would still need to find a way to support myself. The first semester of my second year, an application was sent out for the position of desk student assistant. This was not my first job but I guess my interviewing skills were rusty, so I ended up completely bombing the phone interview and not landing the job.

Fast forward to the middle of the semester. I still hadn't managed to get a job but luckily, the same position opened up and was offered to me. I worked this position for a full academic year, so from the mid-September semester to May move-out, the job was simple enough. The desk is supposed to be available at all hours of the day, so I started out as a substitute, filling in for others who

would call in or just filling in awkward gaps between others' schedules.

But with every job, I ran into problems. A severe lack of volunteers for the longest shift: the overnight shift. This was typically from midnight to four or five in the morning, so it's no wonder people weren't exactly lining up for the position.

Wanting to be helpful, I took every overnight shift every scheduling period for a couple of months. With this schedule, I would be attending classes throughout the day and then working through the night with catnaps in between. I was consistently working over the maximum allowed hours (25 per week) to the point where my manager had to threaten to terminate my employment. I was doing all of this and barely taking home \$300 biweekly.

It felt unfair to push myself to the limit that I was allowed and see little reward at the end of a pay-period. But what choice did I, and many other students like me, have? I simply had to learn how to make the money stretch.

After moving out of the



Graphic by: Hailey Nye | Production Assistant

dorms, I lost the DSA position. FAFSA wasn't enough to cover my tuition. I felt like I had basically applied to everywhere, on and off campus. I eventually landed a position at the Quad Cafe, as well as here, at the Ferris State Torch, another position I was painfully under-quai-

fied for.

I was now starting a brand-new semester with two jobs, both paying minimum wage. I had to force both these positions into the 25-hour limit, which with the way photography assignments are scheduled, was not too difficult. Once again, I was working the

absolute max and still bringing home a wimpy \$300-400 check, which almost immediately went back to Ferris to pay for my classes.

After a full year of late nights, late payments and empty promises of paying back family, I was able to pull through that difficult financial

situation and get myself in a comfortable position once I qualified for an increase in my FASFA loans.

Now, being in a higher-paying position and having learned how to stretch a dollar, I better understand the importance of financial management.

Sports

Nolan Matthews | Sports Editor | matthen4@ferris.edu

Women's basketball season ends early

Ferris women's basketball ends season with loss in quarterfinals



Photo by: Clark Vance | Torch Photographer

Senior guard Elle Irwin inbounds the ball in a game against Northern Michigan on Feb. 21.

Devin Wardrop
Sports Reporter

After their 70-59 loss in the NCAA Division II Regional quarterfinals to Missouri-St. Louis, the Ferris State women's basketball season is now over.

The Bulldogs ended the season with an overall record of 26-7 and a conference record of 17-3, with all three of their conference losses coming against Grand Valley State.

Head coach Kurt Westendorp is very proud of his team and the season the girls had.

"You come into the season with some high expectations with the team you have with the six seniors, with all of the experience you had,

we have very high hopes," Westendorp said. "I feel like we achieved so many of the goals the team set out. Any season that ends with setting a school record in wins and trying it, you can't look at it as anything other than a successful season. Seeing the way these girls played on a night-in and night-out basis and represented their community and represented Ferris the entire time, you can't look at that as anything other than a successful season for us."

During the season, the Bulldogs had a ten-game win streak, going from Jan. 24 against Lake Superior State to Feb. 23 against Michigan Tech. In the last month of the regular season, Ferris had a record of 8-1, losing to Grand

Valley 70-44 on Feb. 26. Ferris State went 2-2 in the playoffs, beating Parkside and Wayne State before falling to Grand Valley in the GLIAC Championship and then to Missouri-St. Louis.

In 33 games, Ferris averaged 77.5 points per game on 42.2% shooting and 33.2% from three-point range. The Bulldogs also averaged 39.4 rebounds and 17.8 assists per game.

Senior guard Kady Blanchard talked about the season she had this year as she reflects on her college career.

"I obviously got injured last year and I was really debating on coming back," Blanchard said. "But with how this year ended up, I wouldn't have wanted to do it

any other way. I have my best friends from past teammates to the teammates I have now. There's never enough time and I wish I had more time with the girls who came in this year. I'm very happy I stayed and I'm very proud of what we accomplished this year."

Four players ended the season averaging ten points or more, with Blanchard leading the Bulldogs with 17.0 points per game, which leads the GLIAC. Senior guard Mia Riley is second on the team and fourth in the GLIAC in scoring with 15.9 per game.

Senior forward/center Mya Hiram led the Bulldogs in rebounds with 6.4, with Blanchard and Riley behind her both with 6.0 per game. Hiram also leads the team

in field goal percentage with 49.4% from the field. Senior guard Emma Schierbeek led the team in 3-point percentage with 38.8% from behind the arc.

Blanchard had the team's highest scoring individual game with 33 points on Jan. 10 at Michigan Tech. On Feb. 21 against Northern Michigan, Riley had a triple-double with 20 points, 15 rebounds, and 10 assists. Those 15 rebounds were the most in a single game this season for the Bulldogs. Hiram led the team 12 times as the team's top rebounder, grabbing ten or more rebounds seven times, while also having two games with 13 rebounds, coming in both regular season matchups against Roosevelt.

Hiram is proud of what the team has accomplished this season.

"I'm so proud of the girls and myself," Hiram said. "We've all been through so much together and to see us continue to show up not just for the games but for each other is something I'll cherish forever. It wasn't how we wanted it to end but I wouldn't change this year for anything."

Six seniors from this team are graduating after this year, including Blanchard, Hiram, Schierbeek, Riley, while guards Elle Irwin and Ally Schultz are also graduating.

Softball starts first home games

Bulldogs softball starts GLIAC play for first home games of the season

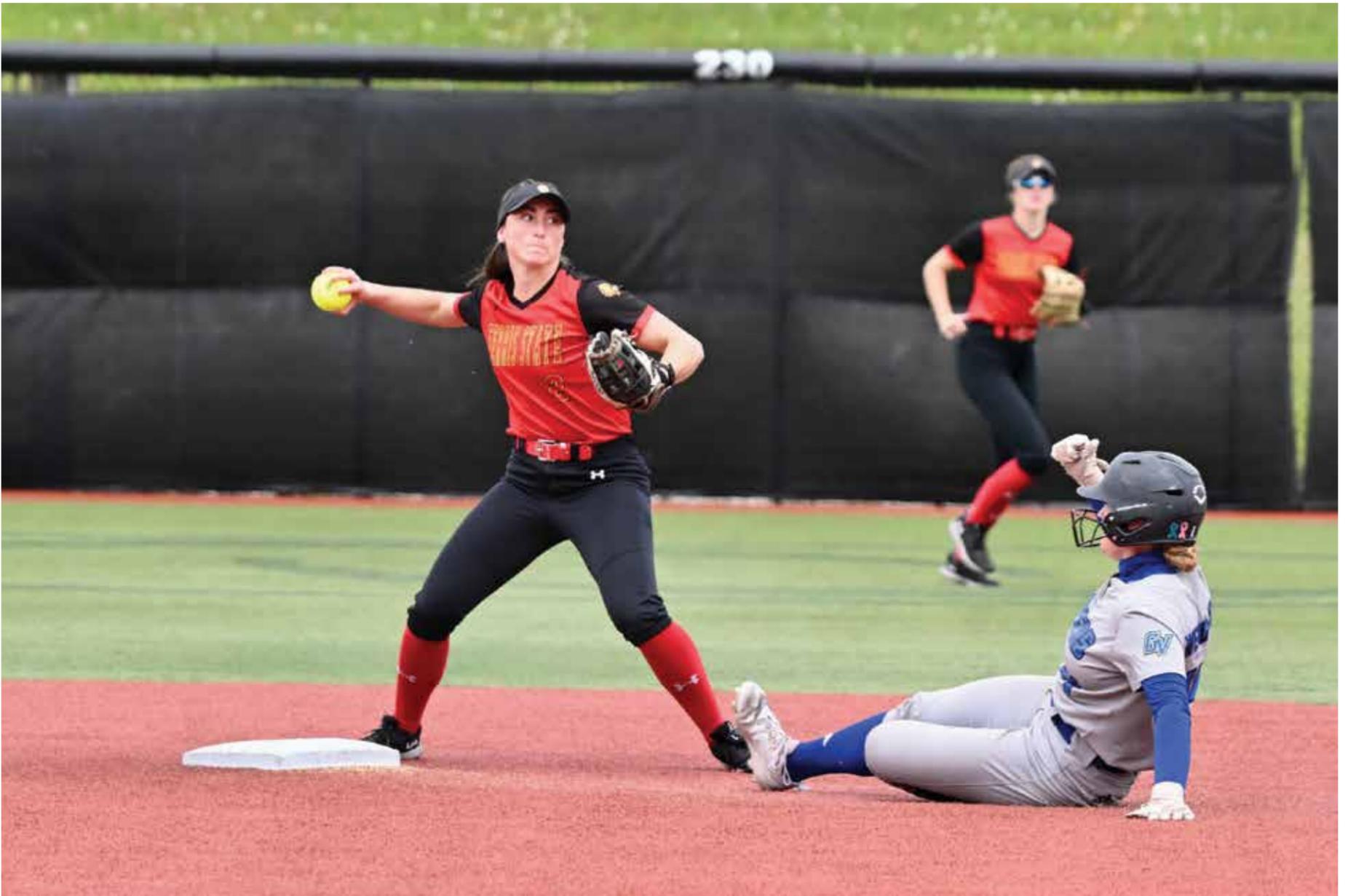


Photo courtesy of Ferris Athletics

Senior infielder Jadyn Joseph attempts to turn a double play against Grand Valley in 2025.

Nolan Matthews
Sports Editor

After playing eight games in just four days, the Bulldogs softball team came out of the USSSA Space Coast Spring games winning five of the eight games during the week.

The Bulldogs outscored their opponents in those five wins by 24 runs to just four, while securing two shutout victories. Freshman pitcher Katie Shuboy pitched those two complete game shutouts, pitching a 5-inning, three-hit and five-strikeout game against Ursuline. While one-upping that game only three days later in a seven-inning, three-hit and seven-strikeout complete game.

Shuboy talked about her performance during the USSSA Space Coast games.

"It feels fantastic," Shuboy said. "We are ready to roll into GLIAC play, I give a lot of credit to my coaches for working with me all winter and all of my supportive teammates who have my back."

While on the offensive side, freshman outfielder Ava Gardner stepped up in those eight games. She secured 12 hits in her 23 at-bats, which

was good for a .521 average, while knocking in eight RBIs, three doubles, two triples, two home runs and adding one stolen base.

The Bulldogs (14-11, 0-0 in GLIAC) will take on the Saginaw Valley State Cardinals (10-8, 0-0 in GLIAC) for the first set of home games of the 2026 season.

Saginaw Valley has taken home the regular-season title in the last two seasons and won the GLIAC tournament in the last four. March has been a stagnant one for the Cardinals, going 6-6 so far this month, but they come into the matchup against the Bulldogs riding a three-game win streak.

The Cardinals have one of the toughest pitching staffs in the division, led by junior Aalana Kimble. Kimble has started in eight games this season to a total of 54 innings, while having seven complete games. Kimble has pitched to a 1.94 ERA, while striking out 39 while only walking 11 batters.

Head coach Jake Schumann spoke about playing back in front of the Bulldogs faithful and taking on the tough Cardinals squad.

"SVSU has been the team to beat the last three years

in the league, and having to open up with them is a tough task. But to finally be home will hopefully produce a home crowd that will motivate our young team to perform to the best of our abilities. We get to return home to our amazing parents and community members who have adopted our team. This will be an amazing opportunity to showcase our young and talented squad."

The second set of games comes against the Wayne State Warriors (6-7, 0-0 in GLIAC).

The Bulldogs have struggled against the Warriors all-time, with the Warriors holding a 41-31 record against Ferris all-time. Though, since 2022, the Bulldogs have held a record of 11-4 against the Warriors.

For the Bulldogs, they look to get their offense rolling against the Warriors, which is bolstered by junior outfielder Emma Gillard. Gillard has a .310 average, while totaling four extra base hits, three home runs, and a team-leading 19 RBIs this season.

Wayne State is led on offense by sophomore shortstop Hunter Near. Near is batting a .400 average, with a 1.210 OPS, while having

four extra base hits, two home runs, and knocking in seven RBIs this season.

The Warriors' pitching staff is fronted by junior Sydney Long, who has pitched in eight games to the tune of a 2.98 ERA, striking out 27,

while walking just nine batters in 42.1 innings.

The Ferris State Bulldogs softball team returns home to Big Rapids for the first set of games, starting off against the Saginaw Valley State Cardinals on March 21 at 1

p.m., while the second game is scheduled for 3 p.m. The second set of games comes the following day against the Wayne State Warriors, with the games scheduled for 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.

A-1

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Tennis to begin divisional slate

Ferris tennis returns to Michigan for first two GLIAC matches

Nolan Matthews
Sports Editor

After the men finished this past week's four matches at 2-2 and the women finished 1-3, the Ferris State Bulldogs tennis teams look to gain momentum heading into the final month of the regular season.

The Bulldogs look ahead to men's and women's taking on the Davenport Panthers and the Grand Valley State Lakers, while the women's team will also take on Saginaw Valley for their first divisional game of the season.

Head coach Mark Doren is feeling good about the teams this season and is looking

forward to GLIAC play.

"I'm feeling very good about both teams," Doren said. "We are loaded with talent, and as the season progresses, we are gaining more and more confidence. The men's team on paper is the most talented team I've had in my eight years here, but as we've gotten better, so has everyone else. On the women's team, we are very aggressive as a team on the singles court. They can really push opponents around on the court."

Women's

Although the team started the season 1-3 and had two cancellations, the squad had a strong February. Having a

5-2 record, taking down opponents in Spring Arbor University, Walsh University, Calvin University, McKendree University and Hillsdale University.

The squad started March off to three losses, those coming against Florida Southern, Augustana and Embry Riddle before taking a 3-2 victory over Eckerd.

In that 3-2 victory, the Bulldogs took two of three doubles matches, with seniors Ana Hernandez and Maria Hernandez winning the first 6-2, while sophomore Ayva Johnstone and freshman Madeline Peisley took the second with a 6-3 victory.

While in singles competi-

tion, Peisley won her match 6-4 and 6-1, and sophomore Yara Madi taking the victory in her match by scores of 7-6 and 6-4.

Ana Hernandez believes the team can pick up momentum heading into division play.

"I think we must still believe in ourselves and the skills and preparation we have," Hernandez said. "The team is so talented and qualified, so I believe we must start strong the conference and learn from the losses and wins because we are so capable of winning this year."

The Bulldogs (7-5, 0-0 in GLIAC) will first take on the Saginaw Valley State Cardinals (6-5, 0-1 in GLIAC). Last season Ferris only faced the Cardinals once, taking them down at home by a score of 4-3.

Then Ferris State heads south to take on the Davenport Panthers (12-4, 1-0 in GLIAC). Last season the Bulldogs faced Davenport twice, winning by scores of 5-2, and 4-3.

The following day, the Bulldogs take on the Grand Valley State Lakers (8-1, 0-0 in GLIAC). The Lakers were a thorn in the Bulldogs side last season, taking them down twice, once by 5-2, then the second time in the GLIAC tournament 4-0.

Men's

Ferris State men's tennis started the season off strong, starting the season off 8-2, while riding a seven game winning streak between Feb. 6 and Feb. 21.

In March, the Bulldogs have gone 2-2 so far, taking a 5-2 loss to Florida Southern and a 5-2 loss against Embry-Riddle. While taking a 7-0 victory over Augustana and a 3-1 win over Eckerd.

Junior Kevin Kovacs believes his team can keep the momentum as they move into the final month of the season.

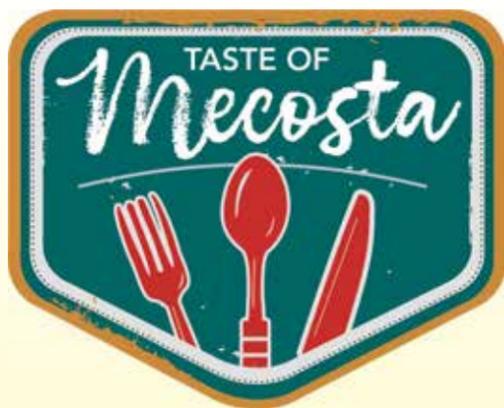
"I feel really good about where our level is this season," Kovacs said. "We have been playing really good tennis and starting 9-3 is a great position to be at.

For the past week we have played several top 10 ranked teams in the country. These matches were a great test and showed us that we can compete and even beat the best teams in division 2 tennis."

The Bulldogs (10-3, 0-0 in GLIAC) will first face off against the Panthers (7-9, 0-1 in GLIAC). The Panthers come into the matchup 2-3 in their last five matches, losing their most recent to Purdue Northwest by a score of 5-2.

Then Ferris State will then take on the Lakers the following day (6-4, 0-0 in GLIAC). The Lakers, just like the Panthers, come into the matchup 2-3 in their last five matches, also losing their most recent match 4-3.

Ferris State women's tennis will take on Saginaw Valley State on March 19 at 3 p.m., while both teams will take on Davenport on March 27 and Grand Valley on March 28, with both times to be determined.



LOCATION
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5:30-8:30pm

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Photo courtesy of Ferris Athletics

Senior Felipe Iser celebrates during a match against Davenport in the 2025 season.