



VISION STATEMENT: What we want to BE as an institution

Frostburg State University, with its emphasis on student engagement¹, will provide an interdisciplinary focus² through core studies in the liberal arts³, opportunities for experiential education⁴, and outstanding programs in education⁵, business⁶, environmental studies⁷, and [to be named⁸ based on performance in response to clearly-defined standards].

¹ **STUDENT ENGAGEMENT** is a collective phrase that addresses the issues cited most often by faculty, staff, and students regarding a desirable learning environment: providing an atmosphere of caring, focusing on the individual student, supporting student growth, offering opportunities for leadership, maintaining a small faculty-student ratio. The concept of developing a true academic community revolves around an emphasis on student success through engagement at every level.

² An **INTERDISCIPLINARY FOCUS** is identified as a key contributor in our efforts “to prepare our students for the 21st century.” Interdisciplinarity is important to helping students develop the necessary skills of thinking critically, looking beyond disciplinary borders, and preparing to live in a world that is inherently multi-disciplinary.

³ The **LIBERAL ARTS** are viewed as the foundation on which other educational emphases are constructed. Our community looks to the liberal arts to provide “an intellectual breadth of vision,” to help students to deal with different situations in a changing world, to become lifelong learners and critical thinkers, and “to produce a global student.” Continuing to build on the Statement of Liberal Education is important, as is completing the implementation of the Undergraduate Education Initiative.

⁴ **EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION**—providing students opportunities to engage in “real life” experiences that enhance their academic requirements—is mentioned more than any other issue as being of fundamental importance for our students. As one faculty member observes, “The more ‘real’ and applicable we make our instruction, the more prepared our students will be to tackle issues and take the initiative to act without being asked or instructed to do so.” Another comments, “The concern for an education has to go beyond what goes on in the classroom.”

⁵ **EDUCATION** as one of our featured programs is first among many recommendations for a market niche. Primary reasons are FSU’s long-standing primacy in the field, our accreditation, our history, and the potential for developing applied EdDs.

⁶ The second most-cited existing program, **BUSINESS**, earns this rank primarily because of its AACSB accreditation, the developing positive reputation of its programs, and general recognition of the ongoing excellence needed to maintain that status.

⁷ **ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES**, both as a curricular focus and as a thematic emphasis for the University, is the single most-cited new program that is deserving of being “featured”. Faculty, staff, and students enthusiastically about how well FSU is positioned, both in its location and with its existing slate of environmentally-focused programs, to become a regional or national center for education in the environment. Virtually every program on campus can contribute to the study of the environment (in fact, courses/concentrations/tracks already exist in programs as diverse as philosophy, geography, biology, and history), and the recent announcement of the “green campus initiative” provides unparalleled opportunities for experiential education.

⁸ **[TO BE NAMED]** alludes to the concern of many that other programs are deserving of being ranked as an “outstanding program.” However, should the idea of market niches be expanded, basing the decision on proof of achievement should be a priority, rather than on “feelings” or politics. Any program wishing to be considered should present evidence of excellence; e.g., faculty achievement, alumni success, graduation rates, currency of curricular content, quality of resources, potential of program with regards to workforce issues, etc.



FSU's FIVE CORE VALUES: Those components of FSU's mission that are inviolate and unchanging.

<p>1. We will empower each student to achieve individual success.</p>	<p>“Caring” is the overall theme that appears throughout all the Forums and in written responses, a theme that translates into the provision of an environment that promotes individual student success, “provides gentle support to encourage and guide growth and learning,” and offers “a safe and supportive environment in which to mature and grow intellectually.” This core value can be considered all-encompassing, in that achievements in support of the following four core values contribute directly to each student’s individual success.</p>
<p>2. We will provide the best education possible, one that enunciates clear standards for teaching and learning.</p>	<p>Identifying a specific “recruitment population” is generally not supported. Instead, the prevalent theme is one of establishing specific standards for academic performance, clearly communicating these to potential students, and helping them understand that they will be held to these standards as FSU students. In effect, students would understand that, by coming to FSU, they would “encounter a learning environment in which excellence is celebrated and expected,” in which “this misconception that FSU is a slacker/party school is eliminated,” and which clearly fosters “an academic environment of accountability and responsibility.” Providing a defined set of academic standards is part of a clear desire to establish and maintain a caring environment by impressing upon students the importance of self-responsibility and accountability.</p> <p>Interestingly, several faculty have spoken to the importance of establishing concurrent standards for themselves; one faculty asks, “If we don’t meet standards we set for ourselves as faculty, how can we expect students to meet those we’ve established for them?” Faculty emphasize the importance of ongoing faculty development: using active and collaborative learning, educating themselves in learning style theory, and incorporating new technology to provide an educational environment with features to which students are already accustomed .</p> <p>Implicit in this core value is an institutional commitment to student learning assessment.</p>
<p>3. We will prepare students for the world beyond college.</p>	<p>In one of the Forums, this succinct observation was offered regarding what students should expect of FSU: “We need to teach them how to actually succeed after college, not just help them graduate.” This concern echoes throughout the numerous recommendations that FSU embrace a comprehensive approach to experiential education—providing “real life” experiences as a complement to classroom studies.</p> <p>In addition to internships, field experiences, course-based activities, and other “traditional” forms of experiential education, training in the basic skills of general education is vital (written communication, oral communication, quantitative literacy, scientific reasoning, technology literacy, information literacy, critical thinking). Continually reinforcing these skills throughout students’ academic careers is of equal importance.</p>



4. We will emphasize opportunities for leadership.	An emphasis on leadership builds upon “real world” skills and a concern voiced by many respondents about the importance of training students to become global citizens. According to one participant, leadership “is something that students can easily identify with . . . Leadership can be defined broader than one specific program. I can define leadership in terms of adventure sports, business can define leadership in management, in marketing; you get the idea. So now you can take those types of concepts and broaden it to be part of almost every program.”
5. We will use technology as a tool for teaching and learning.	The issue of technology and its ubiquity figures prominently in several opinions about its place in higher education. While some faculty are more cautious, asking that the University “engage in a true conversation about the balance between traditional classroom education and education in the on-line world,” others offer a pragmatic view. As an institution, we should “address the fact that we live in a multi-national world interconnected by fiber and satellites. We should be finding unique ways to mesh classroom instruction and personal attention with the most up to date technology available.” Issues about technology also are a factor in conversations about teaching standards, as outlined in #2 above.

All quotations are from the Vision Forum thematic analysis.

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