

Dear Bobcats,

I hope you had a wonderful weekend. I am excited to share highlights from last Saturday's celebration marking the grand reopening of Frostburg State University's newly revitalized Planetarium. It was a truly inspiring evening for our campus and our invited guests.

We were pleased to welcome more than 70 attendees, including FSU leadership, county and regional government partners, state and federal officials, dignitaries, generous donors and valued supporters who helped make this vision a reality. Their presence underscored the importance of the Planetarium as both a teaching tool and a community resource.

The evening began with a reception and ribbon cutting. Guests then experienced a guided sky tour inside the state-of-the-art Planetarium, showcasing its professional-quality digital projection and immersive surround sound. The clarity, brightness and depth of the images created an experience that truly brought the universe to life. The program concluded with a Q&A session led by our very own Dr. Jason Speights.



As I shared during the program, the revitalized Planetarium reflects Frostburg State's commitment to providing inspiring, applied learning opportunities for our students while also

serving as a hub for community engagement. It will play a vital role in advancing STEM education, supporting classroom instruction and offering public programming that invites curiosity and exploration.

This project was made possible through a combination of federal support and the generosity of our donors. I am deeply grateful to the many campus partners, including our facilities staff, IT professionals and colleagues in Advancement and Regional Engagement, whose collaboration and dedication brought this project to fruition.

And while this was truly a team effort, I do want to specifically recognize four campus champions who were instrumental in bringing this project across the finish line.

- John Brewer, our Director of Physical Plant, worked behind the scenes with his dedicated facilities team to make sure that the infrastructure was perfectly in place so that the installation team could do their job.
- Tim Pelesky, our CIO, and his team of IT professionals ensured we were ready to go with state-of-the-art technology.
- Amy Hutcherson, our Planetarium Coordinator, helped keep the work moving with her quiet, focused energy and strong project management throughout.
- Dr. Jason Speights, associate professor of physics and director of the Planetarium, has remained tirelessly devoted to this revitalization and was the backbone of this project. His love of astronomy and physics is second to none, and we are truly indebted to his service.

Looking ahead, we are excited about continued enhancements, including plans for an exhibit hall in the CCIT atrium that will feature interactive displays and memorabilia from NASA astronaut Ricky Arnold '85. These additions will further enrich the experience for students and visitors alike.

I hope you had the chance last week to visit the Planetarium during one of the three special shows for our campus community. If you couldn't attend, the Planetarium will open to the public in June, offering regular programming throughout the summer. I encourage you to take advantage of this remarkable resource and share the experience with your family and friends.

Thank you, again, to everyone who contributed to this milestone moment for our university. I look forward to seeing the many ways our revitalized Planetarium will inspire learning, discovery and connection in the years ahead.

With FSU pride,

Darlene Brannigan Smith, PhD
Interim President