

Good morning, Bobcats.

Welcome to your first “full” week on campus. Last week, our maintenance and facilities and housekeeping teams worked tirelessly, often in challenging conditions, to clear snow, restore walkways, clean buildings and ensure our campus remained safe for returning students, faculty and staff. Behind the scenes, our food service employees also navigated the winter weather to keep dining operations running to ensure our students were fed and cared for. Their dedication and care of these teams for our campus community do not go unnoticed, and like you, I am deeply grateful for their extraordinary efforts. Let’s hope that Mother Nature cooperates with us moving forward so that we can stay on track for a successful spring semester!

I recently penned an op-ed that is scheduled to appear in the Cumberland Times-News this Wednesday, Feb. 4 that highlights some of the important initiatives happening on our campus and the many ways our students incorporate service-learning into their educational experience. I want to take the opportunity to summarize for our campus what will be shared later this week with the broader community.

As you know, at Frostburg State University, learning doesn’t stop at the edge of campus. It comes to life through our students’ commitment to service, civic engagement and community leadership. Over the past year, more than 2,800 volunteers from the FSU community contributed nearly 9,000 hours of service – clear evidence that higher education thrives when it is deeply connected to place.

Whether it is lending a hand to help beautify city parks or delivering meals and care packages to those in need or waking up early to volunteer across the region, our new campus theme, *Together Towards Tomorrow*, reminds us that academic excellence is strengthened by meaningful relationships and collective action.

Each fall, students bring these values to life through nearly 80 registered student organizations. Our students lead and participate in traditions such as The Big Event, holiday food drives and the annual Thanksgiving Basket Collection, which last year delivered 100 baskets containing 3,900 pounds of food and nearly \$3,000 in gift cards to local families. Student-athletes, fraternity and sorority members and student leaders serve year-round supporting community events, partnering with local organizations and addressing real needs close to home.

Civic engagement is equally central to the Frostburg experience. The J. Glenn Beall Jr. Institute for Public Affairs helps prepare students for public service through forums, town halls, scholarships and internships, and it is a powerful bridge between FSU and the public sector. FSU is also proud to be recognized as a Voter Friendly Campus, supporting voter registration, issue-based dialogue and access to the polls.

Whether serving locally or through experiences such as Alternative Winter Break and the Martin Luther King Day of Service, our students continue to show up with empathy, purpose and heart. Like I said, service-learning is central to who we are at FSU – not an add-on. Our students' dedication and compassion embody the very best of Frostburg State University.

I am deeply proud of our students and grateful to the faculty, staff, alumni and partners who support their engagement. Together, we are preparing civic-minded leaders and strengthening the communities we proudly call home.

With FSU pride,

Darlene Brannigan Smith, PhD
Interim President