

Dear Bobcats,

Last week FSU had the privilege of hosting the 2025 Appalachian Regional Commission's annual conference, which gave us the opportunity to showcase our beautiful campus to a very dynamic group of community leaders and entrepreneurs. We were also especially honored to welcome Governor Wes Moore as the keynote speaker.

I offered welcoming remarks to a packed house during the opening plenary session, and I was sure to use my time to brag about FSU and its deep commitment to strengthening our connections within the community through education, workforce development, research and engagement.

I explained that at Frostburg, we align our academic programs with the evolving needs of the regional economy, and our Bobcats are part of Mountain Maryland's community of treasures. I was proud to boast that more than 70% of our graduates find careers in Maryland, with more than 25% of them staying in western Maryland after earning their degrees.

I also took the opportunity to speak about other FSU treasures including our Children's Literature Centre, now the only one of its kind in the U.S., our planetarium, the Cultural Events Series and the newly created institute focused on Frostburg's outdoor recreation economy. My point in highlighting some of our accomplishments was to reaffirm our commitment and success each year in preparing hundreds of graduates who stay to live and work in our region. Hopefully my message resonated because at FSU we work hard to make sure our students' access to affordable excellence is a top priority so that we remain a beacon of innovation in the region.

We also had several FSU faculty and staff who led a breakout session aimed at ways to increase regional development in a way that fosters job creation, entrepreneurship and economic growth. Thanks go out to Jodi Broadwater, Jeffrey Simcoe, Jennifer Walsh and Stacy Wassel for their leadership during this session.

Finally, as we reflect on an exciting and memorable Homecoming and Family Weekend immediately followed by the two-day ARC conference, I would be remiss if I didn't take a moment to extend my deepest gratitude to the Student Engagement and Lane University Center teams for their dedication, long hours and attention to detail in preparing all of the spaces on campus for these back-to-back events. Your extraordinary efforts have not gone unnoticed. Your work behind-the-scenes ensured the overwhelming success of both major events. Throughout the week, I received feedback from so many campus visitors raving about the exceptional, professional staff here at FSU, the great food (thank you to our Elmor team as well!) and the remarkable level of care they received. Your ability to pivot from one event to the next so seamlessly was truly commendable. I would also like to give a shout out to our maintenance and facilities crews for their work beautifying our campus grounds and for the cleanliness of our buildings. Some guests even remarked that they felt like they were at a resort! So again, thank

you for all you did to elevate FSU's reputation within the community and for the essential work you do EVERY DAY to make sure our campus runs smoothly.

In closing, next week Dr. Mathias will provide the weekly message to campus from the Office of the Provost in lieu of my email to share broader academic updates with our faculty, staff, students and alumni. I am looking forward to it.

With FSU pride,

Darlene Brannigan Smith, PhD
Interim President