

Fall 2016 Convocation Address

Dr. Ronald Nowaczyk

Thursday, Sept. 1, 2016

Pealer Recital Hall, Performing Arts Center

Good afternoon and welcome to the convocation for the 2016-17 academic year. I am very pleased and honored to be addressing you this afternoon as Frostburg State University's 15th president. Since joining FSU in early May, I have spent much of my time meeting people, learning about the culture of Frostburg State, hearing about the accomplishments at FSU and the opportunities and challenges we have before us.

I thank each of you for the warm and sincere welcome to the campus and community that you have extended to my family and me. The smiles, the stories, the words of encouragement have all been wonderful. I could not have asked for any more support than we have received from everyone here. We truly feel welcome and are excited about making Frostburg our home. Thank you.

This afternoon, I would like to share some of FSU's recent accomplishments to celebrate the efforts and hard work of our faculty, staff, and students; and then, discuss what I see as our agenda for this upcoming academic year. When I was considering coming to Frostburg, one thing that particularly impressed me was Frostburg's commitment to experiential education. These opportunities for our students continue to expand. I'll note just a few examples here:

- College of Business students won second place in a national case competition sponsored by the Society for Advancement of Management at its international conference.
- Engineering students at our site in Arundel Mills Regional Higher Education Center have been partnering with NASA on a series of projects, most recently building a data acquisition subsystem to take photos and capture environmental data that will be beamed into space through NASA's Tracking and Data Relay Satellite System
- The Student Business Leadership Committee created and coordinated what will be an annual Business Leadership Mountain Retreat to promote student engagement in on-campus organizations and cultivating participants' leadership ability
- Our students' artwork is showing up all over Frostburg, the result of three competitive public art projects that our students designed, presented and completed.
- Our civic learning and democratic engagement efforts have been recognized for many years, and now we have received recognition for the second year as a NASPA Lead Consulting Institution. This means that FSU is mentoring other institutions in the nurturing of these programs.

Frostburg is now receiving national recognition for our commitment to experiential education. The Washington Center, an organization that places students in internships in agencies throughout the D.C. area, recently named Frostburg State University as its "public university of the year." This past summer, we had 10 students in D.C. working at the Sierra Club, the FBI, the State Department, and other organizations. These students also received support from the Beall Institute for Public Affairs, which has been connecting FSU students with state and national legislative internships since 2005. The University will be formally recognized late September, and Amy Shimko, Director of Student Development, has been invited to join The Washington Center's Advisory Board.

You will hear me talk later about our commitment to being a regional partner. Part of that involves being a good neighbor to our community of Frostburg. Here are some of the Town-Gown Initiatives that are being undertaken:

- We have strengthened our ties with local law enforcement agencies. Earlier this summer, the University hosted Bill Laramée, a police officer who serves as the Neighborhood Liaison for the City of Amherst police department. He shared their community policing efforts with University and City officials and our local law enforcement partners, and also presented a workshop for line officers.
- Leaders of our Student Government Association have been working closely with the City of Frostburg to present “A Taste of Frostburg” on Sept. 10. This event is designed to introduce our students to the businesses and resources to be found in downtown Frostburg.
- There has also been more intentional messaging to our students about their responsibilities as members of the community. The members of our BURG Peer Education Network delivered “goodie bags” to students living off campus that included information on ways to be good neighbors, and they are launching a new initiative, FrostBURG Cares, stressing the value of random acts of kindness.

Our Public Safety Building, which is on schedule for completion in the spring semester – and on budget – is strategically located to enhance our collaboration with the city of Frostburg in serving the campus and University neighborhood.

Here are some other highlights:

- The College of Business earned continuing accreditation from AACSB International, following a rigorous review process. This milestone was achieved with the dedication and commitment of the entire College – its faculty, staff, students, and members of the Advisory Board - to instill and reflect continuous improvement in all facets of its academic culture over the preceding five-year period.
- Our international programs continue to grow. We are on a pace for the largest fall enrollment ever for international students. These students bring a global perspective to our corner of Maryland, and enhance the learning experience for our native students.
- We are launching a dual-degree program in economics, with a minor in finance, with Hunan University of Commerce in Changsha, China. Hunan University students enrolled in the program will earn an FSU degree. We have two other cooperative degree programs in China that will come online soon. International experiences for our American students are expanding as well, and our Center for International Education is stepping up its efforts to find ways for students to experience education in another country.
- We were given enhancement funds to implement Helio Campus, analytic software that will provide us with real-time data so that we can analyze budget expenditures, enrollment trends, academic programs and other metrics. It will allow us to help make data-informed decisions based on real-time dashboards and reports, pulling data from different systems and giving us reporting capabilities we haven’t had before

With regard to facilities, after many years of deferring maintenance to balance the university’s budget, we recognize that this is not a sustainable approach. Vice President Rose emphasized the importance for us to address maintenance before I started this past May. We have now committed to the chancellor to show significant improvement in maintaining our buildings, grounds and infrastructure in the current fiscal year. We will meet the standard for the percentage of our budget spent on these projects set by the System by fiscal 2018. We hope to leverage these actions with additional dollars to address our campus facilities’ needs.

Along the lines of ensuring that our student-athletes have quality, equitable facilities, the locker rooms for our women's sports just completed a total renovation. This long-overdue improvement allows each team its own locker room. Generally, about a quarter of our incoming first year students participate in athletics, and about a tenth of our overall student population are athletes, indicating the significant role athletics plays not only in our students' educational experience, but in our overall enrollment as well.

We have good news on a national level. The U.S. Department of Education created the College Scorecard to provide students and their parents with a different way of comparing colleges than those that existed before. These focused – many say inordinately – on the credentials of incoming students and how many applications a college rejected. With a greater focus on cost, value and outcomes, different schools started to gain attention for how well they prepared their graduates for success. Frostburg is one of those schools.

The alumni I have met have told me many stories about how Frostburg and its people were able to find and nurture the best in them. Now there appears to be data to back up the anecdotes I and so many others have heard. For example:

- *The Economist* rated FSU number 101 out of 1,275 four-year schools for enhancing our graduates' earnings potential significantly more than expected for similar schools. This puts FSU in the top 8 percent of these schools.
- The Brookings Institute gave FSU a score of 78 of a possible 100 among all four-year schools nationwide, placing FSU in the top 25 percent of in terms of value added to earnings potential.
- *MONEY Magazine* included FSU on its list of America's 705 "Best Value Colleges" this year, in a study that measured 24 factors in three categories, educational quality, affordability and outcomes.
- LendEDU, a student loan comparison company, ranked FSU ranked 113 among all four-year public colleges and universities studied, and 227 among public and private schools combined in terms of lowest average student debt per borrower. Frostburg was second-lowest among all Maryland schools.

These are a few examples, and as other ranking organizations incorporate these new data, Frostburg is getting a second look.

Please let me turn our attention to this upcoming year. The development of our next strategic plan is foremost in that it will guide many of our actions over the next several years. To know where we are going, I believe we need to evaluate our progress on the 2011-2016 strategic plan. Here are the six strategic goals in that plan.

(DISPLAYS THE FOLLOWING)

GOAL 1: Develop and support academic programs and student services that prepare a changing student population for an era of complexity and globalization.

GOAL 2: Enhance facilities and the campus environment in order to support and reinforce student learning.

GOAL 3: Increase student quality and institutional retention and graduation rates while encouraging baccalaureate students to persist to graduation.

GOAL 4: Recruit and retain diverse and talented faculty and staff committed to student learning and University goals.

GOAL 5: Promote activities that demonstrate the University's educational distinction.

GOAL 6: Serve as a collaborative partner in the cultural, social and economic development in Western Maryland, the region, and the state.

One question is, how well did we do over the past years to address these goals? Related to that question, are:

- Should we continue or modify any of these goals and incorporate them in the next strategic plan?
- Do any of these goals lead us in new directions we should consider in developing our next set of goals?

I recommend a 2017-2023 timeframe for our next strategic plan. 2023 is a special year for Frostburg State University as we celebrate our 125th anniversary as an institution. My hope is that this fall, we have extensive discussions on campus, with alumni and friends of FSU, and with the regional community, to help us develop that plan. What should emerge from that plan are three to five strategic themes or goals that will guide our *thinking, planning, budgeting, and actions* as we move forward.

I chose those words carefully because we must ensure that the thinking and planning we do become reality through our budget and our actions. The last task for the strategic plan will be developing measureable outcomes that help us achieve our strategic themes. I would envision a plan that is succinct and doable and embraced by the campus, our alumni and friends, and the external community.

With regard to the timeline, we are completing an RFP process to identify a facilitator to help us with developing the plan especially as it pertains to having inclusive and meaningful discussions among the various constituencies. The plan must belong to us all to be successful, which means considerable time for listening and processing of information. The Board of Regents meets at Frostburg next summer and I hope we can present our strategic plan at that time.

Let me turn to some news about facilities next. In addition to the public safety building, we have secured funding for the renovation of the five downhill residence halls over the next few years as well as the construction of a new residence hall in the area where the Veterans' Center and Sand Springs are, with those services to be relocated on campus. The design of that hall is underway and we hope to break ground on the new residence hall next summer with a move-in date for students in fall 2019. This building is planned to be a suites-style residence hall and will provide our students with an additional housing option.

Thanks to the efforts of Senator George Edwards and our Maryland Delegates Beitzel, Buckel, and McKay, the Maryland legislature approved planning money for our next academic building for Education and Health Sciences. We have been averaging one new building about every decade and this building which is needed to support our programs in Educational Professions and Health Sciences is very much needed. The Health Center and Counseling and Psychological Services would also be housed in this building. Under optimal conditions, the plans for the building would be complete to allow construction to begin in July 2019 and have occupancy of the building in time for fall 2021.

These building projects exemplify the vitality of the campus as we look to the future. At the same time, I am cognizant of the deferred maintenance needs I mentioned. For example, between 1969 and 1978, FSU added approximately one new building each year. Those buildings have either reached or are reaching the end of expected life cycles for items like roofs, windows and HVAC. We have requests into the Maryland system to assist us with our deferred maintenance. However, we are going to have to show our commitment to these needs by

meeting the system expectations that we spend some of our operating dollars on the physical campus. We made strides on that this past summer with some facility upgrades you may have seen including some new sidewalks and building canopies. I toured several of our classroom buildings this summer and once we know what our census numbers look like, I hope to do some classroom improvements as well. We will begin with those classrooms that are most heavily used. This will be a multi-year undertaking but one that I am committed to in order to improve the quality of our facilities. You will also see work in Pullen Hall as we begin moving offices and operations that will be relocated because of construction. I have asked Vice President Rose and his staff to schedule university briefings on these plans.

I would now like to spend a few minutes talking about our internal self-study from last year. It was clear from the report that there is a desire for greater communication and transparency within FSU. I along with the vice-presidents and division leaderships will continue to listen to your ideas and thoughts to achieve that desire of better communication and transparency. I have taken a few small steps in my office. First, I will continue to send out biweekly emails to the university community. I also plan on scheduling monthly informal listening sessions to learn about campus issues. I have talked with the members of the BURG Peer Education Network to help me schedule an evening meeting each month with students in residence halls. I also welcome invitations from any department to meet this semester. Please contact Sandy Rohrbaugh in my office to schedule a time.

I met with staff this summer to follow up on the discussions begun last year with Dr. Bowling to establish a Staff Senate. I will support and implement a staff advisory body and have asked staff leadership to research what other schools have done and propose a model. We also established an ad hoc University Advisory Council this summer. Membership includes the Vice Presidents, three faculty, three staff members, three students, and myself. The focus of the council is on campus-wide planning and implementation and facilitates real time understanding and discussion of pressing matters affecting the mission and operations of the university. The Council met three times over the summer and is ad hoc in that at the end of the fall semester we will evaluate its operations and decide on any modifications to it in moving forward. Minutes and materials from the Council will be posted on the web for all to read.

Earlier I talked about planning and budgets. I appreciate the work of Dave Rose, Denise Murphy, and the staff in Administration and Finance in developing and managing our budget. The recently completed 2016 fiscal year resulted with Frostburg State adding approximately \$4 million to our reserves. While that may sound like a lot of money, it is just over 3 percent of our annual budget and we cannot count on that reserve being there every year. At the same time, our internal study asks for greater transparency and better alignment of budget to plans. We will use this year during strategic planning to look at our budgeting process. First, I think it is important that you, the members of the university community, understand the budget. Being a public institution and part of a system places constraints on the use of funds. I must admit, I am still learning nuances within the budgeting system. I have asked Dave and his staff to offer forums this fall to explain the budgeting process starting with what I will call Budgeting 101, the very top view on the process. Later meetings will explain the budget in greater detail. The intent is to identify aspects of the budgeting process that are facilitating our work as well as those that are keeping us from our goals. Revenue from additional students is always welcome. Yet, we should also discuss how we reallocate current funds where needed. Before we can accomplish that, however, I think we need to be on the same page with regard to the budget process and the levers we can pull to make things happen.

While we are on the subject of budget, I want to mention the requests I hear for PINs and additional personnel. I ask your patience as we better understand our current distribution of people and our projected needs. Fortunately, the Maryland system is similar to the North Carolina system with regard to PINs and personnel, which has reduced my learning curve here. I would like to work with the university leadership as we look for long-term solutions regarding personnel and compensation. The majority of our budget is personnel, and a full understanding

of the costs, including salaries as well as benefits, is essential for us in planning for future personnel needs. While this is an issue that cannot be solved in one year, I am committed to beginning the process this year. I ask for your support and understanding as we tackle the topic of resource allocation.

As you know, our self-study led to Middle States continuing our accreditation but asking us for two monitoring reports. One addresses institutional assessment at the university level. The other focuses on the assessment of our general education program. Unfortunately, the requirement of these two reports led to us being placed on “warning” by Middle States. That term caused us some negative press this summer. In its letter to us, Middle States conveyed their belief that we can provide the necessary documentation to show our compliance in these two areas. Our Middle States liaison visited campus this month to meet with various groups on campus. The Provost and Professor Evan Offstein from the College of Business visited with our liaison this week to review our plans. Professor Offstein has agreed to work in the Provost’s office this year. Along with Ms. Sara-Beth Bittinger, they will be leading the efforts to complete those reports due in March. The conversations with our liaison have been very encouraging, and I believe we will be able to produce the necessary documentation to meet the Middle States’ expectations.

My final comment on the self-study is in response to the institution’s acknowledgement that the self-study came at a time when we had numerous interim appointments. One of those interim positions was for provost and vice president for academic affairs. As you are probably aware, we are moving forward with a national search for our next provost. An announcement went out earlier this week identifying the members of the search committee and the process. There will be a link off of my webpage with information for the community throughout the search. We hope to have final candidates visit campus and meet with the university community right after the Thanksgiving break.

Please let me spend a few minutes sharing what I see as the opportunities and potential for Frostburg State University. Although they overlap, I have publicly talked about Frostburg State’s future in terms of student success and FSU’s role as a regional university.

Student success is our primary goal. We strive for our students to graduate with the knowledge, skills, motivation, and attitudes to contribute to society and lead happy and meaningful lives. While we certainly want our students to be employed in fields of their interest, we want them to be fully engaged citizens. In today’s world, parents, the public and students talk of “value.” Value is often defined in terms of two components, affordability and likelihood of success. As a public regional university, our costs are lower than most of our competitors, both in the private and public sectors. The challenge for us – common among regional universities – is the success side of the equation. The two most-often cited metrics are the retention rates of students and the 4-year and 6-year graduation rates. We know there are a host of factors that keep students from graduating including financial reasons, personal reasons, student’s plans to transfer, etc. Yet, as an institution I hope we have the confidence and faith in ourselves to do that critical look to identify ways we could improve our graduation rates. I suspect many of you in this room can think of systematic things we do or should do to improve our graduation rates. I have heard people speak of graduating students one at a time, meaning we attend to advising and communicating student issues across both academic and student affairs. I have also seen the word “intentionality” used to indicate that we are serious about what we say and what we do in terms of student success. I hope we devote time this year to examining the factors that will help us improve our graduation rates.

I also think it is important for us to focus on the word “student” as we look to our future. We all know that the competition for the traditional 18-year-old high school graduate has intensified. The pool of these students is not growing. If anything, the pool is shrinking. While we will always be there for the high school graduate, we are

finding greater demands in education from transfer students and adult learners. I am finding this discussion on expanding our student profile resonating with the public in the region.

Well over a third of our incoming class this fall consists of transfer students. I have met three of the four community college presidents in this area. I have had extensive discussions with two of them about making the transfer process more seamless and the possibility of dual enrollment and reverse transfer. We need for FSU to be the college of choice for transfer students.

The largest untapped market for regional universities is the adult learner who has some college credits or a college degree. I hope, as a university community, we are open to considering this adult market where it fits with our areas of expertise and interests. What I have been sharing in external meetings are three concepts, affordability, convenience, and relevancy.

Affordability requires us to look at how we “package” our education costs to adults. In some instances, we may be able to have employers cover some of the student cost. We also need to look at our fee structure for adults.

Convenience includes the use of technology in instruction. FSU, like many rural universities, has made the successful transition to online courses in the summer. Why? Because students no longer have the luxury of being on campus for a summer to take courses. We also are offering the equivalent of the traditional 15-week long course in different lengths of time. I ask that we think about the working professional adult and how we can best deliver a degree to that individual.

And, the last term is **relevancy**. We need to listen to what the adult learner says he or she needs from the educational program and translate that into what the academic discipline or disciplines can offer. As an example, I have had conversations with leaders in health care in this region and asked what skills or knowledge their employees should have if they are seeking a bachelor’s degree in health sciences. What I heard included knowledge of health-care regulations, value-based health care, and case management. The challenge for our faculty is to listen and interpret what we hear, and then put together a first-rate program that we can be proud of that helps those professionals in their careers. For too long we in higher education have said we want students to be life-long learners, and then we make it difficult for them to connect with us to continue that learning. I am confident we have the talent and leadership here to help these adult learners.

Let me turn to the regional commitment. Clearly our first role will be in meeting the educational needs of the citizens of this region, whether they be the 18-year old high school graduate, the transfer student from a community college, or the adult professional we just talked about. We also have a role to serve the region in terms of artistic and cultural events. The 60th anniversary of our Cultural Events Series demonstrates our commitment and service to this region. Our students’ artistic endeavors are another cultural benefit, and we partner with other cultural and artistic entities in the region to provide successful arts venues and events. We will continue to enhance those efforts.

We also have an expectation from the state system and the state government to serve as an asset for economic and community development. We are viewed as a primary asset in Western Maryland. National research has shown that rural communities with a college or university do better than those without a higher education institution. My commitment to the people in this region is to look for meaningful ways to support the regional economic and community development opportunities.

You will hear me say that we are not a bank. We will not use state tuition dollars to fund economic and community development. But what we do have is more precious – we have talent. We have faculty and students

who can get involved in projects to make our communities better. These partnerships – and I am emphasizing partnerships – should be a win-win relationship. Our students can get valuable experience outside of the classroom, faculty may find the projects consistent with their creative or scholarly agendas, and the community partner may get something that advances the well-being and lifestyle of their citizens or clients. While we should be open to these possibilities, we must be thoughtful as we enter into these partnerships to ensure they are consistent with our mission and we can deliver on our promises. If the region advances, so does Frostburg State University. I ask for your support as I and others champion FSU within our region.

Thank you for your attention to this update, and stay tuned for some exciting things to come!

And now, allow me to present our 2016 FSU Staff Awards for Excellence Award Winners

In the Exempt Employee category, we honor Lynn Ketterman from University Advancement.

Lynn has been working at FSU in different capacities for 20 years. She started working at FSU in a contingent position with Alumni Affairs in 1995. Beginning in 2001, Lynn continued to support FSU in various part-time roles over seven years while raising a family. She returned to full-time status in 2008 in her current role as Prospect Research Analyst.

Lynn has developed relationships with alumni to turn them not simply into donors but into mentors for our students. Her unbridled compassion and sincere care for our students to provide networking opportunities with alumni enable her to open doors for potential employment and internships.

Lynn's contributions to students continue into her personal life. Lynn took on a mother-away-from-home role for the students of Phi Mu Delta. She is affectionately known as "Momma K". She offers advice, career assistance, resume critiques, home-cooked meals and an open ear.

According to her nomination letter, "Lynn Ketterman acts each and every day with the success of our students in her thoughts, words, and actions."

Congratulations, Lynn!

In the Nonexempt Employee category, I am very pleased to honor Sandra Rohrbaugh, Executive Administrative Assistant in the President's Office.

Sandy has been employed at FSU for an amazing 44 years.

Sandy is the friendly face who greets you when you come to the President's Office. She always makes sure that you feel welcome – regardless if you're an important state representative, a student or just someone who is lost in the Hitchins Building.

Sandy is one of those people who is asked to do much more than her job description might indicate, always busy behind the scenes lending a helping hand. She is completely devoted to FSU, and I am lucky to have her looking after me. She is a delightful person to work with and has helped me immeasurably in learning my way here at Frostburg State University. I personally thank you, Sandy.

Congratulations, Sandy!

In the Nonexempt Employee/Facilities/Maintenance category, we recognize Jason "Jay" Howard.

Jay has been a carpenter in FSU's Physical Plant just shy of 6 years. He takes extreme pride in the work that he performs. He provided the highest level of craftsmanship, with a keen eye for detail, as well as a commitment to being fiscally responsible. Jay brings to each project a willingness to communicate and work through the details with the project's user. He takes care in making sure each project is completed to that person's full satisfaction.

Outside of the workplace Jay has volunteered countless hours coaching Pee Wee football, specifically, for the Frostburg Cougar organization, where Jay coached players for 12 years. In addition, Jay is a member and active volunteer at the Mt. Savage United Methodist Church. He is always ready and willing to help at church functions, doing repairs, building props for church services and helping out wherever a need arises.

FSU and the Frostburg community are very fortunate to have someone of Jay's caliber and dedication.

Congratulations, Jay!

In closing, please join me in thanking Dr. Tom Bowling for his service to Frostburg State University this past year as Interim President. Let me thank each of you once again for your support of my efforts here and for your warm welcome extended to my family and me. I am truly thankful and very pleased to be here at Frostburg State University and look forward to our journey together over the upcoming years. Thank you and my best to each of you and all of the FSU Bobcats out there.