

Here's our next vice presidential update, from Al Delia, vice president for Regional Development and Engagement:

Update from Regional Development and Engagement

Though long but wrongly renowned as a Chinese admonishment, "May you live in interesting times." certainly defines what we witness in our world every day. For Frostburg State University and for our region, these interesting times portend opportunity and a future of promise and cooperation.

The Division of Regional Development and Engagement was created to more closely connect FSU with our community and to sometimes help bring together and lead our region toward opportunities to improve it. One successful example of this work is the creation and launch of a new regional economic development effort, the ***I-68 Regional Alliance***. Without funding support from the Appalachian Regional Commission and FSU leadership as convener, facilitator and arbiter, this new regional partnership of economic development, chamber of commerce and tourism interests from each of five counties in three states – Allegany and Garrett Counties in Maryland, Somerset and Bedford Counties in Pennsylvania and West Virginia's Mineral County – would not have come to fruition.

About a year in the making, partners from the region have created an organizational and governance structure comprised of 16 voting members. Each of the five counties have three voting representatives on the board broadly representing economic development, business and tourism interests. Additionally, The Greater Cumberland Committee (TGCC) has agreed to serve as the organizational host and financial fiduciary for The Alliance. A member of the TGCC governing board will be formal liaison between TGCC and The Alliance and serve as a voting member of the I-68 Alliance board. The voting board members on The Alliance board will appoint a (yet undetermined) number of non-voting ex-officio members to serve on the I-68 Alliance governing board. As an example, The Alliance anticipates appointing FSU's Vice President of Regional Development and Engagement as a non-voting, ex-officio member.

By-laws governing operations are in the process of review and adoption and a fee or dues structure is under development to assure long-term financial sustainability of the organization.

The I-68 Regional Alliance has had an attractive and meaningful logo developed, which will be prominently displayed on the new website (www.I68Alliance.com) and featured on marketing materials. Members of the I-68 Alliance are already devising forceful plans to foster job creation in each of the three targeted industry sectors identified by The Alliance:

1. Lifestyle Manufacturing;
2. Aerospace Sector Supply Chain; and
3. Information Technology: Security Software and Services.

Events and activities aggressively marketing the region are already under way, including a robust presence at Mountain Maryland PACE (Positive Attitudes Change Everything) at the end of January 2020. PACE is an annual event in Annapolis designed to showcase advantages of Western Maryland and thank state political leaders for their ongoing support of efforts in the westernmost part of the state. In fact, this year, support of the I-68 Regional Alliance itself is one of a handful of regional priorities PACE has chosen to highlight to state leaders in Annapolis. The Alliance will undertake similar efforts in West Virginia and Pennsylvania in the coming months.

The creation and launch of the I-68 Regional Alliance, with the enthusiastic and strong support of partner organizations in the five-county area, will make the interesting times in which we live hopeful and successful ones for our region and for Frostburg State University.

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