



THE CHALLENGER CENTER



Frostburg State University is entering into an agreement with the national Challenger Center to provide realistic space travel and mission control simulation experiences for middle school students from across the state and region. The Challenger Center Network grew from the catastrophic disaster of the Challenger Shuttle explosion in 1986. The mission for that flight had the distinction of being education-focused and included teacher Christa McAuliffe on its crew. FSU is thrilled to have a NASA astronaut, Ricky Arnold '85, as an alumnus who flew on a space shuttle and spent five months on the International Space Station. NASA dubbed 2018 as the "Year of Education on Station," and Arnold used his teaching experience to help complete McAuliffe's legacy.

Program Vision

Challenger Center missions are NASA approved STEM experiences designed for middle school students and are available at Challenger Learning Centers around the world. The space-themed, simulation-based experiences are led by trained Flight Directors and take place in a fully immersive Space Station and Mission Control. For each half-day mission, students and teachers are divided into two groups – one in Mission Control, the other in a simulated spacecraft. Roles are then switched halfway through as part of the story arc. We intend for the Challenger Learning Center to be part of a Science Center providing drop-in, hands-on activities for visitors, such as robotics and coding.

Practical Considerations

FSU has negotiated with the City of Frostburg to lease for \$1 per year, and ultimately purchase for \$1, the former City Hall on Main Street, which the city vacated for a new facility. Placing the Challenger Center in this highly visible and accessible location will add to the vibrancy of downtown Frostburg and will allow Arnold's artifacts (loaned from NASA for permanent display) to be an informative and interesting stop for visitors to town.

We have secured a commitment from Allegany Public Schools to add this experience to their science learning curriculum for middle school students, which comprises 40 sixth and eighth grade classes (averaging 30 students per class). Written support has also been received from neighboring school systems in Maryland, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Additionally, we are reaching out to all school systems within a 90-minute radius of Frostburg to offer them an opportunity to participate. We expect to impact 5,000 students annually. FSU anticipates that the Center's operating expenses will be covered by the school systems' payments, as well as other programs.

Funding Needs

The total cost of the project is anticipated to be \$5.5 million and we are seeking an additional \$500,000 to cover first-year operating costs and contingencies. FSU has received \$3 million from the Governor's Capital Budget to pay for the design and renovation of the building. We are seeking funding from other governmental sources as well as from individuals and companies to pay the national Challenger Center Network \$2.5 million for the purchase of the equipment, its installation, and the training of staff to operate the simulations for school classes and others. To date, we have received approximately \$1 million. We hope to have the Center fully operational in the early spring of 2023.

Naming opportunities are available:

frostburgstateforgingfutures.com/naming-opportunity/challenger-learning-center.

**For more information, please contact John Short, Vice President for University Advancement,
at jtshort@frostburg.edu or 301-687-4068.**