

Fall 2011 Convocation Address
Dr. Jonathan Gibraltar
Thursday, September 15, 2011
3:30 p.m., Pealer Recital Hall

Good afternoon. It is always an honor to speak to you about Frostburg State University—and today is no exception. Thank you for joining me. I realize you are all very busy people serving our students, so the fact that you took time out of your day to hear an update about our university is truly an indication of your heartfelt commitment to FSU.

I want to begin by asking you to take a moment to look at the people around you: some familiar faces you've known for years, but also many new faces that you haven't seen before. This University is changing, and every person in this room has a role to play and a contribution to make in how these next few years will unfold. In how our institution will ultimately be defined. We're all stakeholders in this transformation.

Those of you who were at Fall Convocation last year may remember that I issued a call to action. Frostburg had reached a fork in the road, and we realized it was time to take the "Road Less Travelled"—the high road—the path that would lead us to becoming a high-quality academic institution with national distinction.

And like any journey, there have been some bumps in this road, some challenges along the way. The challenge of reaching new audiences with the story of how we're a serious institution that cares deeply about our students. The challenge of somehow making this happen during what some people have described as the worst economic crisis of our time, with many of us working longer hours with fewer resources.

Connecting our progress to the things we do at our jobs every day is essential if Frostburg is going to grow in the right direction. We cannot be on this journey together if we don't have the same roadmap in place, and as you will learn today, Frostburg is evolving. We are moving forward. Like any evolution, it is not a simple, one-time event, or something that can magically happen in one year, or even two years. It's a multi-faceted, ongoing process, with many factors at play that affect how we determine what our best solutions and ideas will be as we reach new levels of excellence.

Today, I will give you an overview of some of those ideas and solutions: our most important strategic priorities and how we're making progress in accomplishing them. These priorities, as outlined in our Strategic Plan, are to improve our academic reputation, to develop experiential learning, and to improve the quality of our academic and residential facilities. We must identify our niche in the marketplace of American higher education, and I believe these priorities will get us there.

I want to emphasize to everyone here that these priorities aren't just what I think is best.

- Many people have provided input through the President's Advisory Council on Institutional Effectiveness. Consisting of campus-wide representatives, this group was developed so our campus could evaluate the important connection between our planning and allocation of resources. They've come up with a variety of targeted action items to better define our strengths, our brand and our overall

academic excellence that I believe will profoundly shape the year ahead.

- We also get a lot of valuable feedback from **Faculty Senate**.
- We have received an evaluation of our **Periodic Review Report** from the Middle States external reviewers. I can tell you that their report is very positive but we will not officially know the outcome until later this fall. I'd like to personally thank everyone who was involved in this incredibly important project and congratulate you on your excellent work.

Let's start our conversation today by discussing enrollment.

ENROLLMENT

In our effort to be more selective, you can see that there are some aspects of our enrollment situation that are quite promising. SAT scores and high school GPAs are on the rise. But as we expected, the size of our freshman class has decreased. However, a smaller and more academically prepared freshman class is what the faculty have asked for over these past years. It's what our campus and local community, including many of our students and regional employers, have said was needed in their feedback they've shared with us. And keep in mind that by retaining more students, we can better accommodate the decrease in our enrollment.

I am pleased to tell you that the *2012 U.S. News & World Report* is beginning to reflect our focus on recruiting quality students.

Although our overall ranking did not improve this year, specific ratings did:

- Frostburg is also increasingly perceived as being a worthy competitor to our peer institutions. Our peer perception score went up slightly. This score is worth 25 percent of our total ranking. When our peers see us more positively, our overall reputation improves. I will highlight this more when I talk about branding later today.

It's important to note that these rankings reflect what we accomplished in fall 2010. I imagine they will continue to improve next year when the *U.S. News & World Report* evaluates Frostburg based on our efforts of 2011.

As we interpret our enrollment situation, it is also reassuring to see increases in our graduate and transfer students, as well as in our international student population. When you really look at our overall enrollment, we went from 5,470 in fall of 2010 to 5,428 this fall: We're only off by 42 students. While FTEs are down, if the other areas where we saw growth—our graduate student enrollment, our community college transfers--- hadn't happened, we'd have a multi-million dollar problem on our hands right now. But we don't. If that's not a reason for us to feel better about our enrollment situation, I don't know what is.

- I want to stop right now and personally thank the College of Business—it took a long time, but your efforts to put the MBA program online resulted in one of the

largest increases in enrollment that we've seen in any one group of students. There has been a 75 percent increase over this past year. This enrollment increase reflects 128 people in traditional classes and 124 online graduate students. I want to thank you for making this a priority and reality.

- I also want to thank the College of Education. You're nearing completion of establishing an Ed.D. in Educational Policy and Leadership, a program we've needed for a long time. By establishing this program, we join the many comprehensive universities who already have applied doctorate degrees and expand our offerings in graduate study. We believe once it is approved, the Ed.D. will also dramatically increase our overall enrollment numbers.
- And I am very grateful to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences for its rapid development of our new R.N. to B.S.N. nursing program. We expect to hear about our Nursing accreditation in a few weeks and, if accredited, I believe our enrollment in this online program will also grow dramatically. We also plan to establish an online Master of Science in Nursing at Frostburg.
- This past summer, I asked the Academic Coordinators from the University System of Maryland at Hagerstown to prepare a plan for enrollment growth and expansion at USMH. Their strategic priorities have been discussed with me, many of the Vice Presidents, Academic Deans and Associate Deans and are included in the Strategic Plan you were handed when you walked in this afternoon. They believe that with adequate support and an expansion of their marketing resources, that they can grow FSU enrollment by 50 percent in three years.
- And look at the increase in our international students at FSU; it's outstanding that we're building a global community here on campus. In fact, I'm leading a small delegation to China this fall to create new exchange partnerships in Hunan Province and Taiwan.
- And, while I am discussing international enrollment, I want to mention the relationship we have formed with an Oklahoma.-based firm called The Language Company. FSU has purchased the old Counseling Center building and the apartment building next to it on Center Street and we're renting these spaces to this company. They will renovate the facilities and this spring they are opening an English As A Second Language center where they will teach students from around the world. We anticipate many of these students will eventually enroll at FSU in our undergraduate and graduate programs. This was accomplished with special revenue funds made available to us from the state of Maryland. It had no impact on operational funding. We are renting the space to this company and will eventually make back more than what we put into this project.

RETENTION AND GRADUATION RATE SUCCESS STRATEGIES

Let me talk a little bit about our retention and graduation rates. Addressing student quality also means pinpointing where we're losing students and providing better resources to retain them. We have to determine how we can put our students on a path

that leads them to successful completion in four years. Eventually, we will reach a place where that number of incoming freshmen can and should be based on quality and our existing resources, and our desire to increase our retention rate to 80 percent.

I ask you to think about the complexity of our student body. We have many freshmen who come to Frostburg as first-generation college students—students who struggle to be academically successful while often holding down jobs to support themselves. We even have some students who are just not emotionally ready for the rigors of college—just like many other schools. Frostburg has some great programs and resources in place to help them, not to mention amazing mentors among our faculty and staff. We also have many outstanding students who readily excel in their classes from Day 1. They stay at Frostburg because their ideas and opportunities feel bigger here than they do at other schools ... and that's also thanks to the many great educators at Frostburg, and what we make possible for them. But I invite everyone, not just people who teach our students, to think about how you can ensure our students' success here. It's a collective goal for our whole university. You see, once the Admissions folks bring these students to Frostburg it's up to all of us to keep them here. We want to create an environment of academic excellence and instill the expectation that that's what we're about.

We must improve our retention and graduation rates. I'd like to highlight a few resources and developments that will move us forward in supporting this goal:

- As you may remember, last year Frostburg began using MAP-Works with the freshman class. We're now expanding the use of MAP-Works to include all undergraduate students and integrating it with Blackboard, which will make it easier for faculty to use. Through MAP-Works, we are able to gather information that is shared with a network of individuals who can contribute to the success of our students, including academic advisors, faculty, coaches, and professional staff in residence life and the advising center. If we all know about some of the challenges that are confronting our students, we can more effectively identify the resources and assistance they need to excel. Great educators offer students a skillful blend of both challenge and support. MAP-Works is a tool that has the potential to increase the effectiveness of the support we provide students. Last year, few faculty used MAP-Works. Please take advantage of this tool so we can better help our students. I believe it can become a major retention strategy, and it has been used successfully at other universities. In a conversation with Faculty Chair Mary Mumper late this summer, she asked me what faculty could do to help the University meet its strategic goals. Recognizing how very busy faculty are already, I said that the only new thing I would like to ask each faculty member to do this year is to make greater use of the MAP-Works system. I am convinced that doing so will give us the opportunity to enhance the success of our students, and improve our retention and graduation rates.
- We are currently in the process of conducting a search for an Assistant Provost for Student Success and Retention. This person will be responsible for looking at all of our retention strategies and better coordinate those services, including:
 - focusing on the University's Achievement Gap initiative,
 - assessing retention and advising efforts;

- developing and implementing an undergraduate retention and advising plan and
- promoting collaborative retention efforts between the Academic Affairs Division and the Student and Educational Services Division.

We are currently reviewing applications and hope to fill this position very soon.

- With the help of our faculty, we're refining how we reach students through course redesign. We're trying to redesign our gatekeeper courses, those courses that are most challenging for our students, using the model that has been created by the National Center for Academic Transformation.
 - In addition to general psychology and developmental math courses, we'll also be using this model in the Department of Communication Studies
 - I'd like to personally acknowledge the hard work of Dr. Megan Bradley in FSU's Department of Psychology. She's received grants and national recognition for her work in course redesign that has led to improved academic performance of students.
 - I know our faculty work incredibly hard to connect with students, as part of your meaningful work as educators. I invite all of you consider course redesign as part of this process; there is nothing better than that moment when you realize a student really gets it. Course redesign can be a part of how you facilitate those experiences. Chancellor Kirwan is really behind this movement and has put his own money into the many grants that are available to support course redesign.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Frostburg continues to enhance the educational experience of our students through our expanded focus on experiential learning. While what a student learns in the classroom is incredibly important, how they apply it outside the classroom really demonstrates how it's affected them. Every time the student discovers the joy of what they learned through their academic offerings and sees the application in the real world, we're giving them the passport to success. Last year, we set out to document all the experiential learning opportunities that exist at Frostburg State. We've have found that they exist throughout every academic and non-academic program at the institution; last year our inventory revealed more than 60 examples of experiential learning.

This year, our plan is to develop an experiential transcript for our students – something they can add to their resume and bring to a graduate school interview or to a potential employer to demonstrate what they've accomplished. We are good at experiential learning, and we intend to grow it beyond a simple category into something that is intrinsic to our institutional culture and brand.

Thanks to the President's Advisory Council on Institutional Effectiveness and Mary Mumper, Frostburg continues to move forward in funding experiential learning opportunities: Last year, we made \$35,000 available to 15 different faculty projects in our three Colleges through the President's Experiential Learning Enhancement Fund. This fund was established to promote educational experiences that engage students in experiential learning opportunities such as internships, volunteerism, undergraduate research and study abroad. This fund is being offered again this year and you will hear

about the process of allocating these funds very soon.

In addition, the FSU Foundation, through the Annual Fund, will continue to provide financial support for faculty and staff projects. The Foundation has made \$300,000 in grants available to faculty, staff and students over the last four years, in supporting proposals directly tied to our Strategic Plan. Most recently, we were able to offer over \$98,000 to fund 36 different proposals. We will be offering these grants again this year. I want to make sure everyone knows that the Foundation providing this kind of support is really unique; this doesn't happen nationally. Our Board makes this commitment to you because they believe in our faculty and staff and how you are really trying to make a difference in the lives of our students. You all play a part in building Frostburg's future through the meaningful projects and experiences you create for our students.

FACILITIES & SUSTAINABILITY

Our University is also building Frostburg's future in a very literal sense: through academic and residential facility upgrades necessary for bringing this campus further into the 21st century. We've made this one of our institutional priorities, as part of our Strategic Plan.

Here are some updates on how we're gradually transforming our campus:

- Due to the upcoming demolition of Tawes Hall, we had to move all faculty offices out of that building. In an effort to be frugal, we decided to complete the new office spaces in Dunkle Hall ourselves, adding new office space for faculty. The FSU Physical Plant did an outstanding job and the faculty report they are very happy with the offices in Dunkle. The process of demolishing Tawes Hall will begin in January by removing the asbestos and then razing the building. Our hope is that the construction of the Center for Communications and Information Technology will begin sometime next summer.
- We're excited about getting CCIT going, and I'm pleased to report that it is scheduled to be occupied in January of 2014. It will be a state-of-the-art building that will herald greater innovation and an expansion of technology on our campus.
- As part of the site prep for the CCIT building, FSU is relocating ADA ramps from the west of Tawes to the west of the Performing Arts Center. The PAC steps will be closed during this time, then reconstructed to include new ramps. This project is to begin in October.
- We have just broken ground on our Sustainable Energy Research Facility; the goal is for SERF to be under a roof before winter. SERF gives us an opportunity to position ourselves as a national center for renewable energy and research, something very much in line with raising our profile and overall excellence.
- After completing a marketing survey about our residential capacity on campus, I informed the Board of Regents that we have need for an additional on-campus residence hall with a capacity of 425 beds. This is a high priority for University

and Board of Regents, and while we don't know the date, we are in the queue for this project to be bonded in the State of Maryland. Over the past five years, we've invested a million dollars each year renovating several of our older residence halls. We've added new windows, new heating and ventilation systems. New bathrooms and carpeting. Each renovation has dramatically improved the living environment for our students. This year we'll be renovating Simpson.

- By now, hopefully everyone here has had a chance to spend time in our beautifully renovated Lane Center. This building is so impressive that it was recently featured in a national magazine for the National Association of College Stores.
- We will soon begin the remodeling of the Leake Room in the Cordts Physical Education Center and eventually convert it into a very nice room that will house the FSU Athletic Hall of Fame and will be used for select events.
- We'll soon be improving the lighting in the Ort Library and we're in the process of replacing lighting in the Performing Arts Center to gain greater energy efficiency by reducing heat. The PAC lighting project is in partnership with Potomac Edison, which will provide us with rebates. I was pleased to learn that we have an FSU alumnus, John Emerick, Class of 1990, at Potomac Edison who has been instrumental with the PAC project.
- Once the CCIT is completed, the next building in the governor's budget is the Education and Allied Health Building. Simultaneously, we're also planning an extensive renovation on Framptom Hall so it can become the sole home of the College of Business.

Our Strategic Plan clearly directs us to reinvest money into our academic and residence facilities. Right now, over 90 percent of the buildings on the FSU campus were built before 1978. This has to change if we're going to improve our overall quality and excellence. Simply put, we can't stand still and let our facilities deteriorate. Frostburg has to modernize by upgrading our academic and non-academic facilities if we are to remain competitive in the higher education marketplace.

Our institution's commitment to sustainability is guiding us in how we can become more fiscally responsible with our facilities.

- Frostburg is participating in the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System, or STARS, which rates sustainability in higher education. Select staff and faculty members have been asked and will soon be asked to provide relevant information to complete the STARS assessment. I appreciate your efforts and cooperation in sharing helpful information with FSU's Learning Green, Living Green for this project.
- Thanks to a Constellation Energy EcoStar Grant, FSU's LGLG Committee, its faculty-led Sustainability Studies Committee and the University's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, will oversee the launch of a student-led initiative to complete

energy audits of academic and residence hall buildings. This is a great learning opportunity for our students, and a way we can better assess how we're using energy.

Preparing our students for "green collar jobs" is just one way our commitment to sustainability is improving our institution. Our focus on sustainability is also increasingly earning our institution national recognition. This past summer we received a national Climate Leadership Award at the Fifth Annual American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment Summit in recognition of our campus' commitment to sustainability. I hope anyone out there today who is interested in the future of our planet will consider getting involved in the University's sustainability initiative.

Your participation and initiative are what will ensure sustainability can continue to grow at Frostburg, as part of our institutional identity.

SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF CAMPAIGN

As many of you know, we completed our campaign, Staking Our Claim: The Campaign for Frostburg in late June. Thanks to the generosity of so many amazing people who make up the Frostburg family, our University raised \$16.7 million. That's \$1.7 million more than our original goal of \$15 million. This is, in a word, extraordinary.

I greatly appreciate the unwavering support FSU received, especially during such uncertain economic times. I'm pleased to report that we had over 5,600 new donors, including nearly 600 new leadership donors, donors who contributed \$1,000 or more, and 40 new members of our Old Main Society, people who named FSU in their estate planning. We created 69 new endowed funds. During the course of the campaign, faculty and staff have contributed over \$611,000. These commitments ensure Frostburg can continue to grow and provide our students with a high-quality educational experience. We have entered a new era of fundraising for this institution unlike any other time in its history. I think it is because people really believe Frostburg is on the path to bigger and better things.

I'd like to briefly mention the how the FSU Foundation is approaching fundraising as we look beyond the completion of Staking Our Claim:

- Our Foundation Board, in response to my call to recruit more academic achievers has made a commitment to raise \$2.5 million in merit scholarships by 2015. These scholarships will allow us to recruit more highly qualified students and free up more institutional funding for need-based scholarships.
- Our Board is taking a year to assess our capacity for the next campaign, which will take on different issues and engage more people. We are setting our sights even higher for the next campaign.

B.J. Davisson, Vice President of University Advancement, likes to say that "regardless of financial resources, station in life and daily schedule, one will ultimately find the time and money for causes deemed important."

It's clear that there are some amazing people here at Frostburg and in its extended family of friends and alumni who think our University is an incredibly important and

worthy cause. I'd like to personally thank everyone who chose to support our campaign, through your various contributions, financial and otherwise. These have been tough economic times for all of us, and I'm really moved and deeply appreciative of the fact that so many of you have stood by this University and made a decision to support our campaign. Let's give ourselves a hand, we deserve it.

BRANDING: WE ARE ALL AMBASSADORS

You know, if you consider how Frostburg receives only 32 percent of our funds from the state of Maryland, it becomes even clearer that we are all stakeholders in this institution. We don't get a big infusion of funds every year. We have to build what we do from the ground up, through tuition, fundraising and grants.

Frostburg has never really been featured on any high-profile lists of America's top party schools. That's not the problem. The problem has been that we've never had anything to fill in the blanks and describe ourselves. As a result, urban legends and not investing in our marketing have really hurt us and created a lackluster reputation that does us no justice.

Changing image and reputation takes time, strategy and resources. Let me explain: A brand is not a logo. It's a relationship. A well-executed brand strategy can enhance loyalty, define FSU within the competitive market, grow enrollment and enlist the help of donors.

The President's Advisory Council on Institutional Effectiveness has identified refocusing our branding efforts as one of our Strategic goals. As a first step, this summer, a group of faculty and staff met with Dr. Terry Flannery, the mastermind behind College Park's "Fear the Turtle" campaign. Terry is now vice president of university communications and marketing at American University and consults regularly with college and universities interested in developing brand strategies for their organizations. One thing she said that really stayed with me: "A brand should be a mirror and a bridge ... but mostly a mirror." In other words, a brand has to uniquely, distinctly and authentically reflect a university's true strengths with enough aspiration to help the university raise its profile in the higher education marketplace.

To turn our brand into something really remarkable, Frostburg needs to focus on several key goals:

We need to identify what is true about ourselves.

Through the hard work of our faculty and staff, Frostburg State University has been changing. It is time to reflect that change through a data-driven, strategic branding process. To do this, we are bringing in an outside market research firm that will be gathering data for us to hopefully launch a new brand identity next summer.

We also need to get behind the idea that we are all ambassadors for Frostburg.

Ultimately, we are all brand ambassadors who are responsible for our university's reputation and our ongoing pursuit of quality and excellence. Everyone brings something to the table, whether it is connecting with prospective students at Open Houses, doing service and volunteer work in our local area or welcoming visitors to our campus in a

friendly and helpful way. What we think, what we say, what we viscerally experience when we imagine this university really matters.

I want the next five years of my presidency to be about how we define who we are within the higher education marketplace. That's something that's going to take more than one year to accomplish. It's also going to take the commitment of everyone who is affiliated with Frostburg State University.

CONCLUSION

For years, Frostburg has tried to be all things to all people, and this has led to us only being able to marginally meet the many demands placed upon our institution. We can't be everything to everyone anymore. We have to embrace and foster those qualities that make us unique, the qualities that have the most traction and will bring us national distinction.

We have identified specific institutional priorities within our Strategic Plan - improving our academic reputation, developing experiential learning, and enhancing the quality of our academic and residential facilities. It's as simple as this: if we want Frostburg State University to get the recognition it deserves, we must focus on these priorities. And if we do, five years from now we'll be a much stronger, more vibrant university. We must approach this with a unified sense of purpose and find new ways to work together to achieve these goals. We have to be persistent and stay our course. We have to believe we can be great.

Our students have to want to be great, too. If we can create a culture of excellence that gives them a sense of pride in everything they do, they will want to belong to this community that encourages them. They will be inspired to support each other to be greater than they've ever been before, through their scholarship, involvement and service. We want to create these pathways of greatness. I can't think of anything better than giving our students this gift of claiming a sense of ownership and autonomy in being the best people they can be, through their educational experiences at Frostburg.

Thank you for being here and I wish everyone a great academic year. I'd now like to announce our Staff Awards for Excellence:

Exempt Employee:

Employed by FSU for the past three years, this person is the coordinator for University Wellness. In her position, she actively promotes the University's Strategic Plan by engaging students in wellness initiatives through the CHILL program. It was noted in her nomination packet that her sense of integrity complements her tremendous personal character. To those who know her, this is no surprise, as she approaches every day and each project with contagious enthusiasm. In fact, it was through her grassroots efforts with CHILL that FSU was recently recognized by the American Heart Association as a Gold Standard Workplace winner. Congratulations to **April Baer**.

Nonexempt Employee:

This person began her employment at FSU eight years ago. In 2006, she was hired as an executive administrative assistant in the College of Business. She is known, by all, for her highly conscientious, organized, thorough and cooperative traits. Throughout her nomination packet, it was repeated that she is always willing to go the extra mile to get the job done and to help others. In addition to her employment at FSU, she is enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration program and will be graduating in May 2012. Congratulations to **Stacy Wassell!**

Nonexempt Employee/Facilities/Maintenance:

This individual has been employed at FSU for 39 years. In 1971, he was hired as a temporary service worker in the Physical Plant. Soon after that, he was hired as a locksmith and continues to serve in that capacity almost four decades later. He is involved in all aspects of the University's various key and lock systems. In short, he is responsible for the integrity of each and every lock on campus. In his free time, he is a member of the Piney Mountain Sportsmen's Association where he serves on their Board of Directors. Congratulations to **James Imes!**

Congratulations to all the award recipients.

I'd like to remind everyone that this Saturday at 1 p.m. is our first FSU Home Football game against Utica. Our SGA President, Mary Biscoe, has asked all of us to come support our Bobcats at Bobcat Stadium. Please wear white in memory of Derek Sheely and let's fill every seat. Let's support our team and celebrate Derek's memory.

And now the FSU Cheerleaders!