

Dear Bobcats,

I'm pleased to share two important tuition initiatives recently approved by the USM Board of Regents that reflect our mission as a regional comprehensive institution and our commitment to access and affordable excellence.

FSU serves rural areas with smaller populations and fewer students going to college. Growing enrollment is essential to strengthening our financial sustainability, and because FSU has excess instructional and housing capacity, we can add students at relatively low cost.

As such, FSU's current tuition structure does not fully align with our market or capacity. Our naturally occurring recruitment footprint is multi-state, spanning the broader Appalachian service region, so we must be competitive with cross-border pricing structures.

These two new bold tuition reforms are as follows:

Expanded In-State Tuition Eligibility for Undergraduate Students

Beginning **next** fall (academic year 2027–2028), eligible undergraduate students whose permanent home address is in any county in Pennsylvania and West Virginia, and select counties in northern Virginia, eastern Ohio, and southern New York, **will qualify for FSU's in-state tuition rate**. This expansion includes the Appalachian Regional Commission's (ARC) Northern and North Central subregions. The current 120-mile regional tuition rate will be phased out and replaced by the new, lower in-state tuition classification. This initiative expands affordable access to higher education across the Appalachian region, strengthens FSU's role as a regional access institution and supports economic mobility and workforce readiness. This more streamlined undergraduate tuition model helps simplify pricing, reduces the need for complicated discounts and provides more transparent information for students and families.

New Unified Tuition Rates for Graduate and Doctoral Online Programs

Beginning **this** fall (academic year 2026–2027), we will implement unified tuition rates for all graduate and doctoral online programs. This change eliminates the distinction between in-state and out-of-state tuition for online programs, simplifies our pricing structure and increases competitiveness in the national online marketplace.

Online tuition rates apply regardless of residency and are intended to improve access and affordability for working adults who live outside Maryland but choose Frostburg for the quality and value of our programs.

How Will Current Students Be Affected?

Many students may be wondering, “Will my tuition change next year?” The answer depends on their program and course modality (and for undergraduate students, eligibility for expanded in-state rates). Current students will receive information explaining the new tuition structure and how it may affect financial aid within the next several weeks. Please note that changes to the undergraduate tuition structure will not take effect until Fall 2027, whereas online graduate and doctoral tuition changes will be effective Fall 2026.

FSU will share updates well before implementation through email and official announcements, including any changes to tuition classification and institutional aid. We also plan to actively market these tuition updates within our expanded regions and will work collaboratively across campus to update our public-facing websites, targeted admissions communications and advising materials.

I appreciate the work of our faculty, staff and leadership teams who contributed to these efforts, and I thank our campus community for its continued dedication to serving students and the region.

Together, these changes advance FSU’s mission and reaffirm our commitment to affordable excellence.

Thank you for all you do to support our students and one another.

With FSU pride,

Darlene Brannigan Smith, PhD
Interim President