

Good morning, Bobcats.

Before I begin, I want to give a big shoutout to our Bobcat football team for their win over Fairmont State on Saturday to clinch a share of the Mountain East Conference championship and an NCAA playoff berth for the first time since becoming Division III! I know I speak for everyone when I say how proud we are of these student-athletes and their coaches. Good luck in the playoffs-Bobcat Nation will be cheering for you!

As we head into the holiday season, it is so important to remember to be grateful and to give thanks. There's a good reason for that - gratitude is POWERFUL. It helps us take pause, to notice what is good in our lives, and appreciate those who make our lives better.

But it's worth asking – is gratitude *enough*? Research suggests that it is, and I would concur. Because giving thanks does more than just makes us feel good. It strengthens our relationships, gives us a sense of purpose and it supports our own sense of health and well-being.

Though I have only been at FSU for 8 months, I can say with 100% authenticity that I am GRATEFUL to be here, even if only for just a short while, and I will always count Frostburg as one of *my* blessings.

I have so many things to show gratitude for, too. I am part of a community who is committed to our University's success, ALWAYS willing to be our partner and advocate. FSU has dedicated, compassionate and caring faculty who ALWAYS put their students first and who go the extra mile to ensure their success. Our staff always and tirelessly support the needs of the entire University, and FSU alumni give their time, talent and treasure to encourage and support the next generation of learners. And last, but not certainly least, FSU students are smart, motivated, caring young men and women who are poised for greatness.

I am especially grateful for the spirit of collaboration at Frostburg. Together, we face challenges head on and overcome them with resilience. We celebrate each other's achievements with pride, and we work every day to make a positive difference in our communities and in the region.

I have come to learn that generosity is part of the DNA at FSU. Individually and collectively, we know that each act of generosity strengthens the foundation of our FSU family. This is one of the most caring campuses I have ever had the privilege of being a part of. The sense of belonging is what I can only describe as a family-like environment, and it is beyond compare. Your school spirit and community pride shine through every aspect of life here. This University and its people are truly committed to providing our students with access to affordable excellence.

While it is important to show gratitude and give thanks, I would be remiss not to mention the importance of giving of oneself. How do we give of ourselves? Well, we do it through small actions that uplift one another - by offering help to those in need, by being kind and respectful or by simply being present.

My goal for the upcoming year is to ensure that I turn my words into actions. And I want to challenge each of you to do the same. Every day I plan to...

- Identify and give thanks for one special thing in my life.
- Openly express gratitude for one person or one experience.
- Choose one act of giving.
- And ensure that I actively listen to colleagues, friends and family members.

If you are looking for a way to give, don't forget that our Department of Student Engagement, PAWS Pantry and the ASTAR Americorps program is currently holding the annual Sponsor-A-Family Thanksgiving Basket Program. You can help a local family in need by donating a Thanksgiving meal in a basket, and it will be delivered to them on the Monday before Thanksgiving. So, I encourage everyone to participate if you can, because together, we can make a difference. No act of giving is too small.

Another option to give is through the [2025 Maryland Charity Campaign](#), which will run until December 12. This year's theme is "Giving Back Together." If you are not familiar with this giving program, I encourage you to check it out. It offers state employees and eligible retirees a way to conveniently and securely contribute to charities that matter the most to you.

In closing, remember to take the time to pause and reflect on your blessings as we gather with loved ones during this season of thanksgiving.

With FSU pride,

Darlene Brannigan Smith, PhD