

# FROSTBURG

STATE UNIVERSITY

Dean

Frostburg State University, College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences  
Frostburg, Maryland

## THE SEARCH

[Frostburg State University](#) (“Frostburg” or “FSU”), a historic, regional comprehensive, and student-centered institution of the [University System of Maryland \(USM\)](#), seeks a seasoned, forward-thinking academic leader to serve as the next Dean of the College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences. Reporting to the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, the Dean will lead the college through a period of growth and change while advancing its mission to deliver a transformative educational experience grounded in the liberal arts tradition.

The College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences (CHAS) is a vibrant academic community at the heart of FSU's educational mission, preparing students for lives of purpose, leadership, and impact. Through rigorous academic programs and dynamic learning experiences across the humanities, visual and performing arts, and social, physical, and natural sciences, the college fosters curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking. As a regional hub for intellectual and cultural enrichment, it promotes civic engagement and cultivates meaningful partnerships across the region. Guided by accomplished faculty dedicated to excellence in teaching, research, and artistic expression, the college equips students with the knowledge, skills, and perspectives needed to thrive in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. The next Dean will have an exceptional opportunity to lead the college at a pivotal moment of change and to help reimagine how a liberal arts education can respond to evolving student needs and global challenges.

The Dean will oversee six academic departments, four centers, and nearly 100 full and part-time faculty and staff. The ideal candidate will have a distinguished academic record, be eligible for tenure at the rank of full professor and demonstrate a leadership style that balances thoughtful consultation with decisive action. They will have a proven ability to unite diverse voices around shared goals, coupled with an entrepreneurial spirit to drive bold initiatives. The Dean will champion faculty excellence in research, creative activity, and teaching; foster interdisciplinary collaboration across departments and colleges; and advance innovative approaches that strengthen and redefine the liberal arts experience at FSU.

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Frostburg State University has engaged Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, for this recruitment effort. All applications, inquiries, and nominations should be directed in confidence to the search team as indicated at the end of this document.

## ABOUT FROSTBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

Frostburg State University (FSU) is located on a scenic 260-acre campus in Frostburg, Maryland, nestled in the Allegheny Mountains of Western Maryland. The town was ranked the third-best small college town in the United States by USA Today's 10 Best Readers' Choice in 2024. FSU benefits from proximity to Deep Creek Lake, a major draw for visitors seeking outdoor adventure. The region provides ample opportunities for hiking, skiing, snowboarding and other outdoor sports, making it an ideal place to live and work for nature enthusiast. Conveniently located within two hours of Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and Pittsburgh, Frostburg is also near Cumberland, the county seat and a major tourist destination.

Founded in 1898 as Maryland Normal School No. 2, FSU originally trained elementary teachers for Western Maryland. It opened in 1902 with a two-year program and 57 students. Over time, the institution evolved: becoming State Teachers College at Frostburg in 1935, Frostburg State College in 1963, and finally Frostburg State University in 1987, affirming its status as a comprehensive regional university. FSU reaffirmed its accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education in 2025 and holds 11 discipline-specific accreditations, including AACSB for business, ABET for engineering, CAEP for education, CAATE for athletic training, and CCNE for nursing.

As one of 12 institutions in the University System of Maryland (USM), FSU is the only four-year USM university west of the Baltimore-Washington corridor. The University is deeply connected to the state of Maryland and the broader Appalachian region; 82% of its students are Maryland residents, while many others derive from neighboring counties in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and beyond. In addition to its main campus, FSU offers programs in Hagerstown, Anne Arundel County, Cecil County, online, and maintains a strong international partnership with China. Today, approximately 4,100 students are enrolled in 47 undergraduate majors, 16 graduate programs, and a doctoral program in education. Known for its student-centered approach, innovative academics, and commitment to teaching excellence, FSU plays a vital role in workforce development and regional economic growth—changing lives and strengthening communities.

## Strategic Planning

FSU's Strategic Plan for 2024-2026 (recently extended through 2027 by Interim President Darlene Smith) and its current annual plan focuses on five primary goals: increasing enrollment, strengthening financial sustainability, improving the user experience through academic and operational process review, championing campus pride and community engagement, and achieving academic excellence and innovation. The plan aligns with the Maryland State Plan for Postsecondary Education and the University System of Maryland Strategic Plan. More detailed information can be found at <https://www.frostburg.edu/about-frostburg/strategic-plan-2024-2026/index.php>

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## Students, Faculty, and Staff

For the fall 2025 semester, Frostburg State University enrolled 3,436 undergraduate students, 548 graduate students, and 81 doctoral students, with 84% of undergraduates from Maryland and 40% identifying as students of color. The University has a first-year retention rate of 70% and offers a vibrant campus experience shaped by academics, athletics, and community engagement. Frostburg student-athletes (the Bobcats) compete at the NCAA Division II level in the Mountain East Conference, fielding competitive men's and women's teams that contribute significantly to school spirit and student leadership. The University has also been recognized as a "Military-Friendly School" for 13 consecutive years, reflecting its longstanding commitment to supporting service members, veterans, and military-affiliated students and ensuring their success.

The University community comprises approximately 300 faculty members and 490 staff, resulting in a student-to-faculty ratio of 14:1. Full-time faculty members primarily hold terminal degrees in their respective disciplines. They are nationally recognized for their scholarship, service, and dedication to student success. Together with staff, they form a close-knit professional community deeply committed to the academic mission and the vitality of the broader Frostburg region. Within this context, the College of Humanities, Arts, and Sciences enrolled 674 undergraduate and 48 graduate students in the 2025–2026 academic year, serving as a significant academic home for students and a core contributor to the University's educational mission.

More detailed information can be found at FSU's [2025 Fact Sheet](#), [2025 Institutional Data Dashboard](#), and [Fall 2025 Enrollment Profile and Trends Data](#).

## College of Humanities, Arts, and Sciences (CHAS)

Blending creativity, discovery, and innovation across six departments and four specialized centers, the College of Humanities, Arts, and Sciences (CHAS) is the academic center of Frostburg State University. As home to roughly one-third of FSU's course enrollments, CHAS plays a pivotal role in shaping the University's [General Education curriculum](#) and ensures that FSU students not only acquire broad skills but also become adaptable learners, capable of addressing challenges in today's constantly changing world.

The College's current structure emerged from a deliberative, considered strategy undertaken by the University to respond to several years of financial exigency, enrollment challenges, and national shifts in academic positioning. In 2024, the computing sciences, engineering, and mathematical sciences departed CHAS for the College of Business, Engineering, Computing, and Analytics (BECA). This shift was followed by a reformulation of CHAS's departmental structures to foster efficiency, integration, and collaboration across disciplines.

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Today, CHAS is home to approximately 69 tenured and tenure-track faculty, along with five non-tenure-track eligible faculty, and includes six academic departments:

- [Biology](#)
- Communication and Literature
  - [English](#)
  - [Foreign Languages](#)
  - [Strategic Communication](#)
- [Digital Media](#) and [Visual Arts](#)
- Law, Society, and Humanities
  - [History](#)
  - [Philosophy](#)
  - [Political Science](#)
  - [Sociology](#)
- [Music and Theatre and Dance](#)
- Physical and Environmental Sciences
  - [Chemistry and Physics](#)
  - [Geography](#)

While supporting the core arts and sciences disciplines in advancing their diverse fields of knowledge, CHAS brings together students and faculty from disparate fields across the University and around the world to do change-making research. Research awards at CHAS were approximately \$650,000 in external grants for 2025 and roughly \$930,000 in 2024. These awards include a mixture of state, federal, local, and private funding supporting research across the departments.

The CHAS centers and facilities fuel creativity and research, including the [Center for Literary Arts](#), the [3-State Community Media Center](#), the [Multimedia Learning Center with Planetarium & Observatory](#), the [Museum of Natural History](#), and the [Western Maryland GIS Center](#). Students and faculty thrive in state-of-the-art spaces such as the Compton Science Center, Fine Arts Building, Gira Center for Communications and Information Technology, and Pealer Performing Arts Center.

## Campus Leadership and Current Context

Dr. Darlene Brannigan Smith was appointed Interim President of Frostburg State University in March 2025, pending the conclusion of a national search for the University's next president, which is expected to be completed in the near term. Since assuming her role at Frostburg, Dr. Smith has taken proactive steps to strengthen the University's planning function, strengthen marketing and admissions efforts, enhancing academic programming, and fostering regional engagement. These efforts underscore FSU's commitment to elevating its visibility and reinforcing its role as an incubator of leadership, creativity, and innovation within the region.

In recent years, the College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences has undergone strategic shifts to address budgetary pressures, resulting in a more sustainable operational model that is closely aligned with broader university goals. These changes have clarified longstanding challenges, deliberately and

transparently bringing them into focus rather than allowing them to emerge as unexpected crises. The Dean will enter at a pivotal moment, with a clear mandate and strong support from the President, Provost, and System Chancellor to lead meaningful change. This environment presents not only challenges but also significant opportunities, calling for decisive, visionary leadership to harness CHAS's collective talents and shape its next chapter, leaving a lasting impact on the institution.

## THE ROLE OF THE DEAN

An effective and transparent communicator with high emotional intelligence, the Dean of the College of Humanities, Arts, and Sciences will foster a collegial, collaborative culture grounded in mutual respect. In partnership with directors and department chairs, the Dean will recruit and retain a talented and diverse faculty and staff that reflects the University's commitment to diversity and excellence. The Dean will also champion innovation by encouraging scholarly and creative productivity, supporting the continual enhancement of teaching practices, and promoting staff professional development in the service of the academic mission.

The Dean has broad responsibilities for planning, developing, and administering CHAS's educational and research programs, providing vision and direction to advance CHAS's overall quality, reputation, stature, and reach, and to achieve aspirational goals. The Dean is responsible for overseeing and managing the college, with efforts including but not limited to: setting direction for the college's curricular, scholarly, and artistic efforts to foster interdisciplinary and exceptional academic programs and research pursuits; recruiting and retaining distinguished scholars, artists, and outstanding students; planning, evaluating and overseeing curricular programs; overseeing promotion and tenure guidelines for faculty; managing an operating budget of \$1 million and fostering collaborative relationships with internal and external stakeholders. The Dean oversees six department chairs and is supported by operations staff members within CHAS and across the University.

The Dean of CHAS reports directly to the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, [Dr. Michael Mathias](#), and serves as a core member of the academic leadership team along with the Deans of the colleges of Business, Engineering, Computing & Analytics; and Education, Behavioral & Health Professions.

## KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE DEAN

This is a pivotal moment for the College and the University, as the challenges presented by demographic shifts, fluctuations in student enrollment, and economic pressures are particularly acute for liberal arts programs. The next Dean will play a crucial role in developing and implementing strategies that align with, complement, and support the achievement of university-wide goals. The Dean will also implement strategies that advance and promote CHAS's mission, encourage and support its faculty, staff, and students, champion excellence in teaching and research, and engage alumni as well as internal and external stakeholders to realize its potential.

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To ensure the college's development and success, the next Dean will address the following key opportunities and challenges:

### **Craft a strategic vision and shared identity**

The shift in university leadership and the reorganization of academic programs in recent years offer a tremendous opportunity for the Dean of the College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences to leverage the University's momentum and harness CHAS's potential for innovative programming and scholarly impact. The Dean will foster a culture that empowers faculty, staff, and students to raise the bar of academic excellence, encouraging scholars to pursue diverse funding opportunities while excelling in the pedagogical enterprise. As an institutional leader, the Dean will engage expansively with other colleges and academic units to cultivate shared purpose, effective partnership, and a spirit of programmatic innovation in pursuit of shared goals in teaching, research, and student outcomes for the betterment of CHAS and the University.

The Dean will be a compelling leader and advocate for the liberal arts across the University and externally. They will position the College as a foundational partner for the University, clearly articulating how the humanities, arts, and sciences generate knowledge, cultivate critical and creative thinking, and strengthen problem-solving skills, preparing students for a lifetime of intellectual inquiry and equipping them to succeed in an evolving personal and professional landscape.

### **Steward and secure resources to ensure the continued growth and success of the College**

The Dean plays a crucial leadership role in conscientiously stewarding the College's human and material resources, a responsibility even more critical amid budgetary pressures, a fast-changing federal funding landscape, and enrollment shifts. The Dean must be a stalwart advocate for the resourcing needed to bring the College's ambitions to fruition while deftly managing budgets, personnel, and space with a lean leadership team. Importantly, the Dean must take a firm and aggressive stance in setting fundraising goals, cultivating relationships with prospective and existing donors, and soliciting major gifts. The Dean will present a clear, compelling vision for the college and skillfully and passionately market opportunities for serving the external community. The Dean will seek to build a culture of philanthropy among the CHAS alumni community and create opportunities for alumni to engage with students and faculty, recognizing the valuable contributions this community can make towards student recruitment, professional development, and the intellectual life of the college. The Dean will work to diversify CHAS's funding base, exploring opportunities for revenue-generating programs and encouraging scholars to pursue external grant funding from a diverse set of sources, all to move the College towards a sustainable future.

### **Develop enrollment strategies for long-term growth**

FSU has been affected by the same economic and demographic headwinds facing regional comprehensive institutions across the country, and the Dean of CHAS will play an institutional leadership role in influencing and defining the University's response. FSU enjoys incredibly robust, historically significant ties to the school districts and community colleges in surrounding counties and offers a Regional Tuition

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Rate to residents of Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and Ohio who live within 120 miles of the University. The University has also recently joined the Maryland Statewide Transfer Intensive, a program through the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), which is designed to significantly improve community college transfer outcomes. Leveraging this aggressive institution-wide response, the Dean of CHAS will continue to craft robust, comprehensive strategies for student success, enrollment, and marketing to continue its momentum. The Dean will lead efforts to stabilize and expand degree program enrollments, continue CHAS contribution to a military-friendly campus, improve student retention, and pursue new opportunities aligned with emerging student demand. The Dean must also serve as a nimble, collaborative partner with other academic leaders, advocating for CHAS's needs and contributions as shifting enrollment patterns affect general education and institutional priorities.

### **Develop, lead, and inspire a productive, ambitious, and proud faculty and staff**

The College of Humanities, Arts, and Sciences thrives because of the dedication and excellence of its faculty and staff. The Dean will play a central role in advancing their professional growth by supporting the development of both tenured and non-tenure-track faculty and staff at every level. By defining clear pathways for training and advancement and leveraging University resources for teaching and research development, the Dean will help faculty cultivate inclusive, engaging learning environments. In addition, the Dean will expand University-supported opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to connect beyond the classroom, strengthening collaboration across disciplines and colleges. Importantly, the Dean will inject new ambition and creative energy into the College around scholarly achievement and impact, leveraging University-wide activities like the FSU Strategic Investment Fund, designed to support innovative, high-impact activities and projects that advance FSU's institutional mission, strategic priorities, and long-term sustainability. The Dean will serve as an exemplar and mentor to faculty in their pursuit of external funding opportunities from a diversity of sources, as well as in the translation of those efforts into the student experience and into FSU's impact across the region.

### **Foster and sustain a commitment to shared governance and collaboration within and outside of the College**

The University System of Maryland, Frostburg State University, and the College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences share a strong, deeply felt, and historic commitment to shared governance as the foundation of a vibrant academic enterprise. The Dean will continue this commitment as a vigorous and articulate advocate for the role of faculty, staff, and students in shared decision-making as the College's vision and structures evolve. The Dean will create and leverage opportunities for collaboration among academic departments and colleges to encourage innovation, creativity, and the development of meaningful and exciting initiatives across CHAS and the broader University, balancing consultation with decisive action, coupled with a transparent and communicative leadership approach. In so doing, the Dean will foster trust and shared purpose among all involved: faculty, academic staff, administrators, and University leadership.

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## QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The ideal candidate will possess the following personal and professional qualifications and values:

- A doctorate and a record of broad interdisciplinary teaching and scholarship or creative activity that merit an appointment as a full professor with tenure
- Experience as an inspirational and inclusive leader with a demonstrated ability to bring constituencies together around common goals
- A track record of working across disciplines, managing, and marketing interdisciplinary degrees
- Successful experience or demonstrated potential in fundraising and advancement activities; evidence of success in developing relationships with external partners
- A track record of effective planning, administration, and personnel and fiscal management
- A thorough understanding of the goals and values of an arts, humanities, and sciences education in the twenty-first century, and ability to clarify and amplify the value proposition of the arts, humanities, and sciences to both students and parents.
- A deep understanding and appreciation of shared governance; a commitment to a culture of transparency and collegiality
- An understanding and respect for all disciplines and a desire to work collaboratively with faculty, staff, and administrators to promote the collective goals of an institution
- Effective communication and interpersonal skills with the ability to make the case for the importance of liberal arts in society; an approachable leader, good listener, and active learner who can understand issues from multiple viewpoints
- An energetic, entrepreneurial, and collaborative leadership style that inspires faculty, students, and staff and builds pride in and commitment to the college, the University, and the surrounding community
- The confidence, wisdom, and courage to make difficult choices when needs are abundant, and resources are not; a demonstrated ability to advocate for needed resources
- A commitment to building a strong learning environment for students that stresses academic quality, student engagement, experiential learning, and global perspectives
- A deep commitment to and appreciation for diversity in all forms; proven success in enhancing an inclusive, equitable, and diverse culture at their institution
- Culturally well-versed and considerate of the needs of students, faculty, and staff from a wide range of backgrounds
- Energy, integrity, creativity, transparency, passion, openness, and flexibility

## APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/frostburg-state-university-college-humanities-arts-and-sciences/dean>

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*Frostburg State University affirms its commitment to a campus environment which values human diversity and respects individuals who represent that diversity. Fostering diversity and respect for difference is a fundamental goal of higher education, ranking among the highest priorities of this institution. In both education and employment, Frostburg State University prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, or gender identity), marital status, national origin, age (40 or older), disability, genetic information (including family medical history), and/or having been party to a previous discrimination/harassment complaint/investigation.*

*This document has been prepared based on the information provided by Frostburg State University, College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by Frostburg State University, College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences would supersede any conflicting information in this document.*