

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
ST. MARY'S COLLEGE OF MARYLAND
ADMISSION AND FINANCIAL AID
MEETING OF OCTOBER 15, 2021**

**OPEN SESSION
AGENDA**

- I. DISCUSSION ITEMS**
 - A. Tuition Waiver & Tuition Remission Policy Proposal
- II. ACTION ITEMS**
 - A. Tuition Waiver & Tuition Remission Policy Proposal
- III. INFORMATION ITEMS**
 - None
- IV.** Vote to close meeting in compliance with Title 10, Subtitle 3 of the General Provisions Article (the Open Meetings Act) for the purposes set forth on the closing statement.

The Committee expects to close a portion of this meeting.

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
ADMISSIONS AND FINANCIAL AID**

REPORT SUMMARY
(See appendix for supporting materials)

Date of Meeting: October 15, 2021

Date of Next Meeting: February 4, 2022

Committee Chair: Ray Wernecke

Committee Members: Carlos Alcazar, Board Chair Susan Dyer, Judith Fillius '79, Melanie Hilley '92, Sven Holmes, President Tuajuanda Jordan, and Jesse Price '92.

Staff Member: David L. Hautanen, Jr. Vice President for Enrollment Management

Dashboard Metrics: *(Enter NA if this does not apply)*

Executive Summary:

The Office of Enrollment Management is pleased to submit its October 2021 report to the Board of Trustees. This report includes Fall 2021 enrollment and financial aid figures, fall recruitment plans, new partnerships, and organizational updates.

Enrollment:

Enrollment (headcount) for the Fall 2021 semester includes 1526 undergraduate students, (1474 full-time and 52 part-time), and 25 graduate students. This is an increase of 38 undergraduate and 3 graduate students compared to Fall 2020. Including both first-year and new transfer students, there are a total of 465 new students for Fall 2021.

For the Fall 2021 entering class, the College received 2875 first-time, first-year (FTFY) applications. This is an increase of 10.4% compared to the previous year and is the largest number of FTFY applications in the history of the College. The Admission Committee offered admission to 1.7% fewer applicants in the pool compared to the Fall 2020 pool. The College enrolled 382 new first-year students which was an increase of 1 new student compared to the previous fall. The College's first-year admitted student yield went down 1.3% compared to Fall 2020. This decline can be primarily attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic causing the transition of in-person signature events such as our Open Houses and Admitted Seahawk Days from in-person to virtual events and the reduction or elimination of in-person on-campus tour options during the recruitment cycle. St. Mary's College of Maryland is a destination college due to our location. The reduction of in-person visit opportunities had an impact on our results.

The College received 203 transfer applications for Fall 2021 compared to 168 the previous year. Admission was offered to 15 more students. The College enrolled 83 new transfer students compared to 79 in Fall 2020. The yield of our admitted transfer applicant's decreased by 3.5% also likely due to the challenges caused by the pandemic.

Maryland residents account for 88.7% of FTFY students and 96% of new transfer students. Eighteen percent of the FTFY class and 24% of the TR class are Pell-Grant eligible, 23% are first generation students, and 30% are underrepresented BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) students. The academic profile of the FTFY class is very similar to the Fall 2020 class with an average unweighted GPA of 3.45 on a 4.0 scale, a weighted GPA of 3.76, and an average SAT of 1232. When considering the average SAT, it is important to note that this figure is of the 22% of enrolling students who submitted test scores. While the College anticipated a reduction in the number of students submitting test scores following the adoption of our test-optional policy, limited access to testing during the pandemic exacerbated the reduction. The average GPA of our new transfer students is a 3.32. The Desousa Brent (DB) program enrolled 54 new students. There are a total of 170 students in the DB program.

The New Student Experience (NSE) team including staff from Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, coordinates eSOAR (Seahawk Orientation, Advising and Registration) and the Orientation program at the beginning of the fall semester. Beginning in mid-May, the 2021 virtual eSOAR program included a weekly webinar ('Hawk Talk) series, student assessments, one-on-one virtual faculty advising sessions, targeted communications, social media and other activities to engage our enrolled students to offset the possibility of increased summer melt. The Fall 2021 melt of our new students was 7.2% which was a decrease of 4.8% from the 12% melt for Fall 2020. The decrease in melt can be attributed to a combination of the return to in-person learning as well as the enriched eSOAR programming.

Fall Orientation was extended by one day to allow for additional programming designed to strengthen the transition of our FTFY students to campus. The reimaged program included a twilight induction ceremony during which students committed to "The St. Mary's Way", programming for grouped orientation groups called "Nests", and the wearing of a common t-shirt for the academic Convocation as a sign of community. The intention is that these initiatives become College traditions.

Over the course of the 2020 – 2021 academic year the Retention Strategies Committee launched a number of initiatives to bring attention to the need to improve our retention and, in the process, reduce equity gaps that exist between majority and underrepresented, emerging populations. First to second year retention is 85% for Fall 2020 FTFY students to Fall 2021. This is an increase of 2% compared to the retention of the Fall 2019 FTFY entering class and level with the retention of the Fall 2018 FTFY entering class. Retention increased in all areas except for Latinx and first generation students. The Retention Strategies Committee will be looking further into this data and will also continue to support our retention initiatives gain traction.

The College continues to invest significant institutional funds for merit and need-based financial assistance with 85.3% of undergraduate students receiving institutional merit and/or need-based aid this fall compared to 81.8% last fall. For the 2021-2022 academic year, we project that \$7.7M of College funds and approximately \$1.1M of St. Mary's College Foundation funds will be used for merit and need-based financial assistance for our students. In addition, \$553K in waivers for Tuition Exchange, Resident Assistants, and Tuition Remission have been granted. This compares to \$7M of College Funds, \$1M of St. Mary's College Foundation funds, and \$620K in waivers during 2020-2021. The 2020-2021 actual institutional aid expenditure was less than

budgeted due to fewer students living on campus who then received less need-based financial assistance. While the projected 2021-2021 figures represent an increase from the 2020-2021 figures, this is due to another larger entering class replacing a smaller graduating class and having all enrolled students at the increased tuition and fees discount of recent years. Now that this has been normalized, future increases would be the result of enrollment growth or increased demand for institutional aid.

Fall 2021 Recruitment:

After the May 1 National Candidates Reply deadline for the Fall 2021 first year class, in person campus tours were made available for other prospective students. These campus tours were limited to two families per tour until June 1 when capacity limits were increased to three families per tour. To support the expected demand for campus tours over the summer with the limited number of families per tour, five student ambassadors were hired and provided campus housing.

Beginning with May and through September the campus has had a 26.7% increase in prospective student visitors. The month of July had a 50% increase in prospective student visitors compared to 2019 (the last time in-person campus tours were offered) and the month of August was the busiest with 205 prospective students visiting campus.

At the Admission Open House on Saturday, September 18, the campus hosted 162 prospective students and 244 guests for a total of 406 in attendance. This compares to 137 prospective students who attended the in-person September Open House in 2019. This was the largest September Open House since 2015. To reduce the likelihood of Open House attendees gathering in an area, the program was redesigned from beginning with an opening session with a following sequence of activities, to a program in which guests could choose from a set of activities that were all available from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m.. Program activities included meeting with faculty and staff at an Academic and Student Service Fair, learning about the admission and financial assistance process, taking a campus tour, and eating brunch in the Great Room. The center of activity was the campus quadrangle between Montgomery Hall and the Michael P. O'Brien Athletic and Recreation Center. All guests were required to provide proof of Covid-19 vaccination or negative test results taken within 72 hours per the College's Guest Policy at a single point check-in. With 49% responding, evaluation feedback from our guests was very positive. The program was rated as "excellent" by 82.4% of our prospective student attendees. Another 17% rated the program as "good" and the program increased the interest of 80.9% of attendees. Our next Open Houses are scheduled for Saturday, October 16 and Saturday, November 13. The Spring Open House is scheduled for Saturday, April 23, 2022.

Of all predictive measures, whether or not a student visits campus carries the greatest weight meaning that prospective students who visit campus are more likely to apply and enroll. This increase in visitors, along with positive evaluation results, suggest that we will see an increase in the number of applications for admission with a higher affinity for the College. This bodes well for the upcoming application season.

After a year with limited on campus tours and a hiatus of our signature on campus recruitment event programs, a consultant was secured to assess our campus visit experience, learn about our Admission Ambassador program and provide recommendations for strengthening the experience

for our guests and students. The consultant visited campus in early August and in early September. During those visits, he took a number of campus tours, met with students and admission, integrated marketing, physical plant staff as well as senior leaders. Preliminary recommendations include: revising the tour route to include a transportation component, strengthening campus landscape experience, and adding branding at building thresholds and throughout campus along the tour route. Recommendations for strengthening the Admission Ambassador program were also provided.

Admission staff are conducting recruitment travel at about 250 high schools, community colleges, and community-based organizations primarily in Maryland and then in our targeted out-of-state markets. These are a mix of virtual and in-person programs with a number of schools still not offering visit options. The Office of Student Financial Assistance is continuing to promote the College by participating in virtual and in-person, off-campus financial aid awareness programs. The alumni referral program for prospective students entitled “Launch-a-Leader” in partnership with the Office of Alumni Relations will continue for this application cycle.

The College is again working closely with our brand and marketing partners to increase awareness of the College and our recruitment programs. In addition to the print, email, and digital communications generated by the Office of Admission, our partners have implemented a significant digital, social media, and outdoor advertising campaign. With a resumption of in person on-campus Open House programs, this campaign has been expanded from the Fall 2020 campaign and will continue through the middle of November with a relaunch as part of our spring yield strategy.

Our first year Early Decision (ED) and Early Action (EA) application deadlines are November 1 with the Regular Decision (RD) application deadline on January 15. We plan to release ED admission decisions by December 1, EA decisions by January 1, and RD decisions by March 1. Once admission decisions are released, we will launch a comprehensive yield campaign for admitted students and their families.

Office of Student Support Services:

The Office of Student Support Services has been rebranded as the Office of Student Success Services (OS3) to reflect a stronger focus on providing a wide range of programs and services to support all of our students achieve academic success.

OS3 began two new initiatives in Fall 2021 in response to needs identified by students and by OS3 staff. Both initiatives are designed to help students learn and apply strategies to support academic success, including study skills, note-taking, time management, test preparation and test-taking skills, and communicating with faculty.

The Seahawk Academic Improvement and Learning Strategies (SAILS) course is a credit bearing interdisciplinary course focused on the aforementioned skills. In the SAILS course, students engage in self-reflection to identify areas of strength and improvement, and learn how to apply organizational tools and study strategies to their own individual academic experiences. Students may take the course for 1 or 2 credits based on this self-assessment.

OS3 has also launched a Peer Academic Success Strategies (PASS) Specialists mentoring program. PASS complements SAILS by providing one-on-one meetings to help students learn and apply academic success skills. The PASS Specialists program was implemented with the knowledge that college students tend to respond most positively to advice given by peers. PASS Specialists are upper-level students who are trained on a variety of academic strategies that they then share with their peers during weekly open office hours. The PASS program leverages the positive impact of peer-to-peer communication and opens up time for the OS3 professional staff to provide additional programming and to respond to other, more substantial student needs.

OS3 has also significantly expanded the College's peer tutoring program. Peer tutors are upper-level students who had previously taken the course and received grades of A- or better. There are 32 tutors who provide tutoring in a wide range of 100 through 300 level courses. Students may schedule virtual or in-person appointments with peer tutors.

Staffing:

There are a number of vacancies in the Division of Enrollment Management. Stacey Goddard, who has worked in the Office of Admission for 31 years, retired as of September 30. Since 2019 the Director of Admission position has been filled on an interim basis by Sara Ramirez. If not for the pandemic, a search to fill the position on a permanent basis would have been launched in 2020. The search to fill the position was launched at the end of June 2021 and is proceeding on schedule. Because of the institutionally-critical nature of this role, the College contracted with a search firm to assist with the search. There are two Assistant Director of Admission vacancies in the Office of Admission due to Emily Huey and Roderick Lewis leaving for positions which align more closely with their career aspirations. The first search has failed to fill these positions because of candidate salary requirements. Another search will be launched in November. Searches are underway to fill two contractual positions, a part-time receptionist and a one-year Admission Fellow. An offer has been accepted for the Admission Fellow position. Following an assessment of the strengths and opportunities in the Office of Student Success Services, an open position was redesigned to manage and lead the office. After a search that drew applicants from across the nation, Kathy Langan Puseker was hired as the Executive Director of Enrollment for Student Success. Lastly, Bhargavi Bandi, Director of Enrollment Operations, has been on family leave since late July when she and her family welcomed their second son, Rishi.

Action Item(s) related to specific strategic plan goals as appropriate:

Proposed revisions to the Tuition Waiver and Tuition Remission Policies

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
ST. MARY'S COLLEGE OF MARYLAND
ADMISSION AND FINANCIAL AID COMMITTEE
MEETING OF OCTOBER 15, 2021
ACTION ITEM 2122-02
RECOMMENDATION TO AMEND TUITION WAIVER POLICY**

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Tuition Waiver Policy:

The Admission and Financial Aid Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees amend the Tuition Waiver Policy so that it includes tuition waiver benefits for dependents of retirees who have retired from SMCM having completed at least ten (10) years of full-time service at SMCM.

Eligibility guidelines will be consistent with those for other eligible dependents.

Tuition Remission Policy:

The Admission and Financial Aid Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees amend the Tuition Remission Policy so that it includes tuition remission benefit eligibility for dependents of USM retirees who have completed at least ten (10) years of full-time service at a USM institution.

Eligibility guidelines will be consistent with those for other USM eligible dependents.

RATIONALE:

Tuition Waiver Policy:

The dependents of SMCM retirees who retire before the student enrolls are currently not eligible to receive SMCM tuition benefits. The dependents of employees who retire while a student is enrolled are eligible for SMCM tuition benefits. This further appears to be an omission when a dependent of a permanent employee who dies while in service is eligible to receive tuition benefits. We expect that this policy change will apply to a small number of dependents of permanent full-time employees who retire before the student enrolls.

Tuition Remission Policy:

The dependents of USM retirees who retire before the student enrolls are not eligible to receive SMCM tuition benefits. The USM has the same policy in reciprocity to the current SMCM policy which does not allow for tuition benefits to the dependents of USM retirees. A change of the current policy may result in similar eligibility for the dependents of SMCM retirees who retire before the student enrolls at SMCM. For Fall 2020 and Fall 2021, one student in each year would have been eligible if this policy had been in place.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
ADMISSION AND FINANCIAL AID COMMITTEE VIRTUAL MEETING
OPEN SESSION
MINUTES

Date of Meeting: May 7, 2021

Status of Minutes: Approved October 6, 2021

Admission and Financial Aid Committee Members Present: Ray Wernecke, Committee Chair, Board Chair Lex Birney, President Tuajuanda Jordan, Judith Fillius '79, Sven Holmes, Harry Weitzel

Committee Members Absent: None

Staff Member: David L. Hautanen, Jr.

Others Present: Nicolas Abrams '99, John Bell '95, Alice Bonner '03, Peter Bruns, Donny Bryan '73, Paula Collins, Susan Dyer, Elizabeth Graves '95, Gail Harmon, Glen Ives, Larry Leake, Doug Mayer '04, Danielle Troyan '92, John Wobensmith '93, Betsy Barreto, Bhargavi Bandi, Fatima Bouzid '22, Geoff Bowers, Allison Boyle, Anne Marie Brady, Kelsey Bush, Carolyn Curry, Helen Lawless, Rob Maddox, Shana Meyer, Dan Pendell, Paul Pusecker, Sara Ramirez, Beverly Read, Brayan Ruiz-Lopez, Jenny Sivak, Janna Thompson, Mike Wick, Libby Williams, Anna Yates, Derek Young,.

Executive Summary

Ray Wernecke, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m.

David L. Hautanen, Jr. updated the committee on the Fall 2021 application pool and current enrollment as well as the new student experience and student success:

- Two years ago, new Board Chair Lex Birney charged the Office of Admission to double the number of first year applicants from about 1600 to 3200. While we did not meet the goal, the College has received a 2830 applications. This is a record number of applications in the history of the College. The expectation is to end with approximately 2850.
- We have received 130 Transfer applications which is 29% ahead of last year at this point in time.
- As of May 6 there were 414 new students enrolled. This includes 379 first-year and 35 transfer students. This is quite an accomplishment given that limited numbers of students were able to visit campus and that we were not able to host our signature events due to the pandemic. In comparison there were 406 first year students for Fall 2020 and 328 for Fall 2019 at this point in time.
- We have a slight increase in the percent of BIPOC student enrolling this year – from 30% for Fall 2020 to 31% this year. Despite targeted outreach to first generation students, we

have a decrease in the percent of first generation student enrolling. This year we have 22%, similar to Fall 2019, compared to 26% last year. The female/male distribution is usually about 63% and 37%. This year it's 55% and 45% which continues to a three-year trend of an increase in the percent of males in the entering class.

- The New Student Experience Team is comprised of staff from academic affairs, enrollment management, and student affairs. Under the direction of Kathy Langan Pusecker, the team has reimagined the new student experience based on best practice and acknowledging that our new students will be arriving on campus after having five academic quarters in virtual or hybrid learning. Seahawk Orientation, Advising, and Registration (SOAR) is typically held over 3 days. Last year it was moved to a virtual format over 3 days - eSOAR. This year eSOAR will launch virtually on May 18 and conclude at the end of June. During the eSOAR series, students will complete the activities that were previously compressed into a single day program.
- Last year, our 'Hawk Talks programs were launched as a strategy to keep our enrolling students engaged throughout the summer. Topics range from finances, to accessibility services, wellness, and having important kitchen table conversations. These are continuing this year.
- We provide our enrolling students with a virtual social community (ZeeMee) for enrolling students. Beginning with eSOAR and continuing through the summer Orientation leaders will be engaging with students in this community.
- We will be hosting our inaugural Week of Welcome (WOW) program. WOW will include a range of activities to welcome our students to campus over the course of the first week.
- We are launching a Seahawk Success Network designed to strengthen our new student's transition to college, intentionally build community, and help them have a sense of belonging. As part of this initiative, students will be divided into four groups we are calling "Nests" at the Twilight Induction Ceremony when students will commit to the St. Mary's Way. The Nests will be named and will have monthly programming to foster community across academic disciplines, on-campus programming, and experiential learning opportunities.

A short discussion was held about the growth of the applicant pool.

The meeting adjourned at 9:47 a.m.