

# ST MARY'S

COLLEGE *of* MARYLAND



*The*  
**NATIONAL  
PUBLIC  
HONORS**  
*College*

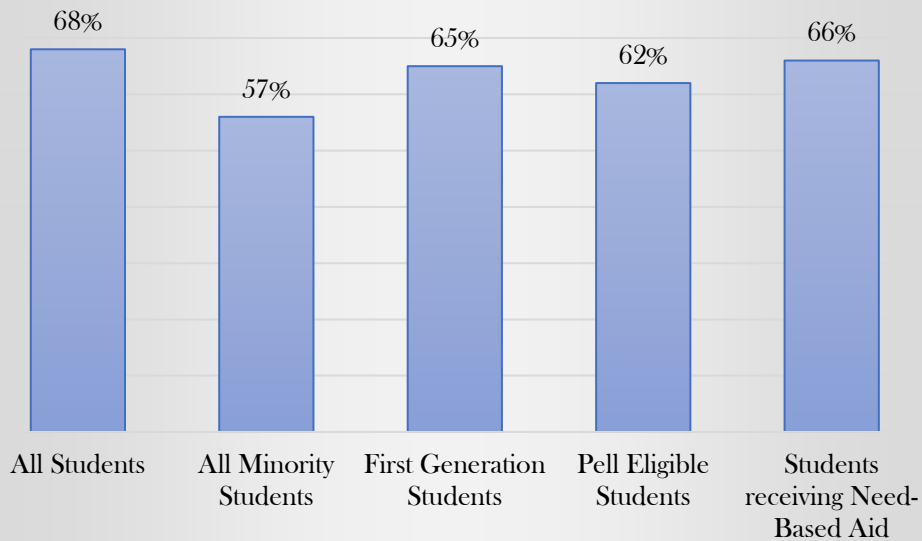
## Maryland's Public Honors College



- Unique Mission:
  - Liberal arts college excellence akin to elite privates → curricular innovation and relevance
  - Public = Accessible + Affordable + Diverse
  - Rigorous standards in every academic discipline



### 4-Year Graduation Rates (average last 5 years)



# ST MARY'S

## COLLEGE of MARYLAND

*The National Public Honors College*

### **Higher Education Overview**

**Senate Subcommittee on Education, Business and Administration  
January 23, 2020**

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**House Appropriations Committee  
January 24, 2020**

**Dr. Tuajuanda C. Jordan, President  
The Honorable Sven E. Holmes, Trustee  
Charles C. Jackson, Government Relations Liaison**

#### **Introduction**

St. Mary's College of Maryland, located in Historic St. Mary's City, is designated the State's public honors college. The College's charter, established by the State of Maryland in 1992, provides both the promise of a public education affordable to all, thriving on diversity and the high standards of academic excellence. As always, the College is grateful to the Governor, the Legislature, and the Maryland Higher Education Commission for their ongoing commitment to higher education, in general, and to St. Mary's College of Maryland specifically.

Supporting the two goals articulated by the State's historical vision for the College - the educational requirements of an honors program and the promise of access - sets St. Mary's College uniquely in the State and in rare company in the national higher education sector. St. Mary's College has been highly successful in supporting State-wide goals with one of the highest retention and completion rates among Maryland publics, a commitment to diversity, and in providing financial resources for students with need.

The College continues to evolve as an innovator within the national higher education sector. Our new core curriculum, Learning through Experiential and Applied Discovery (LEAD), will provide every student with theme-based integrated learning experiences, practical skills, internships, capstone projects, and other experiences that integrate career preparation with an honors curriculum within the context of the foundation of a liberal education. Our national standing and successes make us the leader among public liberal arts institutions. St. Mary's College has become **The National Public Honors College**.

## **Response to Questions in the Higher Education Overview**

**The Chancellor, presidents of SMCM and MSU, MICUA, and the Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC) should comment on factors contributing to the decline in enrollment. Further, with the projected decline in high school graduates, they should also comment on efforts that will be taken to stabilize/grow enrollment.**

St. Mary's College recognizes the demographic changes and the need to identify reasonable enrollment targets, develop feasible plans to reach those targets, and to stabilize enrollments within an overall challenging setting. Each year, we conduct an assessment with admitted students to understand the reasons why they chose to attend or not attend the College. Not surprisingly, the top three reasons given by both groups are the same: cost of attendance, offered programs, and location. For example, roughly equal numbers of students enroll due to cost as those who cite cost as a reason they chose not to enroll.

To enhance enrollment, St. Mary's College has initiated a multifaceted array of initiatives. As a result of the State's ongoing commitment to our unique mission to provide an outstanding liberal arts education that is affordable and accessible, we have become the most highly acclaimed public liberal arts institution in the country. Thus, in recognition of this success, we have rebranded St. Mary's College as not only the State of Maryland's Public Honors College, but also as the National Public Honors College. This new brand was launched this past year and it appears to have been well received in the market.

Additionally, we have significantly increased our investment in recruiting and marketing by 117% over the past several years. We have used both traditional and social media outlets, such as direct mail, radio, billboards, and digital advertising designed to increase brand awareness among prospective students and their influencers.

Importantly, we have also revamped our programming. Our new Learning through Experiential and Applied Discovery (LEAD) initiative, in part, marries our traditional liberal arts with a new and innovative career preparation program as part of the core curriculum. Our new programming is a direct response to the desires of today's prospective students and their families, who are not only looking for a good fit in terms of what a college has to offer, but also want to understand how their education will enhance their prospects for 1) getting that first job immediately upon graduation and 2) providing the foundation for a career. Early results indicate that the market is responding positively to this curricular innovation.

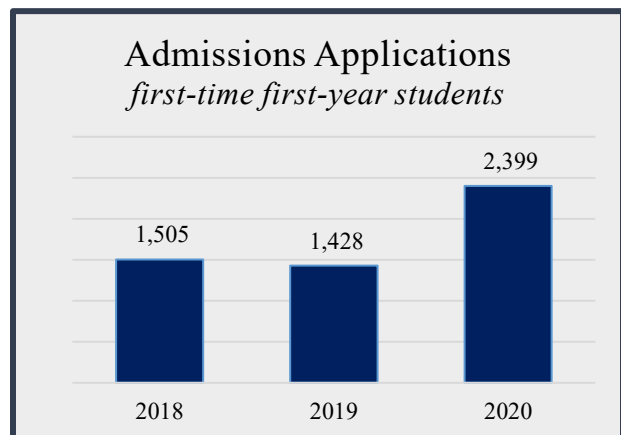
**The Chancellor, presidents of SMCM and MSU, MICUA, and MACC should comment on programs or initiatives to re-enroll and ensure successful outcomes of those students with SCND.**

St. Mary's College encourages the continued development of the Near Completers Program and participated in the Near Completers survey this past summer. Additionally, each year we reach out to former students who did not complete their degree and encourage their return to the classroom. We support efforts to provide scholarship aid for these students and efforts to increase outreach to them.

Among students who transfer to the College without a previous degree, approximately 20% are returning to college after taking some time off (“stopping out”). Stop-out time for these students ranges from one semester to 18 years. Our preliminary analysis shows that these students are successful at the College. Specifically, 70% of all new non-degreed fall transfer students entering between Fall 2014 and Fall 2017 persisted through the 2019-20 academic year, either earning a bachelor’s degree or remaining enrolled at the College. Students who had stopped out of college for at least one semester before enrolling at the College persisted at a very similar rate of 65%.

**The President should comment on what actions are being taken to address the declining enrollment at the institution. The President should also comment on whether SMCM has undertaken efforts to identify administrative and academic efficiencies and, if so, what actions have or will be taken to achieve cost savings. The President should also discuss what actions are being taken to address the high tuition and fees for in-state undergraduate students at SMCM and the extent to which these high tuition and fee levels are making SMCM uncompetitive and unattractive to potential students.**

First, it is important to note that we are cautiously optimistic that the actions we have taken over the past several years to improve enrollment are proving to be effective. As of January 21<sup>st</sup>, applications for the Fall 2020 entering class are up 64% compared to the last two years. Paid deposits are also significantly higher, up 73% over the past two years. While the admissions cycle is still early, these data are welcome and indicate that our efforts to improve our position in the market, through new branding, increased recruitment and marketing, and curricular innovation, are working.

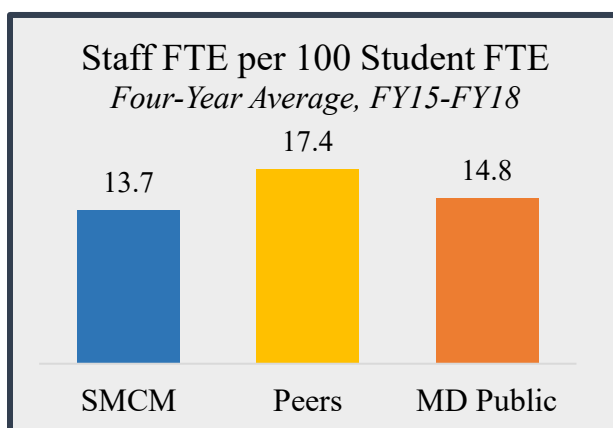


To continue our progress, I requested that our Board of Trustees convene two task forces to look at new student recruitment and tuition as well as programming. The task forces began their work this past summer and are continuing to work through this academic year. One task force is assigned with taking a deep look at recruitment strategies and tuition, as compared to our competitors, and has been charged with developing a model that includes the potential impacts of continued tuition increases, maintaining current tuition levels, or, possibly, lowering tuition.

The second task force is looking at our array of programming. This year, our faculty and staff submitted 28 proposals for new academic and co-curricular programs. After internal review, the most promising of these proposals were sent to a consultant who will complete a market analysis that will help us to better understand each proposed new program’s potential for attracting new students. At the same time, the College is engaged in a program prioritization review of our current academic programs with recommendations due by Summer 2020.

It is important to note that our mission puts us at a place that is, realistically, a public-private hybrid. Thus, although our tuition is high for the normal public higher education institution, we are an honors liberal arts college. This distinction makes our peers predominately nationally-ranked privates. We are quite competitive, cost-wise, with these small, private liberal arts colleges. A significant challenge, however, is with our public, in-state competitors, not our peers. Thus, the perceived uncompetitiveness is a complex challenge that goes beyond pricing. Nonetheless, we are extremely sensitive to the need to constantly identify and implement efficiencies.

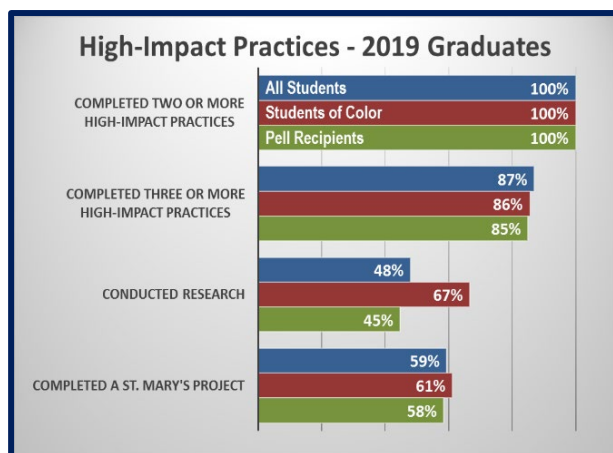
Over the last several years, we have reduced non-essential staffing and implemented technology wherever possible to introduce operational efficiencies. Thus, I am proud to report the St. Mary's College is highly efficient. Overall, our E&G expenses are slightly below the average of our Peers, which consist of four public and eight private liberal arts colleges. With regard to administrative and support staff, the College is 21% below the average of our Peers per FTE, and 7% below the average for Maryland Public Higher Education institutions.



Over the past several years, our enrollment challenges have placed significant pressure on our operating budget. We are very grateful for the support we receive from the State, and in particular the revision of our funding formula that was provided in the 2017 legislative session. As student revenue has declined due to enrollment, we have cut expenses by \$4.9 million (7%) since 2014. As we have trimmed expenses, however, we have maintained our commitment to deliver excellent academic programs and to provide adequate and appropriate student support. For example, our financial aid budget has increased 22% since 2014.

Our mission requires that we maintain a robust academic program that focuses on student success. Our expenses on academic and student support programs reflect:

- a low student-faculty ratio of 9 to 1
- a significant proportion of course credits taught by full-time faculty (88% compared to the USM reported total of 66%)
- an extensive array of High-Impact Practices designed for all students (impacts retention and post-graduate success)
- an extensive program of student support including intrusive advising



These investments continue to provide a high return on investment. The College has among the highest four-year graduation rates in the country. Our students are successful in finding employment and 67% of our students continue on to seek a graduate or professional degree within five years.

St. Mary's College has also made significant progress to narrow the achievement gap, as shown in the chart at the beginning of our testimony. Importantly, this past year, we successfully met the 70% required four-year graduation rate for students in the DeSousa Brent Scholars Program. Thanks to the support you have provided, we have been able to advance the program, which has made a huge difference for many of our at-risk students.

## High Return on Investment for Graduates



- 9<sup>th</sup> highest four-year graduation rate in the *country*
- 94%<sup>1</sup> employed, continuing education, or volunteering within six months (National avg. = 93%)
- 64% go to graduate or professional school within five years
- 2.9%<sup>2</sup> default on student loans (National avg. = 10.1%)



<sup>1</sup>Class of 2018 data; <sup>2</sup>As of 2019

## A National Gem SMCM: Highly Lauded



- 92<sup>nd</sup> Best *National* Liberal Arts College (300), *US News*
- 5<sup>th</sup> Best Public Liberal Arts College (~100), *US News*
- 2019 Best College for your Money, *Money Magazine*
- A national College of Distinction
- 2019 U. S. Hidden Gem
- 5<sup>th</sup> in the Princeton Review's Top 50 Green Colleges

