

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE OF MARYLAND

1. MISSION

St. Mary's College of Maryland is Maryland's honors college, a selective, public liberal arts college—a vibrant community of scholars and learners. We foster a rigorous and innovative curriculum; experiential learning; scholarship and creativity; close mentoring relationships; and a community dedicated to honesty, civility, and integrity. We are committed to diversity, access, and affordability. Our students, faculty and staff serve local, national, and global communities and cultivate and promote social responsibility.

2. INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT

A. FY19 Highlights

Significant changes and events occurring at St. Mary's College of Maryland (SMCM) during FY19 included the following.

- A new comprehensive brand for SMCM – The National Public Honors College – was developed, market-tested, and launched internally. Preparations were made for an FY20 external launch to coincide with recruitment of the incoming class of Fall 2020.
- SMCM completed the third and final planned year of implementation of the 2016-19 strategic plan, *A Time for Rebirth*.
- Two new minors were implemented in FY19: Business Management and Astrophysics. The Business minor is especially popular; 41 students are declared for Fall 2019, making it the second most popular minor out of 35 programs. A new major in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies was approved by MHEC and is awaiting implementation.
- Dr. Tayo Clyburn began his tenure as the inaugural Vice President for Inclusive Diversity and Equity. While SMCM established a Chief Diversity Officer position in 2016, this position is now elevated to the Vice President level.
- The Core Curriculum (general education program) underwent a major redesign, adding integrated course themes and professional development coursework for all students. The new LEAD curriculum (Learning through Experiential and Applied Discovery) was approved by the faculty and by the Board of Trustees, and is being piloted in FY20.
- A new Center for Inclusive Teaching and Learning (CITL) was established and will provide diverse professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.
- Construction on the Jamie L. Roberts Stadium, a new state-of-the-art athletics complex, was completed and the grand opening will take place in September 2019.
- SMCM was once again named to several national college ranking lists, including: Top Public Liberal Arts Colleges (U.S. News & World Report 2019), Colleges of Distinction (2018-19), Best 384 Colleges (Princeton Review 2019), Top 50 Green Colleges (Princeton Review 2019), Best Colleges and Universities in Maryland (College Consensus 2018), America's Top Colleges (Forbes 2018), Best Colleges for Your Money (Money Magazine 2018-19), Lowest Student Loan Debt (LendEDU.com 2018), Top 30 National Liberal Arts Colleges (Washington Monthly 2018), Hidden Gem Colleges (CollegeRaptor.com 2019), Best Value Colleges (Kiplinger's 2019), and Fiske Guide to Colleges (2019).

B. Analysis of Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Ensure a high quality and rigorous academic program.

Objective 1.1: SMCM students continue to complete one-on-one learning experiences with faculty at high rates. The 2016-19 Strategic Plan includes a number of objectives related to expanding opportunities for high-impact practices, as we continue to strive toward the target of 80% of the graduating class participating in a one-on-one learning experience, including research or independent study with faculty; a credit-based internship; or private musical instruction. Relatedly, for the second year in a row, we expect to meet the Strategic Plan target of 100% of graduates completing at least two high-impact practices (research with faculty, first-year seminars, capstone experiences, international experiences, internships, etc.)

Objectives 1.2 and 1.3: SMCM is committed to offering a rigorous curriculum taught by qualified faculty. For four of the past five years, SMCM has met or exceeded the targeted percent of full-time faculty who have terminal degrees (1.2), and full-time faculty teach the great majority of undergraduate credit hours as indicated by meeting or exceeding the target (1.3) for the past four years. Finally, the undergraduate student-faculty ratio has remained at 10:1 for the past five years, well below (better than) the target of 12:1. This combination of a consistently low student-faculty ratio with a faculty of qualified full-time professors is essential to the success of achieving and maintaining a high quality academic program.

Peer Benchmarks: SMCM has by far the lowest student-faculty ratio (10:1) among the traditional four-year public institutions in Maryland, with the next lowest being Morgan State and UM Eastern Shore at 13:1, and the average being 15:1. The SMCM student-faculty ratio (along with New College of Florida) is also the lowest among COPLAC institutions, which average 15:1; and is on par with Maryland private, peer institutions, and aspirant institutions, which range from 7:1 to 16:1 (with an average of 10:1) and include many private colleges. (*Source: IPEDS Data Center*)

Goal 2: Recruit, support, and retain a diverse and qualified group of students, faculty and administrative staff.

Objective 2.1: In FY19, SMCM was able to recruit a first-year class that exceeded the target for the percentage of minority students for the sixth year in a row, and exceeded the target for first generation college students for the second year in a row. The percentage of first-year students receiving Pell grants was notably lower than past years, due to a shifting income demographic among the Fall 2018 entering class, but is expected to rebound to target levels over the next two years. High school academic performance of the entering class remains strong; the average GPA of incoming students was at its highest value in four years, and is projected to remain steady for the FY20 entering class. After several years of declining SAT scores among incoming SMCM students, the FY19 median score increased from the previous year (note that only the 2018 and 2019 scores are directly comparable because of changes to the SAT). Finally, SMCM continues to face challenges in recruiting and enrolling students from outside of Maryland.

Peer Benchmarks: While the metric for SAT scores uses the median SAT score, the

available benchmark data uses the mean (average). Based on these data, the average SAT score of SMCM entering students (1178) continues to exceed that of most other Maryland four-year institutions (FY19 average = 1099), and our students rank well against high school seniors both in Maryland (FY19 average = 1080) and nationwide (FY19 average = 1067). Other Maryland public institutions vary in their ability to attract out of state students; percentages for the Fall 2018 entering class ranged from 6% to 30%, with an average of 17%, exclusive of the online institution UMUC. (*Source: MHEC 2019 Data Book*)

Objective 2.2:

Four-Year Graduation Rates. Four-year graduation rates for FY19 (Fall 2015 cohort graduating by Spring/Summer 2019) increased for African American students (51%) and Pell recipients (60%), and remained steady for first generation students (60%). Overall four-year graduation rates (64%) were also fairly steady from FY18 (63%), but at a level that is lower than most previous years. The four-year graduation rate for African American students (51%) was at its highest since FY13, meeting the target for this student population, but still well below that of the overall student body. Despite this increase, four-year rates among all minorities decreased (52%), primarily driven by a substantial decrease among Hispanic students (53%). Based upon current projections, overall four-year rates are predicted to remain low, and while several metrics are projected to meet targets in FY20, additional decreases are projected for FY21 in the absence of additional intervention.

We continue to analyze the relationship between students' progress toward degree completion and several important early milestones, including enrolling in a college mathematics course in the first year, attempting at least 16 credits per semester in the first year (1/8 of the 128 needed to graduate), and earning at least 32 total credits in the first year. These milestones are historically correlated with higher retention and graduation rates, particularly among students from underrepresented groups. Notably, students in this year's reported Fall 2015 cohort, which showed a lower four-year graduation rate (64%) than in previous years, were substantially less likely to attempt 16 credits per semester and to earn 32 total credits, compared to previous cohorts. This was especially true for minority students and Hispanic students, two populations which showed large declines from previous years.

In 2018-19, faculty advisors and academic support staff were informed of these relationships and encouraged to communicate the importance of these milestones to their first-year student advisees. At the beginning of each semester, additional messages were sent to advisors of students who were registered for fewer than 16 credits. Initial data suggests that these efforts may have had some impact, as the percentage of Fall 2018 first-year students taking fewer than 16 credits in their first semester dropped to 9%, down from an average of 15% over the past four years (Fall 2014 through 2017 cohorts). Even more striking improvements in achieving this milestone were observed among African American, Hispanic, first generation, and Pell recipient students. The percentage taking fewer than 16 credits in the second semester also improved but only slightly, decreasing from a four-year average of 15.5% to 14% for the Fall 2018 cohort. In 2019-20, we will continue to communicate frequently with both advisors and first-year students about the importance of registering for (and completing) a full load of 16 credits per semester whenever possible.

The second year of lower-than-usual graduation rates, and the similarly low estimates for the next two years, makes it clear that we must improve our understanding of the student experiences that lead to the decision to depart SMCM, particularly among students from underrepresented groups. We have begun to analyze data from exit interviews with students taking leaves of absence and withdrawing from SMCM, and will use this information to identify how and where we can better support our students. We are also investigating the status of currently enrolled students from the Fall 2016, 2017, and 2018 cohorts to identify potential intervention strategies to provide support for timely degree completion. For example, nearly 20% of first-year students in the Fall 2018 cohort are between 1 and 16 credits (a full semester) behind the pace of 16 credits per semester toward four-year graduation. We can continue communicating with these students about the importance of completing 16 credits per semester, and assist them in exploring options for completing additional credits such as online coursework, summer coursework, and strategic overloading during the regular academic year. Finally, about 15% of departed first-year students over the past three cohorts have transferred out to two-year institutions, according to the National Student Clearinghouse. We are considering how best to reach out to these students regarding the possibility of reverse transfer, encouraging them to return and complete their baccalaureate degree at SMCM. The development of targeted, program-specific articulation agreements with many Maryland community colleges (discussed below in Objective 2.6) is expected to facilitate such reverse transfer efforts.

Peer Benchmarks: Based on the most recent comparison data available (FY15), as shown in the table below, SMCM’s overall four-year graduation rate (70% for the 2011 cohort) exceeded those of other institutions belonging to the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC) and other Maryland public four-year institutions, as well as Maryland private institutions and SMCM’s peer institutions, many of which are private. The average four-year graduation rate at aspirant institutions (all private) represents a benchmark well above our target. As shown below, four-year graduation rates for African American students, Hispanic students, and all minority students combined were all well above the corresponding rates at other COPLAC, Maryland public, or Maryland private institutions. Compared to peer institutions, four-year rates for Hispanic students were higher at SMCM, while four-year rates for all minority student and for African American students lagged behind. Four-year graduation rates for Pell recipients are not available. *(Source: IPEDS Data Center)*

Four-Year Graduation Rates, FY15 (Fall 2011 cohort)					
Institution(s)	N	Overall	Minority	Afr-Amer	Hispanic
SMCM	1	70%	55%	48%	75%
COPLAC	27	37%	29%	24%	27%
MD Public	11	27%	23%	22%	23%
MD Private	9	58%	48%	43%	53%
Peer	12	66%	61%	59%	61%
Aspirant	6	87%	85%	85%	84%

These comparisons with peers and aspirants, which are our primary programmatic and curricular competitors, underscore the need for SMCM to direct additional attention and

resources toward underrepresented students. (Source: IPEDS Data Center)

Six-Year Graduation Rates. The preliminary estimate for the FY19 overall six-year graduation rate (Fall 2013 cohort graduating by Summer 2019) is 77%, which while not meeting the target, continues a three-year recovery from a brief dip in FY16. Similar to this year’s increase in the four-year graduation rate for African American students, the six-year graduation rate for this group (69%) was substantially increased from previous years and only two percentage points below the target. However, six-year rates for all other groups decreased from FY18, and only the rate for Pell recipients (69%) met the target. Also similar to four-year graduation rates discussed above, additional decreases in six-year graduation rates are projected over the next two years.

Peer Benchmarks: The most recent comparison data available (FY17), shown below, reveal that SMCM’s overall six-year graduation rate in that year (78%, for the 2011 cohort) exceeded that of other COPLAC institutions, other Maryland public four-year institutions, Maryland private institutions, and peer institutions. The average reported six-year graduation rate at private aspirant institutions was 91% in FY17. SMCM’s six-year rates for all minority students and for African American students exceeded those at other COPLAC, Maryland public, and Maryland private institutions, but were behind those of peer and aspirant peer institutions. Notably, the six-year graduation rate for Hispanic students at SMCM was well above that from all other groups except aspirant institutions. Finally, SMCM’s six-year graduation rate for Pell recipients in FY17 was well above that of other COPLAC institutions, Maryland public institutions, and Maryland private institutions, and was close to the average rate at peer institutions. (Source: IPEDS Data Center)

Six-Year Graduation Rates, FY17 (Fall 2011 cohort)							
Institution(s)	N	Overall	Minority	Afr-Amer	Hispanic	Pell	Need Aid
SMCM	1	78%	67%	55%	81%	68%	75%
COPLAC	27	53%	46%	42%	45%	48%	50%
MD Public	11	47%	46%	45%	41%	44%	45%
MD Private	9	64%	55%	52%	60%	60%	63%
Peer	12	75%	71%	69%	74%	72%	73%
Aspirant	6	91%	90%	90%	91%	90%	90%

Objective 2.3: The second year retention rate in FY19, for the Fall 2017 cohort returning in Fall 2018, was unusually low at 82%. Several risk factors were overrepresented among the non-retained students, including minority race, first generation status, and Pell recipients. In addition, students from these groups were more likely to attend community colleges than White, non-first-generation, and non-Pell students, respectively. Preliminary data suggests that the retention rate is likely to rebound, as indicated by the estimated 2020 rate of 85% (Fall 2018 cohort students returning for Fall 2019).

Peer Benchmarks: Based on the most recent data available (FY17), SMCM’s first-to-

second year retention rate (87%) was well above those of other public liberal arts colleges (COPLAC schools, average = 74%) and Maryland public four-year institutions (average = 74%), and also exceeded that of Maryland private institutions (average = 81%) and peer institutions (average = 84%), many of which are private. Retention rates at private aspirant institutions averaged 95% in FY17, which is well above SMCM's target but is a useful aspirational benchmark as we strive to remain competitive with those institutions. (*Source: IPEDS Data Center*)

Objective 2.4: SMCM continues to work toward its goal to maintain a diverse faculty and staff. Gender equity was once again achieved for both faculty and staff in FY19, and the diversity target for full-time staff (percent minority) was met in FY19 for the first time in nine years. The target for faculty diversity was not quite met, but continues to stay higher than when the metric was first implemented in FY11. Continuing recently implemented strategies aimed at increasing faculty and staff diversity will be a major focus of the upcoming fiscal year, especially with the recent hire of the inaugural Vice President for Inclusive Diversity and Equity in July 2019. For example, SMCM expanded its external recruitment venues to attract more applications from women and underrepresented professionals; faculty search committees were provided with a variety of materials and strategies regarding recruiting a diverse pool; and the Office of Human Resources streamlined and updated hiring processes and the Affirmative Action Plan.

Objective 2.5: SMCM has met or exceeded the target of an entering class that contains 20% transfer students for the past six years, and levels are expected to maintain at 20% or higher over the next two years.

Objective 2.6: Among transfer students, both the three-year graduation rate (62%, Fall 2016 entering students graduating by Summer 2019) and the four-year rate (74%, Fall 2015 entering students graduating by Summer 2019) increased to meet the targets this year. Moreover, analysis of students' degree progress for the Fall 2017 and Fall 2018 transfer cohorts suggests that these graduation rates will continue to increase over the next two years. As transfer students continue to comprise a substantial proportion of SMCM's incoming students, the College will continue to explore strategies to support them and ensure their timely graduation. For example, in Spring 2019, all departments engaged in the preparation of detailed, major-specific articulation agreements with Maryland two-year institutions, which will facilitate transfer students' timely progress toward the baccalaureate degree. To date, faculty in 25 out of 26 academic programs have prepared a total of 114 targeted articulation agreements. Most of these agreements are under review by the partner community college, and are anticipated to become active during the 2019-20 academic year.

Peer Benchmarks: Benchmark information for four-year rates is only available from those schools which voluntarily provide data to the Student Achievement Measure (SAM) initiative. Based on the most recent data available from SAM (2012 cohort graduating by Summer 2016), SMCM's four-year graduation rate for transfer cohorts (76%) is tied with UM College Park for the highest rate among Maryland public four-year institutions, and was well above the average of 59%. SMCM also compares favorably to COPLAC institutions that participate in SAM (16 of 24) which report an average four-year transfer graduation rate of 56%. No aspirant institutions and only 2 of 12 peer institutions (both also COPLAC institutions) participate in SAM. (*Source: studentachievementmeasure.org*)

Goal 3: Ensure access for students with financial need through a strategic combination of federal, state, private, and institutional funds.

Objective 3.1: This objective has consistently been met or exceeded as SMCM has focused on meeting the financial needs of entering first-time students.

Objective 3.2: The six-year graduation rate among students receiving need-based aid (Pell grant or Stafford loan) was strong (78%); while not meeting the target of 80%, it was above the overall student population six-year rate of 77% for FY19. However, the four-year graduation rate (59%) was low for the second year in a row, similar to four-year rates among most other Fall 2015 cohort groups as discussed above for Objective 2.2, and are similarly projected to remain low. Given the particularly sensitive financial situation of students receiving need-based aid, this gap warrants increased attention. Similarly, retention to the second year (80%) was again below the target and lower than the rate for the overall population.

Peer Benchmarks: Similar to findings for graduation rates among Pell recipients, SMCM's six-year graduation rate for students receiving need-based aid in FY17 (75%, most recent comparison data available) was well above that of other COPLAC institutions (50%), Maryland public institutions (45%), and Maryland private institutions (63%). Notably, this rate also exceeded the FY17 rate at peer institutions (73%). The six-year graduation rate for recipients of need-based aid at aspirant institutions was 90%, nearly equal to their overall six-year graduation rate. (Source: IPEDS Data Center)

Goal 4: Increase student contributions to the Maryland community and to the state and national workforce.

Objectives 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4: SMCM prides itself in preparing students for life after college. Recently, we have focused on promoting community service (4.1) and internships (4.2) and these efforts appear to be succeeding. Community service participation has exceeded the target for the past four years. While the percentage of students reporting internships was low again this year, it remains strong and recent expansion of Career Development Center staff and programming are expected to support future increases in student participation in internships. SMCM students continue to be employed at high rates five years after graduation (4.3), and the proportion of students continuing their education at the graduate level within five years (4.4) also continues to increase. Both of these measures have exceeded their targets for the past four years.

Peer Benchmarks: Similar, but not identical, benchmarks are available for community service and internships. The Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency that supports and tracks volunteering efforts at national and state levels, reported that the national volunteer rate for college-age adults in 2018 was 26%, and the rate for Maryland residents (of all ages; demographic breakdowns not available) was 36%. The rate for SMCM seniors in 2018 was 71%. Although the methodologies underlying the calculation of volunteer rates certainly differ in multiple ways (e.g., college-age adults versus graduating seniors versus all adults), this benchmark suggests that SMCM students' volunteer rates are likely to be comparable to peers both nationally and in Maryland. With regard to internships, the National Association of Colleges and

Employers (NACE) reported that among over 7,800 sampled senior college students from 504 campuses in Spring 2018, 53% had participated in an internship. Although this figure is a fair amount higher than the reported percentage of 41% among SMCM graduating seniors in 2018, it is important to note that NACE also reported that the top majors of students most likely to have completed an internship were agriculture, communications, finance, marketing, parks and recreation, political science, and public administration. SMCM offers only one of those top seven majors. (Sources: Corporation for National and Community Service, www.nationalservice.gov/vcla; NACE Class of 2018 Student Survey Report)

C. Response to Commission Assessment

The Commission continues to focus its attention on equity gaps in college outcomes among minority college students and their white peers. A central topic of the 2019 Completion Summit MHEC held in April was on college completion and equity. One of the speakers, Dr. Nikki Edgcombe of the Community College Research Center (CCRC), discussed ways institutions can create more equitable and inclusive pathways for students to achieve their educational goals.

The principles she posited include: 1) knowing your students, 2) understanding the obstacles to their success, 3) adopting and adapting responsive policies and practices, and 4) scaling and institutionalizing continuous improvement. In reference to this, she stated “Targeted interventions are probably one of the more powerful vehicles we have for addressing gaps in attainment. They are not always popular, but universal interventions often times may lift all boats but maintain gaps...”

For your institution, please describe: 1) one or more targeted interventions and the population(s) served, 2) the identified obstacles the students might face, 3) the metrics used to evaluate the intervention(s) and 4) the evidence used to assess and adapt the intervention(s) to ensure its intended effects.

DeSousa-Brent Scholars Program (DBSP)

The DBSP, established in 2007, is SMCM’s flagship program for underrepresented students. First-year and transfer students are invited to apply to the DBSP based on interest, high school accomplishments, and leadership potential, and are interviewed by the Program Director prior to being offered enrollment in the program. DBSP students attend a pre-matriculation summer bridge program, receive intensive advising, are enrolled in the same first year seminar as other DB Scholars (to facilitate cohort building), and carry out a campus-wide leadership project. Funding from the state has allowed for the expansion of the DBSP from its initial focus on the first year to a four-year, developmentally appropriate program designed to support students through graduation.

Populations Served: Students from groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education, including students belonging to ethnic minority groups; first generation students; students eligible to receive Pell grants; students with disabilities; or students from rural or urban communities.

Obstacles Faced: Since DBSP students are often the first in their families to attend a four-year institution, they may not possess the same knowledge of academic study skills, campus life, and general college expectations as their peers who are not first-generation. Additionally, students who have attended under-resourced high schools may struggle with the increased academic rigor of college coursework, especially at an honors college, and may need assistance with time management. Both of these issues are addressed in the DBSP via the first year seminars, which are taught in special sections limited to DBSP students, as well as through intensive advising. Finally, DBSP students may face obstacles related to their low-income status. In response, DBSP students are offered generous financial aid packages whenever possible, and receive laptop computers for their personal academic use upon entry to the program.

Metrics: Several quantitative and qualitative assessments are in place. The retention and graduation rates of each successive DBSP cohort are closely monitored. Beginning with the Fall 2015 cohort, these rates have been evaluated against aspirational targets set by the State of Maryland. The program has met each one of these success goals, including increasing first-to-second year retention from 80% to 88%; increasing first-to-third year retention from 68% to 80%; and increasing the four-year graduation rate from a low of 32% in the first year to 71% for the most recent year, effectively closing the completion equity gap between participating DBSP students and all SMCM students. In addition, DBSP students are surveyed following the summer bridge experience to assess how well prepared they feel for college, and to solicit suggestions for improvements. DBSP alumni are periodically surveyed to assess the impact of the program on their college experience and post-baccalaureate professional lives.

Evidence: On survey responses and in individual consultations and advising meetings, DBSP students expressed a number of academic concerns, including study skills, time management, understanding of transfer credits, requesting and using academic accommodations, and degree planning. In response, the DBSP partnered with several offices on campus, including the Registrar and the Office of Student Support Services, to offer workshops specifically tailored for DBSP students to address these concerns. For example, major-specific workshops focusing on multi-year degree planning are now being offered to assist students in understanding how to effectively and efficiently complete their major requirements within four years.