

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. Analysis of Goals and Objectives

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

Objective 1.1: For three of the past four years, SMCM has met the target of 100% of graduates completing at least two high-impact practices (HIP), and reached 99% last year. The goal of 80% completing at least three HIPs has been met for each of the past four year. This year, 95% of students completed at least two HIPs and 72% completed at least three. As noted in the 2020 report, many students were on track to complete additional experiences when the coronavirus pandemic forced the cancellation of their plans, and the hybrid teaching environment during the 2020-21 academic year limited the experiences that SMCM faculty were able to offer. We are confident that as the pandemic resolves, we will resume meeting these goals.

Peer Benchmarks: The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) releases annual benchmarks regarding the completion of HIPs among graduating seniors at institutions participating in the survey. For the Class of 2019, the latest comparison data available, SMCM's rate of 100% of students completing at least two HIPs exceeds the national average of 86% of students at participating Carnegie Baccalaureate Arts & Sciences institutions. Further, SMCM's rate of 87% of students completing at least three HIPs is also well above the national average of 68% of students at participating Carnegie Baccalaureate Arts & Sciences institutions.

Objectives 1.2 and 1.3: SMCM is committed to offering a rigorous curriculum taught by qualified faculty. For the past five years, SMCM has met or exceeded the targeted percent of full-time faculty who have terminal degrees. Although the percentage of credit hours taught by full-time faculty has declined slightly over the past two years, full-time faculty still teach the great majority of undergraduate credit hours. Finally, the undergraduate student-faculty ratio has been between 9:1 and 10:1 for the past five years, well below (better than) the target of 12:1.

Peer Benchmarks: SMCM has by far the lowest student-faculty ratio (9:1) among the traditional four-year public institutions in Maryland, which average 15:1. The SMCM student-faculty ratio is second lowest (after New College of Florida at 7:1) among COPLAC institutions, which average 14:1; and is on par with Maryland private institutions, peer institutions, and aspirant institutions, which range from 7:1 to 15:1

(average = 10:1). (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 FY21 (Fall 2020), SMCM recruited a first-year class that exceeded the targets for the percentages of students of color (for the eighth consecutive year), of first generation college students (for the fourth consecutive year), and of Pell grant recipients (for the third time in the past four years). High school academic performance of the entering class remains strong; the average GPA of incoming students has steadily improved to its current ten-year high. Median SAT scores appear to have stabilized around 1180, above the target of 1150 (note that only the 2018, 2019 and 2020 scores are directly comparable because of changes to the SAT). Finally, the out-of-state student population is slowly rising after several years of below-target numbers, and is expected to continue to improve with the FY22 class.

Peer Benchmarks: Based on available benchmark data which uses the mean (average) rather than the median, the average SAT score of SMCM entering students (1176) continues to exceed that of most other Maryland four-year institutions (FY21 average = 1073), and our students rank well against high school seniors both in Maryland (FY21 average = 1029) and nationwide (FY21 average = 1051). (Source: MHEC 2021 Data Book)

Objective 2.2: Both four-year graduation rates (Fall 2017 cohort graduating by Summer 2021) and six-year graduation rates (Fall 2015 cohort graduating by Summer 2021) were below targets for all groups, as they have been for the past few years. However, projections of four-year graduation rates over the next two years are promising. First-time students entering in Fall 2018 and Fall 2019 are projected, based on current enrollment statistics, to rebound to an overall 72% four-year graduation rate, and rates for all examined populations are also projected to rise to meet (or nearly meet) targets. Six-year rates are not yet projected to rebound to previous levels, but we expect that these numbers will improve as the Fall 2018 and 2019 cohorts advance. Projections show most rates rebounding over the next two years, although not to target levels and with greater fluctuations among estimated six-year rates.

While this year's graduation rates are disappointing, we are encouraged by the strong projected improvements over the next few years. We are optimistic that these predicted increases reflect a positive impact of our recent concerted efforts to improve retention and student persistence. For the past few years, we have been carefully analyzing the relationship between students' progress toward degree completion and several important early academic milestones, including enrolling in a college mathematics course in the first year, attempting at least 16 credits per semester in the first year, 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. We have shared these findings widely with faculty and staff, and have begun a campaign to publicize the importance of meeting these milestones to students as well. SMCM also instituted its first ever Winter session to assist students in catching up on credits, and we plan to continue to offer online courses during both Summer and Winter sessions to provide students with a convenient means of earning additional credits in between traditional semesters. Overall, it appears that these strategies may be paying off over the next few years. We will continue to work with faculty advisors and academic support staff to ensure they are aware of the importance of these milestones, and know how to communicate them to their first-year

student advisees. We will continue to explore how best to make Winter and Summer session offerings applicable and accessible, particularly to students who may have financial challenges paying for classes during an extra term.

Finally, about 15% of departed first-year students over the past several cohorts have transferred out to two-year institutions, according to data from 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 continued development and implementation of targeted, program-specific articulation agreements with many Maryland community colleges is expected to facilitate such reverse transfer efforts.

Peer Benchmarks: Based on the most recent comparison data available (FY17), SMCM’s overall four-year graduation rate (68% for the 2013 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 students of color combined were all at or above the corresponding rates at other COPLAC, Maryland public, and Maryland private institutions. Benchmark four-year graduation rates for Pell recipients are not available. *(Source: IPEDS Data Center)*

Four-Year Graduation Rates, FY17 (Fall 2013 cohort)					
Institution(s)	N	Overall	Students of Color	African American	Hispanic
SMCM	1	68%	55%	51%	55%
COPLAC	28	38%	31%	29%	35%
MD Public	11	29%	27%	26%	24%
MD Private	9	61%	54%	41%	55%
Peer	12	65%	61%	59%	60%
Aspirant	6	86%	84%	86%	81%

For six-year graduation rates, the most recent comparison data available (FY19) reveal that SMCM’s overall rate (77%, for the 2013 cohort) exceeded that of all other comparison groups except private aspirant institutions at 90%. SMCM’s six-year rate for all students of color exceeded those at other COPLAC, Maryland public, and Maryland private institutions, and nearly matched the rate at peer institutions. Notably, the six-year graduation rates for African American and Hispanic students at SMCM were well above that from all other groups except aspirant institutions. Finally, SMCM’s six-year graduation rates for Pell recipients in FY19 were above or close to those of other COPLAC, Maryland public and private, and peer institutions. *(Source: IPEDS Data Center)*

Six-Year Graduation Rates, FY19 (Fall 2013 cohort)							
Institution(s)	N	Overall	Students of Color	African American	Hispanic	Pell	Need-Based Aid
SMCM	1	77%	69%	70%	70%	69%	78%
COPLAC	28	54%	48%	48%	49%	49%	51%
MD Public	11	51%	50%	50%	45%	47%	48%
MD Private	9	69%	63%	54%	65%	66%	67%
Peer	12	72%	70%	68%	68%	71%	72%
Aspirant	6	90%	90%	91%	88%	92%	92%

Objective 2.3: The second year retention rate continues to fluctuate, falling slightly to 83% in FY21. While still not meeting the target, this year’s retention rate still exceeds many benchmarks. In addition, based on preliminary numbers, retention is expected to improve to 89% for both of the next two years.

Peer Benchmarks: Based on the most recent data available (FY19), SMCM’s first-to-second year retention rate in that year (85%) exceeded those of other public liberal arts colleges (COPLAC institutions, average = 73%), Maryland public four-year institutions (average = 76%), Maryland private institutions (average = 80%), and peer institutions (average = 83%), many of which are private. Retention rates at private aspirant institutions averaged 93% in FY19, 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 to maintain a diverse faculty and staff. Gender parity was once again achieved for both faculty and staff in FY21, and the diversity of full-time staff (percent staff of color) missed the target by only one percentage point. Faculty diversity remains below the target which indicates a need for continued attention to recruitment and retention strategies.

Objective 2.5: SMCM has met or exceeded the target of an entering class that contains 20% transfer students for the past seven years, but the percentage fell to 17% in FY21. This is likely related to the challenges of recruiting transfer students during the coronavirus pandemic in Spring and Summer 2020. We will continue to focus on recruiting a strong incoming class of transfer students.

Objective 2.6: Among transfer students, both the three-year graduation rate (68%, Fall 2018 entering students graduating by Summer 2021) and four-year graduation rate (75%, Fall 2017 entering students graduating by Summer 2021) well exceeded the targets of 60% and 70%, respectively. Moreover, analysis of students’ degree progress for the Fall 2018 and Fall 2019 transfer cohorts suggests that these graduation rates will remain high over the next two years. Continued development and refinement of articulation agreements with Maryland two-year institutions will facilitate transfer students’ timely progress toward the baccalaureate degree.

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: Both four-year and six-year graduation rates among students receiving need-based aid (Pell grant or Stafford loan) were low this year, similar to other cohort groups as discussed above for Objective 2.2. The four-year graduation rate is projected to improve over the next two years, but not quite as strongly as other four-year rates discussed above. Given the particularly sensitive financial situation of students receiving need-based aid, this gap warrants increased attention. Similarly, retention to the second year (79%) was again below the target and lower than the rate for the overall population, but is projected to rebound to 91%, a level even higher than the all-student level.

Peer Benchmarks: Similar to findings for graduation rates among Pell recipients, SMCM's six-year graduation rate for students receiving need-based aid (78% in FY19, most recent comparison data available) was well above that of other COPLAC institutions (51%), Maryland public institutions (48%), and Maryland private institutions (67%). Notably, this rate also exceeded the FY19 rate at peer institutions (72%). The six-year graduation rate for recipients of need-based aid at aspirant institutions was 92%, above even their overall six-year graduation rate of 90%. (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: Community service participation in FY21 did not meet the target for the second time in five years, perhaps due to ongoing effects of the pandemic during 2019-20 and 2020-21. Internship participation dipped slightly to just below the target of 45% of graduates, and is expected to grow over the next few years as students move through the LEAD curriculum. With regard to six-month post-degree outcomes, while the six-month employment rate (53%) was below the target for the Class of 2020, the six-month continuing education rate (34%) was substantially above the target, suggesting that 2020 graduates who were not employed were choosing to continue their education instead. In support of this interpretation, the overall Career Outcomes Rate (rate of graduates with a "positive career outcome", such as employment, continuing education, fellowship, or service experience) for SMCM was 91%.

Peer Benchmarks: Benchmarks for the six-month employment and continuing education rate come from the nationally administered First Destination Survey, and are for Carnegie Baccalaureate Arts & Sciences institutions. For the Class of 2019, the most recent data available, SMCM's employment rate was 58% and the national rate was 69%, while SMCM's continuing education rate was 30% and the national rate was 18%. The total Career Outcome Rate for SMCM was 94% while the national rate was 92%. Again, these numbers support the interpretation that SMCM graduates are just as successful as college graduates nationwide, and are more likely than similar college graduates nationwide to choose to continue their education (rather than enter the job market) just after graduation. (Source: National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) First Destinations for the Class of 2019 Report)

B. Response to Commission Assessment

What are three COVID-related initiatives/programs your institution implemented that your institution will be adopting permanently?

Winterim and Online Courses. The pandemic-induced shift to remote instruction, while sudden, provided significant opportunities to increase access that have become a permanent part of the College's academic offerings. Online instruction, particularly between standard academic terms, allowed the College to aid students in making timely degree progression. For example, in a pilot Winterim term in 2020-21, students were able to return home, work if so desired, and still make academic progress toward their degrees. Entering the pilot, 57% of the students registered for Winterim were “on-track” for four-year graduation. As a result of credits earned during Winterim, 70% of students were on track heading into the spring semester. Winterim was also a net budget-positive endeavor. The College plans to continue offering online courses during off-session terms (Winterim and Summer), both increasing revenue and allowing more students to graduate in four years.

Implementation of eSOAR. In response to the pandemic, St. Mary's College transformed its on-site, in-person summer orientation, advising, and registration event (SOAR) into a remote experience that students could complete asynchronously (eSOAR) in Summer 2020. We offered information about curriculum and course selection via our LMS, hosted weekly webinars on topics of interest to new students and their families, and connected students to Orientation Leaders and other campus resources via ZeeMee. During our second version of eSOAR in Summer 2021, we improved upon our initial version by offering students one-on-one advising appointments via Zoom. While we hope to welcome students to campus next summer as part of our onboarding process, aspects of the virtual eSOAR experience will persist. We will continue to offer information on the curriculum via Blackboard as this has helped students to prepare better for registration. We will also continue to do remote advising appointments for all new students-- the flexibility of remote appointments has allowed us to give students a much more personalized advising experience. Finally, we will continue to offer a limited number of webinars for new students and their families to maximize access and convenience.

Revision of Telework Policy. The sudden onset of mandatory and continuous telework led to changes in the way College employees conduct processes and interact. Employees and processes were able to adapt and still conduct instruction and operations. The College's telework policy and procedures had last been updated in 2015 and were outdated and presented barriers to effective telework. Rather than edit the outdated policy, we developed a new policy. Highlights of the new policy include a list of job duties deemed acceptable for telework; inclusion of language that would permit ad hoc telework; a provision to ensure employees meet proactively with the Office of Information Technology in order to receive the hardware, software and remote access they need to telework; and acknowledgement of tax and other legal implications associated with long term out-of-state telework.

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VISION

St. Mary's College of Maryland will increasingly serve as the liberal arts college of choice for intellectually ambitious students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds, attracted by a rigorous, innovative, and distinctive curriculum that integrates theory and practice; a talented, professionally engaged, and student-centered faculty and staff; and a strong infrastructure. Students will be part of a collaborative learning community that embraces intellectual curiosity and innovation, the power of diversity, and the College's unique environment. Our graduates will thrive as responsible and thoughtful global citizens and leaders.

KEY GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

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

- Obj. 1.1** All graduating students will participate in at least two high-impact practices, and at least 80 percent of the graduating class will participate in at least three high-impact practices. High-impact practices are defined by the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U).
- Obj. 1.2** Maintain a full-time faculty of which 98 percent have terminal degrees. Maintain the proportion of undergraduate credit hours taught by full-time faculty at 88 percent annually.
- Obj. 1.3** Maintain an environment that promotes individual contact between faculty and students by maintaining a student-faculty ratio of no more than 12 to 1.

Performance Measures	2017 Act.	2018 Act.	2019 Act.	2020 Act.	2021 Act.	2022 Est.	2023 Est.
Percent of the graduating class successfully completing at least two high-impact practices	100%	100%	100%	99%	95%	100%	100%
Percent of the graduating class successfully completing at least three high-impact practices	84%	86%	87%	82%	72%	82%	85%
Percent of all full-time faculty who have terminal degrees	98%	99%	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%
Percent of undergraduate credit hours taught by full-time faculty	91%	89%	88%	87%	82%	85%	85%
Undergraduate student to faculty ratio	10:1	10:1	10:1	9:1	9:1	10:1	10:1

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Goal 2. Recruit, support, and retain a diverse and qualified group of students, faculty and administrative staff who will contribute to and benefit from the enriched academic and cultural environment provided by St. Mary's.

Obj. 2.1 Recruit a qualified and diverse entering class with the following attributes: Median verbal and math combined SAT score of at least 1150, average high school grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.40 (4 point scale), minority enrollment of at least 25 percent, out of state student enrollment of at least 10 percent, students from first generation households enrollment of at least 20 percent, and Pell Grants disbursed during their first semester student enrollment of at least 20 percent.

Obj. 2.2 Achieve and maintain 4-year graduation rates for all students (70 percent), all minorities (59 percent), African-American students (51 percent), Hispanic students (70 percent), all first generation students (65 percent), and all students with a Pell Grant disbursed during their first semester (58 percent). Maintain 6-year graduation rates for all students (80 percent), all minorities (74 percent), African-American students (71 percent), Hispanic students (80 percent), all first generation students (78 percent) and all Pell Grants disbursed during their first semester (68 percent).

Performance Measures	2017 Act.	2018 Act.	2019 Act.	2020 Act.	2021 Act.	2022 Est.	2023 Est.
¹ Median (verbal and mathematics combined) SAT scores of first year entering class	1130	1180	1185	1180	1180	1180	1180
Average high school GPA	3.34	3.33	3.38	3.38	3.44	3.40	3.40
Percent of entering first year class who are minorities	31%	27%	25%	33%	31%	32%	32%
Percent of entering first year class who originate from outside of Maryland	7%	9%	7%	6%	9%	11%	10%
Percent of entering first year class from first generation households	18%	25%	21%	23%	25%	21%	23%
Percent of entering first year class receiving Pell Grants disbursed during their first semester	19%	20%	17%	22%	24%	17%	20%
Four-year graduation rate for all students	68%	63%	64%	60%	58%	72%	72%
Four-year graduation rate for all minorities	52%	59%	52%	48%	44%	59%	65%
Four-year graduation rate for African-American students	49%	46%	51%	48%	38%	50%	54%
Four-year graduation rate for Hispanic students	52%	68%	53%	44%	44%	71%	76%
Four-year graduation rate for all first generation students	60%	59%	60%	51%	44%	70%	61%
Four-year graduation rate for students with a Pell Grant disbursed during their first semester	57%	55%	60%	57%	43%	72%	63%
Six-year graduation rate for all students	78%	80%	77%	72%	73%	72%	69%
Six-year graduation rate for all minorities	67%	72%	67%	67%	64%	63%	56%
Six-year graduation rate for African-American students	55%	56%	69%	51%	69%	63%	53%
Six-year graduation rate for Hispanic students	81%	81%	68%	74%	58%	53%	56%
Six-year graduation rate for all first generation students	74%	85%	69%	64%	71%	65%	60%
Six-year graduation rate for students with a Pell Grant disbursed during their first semester	68%	84%	69%	62%	76%	65%	54%

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Obj. 2.3 The first to second-year retention rate will be 90 percent.

Obj. 2.4 The College will strive for diversity in the faculty and staff so that the composition reflects the aspired diversity of the student body. The aspirant goal for full-time faculty and staff will be: all minorities (20 percent and 28 percent), and women (50 percent and 50 percent).

Obj. 2.5 Ensure access for transfer students, particularly those from 2-year institutions. Achieve and maintain transfer students at 20 percent of the entering class each fall.

Obj. 2.6 Achieve and maintain degree completion rates for transfer students at 60 percent for three-year graduation rates, and at 70 percent for four-year graduation rates.

Performance Measures	2017 Act.	2018 Act.	2019 Act.	2020 Act.	2021 Act.	2022 Est.	2023 Est.
First to second-year retention rate	87%	87%	82%	85%	83%	85%	87%
Percent minority of all full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty	16%	17%	16%	14%	15%	16%	17%
Percent women of all full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty	46%	51%	51%	52%	51%	51%	51%
Percent minority of all full-time (non-faculty) staff	24%	27%	29%	27%	27%	28%	28%
Percent women of all full-time (non-faculty) staff	55%	52%	57%	57%	57%	57%	57%
Percentage of entering fall class who are transfer students	25%	20%	22%	21%	17%	17%	20%
3-year graduation rate for all transfer students	62%	56%	62%	69%	68%	73%	76%
4-year graduation rate for all transfer students	62%	71%	74%	69%	74%	79%	74%

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

Obj. 3.1 72 percent of entering first-year student need is met by awarding any need-based aid.

Obj. 3.2 Support persistence to graduation of students receiving need-based aid at entry. Achieve and maintain first-to-second year retention rates at 90 percent, four-year graduation rates at 70 percent, and six-year graduation rates at 80 percent for students receiving need-based aid in the first semester.

Performance Measures	2017 Act.	2018 Act.	2019 Act.	2020 Act.	2021 Act.	2022 Est.	2023 Est.
Average percent of first-time full-time degree-seeking student need met by awarding need-based aid	72%	75%	73%	78%	84%	78%	78%
First-to-second year retention rate for students receiving need-based aid in the first semester	84%	80%	80%	81%	79%	88%	88%
Four-year graduation rate for students receiving need-based aid in the first semester	66%	61%	59%	55%	54%	67%	65%
Six-year graduation rate for students receiving need-based aid in the first semester	75%	81%	78%	68%	69%	66%	64%

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

- Obj. 4.1** 65 percent of graduating seniors will have performed community service while at SMCM.
- Obj. 4.2** 45 percent of graduating seniors will have participated in a paid or unpaid internship.
- Obj. 4.3** The rate of employment within six months of graduation will be at least 67 percent.
- Obj. 4.4** The rate of continuing education (at any level) within six months of graduation will be 25 percent.

Performance Measures	2017 Act.	2018 Act.	2019 Act.	2020 Act.	2021 Act.	2022 Est.	2023 Est.
Percent of graduating seniors who will have performed community service while at SMCM	79%	71%	69%	63%	50%	60%	65%
Percent of graduating seniors who fulfilled a paid or unpaid internship	45%	41%	40%	45%	44%	47%	50%
Employment rate of graduates within six months of graduation	65%	67%	62%	58%	53%	58%	58%
Percent of graduates continuing their education (at any level) within six months of graduation	21%	23%	28%	30%	34%	32%	32%

NOTES

¹ Due to the SAT changing, beginning with 2018, scores are not comparable to previous years.