

ST MARY'S COLLEGE *of* MARYLAND

RD14D00

Fiscal Year 2024 Operating Budget Testimony

**House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Education and Economic Development
Delegate Stephanie Smith, Chair
February 23, 2023**

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**Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
Subcommittee on Education, Business, and Administration
Senator Nancy King, Chair
February 24, 2023**



**Dr. Tuajuanda C. Jordan, President
Ms. Paula Collins, Trustee
Mr. Paul A. Pusecker, Vice President for Business and CFO
Mr. Charles C. Jackson, Government Relations Liaison**

Introduction – The Public Honors College

As the State's designated public honors college, St. Mary's College of Maryland (SMCM) provides a **premier liberal arts education** that is both **affordable** and **accessible**. The College awards a variety of undergraduate degrees as well as a graduate Master of Arts in Teaching degree. With a faculty of gifted teachers and distinguished scholars, a talented and diverse student body, and a low student/faculty ratio, St. Mary's College provides a challenging curriculum within an academically nurturing environment. In addition, the College fosters a sense of social responsibility and community among students through its curriculum and campus life.

The Nation's 1st Public Honors College

Supporting the two goals articulated by the State's 1992 mandated mission 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 the national higher education sector.

As a public institution that is both accessible and affordable, St. Mary's College provides an opportunity for academically talented students from a broad socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial spectrum to acquire a liberal arts education. This diversity creates a rich academic and social environment that enhances the education provided by the College.

Maryland's Public Honors College

Mission unique in the Nation

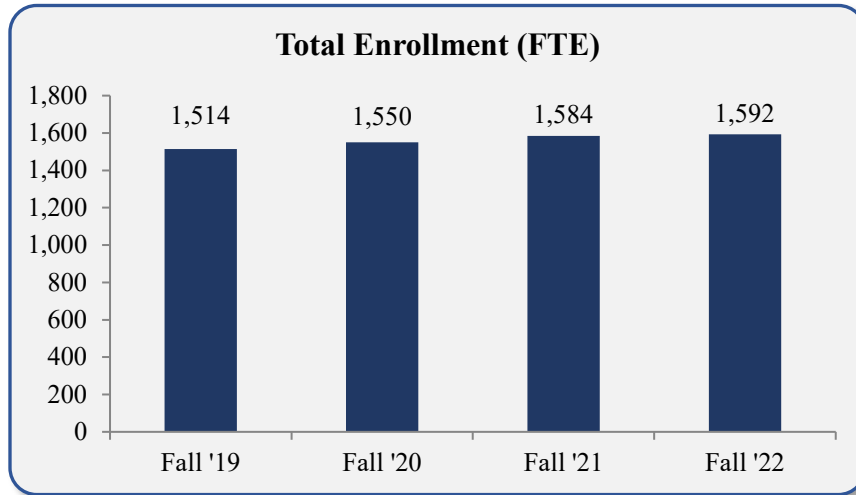
- *Liberal arts college excellence akin to elite privates → curricular innovation and relevance*
- *Public = Accessible + Affordable + Diverse*

St. Mary's College was established by the Maryland legislature in 1840 as a living memorial to Maryland's founders and their ideals of tolerance and innovation. The school evolved into a four-year institution in 1967. St. Mary's College maintains its identity as a residential liberal arts institution, fostering principles of diversity, civic-mindedness, and intellectual exploration. The College offers academic and extracurricular programs that build upon the rich historical, cultural, and natural environments that come from its affiliation with Historic St. Mary's City and location on the banks of the St. Mary's River within the Chesapeake Tidewater.

St. Mary's 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.

Enrollment

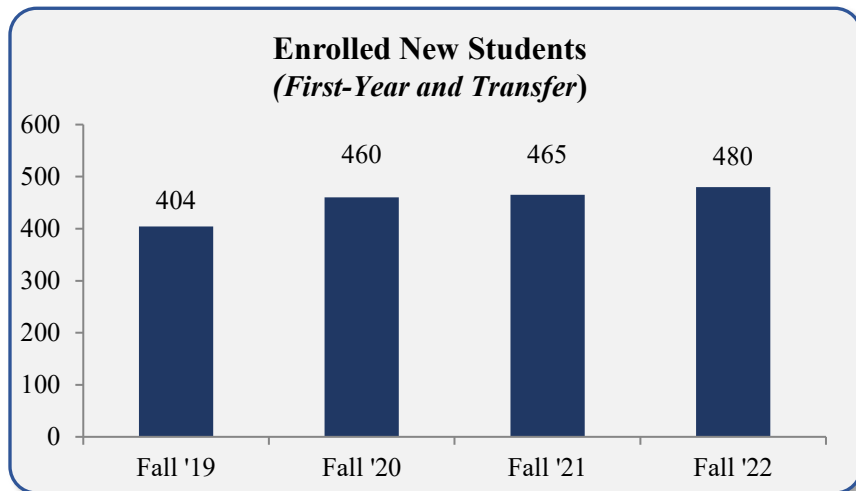
After declining from 2013 to 2019, the College has now stabilized its enrollment and has recently seen gains. As shown in Exhibit 1, overall **undergraduate enrollment has increased 5% over the past three years** (Fall 2019 to Fall 2022).



*Enrollment up
5% Since 2019*

Exhibit 1

The College's increasing enrollment is due to the matriculation of greater numbers of first-time first-year and transfer students, **which have grown 19% over the past three years** (Exhibit 2).



*New Student
Enrollment up
19% since 2019*

Exhibit 2

The increase in new students is the result of the College's varied efforts to enhance its position within the higher education market. These include:

- implementation of the *LEAD* curriculum that integrates the proven long-term benefits of a traditional liberal arts education with the applied professional skills demanded in today's economy.
- implementation of new majors based on student interest, economic relevance and, importantly, taking advantage of both the College's location and faculty/community expertise. The new majors are in Neuroscience, Marine Science, Business Administration, and Performing Arts, with Marine Science and Business Administration representing the third and fourth most popular intended majors, respectively, among new first-year students.
- enhanced marketing and recruiting efforts implemented to launch the College as *The National Public Honors College*.

Together, these initiatives have made St. Mary's College more relevant and more competitive. Illustrating this success, over the past three years **applications have increased 71%** (Exhibit 3).

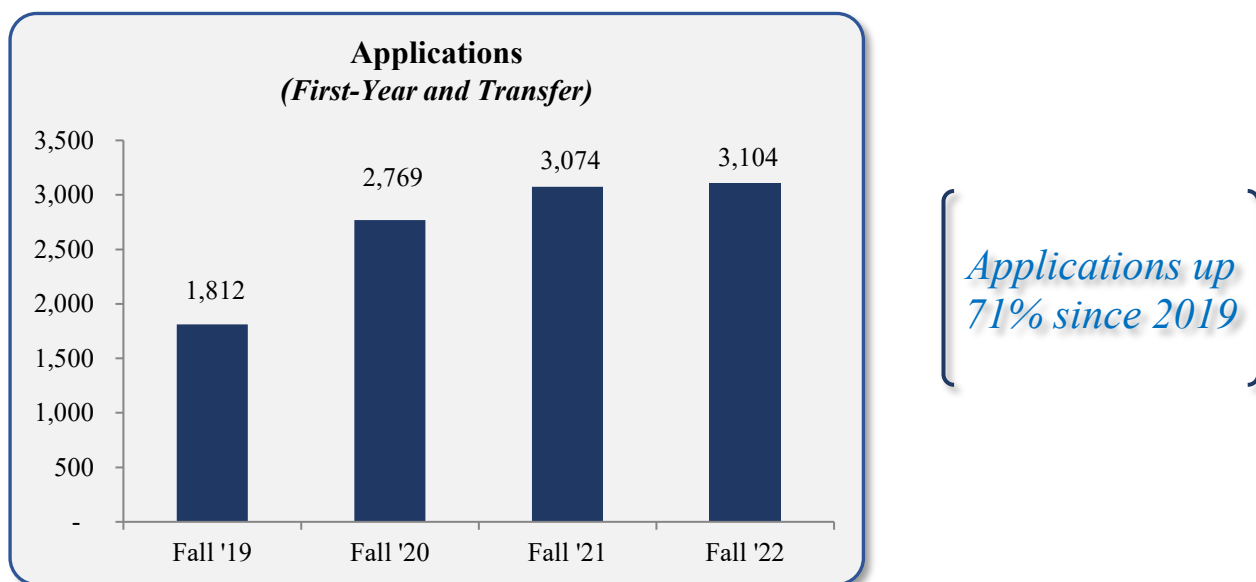


Exhibit 3

Given the strong entering class for Fall 2022, St. Mary's College believes that efforts to sustain its record of student success, modernize its curriculum, and market its new brand are resonating well with prospective high school students and their families. Overall, these successes will result in increased enrollment, as larger classes of new students replace smaller graduating classes.

Support for the Maryland State Plan for Postsecondary Education

Access and Affordability:

St. Mary's College of Maryland's unique mission, to provide an honors-level liberal arts education that is both accessible and affordable to all Marylanders, is challenging. Through a combination of institutional efforts to control expenses, coupled with State support, tuition pricing was lowered in FY15 and has since been successfully moderated, making St. Mary's College more affordable for Maryland families.

In-state tuition for the 2022-2023 academic year is \$12,116, which is less than it was in 2013 (Exhibit 4). Recently, the St. Mary's College of Maryland Board of Trustees voted to freeze tuition for the 2023-2024 academic year - **for the fourth consecutive year**.

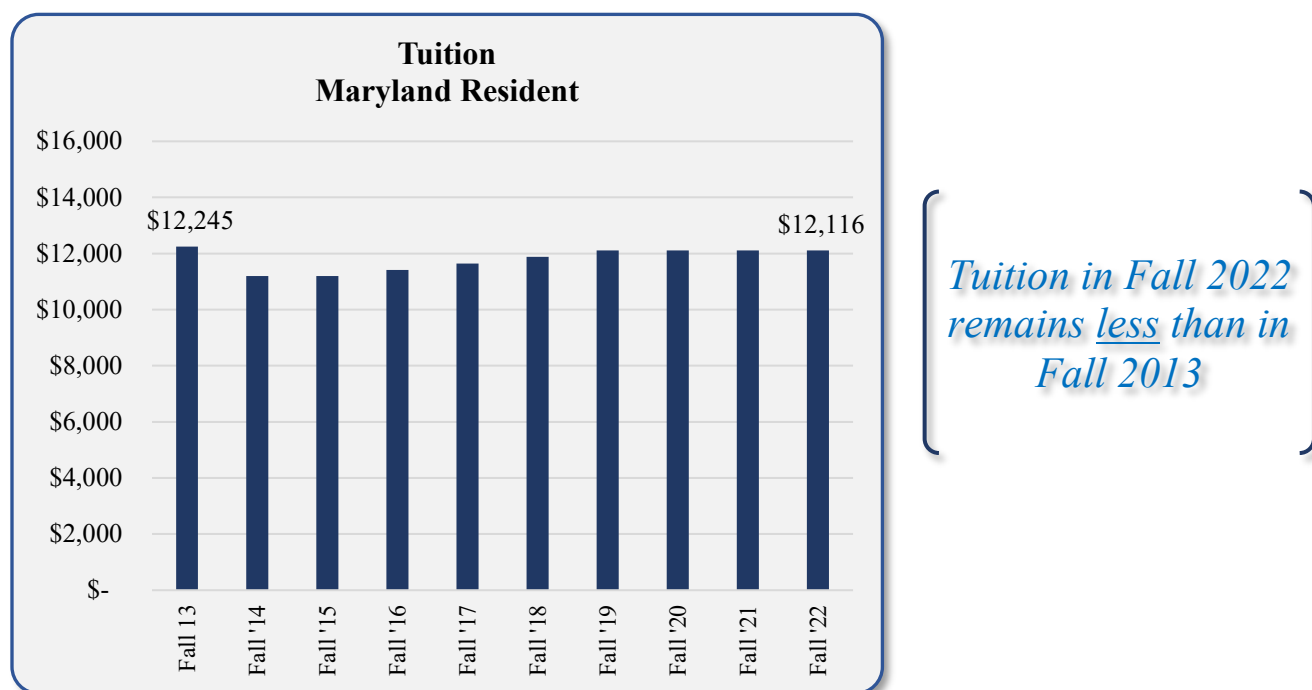


Exhibit 4

Financial Aid: The current in-state tuition price of \$12,116 requires a continued commitment to providing a robust financial aid program. For the Fall 2022 entering class, 95% of students received institutional financial aid.

Over the past five years, St. Mary College has **increased aid by 51%**, adding \$3.1M in direct need-based and merit-based aid to students. As the College has provided more aid to students, it has allocated aid strategically to best recruit highly qualified students regardless of their ability to pay. The current market for talented students is such that many students and their families value merit-based aid over need-based aid. As a consequence, if a student's record warrants merit-based

aid, and the student also has need, the aid awarded by the College will be packaged as merit-based rather than need-based.

As the College continues to be successful recruiting students who qualify both for merit-based and need-based aid, the proportion of merit-based aid has grown, as much of the merit-based aid also meets student need. To understand how much institutional aid is supporting need, the Common Data Set (CDS) tracks total aid that meets need, regardless of whether it is packaged as merit-based or need-based.

As shown in Exhibit 5, the amount of aid awarded by the College to **support student need** has increased from \$4.6M in 2016-2017 to \$6.0M, as reported to the national CDS.

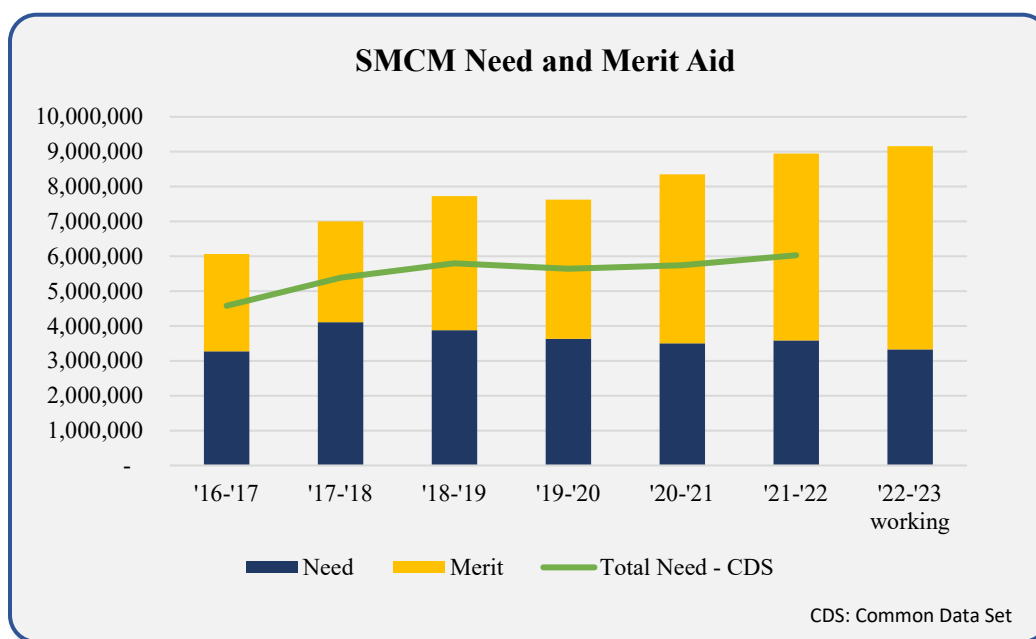
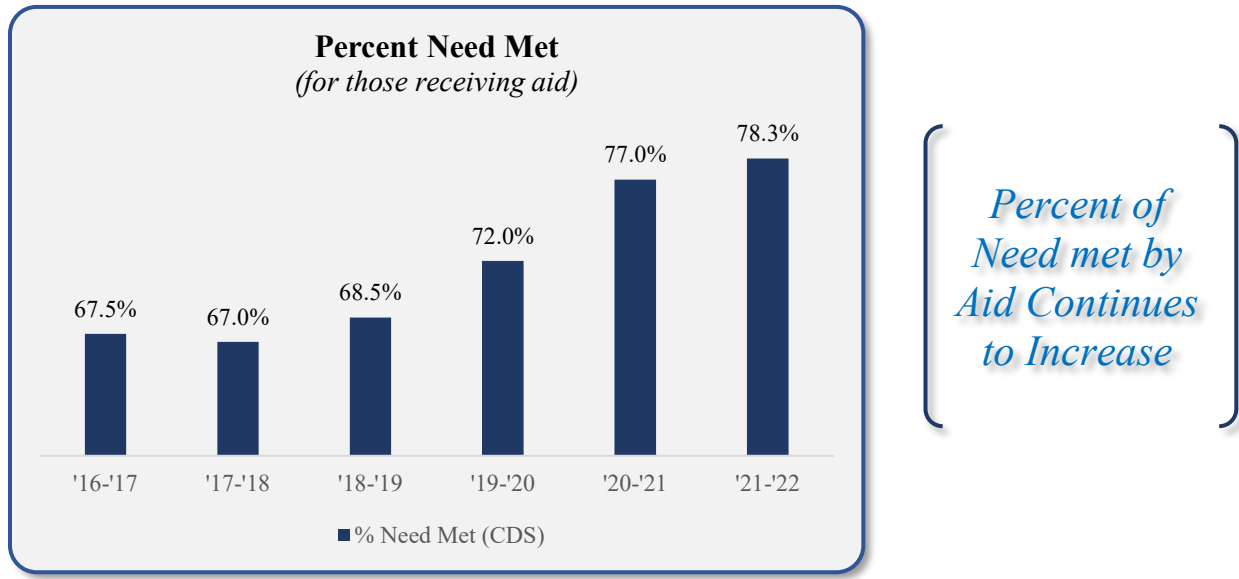
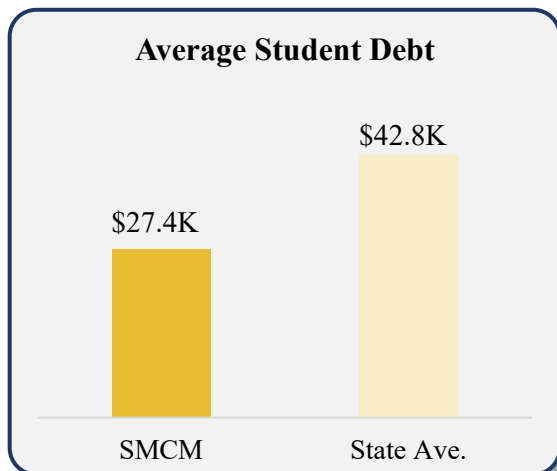
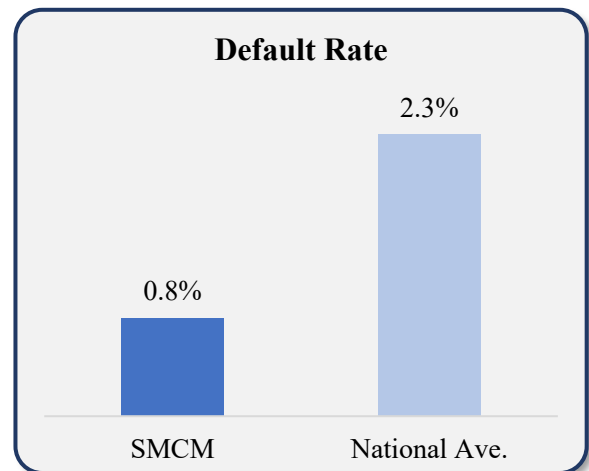


Exhibit 5

To further illustrate this point, for those students receiving aid, the percent of need met by institutional aid (need-based and merit-based) has increased from 67.5% to 78.3% over the past six years (Exhibit 6).

**Exhibit 6**

Student Debt: St. Mary's College's relatively high four-year graduation rate contributes to the lowest average student indebtedness in Maryland (\$27.4K versus the statewide average of \$42.8K) as students are more likely to graduate on time (Exhibit 7). The default rate for St. Mary's College students is 0.8% compared to the national average of 2.3% (Exhibit 8). Lower average indebtedness combined with the lower default rate and high four-year graduation rate means that St. Mary's College graduates are entering the workforce faster and are gainfully employed with more disposable income.

**Exhibit 7****Exhibit 8**

Access to Quality Postsecondary Education:

Quality: St. Mary's College has successfully responded to its charge to provide an outstanding academic program – akin to those offered by some of the best private liberal arts colleges in the nation – to the citizens of Maryland. Over the past 25 years, the College has invested significantly in creating an academic program that is focused on student learning. Major publications continue to highlight St. Mary's College as one of the top liberal arts colleges nationally, including the recent U.S. News and World Report (2022) ranking us 6th among public liberal arts colleges. Other laudatory commentaries have come from the Princeton Review, Colleges of Distinction, Money Magazine, Washington Monthly, and the Fiske Guide to Colleges.

#6 National Public Liberal Arts College, U.S. News

Student-Centered Learning: A hallmark of an excellent liberal education is student-centered learning and St. Mary's College remains one of the best in the nation with a program that includes many high-impact educational practices. For the past five graduating classes, nearly **every student** (98%) has completed at least **two** high-impact practices, compared to the national average of 84% at baccalaureate arts & sciences institutions, and many have completed more than two (average of 3.3 for the Class of 2022).

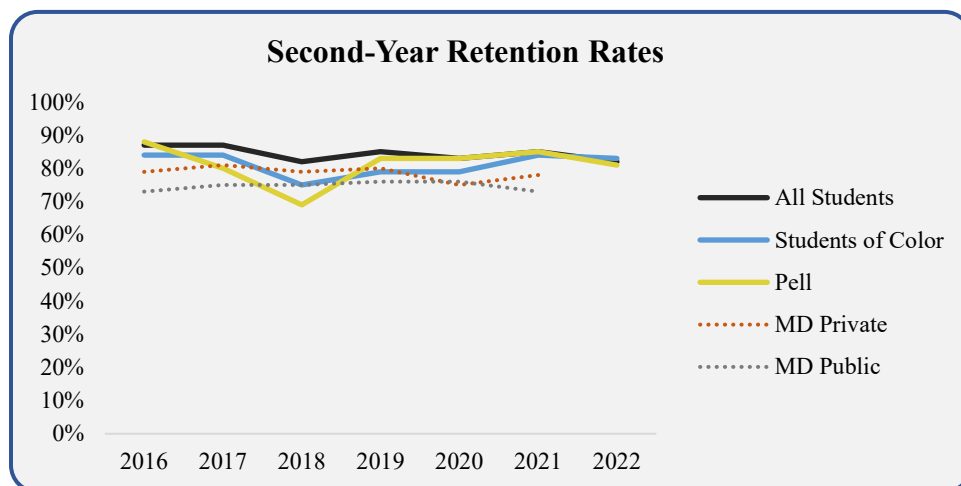
High Impact Practices

98% of graduates completed two or more High Impact Practices

High-impact experiences, including internships, faculty/student collaborative research, and study abroad, are central to the LEAD curriculum (Learning through Experiential and Applied Discovery). This curriculum, first implemented with the incoming first-year class of 2020, provides all students with an integrated academic program that combines deep knowledge of their major with real world experiences to better prepare them for life after graduation. The LEAD core curriculum has been integrated into our current liberal arts curriculum, resulting in a re-imagined applied liberal arts program designed to provide students with a distinctive experience that enhances career preparation. We are confident that once fully implemented, the LEAD curriculum will result in significant gains in student participation rates across many of the high-impact practices.

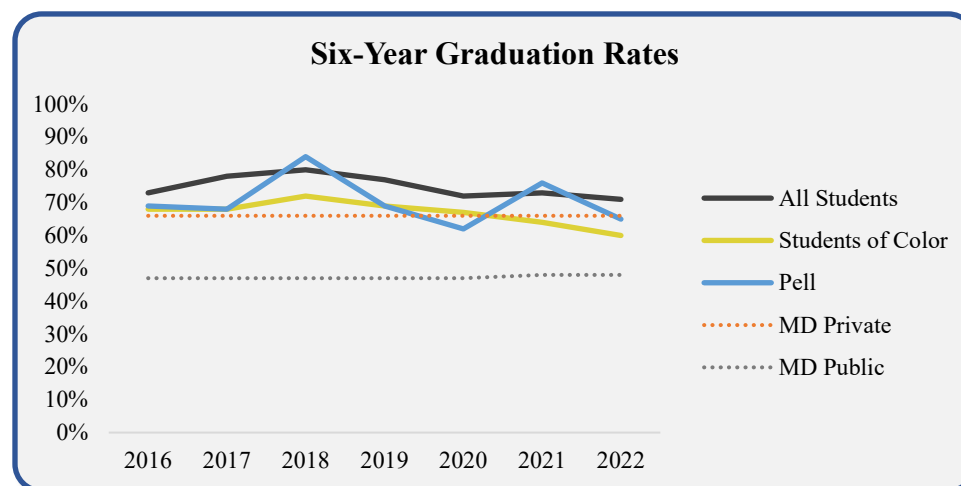
LEAD

Ensure Equal Opportunity for Maryland's Diverse Citizenry: St. Mary's College has made a significant impact in reducing the achievement gap. Overall, persistence of first-time students to their second year is strong. As shown in Exhibit 9, the first-to-second-year retention of students receiving Pell grants has historically equaled that of all students. After a brief dip during 2017-2018, the retention rates for Pell students have again paralleled those of the overall student population. Exhibit 9 also shows that the first-to-second-year retention rate for students of color has increased, and for the last two years, has been equivalent to all students.

**Exhibit 9**

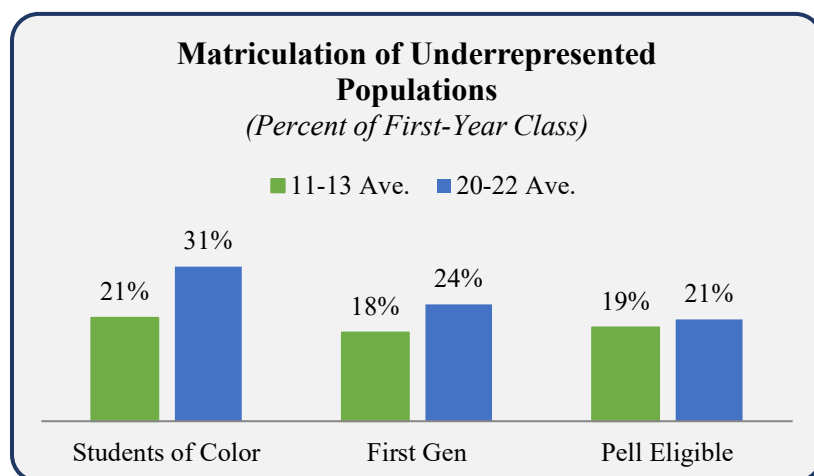
(MD averages not yet available for 2022)

The College's six-year graduation rate remains strong. As shown in Exhibit 10, over the last five years, the six-year graduation rate for all students has averaged 72%, compared to 64% for students of color, and 68% for Pell-eligible students. The six-year graduation rate for students receiving need-based aid is 74% (five-year average).

**Exhibit 10**

(Note that MD averages are three-year average spread across each year)

St. Mary's College is doing well in its efforts to recruit a diverse student body. Students of color represent 31% of the Fall 2022 incoming class compared to 21% a decade ago. Exhibit 11 shows the increase in matriculated students from underrepresented groups over the past nine years.



*Continued Increase in
Matriculation of
Students from
Disadvantaged
Backgrounds*

Exhibit 11

President Tuajuanda Jordan's Sum Primus ("I am first") initiative enables students who are the first in their families to attend college (like President Jordan) to be part of an on-campus support network that includes other first-generation students and faculty. Sum Primus was expanded this year to offer extended pre-orientation activities for entering first-generation students, including discussion sessions focused on time management, major exploration, financial literacy, and team building.

A testament to St. Mary's College's commitment to access and diversity is its invited inclusion in the American Talent Initiative (ATI), a consortium consisting of 135 of the nation's highly- and very highly-selective colleges and universities. Member institutions of the ATI are committed to increasing the number of talented low- and moderate-income students who attend and graduate from these institutions by 50,000 before 2025. Within this national consortium there are three Maryland institutions – St. Mary's College of Maryland, Johns Hopkins University, and the University of Maryland, College Park.

*Member of the
American Talent
Initiative*

It is worth noting that the LEAD curriculum, with its holistic and intentional inclusion of all students in required credit-bearing professional development activities, will have a disproportionately positive impact on students from diverse backgrounds. Evidence clearly indicates that students from these traditionally underserved populations participated in applied co-curricular experiences at lower rates. In the LEAD curriculum, these experiences are required of all students and all students receive support in gaining these experiences.

Promote Economic Growth, Advancement of Research, and Workforce Development

To further enrich learning opportunities, St. Mary's College continues to increase academic programming aligned with the LEAD approach. Two new majors, Marine Science and Neuroscience, began in Fall 2021, and two new majors, Business Administration and the Performing Arts, began in Fall 2022. These new majors directly align with both a liberal arts education and with the practical, employment-minded desires of today's students.

St. Mary's College offers B.A. degrees in most fields, with B.S. degrees offered to students majoring in STEM disciplines. Over the past three years, the College has awarded 26% of its degrees in STEM-related fields. The College is one of 12 partnering institutions for the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) Transformation Project, a project to revise traditional four-year undergraduate curricula in biology, chemistry, physics, and psychology, by focusing on high-quality undergraduate research throughout the four years of a student's major. We anticipate that this endeavor, that aligns perfectly with the LEAD curriculum, will enhance the quality of, and expand student participation (currently 60%, four-year average) in, research at the College.

*26% of Students Graduate
with STEM Degrees*

Our graduates demonstrably succeed. The Career Outcome Rate for graduates of the Class of 2021, reflecting employment, public service, or continued education within six months of graduating, is 97%, compared with the national benchmark of 92% for baccalaureate arts & sciences institutions, as shown in Exhibit 12. The applied and highly marketable skills acquired through our LEAD curriculum have already proven to be a positive influence on the six-month Career Outcome Rate (97% for the Class of 2022 compared to 91% for the Class of 2021).

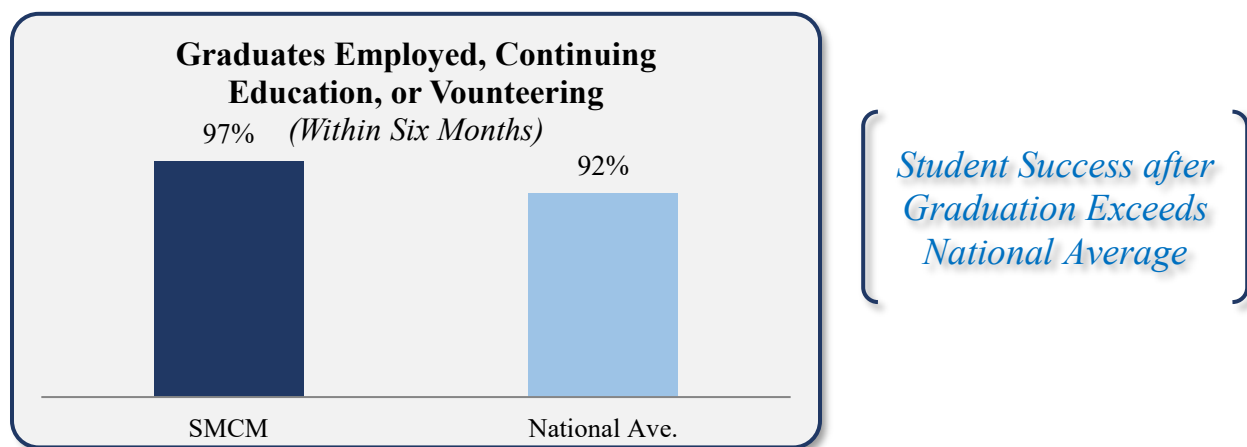


Exhibit 12

In addition, within five years of graduation, 59% of graduates (three-year average) are accepted into graduate or professional school.

St. Mary's College works closely with the regional public school systems and the nearby Patuxent River Naval Air Station to promote economic development and growth of a highly qualified workforce. More than 90% of our graduates from the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program work in Maryland schools, with many remaining in the Southern Maryland region.

*90% of MAT
Graduates Teaching in
Maryland*

Response to Questions in DLS Analysis

Question: The President should detail why the acceptance and yield rates have declined since fall 2019.

Acceptance rates declined from 84% in 2019 (the highest ever) to 77% in 2022. During the same period, the yield rate of admitted applicants declined from 23% in 2019 to 17% for Fall 2021 and increased to 18% for Fall 2022. This is both an intentional and a natural consequence of having such a significant increase (71%) in the number of applications during that period.

The percent of applicants offered admission typically decreases when the size of an applicant pool increases. As the applicant pool grew, it included increases in applicants who are well- prepared for the rigors of an honors-level education as well as those who are not as well prepared. The nominal decline in the acceptance rate compared to the significant growth of the applicant pool is because of admitted applicants having a greater number of enrollment choices compared to a smaller, self-selecting pool.

We are pleased that our marketing and recruiting initiatives coupled with our new program offerings are resulting in greater interest in the College. As these efforts continue to gain traction, we anticipate continued growth in our enrollment.

Question: The President should comment on efforts to improve the four-year graduation rates.

The College continually works to enhance its student success programs to support its students. Over the past few years, new initiatives included a short winter term, the Sum Primus program for first generation students, and expanded services provided by the Office of Student Success Services.

1. Due to its condensed timeline (courses are three or four weeks in duration) and its remote nature, the winter term (Winterim), instituted in 2021, provides an excellent opportunity for students to catch up on credits and fulfill missing requirements. Analysis of students who enrolled in Winterim supports its success in advancing degree completion. After Winterim 2022, the percentage of students on track to graduate within four years increased from 63% to 78%. Similar results were observed after Winterim 2021.
2. As described in our testimony, the Sum Primus ("I am first") program was created to provide an on-campus support network for first-generation students and was expanded this year to include discussions of time management, exploring majors, financial literacy, and team building to incoming students before orientation began.

3. The Office of Student Success Services (OS3) has expanded its programming over the past few years to include increased academic workshops, expanded tutoring and peer mentoring programs. More faculty and staff are using the early alert system, ensuring that students in need of assistance can be more quickly connected with the necessary resources. Finally, the Seahawk Family Liaison program, consisting of newsletters, a targeted family website, and a series of webinars, was launched in Fall 2022 to build partnerships with parents and families. All of these efforts are aimed at removing barriers and improving the student academic experience.

There is early evidence that these efforts may already be paying off - the four-year rate for the latest cohort (2018 graduating by 2022) is 60%, up 2 points from the 2017 cohort.

Question: The President should comment on the reason for the increase in instruction expenditures in fiscal 2023.

The FY22 instructional expenditures (\$17.4M) represent actual expenditures whereas FY23 expenditures (\$21.9M) represent budgeted expenditures. The \$4.5M difference is due to the following.

1. The instructional wages in FY22 actuals reflect several vacant positions (16% vacancy rate as of June 30, 2022) whereas the FY23 budgeted amount includes all budgeted lines.
2. The projected FY23 instructional expenditures include multiple rounds of COLA salary increases.
3. The FY23 budgeted expenditures include \$1.2M to support study abroad programs for students; in FY22 there was virtually no international travel due to pandemic-related restrictions.

