

ST MARY'S  
COLLEGE *of* MARYLAND

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*The National Public Honors College*

St. Mary's College of Maryland  
Cultural Diversity Report

2021

Answer to Item 1:

Over its history, St. Mary's College of Maryland has prided itself as an institution that celebrated a panoply of interests, people, and experiences. This goes to the founding of St. Mary's College as a monument to the Freedom of Conscience that was developed at the English settlement that stood on the same grounds as the College. The genesis of the College's founding was to be a living monument to this unique idea. St. Mary's College has always been celebrated for its diverse and vibrant students and faculty.

As a way to capture this tradition of celebrating the peculiar life at St. Mary's, the College processed the history and tradition into a document. Working together, the College community developed the St. Mary's Way. The St. Mary's Way is a communal pledge that all members of the College agree that they will join in the work to develop the College as a community. This pledge builds on the history and environment of the land and the responsibility of those associated with the College to be stewards of both of these. In addition to the support of the history and the environment, College citizens pledge to "engage in an ongoing dialogue that values differences and unique contributions of others' talent, backgrounds, customs, and worldviews." This line established the College's approach and base diversity definition.

To operationalize the tenants of the St. Mary's Way, the College adopted the following language from the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) as its definition of diversity: "*Individual differences (e.g., personality, prior knowledge, and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, and ability, as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations).*" This adoption of a common definition of diversity allows for all members of the College community to have the same understanding of this important issue. The College administration has taken the approach to incorporate equity and diversity into all of its planning and activities. Diversity was woven into each goal of the College's most recent strategic plan in 2016 and multiple metrics were established to assess progress in meeting these goals (see Appendix 1). Due to COVID-19, the College continued with its existing strategic plan. The planning process for a new strategic plan is scheduled for the upcoming academic year with the goal of a new plan being in place for the 2022-2023 academic year.

Answer to Item 2:

Six years ago, St. Mary's College of Maryland embarked on directly addressing the diversity, inclusion, and equity on campus with the creation of an ad hoc committee of students, faculty, and staff. Through the hard work of this group and the vision of Dr. Tuajuanda C. Jordan, President of St. Mary's College of Maryland, the Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Office was created to address the issues associated with cultural diversity. However, this was just the beginning of the College's journey into this important work. Over the next several years, the operations were refined to address the complex nature of cultural diversity. In October 2020, the office was reorganized to address diversity with a cross-cutting approach. Through the last iteration of Inclusive Diversity and Equity (IDE), the Board of Trustees and President Jordan have already acted on our public responsibility to have a diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible community where all can flourish and succeed. We have not and will not shy away from diving into the campus thicket when these challenges and opportunities concerning diversity, equity, and inclusion-related issues arise. One of the hallmarks of this is recently dedicated Commemorative to the Enslaved Peoples of Southern Maryland. The physical celebration of perseverance is the first step toward changing the way that we discuss this stain on our collective history. The College is in the process of developing programming and curriculum around this magnificent piece.

With this as the physical dedication to diversity, the next was to change the approach to how IDE work was done at the College. It is with that strong sense of community and resolve that the office steps into this new chapter as IDEAA: The Division of Inclusive Diversity, Equity, Access and Accountability. During President Jordan's State of the College remarks, she said, "What we've learned over the years is that the job [Inclusive Diversity and Equity] is much too complex for a single individual to address with the sense of urgency we need.... SMCM needs a different approach - one that incorporates a number of individuals with different yet complementary areas of expertise and who are familiar with our College, to help build a solid foundation, from which to grow our IDE efforts." To this end, President Jordan has tasked Michael Dunn, Assistant Vice President of Equity and Inclusion, José Ballesteros, Director of Equity Programming, and Kelsey Bush, Interim Chief Diversity Officer, to develop and implement the procedures, programs and policies to move the initiatives of IDEAA forward while making us a community accountable for our efforts.

As mentioned in the previous section, the College includes diversity in its strategic plan. In that plan, success is measured by the several metrics that are outlined in each section. A copy of this plan is included in the appendix. In addition to the measurements in the strategic plan, the unit monitors yearly retention numbers of faculty, staff, and students; follows persistence of students through graduation; uses survey data from multiple satisfaction and safety surveys; and works with different departments and student groups to identify areas of improvement and to collaborate on new initiatives to celebrate and highlight the diversity on campus.

Answer to Item 3:

As the world changed a year ago, St. Mary's College of Maryland shifted its toward the online platform to prevent the spread of COVID 19. The College's leadership led the campus on a shift toward a fully online experience for the remainder of the Spring 2020 semester. Over the summer the first of many positives occurred. The first-year learning experience began with an overhaul of the summer orientation process, Seahawk Orientation Advising and Registration (SOAR). SOAR was moved to an online format and rechristened eSOAR to reflect the electronic format. The first part of eSOAR was the orientation leaders communicating with first-year students via web-based platforms. This created a sense of community early and alleviated the travel cost usually associated with this program. To augment this process, a weekly webinar series "Hawk Talks" was created in summer 2020, in which a featured office gave an overview of their campus role and answered questions from attendees. These practices have been adopted for the upcoming year as a way to allow all first-year families to receive information and participate in these important activities without barriers of travel or the associated costs.

Leadership at the College understood that even with positive outcomes of an online learning environment, many students relied on the College for food, shelter, therapy, and other services. To address those needs, the College utilized the hybrid learning model to allow students that choose or needed to be on campus the opportunity to be here. They would have to adhere to strict guidelines but they would be able to have the support they needed without disruption. Currently, student success data for the entire 2020-21 academic year is not yet available. However, based on multiple student surveys administered during the Fall 2020 semester, both BIPOC and White students were adjusting fairly well to the altered academic experience (Appendix 2). Also, students indicated that they were satisfied with the processes and procedures that the College had in place with online learning.

Many online programs were developed by Student Affairs to meet co-curricular needs of the campus. Additionally, many programs that have been or would have been in-person events became more impactful as online activities. Two examples of this were the dedication of the Commemorative to Enslaved Peoples of Southern Maryland and the Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Prayer Breakfast. Because both events live online, they can be used to celebrate diversity on campus beyond the day of the event. This allows for further discussion and reflection on the information presented during them. The pandemic has also led to the creation of new programming such as a film series celebrating diversity and a cross community speaker series to discuss and bring the community closer together in light of all of the social and political events of the past year. The Bridging our Gaps program is a partnership between St. Mary's College of Maryland's IDEAA unit, The Center for the Study of Democracy, and the College of Southern Maryland that provide an opportunity for the community at both institutions and the community at large to discuss several critical issues that affect our community. These topics ranged from election integrity to race.

## Appendix 1

### **Cultural Diversity Plan** **St. Mary's College of Maryland** **Academic Year 2020-2021**

Inclusive Diversity at St. Mary's College of Maryland (SMCM) is a foundational tenet of the overall institutional mission. Our work is marked by our intention to “foster... a community dedicated to honesty, civility, and integrity” as stated in the SMCM mission statement. The Division of Inclusive Diversity and Equity (IDE) is committed to engaging the entire campus with a robust slate of activities aimed at program design, curriculum reform, alumni engagement, policy creation and general campus climate reform. Additionally, promoting and embracing cultural diversity and cultural competence among SMCM constituents is essential to the success of the institution as the nation's public honors college; hence, inclusion, diversity, equity, accountability and access are prominent themes that recur throughout the College's [Strategic Plan](#).

The IDE-related objectives in the Strategic Plan serve as the foundation of College's Cultural Diversity Plan, which is as follows:

- **Goal 1:** *Attract intellectually ambitious students who thrive in and respect a diverse, collaborative learning community.* This will be partially accomplished through increasing diversity among the student body (Objective 1); diversifying course offerings related to wellness, diversity, leadership, and financial literacy (Objective 2); and enhancing the academic and social integration of students in the campus environment (Objective 3).
- **Goal 2:** *Engage students in a rigorous, experiential, flexible, and innovative academic environment that capitalizes on our unique geographical location.* This will be partially accomplished by promoting a community and academic environment that embodies the principles of diversity and inclusion on which we were founded (Objective 4). In doing so, the campus will inventory its learning opportunities (via course offerings and workshop/training opportunities) for diversity-related content and pedagogical strategies as well as create a system for developing additional opportunities/offerings and a long-term plan for institution-wide IDE efforts.
- **Goal 3:** *Attract and retain a diverse staff and faculty who achieve excellence across the liberal arts in the teaching, scholarship, creative works, and practice of their disciplines.* Toward this end, SMCM will increase its efforts to recruit/hire a diverse employee population (Objective 1) along with expanding efforts to create an inclusive environment that values and optimizes the strengths of a diverse workplace while supporting employees' professional excellence, personal well-being, and ability to thrive on campus (Objective 2).

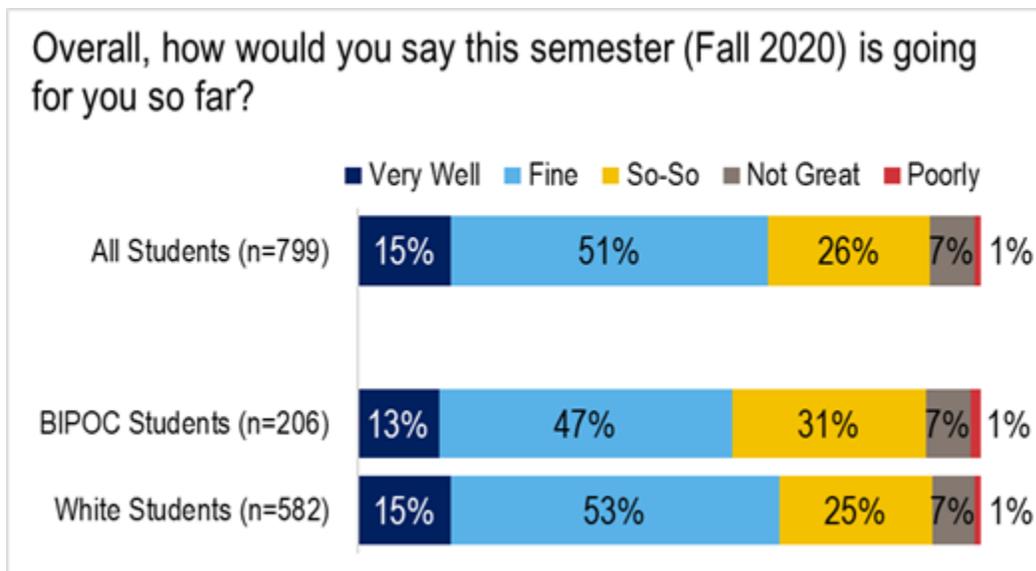
- **Goal 4:** *Graduate prepared, responsible, and thoughtful global citizens.* To accomplish this, SMCM will promote inclusion, diversity, and equity (via increased IDE initiatives and professional development opportunities) to engage students in (and assist employees in working with each other and students while) challenging and abating injustice consistent with the St. Mary's Way (Objectives 3 and 4).
- Increase the four-year graduation rate for underrepresented (racial/ethnic minority and first-generation college) students. Note: Although this objective is not explicitly listed in the Strategic Plan, SMCM is committed to supporting efforts aimed at enhancing retention and graduation rates of these student populations.

## Appendix 2

### Selected Student Survey Results

Students were surveyed multiple times during Fall 2020 to check in on their experiences with remote or hybrid learning, and to assess their need for further support. Selected results are shown below.

In an early survey (September), students were asked “Overall, how would you say this semester is going for you so far”? Of 1,498 undergraduate students surveyed, 799 answered this question. Results shown below indicate a very similar pattern of responses between white students and BIPOC students.



On a mid-semester (October) survey, students were asked to self-assess their academic performance in the Fall 2020 semester so far. Of 1,490 students surveyed, 787 answered this question. As seen below, again, BIPOC students showed a very similar pattern of responses to white students.

## How do you feel about your academic performance in your Fall 2020 classes, compared to your expectations before classes began?

Percent of classes where students report doing \_\_\_ than expected:



On that mid-semester survey, students were also asked about their satisfaction with various campus offices and services. Satisfaction results did not appear to vary based on whether students were studying remotely, or were on campus, suggesting that campus offices were able to maintain their effectiveness while operating virtually.

## Satisfaction with Campus Services - All Students (n=887)

