

THE ST. MARY'S PROJECT
The Capstone Experience of the Honors Curriculum
at Maryland's Public Honors College

St. Mary's College of Maryland
St. Mary's City, Maryland

2010-2011

Purpose of the St. Mary's Project

Each St. Mary's Project is an independent, sustained endeavor supervised by a faculty mentor and presented in a public forum. Each project realizes several of the following goals of our honors college:

1. The maintenance of high academic standards
2. The creation of a sense of intellectual community in which academic disciplines are appreciated as both unique and interrelated
3. The development of each student's ability to think critically and creatively in order to foster curiosity and promote inquiry
4. The encouragement of each student's ability to identify personal educational goals and to select courses that will help to realize these goals
5. An emphasis on learning not only in the classroom, but between faculty and students and between students and their peers
6. Sponsorship of a project of quality as the culmination and means of assessing the whole of a student's education
7. High standards of intellectual and creative endeavor and a sense of responsibility and personal integrity that leads to meaningful performance in a world that is complex and interdependent.

Description of the St. Mary's Project

A St. Mary's Project may be a research project or a creative expression in the arts. It may include collaborative work and build upon components of internships, study-abroad programs, and other experiential formats, as well as reflect traditional research skills. Most students will enroll for the St. Mary's Project in the senior year, but some projects may involve junior-year experiences.

A St. Mary's Project is usually completed within the major; however, a project may be conducted within a single discipline or across disciplines, including established cross-disciplinary minors. The initiation of the project and its completion are the responsibility of the student. Projects must be approved by the department or departments in which the student is majoring.

The Requirement: St. Mary's Projects may be mandatory depending on the student's major. All students should check the College catalog to determine if their major requires them to complete a St. Mary's Project. Double majors are required to work closely with the department chairs in both majors to ensure that senior experience requirements are fulfilled in each major. Transfer students should consult with the chair of their department to determine if a St. Mary's Project is mandatory for them.

1. A St. Mary's Project requires 8 semester-hours of credit. All of these credits must be taken at St. Mary's College.
2. Approval must be sought from the major department or departments (in the case of double majors) if the project is to be undertaken across two disciplines or in a cross-disciplinary minor.
3. Each student may receive credit for only one 8-credit St. Mary's Project. Double majors may not do two SMPs; an alternative senior experience may be required in a major if the student does not complete an SMP in that major, check with the department chairs in each major.

Supervision: The project is supervised by a faculty mentor in the major or cross-disciplinary minor. The responsibilities of the mentor are to assist the student in the development of a plan for the project, to supervise the work of the project, and to evaluate the in-progress and finished work. Department chairs are responsible for the allocation of faculty mentors, taking into consideration student preference as well as faculty expertise and workload.

Design of the Project: All projects must have the following characteristics:

Student-initiated. Students are responsible for proposing a project that can gain the approval and support of the sponsoring department or cross-disciplinary minor.

Methodological Competence. The project must demonstrate methodological competence by identifying an area to be explored and proposing a method of inquiry appropriate for the topic.

Achievement, Synthesis, and Reflection. The project must draw on and extend knowledge, skills of analysis, and creative achievement developed through previous academic work. The project must include a reflection on the social context, the body of literature, or the conceptual framework to which the project is a contribution.

Public Presentation. A St. Mary's Project must be shared with the larger community through posters, presentations, or other means.

Planning for the Project: Because the St. Mary's Project is the culmination of studies at the College, it is important to plan for this work as early as possible. In this way, students can include specific courses, internships, study abroad, or other experiences as part of their curriculum. Prior to registration for the project, students should discuss potential projects with a faculty adviser and a project mentor. Each department has its own procedures and guidelines for assigning mentors, proposing projects, etc. Students should familiarize themselves with their major department's procedures and deadlines.

Registration: Students will register for the St. Mary's Project each semester during which they undertake work on a project. The first 4 credits of St. Mary's Project are to be numbered **493**, and the final 4 credits will be numbered **494**.

In the **first semester** that a student undertakes a St. Mary's Project, registration is **not final** until an **Action Plan**, with all signatures, has been submitted to the Office of the Registrar no later

than the last day of drop-add, **September 10** for fall or if a student begins a St. Mary's project in the Spring, **January 28**. In the first semester in which the St. Mary's Project is undertaken, this **Action Plan** details the nature of the project, the goals and activities for that semester, a sequence of credit distribution, a title, and an expected date of completion. The Action Plan is signed by the student, the faculty mentor, the student's academic adviser, the chair(s) of the student's major(s), the chair of the department in which the project is being done, or the coordinator of the cross-disciplinary minor. Other requirements for approval and filing of St. Mary's Projects may be established by departments and cross-disciplinary minors, and students should consult with their faculty mentors to learn of these requirements.

When students register for the St. Mary's Project in the second and subsequent semesters, an updated **Action Plan**, signed by the project mentor, must be submitted to the Office of the Registrar. This action plan will describe the work to be completed during that semester. If, in the course of this work, the description of the project changes substantially, the mentor may require the student to resubmit a proposal with an updated description and work plan. General College information regarding the St. Mary's Project will be transmitted to students by e-mail.

Projects terminating in the fall semester are due to mentors on **November 19**. Those terminating in the spring semester are due on **April 11**. Archival material must be submitted to the Office of the Registrar on **the last day of classes** in the appropriate semester.

Timing of the Project: Students will usually register for 4 credits of the project in both the fall and spring semesters of the senior year. However, other plans for distribution of credit are possible. For example, in one semester a student might register for 14 credits through a study abroad or internship experience and 2 credits for the St. Mary's Project. On returning to the College, the student will complete the remaining 6 credits for the St. Mary's Project.

Funding for the Project: As for any course work, students are expected to plan for and to bear reasonable costs associated with St. Mary's Projects. These costs have been set at \$200, comparable to costs associated with 8 credits of other academic work. Although departments may have somewhat different procedures for preparation of student budgets for projects, all departments expect students to prepare an **SMP Budget Projection Form** outlining the anticipated costs of the entire project. Students should indicate on this form their anticipated \$200 contribution to these costs. Students need to collect and keep receipts for all of their expenditures. When students seek reimbursement for costs over their \$200 anticipated contribution, they fill out the **SMP Expenditure Reimbursement Form** and submit receipts for each item mentioned in the form to their mentor. Grants to support costs greater than the \$200 student contribution are available after the student's \$200 of expenses are incurred in most departments. Students should consult with their SMP mentor to determine how reimbursement is structured in that department. Applications for these grants should be discussed with the faculty mentor before they are submitted to the department chair, who must approve the application.

Evaluation of the Project: The faculty mentor is responsible for submitting to the department chair, with a copy to the student, an evaluation of the progress of the work at each mid-term and at the end of each term. A grade of IP (in progress) is recorded until all 8 credits are completed. Submission of a final grade comes only after the successful completion of all elements of the work, including the public presentation.

Submitting the Final Project: In order to maintain a record of St. Mary's Projects, students are required by the deadline of **December 10** for the fall semester and **April 29** for the spring semester to submit to the Office of the Registrar a CD-R or DVD-R containing the final written project and/or, if appropriate, an artifact (for example, an audio CD, film on videotape or DVD-R, or collection of images). The archive copy must include two files: a) an **abstract** of no more than 250 words saved as a text or Microsoft Word file; and b) the written project itself in a single comprehensive document saved as a PDF or as a Microsoft Word file. Once submitted to the Office of the Registrar, students may not retrieve and re-submit their project. At the time of submission students, as well as their mentors, will sign a **Release Form**. Please discuss issues of proper citations and/or permission for use of others' materials you may wish to include in your SMP.

Public Presentation: Students will give a public presentation at the completion of the project, and students should work with their mentor to ensure that a presentation is scheduled. In the final semester of the SMP, the student will indicate on the Action Plan what their planned form of presentation will be. In the spring semester this presentation generally will be made during the St. Mary's Project Presentation Days, **May 2 and 3**. Poster presentations will take place on Tuesday, **May 3** from 9 AM to noon. Each student will be required to present their poster for 1½ hours of the poster session. Posters may be put up at 8:30 AM on the day of the presentation and taken down at 1 PM. Fall presentations will be arranged at the end of that term by the student's mentor. Presentations to professional and community groups may also satisfy this requirement.

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