

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
ST. MARY'S COLLEGE OF MARYLAND
DRAFT RETREAT AGENDA
AUGUST 7 AND 8, 2026**

Waterfront Room
Pendry Baltimore
Baltimore, Maryland

Stephen Portch will facilitate all sessions
Breakfast will begin at 8:30 a.m. both days

FRIDAY, AUGUST 7, 2026

I. Call to Order (9:00 a.m.)

Discussion Leader:

- Board Chair John J. Bell '95

II. Welcome, Retreat Objectives, and Agenda Overview (9:05 a.m.)

Discussion Leaders:

- Board Chair John J. Bell '95
- Board Vice Chair Paula Collins

Discussion Topics:

- Set the tone and desired outcomes for the retreat.
- Review the agenda structure, discussion norms, and expectations for Board engagement.
- Frame the retreat as a strategic working session focused on the College's future direction.

III. Reflections on First Year, State of the College, and Strategic Priorities (9:15 a.m.)

Discussion Leader:

- Rhonda Phillips, Ph.D., FAICP
President, St. Mary's College of Maryland

Discussion Topics:

- Reflect on the President's first year and key institutional observations.
- Provide a state of the College overview, including strengths, pressures, and opportunities.
- Connect current conditions to strategic priorities for the next three to five years.

IV. The Changing Landscape of Higher Education (10:00 a.m.)

Discussion Leader:

- Stephen Portch, Facilitator

Discussion Topics:

- Present key national and regional trends and risks affecting public higher education.
- Identify implications for small public liberal arts institutions.
- Board discussion on how these trends should inform SMCM's strategy, differentiation, and risk posture to support long-term institutional success.

Break (11:15 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.)

V. What Should Distinguish SMCM in 2030? (11:30 a.m.)

Discussion Leaders:

- Provost and Dean of Faculty Katie Gantz

- Kim Kelley, Chair, Academic Affairs Committee

Discussion Topics:

- Explore what SMCM should be known for by 2030.
- Identify distinctive academic and institutional strengths that should be protected, elevated, or reimagined.
- Consider how SMCM's public mission can remain relevant and distinctive in a rapidly changing higher education environment.
- Consider how emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, may influence the College's academic mission, student experience, and institutional distinctiveness.

Lunch (12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.)

Introduction:

- Board Secretary Nick Abrams '99

Guest Speaker:

The Honorable Brandon Scott '06
Mayor, Baltimore City, Maryland

VI. Enrollment, Recruitment, Retention, and Student Success (1:30 p.m.)

Discussion Leaders:

- David Hautanen, Vice President for Enrollment Management
- Ray Wernecke, Chair, Admissions & Financial Aid Committee

Discussion Topics:

- Review enrollment, recruitment, retention, and student success as linked institutional priorities.
- Discuss the Board's role in supporting enrollment strategy and institutional alignment.
- Identify strategic levers that could strengthen student recruitment, belonging, persistence, and completion.

Break (2:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.)

VII. Reputation, Positioning, and Institutional Visibility (3:00 p.m.)

Discussion Leader:

- Renea Morris, Vice President for Communications & Marketing

Discussion Topics:

- Discuss how SMCM is perceived by prospective students, families, alumni, policymakers, and external partners.
- Identify opportunities to strengthen reputation, visibility, message discipline, and market positioning.
- Consider how institutional storytelling can better reflect SMCM's public mission, value proposition, and distinctiveness.

VIII. Advancement and Alumni Engagement (4:00 p.m.)

Discussion Leaders:

- Elizabeth Mitchell, Vice President for Institutional Advancement
- Dave Sushinsky, Assistant Vice President of Alumni Relations

Discussion Topics:

- Discuss advancement and alumni engagement as strategic drivers for the College's future.
- Consider priorities, opportunities, and challenges for philanthropy, alumni engagement, and external partnerships.
- Discuss the Board's role in supporting fundraising, alumni engagement, and donor cultivation.

IX. Closing Comments and Adjournment (5:00 p.m.)

Discussion Leaders:

- Board Chair John J. Bell '95
- Rhonda Phillips, Ph.D., FAICP
President, St. Mary's College of Maryland

X. Dinner and Guest Speaker at Prima Dopo (6:30 p.m.)

Introduction:

- Board Trustee Aaron Tomarchio '96
Government Relations Liaison

Guest Speaker:

- Mark Anthony Thomas
President and Chief Executive Officer
Greater Baltimore Committee

SATURDAY, AUGUST 8, 2026

I. Call to Order (9:00 a.m.)

Discussion Leader:

- Board Chair John J. Bell '95

II. Strategic Themes and Emerging Priorities from Friday's Session (9:05 a.m.)

Discussion Leader:

- Stephen Portch, Facilitator

Discussion Topics:

- Summarize major themes and points of alignment from Friday's discussions.
- Identify emerging strategic priorities and key questions for further consideration.
- Preview Saturday's discussion topics.

III. The St. Mary's College Experience from the Student Perspective (9:30 a.m.)

Discussion Leaders:

- Jerri Howland, Vice President for Student Affairs
- Nick Abrams '99, Chair, Campus Life Committee

Discussion Topics:

- Identify the most impactful aspects of the SMCM experience and how they should be protected, elevated, or evolved.
- How is AI affecting the student experience and what are the implications for life after SMCM?
- Economically challenged students - how are they faring, and are our non-academic support services sufficient to enable them to fully leverage their SMCM experience?

IV. Government Relations: Risks and Opportunities for Public Higher Education and Positioning SMCM for the Future (10:30 a.m.)

Discussion Leaders:

- Brandon Engle, Director of Government Relations
- Aaron Tomarchio '96, Government Relations Liaison
- Patrick Hogan, Principal, Cornerstone Government Affairs

Discussion Topics:

- Discuss the public policy, funding, legislative, workforce, and technological landscape affecting SMCM and higher education.
- Identify risks and opportunities for Maryland public higher education.
- Consider how SMCM can position itself effectively with state and federal leaders and external stakeholders.

IV. Retreat Wrap-Up and Next Steps (11:30 a.m.)

Discussion Leaders:

- Board Chair John J. Bell '95
- Rhonda Phillips, Ph.D., FAICP
President, St. Mary's College of Maryland

Discussion Topics:

- Review key themes and areas of Board alignment.
- Confirm strategic priorities and next steps.
- Discuss how progress on retreat outcomes will be tracked and reported to the Board.

V. Adjournment & Lunch (12:00 p.m.)

Discussion Leader:

- Board Chair John J. Bell '95