



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

RETREAT MINUTES

Date of Meeting: August 7-8, 2026

Status: APPROVED

Board Members Present: Chair John Bell '95; Vice Chair Paula Collins; Treasurer John Wobensmith '93; Secretary Nicolas Abrams '99; Susan Bass; Peter Bruns; Antoinette Coleman; Susan Dyer; Elizabeth Graves '95; Bonnie Green '74; Kristen Greenaway; Talib Horne '93; Kimberly B. Kelley; Micheline Lopez-Estrada; Heidi Murdy-Michael; Jesse Price '92; Julia Rapier; Melanie Rosalez '92; Michele Shipley '92; Aaron Tomarchio '96; Raymond Wernecke; Danielle Troyan '92; and President Rhonda Phillips.

Board Members Absent: Judith Fillius '79 and Rep. Steny H. Hoyer

Others Present: Mary Broadwater (OAG); Donny Bryan '73; Brandon S. Engle '18; David L. Hautanen; Patrick Hogan; Jerri D. Howland; Samantha J. Katz; Shontay Kincaid; Elizabeth H. Mitchell; Renea P. Morris; Eileen E. Petula; Stephen Portch; and David Sushinsky '02.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 7, 2026

- I. Call to Order
Chair Bell called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.
- II. Welcome, Retreat Objectives, and Agenda Overview
Chair Bell and Vice Chair Collins welcomed the Board and reviewed the agenda for the retreat.
- III. Reflections on First Year, State of the College, and Strategic Priorities
President Phillips reflected on her first year as President and the development of the College's strategic plan.
- IV. The Changing Landscape of Higher Education
Stephen Portch, retreat facilitator, presented an overview of key national trends and emerging issues shaping the higher education landscape. His remarks addressed challenges and opportunities related to enrollment, institutional sustainability, governance, public confidence, intercollegiate athletics, student learning outcomes, and the growing impact of technological advances.

V. What Should Distinguish SMCM in 2030?

Antoinette Coleman, incoming Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee; Provost and Dean of Faculty Katie Gantz; and Kimberly Kelley, Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee, facilitated a discussion regarding the academic and institutional strengths that should define the College in the future. The conversation focused on the evolving role and relevance of an honors college, including how SMCM can remain distinctive in a changing higher education landscape.

Lunch Speaker

Secretary Abrams '99 introduced the Honorable Brandon Scott '06, Mayor of Baltimore City, as the luncheon keynote speaker. Mayor Scott discussed the importance of expanding educational access and opportunity for Baltimore City students and explored potential pathways to strengthen engagement between Baltimore City schools and the College.

VI. Enrollment, Recruitment, Retention, and Student Success

David Hautanen, Vice President for Enrollment Management, and Raymond Wernecke, Chair of the Admissions and Financial Aid Committee, led a discussion on enrollment, recruitment, retention, and student success.

VII. Reputation, Positioning, and Institutional Visibility

Renea Morris, Vice President for Communications and Marketing, presented insights regarding how SMCM is perceived by prospective students, families, alumni, policymakers, and external partners.

VIII. Advancement and Alumni Engagement

Elizabeth Mitchell, Vice President for Institutional Advancement, and David Sushinsky, Assistant Vice President of Alumni Relations, discussed advancement and alumni engagement as strategic priorities for the College.

IX. Closing Comments and Adjournment

Chair Bell and President Phillips thanked the Board for its engagement and contributions throughout the day and previewed the evening program and final day of the retreat.

X. Dinner Speaker

Trustee Aaron Tomarchio '96, Government Relations Liaison, introduced Mark Anthony Thomas, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC). Mr. Thomas discussed GBC's efforts to advance economic vitality, workforce development, business competitiveness, and regional growth across the Baltimore area.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 8, 2026

I. Call to Order

Chair Bell called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

II. Strategic Themes and Emerging Priorities from Friday's Session

Stephen Portch summarized key themes from the previous session, including the role of honors education as a distinguishing feature of the College and the Board's commitment to supporting the strategic plan.

- III. The St. Mary's College Experience from the Student Perspective
Jerri Howland, Vice President for Student Affairs, and Nicolas Abrams '99, Chair of the Campus Life Committee, led a discussion on the most impactful aspects of the student experience at SMCM.

Student Trustee Julia Rapier '27 offered a student perspective on the growing influence of artificial intelligence in higher education and its implications for student learning and campus life.

- IV. Government Relations: Risks and Opportunities for Public Higher Education and Positioning SMCM for the Future
Brandon Engle, Director of Government Relations; Aaron Tomarchio '96, Government Relations Liaison; and Patrick Hogan, Principal at Cornerstone Government Affairs, shared an overview of the policy, funding, and legislative landscape shaping public higher education.

- V. Retreat Wrap-Up and Next Steps
Chair Bell and President Phillips concluded the retreat by thanking trustees and staff for their active participation and thoughtful engagement throughout the sessions.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m. on Saturday, August 8, 2026.