



The National Public Honors College



Alums Bump into Each Other in Unexpected Places

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE
of Maryland

The **MULBERRY TREE**

WINTER 2025, VOL. XLVI, NO. 1

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The Mulberry Tree is published by St. Mary's College of Maryland, Maryland's public honors college for the liberal arts and sciences. It is produced for alumni, faculty, staff, trustees, the local community and friends of the College.

The magazine is named for the famous mulberry tree under which the Calvert colonists signed a treaty of friendship with the Yacomocomo people and on the trunk of which public notices were posted in the mid-1600s. The tree endured long into the 19th century and was once a popular meeting spot for St. Mary's College students. The illustration of the mulberry tree on the cover was drawn in 1972 by Earl Hofmann, artist-in-residence when St. Mary's College President Renwick Jackson launched the magazine.

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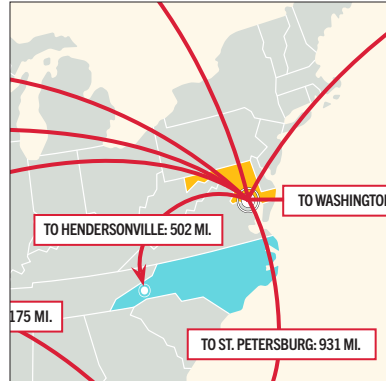
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AS A RESULT OF OUR COLLECTIVE FOCUSED HARD WORK AND DISCIPLINE, the College has emerged like few other institutions have from the global pandemic. Enrollment is up and tuition costs are down (by being frozen for five years). New academic programs, along with expanded international offerings and growing connections for campus and regional partnerships, help shape our increasingly diverse community of scholars.

I have made it a top priority during the final months of my presidency to thank as many of you in person as I can. It is your conviction in our mission that has fueled the overwhelming success of the \$20 million Taking the LEAD campaign, providing more than \$7.5 million in student scholarships. Every year, including the one just behind us, Institutional Advancement's Alumni Relations team breaks its previous record on Giving Tuesday with an ever-growing number of alumni donors. Thank you for your unwavering support.

I look forward to showing our strength during the upcoming site visit from March 16-19 as part of the process to reaffirm our accreditation by the Middle States Higher Education Commission.

I am honored and humbled by the way in which our community has embraced The Sacred Journey as part of an annual remembrance for the Commemorative to Enslaved Peoples of Southern Maryland. November's Sacred Journey was particularly poignant for me as my final walk as president. A busy spring semester of events includes more poignant occasions, with Honoring the Legacy of Lucille Clifton on February 28 and the Mark Twain Lecture Series with Rainn Wilson on March 28. Finally, the Mulberry Music Festival on June 20 will bring my presidency to a close with a musical flourish.

It has been my distinct honor to serve as your president. The College is in a good place and that success is due in no small part to your steadfast support. Thank you. I believe the titles of our strategic plans, *A Time for Rebirth*, *Big Audacious Goals* and *The Rising Tide*, aptly describe the College's transformation over the course of the past 11 years. I have no doubt that with your continued engagement and support, the next president will lead the College to heights we've come to expect as the National Public Honors College...bar none.



TUAJUANDA C. JORDAN, PhD
President, St. Mary's College of Maryland

Editor's Note

THAT NEW YEAR'S CALL TO REPLACE holiday lethargy with focused discipline is a marketer's sure thing with an attentive audience for the month of January at least. Enthusiastic pursuits in diet, work, exercise, finance, etc. during the first weeks of the new year too commonly become February failures. Whatever the challenge, the wherewithal to stick with it until results are evident is the hardest part.

For 18 months, the St. Mary's College of Maryland community has been busy in a whirlwind of activities toward achieving the goals of *The Rising Tide* strategic plan. Within the whirlwind, it's difficult to see what's been accomplished. Taking a step back gives the necessary perspective to realize the progress and by doing so, to be spurred on toward the finish line. See page 10 for more on that.

One of the objectives within in the strategic plan is the continued support for faculty research and scholarship. Faculty play a key role in our strategy to create an innovative, distinctive and competitive academic identity. The College's new Heron Grant helps to fund the ongoing scholarship of mid- to senior-level tenured faculty. The first two awardees are profiled on page 15. Likewise, a new initiative for early-career faculty—the Ross Fellows program—supports networking and collaboration of a diverse faculty across disciplines and academic expertise.

SMCM Seahawks live in every state and around the globe. This shouldn't be surprising, but it might be surprising to discover some of the places where they've encountered a fellow Seahawk. See page 8.

The College's Taking the LEAD fundraising campaign surpassed its \$20 million goal a year early and concludes its "How High Can We Fly?" stage in June. Working together to move the strategic plan toward the finish line, we might challenge ourselves with the same question.

LEE CAPRISTO, *editor*

CAMPUS & COMMUNITY NEWS



SMCM Awarded for Diverse and Inclusive Environment Within the Athletics Community

Under the leadership of Director **Crystal Gibson**, the St. Mary's College of Maryland (SMCM) Department of Athletics & Recreation has been awarded the 2025 NCAA and Minority Opportunities Athletic Association Award for Diversity and Inclusion, recognizing outstanding commitment to fostering an inclusive and diverse

environment within the athletics community. St. Mary's College joins Division I Villanova University and Division II Southern Connecticut State University as the recipients in each NCAA division. The recipients were honored during the 2025 NCAA Convention on Jan. 14 in Nashville, Tennessee.



SMCM named its award-winning Learning Commons, dedicated in September 2022, in honor of Dallas Plugge Dean '60, in a ceremony celebrated on campus Sept. 27, 2024. Dean, who died on Aug. 28, 2024, was a teacher and life-long friend of her alma mater. She was featured in the fall 2024 issue of the Mulberry Tree magazine.

St. Mary's College Receives State Grants for 2025

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) made two grant awards to St. Mary's College to be used in 2025. The Office of Public Safety received a \$375,000 grant under the Campus Safety Grant initiative proposed by Governor Wes Moore. SMCM Director of Public Safety **Felix Martinez, Ed.D.** prepared the grant proposal with assistance from the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. The funds will be used to enhance campus security by expanding campus and officer body camera systems, upgrading swipe card door access and improving campus lighting. A \$17,404 Hunger-Free Campus Grant will be used to raise awareness of basic food needs, leverage sustainable solutions to meet those needs and build partnerships with community organizations relating to food insecurity. The co-leads for this effort are **Caroline King**, director of the Office of Community Outreach and Engagement, and **Derek Young '02**, dean of students.

The College's Office of Integrated Marketing and Communications team received national recognition in 2024 with a gold award for the design of the admission admit packet and a merit award for the president's holiday card, both from the 39th Educational Advertising Awards program. For the launch of The Current (student daily news aggregator) and its "Photo of the Day" feature, the integrated marketing team earned bronze and silver awards, respectively, in the Education Digital Marketing Awards.



Members of the Institutional Advancement's Development and Alumni Relations teams were airborne with **President Tuajuanda Jordan** for a multi-city tour of California in early November 2024. They met with alumni and current/former parents in San Diego, Los Angeles, Monterey and Berkeley. A similar trip to Florida took place from Jan. 16-18.



Eight SMCM students successfully completed CompTIA Security+ certification training thanks to a partnership with Resource Management Concepts (RMC), a leading information technology services company located in Lexington Park, Maryland. RMC has also taken on SMCM students as interns as well as part-time and full-time employees. Since 2022, RMC has offered 17 SMCM students an opportunity to participate in CompTIA+ training. All 17 have earned certification.

BOARD & FOUNDATION BOARD NEWS

At its October 2024 meeting, the St. Mary's College of Maryland Board of Trustees approved revisions to the Faculty Bylaws and Title IX policy; a new Freedom of Expression policy; the 2024 Performance Accountability Report; revision of the FY25 operating budget and reconciliation of the FY24 plant

fund budget. The Presidential Search Committee Chair **Ray Wernecke** and search committee members have been reviewing candidates from which to select semi-finalists to interview early in 2025. The Board plans to elect the College's next president in the spring.

The Foundation Board's current officers are **Dan Schiffman '91**, president; **Tomi Hiers '97**, vice president; **Scott Raspa '86**, treasurer; and **Bonnie Green '74**, secretary.

PRESIDENT'S NEWS

As a panelist on the "Reimagining How and Why We Reckon" webinar Dec. 4, 2024, St. Mary's College of Maryland **President Tuajuanda Jordan** said when physical evidence of slave quarters was discovered during an archaeological dig on the College's campus, she knew that honoring the enslaved and giving a voice to the voiceless was the right thing to do. The webinar, hosted by Washington College's Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience, featured experts from three Chesapeake-based institutions of higher education. Panelists spoke about reckoning with legacies of systemic racism and slavery through recent artworks which center around community healing. Jordan spoke of the College's "From Absence to Presence: The Commemorative to Enslaved Peoples of Southern Maryland." The Commemorative is an immersive art experience that honors the story of resilience, determination and persistence that defined the lives of the enslaved individuals that lived in St. Mary's City between 1750 and 1815.

President Tuajuanda Jordan and members of the Carnegie Postsecondary Commission of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in Baltimore and



in Prince George's County met in November 2024 to discuss effective programs, partnerships and pipelines to prepare marginalized students for college and careers.

Members of the commission, of which Jordan is co-chair, discussed a newly formed partnership with College Track, the Ravens, M&T Bank and Baltimore Public Schools that will bring a College Track Center to Baltimore. College Track is a national comprehensive college completion program that makes a 10-year commitment to students from underserved communities who seek to become the first in their families to earn a bachelor's degree. While in Baltimore, the commission visited the Academy

for College and Career Exploration (ACCE) to meet with students. ACCE prepares students to make informed choices by providing exploratory experiences in a variety of careers. The commission also visited the Durrant Center, a College Track Center in Prince George's County, Maryland. President Jordan spoke with students at the ACCE and the Durrant Center who have already applied or are interested in applying to SMCM.

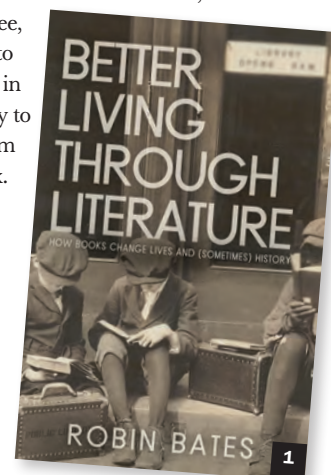
President Tuajuanda Jordan participated in a panel on Sept. 10, 2024, hosted by Higher Education Resource Services (HERS) where she and two other higher education presidents spoke of their decisions to pursue their respective roles. The 90-minute virtual panel titled, "So You Think You Want to Be a President" was part of the HERS Critical Conversation series. She was joined by Marjorie Hass, president of the Council of Independent Colleges and Suzanne Rivera, president of Macalester College. Jordan has been on the HERS Board of Directors in various roles since 2018 and was president of the board in 2020.

FACULTY & STAFF NEWS

Anish Agashe, assistant professor of physics, published a research article in the journal *Universe* in collaboration with his colleague at University of Texas at Dallas. The article deals with an unresolved problem in general relativity and cosmology called the averaging problem. The article found that averaging over large portions could break down certain geometrical properties of the space-time. This could have repercussions in cosmology.

Professor of Psychology **Aileen Bailey** presented at a conference sponsored by the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (Division 2 of the American Psychological Association). The presentation focused on mechanisms to scaffold and embed data science instruction and skills in psychology courses. The work connects to a joint project with Associate Professor of Psychology **James Mantell** for which both were awarded an Improving Undergraduate STEM Education grant from the National Science Foundation.

Professor Emeritus **Robin Bates [1]** released a new book in August 2024, "Better Living through Literature: How Books Change Our Lives and (Sometimes) History" (Quoir, 2024). Bates, who retired to Sewanee, Tennessee, returns to campus in February to read from his book.





Professor of History and Coordinator of the Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies Program **Betül Başaran** published an essay in and is co-editor of “An Eye for Couture: A Collector’s Exploration of 20th Century Fashion” (Prestel, 2024). Başaran’s essay on Princess Niloufer (1916-1989), an exiled Ottoman princess who grew up in France and moved to Hyderabad, India as a young bride, draws attention to Niloufer’s cultural hybridity and her contributions to the advancement of women’s rights in Hyderabad state before India’s partition in 1947, in addition to her exquisite taste in fashion.

The Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry’s work transforming its assessment system was published as a paper in the Journal of Research and Practice in Assessment, with Professor **Geoffrey Bowers**, Professor **Pamela Mertz**, and Associate Dean & Professor **Kelly Neiles** sharing co-first authorship. The paper is the culmination of four-plus years of work as part of the National Science Foundation-sponsored Council on Undergraduate Research Transformations Project (NSF 16-25354).

Assistant Professor of Music **Ellington Carthan [2]** made his debut at New York’s Lincoln Center on Oct. 2, 2024. Carthan performed



as part of the Josanne Francis Septet. Francis was then guest artist when Carthan led the SMCM Jazz Ensemble on Nov. 15 in the Dodge Performing Arts Center.

Jennifer Cognard-Black, professor of English [3] and the 2020 Robert Foster Cherry Award for Great Teaching winner received the Alumni Achievement Award from Nebraska Wesleyan University, where she earned her bachelor’s in English and music. The alumni award recognizes an individual’s vocational achievement and community involvement. A two-time Fulbright recipient, Cognard-Black has authored several books and produced two lecture series with



The Great Courses. In 2024, she was appointed the College’s first director of fellowships and awards to mentor students in academic fellowship and award applications.

Associate Professor of Psychology **Gili Freedman** and collaborator Darcey Powell (associate professor, Texas A&M-Corpus Christi) published a review paper entitled “Ghosting: A common but unpopular rejection strategy” in the journal Social and Personality Psychology Compass. In October 2024, Freedman was interviewed about her research by Nautilus and was featured in “Why We Ghost” by Alice Fleeracker.



Walter Hill, professor of political science and coordinator of African and African Diaspora Studies, wrote a chapter in “Early Black Thinkers in the Diaspora and Their Conceptualizations of Africa,” edited by Abdul Karim Bangura (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024). Hill’s chapter focuses on writer, philosopher, educator Alain LeRoy Locke.

Sue Johnson, professor of art, [4] is exhibiting 15 works from her recent project, “Hall of Portraits from The History of Machines” in COLLECTive Concerns: Collage and Assemblage now on view at the Museum of Arts and Sciences, Macon, Ga., through March 15. Curated by Reni Gower/Wylie Contemporary. The exhibition will travel through 2026 to University Art Gallery, Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, Mich.; Mills Station Arts & Culture Center, Rancho Cordova, Calif.; Piedmont Museum of Art, Martinsville, Va.; Phillips Museum of Art, Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pa.; Gumenick Family Gallery, Glen Allen Art Center, Glen Allen, Va.

Jess Jolly, director of counseling, [5] participated in a panel of college and university counseling professionals titled “Current Problem Gambling Prevention Strategies on Maryland’s College and University



Campuses.” The panel was offered in October 2024 by the Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling, a program of the University of Maryland School of Medicine. The panel was part of the agenda for a day-long training session for college and university staff and administrators, to encourage the implementation of problem gambling prevention strategies for students on campus.

Julia A. King, professor of anthropology and the George B. and Willma Reeves Endowed Chair in the Liberal Arts; **Scott Strickland ’08** and Rappahannock Tribe Chief G. Anne Richardson were recognized by the Omohundro Institute for having authored the best article in the William and Mary Quarterly for “Rappahannock Oral Tradition, John Smith’s Map of Virginia, and Political Authority in the Algonquian Chesapeake.” King, Strickland and Chief Richardson received the 2024 Robert F. Heizer Article Award from the American Society for Ethnohistory for the same article.

Professor of Biochemistry **Pamela Mertz** served by invitation on a council-level Strategic Planning Task force of the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB) to write mission,

vision and values statements for the society. Mertz also led efforts for a steering committee to develop a strategic plan for ASBMB student chapters.

A 2022 eLife article (“Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: A guide for writing anti-racist tenure and promotion letters”) by **Scott Mirabile**, associate professor of psychology, was selected for inclusion in a collection of “Learning Resources for Scientists” which provides useful resources, tools and guides for the professional development and benefit of scholars and researchers.

Professor Emeritus **Don Stabile [6]** earned a Florida State Park Ranger certificate for 1000 hours of service at the Fort Pierce Inlet State Park.

Amy Steiger, associate professor of theater, dance and performance studies wrote a monologue that was performed as part of “Apron Strings: The Ties That Bind,” running Nov. 14-17 at the AMT Theater in New York City. Her piece was

one of 23 woven together into the production.

Professor Emerita **Merideth Taylor [7]** has authored a new book, “Making a Way Out of No Way: Lives of Labor, Love, and Resistance” (New Village Press, 2024). Taylor is author of “Listening in: Echoes and Artifacts from Maryland’s Mother County”; co-editor of “In Relentless Pursuit of an Education: African American Stories from a Century of Segregation”; and screenwriter/director of the documentaries “With All Deliberate Speed: One High School’s Story” and the Telly Award-winning “Talking and Walking Common Ground.”

Assistant Professor of Theater, Dance and Performance Studies **Diego Villada** was an invited guest lecturer in November 2024 to undergraduate acting and musical theater students at Seton Hill University in Greensburg, Pennsylvania.

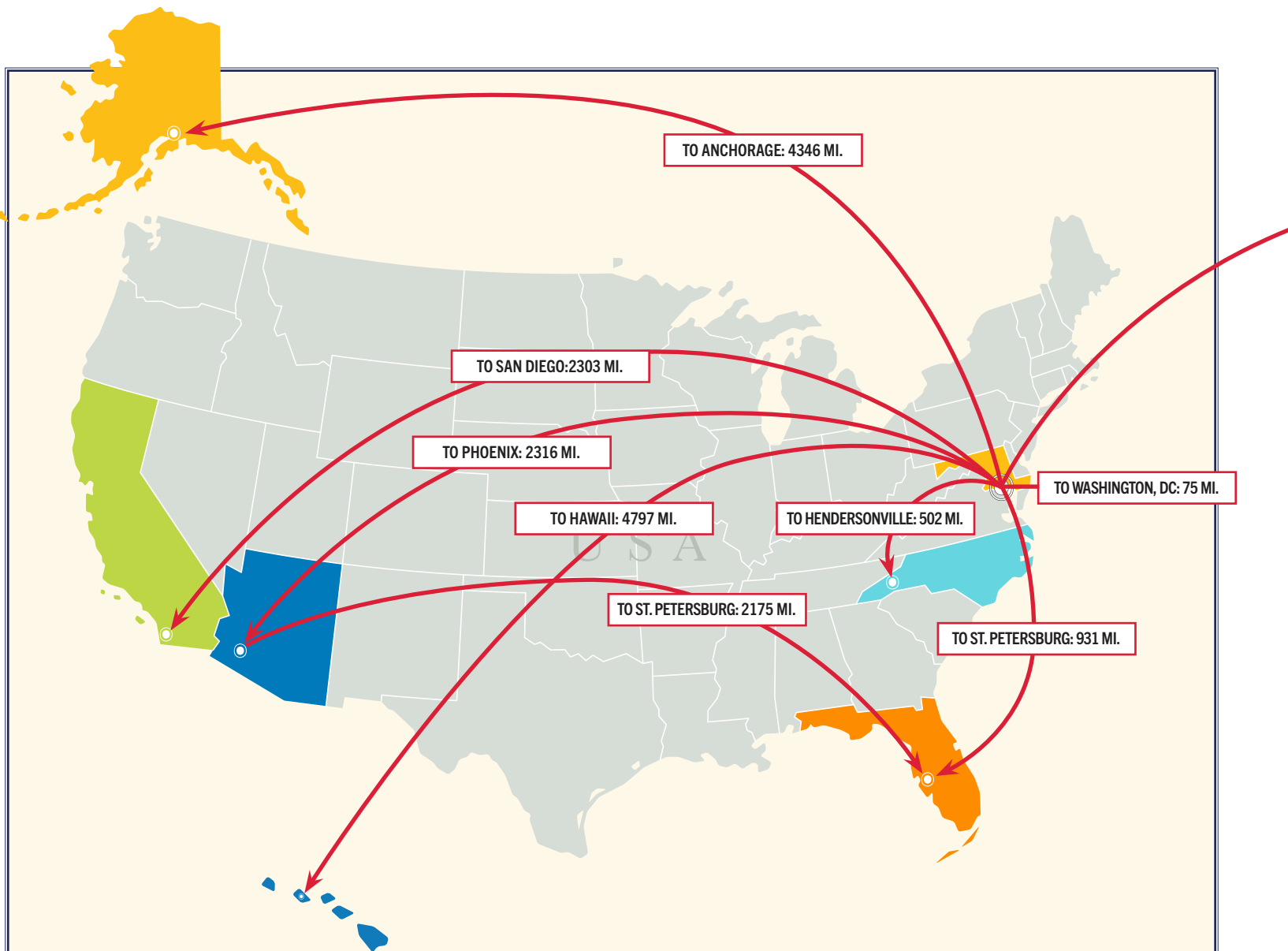
STUDENT NEWS

Sadie Grzymalski ’26, **Nadia Lonnberg ’25** and **Kyren Lopez Perez ’25**, alumna **Carla Wilson ’23**, with Assistant Professor of Psychology **Nayantara Kurpad** and Associate Professor of Psychology **James Mantell**, presented posters based on directed research at the 65th Annual Meeting of the Psychonomic Society in New York City in November 2024.

Anjali Raheja ’26 and **Julia Thomas ’26** presented research that they conducted during the 2024 St. Mary’s Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) program at the Society for Neuroscience Annual Meeting in Chicago in October 2024.

Alex Stornelli ’25 presented at the 2024 American Physical Society Mid-Atlantic Section Meeting held in November 2024 at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His talk was based on his St. Mary’s Project research modeling stars within the theory of general relativity.

Lorelai Symmes ’25 presented a poster entitled “The Association Between Psychological Inflexibility and Disordered Eating Pathology: A Systematic Review” at the 58th Annual Convention of the Association of Cognitive and Behavioral Therapies in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in November 2024.



The Most Surprising Place I Met a Fellow Seahawk...

Karen Clarke Raley '94's [1] surprise encounter with a fellow alumna in Hawaii launched our contest in the fall issue ("I ran into **Leah Anderson Magana '02** on a beach in Hawaii in 2008 – she was returning to shore from kiteboarding!"). Since then, several other unusual Seahawk encounters have been revealed.



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A F R I C A

G H A N A



Charlotte Mac Kay '20 and **Benjamin Sturmer '21**, [2] both living and working in Anchorage, Alaska, met **Geoff Wright '93** and **Cathy Wright '93** [3] at the Alaska Sailing Club. The Wrights have sailed since their days at SMCM and are longtime members of the Alaska Sailing Club. They even host an annual Gov Cup race in Anchorage! Mac Kay first worked as an AmeriCorps VISTA with a refugee-led agricultural cooperative in Anchorage. Then she transitioned to a communications specialist focusing on resettlement and food security. In October, Mac Kay joined the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation's public affairs team. Sturmer first worked as an estimator for a small business in Anchorage and has since advanced to operations lead. In August, he purchased a home in Anchorage and adopted a cat, "Chessie," named in memory of his sailing experiences in Maryland.

Liz Lewis Boyle '07 [4] was at a polling station in the Odododiodio constituency in Accra, Ghana when she ran into **Parker Bennett Gueye '06** [4]. Both were observing Ghana's elections in December 2016. Boyle is senior

Africa policy analyst for the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. She was deputy regional director for Africa with the International Republican Institute at the time of the encounter with Gueye. A foreign service program officer with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in Africa for the past ten years, Gueye lives in Malawi with her husband and four children [5].

Margaret Lopez Erpenbeck '95 of Phoenix, Arizona, ran into **Scott Jewett '94** at the St. Pete's Yacht Club in Florida. Erpenbeck was there for her mother-in-law's golden birthday.

During a visit in October 2024 to Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens in Washington, D.C., **Dan Pindell '10**, [6] who was wearing his SMCM cap at the time, heard someone call out, "St. Mary's!" It turned out to be **Sam Meisel '25**, visiting with his mother and sister. Pindell is the assistant director of alumni relations at SMCM; Meisel is from Chevy Chase, Maryland.

"I have what many feel is an unusual hobby," says **Tim Geho '75** of Charleston, South Carolina. "It's learning all about mushrooms, or fungi in general to be more precise." Geho

attended the North American Mycological Association national foray in Hendersonville, North Carolina in 2023. **Mandie Quark '07** was the foray chairperson. Her foray program bio stated: "Mandie Quark, the self-proclaimed Mushroom Madman, walked barefoot to receive her bachelor's in chemistry from a tiny eclectic Honors College situated on a historic Maryland river in 2007." Quark is a mycologist and fungi photographer based in the bay area of California. Geho, who is retired now, worked in social services for many years.

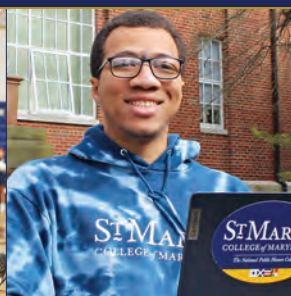
Katie Collins '20 [7] had her flight canceled after a work conference in San Diego, California, so was laid over an extra night. "By chance I was wearing a St. Mary's hoodie," she recalls. "I got stopped by someone who asked if I went to St Mary's College of Maryland. They were a graduate from the class of 2007 who lived in California and were very excited to run into a fellow Seahawk! Since then, I always try and travel with a piece of SMCM merch: you never know what other Seahawks are out there in the world!" ♦

STRATEGIC PLAN: PROGRESS!

BY LEE CAPRISTO, EDITOR



A dedicated steering committee collaborating with faculty, staff, students and the community developed “The Rising Tide: Charting a Course for the Future of St. Mary’s College of Maryland (2023-2026)” based on four foundational pillars: Pillar I CREATE an innovative, distinctive and competitive academic identity that attracts and retains talented students, faculty and staff. Pillar II: EMPOWER all students for success. Pillar III: BUILD a sustainable, vibrant and diverse student body that exemplifies an inclusive institution. Pillar IV: BECOME a sought-after regional resource and develop opportunities for student educational engagement with communities that are mutually beneficial.



Increased brand recognition has led to growth in giving, enrollment, parent engagement, alumni involvement and community attendance at events.

This strategic plan leverages the two prior plans and manifests the College's commitment to fostering academic excellence, inclusivity, innovation and community engagement. **President Tuajuanda C. Jordan** named these among the highlights of what she expected to achieve through "The Rising Tide":

- **Three to five new academic programs**
- **New international experiences in countries and cultures beyond North America and Europe**
- **Development of a Student Success Center for all student support services**
- **Expansion of community engagement opportunities for student involvement in curricular and co-curricular offerings**

At the halfway mark in the three-year strategic plan, President Jordan's Executive Council shared with the Mulberry Tree accomplishments and what's to come as the plan draws to a close in June 2026.

Pillar I: CREATE

an innovative, distinctive and competitive academic identity that attracts and retains talented students, faculty and staff.

It takes capital to create, so that is where Institutional Advancement began. The \$20 million, five-year Taking the LEAD campaign launched its quiet phase in July 2020 (amidst the pandemic) with the goal of addressing critical strategic needs President Jordan identified for strengthening or launching key programs. In September 2023, after raising \$15 million, the campaign entered its public phase—perfectly timed with the release of the College's new strategic plan, "The Rising Tide." Vice President for Institutional Advancement **Carolyn Curry** says this alignment was fortuitous. "The priorities, strategies and focus of the strategic plan closely paralleled many initiatives in Taking the LEAD, creating incredible synergy and momentum. As a result, the campaign reached its \$20 million goal a full year ahead of schedule."



[1] Marketing materials for student recruitment reinforce the College's array of national rankings as a public honors college.
[2] Refurbished lab space for marine science was funded through campaign dollars.

Now that campaign has transitioned to How High Can We Fly?, pushing forward to its conclusion in June 2025. "Thanks to thousands of donors, this landmark effort ensures funding will continue to support strategic plan initiatives through its conclusion in 2026," says Curry. Funds provide help for academic majors, merit- and need-based scholarships (more than \$7.5 million), paid internships, international immersion experiences, student research opportunities, and co-curricular and athletic programs, among other things.

Curry, whose myriad portfolio includes the Office of Integrated Marketing and Communications, explains how the National Public Honors College brand and its hallmark LEAD initiative have been elevated successfully through implementation of the strategic plan. "Articles and advertisements in The Chronicle of Higher Education and Inside Higher Ed, the most influential publications in higher education, have featured President Jordan discussing the transformational impact of the LEAD initiative. These efforts were amplified by paid social

media campaigns that further enhanced visibility for SMCM and its distinctive programs." To this, Curry adds, LEAD is prominently featured across all enrollment marketing and institutional advancement materials, from digital platforms to print publications. The College website includes dedicated pages illustrating LEAD's deliverables, and a suite of compelling short- and long-form videos highlight its successes on the website, in regional and national advertising and on digital and social media platforms. In addition, rankings bestowed on the College to lift the National Public Honors College are touted on the College's website and in internal and external communications.

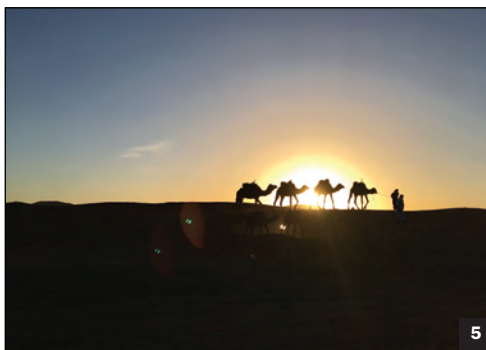
Tracking data shows the strategy's effectiveness: increased brand recognition has led to growth in giving, enrollment, parent engagement, alumni involvement and community attendance at events, among other areas. This holistic approach—integrating strategic media, marketing, fundraising, alumni and student engagement, community outreach—continues to advance the College's reputation as a national leader in public honors education.

Also advancing the College's reputation in the marketplace is the support provided to new majors launched in 2022 in business administration and management as well as marine science and performing arts. Brisk interest in the business administration and management major has resulted in new faculty and new community business partnerships in support of student internship opportunities. A booming marine science program has already outgrown its refurbished lab space funded through campaign dollars. Interim Vice President for Business and Chief Financial Officer **Amir Mohammadi** says new lab spaces are needed to support future growth. Working collaboratively with **Katie Gantz**, vice president for academic affairs and dean of faculty, a coordinated plan for expanding lab space in Schaefer Hall is being fast-tracked to address the need.

During the fall of 2024, Mohammadi's team engaged the College community to evaluate campus facilities and landscaping with respect to academics, athletics, student life, residence halls, parking and sustainability. Guided by the strategic plan, that campus feedback will inform the concepts for the 2025-2035 Facility Master



[3] Students in the marine science major aboard ship inspect core samples with **Elka Porter**, associate professor of marine science. **[4]** Professor of English and two-time Fulbright Scholar **Jennifer Cognard-Black** has taken on the role of director of fellowships and awards to mentor student award applications **[5]** A growing international education program includes Namibia and South Africa, among others.



Plan. While that work is underway, Mohammadi is working on phased short- and long-term plans to upgrade student living spaces, which were prioritized in the strategic plan as essential for attracting and retaining students (and identified as a priority by students themselves). Because state funding does not extend to residence hall improvements, revenue for these upgrades must come from alternative sources, including private fundraising. Improvements already completed in the traditional halls include new flooring, paint, furniture in lobbies and recreation rooms. Further improvements in corridors and restrooms are scheduled beginning summer 2025.

Looking ahead, Mohammadi is excited by an initiative in the 2025-2035 Facility Master Plan that will include the College's participation in energy performance contracting. "Guaranteed energy saving initiatives that generate positive cash flow through reducing utility costs in excess of annual debt service for the cost of the projects

are to be expected," he asserts, and with a past record of monumental energy saving initiatives at schools in Pennsylvania, Delaware and West Virginia, such optimism is warranted. These energy efforts are being coordinated with assistance through the Maryland Department of General Services. The upcoming renovations to Montgomery Hall are projected to follow this process.

Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty Katie Gantz is pleased to have in place a new Office of Student Fellowships and Awards, a strategic plan goal. "SMCM has always had very accomplished, ambitious students. The addition of Professor **Jennifer Cognard-Black** to serve as director of this new office in guiding our student applications, is already generating lots of momentum," Gantz remarks. "We've even caught the eye of the national Fulbright Office: they've applauded our jump in Fulbright applications from four in the fall of 2023 to nine this past fall. I'm delighted that our director is collaborating

with Professor **Pamela Mertz**, the chair of the Health Sciences Advisory Committee, to present our students with a broad range of opportunities for national awards across all disciplines."

Coupled with the increased support for student fellowships and awards is the intentional development of new international experiences guided by a permanent director of international education. Since January 2024, the director, **Aurora Margarita-Goldkamp**, has added study-abroad programs in Bhutan; Namibia and South Africa; South Korea; Sweden and Ireland. A passport grant obtained through the Institute of International Education provides passports to up to 50 students with high financial need each year.

Pillar II: **EMPOWER** all students for success.

Vice President for Student Affairs **Jerri Howland** joined President Jordan's Executive Council early in 2021, when the pandemic still showed its effect on in-person education and campus life. Not surprisingly, mental health and wellness have been among Howland's key focus areas. "When I started, the Wellness Center included two clinical counselors and health services were outsourced," she says. "Now we have two distinct units to meet the growing need for services for our students."

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) now has a diverse team of two licensed clinicians, a case manager, psychiatric nurse practitioner, assistant director, plus a team of peer health educators. CAPS relocated to Margaret Brent Hall in fall of 2024.

Health Services, still housed in the Wellness Center in Ethel Chance Hall, now includes a full-time director, assistant director, nurse practitioner, certified nursing assistant and office associate. Medical services have expanded, and medical appointments have increased 47% over the past year. Testing, lab services, flu clinics, reproductive health services and "Ask-a-Nurse" resident hall programs round out the Health Services offerings.

"The new locations and expanded staff and services allow students to stay on campus to receive the care they need and continue their studies,"

A thriving internship program placed 535 students over the past year, up from 388 the year before. This work is augmented by the Mentor-a-Seahawk program, pairing alumni working professionals with current students.

Howland observes. “Through the outreach and education provided by these offices, wellness and wellbeing are being promoted as part of our campus culture.”

A new student affairs website (<https://www.smc.edu/student-affairs/>) works as a hub to collectively link student support services.

A thriving on- and off-campus internship program overseen by Executive Director **Cindy Greb '87** and the staff of the Career and Professional Development Center placed 535 students over the past year, up from 388 the year before. This work is augmented by the Alumni Relations' Mentor-a-Seahawk program, pairing alumni working professionals with current students to explore careers and learn how to network.

Pillar III: BUILD

a sustainable, vibrant and diverse student body that exemplifies an inclusive institution.

Vice President for Enrollment Management **David Hautanen** has been focused on two strategic plan goals specifically related to new student enrollment.

The first goal is to recruit and enroll an entering class that increasingly reflects the population of the state of Maryland. “As a public institution, this is fundamental to meeting our mission,” Hautanen explains. To support this goal, his staff attend recruitment events at every high school and community college in Maryland. They simultaneously work to establish or strengthen relationships and programs with college preparation and access programs like the College Bound Foundation, College Track and Dream.US. Hautanen hired a regional director of admission for access and partnerships to support and enhance these relationships and to implement targeted recruitment activities. The work is paying off: the percentage of underrepresented students of color in the last two entering classes have been the highest in the history of the College. Likewise, a new director of transfer recruitment, admission and services position focuses on supporting the needs of transfer students in the admission and enrollment processes.



[6] Career fairs held each semester bring community partners to campus to engage with students about internship and job opportunities.

[7] The stylish “River Runner” motorcoach shuttles students at breaks to metro hubs and offers weekly shopping excursions.

[8] Career field trips like this one to JP Morgan in Washington, D.C. connect students with working professionals in their field.

Importantly, recruitment work also includes building and maintaining relationships with high school and community college counselors. The Office of Admission has been hosting an increasing number of “must go to” off-campus and on-campus programs designed for them to learn more about the National Public Honors College. As part of this initiative, the College hosted the first-ever overnight program for counselors from California, Georgia, Maryland, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Hautanen says that by hosting these programs, the College is building stronger relationships with high school and transfer counselors who are key influencers in the college choice process.

Not only does St. Mary's College want to increase enrollment in the first year, but to do so while maintaining an envious first- to second-

year retention rate (currently 81%). In spring 2024, admission and integrated marketing teams launched an online hub, the Seahawk Success Center, bringing together in one spot all of the College's student success and support programs. This past fall, the Seahawk Success Network advising model rolled out for new first-year students. “Each student's network includes their academic adviser, an assigned staff member in both the Office of Student Success Services and the Office of Student Financial Assistance, and an assigned co-curricular adviser from the Division of Student Affairs,” Hautanen explains. “The Seahawk Success Network is designed to facilitate the student's engagement into the College community, sense of belonging, as well as provide them with dedicated advisers in multiple offices.”

For the past two years, integrated marketing has produced a Spanish-language version of the admission viewbook as well as launched a number of web pages in Spanish.

The second goal is to increase the number of out-of-state students as the National Public Honors College. “Over the course of the year, admission staff participate in recruitment events in Maryland’s contiguous states and select other states that have students who are a good fit for the College,” Hautanen says. “In partnership with Admission, the Office of Integrated Marketing and Communications launched a campaign designed to build brand awareness in these markets. Out-of-state enrollment has increased and while first-year applications are up four percent from last year, out-of-state applications are up 13 percent.

For the past two years, integrated marketing has produced a Spanish-language version of the admission viewbook as well as launched a number of web pages in Spanish. This is in addition to a number of Spanish-language communications that are sent from the Office of Admission during the recruitment and enrollment process. The Office of Admission also has a dedicated staff member who is responsible for working with international students. As part of her role, **Sophie Bernheisel ’22** has participated in recruitment trips to Central and South America to begin establishing relationships with counselors and schools in the region. This region was selected for its ability to support an investment in U.S education as well as the College having an increasing number of faculty and staff from the region.

**Pillar IV:
BECOME**
a sought-after regional resource and develop opportunities for student educational engagement with communities that are mutually beneficial.

President Jordan has been clear that community and business partnerships are important factors contributing to the future of St. Mary’s College of Maryland. Opening in 2022, the Nancy R. & Norton T. Dodge Performing Arts Center has rapidly established itself as a cultural cornerstone. In fall 2024 alone, the Dodge PAC welcomed more than 15,000 attendees across 80 events—a remarkable increase from the 12,000 attendees at 50 events during the same period



Regional arts organizations like Ballet Caliente and COSMIC Symphony have made the Dodge Performing Arts Center their home.

in 2023. The venue has become a preferred destination for regional arts organizations such as Ballet Caliente and COSMIC Symphony. Its appeal extends beyond the campus, positioning the College as a vibrant cultural hub, according to **Keith Hinton**, Dodge PAC director.

To bolster this growth, the Institutional Advancement team implemented integrated event marketing strategies that not only have complemented academic and recruitment efforts but also enhanced the College’s brand awareness. These initiatives included expanding local and regional advertising efforts and strengthening the venue’s presence within the community.

President Jordan has remarked that as the National Public Honors College, St. Mary’s College of Maryland “seeks to be an anchor institution, cultivating long-lasting and impactful relationships that contribute to a robust, thriving and resilient community.” A new Office of Community Outreach and Engagement opened during the summer 2024 and under the leadership of Director **Caroline King**, has done a lot in a short time. King and Community Affairs Liaison **Kelsey Bush ’94** have formed a community engagement council to advise the office on its mission of enriching campus and community life by advancing meaningful, mutually beneficial partnerships that support community-based learning and contribute to Southern Maryland. The pair has

hosted and co-sponsored volunteer informational sessions for campus and community members and several campus events to promote community-based learning opportunities.

President Jordan retires in June, one year before “The Rising Tide” concludes. In her October 2024 address to the Board of Trustees she reported that the College “continues to progress on virtually every front within every unit.” She described the engagement by members of the campus community in all of the plan’s initiatives as “phenomenal” and offered that “the evidence clearly demonstrates that SMCM is continuing to soar to new heights as it leads the way in modeling what a 21st-century higher education should be for all students.”❖

MSCHE

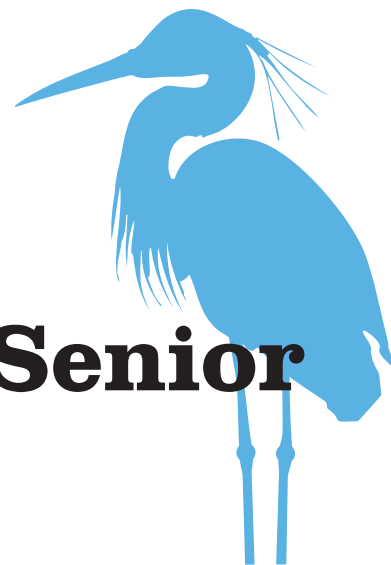
The work to accomplish the strategic plan’s goals is aligned with a nearer measure, which is the reaffirmation of accreditation through the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). St. Mary’s College has been continually accredited since 1959, with accreditation last reaffirmed in 2017. Since the spring of 2023, the College has engaged in self-study and peer review processes toward a successful site visit by an MSCHE review team scheduled for March 16-19. Associate VP of Academic Affairs and Professor of Educational Studies **Katy Arnett ’00** and Assistant VP of Institutional Research and Planning **Anne Marie Brady ’93** co-chair the self-study effort.

MSCHE accreditation reviews focus on seven standards:

- 1. Mission & Goals
- 2. Ethics & Integrity
- 3. Design & Delivery of the Student Learning Experience
- 4. Support of the Student Learning Experience
- 5. Educational Effectiveness Assessment
- 6. Planning, Resources & Institutional Improvement
- 7. Governance, Leadership & Administration

Heron Grants Support Senior Faculty Research

BY LEE CAPRISTO, EDITOR



A strategic plan effort to support faculty research and development has led to the creation of the Heron Grant. Each competitive, two-year grant supports new or ongoing research projects by tenured, mid-career faculty. Sponsored equally through the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Office of Sponsored Research, funding to a maximum of \$8,000 over two years may be requested as part of the grant application. The first awardees of Heron Grants are Professor of History **Christine Adams** and Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry **Pamela Mertz**.

Christine Adams

Christine Adams has taught history at St. Mary's College since the fall of 1992. While her courses cover topics in European history from the Middle Ages to the present, she especially enjoys sharing her love of all things French with her students. She also writes on current events and has a particular interest in the politics of gender and reproductive rights.

She has published primarily in French family and gender history, including "A Taste for Comfort and Status: A Bourgeois Family in Eighteenth-Century France" (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999) and "Poverty, Charity and Motherhood: Maternal Societies in Nineteenth-Century France" (University of Illinois Press, 2010). Most recently, she published with co-author and sister Tracy Adams "The Creation of the French Royal Mistress: From Agnès Sorel to Madame DuBarry" (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2020). Adams was a 2020–21 fellow with the American Council of Learned Societies and a 2021 Andrew W. Mellon fellow at the Newberry Library in Chicago, Illinois. Her current book project is titled "The Merveilleuses and their Impact on the French Historical Imaginary, 1794-1799 and Beyond."



Professor of History **Christine Adams** and her most recently published book, "The Creation of the French Royal Mistress."

The Heron Grant helps to fund this current book project. Adams will undertake research trips to libraries and archives in Paris during the summers of 2025 and 2026 to complete the research necessary to write the book.

In her grant application, Adams described her proposed research this way:

The women I am examining for this project, a group of young and stylish Parisian women, were celebrities during the period of the Directory in the second half of the 1790s following the French Revolution's Reign of Terror and before Napoleon's coup d'état. They are often referred to as the "Merveilleuses" (Marvelous ones). Nineteenth- and twentieth-century historians focused on their fashion leadership (in particular, their revealing neoclassical dresses), their diamonds and pearls, their visibility at Parisian sites of sociability, and their licentious lifestyle, which came to represent the Directory in the historical imagination.

The reputation of these women contributed to the Directorial regime's reputation as corrupt, which was then used to justify Napoleon's seizure of power in 1799 as well as his efforts to eliminate women's political influence. Although these

women were the subject of satire, contemporaries also recognized at least some of them as important political players; they were part of the Directory's salon life and closely linked with male politicians. I originally undertook this project on the Merveilleuses to understand why these women became such iconic figures.

Based on my research during sabbatical, I found that my understanding of who the Merveilleuses were and what they signified to their contemporaries was shifting. While nineteenth- and twentieth-century historians (such as the Goncourt brothers, Paul Lacroix, and Louis Madelin, among others) made

authoritative pronouncements about these women, as well as about their behavior and influence, it became clear that these men did not always have their facts straight—and that modern historians had often accepted these misinterpretations uncritically. Secondary sources had led me to believe that certain famous women such as Madame Tallien, Joséphine Bonaparte, Mademoiselle Lange, Juliette Récamier, and others were the recognized "leaders" of this group of young women. Nevertheless, even though historians refer to these specific women as "Merveilleuses," contemporaries did not—the term itself was ephemeral, and nearly disappeared until nineteenth-century writers revived it.

While there were clearly numerous elegant, fashionable, politically connected, and independent female celebrities under the Directory, the "Merveilleuses" as a cohesive group that included them was more likely the creation of subsequent scholars and political observers with a specific political agenda.

Further work led me to the conclusion that the popular fixation on the Merveilleuses was indeed a nineteenth-century phenomenon, the result—at least in part—of the evocative prose of writers such as the Goncourt brothers and the recreation of the era in theatrical productions under the Third Republic.

At a time when the French were seeking to establish a stable and functional republican government in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 and the downfall of the Second Empire, the experience of the Directory warned: beware the corrupting influence of women. In short, the Merveilleuse, as symbol of the Directory, offered a flexible, collectively composed allegory that folded French anxieties and ambivalence about women's influence into their anxieties and ambivalence about their failed First Republic—and its implications for the Third.

Pamela Mertz

Pamela Mertz joined the faculty of St. Mary's College in 2000. A biochemist, Mertz teaches both biochemistry and chemistry. She also does research in science pedagogy, from laboratory and capstone projects to students' professional skill development, and biomolecular visualization. She was a department co-leader for the Course-based Undergraduate Research Transformations Project (NSF-DUE Award #1625354), which involved scaffolding undergraduate research experiences throughout the curriculum. Mertz is associate director of and steering committee member for BioMolViz (<https://biomolviz.org>). She also serves on the editorial board for the Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Education journal. Furthermore, she is chair of the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB) Student Chapters steering committee.

Mertz was accepted into the summer 2023 MDH CUREs Community (MCC) Fellows Cohort (part of an NSF funded project, #2119918). As a fellow, she did training in the summers of 2023 and 2024, instrumental for learning techniques she has now taught her students. Mertz also obtained an MCC small equipment grant to fund supplies and reagents for a Course-based Undergraduate Research Experience (CURE) into her Biochemistry I lab course in fall 2023.



TOP: Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry **Pamela Mertz** in the new biochemistry lab. BOTTOM: Professor Mertz with her student researchers **Jocelyn Hernandez '24** and **Rachel Manning '24**.

For this course, students purified wild-type human mitochondrial and cytosolic MDH proteins from bacterial cultures and analyzed purity and activity. Then they developed hypotheses to focus on the action of inhibitors (metabolites) that influence the role of MDH in metabolism and designed experiments to test their hypotheses in the lab. Mertz taught the course again in fall 2024 and students studied kinetic properties of MDH mitochondrial phosphomimetic mutants.

Her lab students have worked on a number of biochemical projects. Two St. Mary's Project (SMP) students who graduated in May 2024 worked with wild-type mitochondrial MDH and two site-directed phosphomimetic mutants, T85D (threonine 85 mutated to aspartic acid) and T224D (threonine 224 mutated to aspartic acid). Two SMP students this year are working with two new mutants (created by Mertz during her MCC fellowship) and will present their work at a conference in April.

In her grant application, Mertz described her proposed research this way:

Malate dehydrogenase (MDH) has been implicated in various human diseases, including cancer. In tumor cells, there are dramatic shifts in what genes are expressed to alter cell metabolism, including enzymes changes that lead to increased glucose consumption and cell proliferation. It has been shown that MDH is overexpressed in several cancer cell lines, correlating with adverse cancer prognosis.¹ The data supports a role for MDH supplying cytosolic NAD⁺ by reducing oxaloacetate to malate, which allows cancer cells to increase glucose metabolism through glycolysis. Knockdown of MDH showed the enzyme is critical to glucose metabolism and cellular proliferation, hallmarks of cancer cells.¹ These data point to the potential for inhibition of MDH as a therapeutic strategy and the need for further study of how its catalytic activity is regulated.

One way to study the potential role of a specific phosphorylation site in a protein is to create a site-directed mutant in the protein that is a phosphomimetic. To create a phosphomimetic, a serine or threonine amino acid (containing alcohol functional groups) is replaced with an aspartic or glutamic acid amino acid that has a similar size as the original amino acid and has a negatively charged carboxylic acid group. This negative charge mimics the addition of a phosphate group but is more permanent, as a phosphatase cannot remove the negative charge. Thus, this enables the study of this localized, permanent negative charge on protein structure and function.

In addition to using phosphomimetic mutants to further explore the activity of MDH for its usual substrate, oxaloacetate, my lab is also studying a different substrate, alpha ketoglutarate. It has been shown that MDH is able to use alpha ketoglutarate as an alternate substrate, oxidizing it to 2-hydroxyglutaric acid (2-HG).^{2,3} This occurs under acidic conditions and may play a role in 2-HG production in cancer cells as 2-HG is a tumor promoting metabolite.^{4,5} This project aims to study the role of phosphorylation as a mechanism to cause the switch from solely using oxaloacetate as a substrate to allow alpha ketoglutarate to bind to the enzyme active site and be converted to 2-HG. This will help further understanding of the role of MDH in cancer progression.

Moving forward, I plan to create new site-directed mutants from sites with evidence of phosphorylation.⁶ This will require a molecular biology approach, and thus we have a need of reagents and other items that we do not currently have. I am also requesting Virtual Reality goggles, which will inform our choice of mutants from many options. Using VR technology, we plan to do docking studies with MDH and substrates, using coordinates from solved three dimensional structures. We will express the mutants in *E. coli* and purify these proteins to study the role of specific residues in the regulation of MDH.❖

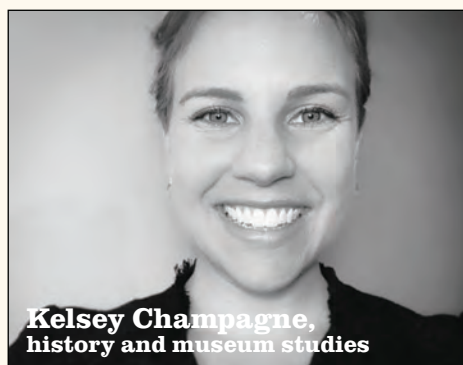
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Ross Fellows

A strategic hiring initiative for new, early-career and pre-tenure faculty launched in 2022. Named for the late Professor **Joe Ross Jr.**, Ross Fellows are hired and mentored as a cohort. The objective is to promote cross-curricular inclusive pedagogy and foster a network of promising new faculty whose expertise will further elevate the College's research profile and whose pedagogical practices will enhance the educational experience of historically underrepresented students. The Ross Fellows initiative is led by Associate Dean and Professor of Political Science **Sahar Shafqat**.

The current cohort includes the following assistant professors:



ALUMNI CONNECTION

CLASS NOTES

1970s

Les Potter '70 retired after a 54-year career in K-12 and higher education, having worked in seven states and two countries. He has lived and worked in Cairo for the past ten years. After earning his bachelor's degree from St. Mary's College of Maryland, Potter went on to receive his master's degree from George Washington University and the University of North Florida. He also received specialist and doctoral degrees from the University of South Carolina. Les credits his strong foundation received at St. Mary's College of Maryland for his successful career in education. He stays engaged with the College by mentoring students through the Mentor-a-Seahawk program every spring semester and is always happy to connect with fellow alumni, current students, faculty and staff.

Allen Hicks '72 has been recognized for his work on "Art with Ombudsman Allen," an interactive livestream for long-term care residents in Baltimore County, winning the 2024 National Association of Counties Achievement Award. The program provides nontraditional virtual connectivity to residents in long-term care facilities. Allen, a self-taught artist, musician and cancer survivor, hosts the program, providing



Nikola Sutherland with London friends LEFT TO RIGHT: **James Miller '20, Michelle Cuttler '92, Hannah Myers '15, Nikola Sutherland '87 and Makenna Bradford '20.**

both personal charm by playing songs on his ukulele, and informative support to residents on issues ranging from residents' rights and advocacy support, to program services, new creative pursuits and more.

Tim Geho '75 says he is "still alive and kicking but not very high." Tim (included in the feature on p. 8) retired from social services work and lives in Charleston, South Carolina. His friends from St. Mary's College might remember him as "Snake" (especially M.G.). Along with "Nudy" and "Teddybear," Tim started the streaking craze at St. Mary's College when it was popular across campuses nationwide.

Jim Johnson '75 hasn't been back to campus in over 45 years but fondly remembers his professors and playing soccer. After earning a master's in science at the College of William and Mary and his doctorate at North Carolina State University, Jim worked for 40 years in drug research, discovering and developing new medicines.

He retired in 2018 and he and his wife, Barbara, live in Cary, North Carolina. Jim stayed involved with soccer as a referee from 1975 to 1994. In 2021, he recertified and is once again serving as a referee for high school soccer, with a goal to do so until he turns 80! He also recently published a veterans history project documenting over 350 veterans from the First United Methodist Church of Cary, who served their country between 1871 and 2021, titled "Called to Serve."

1980s

Nikola Sutherland '87 [1] hosted an alumni gathering in London, where she works. Nikola currently serves on the St. Mary's College of Maryland Foundation board of directors.

Lynne Murray '88 [2] became president of McMurry University in Abilene, Texas in September. Lynne holds a bachelor's degree from St. Mary's College of Maryland, a master's degree in marketing from Johns Hopkins University and a doctorate in special



education administration from Gallaudet University. Previously she served as president of Baker University in Kansas from 2014-2024.

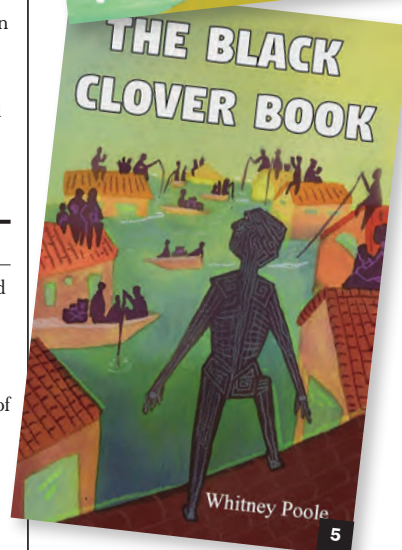
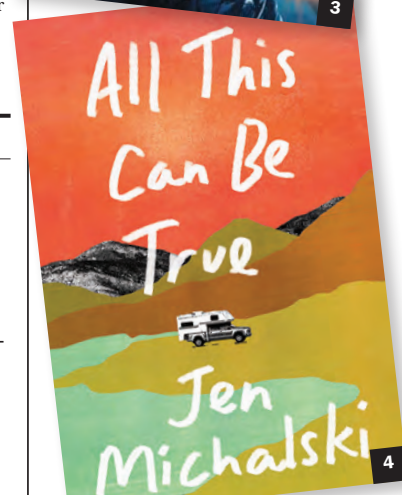
1990s

Robin R. Peace '93 [3] has published her first novel, "The Geldian Prophecy: Ascendence," available on Amazon and Kindle.

Jen Michalski '94 [4] is releasing her fourth novel, "All This Can Be True," forthcoming from Keylight Books/Turner Publishing in June 2025. For fans of "Modern Lovers" and "The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo," this is a tender queer romance about one woman's rediscovery of choice, hope and wild love in the wake of her husband's coma.

2000s

Whitney Poole '00 [5] released his second novel, "The Black Clover Book," a science fiction story that transports readers into a world exploring themes of artificial intelligence, consciousness and environmental disasters.





Philly Regatta

Alumni Seahawk rowers supported the College's crew team under new head coach **Dan Schenk** by racing at the Head of the Schuylkill Regatta on Oct. 26, 2024. Alumni converged on Philadelphia to field four alumni entries.

The men's 4+ included coxswain **Liahna Gonda-King '10** and rowers **Tom Bennett '10**; **Chad Lange '10**; **Chris Rodkey '10**, **MAT '11** and **Jeff Bennett '12**. The women's 4+ included coxswain **Lizi Pinkus Bear '14**, **MAT '15** and rowers **Annika Drilling '23**, **Meara Johnson '24**, **Jocelyn Neubauer '24** and **Gabriela Plummer '24**. Each took first place in their respective races. Annika, Chris, Jeff, Liahna and Tom joined **Chris Newlan '94**, **Joanna Suder '07**, **Sara DeSavage '10** and **Alex Lundahl '17** for the mixed 8+ race and brought home silver medals. The women's 8+ had a strong showing in a crowded event with Gabriela, Jocelyn, Lizi and Meara joined by **Erin Lanham '22**, **Colette Nortman '22**, **Jazlyn Benitez '23**, **Lili Bowman '24** and **Kate Oswald '24**. Representing the Southern Maryland Rowing Association, **Rachel Hawes Boarman '05** took second in the women's masters' single event and teamed up with the College's assistant coach **Nik Meyer** to earn a silver medal in the Mixed Masters Doubles race. Newlan also raced a double in the mixed masters' event with Great River Rowing. In addition to current students on the College's rowing team, the alumni rowers were cheered on by fellow alumni rowers **Karyn Shackleford '99**; **Anna Bennett '12**; **Holly Fabbri '12**, **MAT '13** and **Laura Kruse '16**. The alumni had a great showing and look forward to making this regatta an annual reunion event.

Dave Elseroad '01 [6] enjoyed a visit from **Jackson Norton '03** and his family in Switzerland, where Dave has lived with his family since 2012. They are pictured here visiting the Chateau de Chillon in Vevytau. Dave is the head of advocacy for Human Rights House Foundation. Jackson is a teacher in Montgomery County Public Schools and lives in Washington, D.C.

Samantha Lord '02 [7] fulfilled her dream of becoming a published author in October 2024. Her book, "Finding Life's Blessings: A Journey of Hardship, Healing, and Hope," is a spiritual memoir that details her journey through a series of unexpected challenges during her childhood and early adult years, and how those challenges shaped her into the person she is today. She describes how her

faith carried her through difficult times and gave her a sense of hope and healing she would not have found otherwise. Lord credits her former St. Mary's College of Maryland instructors for helping her discover her passion for writing.

Melissa Bolich '05 was recently promoted to manager of data and systems management for TidalHealth in Salisbury, Maryland.



Laura Drummer '05 assumed new responsibilities as chief data officer for the intelligence community in the U.S. Air Force. Before her work for the Air Force, she founded and served as CEO of TAS Labs, a provider of software, cloud, data and artificial intelligence services to government, defense and national security customers. She also held the role of director of analytics and artificial intelligence within the technical solutions division of Huntington Ingalls Industries, Inc. Laura's resume includes a brief stint as head of artificial intelligence product management at Alion Science and Technology and over 11 years at Novetta Solutions, where she oversaw software, engineering, cyber

and intelligence operations as director. She began her career as an intelligence analyst at the Department of Defense. Laura studied Chinese at St. Mary's College of Maryland and earned a master's in information systems from the University of Maryland Baltimore County.

2010s

Andrew McDowell '12 [8] released his second novel, "Beneath the Deep Wave," which is a sequel to "Mystical Greenwood." Four anthologies of poetry, including a micro-memoir, have also been published in the past year.

Alumni Legacy Scholarships



Taylor Basso '28 is a 2024 recipient of the Alumni Legacy Scholarship and the child of **Kimberly Wiles Basso '96**.

Taylor was inspired to attend St. Mary's

College of Maryland by the academic programs offered and the inviting campus community that has felt like home for such a long time. She plans to study psychology and complete the Master of Arts in Teaching program. In addition to developing a strong undergraduate education, Taylor is looking forward to meeting new people, getting involved in the campus through various interests and hobbies, creating more campus memories, now as a student and "carving my own path at SMCM." Outside of the classroom, she enjoys being creative and learning new things. Some of her hobbies include baking, painting, embroidering, drawing, playing video games, writing and reading. Taylor loves to travel and hopes to see more of the world and share those experiences with others.



Madelyn Jones '27 is a 2024 recipient of the Alumni Legacy Scholarship and the daughter of **Jennifer Carter Jones '94** and **Nicholas Jones '94**.

She was inspired to attend St. Mary's College of Maryland by family trips over the years to campus and the academic programs, as well as the student experience the College has to offer. Madelyn also cherished sharing a common connection with her mother through attending the same high school and wanted to continue sharing in a connection with her parents through attending the same college that meant so

much to both of them. In addition to making lifelong memories and friendships at SMCM, Madelyn hopes to further her professional goals to pursue a career in education and complete the Master of Arts in Teaching program. Outside of the classroom, Madelyn enjoys playing soccer, crocheting and reading.

Don Stabile Alumni Postgraduate Scholarships



Victoria Chang '20 is the 2024 recipient of the Don Stabile Alumni Doctoral Scholarship and currently resides in Denver, Colorado. She is pursuing a PhD in

neuroscience at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. Victoria is investigating how brain development is dysregulated by environmental factors during early life such as stress and prenatal exposure to medications and misused substances. By investigating the effects of these factors on brain development, Victoria hopes she can positively contribute to understanding how neurodevelopmental and neuropsychiatric disorders occur and potential ways to treat and prevent them. Victoria credits SMCM for helping her grow as a researcher by gaining a deeper understanding of the scientific process through research opportunities provided, especially experience gained from her St. Mary's Project. Victoria also credits the supportive environment and mentorship provided by her professors during her time at SMCM for encouraging her to pursue a career in neuroscience research. Victoria's long-term goal is to continue her career at a university where she can have a research lab to further her own work and contributions to the greater community and mentor students with the same supportive and adaptive teaching methods she received as an undergraduate that fostered her passion for science and research.



Kayla Sherfey '22 is the 2024 recipient of the Don Stabile Alumni Postgraduate Scholarship. She is currently enrolled in the physician assistant program

at Arcadia University and is pursuing a master of medical science. Kayla's longtime affinity for biology and desire to serve others led her towards a profession in healthcare. With a strong foundation in service through her volunteerism as an emergency medical technician with her county fire department and work as a medical assistant, Kayla is committed to giving back to her community. By pursuing a career as a physician assistant, Kayla hopes to make a positive impact on her patients and the community she serves. Kayla credits her professors in the SMCM biology department for providing her a strong academic foundation to prepare her for her postgraduate coursework. Kayla is also grateful for the opportunity provided by the Center for Career and Professional Development for her to shadow a hospitalist physician assistant, which helped her formulate a new career path. Kayla is looking forward to a medical service trip to Peru this spring with her physician assistant program, in which she will serve and learn alongside a population with limited access to healthcare. The Don Stabile Alumni Postgraduate Scholarship will support Kayla's academic and professional goals to further her knowledge and skills that will help her address patients' needs, manage their conditions and work towards making healthcare accessible to the community she serves.

Samantha Nickey '12 [9]

will have a solo art show, "Passages: An Introspective," in the Scott Center Gallery at Carroll Community College in Westminster, Md. from February 28 through June 7. An opening reception will be held on February 28 from 4 to 7 p.m. The show will cover a dynamic range of subjects and styles, capturing the shifting thoughts and nuanced emotions that shape Samantha's artistic exploration. Her personal passages are expressed through her process and she invites viewers to witness her intimate journey of self-reflection and transformation.

Alyssa Weber '13 was promoted to the role of associate director of scholarships and grants at Howard Community College, overseeing all state and institutional scholarship and grant programs within financial aid services. Alyssa lives in Columbia, Maryland, with her husband, **Jonathan Weber '13** and their two daughters.

Hattie Webb '13 is now assistant principal at Great Mills High School. Hattie holds a master's degree from the College of William and Mary and a bachelor's degree from St. Mary's College of Maryland. Prior to the appointment, she served as a mathematics teacher at Great Mills High School.

Kati Peditto '15 was appointed as senior design researcher for the global integrated design firm DLR Group. A graduate of St. Mary's College of Maryland, where she majored in psychology, Kati earned a PhD in human behavior and design from Cornell University. Kati is a design psychologist specializing in inclusive design and neurodiversity. She joins DLR Group as an associate based in



Denver, Colorado. She advises designers, clients and stakeholders on translating research into evidence-based design solutions that elevate the human experience. With expertise in youth engagement and participatory design, Kati will enhance the experience for clients and end users, advancing DLR Group's leadership as one of the largest educational designers in the nation.

Jack Darrell '18 [10] works for the Alaska Public Media affiliate KRBD in Ketchikan, Alaska, filing stories on everything from the spread of invasive crabs to the excavation of grocery store parking lots. This fall, though, two of his stories were



picked up at the national level. His story, "Wildlife experts look for new ways to count wolves in Alaska," aired on "All Things Considered" in early November; in the piece, he explores research on Prince of Wales

Island, Alaska, where biologists are tracking wolf scat to better count the animals' numbers. Another story, "He's in a New York prison. Yet courts let him stay on a U.S. House ballot — in Alaska" appeared on NPR's website in September, during the run-up to the election. In this piece, Jack chronicles the attempt of a New York state prisoner to find his way to early release by getting elected to Congress.

Valerie Gregorio '19 works as a contract specialist at the National Institutes of Health's Clinical Center and is a current member of the St. Mary's College of Maryland Alumni Council. She was appointed

to serve as a member of the St. Mary's County Democratic Central Committee in February 2024, and has also served as an ambassador to promote the youth vote. Her interview with voice actor Jennifer Kumiyama, voice of the character Dahlia in Disney's movie "Wish," was published on the Mixed Asian Media website. She was nominated by CB Modeling Associates as a nominee for the Model of the Year Award, walked in their Fall 2024 Modern Day Red Carpet Fashion Show and was selected for their campaign with Supermodels Unlimited. She performed in Ballet Caliente's "A Very Caliente Christmas," at SMCM's Dodge Performing Arts Center on Dec. 14, 2024.

MARRIAGES & UNIONS

James Haight '81 [1] and Ellen Merritt were married on July 13, 2010 in West Barnstable, Massachusetts. **Dennis McDade '82** served as best man. The couple currently reside in West Barnstable, Massachusetts.



Ally Moore '11 [2] and Tony Brown were married on May 17, 2024 on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Alumni in the wedding party included bridesmaids **Dana Gittings '11**, **Catherine Skinner '11**, **Courtney Teed '11** and **Alexa Milroy '12**. **Dan Schell '10** served as a reader and usher. Other alumni in attendance included **Kellie Bartholomew '10**, **Mike Berry '10**, **Ken Benjes '11**, **MAT '12**;



Katie Haney '11; **Lorenna Maysonet '11**; **Bryan Miller '11**; **Meg Nock '11**; **Jules Plant '11**; **Michael Tornabene '11**; **Colleen Vaughn '11**; **Laura Bruffy Dougan '12**; **Kaitlyn "Koko" Olszewski '12**, **MAT '13**; **Jon Rizzardi '12**, **MAT '13** and **Kayla Schell '16**. The couple currently reside in Arlington, Virginia

Anna Weaver '12 and **Collin Hickey '15 [3]** were married on July 13, 2024 in Stevenson, Maryland. **Amanda Zelaya '12**



was a bridesmaid. Groomsmen included **David Kersey '15** and **Brian Oakey '15**. Other alumni in attendance included **Lyndsay Fournier Duffey '12**, **Leigh Emig '14**, **Nick Bozzonetti '15**, **Brian Bruffey '15**, **Michelle DiMenna '15**, **Toby Hall '15**, **Annalise Kenney '15**, **Sarah Schrider '15**, **Maxine Beker '16** and **Taylor Lampansona '16**. The couple currently reside in Brighton, Massachusetts.

Hannah Vickery Diaz '19 [4] and Alonso Diaz were married on Sept. 21, 2024 in Stevensville, Maryland. Alumni in attendance included matron of honor **Brigid Morris Wisor '18**, bridesmaid **Gillian Rosenzweig-Stein '18** and **Sarah Casper-Woodhead '19**. The couple currently reside in Gaithersburg, Maryland.



BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Elizabeth “Liz” Lewis Boyle ‘07 and **Kevin Boyle ‘07 [1]** welcomed their second son, Randy Mercer Boyle, on April 17, 2024. The family resides in Boyds, Maryland, along with Randy’s older brother, Ridge, age one.

Kait Hines-Noble ‘10 and **Jon Noble ‘09 [2]** welcomed their second child, Jackson Noble, born Feb. 22, 2024. Abigail, age three, is very excited to be a big sister. **Alexandra Noble ‘10** is an aunt. The family resides in Cupertino, California.

Joyce Miranda ‘11 and **Patrick Piantadosi ‘10 [3]** welcomed their first child, Penelope Miranda Piantadosi, on June 7, 2024. **Sean Piantadosi ‘10** is now an uncle. The family currently resides in Kensington, Maryland.

Brittany Creeden Miller ‘11 and **Matthew Miller ‘11 [4]** welcomed a son, Joel Ansel Miller, on Aug. 21, 2024. The family resides in Massapequa, New York.



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GIVE TODAY



SMCM.EDU/GIVE



ASHLEY CARMEN PHOTO

5



LURFA GILANI

7

Lizi Pinkus Bear '14, MAT '15 and **Ben Baker Bear '14 [5]** welcomed a son, Carson Bear, on April 14, 2024. The family resides in Wilmington, Delaware.

Victoria Gottlieb Ezim '15, MAT '16 and **Kisslyn Ezim '14 [6]** welcomed a daughter, Amiliana Ezim, on July 21, 2024. The family resides in Severn, Maryland.

Elaine Bucknam Clarke '16 [7] and Michael Clarke welcomed a daughter, Beatrice Ann Clarke, on Jan. 19, 2024 in Santa Monica, California. The family currently resides in Highland Park, New Jersey.

IN MEMORIAM

Peter Vincent Black '10, died on Dec. 28, 2023 after being struck in a hit-and-run accident while cycling home from work. He was 33 years old. Peter was the son of Renee Silwick Black of Keedysville, Maryland and the late Paul Leonard Black. He is survived by fiancée Lauren Morehouse, his mother and his sister, Anne Black. Born in Frederick, Maryland, Peter was an Eagle Scout and attended Otterbein United Methodist Church. He graduated from St. Mary's College of Maryland

summa cum laude with a major in political science and was a member of the Pi Sigma Alpha Honor Society. He earned a J.D. in 2016 from the New York University School of Law, where he was a Vanderbilt Scholar and served as an executive editor for the NYU Environmental Law Journal. Peter was a trial attorney for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and an avid outdoorsman who enjoyed cycling, skiing and hiking.



BRITANY DUNBAR

6

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ANTIQUE DESKS DONATED TO SMCM

BY CHUCK STEENBURGH, ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT OF INTEGRATED MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

St. Mary's College of Maryland recently received the donation of two antique desks that will be joining an assortment of others housed in the Maryland Room (Special Collections) of the Hilda C. Landers Library. One desk returns to the College while the other, older piece has a less direct connection to SMCM.

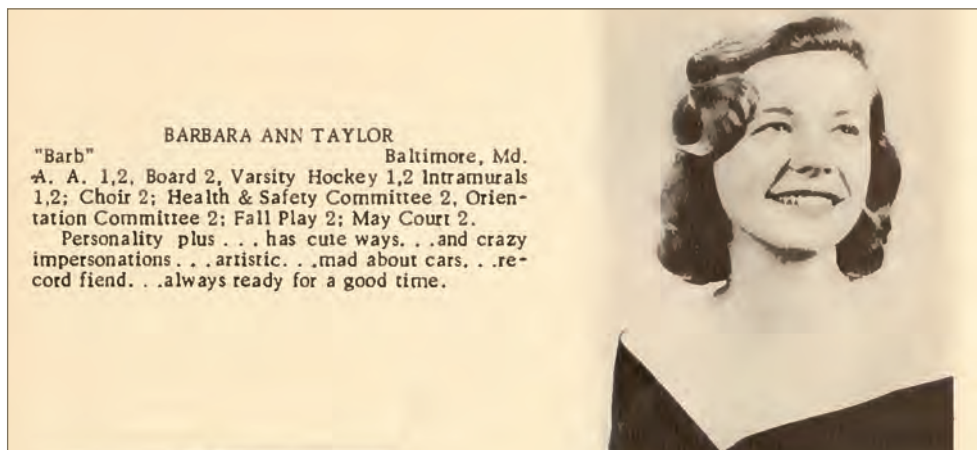
The desks were delivered to the College in November 2024 by Eve Himmelheber Love '74 and her husband, John Cook, adjunct instructor of museum studies. The older piece was the Maryland Senate desk used by Cook's stepfather, J. Frank Raley Jr., and was donated by Love. The more recent desk was the student desk used by Cook's mother, Barbara Ann Taylor Raley '54JC, and was donated by Cook's daughter, Julia P. Cook Dobson '09. John Cook's father, John P. Cook Sr. '51, was killed in action in the Korean War.

The Senate desk was procured by the State of Maryland in 1878, at a cost of \$16. It was used in the Maryland State House until 1966, when the state senate was expanded. Each of the then-sitting senators was permitted to keep their desks – and thus, the desk came into the possession of J. Frank Raley, who represented St. Mary's County.

Raley's impact on the modern development of St. Mary's County – and St. Mary's College of Maryland – is immense. Between 1963 and 1966, Raley shepherded approximately 100 pieces of legislation through the General Assembly that revolutionized Southern Maryland's economy and ushered in 40 years of economic growth.

"J. Frank was a passionate student of history and devout in his belief in public service," said John Cook. "The Senate desk pictured represents a tangible link to the many bonds and battles forged in his tenure in the Maryland Senate as he worked to improve the quality of life here in Southern Maryland."

Among his many contributions and leadership roles, he served for 24 years on the College's Board of Trustees; the J. Frank



TOP: Yearbook photo of **Barbara Ann Taylor '54JC**. BOTTOM LEFT: **Kat Ryner '86**, associate director of the library; **John Cook**; **Eve Himmelheber Love '74**; **Amanda Ver Meulen**, director of the library & archives
BOTTOM LEFT: Desk on the left was a student desk from Calvert Hall used by Barbara Ann Taylor. The desk on the right is from the Maryland Senate.

Raley Great Room is named in his honor. As a legislator and trustee, Raley helped lead the transition of SMCM from a women's junior college to a co-educational, baccalaureate institution.

The student desk was typical of those used by students of the era, and likely dates to the early 20th century. Barbara Raley, a native of Baltimore, came to St. Mary's Seminary Junior College in 1952, and played field hockey and basketball, graduating in 1954. Coincidentally, as a student she used

the desk on the second floor of Calvert Hall—which currently houses the offices of this magazine. She married J. Frank Raley in 1966.

"I am pleased that the two desks, associated with people who had close ties to SMCM, are now collection pieces to be shared with the community," said Love. "Their value is not that they are unique or rare but that they can provoke thought and discussion about the people and events at a culturally different point of time."

BIG EVENTS AT SMCM



RAINN WILSON



THE REAGAN YEARS



BRITTANY JOHNSON



JEFF SILBERSCHLAG



DANÚ



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SATURDAY, FEB. 8	THE KING'S SINGERS 7:00 P.M.	\$
FRIDAY, FEB. 28	HONORING THE LEGACY OF LUCILLE CLIFTON 7:00 P.M.	\$
SATURDAY, MAR. 1	DANÚ: TRADITIONAL MUSIC OF IRELAND 7:00 P.M.	\$
WEDNESDAY, MAR. 5	SMCM CHORAL CONCERT 7:00 P.M.	
FRIDAY, MAR. 21	THE REAGAN YEARS CONCERT 7:00 P.M.	\$
FRIDAY, MAR. 28	THE MARK TWAIN LECTURE: AN EVENING WITH RAINN WILSON 7:00 P.M.	\$
FRIDAY, APR. 4	SMCM JAZZ ENSEMBLE CONCERT 7:00 P.M.	
FRIDAY, APR. 18	SMCM ORCHESTRA CONCERT 7:00 P.M.	
FRIDAY, APR. 25	SMCM CHORAL CONCERT 7:00 P.M.	



Find out the latest on these performances and more at:
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This is a paid admission event.



This event is free with required ticket registration.



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