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St. Mary’s College of Maryland

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State of the College: “What a Difference a Year Makes

I was attending an event for Governor Hogan in Annapolis last week and the banner across the back of the stage read “What a Difference a Year Makes.” The governor then took the stage and discussed what changes have occurred at the state level since he was inaugurated. Driving back from that event late Thursday evening, I replayed the events of the last year at the college and decided that that title “What A Difference a Year Makes” would be the subject of this semester’s state of the College address.

**Strategic Planning**: Last year at this time we were silent on the matter of developing a new strategic plan. This year, we are fully engaged in developing a new strategic plan that will go into effect next year. The Strategic Planning Steering Committee has worked very hard to engage members of the campus community, via large- and small-group meetings, electronically, and via a SWOT analysis, in refining the College’s mission, vision, and core values as well as developing the goals and measurable objectives for a new, three-year plan. The measurable objectives, available for review on the Strategic Planning website, will be presented to the trustees this weekend at the Board meeting while the SPSC is actively working to define the metrics we will use to evaluate progress towards meeting our goals and objectives as well as the associated budgets. Our target is to have the strategic plan vetted by internal and external stakeholders before submitting it to the trustees for approval at their May 2016 meeting. I want to take this opportunity to thank all who have participated in this effort to date and to ask you to remain engaged. A special thank you to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee members: Sarah Crumling, Kevin Emerson, Iris Ford, Laraine Glidden, Juliet Hewitt, Angela Johnson, Arminta Plater, Larry Vote, Libby Williams, and Derek Young.

**175th Anniversary**: At this point last year we were planning the activities to celebrate the 175th anniversary of our institution. The year was filled with activities focused on the theme “Celebrating the Past while We Forge the Future.” We were graced by lectures, presentations, and performances by faculty, staff, and students as well as renowned individuals such as Alan Johnson, Tim Wise, Bill Kane, and Angela Davis. We concluded our 175th Anniversary series of events the week of November 19th. Highlights of that week were the performance of the play *Crossroads: On Common Ground*; an engaging and thought-provoking performance by spoken-word artist and scholar Clint Smith; and, the awarding of The Trailblazer Award to President emeritus Ted Lewis. The *Crossroads* performance was especially powerful and timely. It was an original play written by professor emerita Merideth Taylor that integrated the histories of St. Mary’s County and the College with modern-day perceptions of where we are, as an institution, today in regards to matters of race, inclusion, and equity. The upshot was, and is, that we have much to do but there is hope.

**Diversity and Inclusivity**: Last year at this time, we started the semester with dark clouds overhead. There were several incidents that had arisen the previous semester that gave us pause and made us look at what we were doing to create and sustain an environment that is diverse, inclusive, and welcoming for all. I announced a series of activities – later termed the IDEs Initiative - to address the issues we were experiencing and to be proactive in having systems, services, people, and activities in place to facilitate our reaching our inclusivity goal. The initiatives were being led by Sybol Anderson, chair of the Campus Culture, Policies, and Programming workgroup, Robin Bates, chair of the Civility and Embodiment of our Ethos workgroup, Antonio Ungues (who replaced Beth Rushing) as chair of the Education and Training workgroup, and Leonard Brown, chair of both Sexual Misconduct and the Hate and Bias workgroups. The past year has been tremendously busy for all of these groups working separately and together to accomplish our goals. I will describe just a few of the activities that have transpired since that time. You can follow our progress on a new webpage that will be unveiled next week.

* The Campus Culture, Policies, and Programming workgroup has conducted Thrive Analysis focus groups to try to assess how well our campus constituents are thriving, the factors that contribute to a person thriving on this campus, and what we can do as a community to enhance an individual’s ability to thrive here. The Thrive Survey was administered to students, faculty, and staff in the Fall semester. The workgroup is planning a series of forums to share the survey results and to discuss next steps. One thing that has come out of their work is a recommendation for an Office of Equity and Diversity. This recommendation is congruent with the recommendation from the Education and Training workgroup as well as separate, formal requests from several student organizations, the Staff Senate, and four of the strategic plan workgroups that have all recommended that the College hires an individual whose sole responsibility is to lead and coordinate our diversity and equity efforts. Thanks to all of you who support this initiative.
* The Education and Training workgroup has offered a series of webinars and online trainings examining racial climate on college campuses and they’ve offered a screening of *Vocabulary of Change* – a 2012 dialog between Tim Wise and Angela Davis.
* The Hate and Bias workgroup has constituted the Bias Response Team, and it is now active.
* The Collegehaslaunched a new bystander intervention program, "Step Up".
* MAPP has hosted a forum addressing issues of diversity and equity
* The SGA has established a committee to examine cultural relations within the college community in collaboration with MAPP.
* Hundreds within our campus community participating in the Black Student Union/Latinos Unidos Solidarity March. I take this as a sign that members of our campus community are finding their voices to speak about issues of race, equity, diversity, and inclusion in a peaceful and respectful manner.
* We successfully initiated Race Monologues, and *Crossroads* was tremendously successful.

We have a lot happening. We have recruited Alan Johnson as an advisor for our efforts. We are not where we should be, but we are off to a tremendous start. And, if the way the various leaders on this campus have come out, rolled up their sleeves, and offered to help is any indication of our future, I have no doubt that, though the ascent may be long and challenging, we will successfully scale this mountain and be the inclusive and welcoming community we know we must be.

**Middle States**: At this time last year, we were in the throes of putting the final touches on our Middle States self study report in preparation of the site visit that occurred last semester. Thank you to those of you participating in that process. The Evaluation team found that we met all state and federal regulations for higher education. They lauded our retention and graduation rates and the success of our students in graduate and professional schools. The Team was very complimentary of how bright and engaged our students are. And, they recognized the commitment of our faculty and staff to maintain our programming quality and high standards for our students in spite of the enrollment challenges. All of these things are reflections of the excellence we know to be St. Mary’s College. The Team’s review focused on fourteen accreditation standards, such as the College’s leadership and governance; our planning and resource allocation; and our student admission and retention. Overall the report was positive. It did note we fell short in one of the fourteen areas – how we assess learning outcomes. We had already recognized we needed to do more on this standard and have begun next steps. We have hired an outstanding Provost who has extensive assessment experience. I met with the faculty last week and we, the new provost and I, outlined a process for ensuring we build a lasting assessment infrastructure. Consultants will be assisting us with training faculty and staff and help us develop assessment tools.

Let me underscore that the finding that we have not explicitly demonstrated learning outcomes in no way reflects upon the *quality* of the education our students receive or the *value* of their degree. The MSCHE Evaluation Team states in its report that St. Mary’s College is “a strong institution that serves its students well.” The report also noted, “There is so much good work going on here…The College simply needs to document it; assess it more directly…” With our new provost, working with our strong faculty, staff and other experts, we will address the issue the Evaluation Team has raised in a timely and comprehensive fashion. I will keep our campus community updated on St. Mary’s College of Maryland’s progress as we, a community of extraordinary faculty and staff, continue to educate extraordinary students.

**Provost and Dean of Faculty search**: Last year at this time, Laraine Glidden was announced as the interim vice president for academic affairs/dean of faculty. We were initiating the search for the position of provost and dean of faculty. The person in this position has administrative authority over the faculty as well as responsibilities that extend beyond academic affairs. Although the timing of the national search for this position was late, I believed we would find someone to fill this key position in the College leadership. Well, as you know, we failed to identify the right person for the job. We re-grouped, refined the process, and got off to an early start at the beginning of this academic year with the goal of having someone signed by Thanksgiving. I am very pleased to announce that the search has successfully concluded – on time - with the hire of Michael Wick as the new provost and dean of faculty. Dr. Wick, currently the associate vice chancellor for academic affairs and Dean of Graduate Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire, is a professor of computer science and an excellent example of the teacher-scholar model we value. His years of experience as an administrator and his passion for the liberal arts will be invaluable to our community. Many of you have had the opportunity to interact with Dr. Wick since the announcement, and you will continue to see him and work with him from time to time up to and through his official start date of July 1, 2016. I thank Professor Glidden for coming out of retirement to hold-down the fort while we searched for a new provost and appreciate all she has done in that position.

**Budgets, Buildings, and Fundraising**: Last year at this time, we had received word of the governor’s budget and were happy that he had restored a mandated funding cut that the out-going administration had levied across state agencies, including higher education. Our task during the legislative session was to assure the legislators who have supported the College for many years and provided funds for us to reduce in-state College tuition by 8.5% and then hold it flat last year, that we were grateful for their support and that we would remain good stewards of our state funding.

This year the governor’s budget includes full funding of our proposed operating budget for which we are very thankful. Additionally, we are slated to receive funding for much needed infrastructure improvements, i.e., capital projects. 1) We have received a $2.7M grant to provide funding over the course of two years that will allow us to make some much-needed IT infrastructure improvements. The total cost of this project which includes upgrades to the wireless network and a new Enterprise Resource Project management system will be approximately $3.8M. 2) For the first time that any of us (i.e., Chip) can recall, we have received the funds for infrastructural improvement. The governor supports our request of $10M over the next 4 years for some infrastructural improvements such as sidewalks on Trinity Church Road and new windows for Calvert Hall.

What is even more exciting is the 3rd capital project. The major capital project we have been working on for about a decade, i.e., the new academic building with 700-seat auditorium and the new athletic complex remains fully funded and on schedule to begin the design phase in FY17! This is a huge game-changer for the campus. The new academic building will provide much-needed space for academic programs in Goodpaster Hall; provide improved space for the department of Music and the performing arts; afford a larger space for performances, lectures, and seminars; and equally important, serve to enhance economic development in Southern Maryland. The new athletic fields and sports complex provide women’s lacrosse, soccer, and field hockey with a field comparable to our conference competitors, allow us to have night games for all of our field sports, and enhance our ability to attract stellar scholar-athletes to our College! This is major for us.

As you are all aware, we have focused our fundraising efforts on raising the $2.5M we need to secure the new construction. I believe the governor has shown us that he believes we will raise the money because of the great progress we’ve made towards this effort in the last year, which is $1.32M. The Advancement team is heading into the final phase of fundraising. I thank all of you who have given to this effort thus far. As you are aware, on December 1, 2015, we had the most successful Giving Tuesday event in the College’s history. It was a day that we started out with a $30K fundraising goal from 300 donors. We had met and surpassed that goal by noon of that day. Every time the Advancement team raised the goal, the St. Mary’s College of Maryland community, near and far, met the challenge. By the end of that historic 24-hour period, we had 581 donors to give over $66K.

I, with the other members of our team, will continue to lobby and work with our legislators and the governor to secure funding for our operating and capital budgets. We will also continue to work with our County Commissioners, who have been supportive of our campus efforts, to raise awareness of the economic and cultural implications of this project to Southern Maryland. I ask that you all continue to help, in any way that you can, to make this project a reality. Speaking of help, I want to send a special thank you to Carrie Patterson and Troy Townsend and their students who presented at our legislative reception last night showcasing their great works here at the college. This type of collaborative effort goes a very long way in helping demonstrate to the State the superb educational experience students receive here. They, and recent alumna Mia Bullock, did us proud!

At this time last year, the new Anne Arundel Hall was essentially a gigantic hole in the ground. This year, like a phoenix, it has risen from the dust and is magnificent!

**We, the People**: Last year at this time, morale among the faculty and staff was low for a variety of reasons. As you can see from some of the examples I have provided, and the many things that I have not mentioned at all today, people are beginning to believe that we are turning the corner on many of the challenges that have plagued this institution in the past. One example is related to our bargaining unit staff. They have felt disconnected from the College community, disenfranchised, and invisible for a long time. I personally met with the staff and their supervisors, separately and together, in groups, and individually, to learn about their concerns and brainstorm how we can address the issues collaboratively and collegially. A workgroup was formed to look at the issues and to come up with tangible and reasonable solutions to them. I am pleased to report that there has been tremendous progress in addressing the needs of these members of our community and, working in collaboration with the union leaders, we will be able to announce the results of their work very soon and that the members of this workgroup will continue to work with us to develop and implement the plans in the coming months.

Last year at this time, the governor announced that no state employee could receive a raise. Recognizing that the State does not provide the College any money for salaries and benefits, one might be inclined to provide raises for our community in spite of the announcement. That, however, is not how one demonstrates they are a team player in a State that has provided tremendous support to the College throughout our history. Recognizing that College salaries had been relatively stagnant for several years and knowing that because of our good stewardship and fiscal restraint we had money to provide some compensatory adjustment, the question became, how? A solution became apparent immediately. The team and I then mapped the course and spent months talking with our network, members of the legislators and the governor’s cabinet up through Lt. Governor Rutherford, explaining what we wanted to do, why, and how. In the end, we were successful, and I was pleased to announce to our campus that we would be able to provide a one-time bonus to virtually every full-time employee in time for the holidays.

**Accolades, Achievements, and Acknowledgements**:

The College community has a continued sense of progress when you compare where we were last year to where we are today. What a difference a year makes! There are individuals and groups working together to help make St. Mary’s College of Maryland be the best institution it can be, on every level, for all. We have much to acknowledge and celebrate. As we continue to work to increase the visibility of the College, I highlight just a few of our community’s successes.

Individual

* **Christine Adams**, professor of history is co-editor of a new book, “Female Beauty Systems: Beauty as Social Capital in Western Europe and the United States, Middle Ages to the Present”
* **Christine Adams** also had an op-ed published in Education Week on December 14, 2015 entitled, “Let the Past Inform our Understanding of the Present,” about teaching amidst trauma.
* **Charles Adler**, professor of physics, was the recipient of the 2015 Science Communication Award for best science writing in books from the American Institute of Physics. The award was for Adler’s first book, published in 2014 by Princeton University Press, “Wizards, Aliens, and Starships: Physics and Math in Fantasy and Science Fiction.”
* **Betul Basaran**, associate professor of religious studies, is responsible for the College being awarded the prestigious National Endowment for the Humanities grant for the seminar entitled, “Transcending Boundaries: The Ottoman Empire, Europe, and the Mediterranean World, 1500 – 1800”. The program will convene June 20 – July 15, 2016 and bring scholars from around the world to campus.
* Public Safety Officer **Lori Brasko** pulled an individual from a burning vehicle that had crashed on Mattapany Road. Officer **Angelene Colas** assisted in the effort.
* Original music compositions of **David Froom**, professor of music, were performed in Boston ("Circling"), Tokyo ("Before the Dawn"), Virginia ("Saxophone Quartet") and Washington, D.C.
* **Liza Gijanto**, assistant professor of anthropology, has been awarded funding for her project, “Cremona Collections Curation and National Register Preparation,” from the Heritage Fund.
* **Susan Goldstine**, professor of mathematics, has been tapped as an associate editor for the Journal of Mathematics and the Arts, a peer-reviewed journal that focuses on the connections between mathematics and the arts.
* The Mid Atlantic Association of College and University Housing Officers (MACUHO) established *The Joanne Goldwater Senior Level Professional Award* in recognition of lifetime achievement of **Joanne Goldwater**, the associate dean of students and director of residence life.
* **Walter Hill,** professor of political science, had an op-ed published in the Baltimore Sun on December 13, 2015 entitled, “Remember the Non-Muslim Terrorists.”
* **Julie King**, professor of anthropology, was awarded a $25,000 grant from the Chesapeake Conservancy for her project entitled, “Identifying and Representing the Nanjemoy Creek Watershed Indigenous Cultural Landscape.”
* National Association of Campus Activities (NACA) awarded **Clint Neill**, assistant director of student activities, the Outstanding Professional Award for the Mid- Atlantic region.

Group

* **Ethics Bowl Team Heads to Nationals -** The St. Mary’s Ethics Bowl team will compete at the national competition in Reston, Virginia on February 21. This is the third time in four years that St. Mary’s has qualified for the nationals. The team, coached by Associate Professor of Philosophy Michael Taber, includes Viveka Advani, Matt Flyr, Robert Bishop, Stern Christian, and Lauren Therriault.
* **Scholar-athletes:** For the 8th consecutive year we led the Capital Athletic Conference with 56.5% of our scholar-athletes on the all-academic team.

Institutional

* **St. Mary’s College on the Road -** More than 150 alumni participated in fall 175th Anniversary tours created by the Advancement team with the aim of engaging alumni as goodwill ambassadors for the College and to assist in helping recruit students. Enrollment Management partnered with Advancement to host prospective students and families at each event where alumni helped validate the advantages of a liberal arts education. More than 77% of the alumni who attended had never met the president or had been active in alumni activities. Tours were held in Baltimore and Prince George’s counties and in Boston and New York.

This past year, we have celebrated the past while we forged the future. As I look back on the past year, I see evidence that our present position is strong and it grows stronger every day. What a difference a year makes. I look forward to the ascent.