



Associate Vice President of Human Resources
St. Mary's College of Maryland
St. Mary's, Maryland

THE SEARCH

St. Mary's College of Maryland (SMCM) seeks an innovative and results-oriented change agent to become the Associate Vice President of Human Resources (AVP-HR). This leader will serve as the chief human resources officer for the campus and will be a transformational people and culture leader dedicated to revitalizing and modernizing the human resources office and operations. The AVP-HR will bring a proven record of positive change management and a forward-looking approach to HR, responsive to the evolving landscape of higher education.

St. Mary's College of Maryland, established in 1840, is the 5th ranked public liberal arts college in the U.S. (US News & World Report). Designated by state statute as Maryland's public honors college in 1992, the College was the first standalone public honors college in the nation. St. Mary's College of Maryland adopted the brand identity of the National Public Honors College to clearly and confidently communicate what has always made the College distinctive: its rigorous liberal arts and sciences education, vibrant waterfront campus, and commitment to excellence, integrity, and social responsibility. With a diverse and engaged community, SMCM offers transformative, experiential learning that prepares students to lead with purpose and thrive in an increasingly complex world. SMCM serves more than 1,600 students and employs 186 full- and part-time faculty, and 335 full- and part-time staff.

Reporting to the Vice President for Business and Chief Financial Officer (VPB/CFO), the AVP-HR will be a seasoned and strategic leader with extensive experience in a broad range of HR functional areas and a proven track record of overseeing large-scale, complex initiatives. They will bring a visible, transformative, and collaborative approach to HR, working closely across the campus community on strategic human resources issues and institutional priorities. They will be a strategic thought partner to the VPB/CFO and the senior leadership team, charged with elevating SMCM's human resources function to become a

consultative, proactive, and service-oriented office. They will ensure that all HR systems and functions align with the mission and strategic direction of the College, while developing a future-ready human resources function and campus culture. Leveraging strong change management acumen and thought leadership, they will implement a redeveloped HR organization that is supported by efficient business processes and best-practice human resources functions developed to support the College's mission while remaining compliant with appropriate laws, policies, and regulations.

While setting the strategic vision for human resources will be a priority, the AVP-HR must also serve as a hands-on leader, actively engaging with HR operational functions to ensure the office's success in supporting both its own objectives and the broader priorities of the campus. The AVP-HR will play a pivotal role in rebuilding and rebranding HR services by:

- Leading the development and enhancement of learning and development programs, performance management systems, compensation and classification structures, payroll management practices, and talent acquisition strategies.
- Evaluating current technology and determining where and how HR can improve and enhance automation.
- Conducting a thorough review and modernization of HR policies to reflect best practices, compliance requirements, and institutional values.
- Strengthening HR training and communication initiatives to promote transparency, knowledge sharing, and an inclusive workplace culture.

St. Mary's College of Maryland has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in the recruitment of its next Associate Vice President for Human Resources. Please direct all applications, nominations, and inquiries to Isaacson, Miller, as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT ST. MARY'S COLLEGE OF MARYLAND

St. Mary's College of Maryland (SMCM), the first standalone public honors college in the nation, serves as a model for transformative and experiential education. Founded in 1840 as a living monument to the state of Maryland and the birthplace of religious freedom in America, SMCM has evolved through a rich history from its origins as St. Mary's Female Seminary to its designation in 1992 as Maryland's public honors college.

Today, SMCM is recognized as the National Public Honors College, offering an accessible, rigorous liberal arts and sciences education grounded in excellence, integrity, and social responsibility. The College enrolls over 1,600 students from 29 states and six countries, with 31% representing historically underrepresented groups. With a 10:1 student-to-faculty ratio, 69 academic programs, the LEAD curriculum which integrates credit-bearing professional development coursework into every student's academic program, and offering degrees including the B.A., B.S., and the MAT, SMCM prepares students for success in the

workforce, graduate study, and service. Popular majors include psychology, biology, business administration, marine science, environmental studies, and English.

Located on a stunning 361-acre waterfront campus, SMCM fosters a vibrant residential community with almost 85% of students living on campus and offers 23 NCAA Division III varsity teams. Through its commitment to experiential and applied discovery, SMCM provides an integrative pathway that empowers students to learn by doing and to lead with purpose.

Leadership

[Dr. Rhonda Phillips](#) was named the 8th president of St. Mary's College of Maryland and began her tenure on July 1, 2025. President Phillips is committed to value-added learning experiences, combining educational, research and engagement opportunities in experiential, transformative environments. She provides interdisciplinary teaching and research experience across a range of diverse topics including community development and well-being studies, economic and technology-based development, and urban and regional planning. Prior to her appointment at St. Mary's College of Maryland, President Phillips was the 20th president of Chatham University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She is Inaugural Dean Emerita of the John Martinson Honors College at Purdue University and held the rank of professor in the Agricultural Economics Department. She joined Purdue from Arizona State University where she was Associate Dean for Barrett, The Honors College.

[Eileen Petula](#) joined SMCM as the vice president for business and chief financial officer in July 2025. In this role she is responsible for finance, accounting, budgeting and financial reporting, information technology, human resources, facilities and auxiliary services. Eileen comes to SMCM after serving as interim chief operating officer at Chatham University. She has held senior executive roles at Bucknell University and Allegheny College, preceded by increasingly responsible roles in higher education financial administration at Lafayette College and Swarthmore College.

ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Reporting to the Vice President for Business and Chief Financial Officer (VPB/CFO), the Associate Vice President of Human Resources (AVP-HR) provides strategic leadership and operational oversight for all aspects of human resources at SMCM. With a staff of eight, the AVP-HR will have three director reports; the assistant director of human resources, and labor relations; the senior human resources and immigration specialist; and the assistant director of payroll and benefits. This role is responsible for developing, implementing, and managing modern comprehensive HR policies and programs, including talent acquisition, compensation and benefits, employee and labor relations, staff development, training, and workforce planning. The AVP-HR ensures compliance with equal opportunity and affirmative action requirements and oversees initiatives related to workers' compensation, harassment prevention, and workplace equity.

Key responsibilities include a leadership role in managing labor relations, wage and salary administration, onboarding and training programs, immigration services support, and employee services. The AVP-HR administers the annual salary budget for faculty and staff, oversees payroll operations, serves as the legal custodian of personnel records, and maintains data integrity within the human capital management module of the College's ERP system, Anthology. Additionally, the AVP-HR serves as Deputy Title IX Coordinator and provides human resources functional support for Historic St. Mary's City.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT

Serving as the Associate Vice President for Human Resources for the College, the successful candidate will bring substantial leadership and change management experience and an ability to work collaboratively and decisively with senior leadership across SMCM. The AVP-HR will serve on the College's Leadership Council which is an internal group of leaders, nominated by their Vice President, to foster collaboration and open dialogue on college and unit issues. This person will possess the management and technical skills and personal qualities to achieve the opportunities and challenges below:

Strategically transform Human Resources into a proactive, trusted partner that drives alignment and operational excellence across the College

The AVP-HR will have the opportunity to reshape, rebuild, and transform Human Resources into a dynamic division that supports faculty and staff throughout their career journeys at SMCM. Developing a comprehensive strategic action plan for the division will be essential to drive organizational change and establish a modern HR office. The AVP-HR will lead initiatives to create and improve onboarding, training, and professional development programs; update existing policies and implement new ones; and establish clear communication pathways for mission-critical information. In partnership with HR colleagues and campus leadership, the AVP-HR will evaluate current systems and introduce automation to improve efficiency and service delivery. Additionally, the AVP-HR will design a full career pathway framework, including job families, career ladders, and succession planning. Through these efforts, human resources will evolve into a collaborative, solution-oriented resource that actively engages with the campus community and fosters a culture of partnership and excellence.

Coalesce constituents around a unified strategic human resources vision

The AVP-HR will facilitate campus-wide conversations to gather diverse perspectives, identify shared priorities, and develop a roadmap that reflects both institutional goals and employee aspirations. By fostering transparency and involving faculty, staff, and leadership in the visioning process, the AVP-HR will help embed a sense of collective ownership and commitment to the HR transformation journey. Creating a unified strategic HR vision involves more than just aligning policies and procedures; it requires building consensus among stakeholders, articulating a compelling future state, and ensuring that every initiative supports the College's mission and values.

Serve as a catalyst for campus collaboration and strategic HR leadership

The AVP-HR will be a highly visible member of the College, engaged across the campus, and recognized as a trusted valuable resource and collaborator on organizational development and strategic initiatives. They must actively build and develop strong, synergistic relationships with staff and faculty leadership to support human resource needs and advance the SMCM mission.

As an engaged presence on campus, the AVP-HR will consistently communicate with College units and other key stakeholders, clearly articulating priorities and soliciting feedback. Given HR's interface with all units across the College, the AVP-HR must effectively communicate information to constituents with varied knowledge and relationships to HR. The AVP-HR must possess a clear, concise, and compelling communication style that fosters buy-in and instills trust and credibility, especially when interfacing with high-level leadership.

Develop, implement, and steward HR systems and processes that support best-in-class HR functions

The AVP-HR will have opportunities to leverage technology to attain operational efficiencies across the human resources function. Currently, SMCM uses Anthology as the campus ERP; however, integration with the State of Maryland's software for payroll and benefits is a continuing priority. The AVP-HR will thoroughly investigate and implement mechanisms to automate processes and the overall work of the office. Through this work, they will champion data-driven decision-making and human resources processes that reduce transactional tasks, resulting in a more consultative human resources approach. Regular review of key performance indicators will be used to measure progress, inform decision-making, and foster a culture of continuous improvement across the human resources function.

Empower, develop, and optimize HR staff for professional excellence

The AVP-HR will be an energizing, proactive, and emotionally intelligent leader of the HR staff, effectively advocating for resources to support their work as well as their professional growth. The AVP-HR will strategically review the current office structure to ensure a sufficient level of operational redundancy and optimal alignment with the needs of the SMCM community, articulating and executing a long-term vision for HR that will allow the department to realize its potential as a strategic and trusted campus partner. Due to recent turnover, two searches are being conducted concurrently with this search to fill these vacancies. The AVP-HR will work with the VPB/CFO to evaluate ongoing staffing needs, especially in payroll and benefits. They will also oversee and maintain a cost-effective budget for the human resources function.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

St. Mary's College of Maryland seeks an extraordinary leader who will bring with them many, if not all, of the following qualifications and characteristics.

Required Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree in personnel or business management required, master's degree preferred. Professional or Senior Professional (PHR or SPHR) of Human Resources Certification or SHRM Certified Professional (SHRM-CP) required.
- A minimum of eight to ten years' progressive experience in the field of human resources, preferably in a higher educational setting. (Any combination of acceptable education and experience, which has provided the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfill the requirements of this position, may be considered.)
- Must have strong interpersonal and organizational skills and a broad knowledge of the principles and practices of personnel administration and management; ability to apply and adapt practices and techniques relating to all aspects of personnel administration.

Preferred Qualifications

- Must demonstrate excellent verbal communication skills and the ability to compose clear, precise, and logical memoranda and reports.
- Must possess the ability and desire to deal tactfully with others in the workplace and the community.
- Unparalleled personal integrity, credibility, and ethics; strong hands-on work ethic, independence, and willingness to take initiative and follow up.
- Significant and demonstrated effectiveness in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace.
- The technical and leadership ability to lead ERP optimization and business process redevelopment
- Strong listening, interpersonal, and communication skills; a presence that earns trust, confidence, and respect through transparency; and the ability to lead by influence and example.
- An innate ability to develop people and offices, systems, and processes based on equity and support a culture of shared accountability and success.
- Experience with leading efforts to drive organizational behavior and culture
- Experience with and demonstrated success in developing a strategic HR vision.
- Strong technical knowledge of a broad array of human resource functions, including employee relations, immigration, organizational effectiveness, talent management and development, benefits, compensation, and human resource information systems.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

St. Mary's College of Maryland is committed to practicing salary transparency. The salary range for this position is \$162,000 to \$185,000. The final offer is determined by a candidate's relevant experience, qualifications, and our commitment to internal equity. We review global compensation on a regular basis to ensure market competitiveness and equity. The hiring range for this position has been carefully crafted in alignment with the market.

St. Mary's City, Maryland

St. Mary's City, located in [St. Mary's County](#), is the [historic site Maryland's first capital](#) founded in 1634. St. Mary's County is situated along the Chesapeake Bay and provides abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation, including hiking through local forests, biking across farm fields, and paddleboarding on the St. Mary's River. Nature enthusiasts will appreciate that SMCM was the first college in Maryland designated as an Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary, making it a haven for birdwatching.

St. Mary's City is conveniently located just 75 miles from Washington, D.C., and 97 miles from Baltimore. Nearby towns such as Lexington Park and Leonardtown enhance campus life by offering essential services, hospitals, and waterfront dining options.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the [St. Mary's College of Maryland AVP-HR](#).

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This document has been prepared based on the information provided by St. Mary's College of Maryland (SMCM). The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by SMCM would supersede any conflicting information in this document.