



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 23, 2026

**ANNA MARIA COLLEGE TO CEASE ACADEMIC OPERATIONS AT END OF SPRING 2026 SEMESTER**

*80-year-old Paxton institution cites sustained financial pressures; transfer pathways secured for all students; Commencement to be held May 9*

PAXTON, MA -- Anna Maria College announced today that it will cease academic offerings shortly after graduation at the end of the Spring 2026 semester. After an exhaustive review of the college's current financial situation and the industry-wide trends in higher education, the Board of Trustees determined that the College can no longer project sufficient financial resources to sustain its academic operations and meet the needs of enrolled and admitted students for a period that is consistent with the College's regulatory obligations. The decision follows an extended period of financial restructuring, close engagement with state oversight bodies, and extensive consideration of available alternatives.

Anna Maria College has served the Greater Worcester region and beyond since 1946, enrolling students across programs in nursing, social work, education, criminal justice, fire science, business, and the liberal arts. The College has been particularly important to first-generation students and those from working-class families.

Like many small, tuition-dependent institutions, Anna Maria has faced structural challenges driven by declining enrollment and rising costs in the years following the pandemic. Under President Sean J. Ryan, Ed.D., who joined the College less than a year ago, Anna Maria undertook a comprehensive turnaround effort: reducing staffing and operating costs by more than \$2 million, resetting enrollment targets, pursuing new revenue sources, and maintaining biweekly Board oversight meetings, while ensuring state regulators were informed.

The College reported measurable progress all tracking in a positive and optimistic direction: spring enrollment rose 7.5 percent year over year; fundraising exceeded projections; Fall 2026 deposit activity was trending ahead of prior years; and Accepted Students Day in April drew the largest cohort since before the pandemic. An anonymous donor contributed \$5 million to support the institution's future.

Despite this progress, the College's recently completed FY2025 audit carries a going concern qualification, an opinion of substantial doubt about the institution's ability to continue as an operating entity, which resulted in new restrictions on the college's administration of federal financial aid. Together with the structural financial challenges, a public Financial Assessment and Risk Monitoring (FARM) notice from the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, and additional reviews by the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) left no viable path forward for the College.

Graduating seniors will complete their degrees and participate in Commencement, which will proceed as scheduled on May 9, 2026. For students who will not complete their degrees this semester, Anna Maria has established transfer pathway agreements with partner institutions and additional partners are actively being added. Transfer fairs will be scheduled on campus and virtually so that students can meet with institutional representatives directly.

Academic records for all students and alumni will be permanently maintained and accessible through the generous support of a teach out partner. Further information, including contact information for obtaining transcripts and confirmation of degree conferral will be provided in the near future.

To be clear: The college will cease academic offerings at the end of this semester in May. After which, the college will be transitioning to closure by the end of the calendar year. Some student support and transition services will be available after commencement. Employment for the majority of faculty and staff will conclude in June 2026.

#### **Statement from Anna Maria College President Sean J. Ryan, Ed.D.**

*"Anna Maria College has served students who needed us most, and we have done so with extraordinary dedication for 80 years. I am profoundly grateful for the commitment of every member of this community. Our focus is entirely on our students, ensuring every one of them has a clear pathway to complete their education and that the degrees earned here continue to open doors for the rest of their lives."*

#### **Statement from Anna Maria College Board Chair David Trainor**

*"The Board of Trustees reached this decision only after pursuing every realistic alternative. We are heartbroken. The legacy of the Sisters of Saint Anne, and of every faculty member and staff person who carried their spirit forward, will endure in every graduate this institution has ever produced."*

#### **Statement from Massachusetts Department of Higher Education Commissioner Noe Ortega**

*"The Department of Higher Education has learned from Anna Maria College's leadership that they will transition to closure by the end of December 2026 and cease academic operations after this spring semester. I recognize how incredibly difficult this news is for students, faculty, staff, and the entire Anna Maria community. The College has an 80-year history of serving students from Massachusetts and beyond, many of whom have gone on to serve their communities. The Department continues to work with President Ryan and his leadership team to ensure that students who are not graduating this spring have opportunities to transfer and complete their degrees as seamlessly as possible. I appreciate President Ryan and his team's commitment to prioritizing the needs of students by continuing to work with the Department to pursue all avenues to help students complete their degrees."*

#### **About Anna Maria College**

Anna Maria College was founded in 1946 by the Sisters of Saint Anne and has operated continuously as a Catholic liberal arts institution in Paxton, Massachusetts for 80 years.

**NOTE TO MEDIA:** Anna Maria College is a private campus. We ask you to respect the privacy that our campus provides our students and employees. Access to campus grounds must be coordinated through the media contact below.

**MEDIA CONTACT**

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*Full information for students, employees, alumni, and donors is available at [www.annamaria.edu](http://www.annamaria.edu).*

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