
STRATEGIC GOAL #1: INNOVATIVE LEARNING

Deliver a transformative Mason Learning Experience that is experiential, global, and technology-rich.

Our promise to our students is a transformational learning experience that helps them grow as engaged citizens and well-rounded scholars who are prepared to act. Over the past several decades, we have delivered on this promise by adopting a student-centric approach that has produced graduates who are among the most successful and well prepared in the commonwealth and who have become community leaders committed to making a difference. We have achieved this while serving a large number of socioeconomically disadvantaged students and first-generation college attendees.

Our success in serving students has been founded on an open, inquiry-based culture and innovative programs that have provided students high-impact learning experiences along with strong theoretical knowledge. Our national leadership in undergraduate research, creative activity, and scholarship is one such initiative. Our extensive internship program is another.

Three years into the implementation of our Strategic Plan, we are poised to elevate the Mason Learning Experience to a new level of excellence. Central to this effort is *Mason Impact*, an initiative to offer high-impact learning experiences to all students, deepen their engagement and development, and prepare them to make a real impact in the world. *Mason Impact* shapes our students' development through global education, civic engagement, research, and entrepreneurship, and is grounded in a strong education designed to develop problem-solving, critical thinking, and communication skills.

To better align the university's curriculum with our desired Mason Graduate learning outcomes and provide the right foundation to make our students competitive for job placements or to seek graduate degrees, we are redesigning the Mason Core General Education program. We are also investing in building enhanced and technology-rich classrooms in new academic buildings such as Peterson Hall and the Robinson Hall replacement.

Critical to student success are all the support and advisory systems that allow each individual to find what they need. The Student Experience Redesign initiative aims at re-engineering the student experience from beginning to end.

Key to achieving these goals is our shared commitment to continuous innovation across colleges and departments, to finding better ways to deliver transformative learning, and to creating new offerings that respond to changing needs in the region, the nation, and the world.

To ensure that students are benefiting from a transformative education, we will be studying the impact of these courses and opportunities on student learning. Mason's faculty include national leaders in the development of assessment and program tools, and we will be leveraging their expertise to build a comprehensive assessment plan for Mason Core courses, academic programs, and *Mason Impact* experiences. The collected data will be used to refine our programs and improve learning for our students.

To ensure that faculty receive the support necessary to deliver the world-class instruction that has been Mason's hallmark, we will leverage the resources of the new Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning to provide integrated and state-of-the-art instructional design as well as active collaboration across disciplinary boundaries. We will assist faculty members in aligning their curricula with these broader goals and help them best integrate curricular and experiential learning activities.

Metrics:

Metric #1: 100% of Mason undergraduate students will graduate with transformative *Mason Impact* experiences, incorporating at least one of the following: undergraduate research or creative project, civic engagement project, entrepreneurial experience, global education experience, clinical experience, student teaching, internship, and/or capstone course.

Current Status: FY17: 85% of undergraduate students graduated with an identified transformative experience. (FY14: 78%; FY15: 80%; FY16: 85%)

Metric #2: At least 80% of graduating seniors who complete an RS or Capstone course will meet or exceed benchmarks on learning outcomes in critical thinking, problem solving, and communication.

Current Status: From FY12 - FY16 (cumulative), 73% of students participating in undergraduate research achieved proficiency or higher on OSCAR student learning outcomes.

Metric #3: 30% of all classrooms will be Active Learning Classrooms, and every undergraduate student (excluding fully online students) will take at least one course taught in an Active Learning Classroom.

Current Status: FY17: 4.8% of Mason's total classroom inventory has technology that earns the Active Learning designation supporting interactive, multi-location, or hands-on learning. (FY16: 4.8%)

Metric #4: Maintain or achieve more than 90% student satisfaction with their Mason educational experience upon graduation.

Current status: Students reporting satisfaction with education: FY16: 91% of undergraduates, 94% of doctoral, 93% of master's, and 94% of law. (FY14: 92% undergraduates, 96% doctoral, 94% master's, 98% law; FY15: 93% undergraduates, 94% doctoral, 94% master's, 97% law.) Graduate students reporting satisfaction with mentoring: FY16: 84% of doctoral, 71% of master's and 64% of law. (FY14: doctoral 85%, masters 69%, law 58%; FY15: doctoral 83%, master's 71%, law 60%.)

***Reporting is currently voluntary; we plan to expand and possibly institute mandatory reporting*

Representative Accomplishments to Date:

- Mason received the Council on Undergraduate Research's national AURA award in 2015, which recognized Mason as having the best undergraduate research program in an R1 university.
- Implemented Curriculum Scholarship Development Grants (2012), Curriculum Impact Grants (2017), Global Course Grants (2017), Open Educational Resources Grants (2016), Online Course Development Grants and Academies (2010), and Course (Re-Design) Academy Workshops (2017).
- Created two actively used maker and collaboration spaces: Mason Innovation Exchanges (MIX), and planned for an additional MIX in the Robinson redesign.

Sample Future Initiatives:

- Facilitate collaboration among Stearns Center, Undergraduate Education, and other offices to offer and expand faculty development support for experiential, global, and technology-rich curriculum that utilizes updated campus facilities.
- Create a designation that will track all Mason Impact, entrepreneurial and civic engagement projects courses, and identify students who have participated in related co-curricular experiences.
- Design and implement online learning plan.
- Develop and provide faculty development support for Active Learning Classrooms and other innovative learning spaces such as the Peterson and Robinson educational buildings. Redesign the Mason Core General Education Program that incorporates the various pathways students earn degrees at Mason (native, transfer, online) and includes a technology component and capstone experience for all students.

STRATEGIC GOAL #2: ACCESSIBLE PATHWAYS

Provide multiple pathways and delivery formats to serve the needs of different students.

At the core of our mission to be an innovative and inclusive academic community is the belief that public education is a critical engine for innovation, economic development, and social mobility. A central element of our public mission is to provide access to students of different socioeconomic backgrounds and varied life circumstances. Since our founding, this has driven our expansion as we have grown to become the largest, most diverse public university in Virginia.

In recent years, this mission of access has become even more salient. Over the last decade, Mason has been responsible for almost half of the enrollment growth across all Virginia public universities. As we have grown, we have also become more diverse. More than half of our incoming students are from underrepresented minority groups, and many of them are first-generation college students; roughly one-third are from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds.

At the same time, our students continue to thrive. They graduate at the same high rates regardless of race or economic background. They land the highest-paying jobs of the commonwealth's graduates. And they are able to pay back their student loans more successfully than most, resulting in one of the lowest student loan default rates in the nation.

Since 2014, we have launched numerous programs designed to increase access: The Online Virginia Network (OVN) has built a pathway for adults to complete their unfinished degrees; our partnership with Wiley has created opportunities for graduate online learners; and the INTO partnership has improved access for international students.

The success of these initiatives illustrates that there is much more we can and must do to fulfill our mission of access. In April 2017, Mason and Northern Virginia Community College entered into a partnership (ADVANCE) to develop the next generation of transfer programs, which will provide a guided pathway for NOVA students for timely and cost-efficient completion of their degrees at Mason. By aligning curricula and removing obstacles, we expect to assist thousands of students in meeting their goals of obtaining four-year degrees.

Mason will work to expand our portfolio of online graduate and undergraduate programs through our existing partnerships with Wiley and the OVN, and by creating additional new programs and partnerships to serve online learners. Finally, we will grow the Bachelor of Independent Studies (our successful and growing program for adult returning students) and expand the Mason Early Identification Program to include First Star Scholars, a group focusing on foster students.

Mason students succeed at impressive rates. We believe that we can help our students succeed at even higher levels by improving our overall support. The Student Experience Redesign and Mason Impact programs will be the main vehicles we use to enhance student success. We believe that these initiatives will allow us to remove obstacles, improve processes, and break down barriers that will lead to increased retention, improved learning outcomes, and higher graduation rates. While these initiatives are targeted at undergraduates, we believe that the associated improvements in advising, technology, and process will have benefits for graduate and nondegree students as well. Finally, we will invest in an internationalization plan (see Goal #12) that will improve our ability to serve the increased number of international students who have enrolled at Mason through the INTO program.

Metrics:

Metric #1: Maintain equal graduation outcomes for undergraduate students regardless of race and socioeconomic background.

Current Status: FY18, graduation outcomes for overall, Pell recipients, and African American and Hispanic students were within 10% of each other, ranging from 62-72%. (FY14: 67%; FY15: 67%; FY16: 69%; FY17: 70%; FY18: 71%)

Metric #2: Increase freshman/sophomore retention to 90%.

Current Status: FY18, the freshman/sophomore retention rate was 87.8%. (FY14: 87.3%; FY15: 87.6%; FY16: 87.2%; FY17: 87.5%)

Metric #3: Enroll a total of at least 2,500 ADVANCE students in partnership with NOVA.

Current Status: In process

Metric #4: 7,500 students will have taken most of their courses in an online format.

Current Status: As of FY18, 5,147 students have taken most of their courses in an online format. (FY14: 930; FY15: 1,116; FY16: 1,240; FY17: 1,463; FY18: 1,633)

Metric #5: Increase the number of undergraduate and graduate course sections identified as online or hybrid courses to 1,000 per year.

Current Status: FY17, 729 online or hybrid course sections were offered. (FY14: 490, FY15: 559, FY16: 621)

Representative Accomplishments to Date:

- Launched ADVANCE, a NOVA-Mason partnership, in April 2017.
- Formed the Online Virginia Network in partnership with Old Dominion University.
- Enrolled 140 students in the Early Identification Program during 2016-17.
- Increased the number of programs that are 100% online to 43: 3 bachelor's level (1 with 3 tracks); 15 master's (1 with 2 tracks), and 25 certificates.
- Completed a six-month self-study on the Mason student experience with recommended plans for action to close student-facing gaps in service designed to improve retention and graduation rates.
- Mason has awarded 3,197 Bachelors of Individualized Studies degrees since 1975.

Sample Future Initiatives:

- Implement ADVANCE program.
- Design and implement Online Virginia Network growth plan.
- Implement Early Identification Program partnership with First Star Scholars, preparing foster youths for college.
- Implement Student Experience Redesign recommendations.
- Implement a LifeCycle Constituent Relationship Management program to support the student experience.
- Optimize the advising process to support the student experience.

STRATEGIC GOAL #3: RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Enable all graduates to pursue meaningful lives and successful careers.

Over the past decade, universities across the nation have faced rapid decreases in federal and state funding, forcing many to raise tuition to fill the gap. At the same time, universities have seen an unprecedented rise in student debt amid growing concerns about college affordability. Institutions of higher education are under increased pressure to educate more students, deliver better outcomes, and reduce costs. They are also facing greater demand to demonstrate the benefit they provide to students, families, and society.

Despite these challenges, Mason has managed to contain costs while improving quality. Reductions in state funding have shifted the financial burden to students and their families, yet Mason tuition and fees remain lower than other research universities in Virginia. Mason students graduate with the best employment outcomes in the commonwealth, and one of the lowest loan default rates in the nation.

Given the continued national debate over college access and evidence showing significantly higher lifetime earnings for degree earners, Mason is deeply committed to affordability and value for our students. This means keeping tuition levels at or below the average for other Virginia doctoral institutions, bolstering financial assistance and advising, and maintaining a strong financial and career return on investment for our graduates.

However, the benefit of an education is not just financial. Recognizing the critical importance of well-being, we will develop programs and initiatives that promote student well-being inside and outside the classroom (see Goal #7) to prepare our students for both meaningful careers and meaningful lives.

By supporting faculty teaching and excellence (see Goal #9) we will work to ensure that Mason's learning environment and educational outcomes continue to be a source of strength and value for students. Through the Student Experience Redesign and Mason Impact initiatives, we will make college education more accessible (see Goal #2) and more enriching (see Goal #1) by building new and innovative programs, developing new curricula, and smoothing the path to degree completion.

Underpinning the above efforts will be a collection of specific initiatives that will help students achieve their postgraduation goals and position them for rewarding and productive lives. Leveraging our strong partnership with Gallup, we will use the Gallup StrengthsFinder as well as our internal subject matter expertise on well-being to help students identify possible areas of interest and employment. Through Mason Impact and related initiatives (see Goal #1) we will increase experiential learning, co-curricular activities, internships, and other related opportunities. Finally, we will leverage and enhance our relationships with businesses, NGOs, government entities, and other regional institutions to expand the options available to our graduates.

Metrics:

Metric #1: In-state tuition will remain at or below the average of Virginia's doctoral universities.

Current Status: FY18, Mason's in-state tuition was \$8,672 compared to the average of Virginia's doctoral universities at \$11,942. (FY15: Mason = \$7,562, Avg. = \$9,972; FY16: Mason = \$7,976, Avg. = \$10,800; FY17: Mason = \$8,204, Avg. = \$11,521)

Metric #2: Three-year student loan default rates of graduates will remain within the lowest quartile of national public four-year institutions and below the average of Virginia public four-year institutions.

Current Status: Recently released FY14 three-year default rates show: Mason: 2.0%; Commonwealth of Virginia: 5.5%; National: 11.5%; Public four-year institutions: 7.5%

Metric #3: At least 80% of graduates will report a positive career outcome within six months of graduation.

Current Status: As of 2016, 76% of graduates reported a positive career outcome within six months of graduation. Response Rate: 48%. (FY14: 74% Response Rate: 38%, FY15: 79% Response Rate: 56%)

Representative Accomplishments to Date:

- Hosted more than 550 employers on campus and provided one-of-a kind opportunities for students to highlight their skills and network with top employers.
- Increased access to experiential learning for students with financial hardship through inaugural Unpaid Internship Scholarship Fund (\$37,400 awarded).
- Increased institutional aid budget by \$3.7 million to offset tuition increases for our students with the greatest demonstrated need.
- Created Stay Mason emergency aid program to help prevent students from stopping or dropping out due to financial constraints, and awarded \$1 million to date.
- Created Career Services Industry Model for student career advising and employer development.
- Developed partnership with Gallup to administer StrengthsFinder to any student interested in strengths assessment. To date, more than 15,000 students, faculty, and staff have taken the Gallup StrengthsFinder.

Sample Future Initiatives:

- Design and implement new tuition framework.
- Design and implement on-campus student employment career readiness program.
- Increase student financial assistance.
- Improve data collection efforts for Career Plans Survey.
- Increase employer connections and job/internship opportunities across all industries and locations.
- Create effective talent pipelines for federal employers.
- Expand and scale up Mason's resilience badge process with the focus on building purpose and resilience in preparation for graduation and the workplace.
- Design and implement career readiness model for NOVA-Mason ADVANCE.

STRATEGIC GOAL #12: GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

Expand opportunities for global learning by creating partnerships and programs to support student and faculty mobility and collaboration.

Globalization has brought us closer together and has made us more interdependent. The most effective people in today's world possess global mindsets that allow them to connect and engage productively with individuals and organizations across boundaries.

Mason is committed to building a community that fosters global learning, creates global understanding, and seeks global impact. To do so, we will develop strategies and initiatives that deepen the global mindset of our students and expand the reach of our faculty. We will provide additional learning opportunities that increase knowledge and strengthen global connections.

Core to these efforts will be a campus internationalization plan that enables faculty and staff to succeed in a diverse campus environment. Training and development programs will help faculty manage our increasingly international classroom settings. Specialized student services for international students will help them navigate the unique cross-cultural challenges they face in pursuing an education outside their native countries.

For domestic students, the internationalization plan (along with the Mason Impact initiative) will provide more global learning opportunities. An expanded global education platform, including semester abroad, internships, curriculum-embedded global experiences, and global alliance/cohort programs, will give many of them the chance to immerse in a different culture.

For international students, we will continue to strengthen our INTO partnership, expand our international student recruitment, grow our Korea campus, and nourish our China 1-2-1 partnerships. Collectively, these activities will result in significantly more international students enrolled in Mason degree programs.

Finally, we will leverage the above relationships to promote faculty mobility through formal exchange programs and other initiatives. As part of our overall research efforts, we will encourage and support international collaboration among faculty.

Metrics:

Metric#1: Increase the number of students who study or intern abroad from 1,000 in 2014 to 3,000.

Current Status: As of FY16, 1,029 students studied or interned abroad. (FY14: 1,073; FY15: 1,057)

Metric #2: Increase total number of faculty engaged in international teaching or research projects.

Current Status: Tracking of faculty engagement pending purchase of national database subscription.

Metric #3: Increase the number of enrolled international students to 4,750.

Current Status: Fall 2017 – 3,525 enrolled international students. (FY13: 2,175; FY14: 2,357; FY15: 3,006; FY16: 3,414)

Metric #4: Establish a faculty educational development program to support cultural diversity in the classroom.

Metric#5: Increase the number of students enrolled annually in foreign language courses.

Current Status: FY17 – 3,938 students enrolled in foreign language courses. (FY14: 3,942, FY15: 3,925, FY16: 3,833)

Representative Accomplishments to Date:

- Mason Korea was opened in 2014 and since then more than 60 students and a dozen faculty from the Fairfax Campus have studied and worked in Korea.
- A global committee has been established to review existing levels of engagement and create and implement an action plan.
- Through the China 1-2-1 program, Mason has more than 35 partner institutions in China; more than 425 Chinese students have participated in the undergraduate dual degree program.
- Mason Core has adopted a new policy that a semester-long study abroad experience meets the Global Understanding Core requirement.
- Many students and faculty have been recipients of prestigious fellowships such as Fulbright over the past few years.
- The INTO Mason partnership was signed in December 2013 and implemented in August 2014. Total enrollment for spring 2017 was 617 students.
- Mason currently has 3,414 international students through a variety of recruitment channels.
- In 2016, the Global Education Office launched the Jacquemin Family Foundation Education Abroad Scholarship and Diversifying Study Abroad Scholarship to support student participation of diverse and/or low-income backgrounds in study abroad. To date, 84 scholarships have been awarded totaling \$77,000 in support.

Sample Future Initiatives:

- Design and implement international student recruitment plan.
- Design and implement comprehensive study abroad plan.
- Create a campus internationalization plan to support faculty development and student services for an increasingly international campus.
- Consider means to grow the formal and informal relationships that Mason's academic programs and faculty have with leading peer institutions worldwide.
- Meet Mason Korea growth targets as stipulated in MK 5-year business plan.