

2020-2024 University Life Strategic Plan | Progress Report July 2023

Goal Area: *Inclusive Thriving Community*

1.1.1 Develop a comprehensive lifecycle/eco-system analysis for first-generation students from matriculation through graduation and beyond.

- Established the First-Gen Task Force and the First-Gen+ Center
- Institutional memberships in support of first-gen students (NASPA's First-Gen Forward and First Gen Scholars Institution and Hispanic Association for Colleges and Universities)
- Secured funding from Dominion Energy to launch Summer Bridge Program and increased financial support from Promesa Scholars, CACI Scholars, and Wells Fargo
- Secured American Talent Initiative (ATI) grant for mixed methods multi-cohort study examining relationship between STEP (summer bridge program) and student retention and graduation.
- Established and implemented GMU first, First Gen+ Spotlight Day in collaboration with the First-Gen+ Center, the Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment (CCEE), and Admissions.

1.2.2 Develop basic, intermediate, and advanced diversity education programs that address learning outcomes at different levels of exposure to subject matter.

- The Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment (CCEE) and Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) collaborated to host first ever Diversity Leadership Summit for students, faculty, and staff, positioning campus community to learn, collaborate, and teach about social justice issues that impact our campus, local communities and beyond.
- LEAD created workshop entitled Leadership Across Difference: Tips from A-Z. Workshop was included as part of the 2023 Student Leadership Certificate Series.
- LEAD and the Office of the President hosted the President's Leadership Cohort, including sessions focused on:
 - Identity Challenges, Implicit Bias, Racial Anxiety, and Stereotype Threats
 - Global Challenges
- The CCEE collaborated with multiple units, and local academic units to develop Constructive Dialogue Institute that will be a part of the First Year Experience.
- University Life introduced the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) that assesses the level of intercultural awareness of participants and prescribes individual milestones to increase learning. Instrument made available to faculty, staff, and students upon request.
- The LGBTQ+ Resources Center expanded Safe Zone+ program to feature four different modules.
- The LGBTQ+ Resources Center collaborated with UNIV to develop and deliver UNIV 108, with emphasis on LGBTQ+ topics.
- ARIE supported the CCEE with development of student ambassador model; CCEE staff and students created and facilitated DEI trainings to their peers (paid peer education model).
- The CCEE led alternative spring break social justice trip where students identified systematic barriers facing home insecure humans, brainstormed strategies to support the anti-poverty movement, and participated in mobile markets to deliver food and goods to underserved areas. This initiative will be offered for academic course credit in 2023-2024.
- Created workshop module around Freedom of Expression and incorporated into diversity trainings for new student orientations.

1.2.3 Leverage technology to expand diversity training and education workshop delivery to asynchronous, virtual, and hybrid modalities.

- LEAD Office hosted Leadership Across Differences virtual workshop as part of the Student Leadership Certificate Series Track #2: Emotional Intelligence.
- The Constructive Dialogue Institute will feature virtual modules for students to complete before participating in face-to-face activities
- The LGBTQ+ Resources Center added an online asynchronous “Intro to LGBTQ+ Communities” module as a part of the Safe Zone+ offerings.
- The CCEE expanded training and education modules to feature hybrid and virtual modalities.
- University Career Services (UCS) sponsored a virtual workshop series for employers focusing on creating welcoming workspaces for historically marginalized groups.
- The First-Gen+ Center introduced an online module of Undocu-Ally training.

Goal Area: *Engage All Students*

2.1.1 Increase interactions between students and faculty through expansion of the UL Faculty Fellow initiative.

- Reviewed historical documentation and evaluated current program to produce report with recommendations.
- Four (4) new faculty fellow positions were added to University Life.
- Ongoing work within University Life and with the UL Faculty Fellow to continue within UL and with the ARIE initiative.

***2.1.2 Promote career preparation through intentional connections between academic and career partners.**

- Ongoing initiatives with the Career Readiness Guide (CRG), Career Influencer Network Trainings (CIN), Success Coach Trainings, Classroom Presentations, Career Weeks, Website Overhaul, Internship Courses, and GROWTH Program.

***2.1.3 Foster a co-curricular learning environment through the Residential Curriculum.**

- Ongoing initiatives with the Residential Initiative Guides (RIGS), and with the Residential Roadmap.
- Altered learning outcomes for certain initiatives based on first-year or upper-level populations for Fall 2023 initiatives.

2.2.1 Identify and enhance gateways to student engagement across the division.

- Conducted literature review on student engagement and gateways and engaged in discussion on how best practices and scholarship apply to our Mason-specific experience of student engagement.
- Produced University Life definition of student engagement.

2.2.3 Enhance student civic engagement opportunities in preparation for lifelong community involvement.

- Collaborated with Student Government LEAD Team and UL administrators to analyze current processes and recommended improvements and efficiencies.
- Phase 2 of Student Government Project will continue within Student Involvement.

***2.3.1 Enhance sense of belonging among transfer, off-campus, and online students**

through intentional engagement strategies and interventions.

- Transfer Student Website
 - Conducted User Experience (UX) research related to the Transfer Student Website, leading to the creation of a comprehensive landing page for transfer students.
 - <https://contemporary.gmu.edu/transfer/>
- Student Funding Board (SFB) Project
 - Analyzed Student Funding Board data re-engineered process to improve the RSO officer experience for AY2024
 - SFB Team will initiate 90% of applications within 2 business days after date of submission during AY23-24 Q1
 - Plan to monitor changes to AY24 SFB process through data analysis and observations through fall 2023.
- Began initial review of Student Polling Project
- Ongoing sense of belonging initiatives to support contemporary student populations.

2.3.2 Leverage technology to increase engagement among student organizations.

- Recruited students to participate in user interviews to support process improvement for on-campus job employment and immunization compliance process.

Goal Area: *Holistic Student Support Services*

***3.2.1 Identify and implement service solutions in priority areas that engage vendors, leverage virtual service delivery and technology, and emerging methodology to expand capacity for student services in priority areas.**

- Implemented TimelyCare, a telemental health service platform that provides on-demand emotional support (TalkNow), scheduled counseling, psychiatry services, and health coaching to students.
- To date (July 2023), TimelyCare has supported 919 Mason students in 3986 mental health related visits.
 - With TimelyCare, Mason can provide mental health services to students physically located outside of Virginia, students who require services outside of typical business hours, and students who prefer to choose their provider and access services virtually.

3.3.1 Exceed all relevant compliance, accreditation, and industry standards affecting service delivery units.

- Collected data through a survey identifying the compliance, accreditation, and industry standards within University Life Offices.
- Detailed report outlining compliance, accreditation, and industry standards within University Life was created and shared with steering committee.

3.3.2 Implement targeted training for faculty, staff, and students who can augment professional interventions in priority areas (mental health, coaching for student success, and career readiness).

- Collected data through a survey identifying the mental health, coaching for student success, and career readiness training offered through each University Life unit.
- Partnered with Kognito, a digital learning platform that teaches and shapes skills to improve mental health and well-being.

3.4.1 Identify specific well-being needs of historically under-represented students (students of color and first-generation students) and implement interventions designed to meet their needs.

- Developed and trained participants in the Equity in Mental Health Working Group in qualitative research methods.
 - Hosted Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)/First Generation Mental Health Focus Groups.
 - Engaged in qualitative analysis of focus group data.
- Conducted a quantitative analysis of Healthy Minds Study Data.
- Conducting a review of best practices in supporting the mental health of historically under-represented students.
- Compiling recommendations based on research and review of best practices.

Goal Area: *Organizational Excellence*

4.1.1 Supervision Employee Satisfaction

- Strategy Leads presented at NASPA about supervision skill/competency; Strategy Leads presented a NASPA webinar on supervision strategies on June 28 as part of the NASPA summer webinar series.
- Increase in presentations focused on supervision at 2023 University Life Symposium (4 out of 22 presentations).
- Increase in supervision focused training requests; Ongoing consultation regarding supervision strategies and resources (both internal to Mason and external).
- Development of expanded Radical Chats program calendar; development of new supervision and management programs, initiatives and resources focusing on supervision and team management.

***4.1.2 Reduce position time to hire and improve persistence and retention through reviewing organizational structures, human resource policies and practices, and staff title designations and compensation.**

- Comprehensive process review of the University and UL recruitment process.
- UX research to assess experience of multiple users in University Life.
- Development of University Life recruitment materials organized by search role function (hiring authority, search coordinator, search chair, search committee), complete with checklists, sample documents, templates, etc. All materials on UL Blackboard org available to division.
- Created a University Life HR and Budget liaison collective cohort group that began meeting and organizing in Summer 2022 to share updates, information, and serve as resources to one another.

***4.1.3 Build out a professional development framework, ripe with opportunities for training and development, that aligns professional competencies including leadership; social justice and inclusion; and technology as they relate to roles and evaluation processes.**

- Conducted comprehensive benchmarking research of SCHEV peer institutions, aspirational institutions, and those divisions of Student Affairs have strong reputations. Research was conducted in the division of Student Affairs focusing on professional development priorities, competencies, staffing, resources, programs, commitment, plans, etc.

- Conducted University Life user assessment of professional development to include items focusing on competency development, supervision, career development, etc.
- Created alignment of Mason core competencies with ACPA/NASPA core competencies.
- Created an inventory of existing resources of professional development frameworks in Student Affairs divisions.
- Collaborative partnership with Mason HR to explore performance management and evaluation with professional development and competency development in a professional development framework.

***4.1.4 Create recognition programs and/or incentives for units that excel in their implementation of a best practice culture.**

- Developed report on divisional recognition programs; currently in review by UL leadership with plans to implement upon approval.

***4.2.1 Assess and modify divisional protocol, policies, and procedures ensuring they promote a culture of equity and inclusion among University Life Staff.**

- Completed University Life Well-Being Workbook.

4.2.2 Promote equity and transparency through the implementation of a division-wide resource prioritization and allocation plan.

- Increased divisional engagement with student fee committee.
- Development of budget allocation/reallocation templates to identify current state and future budget needs.
- Developed prioritization framework approach and created unit prioritization workshops and related resources for unit services and program/event review.

4.2.3 Review and align organizational structure, roles, and responsibilities of staff.

- Developed team based staffing working group to review divisional staffing needs and approach.
- Developed organizational and staffing alignment principles. Process underway to integrate this work with resource prioritization planning effort for Fall 2023.

4.2.4 Develop and implement a division-wide shared service model that reduces redundancies and expands unit bandwidth for delivery of services.

- Standard Operation Procedure effort underway for all shared services areas.
- Phase 2 development of Marketing and Communication project tracking system. Implementation in September 2023.
- Finance working group established in summer 2023.

***4.2.5 Develop and implement a division-wide communication plan that communicates divisional impact on student success.**

- Implemented new unit operating procedures and processes to support marketing and communications infrastructure for division.
- Development of new divisional communicators network for implementation in FY24.
- Development of social media policy and strategy for implementation in FY24.

4.2.6 Create a division-wide standardization for technology practices.

- Launched UL Technology website.
 - <https://ultech.ulife.gmu.edu/>
- Launched new ticket portal.
 - <https://ultech.ulife.gmu.edu/request-help/>

4.3.1 Continuously improve programs and services through consistent assessment and planning through a student learning and success outcomes lens.

- Developed and implemented Co-curricular Program Review process. Completed pilot with Student Involvement office in Fall 2022. Additional units underway.

**University Life is now heavily engaged in the work of the [Mason Strategic Direction](#). Items on this document marked with an asterisk (*) indicate efforts stemming from the 2020-2024 UL Strategic Plan that will continue in support of this institutional work.*