

2020-2024 University Life Strategic Plan | Progress Report December 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 created new workshop entitled "Bridging Differences, Increasing Understanding," helping participants develop and practice conversational skills to better understand those with very different viewpoints.
- LEAD hosted the 2023 Leadership Mason Conference featuring educational sessions focused on (1) student activism and civic engagement, (2) well-being, community care, and self-care, (3), ethical leadership, (4) diversity, equity, inclusion, and identify development, and (5) career exploration and mentoring.
- LEAD launched "1:1 Conversations Across Difference" designed to help reduce polarization & increase understanding across difference. (Partnership with Braver Angels, a well-respected national non-profit organization focused on depolarizing our country).
- LEAD and International Programs and Services (OIPS), hosted the Right, Wrong or Different program, designed for students to engage in interactive dialogue to explore how culture – our own and others – affects how we perceive, interact, and lead. The Fall 2023 program focused on differing viewpoints on Immigration was facilitated in collaboration with Dr. Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera (Schar School of Policy and Government).
- 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.
- HRL created the Assistant Director for Belonging and Engagement position to aid in the training and development of Residence Life staff in order to be proactive, educational, and supportive across all areas of difference.

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.
- LEAD launched “1:1 Conversations Across Difference” designed to help reduce polarization & increase understanding across difference. (Partnership with Braver Angels, a well-respected national non-profit organization focused on depolarizing our country).
- LEAD offers an innovative ethical decision-making quiz (Take5 “How Do You Decide What’s Right 2.0” to engage students virtually (asynchronous) around their decision-making style(s) with a goal to increase awareness, critical thinking and reflection regarding challenging decisions.
- 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.
- Learning Services acquired TutorLingo which includes modules on Tutoring Students from Diverse Backgrounds and How to Effectively Tutor Students with Disabilities to provide virtual training to tutors across campus.

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.
- Launched funded On-Campus Internship Program to incentivize faculty and staff across the university to create new career-building experiential learning opportunities, particularly for international students

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

- HRL underwent a residential curriculum review process to increase the ease of usability with student staff. Final outcome centered around providing greater flexibility for staff to respond to needs demonstrated by residents.
- 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.**

- Initiated work on development of a student support website as a landing page intended to simplify navigation of the Mason student experience.
- Successfully re-engineered the Student Funding Board (SFB) process to improve the RSO officer experience for AY2024
- Ongoing sense of belonging initiatives to support contemporary student populations.
- Reviewed data sets from Contemporary Student Services survey and the Patriot Success Survey (Fall 2023) to identify overlapping themes, highlights, and trends, including: need for additional support for transfer students, peer to peer support, expansion of mentorship programs, financial implications, and social connections.
- Created a definition of Sense of Belonging.
- Evolved Contemporary Student Services student staff from advisor-focused to mentor-focused to better support contemporary student sense of belonging

- Expanded Contemporary Student Lounge, which serves as a "third place" for off-campus and many transfer students

2.3.2 Leverage technology to increase engagement among student organizations.

- Completed current state analysis 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.
- As of December 31, 2023, TimelyCare has supported 1488 Mason students in 6330 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.

- Conducted a review of best practices in supporting the mental health of historically under-represented students.
- Provided a report of the analyses, practice review, and detailed recommendations to the Mason Mental Health and Well-Being Task for further action.
- The Center for Wellbeing and HRL collaborated to hire an Assistant Director of Residential Well-being

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.
- Several UL units (e.g. HRL) effectively leveraged Gallup survey data to to decipher insights, ignite change, and elevate employee engagement.

***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.
- UL Human Resources will leverage the platform Wrike and create a knowledge base center to increase productivity and transparency; Anticipated roll-out scheduled for Spring 2024.

***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; Strategy Lead and team member presented findings and recommendations to Cabinet and provided opportunity for feedback.
- HRL created a recognition committee and program to directly respond to results from the Spring 2022 Gallup survey

***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.
- Each UL unit has created and begun implementation of a well-being plan to include the following elements: Shared Values and Language, Modeling Well-being at All Levels, Rewards & Recognition, Traditions & Artifacts.

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.
- Engaged UL Cabinet Leadership team in series of organizational planning retreats, integrating unit outputs from resource prioritization workshops with organizational, functional, and staffing alignment principles,

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, Wrike, was successfully implemented.
- UL Human Resources will leverage the platform Wrike and create a knowledge base center to increase productivity and transparency; Anticipated roll-out scheduled for Spring 2024.

- Finance working group has held weekly meetings to review current state analysis of Mason/UL financial processes and opportunities for process improvement (e.g., internal control and audit trails)
- UL Finance Shared Services Project Initiation scheduled for Spring 2024

***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/>
 - Attended to 972 new tickets between July 2023 and January 2024

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.
 - Units that have completed self-study and external review: Disability Services and Office of International Programs & Services
 - Units currently engaged in self-study process: Mason Recreation, LEAD, and Housing & Residence Life

****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.***