

# University Life Strategic Plan 2014 - 2019

## **UNIVERSITY LIFE:**

***We prepare Mason students for the demands of work, social responsibility, and life in an ever-changing global society.***

Through a range of direct services and programs, University Life supports *every student* at Mason from orientation through graduation. The University Life student success goals and strategic actions outlined below are informed by changing student demographics, attention to increasingly complex student needs, and the overall goal of post-graduate success and well-being in life and career. Successfully implementing these strategic actions will only be possible with a division-wide effort, one that spans every unit on every campus. These goals and actions are designed to help ALL Mason students succeed. No doubt, our work will necessarily include additional priorities over the next six years as pressing student needs emerge and regional, national, and global circumstances shift and change. These goals and actions, however, are meant to provide a clear path forward, one that is critical to achieving student success.

## **STUDENT SUCCESS GOALS:**

- Increased **well-being, post-graduation success**
- Increased **retention and timely degree completion**
- Increased **engagement and student learning**
- Highest level of **service and support** for students and families

## **STUDENT SUCCESS STRATEGY:**

In an effort to facilitate a thriving, inclusive campus community; to provide the highest level of support and service to students and their families; and to deliver a transformative signature Mason learning experience, University Life will cultivate an environment that is:

- Accessible (open to all students),
- Engaging and experiential,
- Integrative (curricular and co-curricular, multicultural and global),
- Technology rich (online delivery of programs/effective use of Campus Labs Student Success Suite), and
- Proactive and supportive (peer and staff coaches).

**Relates to University Strategic Plan Goals: 1,2,3,4,6,7, and 12**

## **STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

1. **Design and implement four co-curricular pathway programs that will help students:**
  - **Prepare for successful careers (Path 1: Career Readiness)**
  - **Develop well-being practices and thrive (Path 2: Well-Being)**
  - **Develop multicultural and global competencies (Path 3: Multicultural and Global)**
  - **Become agents of positive community change (Path 4: Civic Learning and Community Engagement)**

*University Life is committed to preparing students for the demands of work, social responsibility, and life in an ever-changing global society. Through co-curricular pathway programs, which will engage students in experiential learning, University Life will help students develop 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge and skills.*

Initial Plan:

- Design and implement pathway programs for piloting in Fall 2014.
- Expand residential Living-Learning Communities (LLCs) and align LLC program goals with co-curricular pathways learning outcomes
- Identify academic partners to align co-curricular pathways with curricular offerings
- Develop a comprehensive assessment plan for the pathways programs that includes: Identifying division-level student learning outcomes within the four pathways; aligning program and experiential offerings and outcomes; and identifying and addressing gaps/redundancies.
- Develop a comprehensive marketing plan for the pathway programs.
- Fully leverage CollegiateLink as the primary student engagement platform for curating and mapping pathway programs and outcomes, marketing programs, and tracking student participation.
- Fully leverage Baseline as the primary student learning assessment platform (strategic use of surveys, increased use of direct measures of student learning, connecting engagement and learning data with student success outcomes, and preparing dashboards as evidence of progress/success).
- Explore value of/mechanisms for credentialing/badging/giving credit for participation, outcomes achievement, and competency development.

## **2. Implement a student success coaching model**

*Success coaches will help students explore their strengths and interests, integrate their learning (including experiential opportunities and internships), connect with people and resources, and create and implement action plans to achieve their personal, academic, and professional/career goals*

Initial Plan:

- Develop a success coaching model.
- Identify and train staff and students/peers for direct contact as student success coaches.
- Fully leverage Beacon as the primary student support/coaching platform (connect students to support network members, identify students in need of early intervention, and document coaching contacts).
- Develop a comprehensive plan to assess outcomes of success coaching experiences.

## **3. Develop and lead a centrally coordinated and seamless approach to preparing Mason students for post-graduate success.**

*As institutions across the country look at better ways to prepare students for post-graduate success, the most strategic universities will invest heavily in a centralized career education model that truly embeds career readiness into the learning experience for every student, maximizes campus resources and cuts redundancies. A centralized, strong, innovative career services operation at Mason will strengthen Mason's position as a top source of talent and will lead to increased recruitment, retention, and overall student success.*

Initial Plan:

- Develop policy and directive from President, Provost and Vice President for University Life in support of establishing a centralized/coordinated approach to delivery of the full range of career preparation, experiential learning, internships and employer/industry relations programs and services.
- Establish a multidisciplinary task force to develop transition and implementation plans to support a coordinated/centralized approach for delivery of programs and services.

- Coordinate with campus stakeholders in the development and implementation of career readiness initiatives targeting freshmen and sophomores to increase self awareness and ability to identify interests/values coupled with knowledge of marketplace trends and employer recruiting efforts, leading to clearer pathways of success and increased retention
- Coordinate with campus stakeholders in development and implementation of career and professional development initiatives targeting graduate students and leading to greater transparency and understanding of career options and the acquisition of knowledge, skills and experiences necessary for entry into and progress through their profession or career.
- Coordinate with campus stakeholders in the development of strategies and opportunities to:
  - Engage alumni and employers in the preparation of students and/or in the recruitment of students for internships and post-graduation positions
  - Enhance student services and employer relationships
- Develop structural and financial models and plans for maximizing resources, cutting redundancies, and securing requisite funding for existing and new positions, operational expenses and facilities
- Explore the launch of a campaign to secure major donations for renovation or construction of facility to house an innovative career services operation.

**4. Establish Mason First! Students -- Expanding support for first-generation; low income/high ability; and undocumented students and their families.**

*In support of Mason’s commitment to access and inclusion, University Life will expand and diversify programs and services to attract, support, and graduate first-generation, low-income, high-ability, and undocumented students*

**Initial Plan**

- Establish Mason First! Students coordinating team to develop, coordinate, and facilitate programs that focus on first-generation student needs.
- Implement staff training programs to increase knowledge and competencies that address first-generation and low-income and undocumented student needs.
- Launch First Gen residential Living Learning Community.
- Develop strategies to communicate with and engage parents and families of first generation and low-income students.
- Develop and enhance existing vehicles for parents and families to connect and engage with one another on strategies for supporting their student’s success at Mason.
- Provide guidance and advice for students on money management and financial strategies and locating funding sources.
- Identify new revenue sources to support scholarships and other initiatives for first-generation, low-income, and undocumented students.

**5. Internationalize Campus Life**

*In support of Mason’s commitment to internationalize our campuses, University Life will ensure that Mason Pathway students/other English Language Learners are fully integrated into the Mason community and that domestic students are engaged in global and multicultural opportunities.*

**Initial Plan**

- Develop the “Mason for the World Experience” that offers global, national, and local perspectives and experiences.
- Develop and implement a plan to integrate Mason Pathway students/other English Language Learners (ELLs) into the Mason community.

- Establish a standing taskforce/committee for sustained, campus-wide global/international-local/multicultural planning.
- Introduce Mason Pathway students to the Global and Multicultural mindset co-curricular pathway program.
- Include Mason Pathway identifiers in assessment databases so that units can determine the use of programs and services by Mason Pathway students and assess needs/impact of growing the international student population.
- Create a visual internationalization campaign on campus that highlights ‘Mason for the World,’ one that incorporates and acknowledges the notable domestic and global diversity of our students and their life experiences.
- Leverage Residential Life and Off Campus Student Services resources to facilitate integration through Living Learning Communities, programming and peer advising.

## **6. Develop a coordinated division-wide process to enhance and expand student leadership experiences.**

*In order to produce the strong leadership talent needed over the next decade and to inspire the development, emergence, and recognition of leadership throughout the Mason community, University Life will coordinate a division-wide commitment to increasing and enhancing student leadership.*

Initial Plan:

- Identify and categorize existing student leadership experiences within the division (positions by type, expectations, time commitment, compensation, etc.).
- Develop and implement a process to track students who participate in leadership experiences.
- Evaluate and align existing leadership training models with division-level student learning outcomes and Mason Leads core values, assumptions, and competencies.
- Identify opportunities to increase efficiency of leadership training through the use of technology and strategic partnerships.
- Review current student leader evaluation practices and create strategies for using evaluations as evidence of student outcomes.
- Coordinate and streamline student leader awards processes.
- Integrate student leadership training into UL student employment settings.

## **7. Facilitate earlier identification of and support for students with psychological, health, and safety needs through increased awareness and prevention-focused initiatives.**

*Rapid changes that characterize today’s society and the unprecedented access to higher education – demographic and cultural changes; local, national and global events; increased competition for resources; economic and financial concerns; demanding lifestyles and rising expectations; socio-emotional needs and rising levels of overall stress and anxiety; and increasingly complex health challenges - will require all members of the campus community – faculty, staff, students and families – to be more aware and intentional in their response to students experiencing these challenges.*

Initial Plan

- Implement a comprehensive Mason Cares training program for new faculty and staff, students, and families.
- Create visible campaign on campus, through new student and family orientations, new faculty and staff orientations to increase awareness and draw attention to prevention-focused responses, initiatives and resources

- Coordinate/partner with local, state, and national organizations and resources concerned with mental health, campus safety, and violence prevention on college campuses to offer outreach, educational and training programs and to sponsor/support policy recommendations.
- Increase faculty participation in other University Life sponsored support/ally programs (e.g., LGBTQ Safe Zone, students with physical and learning disabilities, victims/survivors of sexual violence)

## **8. Address campus sexual violence comprehensively and reduce its occurrence.**

*Ending the epidemic of sexual violence on college campuses is critical to student success and well-being. The impact of sexual violence reaches far beyond the incident of violence. Sexual violence impacts not only the survivor/victim's physical, emotional, psychological, and social well-being, but the well-being of our campus community. Victimization results in increased stopout/dropout rates and limited opportunities for success. University life is committed to ending sexual violence at Mason through education, training, and enforcement.*

### Initial Plan

- Develop policy statement and directive from the President, Provost, and Vice President for University Life that demonstrates recognition of sexual violence as a problem, a commitment to reduce its occurrence, and action steps for campus community.
- Establish a high-visibility, campus-wide campaign focused on preventing sexual violence.
- Establish a multidisciplinary task force to address sexual violence prevention and response services on campus.
- Educate hearing boards on non-stranger assaults, perpetrator patterns, and possible victim responses and patterns.
- Implement a comprehensive sexual violence prevention and ally training program for health and counseling services staff; faculty; staff; campus law enforcement; and students that includes the dynamics of sexual violence, access to care, victim response and federal/state statutes.
- Create and codify amnesty policies for underage drinking for victims who report sexual assault.
- Create visible campaign on campus that invests men (specifically fraternities and athletic teams) in the prevention of sexual violence.
- Increase bystander intervention education.
- Increase in sexual assault reporting as a result of increased education and awareness of sexual assault resources and support on campus.

### **STUDENT SUCCESS OUTCOME METRICS:**

- Student learning and development
- Participation/Use and Satisfaction
- Sense of belonging
- Inclusive community
- Retention and timely degree completion
- Post-graduation success
- Collaborations/partnerships

## 9. Develop a coordinated division-wide plan for promoting the success and well-being of graduate and professional students

*Graduate and professional students comprise roughly one-third of Mason's student population. University Life is committed to serving this population through the provision of resources and programs catered to their unique needs.*

Initial Plan:

**GOAL 1:** Develop a comprehensive portfolio of programs and services for graduate and professional students across distributed campuses aimed at supporting their enrollment, transition, and post graduate success.

**SAMPLE ACTION:** Clarify vision for future of graduate student life at Mason and align organizational resources accordingly

**SAMPLE ACTION:** Create a calendar of welcome and transition programs for new and returning graduate students within first six weeks of the academic year. (e.g., Grad Student Welcome Days)

**SAMPLE ACTION:** Collaborate with partners to develop suite of career and professional development offerings around specified domains (Navigating Graduate School and Well-Being, Career Planning, Research and Writing Skills, and Teaching Skills). (e.g., work by Graduate Career and Professional Development Advisory Group)

**SAMPLE ACTION:** Develop targeted programming geared toward enhancing professional connections for graduate and professional students in collaboration with Alumni Affairs, academic units, and other relevant stakeholders (e.g., Graduate and Professional Networking and Etiquette Dinner; Pizza & Perspectives; Building Community Networking Reception for Graduate Students, Faculty, and Staff of Color)

**GOAL 2:** Partner purposefully with Provost's Office to align efforts and provide integrated approach to promoting graduate student success.

**SAMPLE ACTION:** Formalize expectations for collaboration between University Life and Provost's Office

**SAMPLE ACTION:** Convene Graduate Career and Professional Development Advisory Group, comprised of campus stakeholders, with Associate Provost of Graduate Education to develop vision for career and professional development offerings.

**GOAL 3:** Build investment among University Life units in serving graduate students as a key constituency for program and service delivery and for tracking and reporting graduate and professional student usage, participation, and trends.

**SAMPLE ACTION:** Assess graduate and professional student needs and interests and convey needs to relevant UL units. (e.g. Arlington Campus Needs Assessment 2009 and 2012)

**SAMPLE ACTION:** Request University Life units to track and report graduate and professional student usage and participation on regular basis.

**GOAL 4:** Identify opportunities within existing UL work to enhance or assess the personal, professional, and academic needs of graduate and professional students.

**SAMPLE ACTION:** Coordinate development and implementation of career and professional development initiatives targeting graduate students and leading to greater transparency and understanding of career options and the acquisition of knowledge, skills and experiences necessary for entry into and progress through their profession or career. (See Strategic Action #3).

**SAMPLE ACTION:** Assess career goals of graduate and professional students to inform planning and delivery of programs and services.

**SAMPLE ACTION:** Create networks for graduate and professional students aimed at fostering an interdisciplinary community; Facilitate connections among students, faculty, administrators, and alumni

**SAMPLE ACTION:** Focus programming, communication, and marketing efforts on unique needs of both full-time and part-time graduate and professional students.

**SAMPLE ACTION:** Identify opportunities to streamline marketing and design efforts with other UL programming units

**SAMPLE ACTION:** Assess graduate and professional student needs and interests and convey needs to relevant UL units. (e.g., Arlington Campus Needs Assessment 2009 and 2012)

**SAMPLE ACTION:** Establish a multidisciplinary advisory board charged with supporting University Life in its effort to focus on the unique needs of graduate and professional students and to cultivate partnerships to develop initiatives and deliver programmatic offerings that address those needs. Establish regular meetings to include University Life stakeholders from each academic unit (e.g., Arlington Campus UL Planning group) **UNIVERSITY LIFE OPERATIONAL GOALS:**

- Increased **organizational** and **operational effectiveness**
- Maximizing goal achievement through **innovative practices** and **strategic partnerships**

#### **10. UNIVERSITY LIFE OPERATIONAL STRATEGY:**

In an effort to serve our stakeholders and deliver a best-in-class return-on-investment for students and their families, University Life will increase transparency and accountability of our operations by using data to inform decision-making, identifying opportunities for increased efficiencies, and determining the effectiveness of our programs and services. Priority will be given to compelling proposals that contribute to achievement of student success goals through partnerships, especially with faculty and academic units, and employment of innovative practices.

**Relates to University Strategic Plan Goals: 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, and 12**

#### **STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

##### **1. Develop division-level support structures and consolidate/integrate processes to enhance efficiency and effectiveness**

Initial Plan:

- Forecast needs and develop division and unit-level strategic plans, staffing models, and facilities management plans to ensure effectiveness.
  - Establish, maintain, and regularly report on KPIs related to division and unit-level strategic plans.
  - Create staff plan and facilities management plan.

- Develop and implement an integrated:
  - Performance management process including accountability measures related to performance goals, staff learning and development plans, and evaluations.
  - Marketing strategy to promote the role of University Life and increase communication with faculty, staff, students, and parents (branding/social media standards, website development, faculty communication plan)
  - Internal communication strategy (standards of practice around staff communication, establishment of staff portal)
  - Data management and reporting strategy (data warehouse, unit and division KPI dashboards, presentation repository)

## **2. Attract, retain and promote a diverse and talented staff**

### Initial Plan:

- Coordinate recruitment practices to increase diversity and talent of applicant pool and increase efficiency and success of search processes.
- Produce and regularly update organization charts and staff bios on unit websites (including pictures, contact information, educational background, areas of expertise, professional affiliation/involvement, accomplishments, etc.)
- Create and offer staff training and development opportunities in alignment with organizational needs (in response to needs assessment). Initial areas of emphasis will include:
  - Well-being
  - Success coaching/coach training
  - Global and multicultural competence
  - Support for key populations (first generation, INTO, students of concern, currently undocumented, sexual assault survivors)
  - Technology and information management (leveraging data and tools to demonstrate impact)
  - Performance planning and budgeting
- Support and increase staff affiliation/involvement with professional organizations (number who serve in leadership positions, present at conferences and submit/publish articles).
- Strive to attain local, regional, national and/or global recognition for programmatic and/or staff accomplishments.
- Provide professional development and mentoring toward leadership positions for staff, who consistently perform at high levels and who are interested in and able to excel in student affairs.

## **3. Design and implement a cyclical program review process to align goals, outcomes, and resources; benchmark with peers; identify and prioritize strategies to increase effectiveness.**

### Initial Plan

- Establish program review guidelines.
- Support comprehensive program review of at least 2 units per year.

## **4. Leverage current funds and generate new funds to achieve University Life mission and goals.**

### Initial Plan

- Analyze and align resource allocation with mission and goals.
- Identify and begin to track cost/student and ROI metrics.
- Develop and implement performance-based funding model.
- Increase opportunities for student, family, and alumni philanthropy.
- Increase fundraising dollars for donor-supported initiatives.
- Expand the University Life Advisory Board's mission, size, and scope.



**UNIVERSITY LIFE OPERATIONAL METRICS:**

- Position retention/vacancy metrics (length of time positions are filled, length of time positions are vacant, diversity and talent of applicant pools).
- Effectiveness of marketing and communication efforts.
- Number of staff who participate in new training/professional development programs and learning outcomes.
- Annual staff profile (including the number of positions by type and the demographics, strengths, educational backgrounds, and professional involvement records (i.e., regional/national organizational leadership, service, conference presentations, awards/recognitions, etc.) of current employees).
- Number of program recognitions
- Program review outcomes.
- Scope and impact of fundraising efforts (number of philanthropy initiatives, number of donors, dollars raised, number of programs/students served as a direct result of fundraising efforts).