

UNIVERSITY LIFE IN REVIEW

# SUCCEEDED

A woman's profile is shown in a three-quarter view, facing right. Her hair is pulled up into a bun. Inside her head, a collage of images is visible: a white building with a steeple, a large tree, a campus walkway with people, and a bronze statue of a man in a military-style uniform. The background behind her is a soft, light blue and green gradient.

A MODEL FOR  
**CHANGING  
MINDS,  
HEALING THE  
NATION**

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**Meaningful  
Career  
Connections**

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**University Life  
COVID-19  
Response**

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# FRIENDS OF THE MASON COMMUNITY,



What a challenging year; our campuses and our students were forced to reimagine the college experience in innovative and inspiring ways as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to the strategic leadership of incoming president, **Dr. Gregory Washington**, Mason is on a bold path, not just in navigating a pandemic, but toward racial justice – in our structures, policies, and practices, and in the ways we educate and engage the most diverse student body in the Commonwealth of Virginia, one of the most diverse in the country.

As Mason's student affairs division, University Life's vision is clear – "Every Student Succeeds". We launched a new strategic plan with the four thematic areas of Inclusive Thriving Communities, Engage All Students, Holistic Student Support Services, and Organizational Excellence – all cornerstones that build a solid foundation for our work over the next four years. To that end, success for our students, reimagined in the context of the pandemic and enduring racial and social injustices facing the country, has been at the heart of our work for much of the year.

Accompanying our students through these trying times, readjusting our lens (and theirs) with a relentless focus on the present and a persistent eye toward the future, has reminded us of the value of inclusive well-being, community, engagement and the role that higher education and

student affairs plays in an informed democracy.

As our students changed, so did we, and so did our practices. On the pages that follow, you will see examples of some of the transformational efforts taking place across our division and in collaboration with so many university-wide partners. And our partners and the support for our students extends beyond the university to alumni and

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STUDENT AFFAIRS  
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"EVERY STUDENT  
SUCCEEDS."**

the larger community. As the resiliency of our students has been put to the test because of financial strains and additional challenges, the generosity of our donors has shone through, enabling students to pursue their dreams and their degrees.

I hope you are inspired by our students and the good work that's been done, empowering them to *Succeed!*

*Rose Pascarell*

Rose Pascarell, Vice President for University Life

## Rose Pascarell, Pillar of the Profession

Each year, the NASPA Foundation recognizes exceptional members of the student affairs and higher education community through the Pillars of the Profession award, one of the Foundation's highest honors. This year, University Life Vice President **Rose Pascarell** was among this esteemed group of leaders honored with the award.



## WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

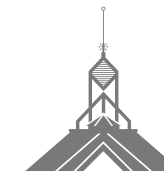
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## 34 UNITS

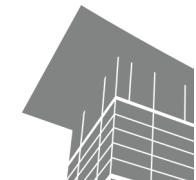
PROVIDING SERVICE ACROSS FOUR CAMPUSES  
AND TWO INSTRUCTIONAL SITES:



ARLINGTON  
CAMPUS



FAIRFAX  
CAMPUS



SCIENCE AND  
TECHNOLOGY  
CAMPUS



MASON KOREA  
CAMPUS



LOUDOUN  
INSTRUCTIONAL  
SITE



SMITHSONIAN-  
MASON SCHOOL OF  
CONSERVATION

### STUDENT SERVING UNITS:

- Academic Integrity
- Campus Life Ensembles\*
- Career Services
- Center for Advancement of Well-Being
- Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment
- Coalition Building and Diversity Education
- Contemporary Student Services
- Counseling and Psychological Services
- Disability Services
- Early Identification Program
- Graduate Student Life
- Housing and Residence Life
- International Programs and Services
- Leadership Education and Development
- Learning Services
- Mason Care Network

- Mason Recreation
- New Student and Family Programs
- Operations and Planning
- Regional Campuses
- Student Centers\*
- Student Conduct
- Student Health Services
- Student Involvement
- Student Media
- Student Support and Advocacy Center
- Women and Gender Studies Center \*

### ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS:

- Advancement
- Assessment
- Business Finance\*
- Communications and Marketing
- Human Resources
- Project and Process Management
- Technology Services\*

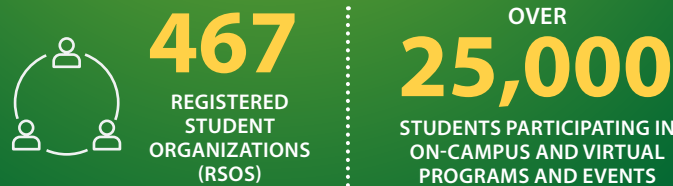
\*Department shared with another University division



# UNIVERSITY LIFE *at a glance*



**50%** OF UNIVERSITY LIFE PROFESSIONAL STAFF IDENTIFY AS PEOPLE OF COLOR OR AS PART OF A DIVERSE ETHNIC GROUP



**6,047** ON-CAMPUS STUDENTS\* LIVING IN



**40** RESIDENCE HALLS WITH **20**

LIVING LEARNING AND VIRTUAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES ENGAGING OVER

**8,174** APPOINTMENTS PROVIDED BY COUNSELING & PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS) SERVING



**3,360** UNIQUE STUDENTS

**1,000** STUDENTS  
\*Pre-COVID-19

**4,237** PARTICIPANTS IN

**210** OUTREACH EVENTS OFFERED BY LEARNING SERVICES

**3,564**

TESTS, EXAMS, AND QUIZZES PROCTORED BY THE DISABILITY SERVICES TESTING CENTER



**5** CAREER FAIRS WITH **94** EMPLOYERS AND OVER **1000** STUDENTS & RECENT GRADS IN ATTENDANCE



Data presented represents the 2019-2020 academic year.

SPECIAL  
FEATURE

## Revolutionizing the Student Experience: 2020-2024 and Beyond

We chart a bold path forward; addressing some of the most important and contemporary questions facing higher education. Using our strategic plan as a guide, we endeavor to revolutionize the way we function. We chart our course to adapt and change alongside our students to meet their ever-developing needs in a fast-paced, digitally transforming world.

### STRATEGIC GOALS:

- 1** INCLUSIVE THRIVING COMMUNITY
- 2** ENGAGE ALL STUDENTS
- 3** HOLISTIC STUDENT SUPPORT
- 4** ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

“ I believe UL’s Strategic Plan is a catalyst for our division to innovate – to leverage the collective strengths and insights of our staff in the ongoing design of Mason’s student experience. ”

– Kirk Vandebrooke,  
Assistant Vice President,  
University Life

## UNIVERSITY LIFE: A model for changing minds, healing the nation

Challenging times call for challenging conversations, and no university in the country is better prepared to confront issues of racial equity, diversity, inclusion and well-being than Mason, according to **Dr. Gail Christopher**, who is one of the country’s leading scholars and architects of social change programs.

“In terms of readiness and willingness, George Mason is at the absolute forefront with a sincere and genuine

commitment that is intent on changing the narrative of how people view and treat each other,” Christopher said, noting how racial strife and struggles over society’s hierarchy seem to dominate headlines daily. “This is a transformational opportunity for preconceived notions to be replaced by the gift and blessing of understanding. There is an urgency to this work; Mason has made the decision to help actualize our aspirational goals of equality.”

con’t...



“The need for healing, connecting authentically and having increased empathy will never go away.”



Dr. Christopher, known for her development of the Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Framework (TRHT), was introduced to the Mason Community through University Life’s Center for the Advancement of Well-Being (CWB) in their use of what are known as Rx Racial Healing Circles™. “Rx Racial Healing Circles™ serve as an introduction to the TRHT framework and an approach that allows us to change narratives and build relationships, moving the needle toward racial healing,” according to **Dr. Creston Lynch**, Associate Dean for University Life.

In the Fall of 2019 Lynch led an interdisciplinary group of University Life and academic partners in the formal application process for TRHT designation with the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU). Mason earned this designation in January, the only one of its kind in Virginia and one of just 26 in the U.S.

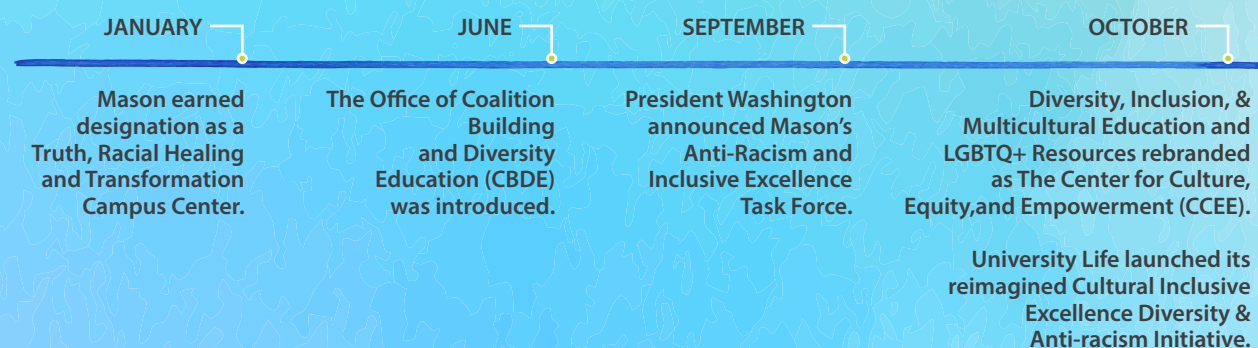
Dr. Christopher’s framework and scholarship has

been pivotal to CWB’s work along with a number of University Life departments and programs that lie at the intersections of diversity, inclusion, and well-being. CWB, along with newly created Office of Coalition Building and Diversity Education (CBDE) both work to provide educational experiences for students, faculty, and staff to thrive together.

“What I envision for Coalition Building and Diversity Education is to harness the power of strategic collaborative relationships with students, faculty and staff for the collective liberation and healing of all peoples and communities” said **Hamal Strayhorn**, CBDE’s Director.

The shift is a result of looking inward at Mason and externally at the world through lectures and educational opportunities, racial healing circles, training seminars and eventually larger-scale symposiums. Our efforts include events and forums for community-wide

**EVEN WITH THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE PANDEMIC, 2020 HAS BEEN MARKED BY SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS:**



dialogue addressing topics like implicit bias and white privilege. These can be developmental experiences that can build character and develop changemakers who are willing to engage in more difficult but rewarding societal examinations.

“All of these elements are converging, and we’re creating a path for cultural change toward values of inclusive excellence,” said **Dr. Nance Lucas**, the Center for the Advancement of Well-Being’s Executive Director. Lucas said Mason’s advantages include having the most diverse student population in Virginia and a senior leadership team that doesn’t shy from the university’s history or put limits on its future vision and strategic priorities.

“We are committed to change for long-term sustainability,” Lucas said. “There’s an enormity of lived experiences at Mason around the concepts, issues and values associated with diversity and inclusion. At

the individual level and as an organization, people are trying to unlearn habits and mindsets to develop new behaviors.”

“The openness, willingness to evolve and to build relationships are exactly the challenges Mason stakeholders need to embrace,” said Dr. Christopher, who accepted a senior scholar role with CWB in early 2020. Dr. Christopher observed, “The need for healing, connecting authentically and having increased empathy will never go away. Over time you’ll begin to see different and deeper relationships. People will work together comfortably, be honest with each other and have each other’s backs.”

University Life’s aspirational goals, combined with the diversity of our student population and the depth and breadth of faculty and staff expertise, can be model for higher education.

**University Life, in collaboration with academic partners, plays a leading role in affirming Mason’s commitment to inclusive excellence:**

- ✔ Graduate Student Life and the Black Graduate Student Association hosting a discussion to address experiences with anti-Blackness, to amplify marginalized voices and create awareness of endemic racism.
- ✔ Panel discussions on police reform and gender, blackness and racial trauma held by the Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution.
- ✔ Faculty and staff training on microaggressions toward minority communities and how to identify methods of advocacy and allyship.
- ✔ Coalition Building and Diversity Education trainings on beyond diversity, creating community, and the Intercultural Development Inventory.

**STUDENT DIVERSITY TRAINER SPOTLIGHT**

**JOSHUA F. MILLER** | Expected Graduation: Spring 2021  
Major/Minor: Integrative Studies with a concentration in Social Justice and Human Rights  
Hometown: Java, Virginia

“One of the biggest reasons I chose to further my education at George Mason was its commitment to racial diversity and equity amongst its students. Coming from a rural area, Mason felt like a breath of fresh air.

“The resources, support, mentorship, and encouragement that I have received from BIPOC faculty and staff alone has shaped me into the man I am today. Not only were

spaces created for me to step fully into my Blackness, and own it, there was always someone there to steer me in the right direction, comfort me when the road got hard, and pick me up when I fell down.

“Mason’s commitment to supporting BIPOC students has had such a positive effect on my educational experience and has prepared me to walk into the world putting my best foot forward.”





# UCS

UNIVERSITY CAREER SERVICES

## Where meaningful career connections happen daily

Alexandra Jones had \$20 in her bank account, was working three jobs to pay for her Mason education and was about to start an unpaid internship, a career opportunity she couldn't pass up, but a role that would further complicate her personal stability.

That's when University Career Services stepped in and awarded Jones, a Masters in Social Work student, one of its Scholarships for Unpaid Internship awards. The assistance for students facing significant financial hardships was a lifesaver, Jones said.

"Receiving the scholarship at that specific time in my life really gave me strength to hold on," Jones said. "I was low, I was about to give up and I was drained. I remember the feeling of hope and happiness overwhelming me."

"Attending GMU has been the best decision I have ever made. All the challenges and struggles were so worth it. I love my school."

Testimonials like Jones' are the outcome of the resources, advice and expertise University Career Services extends to all students and alumni. The department specializes in honing students' talents and trajectory by helping them earn their degrees, gain experience and market themselves to future employers.

"There are meaningful career conversations and connections happening every single day," said Saskia Campbell, the executive director. "We're here for student engagement and helping them prepare for and then excel in their chosen fields."

In 2020, more than 21,000 Mason students and recent graduates accessed services ranging from resume and career document preparation to career exploration, employment searches and interview preparation. It's a multi-faceted approach to

students transitioning after graduation.

UCS staff is also instrumental in forming relationships with employers who actively recruit Mason students, Campbell said. At any given time, the university's Handshake system lists thousands of available jobs and internships. An average of 2,000 students and alumni access the Handshake platform weekly. More than 750 employers regularly participate in career fairs and recruiting events at Mason.

"The earlier students access UCS services, the more rewarding their experience will be," Campbell said.

That belief plays out in the story of a Criminology, Law, and Society junior who is currently in an FBI Honors Internship. The student, who expects to graduate in December 2021, visited career services during his first two weeks on campus with a goal of landing a law enforcement position. Career services helped with his FBI application and got him connected to the Clearance Ready Program.

"The clearance ready program here at Mason was an invaluable resource in preparing me to obtain my (top secret) clearance," the student from Virginia Beach said. "From the investigators career services brings in to review specialized topics to just familiarizing you with the paperwork you will encounter, it has helped smooth the process tremendously."

The student was so impressed with his experience that he now volunteers with UCS to provide the same interaction for others.

"We provide the resources and support for students to be successful," Campbell said. "It starts with their experiences inside and outside of Mason classrooms and continues after graduation with a focus on career success and achievement."

### PEARL MUKORO

Expected Graduation:  
Spring 2020

Major: MS in Health Informatics

"Utilizing University Career Services and attending the career fairs provided great networking opportunities that helped me land an internship and offered clarity on how to thrive in my profession."



## OUTCOMES OF MASON GRADUATES FOR BOTH UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE STUDENTS:

**\$62,383**  
median starting salary

**83%**  
involved in employment, continued education, military commitments or volunteer work

**87%**  
reporting their employment relates to career goals

**92%**  
of graduates (undergrad and grad-level) are employed in DC, VA and MD

Source: Career Plan Survey, 2018-2019



# A Community that ares

The COVID-19 pandemic shifted the college experience at Mason, as it did elsewhere, starting with closing the Fairfax campus in March of 2020, pivoting to virtual and hybrid instruction across the Mason network, gradually reintroducing students at reduced capacities in the fall and preparing for a wider reopening for the 2021 spring semester.

"Mason's overall COVID response puts the health and safety of the Mason community in the forefront of our efforts and relies upon implementing behavioral changes that are known to mitigate the spread of the virus. We could not have implemented a comprehensive approach without leveraging the expertise of the University Life team and their understanding of student needs and behaviors," said Dr. Julie Zobel, Associate Vice President

for Safety, Emergency, & Enterprise Risk Management. As members of the Mason Continuity and Coordination Team, led by Dr. Zobel, staff across University Life departments have worked to integrate every touchpoint, from campus engagement to housing and residence life, recreation, student and career services, academic counseling, and health and well-being.

University Life's role in helping the community through the pandemic has been a complex matrix. It's one that impacts Mason across each of its campuses, which is why Dr. Pam Patterson, the division's associate vice president, praised the creativity, drive and dedication that exemplified pulling together for the greater good.

"All of the things you typically do and think about in the regular course of life had to be examined from the lens of what are we providing students, staff and faculty, and how can we be sure that we're reaching them," Patterson said. "In most cases, as with classroom instruction, the key was moving to online and virtual engagements, which was no easy task, but one where we were determined to succeed."

If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught Dr. Lisa Park, director of Student Health Services, anything, the overriding theme is that Patriots protect Patriots.

"It's been a big adjustment and just about everything in our normal processes had to be changed as we learned more about COVID-19," Park said. "The priority has always been keeping everyone as safe and healthy as possible by sorting through what makes the most sense and what is the best decision for our students, staff and faculty."

Park and her staff set up telehealth services, trained staff on case investigation, provided medical advice on COVID Health ✓™, an online daily symptom screening tool, worked with university partners to plan the drive-through on-campus testing site, and developed isolation and quarantine protocols.

If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught Dr. Lisa Park, director of Student Health Services, anything, the overriding theme is that Patriots protect Patriots.

The medical center balanced its traditional role as the on-campus primary care services provider for students with COVID-19 testing, contact tracing in conjunction with the health department, and public health planning.

"Student Health Services carried a great weight during this time and remained flexible for the overall benefit of the Mason community," she said.

Park said staff assisted 67% of patients through the new telehealth platform and fielded a 109% increase in patient calls when compared to an average year.

"The dramatically different experience also played out in housing and residence life," said Christian Barber,

con't...



## A COMMUNITY THAT CARES

the department's interim director. While the university closed in March, housing remained an essential service for those without a safe alternative.

Housing occupancy reduced capacity to about half of its normal 6,000 on-campus residents, with no more than two students per bedroom. Instead of gathering in common areas, Virtual Learning Community (VLC) Mentors led online events, games and programs, Barber said.

"The virtual environment kept students engaged and active," he said. "It felt and looked a lot different, but at its core it was to create as close to the same experience as possible.

The college living atmosphere is a huge moment in students' lives, and something they look forward to for years, so we had to find ways for them not to lose that ability to connect with each other."

Traditional events were transitioned to outdoor physically distanced gatherings when possible.

When students tested positive or were exposed to the virus and in need of isolation or quarantine housing accommodations, Housing & Residence Life staff went above and beyond by moving residents into the Angél Cabrera Global Center. The former hotel has 140 spaces that allowed students to isolate in private

bedrooms with a private bath. They received daily delivered meals and housekeeping services such as towels and linens, personal laundry services, and essential toiletries at no charge.

"We didn't get too comfortable or too lax and being careful is what has kept our numbers relatively low," Barber said. "It was above and beyond what a housing operation typically performs."

Patterson summed up the broad efforts of UL staff as exemplary in a time of confusion.

"It was an all-hands-on-deck approach and an effective response to handle a rough and rocky road," she said.

### Emergency Funding

More than \$5 million in emergency funding in 2020 was distributed by University Life to 4,510 students unable to pay rent, utility bills, childcare, food and medical expenses. University Life tapped Mason's state funding, CARES Act relief and private donations from individuals, corporations and foundations.

Partners in Financial Aid and Advancement were instrumental in supporting these efforts.

**\$5 MILLION**

in emergency funding distributed to

**4,510**

**APPLICANTS**

**\$35,800**

distributed in Walmart gift cards

### Patriot Pantry

The Student Support and Advocacy Center distributed \$35,800 in donor-funded Walmart gift cards to students battling food insecurity due to the pandemic. Contributions continued through fall 2020, funneling help to more than 130 students via an online ordering system.

### Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

Fall 2019 came with a 55% increase in total student counseling appointments. As the university shifted for COVID-19, CAPS expanded psychological education through virtual channels. Clinical services, including tele-therapy and group counseling, crisis and outreach services, case management, and psychiatry were all provided online in 2020. In addition, CAPS implemented daily workshops and support spaces, including for students in quarantine and isolation.

### Mason Recreation

Physical and mental fitness remained a priority during the pandemic. Recreation leaders created floor plans and equipment positioning for physical distancing, managed occupancy limitations and instituted extensive sanitization routines. Expanded virtual health, wellness, and fitness opportunities were offered to the Mason community through the BurnAlong platform, which has seen a 45% spike in usership since the start of the pandemic.

### Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS)

Non-immigrant students experienced never-seen-before challenges related to visa status, travel restrictions, and adaptation to an online environment. OIPS regulatory advisors provided ongoing guidance, assisting students with decisions related to their U.S.-based programs of study. OIPS staff hosted virtual cultural events to help students remain connected and engaged.

## MASON STEPS UP for students who are 'desperately in need'



**"MASON DOES A GREAT JOB OF PROVIDING SUPPORT TO STUDENTS WHO ARE DESPERATELY IN NEED. I WILL REMAIN FOREVER GRATEFUL!"**

Maliheh Bitaraf was 6,000 miles from home and working to complete her Master's in Biodefense in Mason's Schar School of Policy and Government when the bridge between her education and finances began to collapse under the weight of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Iranian international student looked for scholarships only to realize that many she researched were open to only U.S. citizens. She explored loans, but those required co-signers

or were not available to residents of countries sanctioned by the U.S. government.

Her worries mounted by the day.

That's when Mason's Student Emergency Assistance Funding provided the stability she needed with short-term financial assistance in the face of her significant hardship.

"Words fail to express my most sincere and heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to Mason's emergency assistance funding and to University Life for their incredible support," said Bitaraf, who expects to graduate in May 2022. "I feel so blessed and grateful to have been selected as a recipient of two awards. I really appreciate Mason for being so supportive and kind. The school funding, particularly under this stressful COVID time, lifted the financial burden and allowed me to focus on studying.

"Mason does a great job of providing support to students who are desperately in need. I will remain forever grateful!"

Bitaraf expressed that University Life staff showed her empathy and support, comfort that was needed as much as the financial help. Mason's generosity has defined her career vision to include being a benefactor to others.

"I always felt how much (they) cared about me, even when there were so many students in need," Bitaraf said.

**"Mental health was already a significant concern for students before the pandemic, but factors related to COVID including prolonged uncertainty, social isolation, and financial stress have exacerbated students' feelings of depression and anxiety. CAPS and other University Life offices have worked to provide creative solutions to address students' emotional well-being needs."**

*—Dr. Rachel Wernicke, Chief Mental Health Officer and Associate Dean for University Life*

## Addressing Student Mental Health: A Growing Concern

- ✓ Mason has implemented a public health approach to the prevention of suicide and serious substance abuse in partnership with JED Campus.
- ✓ The Steve Fund's ten-point Equity in Mental Health framework guides clinicians in their work to address systemic disparities impacting the mental health of students of color.
- ✓ Student Health Services has incorporated mental health services into its primary care setting, increasing reach to Mason students in need.

In Fall 2020:

**39%**

of CAPS clients indicated that they sought mental health treatment due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**98%**

reported that contact with a CAPS clinician helped them feel supported by Mason as a whole.



# MASON CARE NETWORK COACHING MODEL propels college student success



The goal of the Mason Care Network's new Success Coaching model is clear: Provide every student entering Mason with the support and guidance that leads to their personal and academic growth.

Debuting in Fall 2020 and as the result of collaborative efforts with the Office of Undergraduate Education, the framework matched incoming first year student- with a coach who can be an advocate and a guide for their development at Mason. Coaches meet with students to discuss a variety of topics, including forming connections within the Mason community, time management, academic performance and physical, social and emotional health.

"The idea is to develop a consistent student experience that sets the stage for a strong start to their college career," said Dr. Adrienne White, the Mason Care Network director. "Students need a go-to person that can help them answer any question or connect them with the resources that they need.

"We want all Mason students to have what they need to remove roadblocks and barriers to a positive experience. This helps students adjust to campus and builds a foundation that gets them to graduation knowing that Mason has been there for them."

Students are encouraged to meet with coaches at least once a semester, but preferably more often so that the coaching relationship can develop more fully. Mason leaders expect the structure will lift student retention and graduation rates by improving students' overall college experience.

Success coaches are part of a multi-disciplinary approach to help students meet the challenges of college life. Our coaches are trained and certified by InsideTrack which is recognized by the acclaimed International Coaching Federation. In addition, Mason's Peer Student Success Coaching pairs undergraduates with more

con't...

**REBECCA DURANT**  
Expected graduation: May 2021  
Major: Global Affairs  
Hometown: Cranford, NJ

"Mason has truly been a home to me, and it has a special place in my heart. I have leaned on the support and guidance I was given. When figuring out how I could give back, I applied to be a Peer Student Success Coach to help those who may be struggling academically or personally.

"This program has been incredible to be a part of, as I was able to see my peers grow. One student had regularly scheduled meetings with me. We would talk about study tips and resources during our meetings. Each time I met with her, I could see her progress. It is such a special feeling to know that I positively impacted her as a student. I am proud to know that I am making a difference in students' academic careers in a capacity that will last far beyond my time as a coach."

experienced fellow students.

The coaching program was developed by several planning committees with more than 70 campus stakeholders, White said, and it works in harmony with academic advising and career services, and other units from across the institution to form a holistic support system.

In the COVID 19 disrupted fall semester, coaches proactively reached out to all incoming students providing an additional resource for assistance and connection.

"I highly appreciate the efforts the Mason Care Network team and my coach have put into connecting with students," one Mason student said. "Two meetings in and I feel like I am connecting with someone who truly cares for me, my success, and well-being."

Another said: "(My coach) carries the conversation effortlessly and makes sure I never feel rushed to move onto the next topic. I highly appreciate the efforts the MCN team and my coach are putting in to connect with students and hope to meet more often with the staff!"

White expects the results to be noticeable as Success Coaching matures over several years.

"This team is completely focused on improving students' relationship with Mason," she said. "When they get to that finish line and earn that degree, they'll know that Mason was here for them from the beginning."

## Success coaches within the Mason Care Network conducted personal outreach to all incoming students during Fall 2020

Here are the eight focus areas and the broad topics that coaches discuss with students:

- 1 School community: How a student perceives their fit at Mason and the connections they can make.
- 2 Effectiveness: Coaches work with students on managing and working toward long-term goals.
- 3 Commitment to graduation: Assessing motivation for higher education and linking current actions with future achievement.
- 4 Career: Discovering and refining career paths and preparing for job searches and interviews.
- 5 Managing commitments: Balancing responsibilities including academics, work and social plans.
- 6 Finances: Understanding potential sources of aid for tuition and handling personal finances.
- 7 Health & support: Staying aware of physical and mental health and the potential impact on student achievement.
- 8 Academics: Developing study skills, using Mason resources to the fullest.

MCN partners with Contemporary Student Services, which provides support to a range of post-traditional student populations. Contemporary Students are:

- Working full-time
- Transferring
- Raising dependents
- Coming from the foster care system
- Interested in online modality
- Over the age of 25

**RACHEL GILLESPIE**  
Expected Graduation: May 2022  
Major: Computer Science  
Hometown: Reston, VA

"As an off-campus student enrolled in large, lecture-style classes, I initially had a hard time meeting new friends and never really felt like I was part of a greater community. This changed when I began spending time at the CSS office, which is an area for students to study, hang out and relax. That was the first time I felt like I had a 'home' on campus.

"I can confidently say that CSS had the single largest, most positive impact on my college experience. Now, as a current off-campus advisor, I take pride in knowing that I can help provide those same resources and experiences for other off-campus and transfer students."





# Innovating through ENGAGEMENT

Whether students live on or off-campus, hail from Virginia or beyond, take classes virtually or in-person, Mason works hard to engage its student body. University Life has implemented a number of innovative opportunities and resources aimed at keeping students involved, connected, and feeling a sense of Patriot Pride.

## Green Machine: Making Music and a Big Impact

The Green Machine, Mason's award-winning pep band, in collaboration with the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS), College of Visual and Performing Arts (CVPA), and School of Business, has created a new Mason Impact course module entitled, The Activist-Artist: Art as an Engine of Social Justice. This is a year-long project-based learning opportunity where

students investigate issues of significance to society, such as systemic inequalities, the consequences of racial or gender biases, or environmental degradation, and devise a meaningful research question. Through this work, students construct their own understanding of how knowledge is created and how they can use art to communicate that knowledge to others.

The inaugural (2020-21) Activist-Artist course module will contribute to the Enslaved Children of George Mason (ECGM) project.

THE GREEN MACHINE WAS INVITED TO PERFORM FOR THE WASHINGTON NATIONALS AT THE WORLD SERIES IN OCTOBER OF 2019.

## GMU Esports

GMU Esports is making an impact on campus and off. This novel engagement format aspires to create an environment where students at George Mason University can connect with others and form a community around Esports. In Fall 2020, GMU Esports placed first in the Fall A-10 Rocket League Tournament and made it to top finalists in the Best Collegiate Esports team from "the gameHER" awards.

An average of

**500**

WEEKLY VISITORS ENGAGE IN GAME PLAY ON THE DISCORD SERVER

**315**

ACTIVE STUDENTS WITH GMU ESPORTS



## SI2Go: Programming on Wheels

At a time when students are so plugged in to the virtual world, it can be a challenge to discover that next great thing to get them involved in person. The SI2Go truck, launched in July 2020, has been integral not only to engaging students on multiple Mason campuses, but also to reaching students during the pandemic. This mobile event engagement center has offered events such as food giveaways, well-being activities, get out the vote efforts, and drive-in movies, as well as visits to Mason's Arlington and SciTech Campus. During a time when in-person initiatives have been scaled back, the SI2Go truck has become a staple for on-campus student engagement.

**35** SI2GO EVENTS IN FALL 2020, WITH **80** STUDENTS ON AVERAGE PER EVENT

## Well-Being in Action

University Life is committed to ensuring that all students thrive in college and beyond. The Resilience Badge virtual co-curricular program launched in Fall 2020 with generous support from the deLaski Family Foundation, enrolling 83 students. This fully online, asynchronous learning opportunity fosters resilience through content knowledge and practices backed by the science of resilience.

## Mason360

Mason360 is designed to help students get engaged, involved and connected to the Mason Nation. Available as both a web-based and mobile tools, Mason360 puts information about events, organizations, leadership opportunities, and areas of interest in an easy to access, portable format. With Mason360, students can carry the Mason Nation in their pockets. Mason360 offers students virtual alternatives to traditionally in-person programming and supports student leaders and their ability to make meaningful contributions.

OVER **9,000** MEMBERS OF THE MASON COMMUNITY DOWNLOADED MASON360 DURING THE 2019-20 ACADEMIC YEAR

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

### Nationally Recognized Mason Autism Support Initiative Works to Fill a Growing Need

The Disability Services office implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services, affording equal access to university programs and activities.

This office saw a **7% increase in registered students during the 2019-20 academic year, bringing them to a client load of nearly 2,000.**

The MASI program -- Mason Autism Support Initiative (MASI) -- administered by Disability Services has gained national recognition. Born out of a recognized need, MASI was launched in Fall 2014 and has since grown exponentially, and it maintains an annual wait list. MASI's popularity and success rates have led to a demand that the program is unable to meet. Through philanthropy, MASI hopes to expand enrollments over time, ensuring access for all who are eligible.



MASI HAS GROWN FROM **8 TO 39 STUDENTS** OVER A SIX-YEAR SPAN

With high percentages of under- or unemployment among individuals with disabilities, specifically within the Autism Spectrum Disorder community, MASI is expanding its focus to include skill-building for career/workplace success. Internships and field-based experiences are growing in number as a result of deepened connections with industry and community partners.





# Giving to University Life

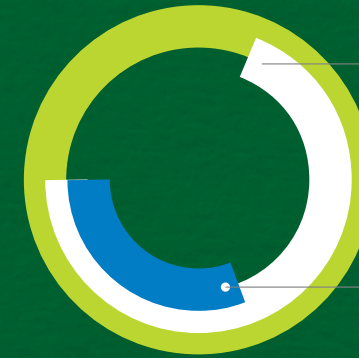
Philanthropy provides University Life the agility to respond to the changing landscape of higher education and to ensure our students have access to key resources that support their success and well-being. Thank you to our donors for their generosity and unwavering support of our students.

**\$985,521**

IN GIFTS AND PLEDGES WERE MADE IN SUPPORT OF UNIVERSITY LIFE

## GIVING AT A GLANCE:

GIVING BY  
AREA OF  
IMPACT



69%

**\$683,353** (69%)  
Scholarship Support

31%

**\$302,168** (31%)  
Programmatic Support



**56**

UNIVERSITY LIFE  
INITIATIVES  
RECEIVED GIFTS



**44**

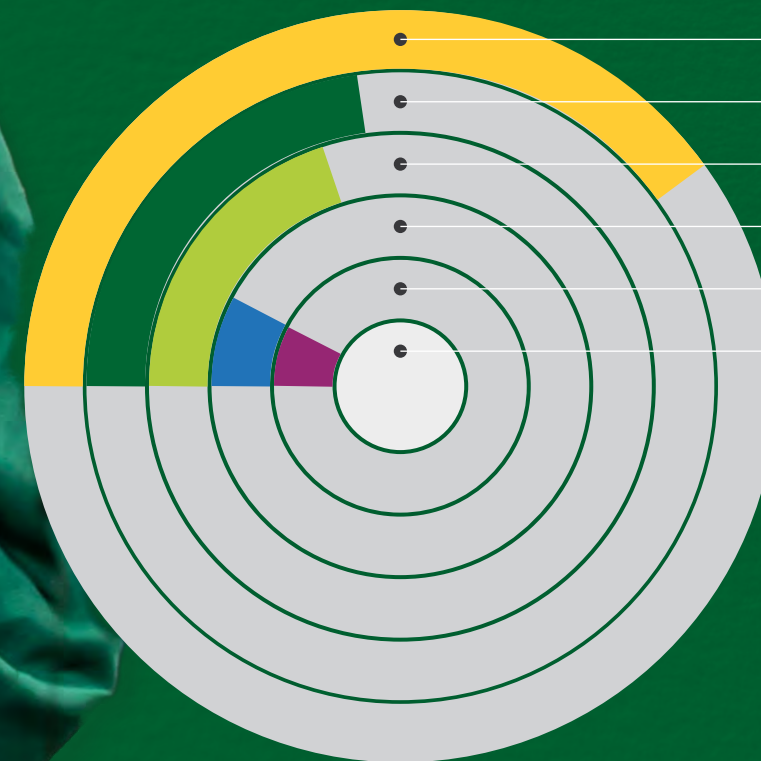
VOLUNTEERS  
SERVED ON THREE  
LEADERSHIP BOARDS:

University Life Advisory Board  
Center for the Advancement of  
Well-Being Advisory Board  
Parent and Family Council



**1892**

DONORS



DONOR  
PARTICIPATION

**40%**

Friends

**23%**

Corporations & Foundations

**20%**

Alumni

**8%**

Parents & Families

**8%**

Faculty & Staff

**<1%**

Students

\*Totals represent gifts and pledges made in fiscal year 2020 (July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020)

Gifts can be made to support University Life and our students at [ulife.gmu.edu](http://ulife.gmu.edu).



# MAKING AN impact

through Alumni Advocacy

Being a Patriot means making an impact. Mason alumnus **Charniele L. Herring** exemplifies the Mason journey not just through her achievements, but also in how she gives back to her community, and her alma mater.

Herring's legislative accomplishments are many. Earning her law degree from Catholic University, she has become an integral part of the legislative process in Northern Virginia and beyond. She was the first African American woman from Northern Virginia to be elected to the state legislature - she currently represents the 46th House District in the Alexandria area. Herring also serves as the chair of the Courts of Justice Committee and the State Crime Commission and this year, she became the first woman and the first African American to be named majority leader of the House of Delegates.

Herring graduated from Mason in 1993 with a BA in Economics. And she has remained connected to the University, volunteering her time and expertise to various Mason initiatives, serving on the University Life Advisory Board since 2016, and advocating for student equity. As an alumna of the Student Transition

Empowerment Program (STEP), a summer bridge program that recruits and retains talented first-generation students from underserved backgrounds, her advocacy in Richmond resulted in a permanent increase of \$150,000 to STEP's annual budget.

George Mason was proud to invite Delegate Herring to speak at the Winter Commencement in 2020, celebrating her resilience, achievements in her community, and dedication to creating more opportunities for the students that came after her.



## PATRIOTS helping PATRIOTS

Mr. Xu Tan, University Life Advisory Board member and Chairman of the China General Chamber of Commerce (CGCC)-Washington D.C. Chapter, responded immediately to the crisis by securing timely and generous support from CGCC and its members - Sun Fiber and China Telecom (Americas), of which Mr. Tan is President.

### INITIATIVE RAISES \$802,000 FOR STUDENTS IN NEED

In collaboration with University Life, the Office of Advancement and Alumni Relations turned Mason's annual Giving Day on April 2, 2020 into the start of a much bigger effort, Patriots Helping Patriots, to focus on providing urgent assistance to Mason students in need.

Over **4,206 donors** contributed more than **\$907,717** to **16 emergency funds** across Mason in 2020.

While Giving Day represented an important milestone in the drive to help students, Patriots Helping Patriots lasted all year, providing Mason alumni with ways to connect with each other more easily and provide mutual assistance during the pandemic.

*Contributor: Rob Riordan*

### GIFTS TO EMERGENCY FUNDS IN UNIVERSITY LIFE ACCOUNTED FOR

# 67%

OF THE TOTAL  
CONTRIBUTIONS,  
raising almost

# \$609,956

FROM

# 2,706

DONORS



## Early Identification Program alumnae are first recipients of I-Achieve scholarships

Kristen Alleyne and Elene Lipartiani, current freshmen at Mason, have been honored with I-Achieve scholarships for academic excellence. The awards were given for the first time in 2020 as part of a \$100,000 grant Mason received from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation.

The scholarships are intended for students who graduated from Mason's Early Identification Program (EIP) and will be attending Mason as University Scholars in the Honors College. EIP is Mason's college preparatory program for first-generation college students in the Northern Virginia area. EIP provides access to educational resources for students from seven local public school systems and is intended to equip students with skills that will help them become lifelong learners, leaders and responsible global citizens.

Khaseem F. Davis, EIP director, said that both students' intellectual curiosity, hard work and pursuit of excellence were evident from their first day in EIP.

Lipartiani, 18, moved to the United States from the Republic of Georgia in 2007.

"I didn't completely understand the language or the cultural aspects of being in the U.S., so I did end up feeling a bit isolated," Lipartiani said.

Lipartiani was accepted to EIP, making friends and finishing Oakton

KRISTEN ALLEYNE  
Recipient of I-Achieve scholarship



High School with a 4.2 grade point average and an interest in mental health and psychology.

"I love understanding people and what makes them tick," said Lipartiani. She wants to study neuroscience

**"Investing in their success and supporting their pursuit of excellence will yield a high return and uplift our communities, region, and nation."**

to help find a cure for Alzheimer's disease.

Alleyne, 17, was born in Guyana, and came to the United States in 2012. Focused on church and public service, Alleyne served on Volunteer



Gifts can be made to support EIP at [eip.gmu.edu](http://eip.gmu.edu)

ELENE LIPARTIANI  
Recipient of I-Achieve scholarship



Arlington's MLK Day of Service Advisory Council.

An EIP student, Alleyne graduated Washington-Liberty High School as a valedictorian and was a member of the National Honor Society. She also served as president of her school's Black Student Union.

Alleyne plans to study community health at Mason and wants to become an epidemiologist.

"When the Ebola virus was rampant, I was fascinated with trying to understand how it spread and how different countries were containing it," Alleyne said. "Now with COVID-19, I am really seeing how important epidemiologists are. It involves a great combination of science and leadership skills."

Davis said that EIP students are a reflection of the changing demographic impacting the country and region.

"Investing in their success and supporting their pursuit of excellence will yield a high return and uplift our communities, region, and nation. I am happy to see that this grant has allowed us to invest in the success of Elene and Kristin," said Davis.

*A version of this story was originally published in The George: <https://www2.gmu.edu/news/588286>*

### STUDENTS THRIVE

through active relationships between student and academic affairs. The contributions of our academic partners, alumni, industry partners and donors are integral to every aspect of our work. Collectively we will achieve our vision – "Every Student Succeeds!"

## PARTNERING WITH ACADEMICS

The University Life Faculty Fellows Program is committed to fostering collaborative relationships with faculty and developing joint initiatives that lead to greater overall student learning and success.

University Life collaborates with academic partners in a number of other ways:

**5** CO-CURRICULAR MEDIA COURSES THROUGH THE COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT AND DOZENS OF FACULTY PARTNERSHIPS EACH YEAR WITH STUDENT MEDIA

**10** MASON FACULTY MEMBERS ACROSS A RANGE OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS ACTIVELY PARTNER IN ALL PROGRAMS LED BY THE WOMEN AND GENDER STUDIES CENTER.

**17** SENIOR SCHOLARS AND SCIENTISTS FROM A WIDE RANGE OF DISCIPLINES AND FIELDS AFFILIATED WITH THE CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WELL-BEING

**85** FACULTY MEMBERS ACROSS COLLEGES TEACHING COURSES LINKED TO VIRTUAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES (VLCs) THROUGH HOUSING AND RESIDENCE LIFE

**403** ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THE MASON CAREER INFLUENCERS NETWORK, LED BY UNIVERSITY CAREER SERVICES, REPRESENTING EVERY MASON SCHOOL, COLLEGE AND DIVISION




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