

UNIVERSITY LIFE IN REVIEW

# SUCCEEDED

Cultivating  
**Leaders  
for Life**

PAGE 13

Our Commitment  
to Supporting  
**Holistic  
Well-Being**

PAGE 20

*Back  
to  
Campus*

PAGE 6

Friends of the Mason Community,

# WE ARE BACK!

The energy is palpable as we experience a revitalized return to student life across our campuses. As Mason reopened our physical spaces this fall, I have witnessed a student community ready to engage and re-engage more than ever before. The limitations imposed on us due to the pandemic only underscore the critical nature of our work and the impact we can have on the student experience.

Through a hybrid approach of both virtual and in-person offerings, we have increased the number of programs and services that empower our students to become involved, contributing members of society. We

“  
We have come  
back strong.”

are making good on our continued commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion as we’ve embarked on new initiatives and structural changes. And we have accelerated our efforts to support student well-being, in all forms, with a laser focus on keeping our students healthy and developing their resilience.

We have come back strong. With this return to campus life, the health and safety of our entire community is paramount. We charge forward to re-create and build upon the vibrancy of the Mason Nation.

*Succeed* offers a small glimpse of the large impact our supporters have on the student experience at Mason. I want to express my sincere appreciation to the donors who continue to invest in our students, ensuring they have access to resources that enable them to thrive.

And finally, I want to acknowledge the talented and committed University Life team, who continue to put students first. Together, and with indispensable support from our many campus partners, we continue to build and enhance a community where *Every Student Succeeds*.



This second edition of *University Life's Succeed* magazine showcases a number of these themes, including:

- ✓ Our robust welcome back to campus;
- ✓ A spotlight on our response to the many significant national and world events that have occurred over the last year;
- ✓ Examples of how our students are leading the way, formally and informally, both throughout the pandemic and beyond; and
- ✓ A focus on supporting students in distress, with an emphasis on holistic well-being, highlighting the work of Provost Mark Ginsberg's Mental Health and Well-Being task force.

With gratitude,

Rose Pascarell,  
Vice President for University Life

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**DIVISION  
AT A GLANCE**

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
- Contemporary Student Services
- Counseling and Psychological Services
- Disability Services
- Early Identification Program
- First-Gen+ Center
- Graduate Student Life

- Housing and Residence Life
- International Programs and Services
- Leadership Education and Development
- Learning Services
- LGBTQ+ Resources Center
- Mason Recreation
- New Student and Family Programs
- Regional Campuses
- Student Centers\*
- Student Conduct
- Student Health Services
- Student Involvement
- Student Media

- Student Success Coaching
- Student Support and Advocacy Center
- Women and Gender Studies Center \*

**ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS:**

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

\*Department shared with another University division

# During the **2020-2021** Academic Year

**14,000** on-campus and virtual events across all Mason campuses

**22,000** students served by University Career Services

**73,000** visits to indoor and outdoor Mason Recreation facilities

**Over \$3 million** awarded to 2,648 qualified students through the Stay Mason Fund and the Student Emergency Assistance Fund

**UNIVERSITY LIFE IS COMPRISED OF:**

**371**  
professional staff

**1000**  
student employees



## IN FALL 2021

**OVER 3,000 STUDENTS**

participated in Convocation and Preamble activities, including:

**Self, Others, & Community**

Workshop that lays a foundation of understanding about one's own identity as it relates to others around them.

**Speak About It**

A live performance that sparks important dialogue about consent culture on campus.



# SUCCESSFUL BACK-TO-CAMPUS PLAN Engages Students Who are 'Making Up for Lost Time'

The pandemic-induced phrase “the new normal” served as an understatement for the tasks associated with bringing students back to campus for the fall 2021 semester.

First, New Student and Family Programs had to construct virtual orientation sessions and launch small in-person gatherings – both on-campus and at remote locations – that reached, supported and helped transition students to Mason.

Housing and Residence Life, meanwhile, developed a staggered move-in plan that welcomed 5,100 students to campus residence halls, while balancing the added challenge of supporting two classes arriving for the first time since many who started school in 2020 studied and lived remotely. The reintegration coincided with the launch of a bold new housing initiative designed to better pair first year students in their new Learning Communities.

The Student Involvement team created a logistical and infrastructure plan that included building a new outdoor performance venue at Mason Pond Lawn, allowing them to stage campus traditions like The Preamble.

Within International Programs and Services, the scene was the same – aligning resources and overcoming hurdles to help students from abroad adjust to the culture shock of being in a new environment, while succeeding academically and forming bonds with peers.

The end result: Students were more engaged – and more thankful – than ever before.

“Students wanted that true college experience,” said **Shannon Jordan**, Associate Dean for University Life

“Students were more engaged – and more thankful – than ever before.”

and Chief Housing Officer. “They wanted to be a part of making their home in the residence halls, being a part of the Mason community and being about something bigger than themselves.

“It feels like they are committed to taking care of each other and making up for lost time.”

## Health and Safety Remain Top-Of-Mind

Mason made that possible by abiding by the guiding principle of supporting the health, safety and well-being of Patriot students, faculty and staff. A holistic return to campus plan involved required vaccinations for all who worked, studied, and lived on campus. The protocols continued masking in indoor areas, social distancing when possible and daily use of the Mason Covid Health Check screening tool.

The groundwork laid and the knowledge gained by University Life staff during the length of the pandemic set the tone for a successful introduction to in-person, pre-return small group events like Quill Camp, Explore Mason



and regional Summer Sendoffs at nine locations across the U.S.

It carried on at Preamble events such as Mason New Student Convocation, Gradstravaganza and live outdoor shows from mentalists, comedian Craig Robinson as well as DJ dance parties. Mason Mayhem, held outside of The Hub, provided students with opportunities for some good old-fashioned fun – game playing, karaoke, crafts, jumping on inflatables, live music, and plenty of tasty bites.

“We pulled a lot of different people together to make sure these campus traditions, which are so important to students, could happen,” said **Hope Miller**, Associate Director of Campus Events and Promotion. “The students had been isolated and our goal was to give them a way to get out and enjoy themselves, but to do it safely.

“There was an overwhelming response from the entire Mason team and the student body. I’ve never heard so many students come up and say, ‘this is really great, what’s next?’”

**Lauren Long**, Student Involvement’s Executive

Director, said the behind-the-scenes efforts to stage large-scale events were extraordinary – attendance at Craig Robinson’s show drew 1,600 community members, more than 1,000 were present for Mason Mingle, and Gradstravaganza set an all-time participant record.

“It was an incredible feat at managing chaos and being flexible,” Long said. “We’ve reorganized and re-created the experiences across campus and that is a credit to everybody who is taking part in making sure we fulfill our goal and expectation of making students’ lives rich and full of activity.

“We’ve found that we’re seeing students who normally wouldn’t go to these events get excited and show the desire to be in on the fun.”

## 'Unprecedented' Year Changes Student Interest, Demand For Cultural Connections

**Yali Pan**, Associate Director for Engagement and Assessment within International Programs and Services, has witnessed a similar boost in Mason students who want to be part of the International Buddy Program,



which matches domestic students with international students based on shared hobbies and interests. The office occasionally struggles with numbers of American students, she said.

"This year has been unprecedented," Pan noted, with over 280 students signing up compared to the normal 120 or so. Among those students signed up for the International Buddy Program, this year, 142 are international and 140 are domestic students.

"After such a difficult year – and we're not done with the pandemic yet – students clearly want to establish cultural connections and foster friendships."

"We had planned running the program virtually, but the students told us they wanted to do it in person. We listened and adjusted to make sure we could give them the full experience."

Among the international students arriving at Mason is the largest cohort transitioning from Mason Korea, a partnership in which students spend three years at the Incheon Global Campus and then study their final year in Fairfax.

"The community at Mason Korea is doubly excited for our students, who not only finally get a chance to

experience life on the Fairfax campus after so many years of hearing about it, but also for the fact that they join the campus amidst the excitement of the Mason community in the United States being able to physically come back together," said **Yorgun Marcel**, Associate Dean for University Life at Mason Korea.

"There is no doubt in my mind that this is a direct reflection of the dedication, care, effort, and teamwork displayed by the University Life teams in the United States and Korea who have worked tirelessly to support these students. I look forward to hearing the stories of Mason Korea students' discovery of life in Fairfax, and the impact that they will make on the US campuses."

#### **Housing Launches 'Remarkable' New Initiative**

As an essential service, Housing and Residence Life stayed active year-round, albeit under shifting circumstances for occupancy limits and safety modifications.

The 5,100 students who descended on the Fairfax campus in the fall represented nearly a 50 percent increase from the Spring 2021 semester, and they walked into residence halls with reopened common spaces,

including lounges, study rooms and community kitchens that had been closed. During the 2020-2021 academic year, Housing and Residence Life student staff was comprised of on-campus Community Assistants as well as Virtual Learning Community Mentors. For this year, all of the department's nearly 200 student staff are back on campus, living in each residential community.

"We're back to making this a comfortable home for students," said **Christian Barber**, Director of Residence Life, "a home that we've worked intentionally toward

making an even better part of their lives."

A significant change from past years had Mason placing 100 percent of first-year residential students in learning communities that matched their academic, identity and interdisciplinary interests. The idea is that like-minded students will integrate and flourish more quickly when surrounded by those who share common goals and outlooks.

"It's tailored to make instant connections and form relationships the day you walk in the door," Barber said.

Housing was able to place 90 percent of students in one of their top two choices, an achievement Jordan, the Chief Housing Officer, said is spectacular. The community size varies from as small as 20 on part of a residence hall floor to an entire building for a popular program such as engineering students.

"It's a brand-new initiative that would be a challenge any year, but to do it on the back end of COVID was pretty remarkable," Barber said. "The idea is that we are optimizing the student experience, and that stays true with everything that is happening within University Life."

"The more we can do to promote student success is a measure of our success."

THE **5,100**  
**STUDENTS**  
ON CAMPUS  
REPRESENT NEARLY A  
**50% INCREASE**  
FROM THE SPRING 2021 SEMESTER

2020

**JANUARY**

Mason earned designation as a Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation Campus Center, one of only 23 in the country.

**JUNE**

Mason introduced its Office of Coalition Building and Diversity Education.

**SEPTEMBER**

President Washington announced Mason's Anti-Racism and Inclusive Excellence Task Force, bringing together more than 130 faculty, staff and students to improve diversity and inclusivity at the university.

**OCTOBER**

University Life rebranded the Diversity, Inclusion, & Multicultural Education office and LGBTQ+ Resources as the Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment (CCEE).

*Dialogue for*  
**HEALING &  
UNDERSTANDING**  
*Amid NATIONAL  
CONFLICTS*

2021

**JANUARY**

The Center for the Advancement of Well-Being launched Racial Healing Circles, where students, staff, and faculty were invited to join conversations that promote the unlearning of social hierarchies and a connection to our shared humanity.

**MARCH - AUGUST**

Mason delivered strong and swift denunciations against racially-motivated violence and created virtual avenues for support in the aftermath of hatred.

When **Sherrene DeLong** takes a minute to assess Mason's day-to-day efforts of blazing a bold path to address racial equity and create support spaces where students, staff and faculty can feel safe, she acknowledges it can be a rocky journey even as it is filled with promise.

"Doing the internal work of addressing our own biases and racial socialization is hard, messy work," said DeLong, who serves University Life's Center for the Advancement of Well-Being as the Program Coordinator. "Racial Healing Circles are not glamorous. Participants don't feel an immediate sense of accomplishment, but these conversations are absolutely necessary to move forward.

"At Mason, none of this is one-and-done. We are having important conversations about race and racism in a number of different ways. The programs are the on-ramp to having more authentic conversations and learning. We're giving Mason tools to do the individual work, which will contribute to the community identity and ethos."

The dedication to social and racial justice, and creating an atmosphere where

“ We have to speak out and be a voice of change. ”

– DR. CRESTON LYNCH,  
Assistant Vice President  
of University Life

policies, practices and societal fabrics can be challenged, is happening among a swirl of chaotic events that have left people across the nation shaken over the last two years.

George Floyd's murder, rising antisemitism and anti-Asian sentiments, a violent government insurrection only 20 miles from Mason's campus, not to mention the country weathering the grip of a deadly pandemic, all contribute to growing anxiety.

University Life took a primary role in response to world events as it looked to



STUDENT PROFILE



**VANESSA ARIAS**

**Age:** 21 | **Home:** Manassas, VA  
**Degree:** BSW  
**Major:** Social Work

As a first-generation college student, Vanessa Arias had no roadmap for what she'd encounter when entering her freshman year at Mason. This is the same challenge nearly 30 percent of Patriots face and a fact that presents a barrier to student success.

But Arias, the daughter of El Salvador immigrants, quickly found her community through a student organization, F1rst Gen @ Mason. The student group and the connections she made to various resources were a respite from her concerns.

Three years later – and after serving on the executive board of a registered student organization – Arias will graduate in May 2022, reporting that Mason's welcoming atmosphere and supportive infrastructure spurred her achievements.

"College is too difficult to do it on your own, so it's really important to find the places where you are with people going through the same thing," said Arias. "There are communities that respond when there's a need."

Arias is a champion for the greater good of students; for the past two years she has given her time to working in the Patriot Pantry. The pantry, run by the Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC), provides food assistance to students and raises awareness about food insecurity along with other distressing circumstances college students face.

The social work major felt invested in the pantry because she was helping fellow students succeed and gaining first-hand experience on conditions she'll face in her future career.

"The ability to help people become more independent and grow professionally was important, but I also got a chance to hear their stories," Arias said. "The more impact you can have on helping people find their way, the better their lives will be."

provide advocacy, resource and engagement opportunities that aided students in processing their own experience with the unrest.

**Dr. Julie Choe Kim**, Director of Graduate Student Life, was part of creating UL's support spaces that allowed students and community members to meet and reflect during challenging times. She believes the outreach was embraced by students because Mason's prior actions had shown the university wants to enact systemic, institutional changes.

"At our core, we know our students are impacted by what happens in the world. They are not in a bubble, and they are deeply affected by these events," said Kim, who was also part of a town hall meeting with Virginia Governor Ralph Northam after six Asian women were killed in Atlanta.

"The work University Life had done to build relationships with students and student organizations allowed genuine connections to form and have places of trust where students were comfortable sharing what they were going through."

**Dr. Creston Lynch**, Assistant Vice President of University Life, and **Hamal Strayhorn**, Director of the Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment, have been key players in establishing an infrastructure that drives tangible change. The pair agree that dialogue to build awareness and activism cultivates a stronger Mason.

"Listening and hearing what our community is saying and then helping them through the tough times gives them the ability to go out and be allies and dismantle the systems that have allowed some of these things to happen," said Strayhorn.

Mason's proximity to Washington, D.C. only amplifies the need to respond in a way other institutions can't, Lynch said.

"We are having the conversations about events going on in our backyard," he said. "That demands and allows us to do a lot more for our students when it comes to diversity, equity and inclusion and the elements of society that jeopardize their safety."

"We have to speak out and be a voice for change."

## Inclusion:

a sense of belonging: feeling

respected, supported, and

valued for who you are and

ensuring

others

### FEATURED INITIATIVES:

#### BIPOC WELL-BEING MONTH:

Featuring October as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Well-Being Month (*Collaboration between Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment, the Center for the Advancement for Well-Being, and Student Health Services*)

#### RELATIVELY CONSCIOUS:

Difficult Dialogue Series that has addressed topics such as Anti-Blackness and Gender; Peace and Police Reform; Anti-Blackness, the Insurrection, and Voter Suppression; COVID and Racial Disparity, and fear around vaccination within marginalized communities. (*Collaboration between Coalition Building and Diversity Education and the Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution*)

#### CONVERSATIONS AT THE CROSSROAD SERIES:

Examined topics including colorism, beauty, gender, police reform, anti-blackness, and the global effects of racism. (*Collaboration between Coalition Building and Diversity Education collaboration and Mason Korea*)

#### LISTENING SESSIONS:

Opportunities for students to engage with faculty, staff, and each other in response to national events such as the D.C. insurrection and outcomes from both the Breonna Taylor and Derek Chauvin cases. (*Collaboration between the Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment and the Center for the Advancement of Well-Being*)

#### ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER SUPPORT SPACES:

Designed to provide intentional spaces for dialogue in response to anti-Asian violence and rhetoric. (*Collaboration between Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment, Student Engagement for Racial Justice, and Graduate Student Life*)

# Cultivating LEADERS FOR LIFE

The members of Alpha Phi's Mason chapter redefined tradition during COVID by pivoting their 2021 annual Red Dress Gala – a fundraiser for a women's health nonprofit – to a virtual event, raising thousands of dollars through a silent auction.

Mason Student Media managed to keep publishing relevant content from off-campus locations through the digital footprint of their Fourth Estate newspaper, on the

their skills to succeed.

"I always like to say that Mason Student Media is the largest classroom on campus because the students are learning and leading by doing," said **Kathryn Mangus**, Director of Student Media. "It is all student-run, and they are making the final decisions on everything. There's a lot on the line and a lot of real-life lessons taught every day."

Mangus's sentiments are illustrated by the broad swath of involvement among members of the 12 publications and programs that are produced by more than 800 students across nearly 50 majors.

To an extent, Student Media, along with other engagement units including Student Involvement, LEAD, Graduate Student Life, as well as the University Life offices at the Arlington and SciTech campuses, serve as a microcosm of University Life; they each oversee and direct a wide variety of student support services, student involvement opportunities, and other programs that equip students with a diverse and robust set of leadership skills.

Mason students organize and manage more than 400 registered groups each year, including Student Government, athletic clubs, academic and social interests

STUDENT MEDIA PRODUCES

**12 PUBLICATIONS**  
all run by **800** students  
across nearly **50 majors**

Mason Cable Channel and in blogs and podcasts.

These two examples of the significant change necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic are emblematic of what transpires at Mason every day and every year: Students come together to learn, to lead and to advance

and advocacy alliances. The influence extends through collaboration and overlap where leaders of one group may be members of another and others hone their abilities.

"Everyone has the potential to be a leader," according to **Lisa Snyder**, Associate Director of Leadership Education and Development office, "but we have to give them the space to try it, the ability to lead effectively with ethical values to affect positive change, and the practical experiences to display what they can do."

The LEAD office empowers students with leadership training, resources, services, and recognition. Each year roughly six student leadership consultants are hired to facilitate leadership workshops and cultivate peer-to-peer development. The outreach equips students throughout campus with the ability to make a difference.

"It's one thing to learn about leadership, but it's an entirely different skill to take an idea and make something happen," Snyder said. "Our students have a genuine interest and dedication to learn, not just about themselves, but to also grow and develop as ethical leaders who know how to build community, and collaboratively make positive change."

"The entire experience in University Life and at Mason is to make sure learning is happening and that we are preparing students for their professional development."

In Student Government that growth happens with an array of symposiums, retreats and instruction that helps Patriots look outside their own interests, according to **Sara Heming**, Associate Director of Registered Student Organizations and Student Governance within the Student Involvement office.

Some of the best development occurs through organic, one-on-one discussions that happen in the moment, she said.

"We try to take that time to talk about a specific situation and assess 'what did you learn?' or 'could you have done something differently so that could have gone better,'" Heming said.

Student leaders advance their abilities to communicate effectively, establish relationships, navigate difficult conversations and work on conflict resolution.

"There are a lot of honest and frank conversations, and that's when leadership expands," she said.

The experience that shows maturation, according to **Phil McDaniel**, Associate Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life, is when students are passing the baton to the next set of leaders – a movement that happens across all organizations.

"We see mentoring relationships when the older students are helping bring the newer ones up to

speed so they can build off what's been accomplished," said McDaniel. "It's pretty telling that they've been engaged in their leadership and then are committed to preparing others. That's when you are engaged in making Mason a better place."

Through the years McDaniel has also spotted another tendency that mirrors the philosophy of the LEAD office: "Titles are titles (within student groups) but that doesn't limit or slow the ability of others to take roles in non-officer positions. Every student can make that contribution."

“Everyone has the potential to be a leader.”

– LISA SNYDER, Associate Director of Leadership Education and Development Office



## STUDENT PROFILE



### TULANE SIMPSON

**Age:** 22 | **Home:** Woodbridge, VA  
**Degree:** BA  
**Major:** English **Minor:** History

Tulane Simpson's college experience has been unconventional in that this Mason senior has only attended one class on campus so far; Tulane expects to finish up in-person next semester, pandemic-permitting, before graduating in May 2022. COVID-19's push to virtual instruction and Simpson's collegiate career starting at Northern Virginia Community College, didn't stop them from earning positions as a consultant with the Writing Center and as a LGBTQ+ Peer Mentor. "Mason has had the resources available to us and the professors have created an environment that helps students thrive in a really difficult situation," said Simpson, who will commute from Woodbridge for their in-person class and roles working with students. "I haven't had the traditional on-campus college experience, but that hasn't limited the opportunities to get involved and be a part of Mason."

"I can't wait to have the ability to connect with students on-campus rather than virtually, where you just log-on and log-off. The ability to develop relationships and learn about people's stories is exciting."

The appreciation for developing relationships carries over to Simpson's role as a LGBTQ+ Peer Mentor, which involves assisting first-year students in navigating Mason to locate available resources. Simpson noted that Mason has created a sense of safety for LGBTQ+ students, but that the transition to college always comes with challenges.

"I feel like I can be a leader and be a part of making students comfortable, whether that's through writing or in the LGBTQ+ community," Simpson said.



## STUDENT PROFILE

### TAREQUE MEHDI

**Age:** 30 | **Home:** Dhaka, Bangladesh  
**Degree:** Ph.D. **Major:** Education

When Tareque Mehdi arrived in Fairfax as a doctoral student in 2017, he considered himself an introvert; he seldom spoke in class.

Mehdi's access to mentoring and personal growth opportunities quickly shifted his confidence level; he went on to be elected Vice President of the Graduate and Professional Student Association and also played a founding role in the Bangladeshi Graduate Student Association.

The transformation, Mehdi says, came through attending programs in University Life's Leadership Education and Development office.

"It was a life-changing experience for me,"

Mehdi said. "It got rid of my fear, I found my voice, and I'm a better person today because of what I learned and how I was encouraged."

He and his wife, Azbina Rahman (who arrived at Mason one year before Mehdi and graduated with her doctorate in Water Resources Engineering) feel they were embraced by the campus community. They reciprocated by immersing themselves in everything from student celebrations, to quiz competitions, to multicultural discussions.

"I want to inspire and improve people lives, and help them become leaders," he said. "Mason gave me those opportunities to develop, and I feel it's important to pass them along."







## STUDENT PROFILE

**MONICA DAVIDS** | Age: 34 | Home: Clifton, VA  
Degree: MEd Major: Curriculum and Instruction, concentration in Elementary Ed



As a mother of four children and a student in the College of Education and Human Development Bachelor's/Accelerated master's program, Monica Davids had enough on her schedule that she didn't plan on getting involved in campus activities.

That changed once she met Nick Lennon, an adjunct professor and the Director of the Leadership Education and Development office (LEAD). Lennon, after meeting Davids in an ethics and leadership course, encouraged her to apply for a position as a leadership consultant.

"It was obvious that the whole LEAD office and everyone in University Life really cares about the students and wants to bring out the best in them. I've had amazing mentors and they really showed me the way to get the most out of Mason."

Davids, who earned her bachelors in Integrative Studies with a minor in Well-Being in Spring 2021 and will complete her masters in Elementary Education in Spring 2022, has facilitated multiple workshops for Mason

students, staff and Fairfax area middle schoolers. The topics have included goal setting, well-being, student activism, diversity and inclusion and ethical leadership.

"It's been so rewarding to be a part of University Life, helping other students learn just as I did," Davids said. "I've enjoyed being a part of others' success and the impact that UL makes on Mason students every day."

Davids' service earned her Mason's Community Engagement Medallion, a prestigious award granted to graduates who excel in their commitment to the campus community.

"It's amazing to think that I was just coming to get my degree and start my teaching career, but then I was able to find so much more to Mason and in myself," Davids said. "It's a testament to the LEAD office and University Life that they help people excel as individuals."



## STUDENT PROFILE

**HYOWON KIM** | Age: 22 | Home: Incheon, South Korea  
Degree: BS Major: Management



For three years, Hyowon Kim witnessed wide-eyed students from Mason's Fairfax campus arrive at Mason Korea's Incheon Global Campus in Northeast Asia and wonder how to integrate themselves in a foreign culture.

The business school student served as a beacon to her American peers through her roles as a housing resident advisor, a member of the school's student-run "The Voice" newspaper, Mason Korea's Student Council and the Patriot Activities Council.

In 2021, the script is flipped for Kim, who is now in Fairfax for a year to complete her degree.

Her leadership commitment continues as she has stepped into the role of University Life Regional Campus Student Ambassador for Mason Korea students in Fairfax. The role of a Regional Campuses Student Ambassador is to serve as a voice and resource for students from each of Mason's regional campuses.

"It was overwhelming because there was so much to get used to [in Fairfax]," Kim said. "I've been lucky that

people from University Life and on the campus have been so helpful because there is so much to figure out."

Kim has taken advantage of the University Career Services Fall Career Fair to learn about internship and job opportunities available after her graduation. She has met with staff within Graduate Student Life to better understand opportunities for extending her education; and she has spoken at a Mason Korea "Tea Talks" event, further showcasing her leadership role and interaction with the campus community.

She explained that the engagement she has had at Mason has cultivated and instilled confidence as well as showing her versatility – attributes that have helped her acclimate to living in the U.S.

"I've learned so much in such a short time," she said. "It's been a great experience, and I'm so thankful for everyone here."

# MASON STUDENTS IN DISTRESS: Mobilizing to Meet Massive Demand for Help

In any typical year, Stay Mason Student Support Fund fields roughly 500 to 600 requests for emergency financial assistance from students who have unexpected emergencies or economic hardships.

It goes without saying that the COVID-19 pandemic upended normalcy in so many ways.

Nowhere was it more evident than the time between March and June 2020, when in four months, 4,403 Patriots experienced struggles that led them to seek financial help, and Mason responded by distributing more than \$3.2 million in aid during that period.

"The demand, understandably, skyrocketed when the virus forced so many things to shut down and changed how we were all living," said **Dr. Margaret Olszewska**, Director of the Student Support and Advocacy Center, "Very early on, the university recognized that the pandemic was going to affect the world in a significant way and it was going to severely impact our students."

"University Life instantly created a system to get money into the hands of students who desperately needed it in order to remain enrolled."

Mobilization from departments in University Life wasn't limited to financial help, as leaders continued providing resources to students in varying circumstances of distress, including but not limited to:

- ✓ Food insecurity
- ✓ Sexual or interpersonal violence
- ✓ Substance abuse and recovery
- ✓ Counseling and psychological assistance

Since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 through mid-October 2021:

OVER **9,000**

Patriots experienced struggles that led them to seek help. Mason responded by distributing

MORE THAN **\$7 MILLION** IN EMERGENCY AID

TO NEARLY **6,000** STUDENTS

Mental health services have become a priority as Mason surveys have shown approximately 33 percent of Patriots experience at least one significant problem, such as depression, anxiety disorders, suicidal thoughts, self-injury, or symptoms of eating disorders.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) has partnered with The Jed Foundation to evaluate and strengthen its systems to address mental health issues and to advise on policies, programs and services that can benefit students.

That has led to extended outreach to meet students at the right moment, including designing orientation programs that help students connect with each other and make them aware of support services at all of Mason's campuses and locations, according to **Dr. Rachel Wernicke**, Associate Dean for University Life and Chief Mental Health Officer.

"We've been very intentional in creating spaces where people feel they belong," she said. "We know that social connections are a predictor of well-being and academic success, so we talk a lot about not just responding as an intervention, but ensuring we have preventative programs available to give students the skills they need to handle the tough times."

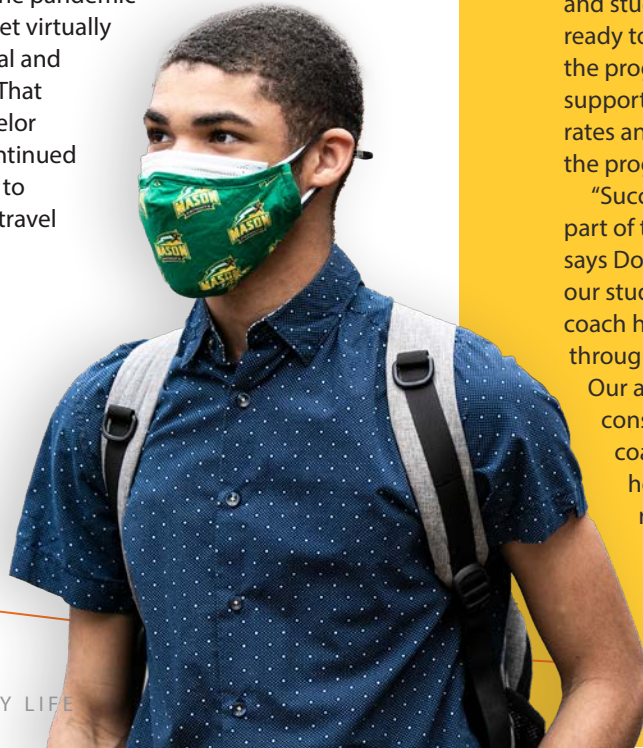
College students, particularly those in their first year away from home, face unique challenges as they adapt to being more independent and work to understand their identities. Those feelings intensify among marginalized and underrepresented students, leaders say.

"It is a time when there is a lot expected of them and students are trying to figure out so much about themselves," said **Dr. Jennifer Kahler**, CAPS Director. "Our goal is to remove barriers and increase access to care."

That effort revealed itself in Mason partnering with ProtoCall, a crisis hotline. This has expanded after-hours services and put students a phone call away from licensed clinicians to provide crisis intervention and referral services at night and on weekends.

CAPS pivoted to an encrypted telehealth platform during the pandemic that allowed students to meet virtually with counselors for individual and group sessions, Kahler said. That ability to meet with a counselor virtually or in person has continued as Mason students returned to campuses in the fall, easing travel hurdles.

"The college years are challenging and students react to the intensity of the world around them," Kahler said. "It's important that we try to move at the same pace and analyze what we can do better to deliver the services they need."



**ADVANCE**, a partnership between Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) and Mason, continues to grow. In its fourth year, the program has an enrollment of over 2,500 students across the two institutions. The program has seen 470 students complete their Associate's degree from NVCC and matriculate to Mason. 16 students have graduated with both an associate's and a bachelor's degree.

University Life supports ADVANCE students through a success coaching model, assigning a coach at point of entry into ADVANCE who sticks with the student until degree completion, and supports their academic, co-curricular, and career goals.

This fall, ADVANCE welcomed a new Director, **Dr. Jason Dodge**, to the team. Bringing a wealth of experience in transfer initiatives and student success, Dr. Dodge is ready to build out the elements of the program that will continue to support and grow student success rates and positive engagement in the program.

"Success coaching is an integral part of the ADVANCE program" says Dodge. "The holistic support our students receive through their coach helps to ensure success throughout the transfer process.

Our annual student survey consistently ranks success coaching as one of the most helpful resources they receive as an ADVANCE student."

## Shannon Osborne

Assistant Director for Financial Well-Being  
Student Support and Advocacy Center  
Joined UL in January 2020



### Q: What is your favorite spot on campus?

**Shannon:** My favorite spot is better described as a path. Driving onto Mason on Campus Drive, through all of the sports fields is so beautiful this time of year as the leaves change colors.

**Ethan:** My favorite spot on campus is The EDGE on the SciTech campus. I enjoy walking the trails, seeing the trees, hearing the sounds of the outdoors, and simply being in nature.

### Q: Describe the nature of your work.

**Shannon:** My job is to help students navigate the confusing world of finances. Anything from creating a budget, managing credit, finding financial aid options, figuring out how to pay off balances, student loan repayment and more. Over the last year, through the Stay Mason/Emergency Assistance Fund, we have helped thousands of students mitigate financial challenges related to COVID-19.

**Ethan:** My work includes providing leadership for our fitness classes, club sports, intramural, outdoor adventure, well-being options, and experiential learning offerings. I also work with our "Leading through Reading" book discussion group, the Resilience Badge cohort, and collaborations such as the Let's Eat Healthy series and Chapter Next.

## Ethan Carter

Associate Director of Programs,  
Well-Being, & Assessment  
Mason Recreation  
Joined UL in February 2011



### Q: What aspects of your job make you get out of bed each morning?

**Shannon:** In the Student Support and Advocacy Center we truly are advocates for students. My goal is that when students leave a meeting with me they have the confidence to believe that they can manage their finances and no longer feel alone in the process.

**Ethan:** I feel so fortunate to work with such a fantastic group of people -- from the Recreation wage staff to the professional staff in the department and in University Life, to those I work with in my adjunct teaching role.

### Q: What are your hopes for the future Mason student?

**Shannon:** I would love to see financial literacy programs being made available and easily accessible to every student at the start of their time at Mason.

**Ethan:** My hope for every student is that they can find the courage to be themselves. I strongly believe that we need each other to achieve our best; who you are inspires others to step out and live.

## Tools to Thrive: Our Commitment to Supporting

# Holistic Well-Being

Mason bolstered its focus on well-being throughout the pandemic, however these efforts have been a staple of our values as an institution from the beginning. Much of the work within University Life aligns with goals to support the holistic well-being of every student; we will only be successful when we support the well-being of our entire community.

The Center for the Advancement of Well-Being (CWB) joined University Life in spring 2020. The center has expanded significantly in under two years. In collaboration with a number of University Life partners, CWB now offers a robust collection of programs and certifications accessible to students, employees, and the public.

## CONNECTING TO COMMUNITY

### RX RACIAL HEALING CIRCLES

RHCs allow us to discover the common humanity within our diverse population. Created by the Center for the Advancement of Well-Being Senior Scholar Dr. Gail Christopher, RHCs use the powerful approach of storytelling to focus on compassion, health, well-being, agency, and inclusion. Circles are designed for community building and racial awareness.

### MASON CHOOSES KINDNESS

MCK is an initiative intended to create and sustain a kindness revolution across Mason Nation. MCK features activities and resources that explore what it means to be kind. We aim to motivate our community to both engage in and spread acts of kindness far and wide. A fall 2021 launch of the Kindness Ambassador program is helping to crystallize this noble mission.

## MANAGING STRESS

### RESILIENCE BADGE

The Resilience Badge contributes to our students' ability to thrive. This uniquely Mason program offers six asynchronous modules that aim to support students' understanding of resilience, their ability to adopt a growth mindset, deepen optimism, explore fear, and identify productive responses to stress. Participants conclude the program with the development of an Individual Resilience Plan and a badge that can be showcased on career search credentials.



## TAKING CARE OF PHYSICAL HEALTH

### IMPROVE PHYSICAL HEALTH

University Life provides a plethora of ways to help Patriots strengthen and improve physical health. Mason BurnAlong offers online classes and workshops centered on exercise strategies, nutrition, and sleep hygiene. Students can also engage in person through any of the Mason Recreation facilities, club sports, intramurals, or outdoor adventures.

### MASON NATION THRIVING TOGETHER 5K

The second annual, virtual Mason Nation Thriving Together 5K took place in October 2021, raising \$4,000 (from nearly 100 donors) for the Student Emergency Assistance Fund, The Student Food and Housing Insecurity Fund, and the Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation Campus Fund. Future plans include an in-person event.

## DISCOVERING MEANING AND PURPOSE

### INTENTIONALLY FINDING MEANING

Intentionality in finding meaning and purpose is at the core of holistic well-being. With 350 Registered Student Organizations, Patriots have ample opportunities to engage and put their values into action. Mason360 features professional, academic, and affinity organizations, as well as campus ministry and social justice groups.

### MASON'S STRENGTHS

Mason's Strengths Academy gives students an opportunity to discover talents through engagement with the CliftonStrengths Assessment, a well-known tool that measures natural patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving. The program offers workshops and one-on-one coaching designed to help Patriots thrive.

## TAKING CARE OF MENTAL HEALTH

### MINDFUL MASON MOMENTS

Mindful Mason Moments are facilitated opportunities for group meditation. The research-backed practice of meditation offers substantial positive benefits, from less stress to increased concentration. MMM facilitators hold space for participants to slow down and reconnect, allowing participants to navigate their day with more awareness, connection, and ease.

### MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING

Offered at Mason since 2014, Mental Health First Aid Training prepares professional staff and faculty members with a toolkit to support community members struggling with their mental health. Training helps participants become aware of the signs and symptoms of mental illness, and addresses the stigma often attached to it. Participants who complete this eight-hour training earn a three-year certification through the National Council for Behavioral Health.

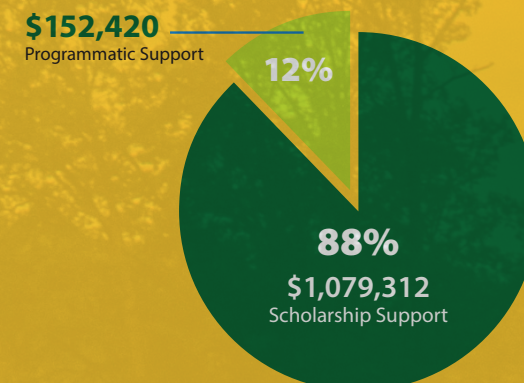
# Giving to UNIVERSITY LIFE

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 unwavering support of our students.

## DONOR PARTICIPATION



## GIVING BY AREA OF IMPACT



**\$1,231,732**  
in gifts and pledges made in support of University Life

**52**  
University Life initiatives received gifts

**2,776**  
Donors

Totals represent gifts and pledges made in fiscal year 2021 (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021).

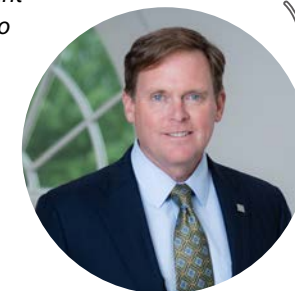
Gifts can be made in support of University Life and our students at [ulife.gmu.edu](http://ulife.gmu.edu), or by contacting Kaitlin Cicchetti, Director of Advancement for University Life at [koyler@gmu.edu](mailto:koyler@gmu.edu).



# Community Partners Making a Difference:



Sandy Spring Bank has been the title sponsor of the University Life Diversity Scholarship Golf Classic for more than a decade. We spoke with **Jay O'Brien**, Executive Vice President and Chief Banking Officer at Sandy Spring, who helps spearhead the bank's involvement.



**Q: Why does Sandy Spring Bank support the Diversity Scholarship Golf Classic?**

"A founding core principle for our bank, from 153 years ago, is to make the communities we serve better places to live, work, raise a family and run a business. Our employees live that out every day, leading and volunteering, in big ways and small. Supporting the Classic is very meaningful to us."

**Q: What makes the EIP and STEP programs effective, in your view?**

Supporting the EIP and STEP programs and scholarships for these inspiring and deserving students is all about providing opportunity. One of the great things about being a Sandy Spring banker is the desire and ability to help people get from where they are now to where they want to be. The STEP and EIP programs do just that.

**Q: What have you learned from the students you meet at Mason?**

"I've heard stories first-hand from students about how scholarships have changed the trajectory of their lives. These scholarships have proven results in providing access to a college education to many who otherwise might have missed this opportunity. We want to continue helping to expand opportunities for many more students in the future."

**Q: How does the Diversity Classic benefit the region?**

"This tournament helps Mason create a vibrant and diverse student population. Many of them go on to then build careers in our Greater Washington communities, helping make our businesses more diverse and more representative of all the people who live here."

**Q: Finally, what can you say about the volunteers you've met who organize the tournament?**

"A successful event—especially one that has thrived for 25 years—requires amazing leaders and volunteers. The Diversity Classic volunteers and supporters are incredibly passionate about the impact that Mason and its programs have on these amazing students and so committed to helping the students reach their goals ... literally changing lives for the better."

## Diversity Scholarship Golf Classic — Exemplifying Community Involvement

Over the past 25 years, the annual Diversity Scholarship Golf Classic has become one of George Mason University's most durable and meaningful traditions.

More than 100 golfers tee off at this year's classic on June 14 to support two programs—the Early Identification Program (EIP) and the Student Transition Empowerment Program (STEP)—that exemplify Mason's mission of access to excellence.

Since it debuted in 1995, the Diversity Scholarship Golf Classic has raised **more than \$700,000 to support scholarships and aid for deserving first-generation college students.** That translates into more than 220 scholarships awarded.

The tournament is a top fundraiser because its cause is so strong, according to **Angela Moody**, Chair of the University Life Advisory Board, which puts on the event. "Our generous sponsors understand that the mission of the event directly supports preparing, recruiting and retaining first-generation college students," says Moody. "The 2020 EIP graduating class saw 96 percent of the EIP students enrolled in college. That is an incredible return on investment."

Founded in 1987, the Early Identification Program supports the academic, career, and personal development of first-generation college-bound students. Each year EIP accepts a new class of rising eighth-graders from seven school districts in Northern Virginia. More than 200 EIP alumni are currently attending Mason.

The Student Transition Empowerment Program helps many of these same students succeed once they are

accepted at Mason. STEP follows a summer bridge model, hosting 50 to 60 students each year who live on campus, take courses together, and receive mentorship support.

"The pot of money we raise from the golf tournament helps students who are already cash-strapped," says **Khaseem Davis**, Director of EIP since 2015. "The great thing is that this money is unrestricted, so we are flexible in how we distribute the funds. We are able to get students the assistance they need, when they need it, and how they need it."

### Funds raised through the Golf Classic can be the key to helping students who struggle to make ends meet

The dedicated volunteers of the University Life Advisory Board, along with University Life staff, are the engines behind the tournament's success. They recruit local corporations, small businesses, and individuals to sponsor (and play in) the tournament, always with the goal of supporting students in mind.

"A big thank you goes to everyone who takes the time to come play and who puts the tournament together," says Khaseem Davis. "They're not paid. They do this because of their affinity for Mason and their love of the students—and wanting to help provide those students the opportunities they need to succeed." So a big thank you from me to everyone who volunteers to help."

Author: Rob Riordan



## Making an Impact Generation to Generation ▶▶

At the root of Jim and Gayle "Gigi" Green's Mason story is the impact education can have, from parent to child, generation to generation. That is why the Greens recently pledged an additional \$50,000 to the Boydie Logan Memorial Scholarship, named in honor of Jim's father.

Boydie Logan was a North Carolina native with a knack for numbers who lied about his age to join the U.S. Army, but never received a college education himself. He served 30 years, earning the rank of Master Sergeant. He started his own extermination business,

“ We need to do more to help people who have gone through hardships. ”

– GAYLE "GIGI" GREEN

but always suspected he would have done even better with an education; an opportunity he didn't want his children to pass up.

“He and my mom [Doris], they always talked about how you need an education or you're not going to go very far in this world,” said Jim. “Don't just get it for yourself [they said]. Try to help other people along the way to do the same thing. They didn't tell me how to do it. All they said was to try.”

The Greens established the Boydie Logan Memorial Scholarship in 2000 to support students affiliated with the Early Identification Program (EIP), Mason's college prep program that aims to support middle and high school students who will be the first in their families to attend college. The Greens' recent pledge of \$50,000 to the endowment ensures EIP students will benefit from this scholarship for years to come.

The Boydie Logan endowment is in addition to another scholarship the couple started, the “W. James and Gayle Green Scholarship Endowment”, which

supports student-athletes.

“When you think about an institution like Mason and our community, as well-off as Fairfax is, and you hear about some of the struggles these kids in EIP have gone through—I think it brings people back to reality,” said Jim.

“We need to do more to help people who have gone through hardships, and EIP is the program that can help them, especially as first-generation college students,” said Gigi.

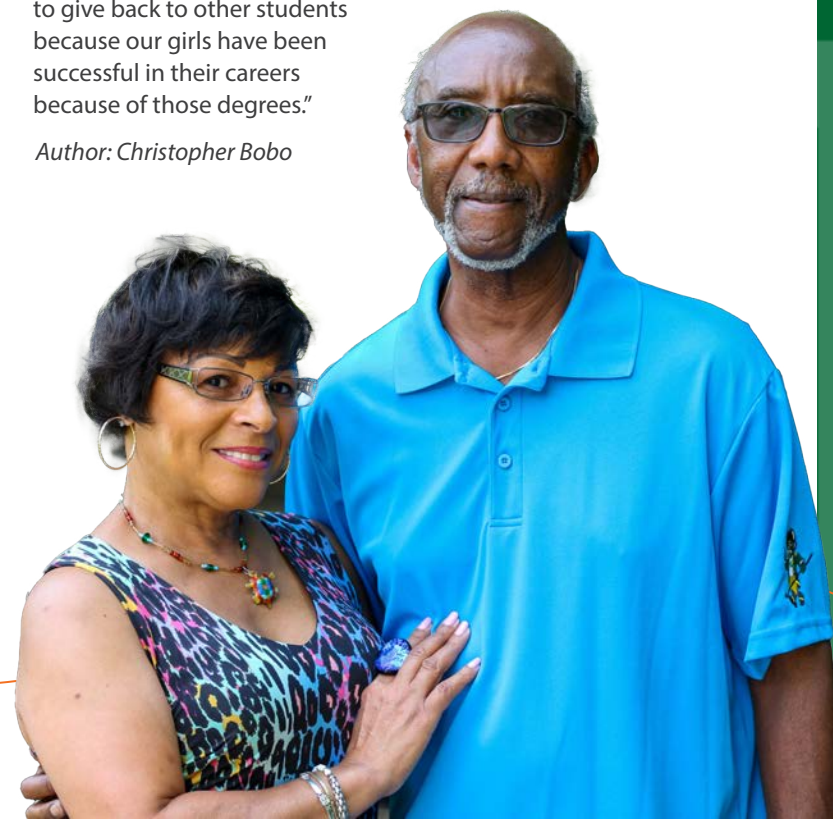
The Greens have been pillars in the Mason community for over 25 years. Jim is a long-time member of the University Life Advisory Board, previously known as the Minority Advisory Board, and the Diversity Advisory Board. Jim also served on the George Mason University Foundation's Board of Trustees. He was central to the creation of University Life's Diversity Scholarship Golf Classic, an annual event that has raised over \$700,000 in its lifetime for first-generation student scholarships, and has co-chaired the event for 25 years.

Gigi graduated from Mason with a BIS in media management and earned her MA in telecommunications. She also served on the University Life Advisory Board and the Patriot Club Advisory Board. Gigi is also Founder and President of the Cookie Jar Club (CJC) whose members have raised \$43,000 for the “CJC/EIP Endowment” at Mason since 2010.

A true Patriot family, their daughter and granddaughter also received master's degrees from Mason.

“Mason has some of the best professors in the country, if not the world,” said Gigi. “So we still want to give back to other students because our girls have been successful in their careers because of those degrees.”

Author: Christopher Bobo



# UNIVERSITY LIFE AWARD RECIPIENTS

## University Outstanding Achievement Awards 2020-2021

- **Adjunct Faculty Service Award**  
*Angelica Newham, University Career Services*
- **Mason Faculty/Staff Alumni Awards**  
*Dr. Adrienne D. White, Mason Care Network*  
*Brent Alexander Johnson, Housing and Residence Life*
- **Patriot Pathbreakers Award**  
Housing and Residence Life and Student Health Services Team : *Christian Barber, Erin Brandt, Mary Davis, Lora Learmont, Jerrelyn Madden, Dr. Erin McCall, Dr. Lisa Park, Aysha Puhl, Faiza Shaikh, Karen Sharrock, Dr. Stephen Wintermeyer*

University Life Emergency Funding Team:  
*Danny Anthes, Laura Bell, Dr. Kaitlin Cicchetti, Dr. Lori Cohen Scher, David Corwin, Crystal Davidson, Birgit Debeerst, Julio Diaz, Elijah Earl, Dr. Brent Ericson, Lewis Forrest, Andrea Frank, Kerry Hentges, Louise Higgins, Dr. Amber Holton-Thomas, Alissa Karton, Dennis Kisielewski, Dr. Maggie Olszewska, Shannon Osborne, Dr. Eunkyong Park, Elizabeth Portaluppi, Sally Richards, Phil Rippa, Atossa Shafaie, Tisheika Snow, Amy Snyder, Rebekah Truog, Jessica Viricochea, Michael Watkins, Karen Wolf*

- **Nancy Murphy Mason Spirit Award**  
*Hope L. Miller, Student Involvement*
- **Goldie and Diane Hattery Award for Excellence**  
*Veronica Escobar, Housing and Residence Life*  
*Juliana Nsiah, Housing and Residence Life*
- **Outstanding Achievement Award**  
*Shannon Osborne, Student Support and Advocacy Center*
- **Exceptional Support Award**  
*Carolyn Kleiman, University Career Services*
- **Margaret C. Howell Award**  
*Josh Kinchen, LGBTQ+ Resources*

## Spring 2021 Mason Awards

- **Spirit of King Award, Spring 2021**  
*Dr. Kheia Hilton, Counseling & Psychological Services*
- **Scholarship Award, Spring 2021**  
*Taylor Campbell was the recipient of the David W. Rossell Endowed Scholarship for Higher Education Program (NODA)*
- **Employee of the Month, May 2021**  
*Aysha Puhl, Associate Director of Residential Student Education and Engagement, Housing and Residence Life*

## University Life Awards Fall 2020-Fall 2021

- **Positive Impact Award, Fall 2020**  
*Bernadette Davies, University Career Services, Fall 2020*
- **Partnership Award, Fall 2020**  
*Jayson Padilla, SAIL*  
*Jade Perez, Enrollment Management*
- **Outstanding Service Award, Spring 2021**  
*Ashley Bus-Morgan, International Programs and Services*  
*Dr. Lisa Park, Student Health Services*  
*Kelly Reid, Student Centers*  
*Philip Wilkerson, University Career Services*
- **Positive Impact Award, Spring 2021**  
*Ebony Amis, International Programs and Services*
- **Positive Impact Award, Fall 2021**  
*Dr. Julie Choe Kim, Graduate Student Life*  
*Dr. Erin McCall, Student Health Services*
- **Outstanding Service Award, Fall 2021**  
*Sophie Gorshenin, University Life Arlington*  
*Rebecca McCrory, New Student and Family Programs*  
*Susan Pilley, International Programs and Services*

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