

UNIVERSITY LIFE IN REVIEW

SUCCEED

A Remarkable Gift That Supports Students

PAGE 8

Student Strengths Coaches Help Peers Flourish

PAGE 10

Boosting Well-Being

PAGE 30



Supporting Students *at every stage*

Friends of University Life,

University Life is dedicated to supporting students at every stage of their George Mason journey. From building community and promoting well-being to opening doors for career readiness, we ensure students have the resources and opportunities they need to thrive.

Philanthropy plays a critical role in this work, especially as we support students in times of change. In this issue of *Succeed*, we celebrate the programs and opportunities that make a real difference in students' lives, as well as the donors whose generosity makes them possible. Every gift strengthens student success and prepares students for lifelong learning and leadership.

Throughout this issue, you'll see the impact of philanthropy across University Life.

- **Adaptive Sports:** On page 12, discover Beep baseball, a groundbreaking initiative led by University Life's Recreation and Disability Services units that is redefining access to sports for blind and visually impaired athletes.
- **Transformational Giving:** On page 8, we celebrate the extraordinary generosity of Kimmy Duong, whose gift to University Life established a scholarship endowment. Her story—marked by perseverance, generosity, and an unwavering belief in the power of education—is truly inspirational.
- **Career Readiness:** On page 5, learn how University Career Services' Scholarship for Unpaid Internships helps students gain vital professional experiences that might otherwise be out of reach.
- **Broad Impact:** On page 28, our Giving at a Glance infographic highlights how donors are shaping every aspect of the student experience.

May these stories inspire you and remind us of the incredible impact we can have when we support students together.

With gratitude,



Rose Pascarell
Vice President for University Life

Photo by Jason Modeste



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Nearly
600
Registered Student
Organizations
including

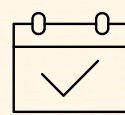
25 fraternities **20** sororities
45 chapters
971 members

Over
353,000
visits to Mason
Recreation facilities,
engaging
70%
of the
on-campus
student population

2,400+
students participating on
319 Intramural Teams and
12 Club Sports teams

GAMEmason hosted
1,300
participants

100% of Early Identification Program alumni
attending George Mason this fall
received a full or partial scholarship —
a first in the program's history



UL Mason Square hosted **400+** outdoor
Plaza events, engaging students, faculty, staff, and the
Arlington community



George Mason Empty
Bowls, a grassroots
fundraising initiative,
exceeded last year's
fundraising total to reach
\$11,500
donated
to the Student Food and
Housing Insecurity Fund

New Student and
Family Programs welcomed
7,700
new students
during orientation



14,200+
clinic interactions with
Student Health Services
serving over
5,100
students



More than
3,300
students
connected with
Disability Services, a
30% increase
since FY21



540
students benefited from
the Gowns for Grads
lending program



The Contemporary Student
Services Lounge hosted
6,250 visits

3 MINUTE READ

Paving the Path to Career Readiness

Open to all George Mason students, the Scholarship for Unpaid Internships provides financial support to ensure access to career opportunities.

By Amanda Milewski

In the current unpredictable and ever-changing job market, where even entry-level positions require experience, an internship can make all the difference. But what happens if a lack of financial support prevents a student from accepting a valuable internship that is unpaid, as many often are?

Thankfully, University Career Services (UCS) has a safety net in the way of its Scholarship for Unpaid Internships, which provides funding for students who would be unable to participate in an internship in their chosen field without it. Students can receive up to \$1,000 during the fall and spring semesters and up to \$3,000 during the summer term if they demonstrate financial hardship and are currently enrolled, degree-seeking students with a minimum 2.0 GPA.

"For some of these students, their internship may convert to a full-time

con't on next page

Photos by Office of University Branding

position,” said Rebekah Truog, office manager, University Career Services. However, “having these internship experiences is important for students’ career goals, regardless of whether it leads to a job,” Truog continued. “Employers want to see experience on a resume, and these internships can provide that.”

Invaluable Experience

Julia Decker, a master of social work (MSW) student who is on track to graduate in spring 2026, explained that part of the MSW curriculum is the practicum—or internship. Students in the program must successfully participate in two practicums to graduate, consisting of more than 1,000 unpaid hours of work.

“It offered me invaluable experience working directly with the patients, care team, and hospital.”

The recipient of a Scholarship for Unpaid Internships, Decker, who is from northern Virginia, completed her first practicum in the spring at VHC Health, a hospital in Arlington. While assigned to the behavioral health and substance use intensive outpatient unit, she “was assimilated into the care team and had the privilege of leading intensive outpatient groups, teaching psychoeducation, leading mindfulness exercises, incorporating new interventions, and more,” she described.

Decker worked under the supervision of a licensed clinical social worker and noted that this type of “critical hands-on learning that extends beyond the classroom,” helps interns progress from social work student to social work professional. “It offered me invaluable experience working directly with the patients, care team, and hospital,” she said.

Preference is given to potential scholarship recipients who are seeking their first internship/career experience. “The scholarship is not major specific,” Truog noted, so there is a wide assortment of internship opportunities available. Many are at nonprofits, community health, social work organizations, and student teaching positions. “We also are seeing a recent uptick in tech start-ups,” she said.

UCS offers a supplementary scholarship for student veterans, thanks to a generous donation from the Colonel Tom Johnson Family Scholarship for Veterans Endowment. Student veteran applicants must have a minimum 3.0 GPA.

Meeting a Need

The scholarship program is mainly funded through revenue generated by the UCS career fair as well as donations from their Career Partners Program and donors to the Career Readiness Fund. Scholarship money can be used however the recipient sees fit—tuition, transportation expenses, professional wardrobe needs; there are no restrictions on how the funds are used.

Applicants are required to demonstrate financial need and provide answers to questions relating the internship experience to their career goals, Truog explained. Scholarships are usually awarded in varying amounts to between five and 10 students each semester. She noted that the program has awarded funding to more than 150 students thus far. She likes to remind students of the UCS career readiness equation: Earn a Degree + Gain Experiences + Market Yourself = Career Ready. ■

Amanda Milewski is a freelance writer.

For more information about the application process or contributing to the Career Readiness Fund, scan the QR Code



Julia Decker, a current recipient of a Scholarship for Unpaid Internships.

Paul J. Bazzano III

BS, Communication – Public Relations, George Mason University
Assistant Director of Competitive Sports and Athletic Training,
Mason Recreation, 23 years



Vicki Dominick

MSEd, Educational Psychology,
Northern Illinois University
Associate Director, Learning Services, 16 years

Q: Describe your job in 50 words or less.

Paul: My role within Mason Recreation is to create meaningful recreational sport experiences that help students build community, grow as leaders, and develop a sense of belonging at George Mason. In addition, I oversee the strategic direction of the Intramural Sports, Club Sports, and Athletic Training programs.

Vicki: My job is to support students’ academic success. I oversee the Learning Services program, which offers academic coaching, academic success workshops, the Knack tutoring program, and a UNIV course focused on academic success strategies.

Q: What is the best thing about your job?

Paul: Watching students grow into their roles. Whether it is a referee taking on a leadership position or a club athlete stepping up to lead their team, it is those moments when everything clicks and they realize what they are capable of.

Vicki: I love talking with students about their goals and helping them discover learning strategies. When a student is struggling in a challenging class, it’s incredibly rewarding to witness their transformation—from confusion and frustration to clarity and confidence. Seeing their face light up when they finally understand a concept is deeply satisfying.

Q: How does your work impact the student experience?

Paul: As a former Mason student, I know how important it is to find your place on campus. My job is about helping students build that sense of belonging through sport, leadership, and teamwork. I also focus on preparing them for life after college by developing transferable skills they can carry into their careers.

Vicki: My work helps students build confidence and reduce academic anxiety by helping them develop effective study habits, time management skills, and test-taking strategies. Through academic coaching

and workshops, students learn to assess their own needs and apply strategies independently—skills that foster lifelong learning.

Q: What makes you optimistic about the future when you interact with today’s students?

Paul: I see students come into our programs unsure of themselves and leave with confidence, leadership experience, and a stronger sense of who they are. Sport gives them a chance to grow in ways that stay with them long after they leave George Mason.

Vicki: Their resilience and care for one another. I see students who have overcome significant challenges while pursuing their degrees. Their commitment to education and desire to pursue careers that change the world is encouraging. I am particularly inspired by how students support each other. The graduate assistants, peer academic coaches, and peer tutors are excited to help their classmates. Working alongside them reminds me that the future is in capable, caring hands.

Q: What is your best piece of advice for students?

Paul: Find something that makes you happy and commit to it. At the same time, look for ways to challenge yourself. Real growth happens when you step outside your comfort zone. The more you lean into those moments, the more you’ll learn about who you are and what you can accomplish.

Vicki: Build a connection with someone at the university—whether it’s a fellow student, a professor, a staff member, or a supervisor. Find someone who can offer support and sound advice. When I was an undergraduate, our dean of students introduced me to the field of higher education, which inspired me to pursue a career helping college students achieve their goals. As a first-generation college student, I hadn’t realized there were career paths in higher education beyond becoming a professor. These connections can help students gain support, learn about opportunities, and develop lifelong friendships that enrich their personal and academic lives.

Photos by Office of University Branding



3 MINUTE READ

Transforming Lives Through Education

A generous gift from a longtime George Mason philanthropist establishes a scholarship endowment in University Life.

By Amanda Milewski

Kimmy Duong's journey from war-torn Vietnam to the United States laid the foundation for a life marked by resilience, entrepreneurial success, and extraordinary philanthropy. Fleeing her homeland in 1975 with just \$30 and a few belongings, Duong persevered and built a life dedicated to helping others realize their potential—especially through education.

Duong credits her parents for instilling in her a deep respect for education, something they cherished despite its limited availability in Vietnam. That tenet continues to be a driving force for Duong, most recently through a transformational gift to George Mason University that carries a \$36 million impact.

Through the Kimmy Duong Foundation (KDF), her gift led to naming the Long Nguyen and Kimmy Duong School of Computing and establishing the Long Nguyen and Kimmy Duong Scholarship Endowment housed in University Life. The ongoing work of KDF, which Duong founded in 2015, supports student scholarships and health and welfare initiatives in the United States and Vietnam. The endowment funds scholarships with a preference for students majoring in nursing, education, and journalism.

While still in a refugee camp, Duong secured a position with IBM, a company she had worked for in Vietnam. She resumed her career in Northern Virginia, working hard to overcome obstacles that many immigrants face. Driven by a desire to give back, Duong consistently focuses her philanthropy on public colleges and universities. "Education is a way for people to get out of poverty," she explained. "I want to help the students who need it most."

A Lasting Impact

Through the KDF scholarship program, hundreds of students from the Washington, D.C., area have been empowered to pursue their educational goals. More than 200 George Mason students have directly benefited from Duong's support and unwavering commitment to the university. "Kimmy

Duong has supported George Mason students with care and generosity for many years," said Rose Pascarell, vice president for University Life. "This remarkable gift reflects her deep belief in our students' potential. We are truly honored by her partnership and deeply grateful for her continued support."

An Nguyen, BS Information Technology '19, MS Software Engineering '21 (no relation to Long Nguyen), was an inaugural recipient of a KDF scholarship in

"This remarkable gift reflects her deep belief in our students' potential."

2018. "The scholarship made a remarkable impact on my time at George Mason," he said. "It helped me pursue the accelerated master's program, and I put the principles of the scholarship into practice in academia and in extracurricular activities." Receiving the scholarship inspired Nguyen to reflect on how to personalize the scholarship's founding values, such as the importance of community involvement. "Embracing the principles of the Kimmy Duong Foundation into my life has served as a catalyst for more success, including my current career in the tech industry, in which continuous learning and collaboration are paramount to making business and social impacts."

Rakibul Alam, a junior majoring in business management and marketing, used his scholarship to study abroad in Morocco, furthering his interest in global leadership.

"As a first-generation college student, I have had to figure everything out myself and be my own champion," Alam said. Receiving the scholarship demonstrated to him that "someone else believed in me and that I could make an impact, which pushed me

to go beyond my [prescribed] curriculum and adopt a multidisciplinary approach to my education."

A Legacy That Inspires

Duong's philanthropy is more than just financial support; it's a call to action. Her goal is to empower students who, in turn, will encourage students who follow them. Former scholarship recipients now serve as judges for the program, embodying the Foundation's ethos of giving back. "We look to the scholarship recipients to commit to paying it forward and helping the next generation," Duong said.

That sentiment is not lost on An Nguyen, who through his position as a software engineer at Microsoft, reviews student resumes, attends career and networking fairs at George Mason, and leads community outreach opportunities, notably Microsoft's support of PatriotHacks 2024. Similarly, the scholarship and Duong's example have spurred Alam to become a donor to the Costello College of Business Dean's Fund. He plans to continue his philanthropy at George Mason and to make his mark as a global leader, something he is already doing as the chief communications officer of a social venture that manufactures women's products in South Asia.

Throughout her remarkable life, Duong has transformed personal adversity into opportunity for herself as well as thousands of others. Her legacy is one of vision, perseverance, and generosity—a testament to the power of education to change lives. ■

Amanda Milewski is a freelance writer.

To explore the Kimmy Duong Foundation and its scholarship programs, visit thekimmyduongfoundation.org.

To read more about the Kimmy Duong Foundation's gift scan the QR Code:



Rakibul Alam talks with Kimmy Duong at the Grand Celebration for Fuse at UL Mason Square.

Photos by Office of University Branding

2 MINUTE READ

Student Strengths Coaches Help Peers

Flourish

A new coaching program from University Life's Center for the Advancement of Well-Being allows students to support their peers in developing their strengths.



By Nance Lucas, Lewis Forrest II, and Nancy Donnelly

A new peer coaching program is empowering George Mason University students to unlock their strengths—thanks to a pioneering program from the Center for the Advancement of Well-Being and a transformative \$1.5 million grant from the Clifton Foundation.

38 undergraduate students
benefiting from
16 Clifton Fellows

This fall, an inaugural cohort of 38 undergraduate students begins its learning journey as student peer strengths coaches, guided by a team of 16 faculty, staff, and scholars, known as the Clifton Fellows. The fellows collaborated to lay the foundation for this initiative, shaping every facet of the program and serving as ambassadors for strengths education.

Through the three-credit course UNIV 379 “Strengths Coaching Education,” students will become

proficient in the Gallup Organization’s CliftonStrengths Assessment, a self-discovery tool widely used around the world. These paid student coaches will be prepared to help other students discover their unique strengths and how to leverage those in everyday situations. As part of their coursework, student coaches will develop competencies including active listening, communications, leadership presence, and self-awareness—skills needed in today’s workplaces that will make them competitive in the job market.

A High-Impact Learning Experience

Two of the first student coaches—Whitney Cardwell, a sophomore sociology major, and Sydney Carver, a senior majoring in mathematics—see the program as a natural next step in their educational curriculum. “I was interested in the coaching program because it seemed like a great opportunity not only for myself but for the students I’ll be able to help,” Cardwell said. “In addition to learning more about my own strengths, I will be able to help others recognize their strengths, and I thought

that was an amazing thing to be a part of!”

Carver noted, “Personal growth is something meaningful to me, and having the opportunity to contribute to a mission involving my peers and community is incredibly valuable to me as well. I hope mostly to be able to share my experience here at Mason as a Black first-generation female in a STEM field. And while this role does not have math at the forefront, it does involve skills-building when contributing as a leader.”

“I will be able to help others recognize their strengths, and I thought that was an amazing thing to be a part of!”

George Mason is uniquely positioned to offer this innovative developmental experience. By leveraging a peer-education model, the program enhances students’ understanding and application of the CliftonStrengths framework while providing career-ready experiences. Research supports the benefits of peer education, showing positive impacts on both competency development and social connection.

Carver is excited to make that connection once the program begins. “My top five strengths are Positivity, Empathy, Winning Others Over, Harmony, and Intellection, which fit well with the responsibilities of this role,” she said. “I’m someone who really leads with my heart for the betterment of others, and to me, that is something I knew would be a major part of student strength coaching and will continue to excite me every step of the way.” ■

Nance Lucas is executive director of the Center for the Advancement of Well-Being. Lewis Forrest II is assistant vice president for University Life. Nancy Donnelly is a freelance writer.



Photos by Office of University Branding

STUDENT PROFILE



Mackenzie (Mack) L. Freilich

Exeter, Rhode Island

May 2025
Scalia School of Law
graduate

2025 Scalia Law School graduate Mack Freilich had many opportunities to learn and lead over the course of his student career. But it wasn’t until he worked as president of OutLaw to organize the 2024 Pride On the Plaza event in Mason Square that he really recognized his leadership capabilities.

“Putting on that event showed me the true meaning of resilience,” Freilich said. “When it seems like everything is against you but you keep going, organizing such a big undertaking really elevated that for me. Nothing I did would have been possible without the support of University Life’s LGBTQ+ Resources Center.”

OutLaw brings together the law school’s LGBTQ+ community and allies to engage in meaningful dialogue and activities that promote unity and understanding. Freilich conceived a big idea for the inaugural Pride On the Plaza. He wanted to gather all of the Washington, D.C., area’s LGBTQIA+ law-student organizations and the community at large to celebrate LGBT History Month in October through live entertainment, raffles, free community health and legal clinics, and much more. Proceeds from the massive event went toward furthering OutLaw’s work and mission.

“Josh Kinchen, the Center’s director, was a tremendous help in the initial thought process and pre-planning for what may have been the largest student-led event on the Mason Square Plaza,” Freilich said. “He showed me that I have a community, and that the Center is a support network, which was a good reminder that we’re all in this together.”

The event required many student volunteers, so Freilich reached out to law students from the entire Washington, D.C., area, not just George Mason. “For me it was that lightbulb of, ‘If we can do this here for this one event, what’s possible in the future when we work together across the courtroom or across the boardroom table?’ We need to be able to network, and my work with OutLaw and the LGBTQ+ Resources Center really taught me that valuable skill that I’ll always use.”

Photo by Office of University Branding



4 MINUTE READ

Leveling the Playing Field

Beep baseball, an adaptive sport for visually impaired players, allows athletes of all abilities to come together.

Photos by Paul Bazzano III



Scan the QR code to make a gift in support of Beep baseball at George Mason University

By Nancy Donnelly

In a first not only for the region but for any university in the United States, visually impaired university baseball players are getting a chance to step up to the plate. Led by a volunteer coach and University Life's Mason Recreation and Disability Services departments, Mason's Beep baseball initiative is gaining momentum after a successful community learn-to-play clinic last fall.

The adaptive sport of Beep baseball allows blind or visually impaired batters to listen for a loud beep coming from a ball pitched by a sighted pitcher. If the batter hits the ball, they run to one of two buzzing bases. If they touch the base before the ball is fielded, they've scored a run. It's a game that prioritizes communication, teamwork, and athleticism. This initiative supports George Mason's efforts to build an inclusive community where all students are valued and have meaningful ways to participate, connect, and belong.

"Beep baseball is a fantastic way for Mason to tap into some underserved populations from an athletic perspective," said Paul J. Bazzano, assistant director of competitive sports with Mason Recreation. "It provides some unique opportunities for us, as there really are no collegiate Beep baseball programs. But we have had some conversations with other schools interested in forming their own teams. Beep baseball brings together students, staff, and community members in a meaningful way.

It's about creating space for inclusive play and laying the groundwork for something that can grow far beyond campus."

A Model for Inclusivity

The addition of Beep baseball to Mason Recreation represents the fulfillment of a lifelong passion of a George Mason philanthropist, the late Dr. Barry R. Berkey, through the vision of his wife, Velma Berkey. She proposed the idea to Bazzano and funded the three-year pilot program.

"My husband's dream was to become a major-league baseball player, but he became a doctor instead," Berkey said. "In later years Barry's vision gradually deteriorated, which greatly impacted watching and enjoying his favorite sport. We became very sensitive to

visually impaired and blind kids who may be in the same position. After my husband passed away, I delved into reading about Beep baseball, which inspired me to present the sport to George Mason University."

Berkey said the George Mason community has an opportunity to be an innovator and leader by bringing this sport to campus and the region. "The team can serve as a model for other colleges and universities to follow suit. George Mason can be a mentor further down the road for high schools and Little League teams."

Jeff Rhines, head coach of the Philadelphia team that won the 2024 Beep Baseball National Championship, helped arrange Mason's first learn-to-play clinic. Alfonso Medrano, head coach for the Houston-based team, also provided valuable input. Students and members of the surrounding community who participated described it as a fantastic

It's about creating space for inclusive play and laying the groundwork for something that can grow far beyond campus."

community-building experience.

"We had two blind students who thoroughly enjoyed it and said they would definitely do it again," said Naomi Martinez-Jones, director of disability services at George Mason. "We also had some of Mason's baseball team help and participate, and that educated people on a certain culture and identity. And just all different types of people coming together for the purpose of Beep baseball and everyone, regardless of vision, could participate. It was great for everyone to have that connection with each other."

George Mason's long-term goal is to build a competitive team made up of students, staff, and community members to compete in tournaments and events sanctioned by the National Beep Baseball Association. As a first step, Mason is working to connect with other teams and recruit a volunteer coach. Mason Recreation plans to offer more training and networking events and launch a sustainable, inclusive team with regular practices and programming. ■

Nancy Donnelly is a freelance writer.

2 MINUTE READ

Space to Come Together

With the upcoming opening of the new Activities Building, students have a place to gather and build community.

George Mason University's eagerly anticipated Student Activities Building on the Fairfax campus will open early next year after a phased launch. The \$11 million, 25,000-square-foot building, designed for student engagement and situated behind the Recreation Athletic Complex, will welcome student gatherings into its spacious halls.

"With this new facility, we're putting students at the heart of our community, creating vibrant spaces for connection and recreation," said Pam Patterson, associate vice president for University Life. "This space embodies our commitment to student well-being and the University Life mission: Every Student Succeeds."

The building provides event space for Registered Student Organizations, student engagement activities, the Green Machine pep band, and Recreation activities. The phased launch alleviates pressure on

With this new facility, we're putting students at the heart of our community, creating vibrant spaces for connection and recreation."

high-demand spaces like Dewberry Hall and The Hub Ballroom, providing much-needed availability for events like the Health and Fitness Expo, Career Fair, and IVth Night.

"We are thrilled to have a dedicated space for practices and a home base," said Michael "Doc Nix" Nickens, associate professor of music and director of the Green Machine arts ensemble, which has been without a permanent home since its founding in 2006. Lauren Long, executive director of Student Involvement, added, "We're excited that this space will support so many facets of student life. I am especially

excited about opportunities for RSOs, like our dance teams, to have more space to come together, practice, meet, and build community."

This flexible, student-centered space represents a significant step in enhancing the student experience at George Mason. According to Sheldon Tate, executive director of recreation, "This space is about improving the way we serve the community." University Life has allocated funding for future equipment upgrades.

The building features two large, multipurpose spaces—each roughly the size of a basketball court—with collapsible dividers to allow flexible use. There are also small, medium, and large conference rooms, making it an ideal venue for many types of campus activities. "We designed this building with students' needs in mind, and we look forward to seeing students engage with each other and feel more connected to campus," Patterson said. ■

Written by University Life staff

Photo by Office of University Branding

STUDENT PROFILE



Eatha Lynch
Enterprise, Alabama

May 2025 Mason graduate
Biology

New Patriot alum Eatha Lynch spent her senior year at George Mason University gaining valuable job experience through an unpaid internship scholarship from University Career Services. During her internship with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), she completed a project with the Branch of History, Library, and Partnerships under the direction of USFWS historian Mark Madison.

"The project entailed creating a comprehensive museum display for the Endangered Species Act's 50th anniversary," Lynch explained. Most of the work was virtual, but Lynch noted that although Madison mentored her throughout the placement, he left much of the planning and execution of materials up to her.

The work included "archival synthesis, writing, participating in oral histories, and independent research," Lynch said. She created a timeline for the project and met periodically with Madison. She wrote the text and chose historical images for a pop-up museum display, an accompanying brochure, and a website with supporting information.

Lynch acknowledged that many entry-level jobs require unpaid experience, which can pose a significant economic barrier for applicants. "I would not have been able to accept this internship without the financial support from University Career Services," she noted.

She is grateful for her George Mason education broadly and the internship scholarship specifically for the practical skills she will be able to apply to her career. "Completing the internship allowed me to strengthen and hone skills—project management, scientific communication, and synthesizing large amounts of information—which will be applicable in any future career," Lynch said. While at George Mason, the peers, mentors, and potential employers with whom she has interacted have become a large professional network that, coupled with her practical experience, give her an advantage in today's job market. "I am excited for the years of work ahead of me and thankful for the work I have had the opportunity to complete as an internship scholarship recipient."

Photo provided

3 MINUTE READ

A Spiritual Oasis

A new campus venue offers a tranquil environment for reflection, meditation, prayer, and connection.

Photos by Jennifer De La Rosa and CLJE staff

By Susan Grunder

Open to all students, faculty, and staff regardless of spiritual or cultural background, the Spiritual and Interfaith Center serves as a sanctuary for personal growth and interfaith dialogue. Located in Fenwick A on the Fairfax campus, this multi-level center offers the George Mason community a peaceful retreat.

The lower level features a quiet space for mindfulness, contemplation, and prayer, while the upper level offers a semi-quiet area for community engagement, conversation, and studying. The center also provides reservable spaces for campus groups for interfaith programming, collective prayer, celebrations of spiritual holy days, and group mindfulness activities. It will also house offices

for the Campus Ministry Association—the independent association of chaplains who work with student organizations—and their affiliates.

Creating this dedicated space addresses a growing demand and is in line with national trends indicating a greater focus on spiritual well-being on college campuses. Other institutions, including Dartmouth College, the University of North Carolina

“...bringing students together around their faith practices is one way to have difficult conversations in productive and supportive ways.”

at Greensboro, and Elon University, have made interfaith spaces an integral part of their campus communities.

University Life Vice President Rose Pascarell noted that the Center supports student development. “Students come to us from all different faith backgrounds, and some students rely on their faith, or faith-based learnings to inform the way they move through their college experience. To be able to explore that with students, to be able to support students in that growth is as important as the socio-emotional growth they experience in college.”

Pascarell sees the center contributing to students’ abilities to navigate a complex world. “We’re living in a world where we are witnessing increased conflict, and it seems to me that bringing students together around their faith practices is one way to have difficult conversations in productive and supportive ways,” she added.

Cultivating Community

The center includes staff and will have a programming board to help direct a variety of interfaith programs through collaboration with internal and external partners. The center will also sponsor a student-led interfaith council. Central to the programming is the hope that George Mason campus community members will discover and appreciate commonalities and differences, expanding their capacity for empathy.

Students have already engaged with the center. The Muslim Student Association (MSA) held Friday prayers in the space last spring. “People really love it and appreciate being able to host Friday prayer in the new space,” according to the MSA president. “The first time in particular was truly beautiful and a bit of a full-circle moment since our 2019 MSA president gave the sermon.” The MSA and other student groups have been advocating for increased space for years. It has quickly become a place for students to decompress and focus on mental health.

Community members have access to supportive items such as prayer rugs, meditation cushions, dividers, noise machines, a podium, and more. ■

Susan Grunder is the graduate professional assistant for spiritual capacity building and pluralism initiatives at George Mason University.

STUDENT PROFILE



Latha Kona

Visakhapatnam, India

2024 Mason graduate
Master’s in Data Analytics
Engineering

When Latha Kona accepted an internship through the On-Campus Internship Program (OCIP), led by University Career Services and funded by University Life, little did she know that it would lead directly to her professional career.

With a background in data analytics from her home country of India, Kona applied to be a finance data analyst intern in the office of Auxiliary Services and Operations. She worked 20 hours per week with the finance team while studying for her master’s degree in data analytics engineering.

OCIP creates paid, career-building internships for George Mason students who have barriers to off-campus work by partnering with campus offices to develop meaningful positions and offering ongoing support throughout the process. Kona hailed the program for “its structure, including mock interviews and feedback and evaluation processes at the end. That really helped me reflect on my performance and identify areas for improvement.”

Additionally, she explained that although she had a theoretical academic foundation in finance, she hadn’t been able to apply that knowledge to real-world problems. “The internship allowed me to explore new areas and understand how data analytics can be used to address practical challenges in finance.”

Kona also credits the Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS) in helping her secure the internship. “When I received the offer, I was confused as to whether I could accept it because of a restriction on my visa,” she recounted. “OIPS immediately helped me understand my eligibility and the process involved in accepting the position.”

The internship was so successful for Kona and Auxiliary Services and Operations that she was offered a full-time position as a finance data analyst upon her graduation. Kona highly recommends OCIP for current students. “They have a wide range of opportunities to cater to different academic backgrounds and career goals,” she affirmed. “They offer tailored support such as networking events and job search guidance, which helps students feel prepared and confident.”

Photo provided

Productive Partnerships

The Faculty Fellows Program provides opportunities for faculty and University Life to collaborate on projects that enrich the student experience.

By Nancy Donnelly

Partnerships and passion projects. That's what University Life's Faculty Fellows Program offers to faculty who take advantage of this unique opportunity to develop innovative programs and services that benefit the George Mason community.

Through the Faculty Fellows Program, Fellows collaborate with UL departments to develop projects that enhance student learning. These projects forge partnerships that connect faculty interests and expertise with divisional, departmental, institutional, and student needs. The ultimate goal is to promote the vision that Every Student Succeeds.

Faculty members bring such tremendous value to our work, extending across our many areas of service and support."

"Centered on increasing student engagement and overall success by bringing together the collective expertise of faculty and UL practitioners, the program has enjoyed success across a number of different domains," said Rose Pascarell, vice president for University Life. "Through the Fellows program, we've seen collaborations focused on research, grant writing, policy, training, and innovative programming—all strengthening our work, broadening our impact, and ultimately benefiting our students."

Fellows receive a \$5,000 academic year stipend or a course release. In the 2024-25 academic year, nine faculty members, including Jeffrey Grim, assistant professor in the College of Humanities & Social Sciences, partnered as fellows to support and enrich the Mason student experience. Grim's work

focused on data analytics related to Pell Grant-eligible students and how George Mason can offer support to improve equitable student success. Grim worked directly with a team of University Life staff to coordinate research, data gathering, and analysis.

"I worked with Birgit Debeerst (director of UL project and process management) to coordinate data gathering. I was so amazed not only by Birgit's work ethic and expertise, but the unique role she plays by helping make processes more efficient and effective for student success," Grim said. "An office like the one she runs is very rare in higher education. I also had the pleasure of working with a team of researchers in University Life, including Joisanne Rodgers (director of Contemporary Student Services) and Taylor Crickenberger (assistant director for Financial Well-Being) to collect, analyze, and report on data. It reminded me how incredibly talented the staff are at their jobs and how intellectually curious they are when it comes to research."

Grim continued, "From the data we collected, analyzed, reported, and visualized, I'm hopeful that university leadership and different departments can have a better—and real—understanding of the experiences and outcomes of low-income students at Mason. It was important to recognize that George Mason does a really good job of supporting low-income students, but there are areas that can be improved. It's my hope leaders and practitioners will use that to alter their own programs and practices."

Collaborations That Count

The Faculty Fellows Program offers multiple benefits to faculty, allowing them to engage with students outside the classroom, apply their skills in new ways, and enhance their ability to support students. "In this fellowship, I was able to use my knowledge and expertise on student success in higher education to create real-world practical

applications—not something I get to do often," Grim said.

For University Life, the program connects departments to networks, unique faculty perspectives, and applied programming that engages students in new ways. "Faculty members bring such tremendous value to our work, extending across our many areas of service and support," said Lori Scher, senior assistant dean for University Life. "As we look to grow and expand the Fellows program, we are focused on enhancing existing partnerships and forging new ones so that students from across all academic disciplines will benefit from these connections, both in their engagement with University Life and in the classroom."

Students whose professors participate in the Faculty Fellows Program benefit from seeing a more holistic approach to their Mason experience, with faculty and practitioners working together to support students' success. Fellowship categories can be departmental, taking place in direct connection with one primary UL department; divisional, cutting across a broad

To learn more about the program, visit ulife.gmu.edu/faculty-fellows
(Visit the bottom of the link's webpage to read about the most recent Fellows.)



Jeffrey Grim, assistant professor in the College of Humanities & Social Sciences

range of areas in support of programs, services, or initiatives; or project based, directed toward a predetermined area of focus in support of the student experience.

Some recent fellowship examples include:

- Increasing library self-efficacy among first-generation college students through gamification.
- Integrating career development into the curriculum and fostering a culture of career readiness.
- Creating workshops on LGBTQ+ literacies and supporting cross-campus civil dialogue.

Faculty Fellows' appointments can be completed during any combination of summer, fall, or spring terms or for the full academic year, depending on the project, interest, and availability. University Life hopes to expand the program to offer more fellowships in the future. ■

Nancy Donnelly is a freelance writer.

Photo by Office of University Branding

Team Effort

Collaborations between University Life and academic departments enhance the student experience and foster a deep sense of community.

By Amanda Milewski

At one time, college faculty served as the primary guides for both academic and personal student development, but as student populations expanded, separate student affairs departments emerged to address the broader range of students' needs. Over time, the gap between student affairs and academic affairs widened. Their shared commitment to holistic

student success has led to increased collaboration in recent decades, breaking down barriers to create more comprehensive support systems for students.

According to the American Council on Education, 80 percent of institutions now operate programs that join academic and student affairs efforts. At George Mason University, these collaborations include the Faculty Fellows program (see article on page 18), academic minors offered in partnership with University Life (UL),

residential learning communities, and innovative career readiness efforts. Each serves to unify students' intellectual, social, and emotional growth in meaningful ways.

Major Collaborations with Academic Minors

A key example is the Women and Gender Studies Program, located within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences but closely partnered with UL. Holly Mason Badra, associate director of Women and Gender Studies, described the partnership as amplifying both academic rigor and social belonging. The program integrates classroom learning with activism and research at the intersection of gender, sexuality, race, and class.

The Women and Gender Studies Center offers students a welcoming space where they can "relax, socialize, work, and feel connected," Badra said. "Students who visit our center and attend our events say that our space has been a home for them in their time at Mason. We hope that we can play an active role in enhancing students' well-being. In this way, we aim to achieve the University Life mission, vision, and goals, where students thrive and succeed and also experience a sense of rootedness here at George Mason."

To make these programs successful, it takes dedicated effort, strong communication, and willing campus partners across all of George Mason's colleges and schools as well as our partner offices in University Life."

Esports provides another model of impactful collaboration. The esports program was born from a partnership between Student Involvement and the School of Sport, Recreation, and Tourism Management (SRTM). Lauren Long, executive director of Student Involvement, began to cultivate a relationship with Craig Esherick, a professor of sports management in SRTM, by creating practical opportunities for SRTM students through assistantships and practicum experiences. Through their collaboration and a two-year Provost's Strategic Funding grant, they established a position where Jordan Whitaker, an

con't on next page

STUDENT PROFILE



Rachel Williams
Atlanta, Georgia

Expected Graduation / May 2028
Cultural Studies Doctoral program

For Rachel Williams, managing George Mason's Patriot Pantry and working toward her cultural studies doctorate go hand-in-hand. "I was already passionate about food insecurity," Williams said. "In my cultural studies program, we talk about possibilities for social change and ways to make the world a better place. Working at the Patriot Pantry helps me add to that theoretical lens and speak to specific challenges people are facing."

Williams sees how Patriot Pantry gathers a community of people to support each other during times of economic hardship. The Patriot Pantry began in 2014 as one student's pet project. Today Williams notes that it's common to see more than 100 orders for bags of food and hygiene products each week. For some students, financial issues and food insecurity might mean the difference between dropping out or graduating.

"This role opened my eyes to the barriers people face when they're just trying to get enough to eat," Williams said. "The Pantry is a special space where people feel like they can get that connection to the broader student community." Working with colleagues in University Life taught her lessons about empathy that she wasn't expecting to learn from her graduate school experience. "The time supervising the undergraduate student staff is also something I treasure. It's wonderful that we have ways to grow new leaders in fields like food security."

She added, "When I arrived at the Pantry, I wasn't really thinking of how I could affect the space beyond my time working in it. But it became clear that there was a lot of potential, and so the work became a challenge to grow a better and more responsive service."

This fall, Williams moved on from her Pantry position to begin teaching with the School of Integrative Studies. She sees her work with Patriot Pantry as instrumental to her approach to teaching: "I know this experience will make me much more understanding of my students facing life challenges."

Photo provided

[below] Professor of sports management in SRTM, Craig Esherick walks with a new sports management student during orientation. Esherick helps create opportunities for SRTM students through assistantships and practicum experiences.



Our goal in student affairs is to cultivate more holistic and integrated student experiences through cross-cutting collaborative work."

adjunct professor, went on to develop SRTM's esports minor as well as Student Involvement's esports program.

"This is a true partnership built on shared goals around recruitment, retention, academic enrichment, and revenue generation," Long said. "The collaboration has had a measurable impact: students consistently cite the esports program as a reason they chose Mason—and stayed. Many top players and student leaders are enrolled in esports courses or are pursuing the minor, and we've even seen students switch majors to sports management as a result of their involvement."

Residential Learning Communities Offer Rich Opportunities

Residential learning communities (RLCs), led by Housing and Residential Life, also highlight the power of partnerships. RLCs allow students with shared interests to reside together, promoting academic achievement, belonging, and personal growth, noted Michael Cherry, associate director of


Residence Life.

"To make these programs successful, it takes dedicated effort, strong communication, and willing campus partners across all of George Mason's colleges and schools as well as our partner offices in University Life," he explained. Programs include discussions, guest speakers, and trips to museums or theme parks. "Residents are also exposed to information that helps them deepen their connection to their major and opportunities for developing skills that will serve them inside and outside the classroom."

These academic partnerships and others exemplify UL's core commitment to student success. "In a setting where students are inundated with content, learning, and engagement opportunities, partnerships between student affairs and academics are essential," noted Lori Scher, senior assistant dean for University Life. "Our goal in student affairs is to cultivate more holistic and integrated student experiences through cross-cutting collaborative work; we are purposefully weaving this collaborative work into the fabric of our organization." ■

Amanda Milewski is a freelance writer.

To read an extended version of this article that provides a more in-depth look at these partnerships, scan the QR code or visit: succeed.ulife.gmu.edu/a-team-effort



Photos by Office of University Branding



Awards & Accolades

Outstanding Achievement Awards

- **Sustainability Hero Award**
Makenzie Gold Quiros, Housing and Residence Life
- **Mason Staff Alumni Award**
Jonathan Carmona, International Programs Services
- **Goldie and Diane Hattery Award for Excellence**
Ruth Mogollon, Housing and Residence Life Residence Hall Operations
- **Nancy Murphy Spirit Award**
Rick Gray, New Student and Family Programs
- **Housing Partner of the Year Award**
Skyler Murphy, Housing and Residence Life
- **Excellence in Assessment Award, OIEP**
Yali Pan, International Programs & Services
- **Formal Acknowledgment of Outstanding Contributions to the Patriot Connect Program**
 - *Amber Shackelford*, UL Technology Services
 - *Sam Greenberg*, UL Technology Services
 - *Noe Todorovich*, UL Technology Services

National Recognition

John Cicchetti, University Life, Department of Homeland Security Master Training Certificate (September 2024)

Yali Pan, International Programs & Services, Fulbright International Education Administrator (IEA) Award (South Korea) (June 2025)

University Life Staff Awards

- **Outstanding Service Awards**
 - Erin Harpine*, Student Health Services
 - Lana Harris*, Student Success Coaching
 - Julia Adams*, International Programs and Services
 - Doris Castro*, Housing and Residence Life
 - Jennifer De La Rosa*, UL Marketing & Communications
 - Birgit Debeerst*, UL Project & Process Management
 - Michael Benedict*, UL IT Specialist
 - Dwayne Hamilton Jr.*, Student Support and Advocacy
 - Barrie Schievert*, Student Success Coaching
 - Louise Higgins*, Contemporary Student Services & Student Success Coaching
 - Celena Creft*, Counseling & Psychological Services
 - Jessie Lee*, New Student & Family Programs
 - Christine Kelly*, Student Involvement
 - Lee Friend*, Student Success Coaching
 - Angela Craven*, International Programs & Services
 - Marie Taylor*, Mason Recreation
- **Positive Impact Awards**
 - Melanie Jalim*, Student Success Coaching
 - Colin Peacock*, Mason Recreation
 - Paul Bazzano*, Mason Recreation
 - Rachel Stockdale*, University Career Services
 - Lauren Long*, Student Involvement
 - Susan Pilley*, UL Project & Process Management
 - Justin Acuna*, Mason Recreation
 - Laura Bowen*, Event Services
 - Kerry Hentges*, UL Science & Technology
 - Lex Ash*, Housing and Residence Life
 - Jeff Massetti*, Student Involvement



3 MINUTE READ

A "Knack" for Tutoring

A partnership that provides free, unlimited tutoring services gives students a chance to boost their peers' academic success.

almost
3K students are registered with
Knack tutoring
1.5K tutoring sessions
completed last fall semester

College courses are designed to challenge students and push them to new academic heights. And when dealing with difficult subjects and new materials, additional academic support can make all the difference.

That's where Knack comes in. Starting in fall 2024, George Mason University entered a three-year partnership with Knack, a peer-to-peer tutoring platform. Through Knack, students in any of the 28 participating courses can get up to three hours of free virtual or in-person tutoring from their peers every week during the semester. Participating courses span math, statistics, biology, chemistry, business, economics, and public health.

"We are transforming the support for student success at George Mason by fostering a collaborative learning environment that empowers students to excel academically," said Vicki Dominick, associate director of George Mason's Learning Services office, which offers a variety of academic success supports for students, including academic success workshops, online resources and coaching. "This is an innovative model that aligns with our mission to provide accessible, impactful academic resources for all students."

Knack does not replace other tutoring services offered by George Mason, Dominick noted. It is an additional resource, allowing more options for meeting times and places.

The initiative supports up to
10,000
enrollment
seats per
semester

Photos by Office of University Branding



Currently, close to 3,000 students are registered with Knack tutoring, and almost 1,500 tutoring sessions were completed last fall semester. The initiative supports up to 10,000 enrollment seats per semester, ensuring that academic assistance is available to a large number of students.

Praise for a Positive Experience

Faculty members have noticed Knack's impact on student performance. Gerald Weatherspoon, associate dean for undergraduate and graduate student affairs and associate professor of chemistry and biochemistry, said that "students enrolled in my CHEM 212 greatly appreciated having access to qualified tutors who could meet with them during nonstandard hours. In addition, students indicated that the Knack tutors reinforced concepts, provided additional problem-solving strategies, and enhanced the overall learning experience for the course."

Sophomore biology major Khushneet Kaur Kainth agreed. "For my chemistry class, there's always many students attending office hours, so I don't get the one-on-one help I need. I've been able to get personalized support through Knack. My tutor explains concepts step by step and assigns practice problems that help me understand the material better."

There are benefits for the tutors as well. It offers an opportunity to gain valuable professional experience and enhance their own academic journeys. Tutoring through Knack is a paid position, and tutors are required to have passed the class for which they are a tutor with an A- or higher within the last two years.

"Knack is an instrumental piece of our evolving academic support for our undergraduate students. This is directly in line with George Mason's mission of access to education," said Keith Renshaw, senior associate provost for undergraduate education and professor of psychology. "It gives the tutors 'high-impact practice,' as they gain hands-on experience teaching complex concepts and problem-solving strategies."

Senior biology major Anahita Salehkhrou is a tutor for BIOL 213 - Cell Structure and Function, and said of her tutoring experience, "it has given me the perfect opportunity to share my passion for teaching while strengthening my resume as I prepare to apply for dental school. It's also helping me prepare for the dental admissions test as I get a good refresher on content I've already learned and studied." ■

Written by University Life staff

STUDENT PROFILE



Nalani Kaysia

Washington, D.C.

May 2025 Mason graduate
Master's in Nonprofit
Management

As a women's basketball forward, Nalani Kaysia has a big cheering section. But the smallest person in it is the most important: her one-year-old daughter Xéla.

The mother-student-athlete led George Mason's women's basketball team to the 2025 Atlantic-10 Championship and subsequent bid to the NCAA Tournament for the first time in program history. She was also named to the A-10 All-Championship Team.

Juggling all three roles was challenging at times, she admitted. "Being a mom can be difficult and tiring. Being an athlete can be difficult and tiring, and being a student can be difficult and tiring and combining all three? There definitely were some long days."

But Kaysia is a problem solver. "Every morning, I wake up and there's a list of things I have to do and I kind of get a joy out of figuring out how I'm going to get everything done and how that lines up with Xéla's needs," she explained.

She is quick to acknowledge the support she received from the George Mason community. "My professors were extremely supportive, even when I was pregnant and then later having to balance motherhood, basketball, and academics. They understood my situation and knew that I was trying to do the work to the best of my abilities." She also gave a shout-out to her teammates, coaches, and the graduate assistants who watched Xéla during practice. "And really, the George Mason community as a whole." Everyone she encountered on campus was genuinely happy to see her. "It really boosted my spirits when I needed it the most."

Kaysia hopes to play professional basketball in Europe and after that, become a sports agent. She also plans to devote time to her "passion project," establishing a nonprofit to lower the recidivism rates for former felons and help them integrate into society.

George Mason's Contemporary Student Services unit supports students like Kaysia who have families, are working professionals, or have experiences such as being in the foster care system or the military.

Photo provided

Meaningful Media Engagement

A longtime partnership between Student Media and Mason LIFE allows young adults with disabilities to gain professional experience.



Photo by Ava Jack

"I love working at Student Media. It's my favorite work site!"

By Tiffany Boggs

For more than 10 years, Student Media has hosted Mason LIFE interns as they prepare for post-graduation careers, pairing them with student mentors who help them develop valuable skills that transcend what they learn in the classroom. Kathryn Mangus, director of Student Media, recalls the impact of helping an early Mason LIFE intern get a press pass to photograph an event at EagleBank Arena: "It was a defining moment for me because I saw how much it meant for the intern to be treated like a professional and know that their contributions were valued."

The Mason Learning into Future Environments (LIFE) Program is an innovative post-secondary program for young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities who desire a university experience in a supportive academic environment that helps them develop essential workplace competencies. It is run through the university's College of Education and Human Development. "Student Media's partnership with Mason LIFE is a perfect example of University Life's vision that every student succeeds, as the two units collaborate to support and empower students to create their own futures at Mason and beyond," Mangus noted.

"The best part of the Mason LIFE-Student Media partnership is seeing our students pursue their passions in meaningful internships where they are valued as emerging professionals," said Melissa Chabot, employment and community involvement coordinator for Mason LIFE.

A Positive Partnership

According to Ely Staggs, a sophomore mechanical engineering major who worked with senior Mason LIFE intern James Hamilton to help distribute publications across campus and inventory promotional items, "[serving as mentor] taught me a lot about what makes a good leader and how to communicate. Encouragement and getting to know someone is important because everyone has something to offer in the workplace and in life."

Hamilton, a creative and resourceful intern, also hosted episodes of Mason Cable Network's "What's Up, Mason?" television show, interviewing students on camera about everything from the 2024 election to an impromptu snowball



Photo by Mitchell Richtmyre

"It was a defining moment for me because I saw how much it meant for the intern to be treated like a professional and know that their contributions were valued."

fight in President's Park. "I love working at Student Media. It's my favorite work site!" he said.

Senior sport management major Mitchell Richtmyre, who filmed Hamilton's video segments and coached him on microphone etiquette and on-air presentation skills, noted his improvement throughout the semester as a producer and interviewer. "It was great to see James' ability to express himself and open his creative eyes."

Ava Jack, who is pursuing a master's in health communication, mentored Emmett Fox, a senior Mason LIFE intern who has hosted "Good Times with Big E" on WGMU Radio since fall 2024. According to Jack, Fox is a sports fanatic and the two prepared for weekly on-air shows by discussing comedy, music trivia, and their shared love for the Chicago Bears and Washington Commanders.

Looking back on his DJ experience, Fox said, "I really love doing the work and have worked with some terrific mentors. My favorite activity is actually going on air. It's exciting and it feels great. I'm always really

happy to be on air...totally in the moment."

Making up a joke on the spot about anything with no context to make his listeners laugh was one of Fox's unique talents that amazed Jack and taught her not to underestimate her mentee. "Don't think of them any less than someone not part of Mason LIFE because they're not, and at times, they exceed your expectations because of how willing they are to just participate in anything and how excited they are," she said.

Current Student Media employee Melissa Gurman brings a unique perspective to the partnership as a Mason LIFE graduate who now mentors students from her former program. "I've had the pleasure to work with several Mason LIFE interns and found them to be smart, hardworking, and motivated, because like me, they want to learn job skills and gain experience." ■

Tiffany Boggs contributed to Student Media as an undergraduate, writing stories for University Life, and joined the Student Media team as an office assistant after graduating with her degree in communication.

Photo by Amy Rose



MASON NOW

POWER THE POSSIBLE

We have reached the midway point of the most ambitious fundraising campaign in Mason's history—and University Life is building on incredible momentum. Last year was our division's best fundraising year to date, a testament to donors who continue to connect their passions with the needs of our students.

Our vision is bold and unwavering: **Every Student Succeeds.** We are here for one reason—our students. Their success drives us, their well-being guides us, and their growth as compassionate, engaged leaders in an inclusive, diverse society inspires us every day.

Join us in shaping Mason's future through the Campaign for George Mason University by visiting gmu.edu/masonnow or contacting Kaitlin Cicchetti, senior director of advancement for University Life, at koyler@gmu.edu for more information.

If you share our focus,
commitment, and
passion, join us.



Totals represent gifts and pledges made in fiscal year 2025 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025)



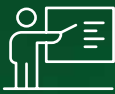
Photo by Office of University Branding

\$6,164,034

in gifts and pledges were made in support
of University Life

47 University Life initiatives
received gifts

GIVING BY AREA OF IMPACT:



Programmatic Support

\$1,993,310



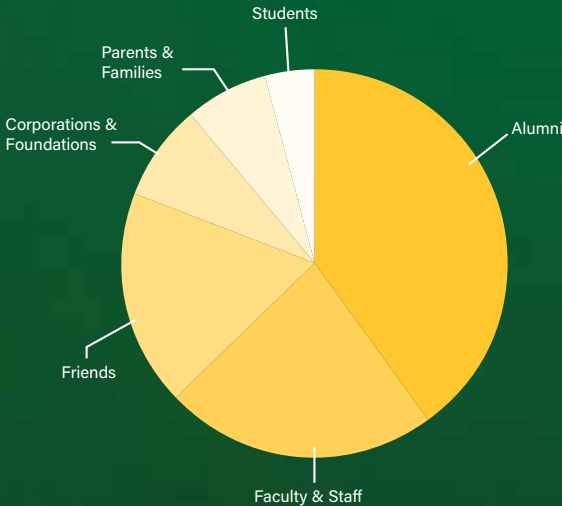
Scholarship Support

\$4,170,723



518 DONORS

Percentages represent the number
of donors from each constituency



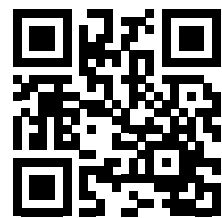
DONOR PARTICIPATION

- 38% Alumni
- 21% Faculty & Staff
- 20% Friends
- 10% Corporations & Foundations
- 8% Parents & Families
- 3% Students

A Wealth of Well-Being Resources

George Mason University's Center for the Advancement of Well-Being (CWB) helps students, faculty, and staff build a life of vitality, purpose, resilience, and engagement. CWB staff share some key resources and how they add value to the community. CWB offers myriad programs to create a nurturing and caring campus environment.

To access all of these resources, scan the QR code.



Photos by Office of University Branding

Bridge to Belonging

Bridge to Belonging helps students, faculty, and staff build a stronger campus community for greater social and emotional well-being. Participants meet in small groups with others from George Mason to enjoy thought-provoking questions and activities together. In the process, they can build new friendships that enrich their lives and strengthen their well-being.



“Bridge to Belonging gives participants the chance to get to know others they might not have crossed paths with, and they often find they have more in common than they expected. They appreciate being able to foster connections that go beyond surface level. I've even been able to connect students to jobs through Bridge to Belonging, and I've seen numerous faculty/staff collaborative relationships form after being in the program.”

— **Zareena Khan**, assistant director of Student Well-Being Programs

Mindfulness

Students, staff, faculty, and alumni can learn how to manage stress and enhance well-being through the Intro to Mindfulness program. The evidence-based curriculum of this mindfulness meditation program can lead to better concentration, improved sleep, and increased self-compassion.



“Through reading, discussion, and practice, you'll have the opportunity to explore the relationship between mindfulness and meditation and start building a practice of your own. You'll begin to discover how a preventative approach to well-being through mindfulness and meditation can be a game changer for your well-being.”

— **Katie Clare**, director of Well-Being Programs

Sophrology

Sophrology is a dynamic relaxation method that strengthens the well-being of both your body and your mind. It combines breathing, mental imagery, gentle movement, meditation, and progressive muscle relaxation into simple, practical exercises. These techniques connect your mind with your body—because your body is the gateway into the present moment, and the present moment is the gateway to peace. Sophrology founder Alfonso Caycedo said, “Sophrology is learning to live better with ourselves and with the world.”



“For students, this means having tools to manage stress, boost focus, and restore balance in everyday life. College is full of challenges and opportunities. Sophrology gives you the calm, clarity, and confidence to meet them. This practice helps you recharge your energy and strengthen your resilience—not just for academics, but for life.”

— **Ayce B. Ozerdem**, Well-Being program specialist

Burnalong

George Mason is the first university to partner with Burnalong, a pioneering online platform that offers on-demand well-being classes and programs. Students, faculty, and staff can access a variety of categories (including fitness, mindfulness, cooking, and more—including special George Mason classes) for free. Plus, they each get up to four extra free accounts for friends and family.



“Burnalong provides a great variety of well-being and fitness options for users to access anytime, anywhere. No matter what your level of experience is in a particular area, the app has something for everyone.”

— **Lewis Forrest**, assistant vice president for University Life

Clifton Strengths

George Mason and The Gallup Organization have partnered to create a strengths-based culture on campus. Students, faculty, and staff can take the CliftonStrengths Assessment, a well-being self-discovery tool that measures natural patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving. They receive a free report that details what they naturally do best and can leverage their strengths in all dimensions of life. Next spring, students can engage in free strengths coaching from CWB's new Student Strengths Coaches.



“Our Student Strengths Coaching Program is an exciting addition to our many strengths education programs. This will be a powerful and engaging experience that allows students to learn from their peers who are equipped with knowledge and skills in strengths coaching. And they too will become the ripple effect of well-being at George Mason and beyond.”

— **Nance Lucas**, executive director and chief well-being officer, Center for the Advancement of Well-Being



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EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS.

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