

UNIVERSITY LIFE

nnovabions

Celebrate Achievements
Live and Act with Integrity
University Life Show You Care
Core Values Dream Big

Foster Student Success

Catch the Mason Spirit

Embrace Our Differences

Pursue Lifelong Learning

Lead by Example

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WHERE INNOVATION IS TRADITION

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University Life in Loudoun

Welcome to University Life

Dear Friends,

What an exhilarating year it has been! Mason continues to grow, and University Life continues to make Mason home to thousands of students.

I am excited to present this new format for our division's newsletter. Instead of highlighting all 28 offices individually, we decided to focus on a common thread that is a core strength of University Life: innovation.



If you've visited campus recently, it would be hard not to notice all of the change going on. There are buildings being constructed at every turn. There are new places to eat, a hotel to stay at, gyms to work out in, and venues for entertainment. Mason is quickly becoming a community of its own, a Masonville if you like.

But the change is much more than construction. This up-and-coming community now has many more members: 33,000 students. And University Life is proud to offer each of them the resources to navigate their college experience from start to finish. Our goal is to help students achieve academically, stay healthy, and get involved.

As you review our highlights, you will notice that University Life staff members are continually finding new ways to bring about positive change and create a community in which each student can design his or her own path to happiness and success. You will also read how the generosity of our contributors affects students and families for generations to come.

We assure students that being at Mason will change their life. Come. Be a part of the change.

Sandy Scherrens

Vice President for University Life



Targeting Employers So They Target Us

The saying goes that timing is everything. But in an economy where citizens are job hunting for months, waiting for the right opportunity to come along is often not an option.

For students, job hunting is typically not on their radar until graduation, but the Career Services staff has it on their mind year round.

In 2010, Mason graduated almost 8,000 students. As the staff watched the number of jobs across the country decrease, they wanted to ensure that all Mason grads were provided ample job opportunities. So in this tough economy, they planned ahead.

The office made it its goal to maintain the high number of employers attending the job fair. Comparing the recruiting cycle to their schedule, the staff found they could better meet employers' needs by altering the timeline for Career Services events. The Employer Orientation held each January was moved to August to draw employer attention to Mason before the September recruiting season began.

As a result, 27 companies attended the orientation. Approximately half of these were new to Mason, and a third signed up to recruit at the fall Job and Internship Fair.

The staff also made it a point to target their outreach at employers who would continue to recruit despite the economy—federal government agencies. In addition to its consistency in recruiting, the government also recruits a wider range of majors than most organizations, meaning a large percentage of Mason students would benefit from its presence on campus.

The staff's targeted efforts were a success. Government agencies attending the fair increased from 20 percent to 33 percent.

The implementation of these two initiatives allowed Career Services to meet its goal of keeping the number of recruiters at Mason high. While other local universities suffered a 25 percent decrease in employer job fair attendance because of the economic downturn, Mason was only down 10 percent, welcoming 177 employers to campus.

Following its job fair success, Career Services debuted an event in December to address another consequence of the economic downturn—the increasing number of internships.

As the availability of full-time positions has decreased, employers have turned to internship programs at universities to

fill their personnel gaps. To Career Services staff, this strategy meant employers needed to see Mason students as desirable candidates before graduation. So, to show-case the talent Mason has to offer, employers were brought face to face with faculty at the Internship Roundtable.

At the event, faculty conveyed the strengths of Mason's academic programs and informed employers of the skills students are learning in the classroom. This understanding assures employers they are hiring quality interns when recruiting at Mason. And for stu-

dents, this means more opportunities that can lead to fulltime positions upon graduation.

Surveyed before and after the event, the number of employers who selected "Mason provides the results and/or hires they need" as a main reason for recruiting at the university increased by 400 percent.

After a successful year, Career Services is now turning its attention to further developing employer relationships. Key to this initiative is an already thriving On-Campus Interviewing (OCI) Program.

In the past five years, the number of students participating in OCI has more than doubled, and the number of total interviews has increased by 80 percent.

Last year alone, more than 1,400 students participated in OCI. As a result, 42 percent of those students were recommended for a second interview.

By continuing to engage employers through personal contact and invitations to campus, Career Services is ensuring that desirable employers are directly connected to Mason students.

To see the many services offered to students or partner with Careers Services as an employer, visit careers.gmu.edu.



Thirty-seven of the Fortune 100 companies recruit at Mason.



Making 33,000 Faces Feel Like Home

Imagine leaving home.

Saying goodbye to family, friends, your house, maybe a pet. In place of home, you move into a residence hall on a campus of 33,000 people and learn your way around a new city, maybe even a new state. In the midst of feeling like the new kid on the block, you must make important life decisions such as selecting a major and a career path, go to classes, meet new people, and learn to manage your money.

The first few weeks of the college experience can feel overwhelming. They also are crucial in determining whether a stu-

dent will continue in his or her studies.

According to the literature on higher education, during the first six to eight weeks of their time on campus, students make the decision to leave or stay based on the sense of community they feel and their fit with the university.

Mason's targeted effort to dispel its reputation as a commuter school and become known as a residential campus has steadily improved over the years. In fall 2000, there were only 2,940 beds on campus. In fall 2010, there were 5,400 beds with 600 more set to be available by fall 2012. Mason has now officially been designated a "primarily residential campus" by the

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. As the number of students on campus continues to increase, it has become apparent that developing community, especially in those first six to eight weeks, is key to retaining students.

In response, University Life made sweeping changes to the Living Learning Community (LLC) program. A collaborative effort between University Life and the Provost's Office, LLCs are select floors, primarily in freshman housing, that unite residential students around a shared curriculum or class. Currently, students can choose from eight LLCs: Arts, Honors College, Mindful Living, Global Studies, New Century College (Cornerstones), School of Management, Information Technology and Engineering, and Major and Career Explorers.

Students selected to participate in an LLC share a common curriculum or are preregistered for a 1-credit course that covers key areas of transition from high school to college. In addition, LLC members agree to attend at least one event per



month with members of their particular LLC, as well as one LLC-wide event per semester.

LLC events, organized by the Office of Housing and Residence Life in conjunction with academic departments, are centered on developing an understanding of how learning inside the classroom applies outside the classroom. Examples of LLC events include dialogues around current events, special speakers, and sensitivity training. These events are held where the students live, turning the floors into learning labs. As students attend these events, their connection to each other, their studies, and the university increases. As a result, a small school atmosphere emerges and community is formed.

In addition, LLCs contribute to the bigger picture of a student's academic success over the long term. Higher education research tells us that learning that takes place in the classroom is enhanced by cocurricular programming outside the classroom and a student's interaction with faculty. In fact, it has been found that after graduation, students identify their favorite faculty member and a favorite speaker as having the greatest impact on their college career. By inviting faculty members to share their interests and research with students and bringing in speakers, LLCs provide students with more opportunities to have these life-changing encounters.

Currently, approximately 500 students (about 25 percent of the incoming class) participate in LLCs, and their diversity echoes that of the student body. Mason is now looking to refine and grow the program. Students are being surveyed at the beginning and end of the year to determine whether retention numbers among participants are higher than those of nonparticipants and assess their sense of community in comparison to the general student body. The eventual goal is to get all first-year students plugged into an experience.

For more information on LLCs, visit **housing.gmu.edu/general/llc.**

Revamping Campus: Two Mission Possibles

As Mason's campus becomes increasingly residential, a sense of community is growing. With this growth, the university wanted to unify students not only in spirit, but also in location. To accommodate the changing needs, the two buildings that house the University Life offices were redone in 2010. Student Union Building I (SUB I) received a facelift and an expansion, and Student Union Building II (SUB II) was renovated. Both buildings are now open and fulfilling their new missions.

Mission 1: Practicality

SUB I was originally an 80,000-square-foot building constructed in 1971 that housed University Life offices and several dining options. With the 2010 addition, the building gained 68,000 square feet and was transformed into a resource center for University Life programs and services connected with students' academic success, career guidance, and personal development.

SUB I is now home to expanded services for Counseling and Psychological Services; Disability Services; Judicial Affairs; Academic Integrity; Alcohol, Drug, and Health Education; Career Services; the Early Identification Program; the Multicultural Research and Resource Center; Sexual Assault Services; Student Health; Technology Integration; Diversity Programs; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Resources; and International Programs and Services. SUB I also provides a one-stop shop for enrollment services through the offices of Admissions, Financial Aid, and the Registrar.

Previously, many of these offices were located in various buildings across campus. Centralizing them has made it more convenient for students to get support and find the help they need in removing barriers to their success.





Mission 2: Inspiration

Built in 1982, SUB II encompasses 91,000 square feet and was used as a conference, meeting, and event center. The goal of revamping the building was to create a space students could take ownership of—a place to meet, engage, and interact with staff.

After the renovation, SUB II (now nicknamed the Hub) became home to all the student organizations and student-led programs on campus and, for the first time, provided them meeting and office space.

The Hub also houses the offices of Leadership Education And Development, Orientation and Family Programs and Services, and Student Media. The Office of Student Involvement (formerly Student Activities) moved into the updated space as well and is now open until 10 p.m. most nights. In addition, the building features a game room, an entertainment area, and a new campus dining option, the Original Burger Company.

The renovated Hub offers much more than a new space. It is a place to catch the Mason spirit, dream big, and lead by example!

For more information on the new student union buildings, visit studentcenters.gmu.edu.



University Life's Top 10 Innovative Initiatives

University Life endeavors to make innovation the norm by reaching out to students personally, virtually, and visually. Below are some examples of how University Life's forward thinking connects students to each other, the administration, and the world.



Lunches with the vice presidents

Every month students are invited to lunch with the vice president of University Life and Mason's senior vice president and have the opportunity to share their experiences of campus life. While it is fairly common for the senior student affairs officer to meet with students, it is quite unusual for students to meet with a university's senior vice president. Given the complex nature of a university, issues that students raise cannot always be solved by a single vice president. Lunching with these two senior administrators gives students access to those who can bring about change!

Managing students of concern

The offices of the Dean of Students, Judicial Affairs,
Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), and
University Police have worked collaboratively to become
leaders in collegiate threat assessment work with students
of concern. The training, resources, and processes instituted at Mason have become a model for other institutions
throughout Virginia, and the dean of students and the executive director of CAPS have spoken to groups around the
country. As a result of its efforts, the Office of Judicial Affairs
reported an increase in the use of its resources by staff and
faculty and an 88 percent increase in student referrals. In addition, the Judicial Affairs staff participates in professional
training on the topic.





New ways to stay connected

- Connect2Mason: In less than a semester Connect-2Mason more than doubled its daily visitors, ranked in the top 18 percent of the most engaging national college media groups, and received recognition in the Chronicle of Higher Education, USA Today, and the Washington Post.
- OnMason.com: A new initiative that provides a blog platform for users to publish information with active discussion, the site had 91,818 visits in 2009–10.
- Extensive coverage: Through the Office of Student Media's programming, more than 640 blogs, articles, shows, and publications covered University Life events.

Mason is the only university in the country to offer an annual weeklong leadership program facilitated by the Strozzi Institute. The School of Embodied Leadership (SOEL) is a six-day intensive training session in which students learn to value, motivate, and bring out the best in themselves and others. Experiential exercises and team practices are used to strengthen students' ability to stay focused and committed to goals. Approximately 100 students have participated in SOEL, and to stay inspired and in touch with each other, students have formed the group SOELmates.

Live webcasting

As a strategy for engaging students at multiple and distant locations, University Life began live streaming of its events. Some of the events covered were Patriot Leader Skits at orientation sessions, International Week, career workshops, and the annual Thanksgiving celebration for international students.

On-campus student employment program

Based on higher education research, increasing oncampus student employment contributes to retention. With this in mind, Career Services created an online platform to centralize on-campus student job listings, making it easier for students to find work at Mason. The team provided supervisor training, created web content, and implemented a marketing plan with exceptional creativity.

Mason Cubes

Situated along a popular route for students heading to class, the Cubes are 10-foot-tall rectangular wooden boxes, each offering four sides of advertising space for student organizations and Mason departments to paint. A highly visual medium for promoting events, supplies can be signed out at no cost and used to paint messages on the Cubes on a first come, first-served basis. With each event, the passion of Mason students emerges as they get creative in their advertising!





Extended orientation for honor students

To fulfill University Life's commitment to the retention of high-achieving students, the Office of Orientation and Family Programs and Services in partnership with the Honors College added an extra day of orientation. These highly select students and their families were introduced to programs and experiences geared toward student engagement and had the opportunity to connect with other students, faculty, and administrators.

Testival
Building on the success of the annual Breastival, the Office of Alcohol, Drug, and Health Education held its first Testival to draw attention to testicular cancer and the importance of exams. Much attention is given to breast cancer awareness, but it is unusual for college campuses to focus on testicular cancer. This event is one of a kind!

Performance management improvements for faculty and staff To enhance the professional development and personal enrichment of faculty and staff, a Performance Management Committee was created to revise University Life's performance management process. The committee revamped the existing human resources forms to incorporate University Life core values and reflect the needs of the division as a whole. The new Performance Management Process focuses on staff development, skill building, and personal and professional improvement through goal setting.

Excellent
Very good
Good
Average
Poor

One Student's Journey from Middle School to Mason

In 2001, one seventh grade boy from Herbert J. Saunders Middle School in Manassas stood nervously before the opening doors of a bus. That year he was the only one from his school selected for the Early Identification Program (EIP), meaning he knew no one on board. But this was a good opportunity.

The ride was nerve wracking. He didn't know much about college (his parents had not gone), and he had never even heard of George Mason University. He didn't know what to expect when he got on that bus, but what he did know was that he dreamed of having one of those big houses he saw when he watched TV, that he wanted to be successful, and that this college prep program would get him there.

Surviving the bus ride, Garrett arrived at Hemlock Overlook Regional Park that serves as an outdoor education center. He was welcomed by someone who, unknown to either of them at the time, would become a mentor of his for the next ten years, Lewis Forrest, the current director of EIP. As the other students poured off

the bus, they morphed from strangers into friends, beckoning him to join their group for the team-building activities that followed.

That first bus ride was the beginning of a much longer and often much more intimidating journey for Garrett Claybrooks. Now a Mason alumnus, Garrett participated in EIP for five years, from 7th through 12th grades.

It was a big commitment for any preteen. It involved weekly tutoring, life skills and academic sessions, team-building ac-



tivities, and giving up three weeks each summer for a mandatory academy that prepared him for the school year to come.

But the reward was well worth it—guaranteed acceptance into Mason if he met all of the requirements along the way. And that he did. In 2006, Garrett received his acceptance letter, not only to Mason but also into the Student Transition Empowerment Program (STEP), a six-week summer program designed to prepare students for their first year in college.

Completing STEP the summer before his freshman year gave Garrett 6 credits to apply to his degree before even starting his first semester. Ready to begin a new year and a new tradition in his family, Garrett came to another crossroads—selecting a major.

"I will never forget my academic advisor, Keshia Woods. She told me I wouldn't like it,"

Garrett laughed. He had selected business administration as his major, but Keshia did not believe it was the right fit for him

Garrett insisted on trying it for a semester, but after his first economics class, he headed right back to Keshia's office. Through the academic counseling process, Keshia and Garrett found that his love for managing needed to be balanced with his love for people so Keshia suggested health administration. Garrett, though a bit skeptical at first, gave it a try and as a result found a career path that was a perfect fit.

Make another student's journey possible.

Donate today: ulife.gmu.edu/give.

"I don't feel like I have to give back, but I want to," Garrett said. "It's a feeling you can't get anywhere else."

In 2010, Garrett finished his degree and obtained an internship at Emeritus at Lake Ridge, a Virginia assisted-living and Alzheimer's care community. His excellent work earned him a job offer after completion, and he is now the assistant executive director of the community.

"I can't believe I have a job, a salary, and a career," Garrett said almost with a sigh of relief. The journey from EIP to STEP to Mason was not an easy one. Garrett said there were times when he broke down along the way, but in the end, he found himself and succeeded at many things he thought were impossible. Among his accomplishments were starting a student organization, receiving two Vision awards for leadership, and becoming a member of the Program Board. He has also given back to the two programs that changed his life by tutoring for EIP and mentoring for STEP.

"I don't feel like I have to give back, but I want to," Garrett said.
"It's a feeling you can't get anywhere else."

Garrett has worked hard for nine years and now he is on a new journey, but he looks back on his accomplishments with pride and encourages other EIP and STEP students:

"You'll have to do a lot of stuff by yourself and that may seem scary, but it's a good way to develop independence and determination. You'll feel more of the accomplishment and achievement. You'll be able to say, 'I did that with my blood, sweat, and tears' and no one can take that away."

Diversity Scholarship Golf Classic

Success stories such as Garrett's are made possible by the generous contributions of individuals and corporate donors. Specifically designed to raise funds for EIP and STEP, the annual Diversity Scholarship Golf Classic was held this past June at the South Riding Golf Club.

One hundred players enjoyed a par 72 championship golf course followed by a live auction and awards luncheon. The event, hosted by former Washington Redskin Brian Mitchell, raised \$25,000 for the two programs, which provided 11 EIP and STEP students with academic scholarships for 2010–11.

Special thanks to cochairs Jim Green of Northrop Grumman and Ty Johnson of Xerox, as well as University Life Advisory Board chair Gigi Green.

Title sponsor: Sandy Spring Bank

Scholarship sponsors: CACI, Lockheed Martin, QinetiQ

Lunch sponsor: Zavin Smith

Tee sponsors: Cardinal Bank, Pyramid Systems, Triumph Technologies

Individual scholarship sponsors: Anthony Pierce, Lorton Ledo Pizza

To learn more about EIP, visit **eip.gmu.edu.** To learn more about STEP, visit **step.gmu.edu.**

Save the date for the next classic on **June 3, 2011**



EIP's Annual Diversity Scholarship Breakfast Ceremony

Student recipients with their executive scholarship sponsors from Sandy Springs Bank (Jay O'Brien and Jody Calabrese not shown), CACI (Bill Fairl and Paul Patton), Lockheed Martin (Bill Washington), QinetiQ North America (Mike Stolarik), Akin Gump (Tony Pierce not shown), University Life board members and staff

Donor Highlights

20th-Century Farm Funds the Future

During the early part of the 20th century, Charles O'Shaughnessy and Mary Hurst O'Shaughnessy ran a suc-

cessful dairy farm in the Bailey's Cross-roads area, providing dairy products throughout Northern Virginia and Washington, D.C. On retirement, the O'Shaughnessys sold their business and their land and created a trust that later became the O'Shaughnessy-Hurst Memorial Foundation Inc.

Mason's Early Identification Program (EIP) has received multiple donations from the foundation. Just this past year, the foundation awarded a new gift of \$100,000 toward a scholarship endowment.

"Having attended an EIP graduation, it is my

belief that both benefactors would be very proud of the result of this gift," says Debbie Piland, current foundation president.

The foundation's gift is greatly appreciated, coming at a critical time when scholarships are needed more than ever.

The California Girl Endowment

An outstanding student and active member of the Mason community, Brittney Kittrell's unexpected death devastated family and friends. No one had known the severity of Brittney's struggles with depression and anxiety that led to her suicide her senior year. As a result, her parents, Gary and Kim, were motivated to help other students who are at risk.

After meeting with the director of Mason's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), the Kittrells decided to support Mason's suicide awareness and prevention efforts via the creation of the California Girl Endowment, named after a poem written by Brittney. This fund is the first programmatic support that has been given to CAPS and will provide information on depression, anxiety, and suicide prevention to students, families, faculty, and staff.

Celebrating 25 Years on Campus

On October 27, 1985, the Mu Mu Chapter was recognized and chartered by Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc., becoming the first African American fraternity at Mason.

To celebrate its 25th year in 2010, the Kappa Alpha Psi alumni and network of friends raised funds to plant a garden and place a bench in a prime location on campus. The dedication ceremony was attended by more than 75 Kappa brothers.





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