

Achieving Inclusive Excellence: The Mason Way

May 2, 2024

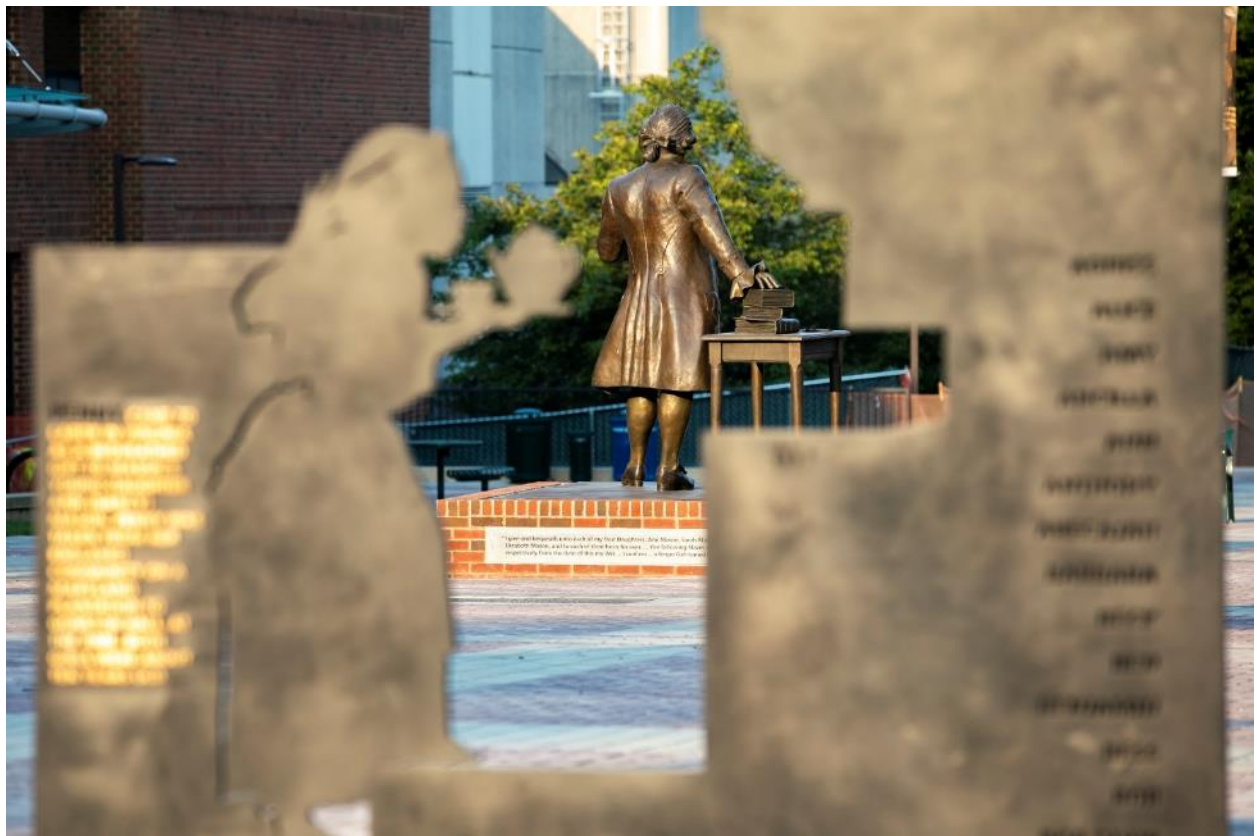


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Executive Summary

Issues of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) have become commonplace and at times controversial in higher education institutions across the nation. Some argue for extensive DEI courses and programs to correct for inherent structural racism and the implicit bias of many individuals. Others argue that DEI initiatives must be rejected, lest they involve indoctrination, forms of racist instruction or discrimination, or the promotion of inherently divisive concepts.

After reviewing policies and procedures, this committee found that, as George Mason University has done in so many areas, Mason has addressed the issue in a way that is *All Together Different*.

As this report explains, Mason has eschewed the extremes of either eliminating any traces of support for diversity initiatives on one hand or adopting programs and practices that accentuate differences and promote divisiveness on the other. Instead, Mason has designed a unique consensual framework of **inclusive excellence** to focus on the education and development of all students to be effective citizens and productive members of society for Virginia and the nation. This “Mason Way” is not a simple compromise between sides, but a way of thinking all together differently about the problem and developing innovative solutions that have the potential to serve as a model for higher education throughout the nation.

A compelling example of an innovative “Mason Way” solution to a vexing problem can be found in Mason’s central Wilkins Plaza. Some called for removing George Mason’s name from the university, just as George Mason High School in nearby Falls Church was renamed Meridian High School in 2020. Others called for the rejection of any such proposal as unchecked “wokeism” that cancels a critical thinker and one of our nation’s founders. The “Mason Way” leveraged a faculty-led student research experience and incorporated substantive dialogue to develop a solution in which GMU can address and learn from its complicated history—ignoring neither the positive nor negative elements of it. As a result, the George Mason statue recognizes his contributions, and the memorial recognizes the enslaved people who helped make George Mason’s contributions possible.

The “Mason Way” chart on the next page illustrates the innovative approaches Mason takes to foster the educational and student support mission of the university in a way that belies the problems that often garner headlines. The left column addresses many of the critiques of DEI initiatives that too often attract attention and, if true, could be problematic. The right column summarizes the innovative approach that Mason has taken to these issues. Those concerned about these issues and how they work should learn more about the innovative approach that George Mason has taken, portions of which are described in this report.

The Mason Way

<u>DEI Critique</u>		<u>'Mason: All Together Different'</u>
Affirmative Action race-conscious admissions	➡	Holistic admissions agnostic of race/ethnicity since 2007
Inequities in graduation/completion rates	➡	No difference in graduate rates by race/income status
Inequitable post-graduation experiences	➡	Career Outcomes survey show no inequities
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) focus began with BLM	➡	Support of diverse student populations a long-standing practice based on state and student needs, predates BLM
DEI: racism, homophobia, sexism but not antisemitism	➡	Mason DEI framework includes anti-Semitism
DEI: limits free expression	➡	Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) Rating #8 in United States (248+ schools)
'Cancel' controversial speakers	➡	No speaker ever cancelled, FIRE rating #8
Required DEI Course(s)	➡	No required DEI course(s); Broad choice among 40+ varied courses that are major and interest specific
DEI focuses primarily or exclusively on traditional 'victimized' minorities	➡	Many students are supported, e.g.: Asian, Black, Caucasian, Hispanic, Indigenous, LGBTQ+, First Gen, Military Veterans, International, Religious/Spiritual, Low Income, Disability, Parent, Transfer, Undocumented, Refugee, no housing, food insecure, sexual assault victims, alcohol/drug addiction, mental health, etc.
No SAT Requirements = Less qualified applicants	➡	Test optional since 2007; incoming GPAs stronger; standards being maintained
Ideological Indoctrination	➡	FIRE Rating #8, Scalia School, Carter Center, Wilkins Plaza, national speakers from all perspectives, Economics, Mercatus Center, Cultural Studies
Students served by DEI programs receive preferential supports based solely on their "group identity"	➡	Student support is customized to address specific individual student needs to serve at scale by bringing together, not separating or accentuating differences
Required diversity statements	➡	No university required 'diversity statements'
DEI: preferential hiring	➡	Inclusive hiring practices. No quotas.
Mandatory DEI trainings	➡	No required DEI trainings. (There are required compliance trainings.)

Why Address DEI Issues at All?

As much as some may think that universities could be better without addressing DEI issues at all, there are compelling reasons to do so including those based on governmental policies, accreditation requirements, employer expectations, and student needs.

Federal. Federal law imposes many requirements to provide equal opportunity for students, faculty, and other employees at Mason. Many of those compliance requirements concern adjudicating and resolving incidents of discrimination or unfair treatment. Ideally, institutions will also have structures and systems that are effective in minimizing conflicts, discrimination, and unfair treatment so that students of all backgrounds have less need for formal adjudication and can leverage all the opportunities available to them to maximize their own personal achievement.

Commonwealth. Governor Youngkin's Executive Order 10 provides the Commonwealth of Virginia Diversity Opportunity and Inclusion Plan (see Appendix B). This plan specifies three concrete goals and seven specific objectives that require agencies to establish business operations and missions to achieve the Commonwealth's goals and objectives. George Mason University is consistently aligned with the Commonwealth's goals.

Accreditation Requirements. Mason is justifiably proud of its academic excellence that has been recognized by the many organizations that oversee and accredit university education. These include the State Council on Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), and the 32 additional organizations that accredit specific programs at Mason (ranging from the American Bar Association [ABA] for the law school to the Accrediting Board for Engineering and Technology [ABET] for engineering). Each of these organizations has specific guidance concerning DEI as part of their accreditation requirements and 22 of the accrediting bodies require that specific DEI student learning objectives are incorporated into courses, such as those recently proposed.

Employers. One of Mason's greatest strengths is its ability to provide opportunities for graduates to be productively employed in northern Virginia upon graduation. All 14 of the top employers of Mason students have corporate statements in support of their DEI mission and they recruit at Mason (in part) because of the diversity of Mason's student body. Having an awareness of DEI issues and being able to understand their role in society and the workplace is an essential requirement for graduates in 2024 and the future.

Students. Today's university students have distinct perspectives on DEI topics, which have often been central issues throughout their lives. They consistently express a need to be thinking about, discussing, and acting on these issues on campus and upon graduation. That is why they take part in over 440 registered student organizations that are involved in a wide range of issues. They expect their university to help them know *how* to think about these issues so that they can better determine for themselves *what* they should think about these complex issues. They also are looking for Mason to show how to proactively encourage all individuals to succeed, honoring but not exacerbating differences between the many groups that comprise their university. The report contains more comprehensive student surveys, but the written comments from a current student to the public BOV session (see box nearby) reflect the perspective of many students.

When considering the projected raise in tuition, although it is never ideal for students to have to pay more, I know for myself and many students like me that if avoiding or lessening an increase in cost comes at the price of cutting funding to the already threatened DEI support programs- I would far rather have the programs and pay more. The draw of GMU as an institution comes from the diversity of community and the support systems in place which uplift a variety of marginalized identities that make up GMU's student population. Without these in place, it makes students like me less able/willing to further our education with GMU when we could seek out institutions that better serve our needs by having these supportive structures in place. If it comes to it, I know that I am willing to pay more for support structures that benefit me and my fellow students; I know others share my sentiment. And, ultimately, I believe you will see a negative impact on student attendance and/or retention if these programs are defunded- counterintuitive to the funding issue at hand. Consider how heavily the marketing for GMU relies upon its status as the "#1 in Virginia for Diversity" and how a loss of student diversity support through DEI programs could impact the university's public face in conjunction with that marketing.
-- D. B., GMU Student, Written public comments 2 April 2024

What it is not. It is important to note that the foregoing are the reasons for addressing DEI issues. It is NOT to promote any specific ideology. More specifically, Mason's efforts do NOT focus on promoting views that specific Mason students, faculty, or staff, or subsets of society are inherently prone to victimhood, being an oppressor, or being oppressed.

Given the perspectives of federal and commonwealth governments, accreditation bodies, employers, and students, Mason is obligated to address these issues. President Washington established a committee to address two specific areas of current concern: (1) the DEI structure and composition at GMU and (2) the implementation of a "Just Societies" requirement in the core curriculum. The full charge to the committee is in Appendix A, and this report addresses those issues. A brief summary of the findings and recommendations in each of these areas follows in this Executive Summary.

Part 1: Student Support Infrastructure and Organization

As the largest and most diverse university in Virginia, Mason has developed a wrap-around student-centric learning environment where education is a place of opportunity intended to have room for everyone. As a majority minority school federally listed as an MSI (Minority Serving Institution), Mason focuses on bringing together individuals from all backgrounds, with different life experiences, all of whom contribute to enhancing the richness of Mason.

Mason has not used race in admissions for over two decades, but it is not enough to merely admit students based upon merit and hope for the best. The university culture at Mason is deliberately and carefully designed to be one that educates and transforms students from different backgrounds in an inclusive culture – one that is *All Together Different* – so that each student has the opportunity to graduate as a proud George Mason Patriot.

Our review of Mason’s support infrastructure and organization revealed that the efforts of the staff and faculty who are involved in creating this Mason culture can be broadly categorized into accomplishing objectives in two areas—cultivating a positive environment and preventing negative outcomes:

Cultivating a Positive Environment. The student support infrastructure fosters a culture of inclusion where diversity is celebrated, and everyone can feel included, respected, and valued. Consistently promoting inclusive excellence demonstrates Mason’s commitment to creating a positive and welcoming environment for individuals from all backgrounds, which contributes to higher levels of student and employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention.

Preventing Negative Outcomes. The student support infrastructure conducts proactive measures to help prevent discrimination, bias, and exclusionary practices before they occur. By identifying potential areas of concern and addressing them preemptively, Mason staff can mitigate the risk of costly legal battles, reputational damage, and negative outcomes such as student attrition and employee turnover associated with conflicts.

Who is Doing This Work?

There are numerous individuals throughout the campus engaged in these efforts. The Board has raised specific questions about positions in the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Faculty Affairs and Development; Academic units; and two University Life units - the Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment, and the LGBTQ+ Resource Center. As detailed in the report, these include 35 positions at the University Level that contribute to the development and promotion of this positive and inclusive culture as described above. Of those positions, 14 are full-time staff or faculty positions and 21 are student positions. The total budget for these positions is \$2,620,009.00 or 0.19% of the total university budget.

What Do These Professional Staff Members Do?

As noted above, the main overarching focus of these individuals is in three objective areas—creating an inclusive culture, providing student support services, and preventing concerning actions. By adopting a preventive approach that promotes inclusion of all individuals, they address barriers that may prevent individuals’ full participation at Mason, and they also reduce the likelihood of serious events that require subsequent extensive and costly intervention. These staff members collaborate with academic and

administrative units to promote effective practices and proactively identify and address potential barriers to student success. Many of the day-to-day activities of these offices cut across several different functions. The work being done is described in more detail in the attached report, and can be summarized in the following areas:

- Provide student, faculty, and staff support
- Cultivate an inclusive culture
- Comply with governor, attorney general, and commonwealth directives
- Support academic freedom and free speech
- Support compliance and risk management
- Meet accreditation requirements
- Support research grant funding
- Support industry needs (e.g. workforce readiness)
- Support intercollegiate athletics
- Support designations and certifications

Given the breadth of responsibilities, a closer examination of the position titles and descriptions reflects that several position descriptions may not effectively describe how the personnel support Mason's mission or what the individuals do in these roles. Mason should not change titles merely to rebrand or respond to criticism, but they *should* consider title changes that more accurately reflect the functions being accomplished, to promote understanding and transparency.

Recommendations

Based upon this review, the Committee recommends the following:

1. The number of full-time staff positions (14) and part-time student positions (21) is appropriate (or possibly low), relative to the number of students being served.
2. The Vice President for University Life and Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion should annually review resource allocations, current roles, responsibilities, and unit names to ensure alignment with the "Mason Way" of inclusive excellence and the Commonwealth of Virginia Diversity Opportunity and Inclusion plan (see [Appendix B](#)) and adjust as necessary.
3. The Vice President for University Life and Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion should initiate a Mason Campus Climate Study conducted by a third-party during AY 2024-25 for undergraduate and graduate students. The study will be taken to assess classroom and environmental factors with a goal of promoting inclusive excellence and avoiding divisive concepts (as defined by Governor Youngkin's Executive Order 1, see Appendix I), and report outcomes to the Board of Visitors. This review will include an assessment of the extent to which DEI programs contribute to the objective areas stated above (creating an inclusive culture, providing student support services, and preventing concerning actions) or whether they accentuate differences among individuals and groups.
4. University Life, Academic Affairs, and Faculty Affairs and Development should work to expand curricular and co-curricular offerings that focus on civil discourse, dialogue and debate across differences, and freedom of expression to align with the Governor's focus on free speech and intellectual diversity.

These recommendations address the first area concerning the Student Support Infrastructure and Organization and provide a way forward to evaluating the existing structure and adapting it as necessary in the future.

Part 2: The Just Societies Course Framework

As the report explains in detail, as early as 2013, Mason faculty began to consider enhancing its core curriculum to address issues related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ). From 2017-2021, Mason's focus was on completing its accreditation reaffirmation with SACSCOC that included a full assessment of the Mason Core and developing a required Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). During that period, the Mason Core Committee, Faculty Senate, and others with specialized expertise worked to determine how best to address this need as part of the undergraduate core curriculum.

They adopted an innovative "Mason Way" approach, to expose all undergraduate students to subject matter that enables them to deal effectively with and think critically about issues concerning diversity, equity, and inclusion. Instead of creating a single required course focused exclusively on DEI issues, the Mason Core Committee found that these concepts, in large part, were already being taught or could be reasonably integrated into existing courses, which students were already taking as part of the existing core curriculum. The concept is that those courses would include a "Just Societies Flag."

After approving this approach, the Mason Core Committee developed materials to train faculty in developing and teaching the courses, and invited Departments to identify existing or new courses that already included or would incorporate concepts of just societies as part of the courses. Over the past 7 months, 34 courses have been approved that accomplish the following general outcome and specific student learning outcomes (SLOs):

Just Societies Outcomes: Students in courses with the "Just Societies" flag are exposed to subject matter that enables them to deal effectively with and think critically about topics concerning diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. The student learning outcomes (SLOs) were intentionally designed to promote engagement of students from all belief systems and focus on *how* to think about and critically evaluate the ideas and engage with each other, and not *what* to think. Among other student learning outcomes (SLOs), courses with a *Just Societies* flag will also include the following:

- SLO #1: Define key terms related to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion as related to this course's field/discipline and use those terms to engage meaningfully with peers about course issues.
- SLO #2: Articulate obstacles to justice and equity, and strategies for addressing them, in response to local, national, and/or global issues in the field/discipline.

The list of approved courses is in the report, but they range the gamut from systems engineering to art and philosophy. Importantly, students have significant flexibility in fulfilling their core course requirements, including selecting two courses that have the *Just Societies* flag from what will likely be over 40 possible courses.

Why Two Courses? In many cases, the main subject of courses with a *Just Societies* flag is not DEI; rather, it is the field or discipline that is the topic of the course. Taking two different courses, each with

a *Just Societies* flag, provides students with a deeper breadth of perspectives in different contexts and from different professors, so that they can form and express their own opinions concerning these issues.

Timing. As noted above, the faculty-led and student-supported process that has led to the Just Societies Flag has taken several years. After being approved in 2022, it was designed to be implemented for upcoming undergraduates arriving in 2024 (e.g., the class of 2028), to allow for development of proposals and identification of sufficient and richly diverse set of courses and disciplines. Already, several thousand students have taken courses that are now approved for the *Just Societies* flag. Significantly, regardless of the addition of the *Just Societies* flag requirement, each of these courses fulfills at least one other aspect of students' core curriculum requirements.

Nevertheless, there is concern that the time available to get courses approved for the Just Societies flag may not have been sufficient to have an appropriate breadth of courses. This was exacerbated because many of the courses initially approved (with syllabi provided to the February BOV meeting) did not appear to provide the multiple, diverse perspectives that was the intent of the Just Societies requirement.

Recommendations

Faculty have worked through a long, deliberative process to develop the updated Mason Core. The most effective way to assess whether this is the right Mason solution to meet the needs of our students is to: (1) ensure that the course offerings are sufficiently broad to meet the intent of the Just Societies requirement; (2) if there is sufficient breadth of courses available, implement as planned; and (3) accelerate the assessment of the Just Societies requirement to expeditiously evaluate whether this approach meets our goals and whether future adjustments or refinements are appropriate.

To support this plan, the committee recommends:

5. The Mason Core Committee should ensure that the contextual language and description framing the learning outcomes are updated to help clarify the goals of the *Just Societies* requirement.
6. The Mason Core Committee should seek an expansion of the number and breadth of courses to meet the *Just Societies* requirement, recognizing that there is still an additional year to continue to develop and approve additional courses before next year's cohort of students are expected to take Exploration level courses (most students will take these courses in their 2nd and 3rd years).
7. The Mason Core Committee should accelerate the start date for assessment of these courses from Fall 2026 to Fall 2025.
8. Based upon the Provost's review of the progress on these actions, the Provost should determine whether or not to continue the implementation of the *Just Societies* requirement as scheduled. If these recommendations cannot be completed in a timely manner, the Provost can decide to delay the implementation of the Just Societies requirement until a subsequent academic year.

To ensure that the Board of Visitors continues to stay appropriately informed about not only the Just Societies requirement, but curriculum updates in general, the committee recommends:

9. The Provost, or designated representative, should establish a regular schedule for sharing with the Board (through the Academic Programs and University Life Committee), at least annually, Mason Core assessment reports that are prepared for any internal or external agency.
10. The Provost, or a designated faculty representative, should brief the Board of Visitors at least annually about significant updates to the curriculum and provide opportunities for feedback and discussion.
11. The Rector of the Board of Visitors and President Washington should work to ensure that all members of our community understand the roles of the BOV, the administration, and the faculty in curricular matters. (See [Appendix F](#))

These recommendations are made with the intent of ensuring that Mason continues to make curriculum decisions with intellectual integrity based on evidence and remains in compliance with SACSCOC accreditation standards and SCHEV policies.

Introduction

As a Minority Serving Institution (MSI) with students from all 50 states and over 130 countries, George Mason University is consistently recognized as one of the most diverse universities in the U.S. Mason's diversity extends beyond race/ethnicity - we have high rates of first-generation students, a high proportion of "adult learners," a high percentage of Pell Grant eligible students, and more. In capturing this range, Mason intentionally defines diversity in broad terms, including diversity of origin, identity, circumstance, and thought.

This broad definition includes a vast array of areas in which individuals differ: ability, age, family status, geographic region of origin, military/veteran status, nationality, neurodiversity, political beliefs, race/ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual and gender identity, socioeconomic status, and more. While recognizing these differences, we also recognize that each individual comes into our community with their own lived experience, and that some may identify strongly with various aspects of their identities and not at all with others. One thing that all of our students have in common is that they are now part of the Mason community, which is "All Together Different."

Mason's diversity is an incredible strength, but this type of diversity serves as a strength only to the degree that *all* students feel supported by and connected to the institution and those around them, and to the degree that we can support students in engaging with others who differ from them, to learn and grow from diverse perspectives, experiences, and ideas. We offer numerous ways that students can feel connected to those around them, through student engagement, service, and support units. **None of these units focus on emphasizing points of difference – rather, they emphasize unique points of connection among our diverse range of students.** Furthermore, each student's affiliation with one of these groups will, by default, bring them into contact with students who differ from them in other ways. Similarly, Mason has over 400 student organizations that students themselves develop, based on their religious, political, career, academic, social and/or other identity-based interests. All of these together allow just about any prospective student to "see themselves" at Mason.

We owe it to our students to provide them with not just the opportunities, but also the *tools*, to engage effectively with difference. The need for effective engagement is not unique to Mason – we see an increasing need for this across our society. Where Mason is unique is the *opportunity* for effective engagement. There are few places in the country with a greater range of diversity in all forms, **giving Mason the chance to be a national exemplar for how to meaningfully and effectively engage in conversations about and across difference.** To do so, we cannot take an overly simplistic approach of either erasing uncomfortable points of view or, conversely, actively promoting points of view that are odious in nature. Instead, **we must help students learn to listen and understand other perspectives, share their own perspectives and advocate effectively, and work with others to build pathways to move forward and establish common ground together.** This work is especially critical in the context of disagreement.

The University of Chicago (UC) Committee on Freedom of Expression put forth a set of principles commonly known as the "Chicago Principles," to which Mason actively subscribes. Their report quotes former UC President Robert M. Hutchins' assertion that "the 'cure' for ideas we oppose 'lies through open discussion rather than inhibition.'" Another UC president, Hanna Holborn Gray, stated that

“education should not be intended to make people comfortable, it is meant to make them think. Universities should be expected to provide the conditions within which hard thought, and therefore strong disagreement, independent judgment, and the questioning of stubborn assumptions, can flourish.” Such conditions do not arise simply by putting people with differences together – they must be intentionally nourished and created.

An excellent example of how Mason seeks to accomplish this mission can be found in our central Wilkins Plaza. Here, the statue of George Mason remains as a testament to the great contributions he made to the founding of our nation. Here also, a memorial to the enslaved people of George Mason stands. Inspired originally by a faculty-led student research experience, this memorial recognizes the enslaved people who helped make George Mason’s contributions possible. The intentional juxtaposition of these two elements represents the core of what Mason is about – a “Mason Way” solution to a vexing problem of how to recognize the complicated nature of people and history.

Mason clearly excels in this work, as evidenced by several metrics. We have had continual growth in applications and student enrollment at a time when other universities’ enrollments are flat or shrinking. Moreover, as our numbers have grown, so have both the diversity of our student body *and* the achievements of those students. We have some of the smallest disparities in retention and graduation rates across all forms of diversity. We are recognized nationally for our campus climate and opportunities by groups ranging from Campus Pride to the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE). Our graduates enjoy some of the strongest employment outcomes of any university in the Commonwealth, and we have received specific feedback from employers in our region that our diversity is one of the primary reasons they seek out Mason graduates.

Mason has exceeded expectations over the years largely by staying ahead of the curve; we continue to be recognized nationally as one of the most innovative universities in the country. In that light, we know that our success can never be taken for granted – the work of supporting and educating students is never complete. As our diversity grows, as knowledge progresses, and as our broader society evolves, so do the needs of our students. We meet those needs by evolving *with* them, in our support structures and our education. At Mason, our goal is to meet each student where they are, understand their individual needs, and meet those needs so that each student can thrive and achieve to the best of their ability.

It is in this spirit – to maintain the parallel commitments to freedom of thought and expression, to diversity and inclusion, and to the broad mission of access to excellence – that Mason has continued to evolve its support structures and our education. The report that follows focuses on two specific elements of these evolutions: (1) support staff related to Mason’s mission of diversity, equity, and inclusion and (2) the Just Societies category within the Mason Core. The committee reviewed the context in which these areas evolved, the current context in which they are employed, and evidence related to their purported intent and to concerns that have been raised about them.

Supporting Mason Students, Faculty, and Staff through Access and Inclusion

Preparing for the world to come

A fundamental value and point of Mason's diversity goes to the essence of this institution: Our student body diversity mirrors the diversity that is projected for America at mid-century, the time when many of today's students will reach the prime of their careers. By exposing them to an environment that looks like the America they will inherit, our environment is preparing them now to enter and lead that world in a way that less diverse universities simply cannot. This is a central value proposition about Mason that truly makes us All Together Different.

Mason's All Together Different approach guides our work and expands our efforts at inclusive excellence. This is evident in our national rankings for our service to and success with military veterans, student parents, and students who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community. It is evident in the continual rise in our social mobility rankings, which reflects our specific work with first generation college students, returning adults, international students, and more. Our intentionality around doing this work in a way that values all members of our community and their individual experiences and beliefs is also evident in our national ranking by FIRE. As a federally designated Minority Serving Institution, we embody the philosophy inherent in our All Together Different approach. We offer personalized student support and success strategies at scale. Everyone counts. (See Figure 1: Mason's National Rankings)

Figure 1 Mason's National Rankings



We create a wrap-around student-centric learning environment by acting on our belief that education is a place of opportunity meant to have room for everyone. From the early identification of promising middle school students who risk being overlooked; through our race-neutral, test optional and broadly inclusive admissions policies; to our signature Mason Virginia Promise to offer pathways to a bachelor's degree or a business start for any Virginian who seeks it; we ultimately admit virtually all students whom we believe are prepared to succeed academically here – more than 90 percent of those who apply. Once enrolled, students encounter extensive student success services and welcoming faculty, all of which are designed to give them a sense of belonging and the support to succeed academically.

How do we do it?

Mason's inclusive excellence efforts promote inclusion of all individuals, provide opportunities to help all students, faculty, and staff achieve to their highest potential, and address barriers that may prevent individuals' full participation. **They do not promote any specific ideology.** More specifically, Mason's efforts do NOT focus on promoting views that specific Mason students, faculty, or staff, or subsets of society are inherently prone to victimhood, being an oppressor, or being oppressed.

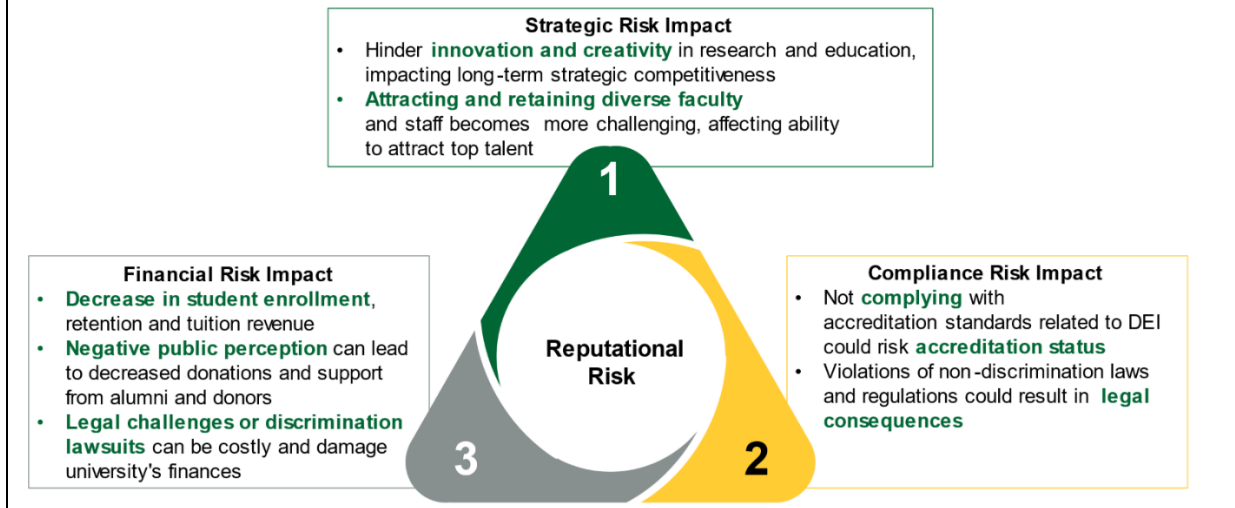
The responsibilities of the professional staff fall broadly into two areas:

- **Cultivating a Positive Environment:** Staff provide different support to students, faculty, and staff to foster a culture of inclusion where diversity is acknowledged, and everyone feels valued and respected. By consistently promoting inclusion excellence, we demonstrate our commitment to creating a welcoming environment for individuals from all backgrounds, contributing to higher levels of student and employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention.
- **Preventing Negative Outcomes:** Staff engage in proactive measures to help prevent discrimination, bias, and exclusionary practices before they occur. By identifying potential areas of concern and addressing them preemptively, we can mitigate the risk of costly legal battles, reputational damage, student retention and employee turnover associated with reactive responses. (See Figure 2. Risk Impact)

Figure 2. Risk Impact

Risk Impact

Impacts of strategic, compliance, and financial risks may culminate into **Reputation Risk** whereby Mason's reputation and brand suffer due to negative media, public perception, backlash and attention.



More specifically, efforts are focused on the following areas, which are expanded on in the sections that follow:

- Cultivate an inclusive culture
- Provide student, faculty, and staff support
- Support academic freedom and free speech
- Comply with governor, attorney general, and commonwealth directives
- Support compliance and risk management
- Meet accreditation requirements
- Support research grant funding
- Support industry needs (e.g. workforce readiness)
- Support intercollegiate athletics
- Support designations and certifications

Cultivate an Inclusive Culture

Maintaining an inclusive culture at Mason enhances our innovation, student retention, employee engagement, and overall performance while mitigating risks associated with discrimination and inequality. To foster an inclusive environment and mitigate risk, we adopt a preventive approach to promote inclusion of all individuals and to address barriers that may prevent individuals' full participation. We have staff who collaborate with academic and administrative units to promote best practices and proactively identify and address potential barriers. (See Figure 3 DEI Full-Time Salaried Positions)

Figure 3. DEI Full-Time Salaried Positions

Full-Time Salaried Positions

Unit	Position Title
Non-Compliance Central Positions	
Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion & Chief Diversity Officer
Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	Inclusive Education Manager
Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	Director of DEI Strategic Partnerships and Initiatives
Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	Engagement and Belonging Manager
University Life Positions	
Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment	Director
Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment	Associate Director Programming
Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment	Associate Director Training & Education
Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment	Assistant Director
LGBTQ+ Resources Center	Director
LGBTQ+ Resources Center	Associate Director
College/School Positions	
College of Visual and Performing Arts	Director of Diversity
College of Science	Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
College of Engineering and Computing	Associate Dean for Diversity, Outreach, and Inclusive Learning
Provost Office Position	
Faculty Affairs and Development Office	Director of Faculty Engagement and Well-Being
Total Count: 14	

Provide Student, Faculty, Staff Support

Institutional Support: The Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI) aims to provide institutional infrastructure and support to advance inclusive excellence through an environment that is safe and welcoming for everyone; one that is free of all discrimination and harassment; and one where all perspectives are valued and encouraged. Staff in the ODEI provide direct service to students, faculty, and staff. They ensure Mason comply with federal mandates such as Americans with Disabilities Act, the Forever GI Bill, and Titles VI, VII, and IX. ODEI staff also work closely with professional staff in other central units (e.g., Faculty Affairs and Development) and academic units (e.g., College of Engineering and Computing, College of Science, and College of Visual and Performing Arts) to help units ensure academic excellence for all; provide leadership for a diverse society (workforce readiness, advanced knowledge); help secure research grant funding and federal designations; implement outreach programs to expand access and opportunity for admission or employment; and build partnerships with external organizations. (See [Appendix C: Position Summaries](#)). One example of an outreach event organized by ODEI staff is STEAMFest, which is a partnership with local county schools, industry, non-profits, and the community, that exposes, inspires and engages youth in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) learning. Over 300 K-12 students from across Washington, D.C., have the opportunity to explore over 50 different STEAM activities at this event.

Student Support and Success: The focus, goals, and programmatic offerings of University Life's Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment (CCEE) and LGBTQ+ offices are much the same as all other University Life units. Rooted in [decades of research and theory](#) that demonstrate the connections of support, engagement, mental health, and a sense of belonging with retention and persistence toward

graduation, these offices focus on creating inclusive, thriving student communities and increasing overall student engagement and sense of belonging. Professional staff in these offices provide various direct student support in response to student needs and help develop, coordinate, and deliver co-curricular programs designed to increase knowledge, skills, and awareness of key academic, social, and personal issues. University Life's holistic approach to overall student success, informed by current data and research, necessarily focuses on support, engagement, and inclusive community. Because the positions and work of CCEE and LGBTQ+ Resources were previously highlighted as 'DEI positions,' this report highlights aspects of those offices.

These specific units also work collaboratively with others to offer programming to all students, such as Constructive Dialogue, Creating Community Workshops, Bridging Differences, Leadership Across Difference, and Understanding Freedom of Expression workshops. One recent example is the student debate focused on whether universities should allow controversial speech on campus. The event was co-hosted by community partners Braver Angels and ACTA, and organized and co-sponsored by CCEE and Leadership Education and Development (LEAD).

The professional staff who work in these units provide direct service and support to students; respond to student transition, community building, and career preparation needs; coach student leaders; deliver training workshops (see programs above); and develop and implement initiatives that commemorate federal and commonwealth-recognized heritage months for the entire campus community among other duties. (See [Appendix C: Position Summaries](#))

Professional student services staff also work together with DEI compliance staff as 'on the ground' practitioners who are both assessing and influencing environmental conditions that may cause student dissatisfaction and/or incidents of bias or discrimination. Often, these staff interventions can alleviate or reduce conflict, and ultimately prevent formal complaints from being filed.

The students who work in these units act as peer mentors, provide office management support, and assist professional staff in programming and other work with student organizations. They are all full-time students, undergraduate students receiving federal work study, and graduate assistants. (See Figure 4. UL Undergraduate and Graduate Student Positions)

Figure 4. UL Undergraduate and Graduate Student Positions

University Life Undergraduate and Graduate Student Positions			
Unit	Position Title	Unit	Description
Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment	Graduate Assistants (4)	Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment	Part-time student employees (full-time graduate students)
Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment	Student Ambassadors (5)	Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment	Part-time student employees (full-time undergraduate students)
Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment	Office Coordinator	Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment	Part-time federal work study student employee (full-time undergraduate student)
Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment	Lead Student IT Coordinator	Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment	Part-time student employee (full-time undergraduate student)
Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment	IT Associate	Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment	Part-time federal work study student employee (full-time undergraduate student)
Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment	Front Desk Receptionist (2)	Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment	Part-time federal work study student employees (full-time undergraduate students)
Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment	Staff in Black Male Success Initiative (5)	Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment	Part-time student employees (full-time undergraduate students)
LGBTQ+ Resources Center	Graduate Assistant, LGBTQ+ Resources Center	LGBTQ+ Resources Center	Part-time student employee (full-time graduate student)
LGBTQ+ Resources Center	BSW Intern, LGBTQ+ Resources Center	LGBTQ+ Resources Center	Part-time student employees (full-time graduate student)
Total Count: 21			

What else do these positions do?

While creating an inclusive culture and providing student, faculty, and staff support are the major areas of work for the DEI positions, there are numerous important additional responsibilities that are essential to the effective functioning of a university today. Those responsibilities are explained below.

Support Academic Freedom and Free Speech

The Mason motto is “Freedom and Learning,” our vision is “Your world, transformed,” and our ultimate goal is to offer an innovative and inclusive academic community committed to creating a more just, free, and prosperous world. Our core values and beliefs reflect that charge and our shared ideal that exposing our community to a multitude of ideas, perspectives, and opinions makes our students better prepared to lead in the world to come. One need not look beyond recent landmark Supreme Court decisions to find Mason faculty as national commentators and sense-makers whose perspectives span the breadth of the American ideological spectrum. This is the broad diversity of thought to which we expose our students.

Staff are committed to upholding the principles of free speech by supporting, responding to, and addressing the diverse perspectives present in the campus community both inside and outside the classroom. They organize programs, serve as speakers, and assist in various campus activities that promote inclusive excellence while also ensuring free speech. With the wide range of perspectives at Mason, staff provide students, faculty, and staff with opportunities for education and professional

development to understand different viewpoints. They promote open discussion on complex topics and teach skills for constructive dialogue across differences, which is essential for a healthy democracy.

Comply with Governor, Attorney General, and Commonwealth Directives

Governor Youngkin signed Executive Order 10, which provided a concrete plan to further strengthen and focus the Commonwealth's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and included a direction for the promotion and expansion of equal opportunity for all Virginians (See [Appendix B](#)). In addition, the Commonwealth Attorney General requested that all Virginia public institutions produce a Freedom of Speech and Intellectual Diversity Action Plan. Finally, SCHEV's Pathway to Opportunity: The Virginia Plan for Higher Education has as its goal that the Commonwealth will be the best state for education. The key principles of the plan are closing access and completion gaps, lowering cost to students, and expanding prosperity. (see [Appendix D: GMU Free Speech Narrative Action Plan](#), [Appendix E: SCHEV Pathways to Opportunity: The Virginia Plan for Higher Education](#)). For these directives and plans, staff lead initiatives that help achieve these goals.

Support Compliance and Risk Management

[ADA](#), the [Forever GI Bill](#), and civil rights laws and regulations, including Titles [VI](#), [VII](#), and [IX](#), are the foundation of inclusive excellence efforts. Staff assist with ensuring that laws are interpreted and applied fairly and accurately. Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, employers are obligated to remove artificial barriers that might result in discriminatory hiring outcomes regardless of intent. In partnership with the colleagues in human resources, staff in central and academic units lead and sometimes participates in efforts to recruit, hire, and retain employees not only in compliance with Title VII, but also to ensure the university identified and hired the best candidates for the job and broadened access to opportunity. Staff help units implement effective practices to proactively identify potential issues related to fair hiring practices and provide tools to address them.

Mason engages in prevention efforts and strategies to minimize risks and liabilities, including lawsuits, as well as reduce the likelihood of harm to individuals and communities that may be the targets of discrimination and harassment. Using ADA as an example, universities have aimed to move beyond compliance with requested accommodations and accessibility on campus to predicting and preventing obstacles that may hinder disabled students' and employees' ability to thrive. Staff proactivity identify and try to remedy these obstacles through trainings and workshops to increase awareness and education; referrals to the appropriate resources and support; programs to create communities where students (at all academic levels), faculty, and staff from all backgrounds can thrive; and consultation with units across the institution to provide expertise related to changing demographics and barriers to success.

Meet Accreditation Requirements

The [Council for Higher Education Accreditation \(CHEA\)](#), which evaluates and confirms the consistency of accrediting organizations' standards and processes, explicitly emphasizes its dedication to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Accreditation is a rigorous peer-reviewed affirmation of academic standards, ethics, reputation, and rigor, and holds immense significance for any higher education institution. Each of the five major institutional accrediting bodies has established several benchmarks and guidelines that specifically address DEI. Only institutions and programs accredited by a federally recognized accreditor

can grant students access to federal student aid, including Pell Grants and student loans. Staff not only support and promote the activities, policies, and practices outlined in the standards, but also provide institutional knowledge and data analytics that facilitate effective responses. *List of Mason's accredited programs:* <https://www.chea.org/george-mason-university>

Secure Research Grant Funding

Research plays a crucial role in the operations of higher education institutions. Federal funding agencies such as [NIH](#), [NSF](#) (Broader [Impacts](#); [Advance Grants](#)), [DOE \(Pier Plans\)](#), and [NASA](#) require diversity impact statements or plans as part of grant submissions and contracting projects. Researchers are expected to provide detailed explanations of how they intend to build inclusive teams and foster a sense of belonging among team members. Staff submit competitive proposals to federal funding agencies to help fund Mason's inclusive excellence efforts and serve as resources and subject matter expertise to researchers submitting competitive proposals. Additionally, researchers rely on the university's inclusive excellence infrastructure (e.g., personnel, programs, assessments, partners) to implement their inclusion plans effectively. Without institutional support, researchers would be burdened with the task of creating these resources from scratch or incurring expenses for external training or support.

Support Industry Needs (e.g., Workforce Readiness)

Embracing diversity is of utmost importance for both businesses and institutions of higher education to remain pertinent in today's world. According to the US Department of Education, an overwhelming 93% of employers highly value employees who possess the ability to collaborate effectively with customers, clients, and businesses from diverse countries and cultures. Companies that boast more diverse workforces, encompassing various racial, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic, neurodiversity, and physical ability backgrounds, exhibit greater financial strength and foster more positive corporate cultures. Employers seek candidates who possess global proficiency, cultural sensitivity, and a broad perspective, as these attributes enable them to maintain a competitive edge. Employers not only desire candidates who are representative of global markets and societies, but also individuals who can thrive and contribute effectively within diverse groups. Staff develop and lead programs to meet students' career preparation needs, including developing cultural competencies (e.g., cross-cultural communications, working effectively in teams, problem solving, cultural awareness).

Support Intercollegiate Athletics

In 2022, the NCAA introduced the DEI Review Framework to align with the priorities outlined in the [NCAA Board of Governors inclusion statement](#). This framework emphasizes equitable participation, inclusive cultures, the learning environment, programming and education, and hiring practices. Member institutions are expected to promote diversity and inclusion in athletics activities and events, hiring practices, professional and coaching relationships, and leadership and advancement opportunities. Without inclusive excellence programming within member institutions, Mason would be hindered in their ability to meet NCAA diversity requirements. In line with the NCAA's Presidential Pledge and Commitment to Promoting Diversity and Gender Equity in Intercollegiate Athletics, Division I have implemented legislation that necessitates institutions to affirm their completion of a self-directed DEI review every four years. Staff serve as consultants to provide advice and support on the athletics

department's inclusive excellence plans, hiring practices, and climate assessments; staff also serve on A-10 Conference DEI Committee.

Support Designations and Certifications

In 2023, Mason became designated as a Minority Serving Institution (MSI) by the Department of Education. As an MSI, we receive additional federal funding to support work study students and additional funding is available for us to pursue under Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965. To maintain this designation, Mason must apply every year with substantial documentation showing the institution's commitment to serving low-income students. Mason also has an organizational certification in diversity and inclusion from the Human Resource Standards Institute (HRSI) Inclusion. Certification shows that Mason's HR management (HRM) practices are in line with International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards for processes that support organizational goals and align with global standards. Through the association with ISO guidance, Mason has a baseline for comparisons of practices on objective bases with other organizations across national boundaries and industry sectors. To maintain this certification, there is an annual report due to HRSI. Staff coordinate across the institution with units to draft and submit the annual application requiring data and documentation showing evidence that Mason substantially increased the higher education opportunities for low-income students; and have utilized effective practices for inclusive hiring, inclusive culture, workforce planning, and employee engagement and retention.

Effect of Inclusive Excellence at Mason

The effect of all of this work is seen in many ways—a welcoming, inclusive culture, meaningful free speech and discussion, robust compliance with directives, multiple accreditations, enhanced grant funding, fewer incidents of discrimination or bias, and many others. Ultimately, however, the result is reflected in our product: proud George Mason graduates. Mason's graduation rates are above the national average, without substantial disparities among demographic groups. Beyond this, 87 percent of our alumni now find career-related employment, continuing education, or public service within six months of graduation. Just as there are no disparities in graduation rates, there are no disparities among our students' career outcomes. (See Figure 5. Student Demographic Profile, Figure 6. Measuring Student Success, Figure 7. Career Success Outcomes)

Furthermore, Mason has awarded the largest number and highest percentage of undergraduate and graduate degrees to underrepresented minorities (URM) students in the Commonwealth, when compared with all four year public institutions in Virginia. (See Figure 8. Underrepresented Minorities [URMs] Graduation Rates in Virginia)

Figure 5. Student Demographic Profile

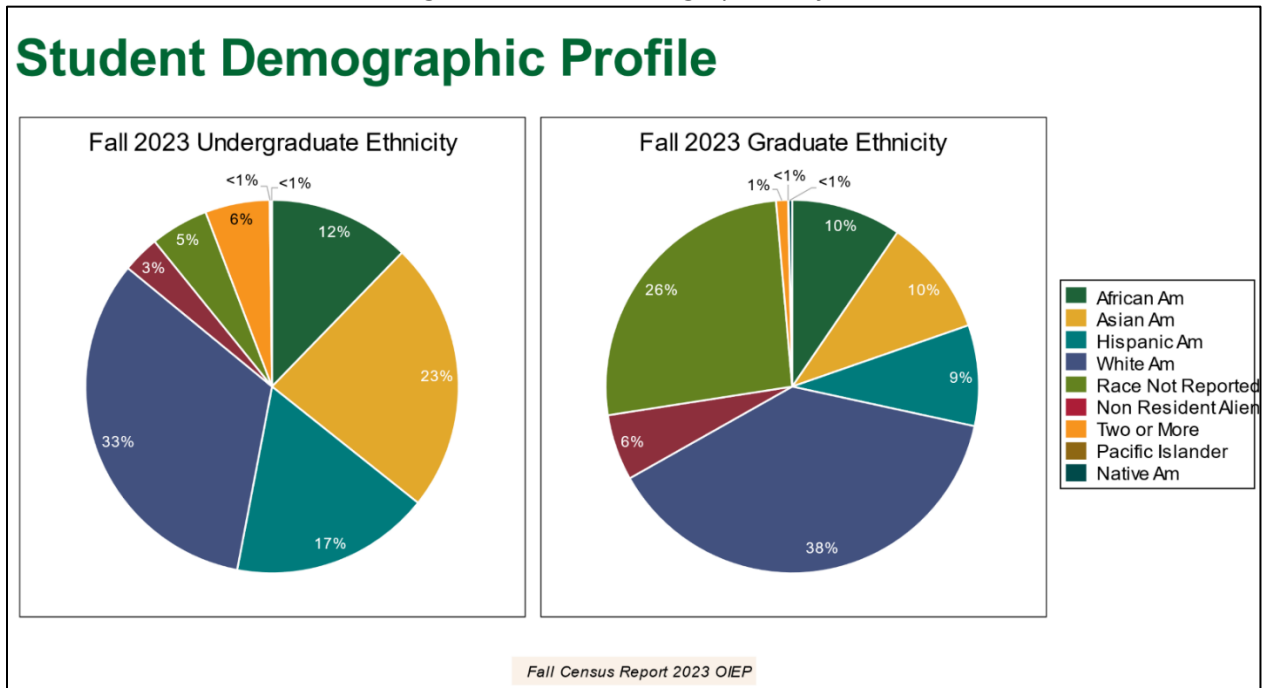


Figure 6. Measuring Student Success

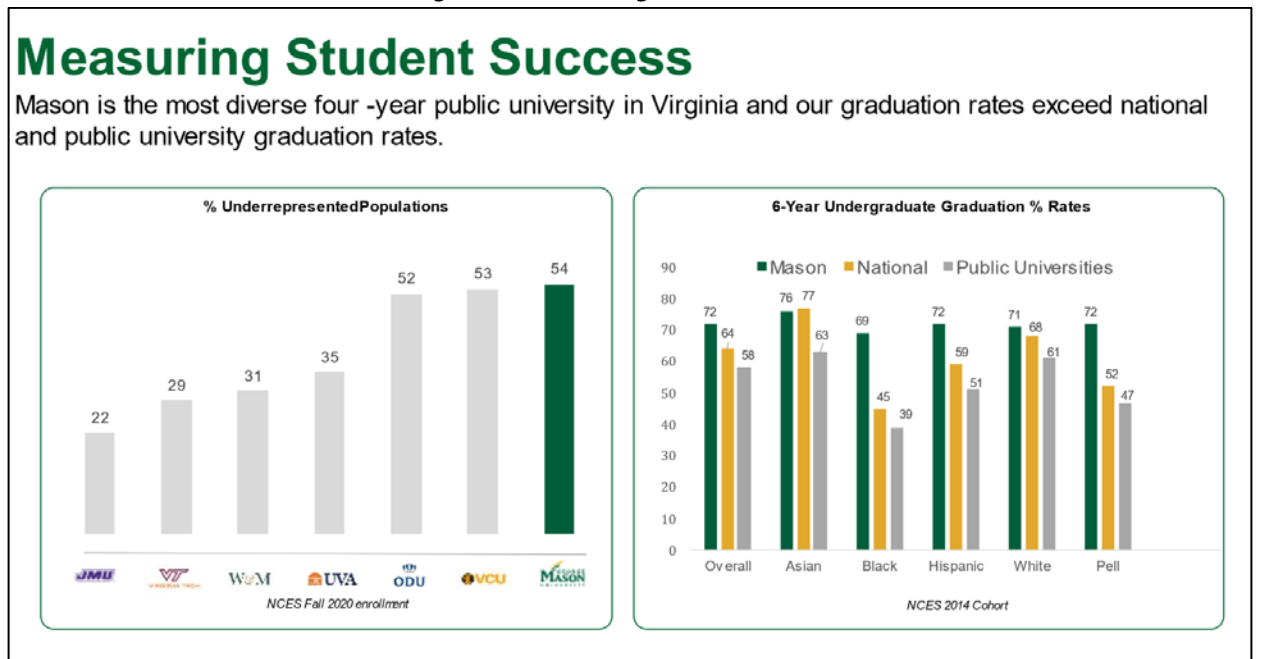
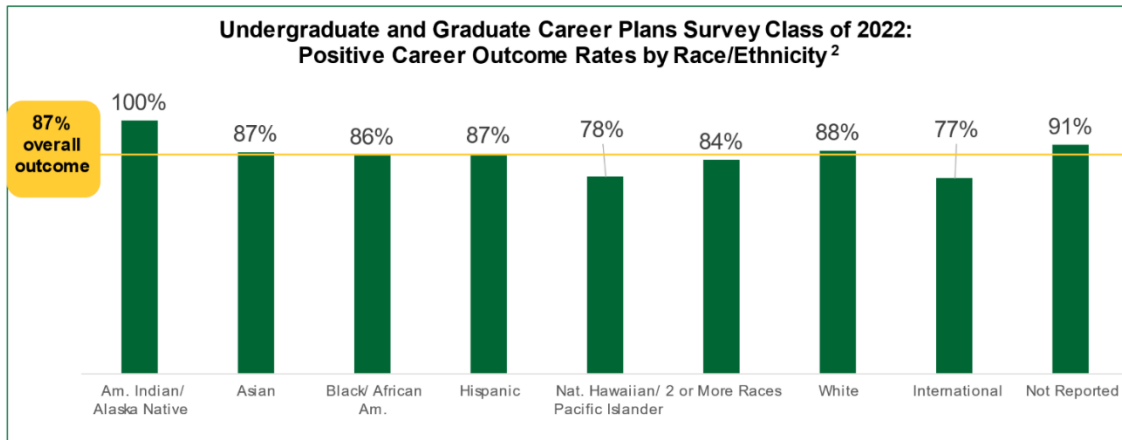


Figure 7. Career Success Outcomes

Career Success Outcomes

Mason's commitment to producing career-ready professionals is reflected in the class of 2022's **87%** positive career outcomes ¹.



¹Positive Career Outcomes Outcome rates of UG and graduate students within six months of graduation (includes employment, graduate school, military, or volunteer work)

²Graph based on available data from 4,575 undergraduate and graduate students out of the 9,154 who graduated in August 2022 and May 2022; percentages for American Indian/Alaska Native students based on <15 graduates and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander <10 graduates.

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Figure 8. Total Number of Underrepresented Minority Graduates in Virginia

Total Number of Underrepresented Minority Graduates in Virginia

Mason confers the highest number of URM bachelors and masters degrees for public four-year institutions in Virginia.

Institution	Bachelors (2022-2023) ¹		Masters (2022-2023) ¹	
	# of Degrees Conferred	% of Total	# of Degrees Conferred	% of Total
George Mason University	1955	19%	687	26%
Virginia Commonwealth University	1699	16%	394	15%
Old Dominion University	1488	14%	346	13%
Virginia Tech	1303	12%	298	11%
University of Virginia	828	8%	230	9%
James Madison University	732	7%	193	7%
Norfolk State University	722	7%	108	4%
Virginia State University	426	4%	97	4%
Radford University	414	4%	88	3%
William & Mary	335	3%	61	2%
University of Mary Washington	183	2%	60	2%
Christopher Newport University	182	2%	23	1%
Longwood University	149	1%	18	1%
Virginia Military Institute	62	1%	0	0%
University of Virginia's College at Wise	17	0%	0	0%
Total Public Four-Year Institutions	10,495	100%	2,603	100%

¹SCHEV 2022-2023 Graduation Data

Context and Considerations that Led to the Development of Just Societies

Overview

The Mason Core is Mason's general education program that is designed to prepare students for work in their majors and minors, for their careers, and for life-long learning. Mason Core accomplishes these goals through three levels of required course categories. Foundation courses (4 courses) build key knowledge and skills needed for academic success. Exploration courses (7 courses) provide a breadth of learning across the university. Integration courses (3 courses) include upper-division courses designed to integrate knowledge and skills learned from Foundation and Exploration courses into the major. Courses within each category of the Core are designed around a common set of learning outcomes. Together, the totality of courses helps develop the qualities we expect of all students graduating with a bachelor's degree from George Mason University: engaged citizens and well-rounded scholars who are prepared to act in a global, diverse world.

There are many influences on the composition of the Mason Core. These include the needs of prospective employers, key guidelines from accrediting bodies at both the institutional and programmatic levels, research and best practices related to general education, and Mason's unique mission and the student body. Below, we review key considerations that influenced recent changes in the Mason Core, which included the move to create the *Just Societies* category.

Employer Perspectives

In the context of globalization and the diversification of our own nation, it has become essential for employees to be able to interact effectively with others from different backgrounds. In 2022, all 100 of the Fortune 100 companies reported [active commitments to diversity and inclusivity](#). Multiple business-focused outlets have also made a strong "business case" for actively promoting inclusivity within the workplace. Notably, in 2015, McKinsey & Company put forward a [report on data from 366 public companies](#) in Canada, the US, the UK, and Latin America. They found that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity were 15% more likely than those in the bottom quartile to outperform the national industry median in earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT), and companies in the top quartile for racial/ethnic diversity were 35% more likely than those in the bottom quartile to do so. Furthermore, within the US specifically, they found a strong and statistically significant correlation between racial/ethnic diversity of senior executive teams and EBIT.

In 2018, McKinsey & Company expanded on their original report with a [study of data from more than 1,000 companies](#) across 12 countries. Findings were similar in terms of significantly greater likelihoods of exceeding the national industry median in EBIT (companies in the top quartile of gender diversity were 21% more likely than those in the bottom quartile; companies in the top quartile of racial/ethnic diversity were 33% more likely than those in the bottom quartile). In 2020, McKinsey & Company conducted another [follow-up report using data from more than 1,000 companies](#) across 15 countries. The same patterns held, with even larger differences in EBIT across companies in top and bottom quartiles (25% and 36%, respectively).

These types of findings, and the overall “business case” for diversity, equity, and inclusion, are echoed by other leading organizations, such as the Boston Consulting Group ([BCG, 2024](#)) and Forbes ([Forbes, 2023](#)). Furthermore, employers’ ratings of the importance of the ability to work effectively in diverse teams and to understand different cultures have increased over time in multiple surveys ([AAC&U 2023 Employer Report](#); [NACE Job Outlook 2024 Report](#)). Furthermore, at a time when the [Pew Research Center](#) reports that Americans are more politically polarized than ever and increasingly hostile in that partisanship, employers will need workers who are even more skilled at listening and engaging with others who have different perspectives.

Finally, despite [eye-catching headlines](#) about cuts to DEI programs at some large employers like Meta and Google, these issues remain important to employers and employees alike, as many of these companies are actually distributing [responsibility for such efforts more widely](#) across their organizations. These moves will make it all the more necessary for employees at all levels to have an understanding of and experience with the nuances related to diversity and inclusion, further reinforcing the importance of providing our students with the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need to succeed.

Likely Employers of Mason Graduates

This broader global employer context is important for our students, who will be entering careers around the world. However, the local context is also important for understanding the needs of employers who most frequently hire Mason graduates. All of Mason's top local employers have explicit statements related to diversity, equity, and inclusion:

1. [Fairfax County Public Schools](#)
2. [Booz Allen Hamilton](#)
3. [Inova Health](#)
4. [Amazon Web Services](#)
5. [Deloitte](#)
6. [Capital One](#)
7. [Freddie Mac](#)
8. [Navy Federal Credit Union](#)
9. [Leidos](#)
10. [General Dynamics IT](#)
11. [Peraton](#)
12. [CGI](#)
13. [Microsoft](#)
14. [SAIC](#)

These top employers also explicitly report that they recruit at Mason at least in part because of the diversity of our student body, through both anecdotal reports and in a recent survey of a few top employers by Career Services (see questions and responses from employers in [Appendix L](#)).

Similarly, the ten largest public companies in the greater Washington area, ranked in order of revenue ([Proctor, 2023](#)), also all have explicit DEI commitments:

1. [Fannie Mae](#), Washington, DC
2. [Freddie Mac](#), Washington, DC

3. [RTX Corp](#), Arlington, VA
4. [Boeing](#), Arlington, VA
5. [Lockheed Martin](#), Bethesda, MD
6. [General Dynamics](#), Reston, VA
7. [Capital One](#), McLean, VA
8. [Northrop Grumman](#), Falls Church, VA
9. [Danaher Corp](#), Washington, DC
10. [Marriott International](#), Bethesda, MD

Overall, Mason has done an excellent job of ensuring career placement for graduates in high-paying jobs, primarily in Virginia and in the DMV area. As we face an enrollment cliff, increasing competition from other universities that are building satellite campuses in the DMV area, and a more competitive job market, we need to continue evolving our curriculum to ensure that our graduates maintain their competitive edge.

Accreditation Requirements

The Mason Core must align with and demonstrate that students are achieving desired learning outcomes as part of our SCHEV assessment process and our SACSCOC accreditation and reaffirmation process. More information is available on the Mason Core assessment page on external reporting agencies and requirements: <https://oiep.gmu.edu/institutional-effectiveness/mason-core-assessment/external-reporting-agencies-and-requirements/>. In addition to these broad institutional accreditation requirements, we have many programs that are accredited by separate program accreditation agencies, and many of those programs rely on the Mason Core to meet some of their accreditation standards. More detail on guidelines and requirements relative to each level of accreditation is below.

SACSCOC Requirements

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is Mason's regional accreditor, and the accrediting standards can be found online at <https://sacscoc.org/accrediting-standards/>. The current [Principles of Accreditation](#) lay out the following requirements for general education in section 9.3 (see [Appendix F](#)). While SACSCOC does not yet specify explicit learning outcomes related to diversity, equity, and inclusion that must be demonstrated, it does have a [Position Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#) that emphasizes the importance of addressing these constructs. That Position Statement begins as follows (emphasis added):

SACSCOC supports and encourages the leadership role of its institutions in **promoting and sustaining diversity, equity and inclusion in all arenas of higher education**. Through its own activities, SACSCOC seeks to model inclusion on its Board of Trustees, on its staff, on its peer evaluation teams, and through its training and professional development, including a multiplicity of perspectives that represent the whole of the SACSCOC membership. While no single SACSCOC standard speaks to diversity, equity and inclusion, **opportunities are available throughout the standards to showcase efforts and to engage in thoughtful reflection, evaluation, and planning to support the diversity of all students, faculty, and staff**. (para. 1)

The statement further lists example strategies that have been implemented at member institutions and provides explicit definitions for diversity, equity, and inclusion (see [Appendix I](#)). These definitions are key to how we understand these terms at Mason and guide our efforts.

Additionally, SACSCOC has clear policies regarding how curriculum is developed and approved (see [Appendix F](#)). Section 4.2b lays out specific roles for the board, administration, and faculty, defining that the governing board “ensures a clear and appropriate distinction between the policy-making function of the board and the respective responsibilities of the administration and faculty to administer and implement policy.” Further, section 10.4 lays out the following requirements for academic governance, which clearly places responsibility for the curriculum in the hands of the faculty (emphasis added):

The institution (a) publishes and implements policies on the authority of faculty in academic and governance matters, (b) demonstrates that educational programs for which academic credit is awarded are approved consistent with institutional policy, and (c) **places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum with its faculty.** (p. 20)

To maintain accreditation, all curriculum development and approval procedures must continue to align with these principles.

SCHEV Requirements

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) monitors general education through the assessment of outcomes, not the approval of changes to any institution's general education requirements¹. SCHEV's [Policy on Student Learning Assessment and Quality in Undergraduate Education](#) asserts that, regardless of major, college education in Virginia should emphasize the following four outcomes:

- Broad learning about science, society, technology, arts and humanities, human diversity, and global cultures and interdependence;
- Intellectual and practical skills that support evidence-based reasoning and innovation—including analysis, communication, critical and creative thinking, quantitative fluency, information literacy, and collaborative problem solving;
- Integrative and adaptive learning, including the demonstrated ability to apply knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to complex problems and new settings;
- Personal and social responsibility, including ethical reasoning, civic and democratic knowledge and engagement, global acumen, and the **capacity to work productively with diverse people and perspectives.** (p. 2)

¹ SCHEV's [Academic Program Approvals and Changes Policy](#) authorizes and requires governing boards to approve all new academic degree programs (p. 7) and to approve the closing (p. 9) or merging (p. 56) of academic degree programs. While SCHEV administrative approval is needed for modifications to academic degree programs that meet a specific threshold, those modifications have never been approved by Mason's BOV. The SCHEV policy for approving program modifications that result in a change in the common core for degree programs specifically excludes general education from this degree program modification approval process (p. 5). There is no SCHEV policy that requires either SCHEV or the BOV to approve general education curriculum. See [Appendix G](#) for more details.

As part of the general education assessment process, each institution in Virginia is required to assess student learning on [four](#) specific core competencies (critical thinking, written communication, quantitative reasoning, and civic engagement) as well as on two competencies selected by the institution (oral communication and inquiry are assessed by Mason).

SCHEV expects institutions to use assessment data to continually improve teaching and the student learning experience, and makes institutions responsible for developing their own curriculum, pedagogical approaches, and assessment strategies. SCHEV also notes:

Students attending Virginia institutions may have different needs based on their personal histories, identities, and life circumstances. It is essential that institutions pay attention to educational quality as it pertains to various subgroups to ensure all students—regardless of their background, identities, or circumstances—receive a high-quality education. (p. 3)

Because Mason’s student population is substantially different from the student populations at other four-year colleges and universities across the Commonwealth and is among the [most diverse student populations](#) in the United States, including [economic diversity](#) and [social mobility](#), it is appropriate for the Mason curriculum to include requirements that address the tremendous range of our students’ experiences and perspectives.

Program Accreditation Requirements

In addition to the accreditation requirements that SACSCOC and SCHEV have for all Mason degrees, many programs are accredited by individual program accreditors. The list of all accredited programs at Mason is included in [Appendix G](#), with a link to the accrediting standards and an indication of whether there are diversity-related standards required as part of that accrediting process. All of the accreditors have requirements related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and/or access, and most require that diversity information be incorporated into reporting for multiple standards. These requirements most often show up in the requirements for **student learning outcomes and the curriculum**; faculty and student recruitment, composition, and retention; and in the guiding principles and organizational statements about the role and value of diversity in the programs. A smaller number of accreditors have requirements to demonstrate DEI in strategic management and long-term planning processes, and five expect program to demonstrate that employers and alumni are satisfied that graduates are prepared to work with diverse populations and in diverse environments.

Best Practices

American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U)

A global organization with over 1,000 member institutions, the AAC&U is widely viewed as the leading voice on undergraduate education. The AAC&U has established a set of [essential learning outcomes](#) that are widely viewed as best practice for ensuring that college students are prepared for the workplace and broader society upon graduation. These learning outcomes, which are well aligned with SCHEV’s four broad outcomes, include: (1) knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world; (2) intellectual and practical skills; (3) personal and social responsibility; and (4) integrative and applied learning.

The first category includes science and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and arts. The second category includes inquiry and analysis, critical and creative thinking, written and oral communication, quantitative literacy, information literacy, and teamwork and problem solving.). The third category includes **civic knowledge and engagement, intercultural knowledge and competence, ethical reasoning and action**, and foundations and skills for lifelong learning. The fourth category includes synthesis and advanced accomplishment.

National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)

With over 17,000 members, NACE is a leading organization that brings together institutions of higher education and employers to identify elements of a college education that are crucial to preparing the future workforce. In this context, NACE provides research-informed guidance on key issues related to preparing college students for future employment.

From 2015 through 2021, NACE facilitated iterative task forces to operationalize what “career readiness” in college graduates means. [This multi-year effort](#) included literature reviews, multiple data collections, and significant validation efforts. The work resulted in the identification and definition of eight competencies believed to represent career readiness in college graduates: communication, critical thinking, career and self-development, teamwork, professionalism, **equity and inclusion**, leadership, and technology. Within these, the equity and inclusion competency was defined as follows: “Demonstrate the awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills required to **equitably engage and include people from different local and global cultures**. Engage in anti-racist practices that **actively challenge the systems, structures, and policies of racism**.”

Peer Institutions

Mason’s peer institutions in Virginia and in the DMV region are another source of important information about programs required to remain competitive in attracting new students to our university and preparing our students for the workforce. A brief summary of the general education requirements related to diversity, equity, and inclusion at several of these institutions follows, with key elements shown in italicized font (emphasis added).

The **University of Virginia** requires four 2-credit courses within their primary first-year curricular “Engagements” pathway. One of these classes is EGMT 1530 *Engaging Differences*. The course description is as follows: “This course ... focuses on what we can learn from examining the ways in which we engage difference. Both within the university and beyond, you will encounter a range of contexts in which people differ, **including distinctions of culture, religion, and nationality, as well as those of class, race, gender, sexuality, ability, privilege, and power**. In a world in which difference is the norm, this class will ask how we will live and flourish together. A course in ‘Engaging Differences’ will help you: **recognize that social inequalities are historically produced and patterned** along lines of difference; consider how differences function across social and temporal boundaries; consider **how we develop and experience bias and discrimination**, inclusion and exclusion; and recognize how **power dynamics shape the impact of how difference works** in the world.”

James Madison University has five areas within their general education, one of which is titled “American and Global Perspectives.” Within this area, students complete two courses, one on the American Experience and a second on Global Experience. Learning outcomes for American Experience

courses are described as follows: “students ... will be able to identify, conceptualize and evaluate: social and political processes and structures using quantitative and qualitative data; primary sources from diverse perspectives relating to American history, political institutions and society; **the evolution of intellectual concepts shaping American democratic institutions, including issues involving power, inequity, and justice**; the complexity and diversity of American politics, society and culture; intentions and consequences of America’s engagement in global affairs; **how the historical exclusion of various social identities influences political, social, cultural and economic development.**” Learning outcomes for the Global Experience course are as follows: “students ... will be able to identify, conceptualize and evaluate: basic global problems; global political, social, cultural, and economic systems that shape societies; issues involved in analyzing societies different from one’s own; **strategies to achieve diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and access both locally and globally**; diverse theoretical models to analyze global problems; **the value and complexity of global diversity in all its forms.**”

Virginia Tech has a “pathways” curriculum that is designed around 7 core concepts and 2 integrative concepts. These include 1 core concept (with a 3-credit course requirement) called “Critical Analysis of Identity and Equity in the US,” and 1 integrative concept (that is achieved through a combination of courses within core concepts) called “Intercultural and Global Awareness.” The *Critical Analysis of Identity and Equity in the US* core concept is described as follows: “Explores the ways **social identities related to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, class, disability status, sexual orientation, religion, veteran status, economic status, age, and other socially salient categories and statuses influence the human condition and experience**, with focus on the United States in particular or in comparative perspective. It recognizes that **people in society have had different experiences and opportunities related to social categories, and challenges students to consider their ethical responsibilities to others in that context** and in the context of Ut Prosim, to enhance their capacities to be engaged citizens and visionary leaders in an increasingly diverse society. Students will **gain self-awareness of how they are situated relative to those around them based on social identities and foundational knowledge of the interactive dynamics of social identities, power and inequity.**”

Associated learning outcomes include: “analyze how social identities, statuses, space, place, traditions, and histories of inequity and power shape human experience in the United States;” “analyze social equity and diversity in the United States (particularly or in comparative perspective) through multiple perspectives on power and identity.” The *Intercultural and Global Awareness* integrative concept is described as follows: “Supports effective and **appropriate interaction with a variety of people and different cultural contexts. Considerations of diversity and inclusion are crucial** for students in an increasingly complex world. An important application of this learning is the **critical analysis of global systems and legacies and their implications for people’s lives and the earth’s sustainability.**”

Virginia Commonwealth University builds their general education program around six learning goals, two of which address issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion: “Ethical reasoning” and “Global and cultural responsiveness.” Ethical reasoning is described as including: “judgments of right and wrong, good and bad, related to human conduct **especially concerning matters of justice, fairness, equity, and social responsibility.**” Associated learning outcomes include “**identify one’s culturally inherited beliefs through self-awareness & civic identity**” and “**understand the different ethical perspectives/concepts & diversity of communities and cultures,**” among others. Global and cultural responsiveness is described as follows: “**This competency’s primary goal, achievable only after several courses with this**

competency, is for students to advance equity and justice on local and global levels, well informed by historical and political contexts.”

At **William and Mary**, all undergraduates complete a “College Curriculum” that includes 6 course categories. One of these categories is: COLL 350 *Difference, Equity, Justice* (3 credits). The course description is as follows: “the course material integrates a **consideration of social norms, institutional practices, and patterns of belonging/marginalization through the lens of race and at least one other social identity**. You'll learn to engage complex, values-laden topics through critical analysis, critical reflection, and respectful dialogue that can bridge differences in perspective.”

University of Maryland has 4 key areas, one of which is Diversity. This area is described as follows: “Rather than affirm or celebrate difference, courses in the Diversity requirement investigate the complexities of human difference and commonality. The Diversity requirement **emphasizes the promises and problems of plural societies and the challenges that must be addressed to achieve just, equitable, and productive societies**. Courses in the Diversity requirement explore the gritty struggles through which plural societies are established and maintained.” Undergraduates are required to complete two courses in this area.

In sum, **all identified peer institutions had requirements related to diversity, equity, and inclusion embedded within their general education program**, with requirements ranging from one course to two courses to a suite of courses aimed at achieving an overarching set of outcomes. Arguably, the Just Societies requirement described below is a smaller requirement than other core programs.

Development and Implementation of Just Societies

Search for “The Mason Way”

Precipitating Curriculum Development and Assessment Activities

By 2013, Mason students had been voicing a desire for some inclusion within our general education of issues related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) for some time. The requests increased over subsequent years, eventually leading President Cabrera to establish a working group with faculty to develop a DEIJ and well-being focused course as one of his annual presidential goals in 2018. Throughout the work of that group, Mason’s overarching mission “to be an innovative and inclusive academic community committed to creating a more just, free, and prosperous world” provided important context. Discussions focused heavily on the need for such a course to be widely accessible to a range of students – **a class that successfully addresses issues of justice and inclusion that will not make any of its students feel excluded.** At the same time, the goal was not to water down challenging content and ideas to merely avoid any discomfort. As stated in the Chicago Principles, “although all members of the University community share in the responsibility for maintaining a climate of mutual respect, concerns about civility and mutual respect can never be used as a justification for closing off discussion of ideas.”

That working group developed a course syllabus, and one faculty member taught a pilot of the course in Fall 2019, with a plan to expand the offerings of that pilot in a subsequent semester and eventually offer a massive multi-section course for all students (similar to the approach for COMM 101 or ENGH 302). However, budgetary and other constraints resulted in a decision to seek another way to implement these learning outcomes in a multitude of courses that allowed faculty to engage students more deeply in learning about these issues within their areas of disciplinary expertise.

At the same time, the Mason Core Committee and related groups engaged in a multi-year effort to review the Mason Core, beginning in force in 2017 and carrying forward through 2022. From 2017-2020, a group of faculty engaged in a comprehensive assessment of the existing Mason Core, in preparation for the SACSCOC accreditation reaffirmation. The results of the Mason Core assessment made it clear that we needed to address a challenge with the *Global Understanding* category that was in the Exploratory level at that time. The *Global Understanding* category in the Mason Core required courses to select three of a larger set of four learning outcomes that essentially fit into one of two groups: outcomes focused on globalization and learning *about* another culture, and outcomes focused on intercultural competencies and learning *how to engage with* individuals from other cultures. The results of the assessment demonstrated that courses were generally covering outcomes only in one group or the other, meaning that some students were achieving competencies related to learning about another culture but not about engaging with individuals from another culture, and other students were achieving the opposite.

Given the results of the broader information gathering described above, it was clear to the Mason Core Committee that *all* students needed to meet *both* of these types of outcomes to be fully equipped for their future careers. This assessment helped to lay the groundwork for the Mason Core revisions that eventually resulted in the creation of the new *Global Contexts* category (comprising the former *Global*

Understanding outcomes that were focused on learning *about* another culture) plus the *Just Societies* flags (comprising the former *Global Understanding* outcomes that were focused on learning *how to engage* with individuals from other cultures).

In the summers of 2019 and 2021, subgroups of faculty and administrators attended the Institute on General Education and Assessment run by the AAC&U. The Mason Core Committee simultaneously engaged in extensive research on best practices. As this work progressed, the Mason Core Committee was also soliciting extensive input from the Mason community to determine what elements faculty and students viewed as essential for general education. In 2019-2020, a Mason Core Faculty Fellow led an effort called “Mason Core Conversations,” which consisted of 17 focus groups and 3 workshops (173 total participants). In addition, two surveys with a mixture of open-ended and forced-choice questions were distributed to faculty (426 faculty responded) and students (559 students responded) in Spring 2020. Seven clear themes emerged from focus group and workshop data with regard to priorities for general education. Among those, cultural competence was the 3rd-most frequently mentioned area, behind critical thinking and written communication, and ahead of oral communication, well-being, civic engagement, and well-roundedness. In the faculty and student surveys, cultural competence was again one of the most highly-rated items, behind only critical thinking (faculty and students), well-being (students only), and written and oral communication (faculty only).

Development Process

In 2021-2022, the Mason Core Committee reviewed the evidence described above. Diversity, equity, and inclusion emerged as a clear and pressing gap within our general education curriculum. National and local employment data highlighted its importance, as did leading organizations like AAC&U and NACE. SCHEV guidelines for general education included the “capacity to work productively with diverse people and perspectives.” Numerous programmatic accrediting bodies required education related to DEI within their curricular guidelines. All other Virginia and regional universities had a required element in their general education. Yet, the only category that addressed these issues within the Mason Core was *Global Understanding*, but at the time, only a subset of the *Global Understanding* courses met this goal.

This misalignment was not true for other domains of learning. All of the other areas of general education identified as most important in both focus groups and surveys with the Mason community had clear maps onto the Mason Core for all students. Similarly, all elements of SCHEV specifications were well covered in the Core, except for “the capacity to work productively with diverse people and perspectives” (addressed only in the optional learning outcomes in *Global Understanding*). The Mason Core also matched well with three of the four outcomes identified by the [AAC&U](#) as essential for general education (which are similar to those identified in [SCHEV’s aspirational statement on quality](#)), with the exception being the category of personal and social responsibility, which includes outcomes for of civic knowledge and engagement- local and global, intercultural knowledge and competence, ethical reasoning and action, and foundations and skills for lifelong learning.

Addressing this gap was the primary focus of one of the Mason Core task forces created during the 2021-2022 academic year. **A crucial consideration in this work was the importance of developing a solution that would be applicable to and approachable by the broad diversity of students at Mason.** Associated learning outcomes and/or courses would need to be even-handed and designed such that students from all backgrounds and belief/value systems would be able to engage in the material. Faculty worked to develop a way of addressing diversity-related issues in the “Mason Way,” through empirically

based, academically rigorous engagement with important issues in an environment that respects the broad-ranging diversity of our students. The discussions moved toward developing a category and associated outcomes that would focus on the how to think about the broader notion of justice (i.e., fair and impartial treatment of all people), as a principle that can transcend divergent forms of thinking.

Why “Just Societies”

Motivated in part by the focus on justice and in part by Mason’s overarching mission “to be an innovative and inclusive academic community committed to creating a more just, free, and prosperous world,” Mason faculty landed on the category name, *Just Societies*. The term “just society” has been written about for decades. In his 1971 book, *A Theory of Justice*, John Rawls framed the concept of a “just society” through the lens of “original position” or “veil of ignorance.” This notion is based on identifying what rules should be in place to govern society if one was to enter that society without knowing what their identity and status would be – they could still have their personal talents and abilities, but would not know what their family status would be, what level of resources they would have, what their gender or race would be, where they would live, etc.

Individuals and organizations across the ideological spectrum have written about what rules are optimal for creating a just society (for example, [Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez](#); [American Enterprise Institute](#); [Heritage Foundation](#)), demonstrating the broad applicability of the framework. The naming of the category as “Just Societies” (rather than “Just Society”) acknowledges and embraces the existence of multiple ideas and methods for achieving justice. It also preserves a focus on the ultimate goal of justice (i.e., fairness to all), rather than on other terms for which meanings and valence may change over time. This broad approach facilitates the incorporation of courses from many different disciplines and contexts to ensure that students are challenged with how to think about these important issues and not prescribed what to think about any given issue.

Why 2 “Flags”

To integrate this *Just Societies* category into the Mason Core, the Mason Core Committee considered a variety of options that revolved around permutations of one or both of the following ideas: (1) adding a new category with associated learning outcomes or (2) identifying a set of learning outcomes that could be integrated into other courses. This latter option, referred to as adding a “flag” to an existing course to represent the additional learning outcomes, would mean having courses that did not focus solely on *Just Societies* outcomes, but instead integrated a smaller set of related outcomes within a broader context.

Some of the initial permutations of these ideas were more extensive, such as adding a new category to the Core and also requiring additional courses to have flags, or requiring all Exploration courses to have flags that reflected *Just Societies* content in all courses. These options were eliminated early in the committee’s deliberations, as they were seen as excessive in terms of the requirements and associated work. Thus, the options were narrowed to the idea of (a) adding a single course or (b) adding flags to 2 or 3 Exploration courses. Adding flags to 2 or 3 courses was to account for the fact that coverage of content and learning outcomes associated with a flag would, by default, be less extensive than it would be in a single course that was solely focused on that category.

Discussions with and feedback from the Mason community had indicated a clear priority to not add credits to the Core, so that students would not potentially be slowed in their progress toward their degrees. Thus, the discussions of the *Just Societies* task force then intertwined with discussions of the

Global Contexts task force, which was focused on how to address the other portion of *Global Understanding* learning outcomes (i.e., those focused on globalization and learning *about* other cultures). The removal of the *Global Understanding* category would leave room for only one of the new categories to become a standard category, with the other needing to be addressed via a “flag” to avoid adding new credits. There was further discussion about how many flags to require, and although many faculty believed that 3 courses would be needed to achieve sufficient coverage of outcomes in either *Global Contexts* or *Just Societies*, adding a flag to only 2 Exploration courses was prioritized to reduce complexity for students.

Ultimately, the final proposals presented to the Mason community for consideration were:

1. Keep *Global Contexts* as a category with 1 course required, and require students to complete two Exploration courses with a *Just Societies* “flag”
2. Add *Just Societies* as a required category with 1 course required, and require student to complete two Exploration courses with a *Global Contexts* “flag”

After further discussion with the Mason community, the model requiring two Exploration category courses to have a *Just Societies* “flag” was deemed the best fit, in part because we had already been exploring this idea following the pilot of the initial DEI course in 2019. This model was presented to and approved by Faculty Senate in April 2022.

Learning Outcomes

The Mason Core Committee invested extensive effort in the design of the learning outcomes for the *Just Societies* flag, with a focus on promoting empirically based, academically rigorous engagement with relevant issues in an environment of inclusivity that respects all forms of diversity (origin, identity, circumstance, and thought). **Continued, explicit emphasis was placed on designing outcomes that would be approachable by students from all backgrounds and belief/value systems.** To reflect what employers were seeking in new hires and what students had been requesting, the learning outcomes were designed with a focus on defining terms, engaging with others, identifying barriers, and articulating possible solutions. The final outcomes were:

1. Define key terms related to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion as related to this course’s field/discipline and use those terms to engage meaningfully with peers about course issues; and
2. Articulate obstacles to justice and equity, and strategies for addressing them, in response to local, national, and/or global issues in the field/discipline.

Of note, these outcomes are well aligned with Governor Youngkin’s Executive Order 10, which seeks to augment the focus of Virginia’s Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion by including “the promotion of free speech and civil discourse” in its mission.

Course Proposal and Approval Process

Overview

The Mason Core proposal and review process represents a balance among maintaining coherence and consistency across courses within categories, fulfilling accreditation guidelines and requirements

(particularly with regard to assessment), respecting academic freedom, and ensuring faculty responsibility for and control of curriculum.

George Mason has instilled authority for its general education in a faculty-led committee: Mason Core Committee. This committee's charge includes the following duties: "develop procedures for assessing, reviewing, and recertifying courses that carry a Mason Core attribute"; "review and revise, as necessary, the overall structure and outcomes of the Mason Core"; and "confer with the Faculty Senate Committee on Academic Policies when changes to Mason Core requirements impact the entire university and/or would be a substantive change to the university catalog." Consistent with the principle of faculty responsibility for and control of curriculum, the committee consists of 14 voting members, 12 of whom are faculty (from at least 6 of the 9 academic units with undergraduate programs), 1 of whom is a student, and 1 of whom is the Senior Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education.

The process for submitting a course for inclusion in the Mason Core originates with faculty. Any faculty member at Mason can submit an undergraduate course for consideration in the Core by completing a proposal.² The primary elements of the proposal are: (1) a course syllabus; (2) a proposal worksheet that contains (a) a conceptual rationale for why the course should be considered for that category, (b) an "assignment map" that shows an example assignment that assesses each learning outcome, and (c) a "course management plan" that describes how the course will remain consistent with the Mason Core designation over time; and (3) any supporting documents (e.g., sample assignments). To assist faculty in the proposal process, Mason Core offers written overviews, recorded videos, 2-hour proposal workshops, 2-day proposal workshops, and 1-on-1 consultations with the Director of Mason Core (who is an ex-officio, non-voting member of the Mason Core Committee).

Once a proposal is submitted, it is reviewed by the Mason Core Committee. This process begins with an administrative review to ensure all required components are included and complete. Subsequently, each proposal has 3 to 4 voting, faculty committee members assigned to conduct an in-depth review of the rationale, content coverage within the course, presence of an appropriate assessment method for each learning outcome that will facilitate compliance with accreditation standards, and presence of an appropriate course management plan. Proposals are then discussed in a meeting of the entire committee, with primary reviewers reporting on their review of each proposal and noting any issues identified. After full discussion of identified issues, the 14 voting members can cast a vote to approve as is, approve with administrative changes (e.g., adding missing information to the syllabus), "rollback" with feedback and encouragement to resubmit, or "rollback" with feedback and no encouragement to resubmit. Of note, this latter outcome is extremely rare (see Table 1 below).

Faculty are able to meet with a committee representative to discuss any questions about or disagreement with feedback. If desired, faculty can request to meet with the entire Committee to discuss areas of disagreement. The Director of Mason Core (a non-voting member of the Mason Core

² Note that courses must already be approved for inclusion in Mason's course catalog before being submitted for Mason Core designation. This process involves a review first by the originating department and/or college, as well as any other units that are affected (e.g., if a course in one department might satisfy a requirement in a major offered by another department). Once approved by all respective units, courses are then submitted for review by the university-wide Undergraduate Council, which has representatives from all colleges/schools with undergraduate programs.

Committee) is also available to meet with any faculty member to discuss feedback and offer assistance in preparing initial proposals and resubmissions.

Just Societies Proposals and Reviews

Implementation of changes approved in April 2022 began in the Summer of 2022 with the development of updated proposal forms and workshops for faculty, and the development of a communication campaign focused on all of the changes to Mason Core (including but not limited to *Just Societies*). This work continued in the 2022-2023 academic year. Workshops began in Spring 2023 and have continued since that time. A total of 4 full, 2-day workshops focused on the new categories and proposal process have been run, with 73 faculty participating. In addition, 13 shorter, 2-hour workshops have also been held, with 86 faculty participating.

Proposals began being submitted in Fall 2023 and have continued throughout the year. As of April 4, 2024, a total of 145 proposals (61 focused on *Just Societies*) were submitted to the Mason Core Committee. This was *7 times as many* proposals as were submitted the prior year, requiring numerous additional meetings of the Committee. This type of effort is reflective of the intensive labor required when changes to the Core are made.

A summary of the status of proposals (total proposals, and those specific to Just Societies) received this year through April 4, 2024 is presented in the Table below. As can be seen, most proposals received feedback with encouragement to resubmit, and a large number of proposals (both overall and specific to Just Societies) have been approved for next year, with many more still in progress.

<i>Table 1. 2023-2024 Mason Core Submissions and Outcomes</i>			
	# Proposals	Approved	In Progress
All Categories	159	92	65
Just Societies	65	35	29
Note: Courses that are in progress have been reviewed once or more by the committee and sent back with feedback and suggested revisions, but have not yet been resubmitted. Of the 65 JS proposals, only 1 was not encouraged to resubmit (due to poor fit with the learning outcomes).			

Approved Courses

The list of approved courses to date is below. These 35 courses come from six independent academic units across the university.

ANTH 135: Introduction to Biological Anthropology
 ANTH 309: Peoples and Cultures of India
 ANTH 365: Scientific Racism and Human Variation
 ARTH 315: Modern Architecture
 ARTH 370: Arts of the United States
 CEIE 100: Environmental Engineering around the World
 CRIM 405: Law and Justice around the World
 CULT 320: Globalization and Culture

ENGH 206: Literature in the Creation of Just Societies
ENGH 315: Folklore and Folklife
EVPP 336: Tackling Wicked Problems in Society & the Environment
GCH 205: Global Health
GGS 301: Political Geography
GLOA 101: Introduction to Global Affairs
GOVT 103: Introduction to American Government
GOVT 134: Grand Challenges to Human Security
GOVT 150: Introduction to Technology Policy
HIST 272: Survey of Latin American History
HIST 308: Nineteenth-Century Europe
HIST 316: History of Modern Architecture
HIST 329: Modern Russia and the Soviet Union (pending approval as *Global Contexts*)
HIST 384: Global History of Christianity
INTS 319: Contemporary Youth Studies
INTS 406: Global Leadership (pending approval as *Global Contexts*)
INYO 261: Mentoring Multilingual Learners
RELI 211: Introduction to Religions of the “West”
RELI 212: Introduction to Religions of Asia
RELI 310: Judaism
RELI 313: Hinduism
RELI 368: Islam, Democracy, and Human Rights
RELI 384: Global History of Christianity
SOCI 101: Introductory Sociology
SOCI 320: Globalization and Social Change
THR 115: Staging Activism (pending approval as *Arts*)
WMST 208: Introduction to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Studies

Additional Courses Under Review

The list of proposals that have been returned with feedback but have not yet been resubmitted for review is below. The 29 courses that have been encouraged to resubmit come from seven independent academic units. Together with the courses already approved, the courses represent all primary academic units with undergraduate programs.

ARAB 365: Black and Minority Cultures in Arabic Literature
BUS 100: Business and Society
COMM 305: Foundations of Intercultural Communication
CONF 101: Conflict and Our World
CRIM 308: Human Rights and Justice
EDSE 230: Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorders
GGS 102: Physical Geography
HIST 271: Survey of Latin America History
HIST 308: Nineteenth-Century Europe

HIST 364: Revolution in Latin America
 HIST 376: Cold War America
 HIST 378: History of Aviation
 HIST 379: History of the Climate Crisis
 HIST 381: Remembering Histories of Violence: Narrative Engagements with Difficult Past
 INTS 304: Social Movements and Community Activism
 INTS 331: The Nonprofit Sector (*not encouraged to resubmit*)
 INTS 336: Poverty, Wealth, and Inequality in the US
 INTS 337: Social Justice Consciousness and Action
 INTS 344: Youth, Music, & Social Change
 INTS 347: Gender Representation in Popular Culture
 INTS 363: Social Justice Narratives
 INTS 434: Research for Social Change
 INYO 105: U.S. American Cultures
 RELI 100: The Human Religious Experience
 RELI 240: Death and the Afterlife in Religion
 RMGT 210: Recreation and Leisure in Life
 SOCI 352: Social Problems and Solutions
 SYST 202: Engineering Systems in a Complex World
 WMST 200: Introduction to Women and Gender Studies

Summary Timeline of Events

The overarching timeline for creating Just Societies, including the implementation steps taken since approval of the Just Societies category in Spring 2022, is below:

2013-2018	Increasing student requests for a more diverse set of history course offerings (similar to those that would transfer in from other schools), to require specific courses, and to include a required DEI course
2017-2021	Mason Core Assessment of all categories in lead-up to SACSCOC reaccreditation
2018	President Cabrera proposes the following annual goal, which BOV approves on 7/27/18: “In collaboration with the faculty, develop a foundational course for all undergraduate students which reflects the university’s values and commitment to diversity, inclusion, and wellbeing.”
2018-2019	Committee works on elements of foundational course addressing diversity, inclusion, and well-being with input from community – develop, pilot, evaluate, and refine foundational course. By January 2020, the Mason Core leadership team planning the implementation of this single course decided to shift toward discussing ways to build these outcomes into multiple courses due to logistical challenges and budgetary considerations associated with teaching a massive multi-section course as well as feedback from the campus community in the “Mason Core Conversations.”
2019	Mason Core team attends AAC&U Institute on General Education and Assessment

2019-2020	Mason Core leads “Mason Core Conversations,” including 17 focus groups, 3 workshops, and a university-wide survey each for faculty and for students.
2021	Mason Core team attends AAC&U Institute on General Education and Assessment
2021-2022	Mason Core forms four task forces to address 4 separate areas of Mason Core enhancements: (1) bringing coherence to capstone/synthesis requirement; (2) addressing misalignment of current history requirement; (3) addressing Global Understanding category (learning outcomes resulted in two types of courses); and (4) addressing addition of requirement related to diversity, inclusion, and well-being. Task Forces develop proposals, engage in extensive outreach to community for input. Elements of proposals are incorporated into SACSCOC reaccreditation materials (approved by BOV Dec 2021). Faculty Senate approves final proposal, which includes Just Societies flags, in Apr 2022. The final set of changes, including the two courses with the Just Societies flags, was presented to BOV in May 2022.
2022-2023	Begin work with registrar for how to mark courses and track completion for students. Revamp proposal process. Develop and launch training for faculty on developing proposals. Host 2 two-day workshops for 43 faculty. Host 7 two-hour workshops for 54 faculty. Prepare catalog language.
2023-2024	Continue workshops for faculty. Host 2 two-day workshops for 30 faculty. Host 6 two-hour workshops for 32 faculty. Accept and review proposals (as of 4/1/24, 61 proposals reviewed – 32 approved, 1 encouraged to submit for another category, 28 in progress; several more on agenda for Apr 4 meeting). Update registrar with approved courses. Finalize catalog language, develop website. Finalize processes with registrar. Develop and run training for advisors. Develop advising materials. Publish updated catalog for 2024-2025 academic year (currently on hold).

Reflections on the Change Process for the Mason Core

In the lead-up to accreditation reaffirmation by SACSCOC, the Mason Core Committee developed and undertook an extensive process that ultimately led to the recent changes to Mason Core. The process followed was exhaustive and offers a guide for future efforts, while also highlighting areas for potential improvement.

One key area needing clarity is the role of various entities in reviewing and approving changes, which is further detailed in [Appendix F](#). SACSCOC requires that the institution “places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum with its faculty.” The Code of Virginia grants SCHEV the power to approve academic programs, and SCHEV requires governing boards to vote to approve, close, or merge academic degree programs before SCHEV will consider those actions. However, SCHEV specifically excludes general education from those actions and instead monitors general education curriculum through assessment of required learning outcomes.

Accordingly, primary authority for revising the “overall structure and outcomes of the Mason Core” rests in the hands of the Mason Core Committee. The Committee is empowered to develop and adjust

learning outcomes for categories and develop proposals for broader changes to the Core. Whenever the Committee considers changes that would “impact the entire university and/or would be a substantive change to the university catalog,” those changes are presented to the Faculty Senate for review and approval/disapproval. This is the process that guided the recent set of changes, which were proposed by the Mason Core Committee to the Faculty Senate, who voted to approve the changes in April 2022.

At that time, the approved changes were reviewed with administrators and the governing Board of Visitors, but notably, such a review is not currently required by any existing specified procedures or by SCHEV or other bodies. Clearer statements of the overarching process for change, including what level of review (e.g., presenting for review and input vs. putting forward for a formal vote of approval) is appropriate at different times for all involved constituencies, would likely produce better outcomes and help avoid miscommunication in the future.

Of note, the recent change process highlighted the need for a more systematic approach to continual re-evaluation and revision of the Core, while simultaneously highlighting the systemic upheavals that can accompany changes to the Core. For example, as described above, the creation of two new categories (*Global Contexts* and *Just Societies*) has required a substantial, 2-year implementation effort for material development, training workshops, proposal support, and review. As another example, some categories in the Mason Core are fulfilled exclusively or nearly exclusively through a single course. In such cases, the infrastructure of instructors, course materials, and training needed to support the course is extensive. For instance, the oral communication category within our Foundations level is fulfilled almost exclusively through *COMM 101: Fundamentals of Communication*. Consequently, this single course enrolls nearly 5,000 students across more than 200 sections each year. Thus, any major changes to a category like this would require several years of careful planning.

Moving forward, we aim to develop and institutionalize sustainable processes for evaluation and potential revision of the Core that will balance the need to evolve over time with the logistical challenges that accompany such evolutions. We also aim to concretize the processes involved in changes to the Mason Core (see [Recommendations](#)).

Campus Climate

Mason's status as one of the most diverse student bodies in the country requires a high degree of intentionality to yield successful outcomes. The staff and offices described in the opening section of our report are central to that work. Relatedly, what the faculty have proposed to do with the *Just Societies* category in the Mason Core is not easy work. Helping the incredibly diverse array of students at Mason engage with complex ideas in a way that respects both student differences and their commonalities requires an environment that promotes inclusivity in all forms. In this section, our committee presents currently available data related to Mason's overall campus climate, which offers both an assessment of the outcomes of Mason's DEI staff and infrastructure and an estimation of the appropriateness of Mason's environment for the enactment of the *Just Societies* requirement. Concurrently, the committee recommends an updated Mason Campus Climate Study (recommendation 5) and an accelerated assessment of the Just Societies requirement (recommendation 3) so that the data presented below can be validated and updated.

Mason subscribes to the "Chicago Principles," a set of ideals promoted in the University of Chicago's *Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression*. This report notes that "it is not the proper role of the University to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive." Rather, as stated by former University of Chicago President Hanna Holborn Gray, "Universities should be expected to provide the conditions within which hard thought, and therefore strong disagreement, independent judgment, and the questioning of stubborn assumptions, can flourish in an environment of the greatest freedom." Indeed, "fostering the ability of members of the University community to engage in such debate and deliberation in an effective and responsible manner is an essential part of the University's educational mission."

Although on the surface, some view these principles as at odds with DEI work, at Mason, these ideals have always been deeply embedded in Mason's "DNA." They are reflected in our [Top 10 ranking for College Free Speech](#) from the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE), coupled with our simultaneous ranking as [one of the most diverse campuses in the U.S.](#) Notably, Mason's student body is the most diverse of FIRE's top 10 ranked schools, with only one of the other Top 10 institutions having a majority minority student body. These and other rankings by a wide range of organizations demonstrate, once again, how Mason is All Together Different. The Mason Way of approaching these issues helps the institution realize "Goal 2" in Governor Youngkin's Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion Plan for the Commonwealth: "create and sustain a culture that welcomes and embraces diverse opinions, independent thinking, and respectful interactions."

Below, we present data that reinforces both the positive impact of Mason's DEI staff and infrastructure, as well as Mason's position as an ideal environment for the type of work that will be done in the *Just Societies* category of the Mason Core. It is important to note that, although we already enjoy strong success in this area, simply maintaining the status quo will not meet the evolving needs of our students and the region's employers. It has been made clear that we need to do more to match the moment – with pressures from all sides on how to address issues related to diversity and inclusion, Mason is positioned to lead the way in engaging in respectful, meaningful, and evidence-based discussions of difficult issues.

Faculty and Staff

There are several ways that we collect data about the campus climate for faculty and staff, the most systematic of which are a series of surveys from Gallup (the Faculty Staff Experience Survey and the Faculty Evaluation of Administrators) and the COACHE faculty survey, all of which suggest that faculty feel comfortable expressing themselves. Further, each week's headlines feature Mason faculty commenting openly about issues to which they bring academic expertise across a range of disciplinary and political perspectives.

Faculty Surveys

The Gallup Faculty/Staff Experience (FSE) survey was last conducted in 2022 and will be deployed again in April of 2024. There are several items on this survey that are good indicators of campus climate and the extent to which faculty and staff are comfortable expressing themselves, and those are summarized below. It is worth noting that these items were among the highest-rated items [on a scale of 1 to 5] across the entire survey.

Item	Mean	Percentile within higher ed institutions
At work, my opinions seem to count.	3.77	51
I am treated with respect.	4.10	47
Everyone at this institution is treated fairly regardless of ethnic background, race, gender, age, disability, or other differences not related to job performance.	3.76	50
At work, I feel comfortable being myself.	3.78	N/A
My supervisor creates an environment that is trusting and open.	3.99	52

The questions for the April 2024 survey have already been finalized and the survey deployed, but Mason has the option to add custom items that more specifically address free speech in the next iteration of the survey. Two sample questions that Gallup has used elsewhere that could be considered for inclusion and for comparative assessment with other institutions are:

1. At GMU, employees can express their opinions freely.
2. Free speech is highly valued at GMU.

Gallup also conducted our annual Faculty Evaluation of Administrators, in which the President, Provost, and Deans were rated on several items. In last year's survey,

- "Effectively advances the university's goals of diversity and inclusion" was highest-rated item for both the President ($M = 4.07$) and the Provost ($M = 3.81$), and also had the highest average rating across all deans ($M = 3.78$, not weighted).
- "Effectively supports faculty efforts to achieve their research, teaching, and service goals." was the second highest overall mean across all deans ($M = 3.59$, not weighted).

Finally, the most recent Harvard Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (Harvard COACHE) survey identified the following areas of strength for Mason: Shared Governance, Adaptability, Productivity, Shared Sense of Purpose, Trust, Understanding the Issue at Hand.

Taken together, these surveys demonstrate that inclusion, trust, and openness, *together with* a commitment to DEI, are strengths in Mason's overall culture.

Sample of Headlines Featuring Mason Faculty

Our committee looked at several of the "President's Weekly Brief" listings to evaluate the range of "media hits" that Mason faculty and staff receive. Our review was strongly *inconsistent* with the notion that people at Mason feel hesitant to speak due to their political beliefs. A sample from just one week (from 2/23-2/29) of these media hits is below:

- The New York Times: [Mason alumna Crystal Clanton \(Scalia Law\) mentioned for having been hired as a law clerk to Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas](#). Also in [The Washington Post](#), another [Washington Post](#) story, [Vanity Fair](#), [Salon](#), [Reuters](#), [The Hill](#), [Yahoo! News](#), [The Root](#), [The Daily Mail \(UK\)](#) and other media outlets.
- Bloomberg: [Tyler Cowen \(Mercatus, CHSS\) writes an op-ed about the true value of open-source software](#).
- The Hill (audio option): [In an op-ed about the upcoming vote to repeal the Certificate of Need \(CON\) Commissions law, a 2016 study by Mercatus is cited](#). Also in [MSN](#).
- The Hill (audio option): [Satya Marar \(Mercatus visiting postgrad fellow\) writes op-ed about the failure of pandemic-era price fixing](#).
- USA TODAY: [Jennifer Huddleston \(Scalia Law\) writes op-ed about the Supreme Court case on speech policies on social media platforms](#). Also in [Yahoo! News](#).
- Richmond Times-Dispatch: [Jamil Jaffer \(NSI, Scalia Law\) mentioned for being part of Republican presidential candidate Nikki Haley's leadership team in Virginia](#).
- The Grio: [Mason mentioned in an article about alum Crystal Clanton being hired as a law clerk for Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas](#). Also in [MSN](#).
- Vox: [Daniel Rothschild \(Mercatus\) is quoted in a story about ideas from two of Latin America's most notable right-wing populists in El Salvador's Nayib Bukele and Argentina's Javier Milei](#).
- Barron's: [Picks up AFP News article where Christine McDaniel \(Mercatus\), leader of the center's Future Fisheries Management Initiative, discusses a potential global agreement that tackles fisheries subsidies](#).
- Reason: [Ilya Somin \(Scalia Law\) is quoted in an article about the Supreme Court case on speech policies for social media platforms](#).
- Reason: [Ilya Somin \(Scalia Law\) writes op-ed about how Illinois court's ruling disqualifying Trump from the presidency could be affected by the Colorado Supreme Court](#).
- Chicago Sun-Times: [Picks up the column by Veronique de Rugy \(Mercatus\) about the potential negative effects of the latest child tax credit](#).
- Creators Syndicate: [Veronique de Rugy \(Mercatus\) writes op-ed about economic state of the country today versus the 1970s and '80s](#). Also in [Reason](#).

Student Perceptions

Similarly, in contrast to concerns that were expressed about whether students feel comfortable sharing their perspectives, our committee found ample evidence to suggest that students feel free to express their views and explore their interests across a wide range of issues.

Student Surveys

There have been numerous student surveys conducted at Mason over the past eight years to evaluate the student experience, and the results of items in these surveys that are related to campus climate, DEI, and engaging with others who have different perspectives are included in Appendixes [J](#) and [K](#). Overall, these results highlight the significant diversity within our student body and also emphasize the importance of offices and efforts that have helped students to feel welcomed and included at Mason, while also identifying areas where greater efforts are still needed.

Student Evaluations of Teaching

Each term, students are invited to complete anonymous online [Student Evaluations of Teaching](#) (SETs) for each class that they take. These SETs include a series of Likert scale items about students' experiences of the course (see Appendix [H](#)). Item 14 (highlighted in green in the tables) specifically asks students to respond to the item, "The instructor encouraged expression of diverse perspectives." As can be seen, this item is among the highest rated across all undergraduate courses, with students clearly indicating that they believe that a variety of perspectives are encouraged in their courses.

It is also worth noting that the student evaluations of teaching across the board are very strong, which is a reflection of the priority that Mason faculty place on excellent teaching and learning experiences and the strong support that is provided by the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning to ensure that faculty have opportunities to continue to develop their pedagogical skills to meet the changing needs of Mason students.

Other Student Indicators

While systematic evidence, such as that we have shared already, is the best way to get a sense of how students as a whole perceive the climate on campus, there are additional indicators and anecdotal evidence that also further reinforce the wide range of student perspectives and the overall comfort that our students have expressing themselves. For example, there are 710 total student organizations listed in [Mason360](#), 447 of which are registered student organizations. On any given day, we see a range of student and external groups sharing information in kiosks in the Johnson Center, handing out flyers, or holding demonstrations about a wide range of issues. Additionally, the topics that students choose to write and speak about in their course assignments represent a tremendous diversity of viewpoints, experiences, and interests.

Summary

Mason's mission is to *include* students, faculty, and staff from all backgrounds and walks of life and to ensure that each individual can grow, thrive, and succeed in meeting their full potential. Mason is unique in that it is a university community that reflects the diversity of the world in which our students

will live and the workplaces in which they will launch their careers – indeed, this is likely the single biggest distinguishing factor Mason has. Mason’s ability to bring together this broad diversity of people in a way that honors and respects those differences while also celebrating our commonalities and working to support each individual in the way they need is the foundation of our *All Together Different* approach. All indicators suggest that Mason has been successful in a way that very few other institutions have.

At the same time, another of Mason’s hallmarks is its innovation. Mason cannot afford to rest on its success – it must continue to innovate and lead the way on key issues. The “Mason Way” involves engaging in meaningful work even when difficult, not shying away from it. In that spirit, it is incumbent upon Mason to continue helping our students build the skills and tools that they need to engage in meaningful conversations with others to be effective employees and citizens in their communities. More broadly, Mason needs to stay ahead of the curve and continue to evolve so that we can preserve this environment that allows inquiry and engagement to thrive.

Recommendations

Ultimately, it seems that there were two broad concerns that motivated this working group and the development of this report:

1. Concerns that the university was engaging in indoctrination and actively silencing those who hold a range of perspectives, both through DEI programming and curriculum
2. Concerns that some board members did not feel fully briefed on changes to the Mason Core curriculum or included in the process

As this report demonstrates, there is substantial evidence that faculty, students, and staff feel comfortable expressing their perspectives on a broad range of issues, and there is no evidence of indoctrination or silencing. There is also compelling evidence—from employers, accreditors, and requests from our students themselves—that we need to continue to support student success for ALL of our students. It is also clear that we also need to continue to do more to help students learn to engage with others who have different perspectives and experiences, as well as understand the roots of those experiences and perspectives, in order to be successful in their future careers and effective when engaging and advocating within their many communities.

Recommendations Regarding DEI Positions and Programs

Given the breadth of responsibilities, a closer examination of the position titles and descriptions reflects that several position descriptions may not effectively describe how the personnel support Mason’s mission or what the individuals do in these roles. Mason should not change titles merely to rebrand or respond to criticism, but they *should* consider title changes that more accurately reflect the functions being accomplished, to promote understanding and transparency.

Based upon this review, the Committee recommends the following:

1. The number of full-time staff positions (14) and part-time student positions (21) is appropriate (or possibly low), relative to the number of students being served.
2. The Vice President for University Life and Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion should annually review resource allocations, current roles, responsibilities, and unit names to ensure alignment with the “Mason Way” of inclusive excellence and the Commonwealth of Virginia Diversity Opportunity and Inclusion plan (see Appendix B) and adjust as necessary.
3. The Vice President for University Life and Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion should initiate a Mason Campus Climate Study conducted by a third-party during AY 2024-25 for undergraduate and graduate students. The study will be taken to assess classroom and environmental factors with a goal of promoting inclusive excellence and avoiding divisive concepts (as defined by Governor Youngkin’s Executive Order 1, see [Appendix I](#)), and report outcomes to the Board of Visitors. This review will include an assessment of the extent to which DEI programs contribute to the objective areas stated above (creating an inclusive culture, providing student support services, and preventing concerning actions) or whether they accentuate differences among individuals and groups.

4. University Life, Academic Affairs, and Faculty Affairs and Development should work to expand curricular and co-curricular offerings that focus on civil discourse, dialogue and debate across differences, and freedom of expression to align with the Governor's focus on free speech and intellectual diversity.

These recommendations address the first area concerning the Student Support Infrastructure and Organization and provide a way forward to evaluating the existing structure and adapting it as necessary in the future.

Recommendations Regarding the Mason Core

Faculty have worked through a long, deliberative process to develop the updated Mason Core. The most effective way to assess whether this is the right Mason solution to meet the needs of our students is to: (1) ensure that the course offerings are sufficiently broad to meet the intent of the *Just Societies* requirement; (2) if there is sufficient breadth of courses available, implement as planned; and (3) accelerate the assessment of the *Just Societies* requirement to expeditiously evaluate whether this approach meets our goals and whether future adjustments or refinements are appropriate.

To support this plan, the committee recommends:

5. The Mason Core Committee should ensure that the contextual language and description framing the learning outcomes are updated to help clarify the goals of the *Just Societies* requirement.
6. The Mason Core Committee should seek an expansion of the number and breadth of courses to meet the *Just Societies* requirement, recognizing that there is still an additional year to continue to develop and approve additional courses before next year's cohort of students are expected to take Exploration level courses (most students will take these courses in their 2nd and 3rd years).
7. The Mason Core Committee should accelerate the start date for assessment of these courses from Fall 2026 to Fall 2025.
8. Based upon the Provost's review of the progress on these actions, the Provost should determine whether or not to continue the implementation of the *Just Societies* requirement as scheduled. If these recommendations cannot be completed in a timely manner, the Provost can decide to delay the implementation of the *Just Societies* requirement until a subsequent academic year.

To ensure that the Board of Visitors continues to stay appropriately informed about not only the *Just Societies* requirement, but curriculum updates in general, the committee recommends:

9. The Provost, or designated representative, should establish a regular schedule for sharing with the Board (through the Academic Programs and University Life Committee), at least annually, Mason Core assessment reports that are prepared for any internal or external agency.
10. The Provost, or a designated faculty representative, should brief the Board of Visitors at least annually about significant updates to the curriculum and provide opportunities for feedback and discussion.

11. The Rector of the Board of Visitors and President Washington should work to ensure that all members of our community understand the roles of the BOV, the administration, and the faculty in curricular matters. (See [Appendix F](#))

These recommendations are made with the intent of ensuring that Mason continues to make curriculum decisions with intellectual integrity based on evidence and remains in compliance with SACSCOC accreditation standards and SCHEV policies.

Appendix A: University Committee Charge on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Just Societies

General Introduction: George Mason University is the largest and most diverse Four-Year Institution in the State of Virginia. Fundamentally speaking, as a campus we are dealing with what is the best structure for success (graduation and job placement) for our students.

Formal Committee Charge: The purpose of the university committee is to make key recommendations related to our DEI infrastructure and Just Societies component of the Mason Core. More specifically:

1. Just Societies: Reexamine the structure and timing of implementation and establish a timeline for success. Should the structure be as it is, broader and more inclusive or less so?
2. DEI Structure and Setup: Examine the total number of positions, position type and organizational naming. Provide diversity, equity, and inclusion metrics and impact on Mason's internal and external communities. Identify institutional and community risks if diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts were eliminated or reduced.
3. Prepare two reports, one for each issue. The reports should have recommendations for Board approval.
4. Recommendations need to be iteratively socialized to board members for feedback.
5. Completed report for the May BOV meeting.

Committee Members: The committee will be chaired by Vice President for University Life, and includes the Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Senior Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education, Professor Psychology, Chair of the Faculty Senate, and two Board of Visitor representatives.

Committee Members	Title/Affiliation
Rose Pascarell, Chair	Vice President for University Life
Sharnnia Artis	Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer
Melissa Broeckelman-Post	President of the Faculty Senate, Professor and Basic Course Director, Department of Communication
Keith Renshaw	Senior Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education, Professor of Psychology
Mike Meese	Board of Visitors Member
Bob Witeck	Board of Visitors Member

Meeting Schedule: Multiple meetings will be held based on committee need and preference and the committee is expected to provide a report at the Board of Visitors meeting in May.

Appendix B: Commonwealth of Virginia Diversity Opportunity and Inclusion Plan

On January 19, 2022, Governor Youngkin signed Executive Order 10, which provided a concrete plan to further strengthen and focus the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and to include the promotion and expansion of equal opportunity for all Virginians in the Office's work. The inclusion of Opportunity is a critical factor in making Virginia the best place to live, work, and raise a family. Since the first days of the Youngkin Administration, the Commonwealth has dedicated resources to promoting ideas, policies, and practices that improve quality of life and expand economic opportunities for Virginians. At the same time, this plan and the programs and policies to promote Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion within the Commonwealth's agencies and authorities have significantly expanded.

In 2000, the Equal Employment Opportunity policy (DHRM, Policy Number 2.05) was implemented to promote respectful workplace and non-discrimination practices. Since that time, plans have evolved to address changing social and economic conditions, with Virginia state government becoming more diverse—even more diverse than the Commonwealth overall.

Our focus in 2023 and beyond is to continue to increase opportunities for all Virginians. The goals and objectives below build upon the plan --- and the promise --- of Executive Order 10. They continue our focus on creating a culture of inclusion where all Virginia state employees are recognized for their contributions, further provide the opportunity for growth through skills development to achieve both personal and professional goals, and will institute regular employee engagement surveys to allow leaders to obtain feedback on a regular basis.

The building block of the Administration's approach to Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion—Executive Order 10—is included herein. You will also find three goals and multiple objectives below to be used as the framework for agencies to update your own plans and to report annually on Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion targets and accomplishments. These goals are intended to provide guidance. Agencies should establish measurable objectives that align with agency business operations and mission.

Goal 1: Access and Success

Recruit and retain a diverse workforce by increasing access to diverse populations for recruiting.

Objective 1:

Continue to improve hiring processes and increase access to potential applicants from diverse populations.

- a. Expand sources for recruiting diverse talent.
- b. Continue to utilize the "Alternative Hiring Process" for people with disabilities.
- c. Utilize interview panels that include members of diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

Objective 2

Continue to retain and promote a diverse workforce.

- a. During onboarding, ensure new employees are made aware and understand the agency's inclusive principles and practices.
- b. Promote training and development opportunities to all levels of staff; enable staff to participate in programs that are designed for professional growth. (See Goal 3 - Objective 3 for more details.)
- c. Ensure accessibility for diverse needs including but not limited to language access, digital access, and access for individuals with disabilities.
- d. Collect employee feedback from multiple sources, including surveys, exit interviews, grievances, and hotline investigations and address validated concerns.

Goal 2: Welcoming and Respectful Culture

Create and sustain a culture that welcomes and embraces diverse opinions, independent thinking, and respectful interactions to deliver optimal results for the organization and its customers.

Objective 1

Persist in creating and maintaining a climate that is supportive and respectful and that values and integrates differing perspectives and experiences.

- a. Provide employees with disabilities the necessary accommodations for them to be successful.
- b. Promote respect of all individuals and provide clear expectations for collegial interactions and compliance with the *Civility in the Workplace Policy*.
- c. Encourage cross-collaboration and rotational assignments among employees to enrich the employee experience, promote education and growth, foster diversity of thought, and inspire innovative solutions.
- d. Offer events that recognize, value, and honor diversity and independent thinking.

Objective 2

Continue to provide an environment where conflicts, concerns, and complaints are aired and addressed expeditiously.

- a. Promote productive methods of conflict resolution through mediation, counseling, and training in respect for free speech and expression.
- b. Promptly address inappropriate workplace behavior.
- c. Promptly address concerns and complaints through a standard process that is consistently followed.

Goal 3: State Agency DOI Infrastructure & Training

Maintain a plan and infrastructure that continues to provide individualized skills training and career development for state employees. Agencies report annually on DOI goals and accomplishments.

Objective 1

Continue to amplify opportunities to advance the goals outlined in this framework.

- a. Incorporate the DOI plan into the agency's strategic plan and reporting efforts.
- b. Design processes to openly share DOI resources and best practices across agencies and units.

Objective 2

Continue to create structures and processes of accountability to increase organizational effectiveness with the Department of Human Resource Management.

- a. Institute systems of assessment, reporting, accountability, and continuous improvement to optimize the realization of the agency's and/or department's goals.
- b. Align DOI responsibilities and tasks with other human resources functions and provide a point of contact within the agency's leadership team or human resources department to this office.
- c. Engage agency leaders and key stakeholders in reviewing and analyzing reports to identify achievements as well as opportunities for improvement.
- d. Review and assess internal policies and procedures throughout the agency and/or department to identify opportunities to further organizational excellence.

Objective 3

Continue to provide training and educational workshops available to all employees.

- a. Offer training and educational workshops for skills training, leadership development, and career advancement.
- b. Develop talent management programs such as mentorships, succession planning, and coaching programs with the assistance of professional organizations and institutions of higher education.
- c. Ensure training programs are available to all employees, including through multiple modes of facilitation (*e.g.*, classroom, virtual, online self-paced, etc.)
- d. Increase training opportunities.

Appendix C: Position Summaries

The position summaries below reflect the 14 significant responsibilities associated with the full-time, budgeted positions identified as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion positions.

Positions in the University Life Offices

CCEE Director

- Provides direct service and support to students.
- Provides leadership/supervision to the department staff and manages the budget.
- Leads experiential learning initiatives that focus on civic engagement and overall student development.
- Supports leadership development through training and education programs including those related to community and civic engagement; freedom of speech and expression; conflict management and resolution; and intergroup dialogue.
- Leads collaborative initiatives with academic affairs departments that serve the recruitment, retention, and success of Mason's diverse student population.
- Co-leads the University bias process that upholds students' free speech rights and creates a campus culture of care for community.

CCEE Associate Director Programming

- Provides direct service and support to students.
- Provides leadership/supervision to assistant directors, graduate assistants, and student staff.
- Plans and implements training and education programs that encourage students of different identities to learn from one another through their experiences and differences.
- Assesses and collects data that informs programs and interventions that support vulnerable student populations (e.g. Latino & PELL-eligible men).
- Implements coalition building initiatives that support students across difference in finding common ground.
- Instructs departmental UNIV 100 (peer mentor and mentee) courses.

CCEE Associate Director Training & Education

- Provides direct service and support to students.
- Supervises part-time and federal wage student peer educators.
- Manages departmental training and education portfolio including creating, scheduling, and delivering training workshops (e.g. Creating Community; Beyond Diversity; Constructive Dialogue Institute for all new and first year students; Intergroup Dialogue; and Civil Discourse); advising administrative faculty, classes, student organization, and student staff members as requested.
- Represents department in collaborations with other University Life and Academic affairs departments.
- Leads departmental community and academic engagement initiatives.
- Instructs departmental UNIV 100 and UNIV 150 (peer mentor and mentee) courses.

CCEE Assistant Director

- Provides direct service and support to students.
- Supervises part-time and federal wage student peer educators.
- Develops and implements initiatives that commemorate federal and state-recognized heritage months for the entire campus community.
- Partners with campus departments and student organizations to help meet student transition, belonging, community building, and career preparedness needs.
- Coaches' student leaders in developing competencies around leadership, communication, conflict resolution, critical thinking, empathy, and dialogue across difference through advising and supporting student organizations.
- Develop and distribute departmental marketing and social media materials that communicate the programs, services, and support for students offered by the department.
- Instructs departmental UNIV 100 (peer mentor and mentee) courses.

LGBTQ+ Resources Center Director

- Provides direct service and support to students.
- Provides leadership/supervision to the department staff and manages the budget.
- Supports the institutional commitment to inclusion and compliance with state and federal anti-discrimination laws and regulations.
- Collaborates with other University Life and Academic Affairs departments to align unit level programs with the institutional commitment to enrollment, graduation, retention, and career outcomes.
- Develop strategy that supports students at the intersection of their identities (veterans; neuro-diverse students; Pell-eligible; and/or those with varying religious beliefs).

LGBTQ+ Resources Center Associate Director

- Provides direct service and support to students.
- Supervise graduate and student staff.
- Coordinate campus partnerships that support signature programs (e.g. Living Learning Communities; Peer mentoring programs; Lavender Orientation & Graduation).
- Support student leadership development in the implementation of student organization programs.
- Coordinate optional Safe Zone+ training and education programs.

*Positions in the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion***Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion & Chief Diversity Officer**

- Provides direct services and support to students, faculty, and staff.
- Assists institution in building capacity to ensure that barriers to success among students (at all levels: undergraduate, professional, and graduate), faculty, and staff are mitigated, and all members of the community continue to engage the needs of an increasingly diverse community.
- Ensures the university is in compliance with federal laws and mandates, including Americans with Disabilities Act, the Forever GI Bill, Titles VI, VII, and IX, and other applicable regulations.

- Supervises the units that investigate/adjudicate claims of discrimination, harassment, assault, and other complaints filed by students, faculty, staff and administrators.
- Facilitates collaborations with campus partners (e.g., Academic Units, Facilities, Human Resources, Information Technology Services, Office of the Provost, University Counsel, University Life) to support and provide expertise to various programs to enhance recruitment, retention, climate, teaching, research, and success of all students, faculty, and staff.
- Cultivates partnerships and manage outreach efforts to enhance access and opportunity to engage with the institutions through education or employment.
- Secures grant funding to advance inclusive excellence research, education, and programs for the institution.

Inclusive Education Manager

- Supports students, faculty, and staff with expanding their knowledge, skills, and abilities around inclusive education.
- Coordinates and delivers inclusive professional development programs for Mason students, faculty, and staff, in partnership with University Life, Human Resources, Stearns Teaching and Learning, and Faculty Affairs and Development.
- Serves as liaison for partnership with Constructive Dialogue Institute and supports units with incorporating content needed to develop knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for effective conversations among diverse viewpoints.
- Partners with external community and organizations to share effective practices and tools for inclusive education.
- Serves as a consultant to provide expertise and support to units with limited capacity to advance inclusive excellence in their unit.

Director of DEI Strategic Partnerships and Initiatives

- Support faculty and staff with the development, implementation, and assessment of institutional efforts to promote and advance inclusive excellence through Inclusive Excellence Plans and the ARIE Initiative.
- Plans, designs, develops, and implements a continuous improvement process that will serve as an accountability system regarding inclusive excellence.
- Collaborates with all academic and administrative units to advance inclusive excellence through Inclusive Excellence Plans.
- Coordinates outreach and recruitment programs for undergraduate and graduate students and faculty.
- Develops and strengthens partnerships with community partners and organizations to expand institution's reach beyond the campus, affecting larger communities; and expand additional resources and funding.
- Serves as a consultant to provide expertise and support to units with limited capacity to advance inclusive excellence in their unit.

Engagement and Belonging Manager

- Provides support to units to help implement inclusive hiring policies and procedures, in collaboration Human Resources.
- Cultivates a climate of awareness, understanding, and respect for all individuals and groups through leadership and facilitation of the University Bias Incident Response process, in partnership with University Life.
- Provides resources, referrals, and consultation for conflict resolution for students, faculty, and staff.
- Sources, markets, and facilitates climate surveys for students and faculty/staff to monitor campus culture and ongoing culture-improvement activities, in collaboration with University Life and Human Resource.
- Facilitates efforts to connect students, faculty, and staff with campus and external partners to support their work.
- Manages processes for securing university certifications and/or recognition.
- Serves as a consultant to provide expertise and support to units with limited capacity to advance inclusive excellence in their unit.

Positions in the Academic Units (College/School)

These positions are focused on their respective units and coordinate with central units.

Director of Diversity, College of Visual and Performing Arts

Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, College of Science

Associate Dean for Diversity, Outreach, and Inclusive Learning, College of Engineering and Computing

- Provides direct service and support to students, faculty, and staff to foster an inclusive and welcoming environment in respective academic unit and serve as a liaison for conflict resolution.
- Develops, implements, and maintains programs to advance the respective academic unit's Inclusive Excellence Plan, including recruitment and retention of faculty, staff, and student body, and enhancing the college's inclusive and welcoming culture.
- Serves as official representative for respective academic unit for inclusive excellence activities, both internally and externally.
- Organizes and/or promotes special events, workshops, seminars, and other activities to increase awareness and demonstrate the importance of inclusive excellence among the respective academic units' faculty, staff, students, and other constituents.
- Oversees and manages the strategic goals and accountability measures for the respective academic unit's inclusive excellence priorities.
- Provide expertise to support the activities, policies, and practices outlined in accreditation requirement and provides institutional knowledge and data analytics that facilitate effective responses.

Position in the Provost Office (Faculty Affairs and Development)

Director of Faculty Engagement and Well-Being

- Supports institutional initiatives around our strategic goal of recruiting and retaining a thriving faculty, in collaboration with Human Resources and the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
- Develops, implements, and assesses strategies and structures for recruitment and retention of faculty.
- Collaborates with institutional leadership across all levels, developing and sharing resources to foster a supportive campus climate for all faculty, particularly as informed by our Mason COACHE initiative.
- Creates, implements, and assesses – in collaboration with campus stakeholders – new initiatives regarding engagement, community, and wellbeing.
- Cultivates mentoring, growth opportunities, and wellbeing programs that support and sustain our goals of retaining an excellent faculty.

Appendix D: GMU Free Speech Narrative Action Plan

George Mason University Freedom of Speech & Intellectual Diversity Draft Narrative Action Plan

Section I: Statements

Where are we?

In addition to adopting the Council of Presidents Statement on Free Speech, Mason has, for some time, adopted an institutional-wide statement on free speech that acknowledges the 2014 University of Chicago report that it steadfastly committed to *“the principle that debate or deliberation may not be suppressed because the ideas put forth are thought by some or even by most members of the University community to be offensive, unwise, immoral, or wrongheaded.”* This statement is readily available on our Mason’s [website](#). Additionally, there is a fullpage of information on freedom of speech in the [New Student Guide Book](#) (pg. 31) distributed to students and families during orientation, and is also made available during various freedom of expression workshops and teach-ins. The information featured in the guide book compliments a presentation to students and families in which freedom of expression is covered along with other student rights and responsibilities.

There are other statements on Freedom of Speech. Following the outbreak of violence Israel and Gaza, the development of Mason’s [Patriot Plan for Safety and Well-being](#) spoke to many topics of campus safety, including free expression, that reaffirmed our commitment to freedom and learning; civil and respectful discourse around topics with which community members disagree; and upholding the rights of community members to express their beliefs.

What actions can we take?

We have opportunities to distribute the statement while affirming our commitment more widely to freedom of expression during messages to our campus community, new faculty orientation by accomplishing the following action items:

1. Introduce the Council of Presidents Statement on Free Expression for adoption to university governing boards including the Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, Student Government, and Board of Visitors.
2. Affirm Mason’s commitment to Freedom of Expression in addition to strategies for upholding said commitment during new faculty orientation.
3. Develop a First Amendment infographic that is available to campus community members through QR code.

Who is responsible?

Vice Presidents for University Life & Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Associate Provost for Faculty Development; Assistant Vice President for University Life; University Life Marketing & Communications

Section II: Environment & Culture

Where are we?

Mason's motto, "Freedom & Learning" reflects our commitment to fostering a culture of free speech, intellectual diversity, and civil discourse. This is evidenced by the retention of our elite "[Green Light](#)" [rating from the Foundation of Individual Rights and Expression \(FIRE\)](#). This commitment is affirmed from students' matriculation through graduation.

For example, before students enroll, they are encouraged to complete online modules of the Constructive Dialogue Institute's [Perspectives](#). Then, during new student orientation, freedom of expression is prominently featured during the "Students Rights and Responsibilities" presentations to students and parents. In addition to discussing the importance of freedom of speech to the academic enterprise and our democracy, students and families are referred to the university's free speech website and made aware of the freedom of speech disruption reporting process and responses. Additionally, students are introduced to the [Free Speech Incident Reporting Form](#) whereby students, faculty, staff, and community members can report incidents where they feel their rights to freedom of speech have been compromised. Those who report have the option of doing so anonymously.

During preamble, Mason's extended new student orientation program, the importance of the exchange of ideas and perspectives through civil discourse is reiterated through programming and dialogue. All forms of diversity, including diversity of perspectives are highlighted during several remarks at the Freshman Convocation. Also, students have the option to participate in a face-to-face module that is a culminating experience drawing from the CDI curriculum.

There are other programs, trainings, and initiatives that take place at various points throughout the academic year led by students, faculty, and administrative faculty. Here are examples:

- Mason's Leadership Education and Development Office (LEAD) and Center for Culture, Equity, & Empowerment partnered with [Braver Angels](#) (a well-respected national non-profit organization focused on depolarizing our country) to offer powerful 1:1 conversations and facilitated group dialogue in **Conversations Across Difference**. These conversations give a clearly structured way for Mason students, faculty, and staff to connect with others to **increase understanding**. Participants will typically be paired with someone outside of Mason to expand their horizons.
- The Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution offers [Dialogue and Difference Project](#) brings students, faculty, staff, and community members together to discuss current controversial and important issues. The Dialogue and Difference Project at Mason sponsors a series of dialogues that promote structured conversations. This process fosters shifts in both emotion and perception — for example, moving from fear to understanding, extreme to balanced views, partisan attachments to shared concerns for the future.
- The Liberty & Law Center, seated within the Antonin Scalia School of Law provides a [Free Speech Clinic that](#) provides robust, hands-on training for students seeking to become free speech advocates. The Clinic has two components: litigation and classroom instruction. This combination enhances students' understanding of pivotal First Amendment issues and then puts that knowledge to practice by litigating active free speech matters.

The division of University Life delivered a division-wide all-staff workshop on Freedom of Expression within the Campus Community that consisted of contemporary case studies and brainstorming on ways in which we can continue to commit to students' freedom of expression with civility and community.

- The Liberty & Law Center of the Law School also offers the [Public Discourse Project](#)
- **Constructive Dialogue Institute** signature program is [Perspectives](#), a series of eight online modules that help learners develop skills to engage effectively across differences.
- **University Life Free Speech Teach-ins** are made available to students, faculty, and staff who are interested in learning more about the history and current application of freedom of expression laws on college campuses.
- The University Life division has developed a **Rapid Response Team** that maintains a presence during free speech activities such as protests and demonstrations. In doing so they work to support a safe learning environment for students to exercise their right to free expression.

What actions can we take?

Through the programs and initiatives noted above, there is evidence of a commitment to freedom of expression, civil discourse, and dialogue across difference. Additionally, Mason can capitalize on the work being done in various departments, colleges, and schools to form a more cohesive and collaborative approach to engaging the entire campus community important, and sometimes uncomfortable conversations through accomplishing the following action items:

1. Develop a campus-wide interdisciplinary freedom of expression/civil discourse consortium that coalesces faculty and student engagement specialists to collaboratively brainstorm efforts enhance and develop campus-wide programs that incorporate concepts of freedom of expression.
2. Expand and empower the University Life Rapid Response team to more regularly offer one on one tutorials, and student group workshops on freedom of expression.
3. Engage and educate student organization advisors on free speech rights.

Who is responsible?

Assistant Vice President for University Life; Vice President for University Life; Dean of Students; Director of Student Involvement

Section III: Policies and Practices

Where are we?

Mason's commitment to freedom of expression is reflected in the institutional general policies to which students, staff, and the public are held accountable. Policies related to freedom of expression are listed on Mason's Free Speech Website: <https://www.gmu.edu/free-speechmason>. Mason also has in place a Code of Student Conduct, which can be found here: <https://studentconduct.gmu.edu/our-process/university-policies/code-of-student-conduct/>

These policies are developed through and regularly reviewed through collaborative efforts representatives from various departments and divisions including the office of the General Counsel; Environmental Health & Safety; University Life/Dean of Students; University Police; and University Events. These departments share responsibility for the enforcement of the policies and code applicable to their areas of responsibility. Collectively, the policies and code of conduct address various terms. Here are some examples.

Threats of Violence:

The Student Code of Conduct prohibits *"any hostile, threatening, or intimidating behavior, or "obscene gestures" that by its very nature would be interpreted by a reasonable person to threaten or endanger the health, safety or well-being of another."*

Indecent speech (including sexually explicit speech):

The Student Code of Conduct prohibits *"Non-Gender Based Stalking which includes but is not limited to, any behavior that is non-gender based directed at another person, on more than one occasion, that the stalker intends, knows, or reasonably should know, places the other person in reasonable fear of their safety or the safety of others or suffer emotional distress. Examples of behaviors include, but are not limited to, the following: non-consensual communication (to or about a person), including face-to-face, telephone calls, voice messages, email, texts, written letters; unwanted gift; threatening or obscene gestures; pursuing or following; surveillance or other observation; trespassing; and vandalism."*

Safety of Invited Speakers

George Mason University is committed to protecting free speech and free expression on its campus and in its education programs. Our commitment to freedom of expression is not incompatible with our commitment to diversity and to nurturing a positive and collaborative environment where everyone can thrive. Mason's commitment to free speech, embracing diverse speakers, and welcoming different perspective is captured in Mason free speech website: [Free Speech at Mason | George Mason University \(gmu.edu\)](https://www.gmu.edu/free-speech):

"Being exposed to competing perspectives is essential for questioning our assumptions, testing our beliefs, and refining our knowledge. Our goal as a community must be to create an environment where we can engage in difficult and challenging conversations with civility and mutual respect, where confronting opposing ideas and perspectives becomes an opportunity to learn from and with each other."

The institution recognizes the potential for demonstrations and disruptive behavior and takes proactive steps to mitigate disruptions and protect speaker safety. When a speaker visits campus, and the institution anticipates student or public opposition or at the request of the speaker the institution will:

1. Coordinate security requests/needs with the speaker or event organizer.
2. Engage student groups in dialog about appropriate behavior while emphasizing their equal right to free speech, this may include:
 - a. Review of applicable policies and student codes of conduct
 - b. Suggesting alternative methods to demonstration or disruption such as simultaneous programs to engage student who share different viewpoints
3. Post university administrators inside and outside of the event to intervene when disruptions occur and escalate as necessary (e.g., warning, referral to conduct, police intervention)

Mason has taken these steps to mitigate disruptive and unsafe behaviors and does not condone acts that constitute a “hecklers veto”; Mason, states on the institution’s Free Speech at Mason Website:

“Members of the Mason community maintain the right to criticize and contest speech they disagree with, whether by members of the Mason community or outside speakers who are invited to the campus. But freedom of expression does not permit disrupting or preventing another person’s ability to speak or hindering the ability of others to see or hear that speech. The First Amendment protects the right to peacefully protest, demonstrate, and speak in opposition to others’ speech, as long as it does not impede the constitutionally protected speech of others.”

Mason Police have increased their presence at impromptu gatherings, demonstrations, and protests to increase protection efforts for the entire University community, while also upholding federal and state laws regarding protests and constitutionally protected speech on public property. Mason’s leadership team gathers to discuss and address potentially disruptive behavior, with assistance from University Counsel if needed.

Hiring and Promotion Practices

The department of Human Resources encourages hiring managers to leverage resources to support Mason’s compliance with federal equal opportunity and affirmative action guidelines to ensure nondiscrimination. Institutional policy does not require any diversity statement as part of annual reviews and promotions.

FIRE Rating

Our policies, procedures, and protocol in addition to the programs, services, and initiatives noted in the previous section collectively support our “Green Light” FIRE rating. Not only is Mason Proud of the highest rating, but Mason is also thrilled to be, again, named **one of the top-ten campus communities in the country as it relates to a climate for freedom of speech**. Our rating is reflective of our campus policies that support an environment where freedom of expression is essential to collective learning, development, and knowledge creation. culture as evidenced by the myriad of student groups who

engage in campus activism, host engaging and sometimes controversial speakers, and take advantage of opportunities to share their ideas, beliefs, and experiences.

What actions can we take?

1. Review relevant policies and procedures to ensure they are clear and easily interpreted.
2. Develop a communication plan that supports students, faculty, and staff in their awareness of campus policies and procedures.

Section IV: Consequences

Where are we?

People or groups who are alleged to violate our policies go through the appropriate disciplinary processes including the code of student conduct (students), instructional faculty handbook (instructional and research faculty), administrative faculty handbook (administrative faculty), and DHRM disciplinary process (classified staff). If found to have violated policy, consequences can be imposed up to and including suspension, expulsion, and termination.

:

Student groups who violate institutional policies related to free speech are referred to the Office of Student Conduct where, if found responsible and depending on the nature of said violation, educational sanctions will be rendered. Repeated violations will result in higher level sanctions.

Faculty handbook policy *2.9.3 Termination of Appointment of Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Term Faculty Members for Cause* includes article (viii) retaliation for exercise of free speech and/or association.

Section V: Other Ideas

Where are we?

Mason recognizes that more and more students come to our colleges and universities more insulating themselves in social vacuums with others that share their personal, social, and political ideologies. There has been a rise in student activism around issues that are polarizing and controversial, creating the need for skill-building in navigating difficult topics through dialogue.

Recently, Mason launched a [1-billion-dollar capital campaign](#) for which every division and college has been challenged to fundraise. Among the major fundraising goals for the division of University Life is to identify donors to support freedom of speech and community care initiatives that will:

- a. Create interdisciplinary opportunities for University Life to collaborate with academic departments to enhance difficult dialogue and civil discourse opportunities for all students and thus,
- b. Develop necessary competencies for students to navigate polarizing and controversial topics to find common ground and build coalitions to address some of the World's most pressing challenges.

We believe there are opportunities to identify donors and put them in touch with campus partners who are excited to engage in this relevant and necessary work.

What actions can we take?

1. Identify campus stakeholders along with development officers to brainstorm ideas for Freedom of speech and community care initiatives.
2. Identify potential donors who would potentially invest in freedom of expression initiatives at Mason.

Who is responsible?

Assistant Vice President for University Life; Director of Advancement, University Life; Select University Life Unit Leaders

Conclusion

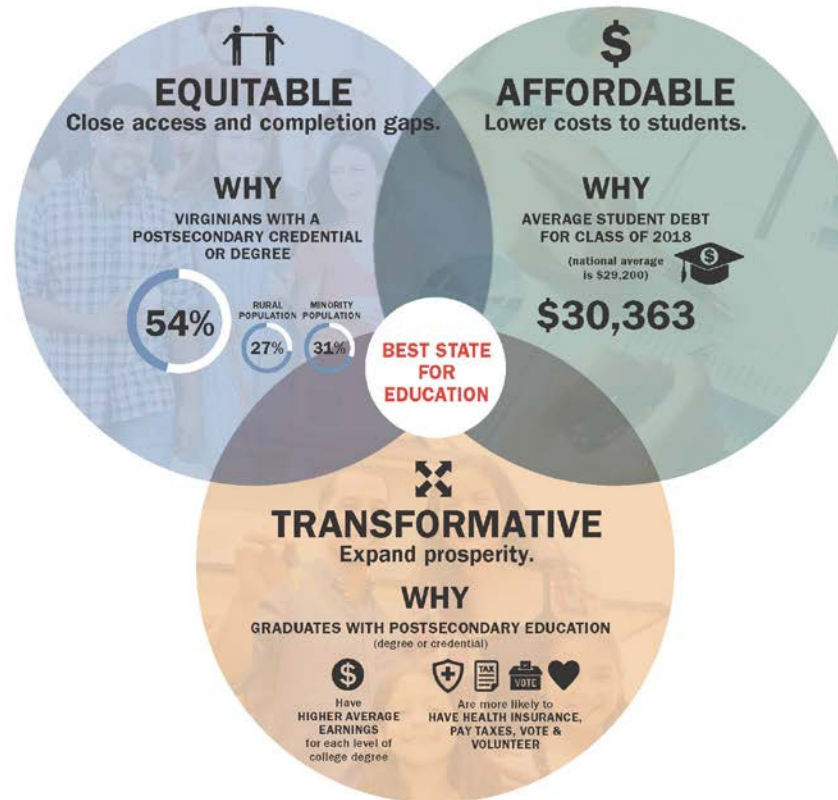
We are hopeful that this narrative action plan effectively articulates Mason's core values, and collective passion for Freedom of speech and intellectual diversity. Freedom of speech is not only a right. It is essential to the work we do in educating students, conducting innovative research, and contributing to our communities. Developing and sustaining competencies around civil discourse and difficult dialogues are essential in preparing students to navigate the complexities of our society. Working through the steps outlined in the plan will further our goals of celebrating our differences while building community and coalitions that make significant transformations on our campus and in our World.

Appendix E: SCHEV Pathways to Opportunity: The Virginia Plan for Higher Education

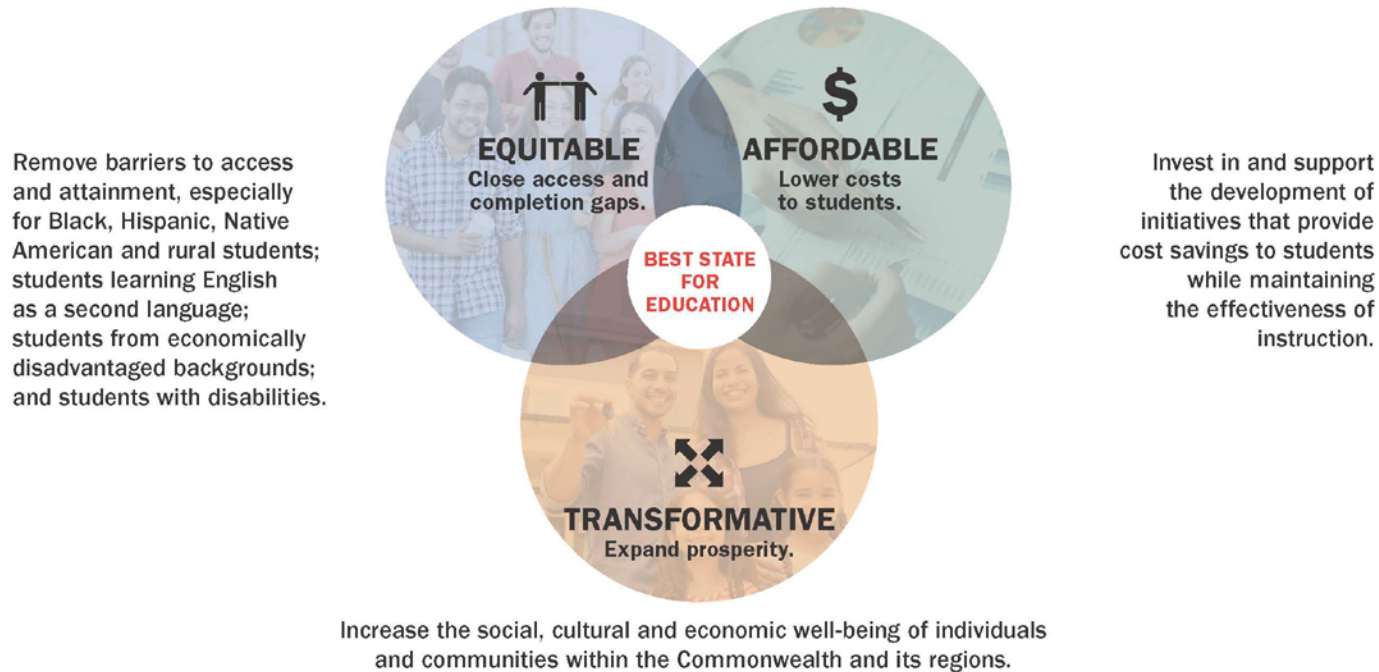
See full report [here](#)

PATHWAYS TO OPPORTUNITY: THE VIRGINIA PLAN FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Virginia will advance equitable, affordable and transformative higher education.
Virginia seeks to be the best state for education by 2030.



PATHWAYS TO OPPORTUNITY: THE VIRGINIA PLAN FOR HIGHER EDUCATION



SCHEV'S ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As the coordinating body for higher education in Virginia, SCHEV staff work closely with the 13-member Council to advocate for and promote the development and operation of an educationally and economically sound, vigorous, progressive, and coordinated system of higher education in the Commonwealth. SCHEV's responsibilities cover the higher education areas of academic, budget and finance and research, including:

- Statewide Strategic Plan
- Academic Policy and New Program Approval Authority
- Educational Programs for Public Institution Board Members
- Certification of New Out-of-State and Private Institutions
- Data Collection and Analysis
- Finance Policy Analysis and Budget Recommendations
- Financial Aid Programs Oversight
- Institutional Performance Reviews
- Advisory Services to Nonprofit Private Higher Education

Appendix F: Relevant Laws and Policies for Curriculum Approval

Red= direct language from law or policy

SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation

SACSCOC's [Principles of Accreditation](#) lay out clear guidelines for the roles and responsibilities of governing boards and faculty in shared governance processes, curriculum, and academic freedom, and the relevant sections are laid out below. Mason received a call on March 22 from SACSCOC Vice President Denise Young letting us know that, based on their policy on unsolicited information following recent media reports, we might be asked to respond to concerns that they have about our adherence with policies 4.2b, 4.2f, 6.4, and 10.4. Any recommendations that come from this report should carefully align with these principles to ensure continued accreditation.

Section 4: Governing Board

2. The governing board

- a. ensures the regular review of the institution's mission. (Mission review)
- b. ensures a clear and appropriate distinction between the policy-making function of the board and the respective responsibilities of the administration and faculty to administer and implement policy. (Board/administrative distinction and shared governance)
- c. selects and regularly evaluates the institution's chief executive officer. (CEO evaluation/selection)
- d. defines and addresses potential conflict of interest for its members. (Conflict of interest)
- e. has appropriate and fair processes for the dismissal of a board member. (Board dismissal)
- f. protects the institution from undue influence by external persons or bodies. (External influence)
- g. defines its responsibilities and regularly evaluates its effectiveness. (Board self-evaluation)

Section 6: Faculty

4. The institution publishes and implements appropriate policies and procedures for preserving and protecting academic freedom. (Academic freedom)

Section 7: Institutional Planning and Effectiveness

2. The institution has a Quality Enhancement Plan that (a) has a topic identified through its ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation processes; (b) has broad-based support of institutional constituencies; (c) focuses on improving specific student learning outcomes and/or student success; (d) commits resources to initiate, implement and complete the QEP; and (e) includes a plan to assess achievement. (Quality Enhancement Plan)

Section 9: Educational Program Structure and Content

3. The institution requires a general education component at the undergraduate level that:
- a. is based on a coherent rationale.
 - b. is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree program. For degree completion in associate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent; for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent.
 - c. ensures breadth of knowledge. These credit hours include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and natural science/mathematics. These courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession. (*General education requirements*)

Section 10: Educational Policies, Procedures, and Practices

4. The institution (a) publishes and implements policies on the authority of faculty in academic and governance matters, (b) demonstrates that educational programs for which academic credit is awarded are approved consistent with institutional policy, and (c) places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum with its faculty. (*Academic governance*)

Virginia Code on Governing Boards:

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacodefull/title23.1/chapter13/>

In the legal code for governing board overall, there is only one area granted to boards to approve curriculum or academic programs:

23.1-1303.7. Establish programs to seek to ensure that all graduates have the technology skills necessary to compete in the twenty-first century and that all students matriculating in teacher-training programs receive instruction in the effective use of educational technology.

The word "curriculum" only appears in section 23.1-1304, which refers to educational programs for institutional governing boards rather than the responsibilities and duties of the board.

Virginia Code on George Mason University

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacodefull/title23.1/chapter15/>

§ 23.1-1503. Powers and duties.

B. The board may confer degrees and, subject to the provisions of § [23.1-203](#), approve new academic programs and discontinue academic programs offered by the University.

Note: 23.1-203 gives the responsibility for approving academic programs to SCHEV, not to the governing boards of universities. It only grants governing boards the responsibility for setting admissions policies for the institution and specific programs. The chapters of code for most other Virginia institutions do not include this in the section on board powers and duties. This suggests that SCHEV's policies on the governing board's role in approving programs are where the details of these powers are laid out.

It is interesting to note in Chapters 13-29 that there are only three universities for which the legal code specifies this power for the governing board, each of which is pursuant to §23.1-203: Christopher Newport, George Mason, and Mary Washington. However, the following colleges & universities that do not have this power and duty in the legal code: James Madison, Longwood University, Norfolk State, Old Dominion, Radford, University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth, Virginia Military Institute, Virginia Tech, Virginia State, the College of William and Mary, and the VCCS.

Virginia's Code on SCHEV: <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacodefull/title23.1/chapter2/>

Article 2 (23.1-203)

- Section 4- grants boards the right to approve admissions policies for institutions and specific programs to boards:
 - The student admissions policies for such institutions and their specific programs shall remain the sole responsibility of the individual governing boards but all baccalaureate public institutions of higher education shall adopt dual admissions policies with comprehensive community colleges as required by § 23.1-907.
- Sections 5 & 6- grant **SCHEV** the power to approve new academic programs, also sets parameters around why a program might be discontinued:
 - 5. Review and approve or disapprove all new undergraduate or graduate academic programs that any public institution of higher education proposes.
 - 6. Review and require the discontinuance of any undergraduate or graduate academic program that is presently offered by any public institution of higher education when the Council determines that such academic program is (i) nonproductive in terms of the number of degrees granted, the number of students served by the program, the program's effectiveness, and budgetary considerations or (ii) supported by state funds and unnecessarily duplicative of academic programs offered at other public institutions of higher education. The Council shall make a report to the Governor and the General Assembly with respect to the discontinuance of any such academic program. No such discontinuance shall become effective until 30 days after the adjournment of the session of the General Assembly next following the filing of such report.

SCHEV Policies <https://www.schev.edu/home/showpublisheddocument/3657>

Comprehensive policies page for program actions in case that direct link changes:

<https://www.schev.edu/institutions/policies-guidelines/academic-affairs-policy/approval-of-program-actions-at-public-institutions>

Page 7- requires board approval to propose new academic degree programs:

IV. New Academic Degree Programs Process for Council Action

A public institution's governing board must approve each proposal for a new academic degree program prior to its submission to the Council. The following procedures are adopted for new degree programs not eligible for facilitated staff approval.

- Council must first be informed about a new degree program via a Program Announcement before the program can be presented for approval at a later Council meeting.
- Institutional officers must attest that information related to duplication and employment has been presented to the governing board prior to its approval of the new degree program. For specific information about the provisions, see below under Section IV: New Degree Programs.

Page 9 - requires board approval to close a degree program before it is sent to the SCHEV Council (page 67 details the procedures), but only requires SCHEV staff approval for technical changes:

VII: Technical Changes, Program Mergers, and Intent to Discontinue Programs

Institutions may propose program actions such as technical changes (CIP code, degree designation, program name) to existing programs and program mergers. Requests for such changes necessitate the submission of information and forms using the guidelines, instructions, and forms contained herein. The Council has delegated approval authority for such changes, including degree designation closures, to SCHEV staff. Final authority for all program actions remains with the Council.

Institutions may close programs or propose to close degree designations. Notifications or requests are submitted to SCHEV using the guidelines, instructions, and forms contained herein. Board of Visitors (BOV) approval is required to close a degree program.

Page 56: SCHEV approval is needed to merge academic degree programs. While there is no policy that says the BOV must approve merged programs, the procedures section says that the letter from the chief academic officer must include the BOV approval date, which by default requires mergers to have BOV approval. Since a merger is also a form of closing multiple degree programs to open a new one, this is also in line with the policies on BOV approval for new degree programs and closing degree programs.

Page 39 defines when program modification for degree and certificate programs would require SCHEV approval; page 41 includes the procedures and indicates that the letter from the chief academic officer should include the date the modification was approved, if required. Up until 2020, SCHEV was notified about certificates but did not actually approve them; now SCHEV staff (not the SCHEV Council) approves certificates. The list of procedures and the cover page includes a placeholder for universities to indicate when the BOV approved the change, and this was added in 2020, but there is not actually a policy that requires SCHEV approval for degree modifications and certificates, and these have never been sent to the BOV for approval before sending them to SCHEV. Susan Woodruff, Mason's Director of Accreditation and State Authorization, puts "not required" in that part of the form, in line with SCHEV's policies

From page 39:

- SCHEV approval of program modifications is limited to instances that involve fundamental aspects of the original program as approved by Council. Modifications that require SCHEV approval include:

1. Altering program requirements in a way that results in a fundamental change to the curriculum, purpose, focus or identity of the program as approved by Council or that alters the requirements for the common core as determined by Council (see page 5 of this document).

**It is important to note here that the common core is clearly referring to core requirements for the major on page 5, not general education. The table on page 5 specifically excludes the “general education core.”

2. Adding a new delivery format to an existing program or ceasing to offer the program in the delivery format in which it was approved by Council.

3. Increasing or decreasing the total credit hours by more than three (3) credits from what was originally approved by Council. In the case of a bachelor degree, any change to more than 124 credits will require SCHEV approval.

Note:

- three (3) is the maximum aggregate change in total credits that may be made without submitting a modification proposal to SCHEV; i.e., approval must be sought if/when the total increase or decrease—even if by smaller increments over time—exceeds three (3) credits. Institutions should maintain an official record of credit increases or decreases to the total credit hours of degree and certificate programs;
- if/when the total aggregate change in credits exceeds 12, it may be necessary to submit a new degree and certificate program proposal.

SCHEV’s overview of the board’s role in approving academic programs: board must consider and demonstrate that they have been given evidence that the new program is avoiding duplication and showing that there is a labor market need for the degree program in Virginia

** There is NO SCHEV policy that requires either SCHEV or the BOV to approve general education curriculum. The Mason Core is not an academic degree program or a certificate program, and there is nothing in the SCHEV policies that indicates that the board should ever approve general education curriculum since it is specifically excluded on page 5. Instead, general education is monitored by SCHEV through assessment only (see below).

SCHEV’s Policy on Assessing General Education

<https://www.schev.edu/institutions/teaching-assessment-initiatives/student-learning-assessment>

SCHEV monitors general education through assessing student learning outcomes, not approval of changes to the types of courses included in general education. SCHEV requires that we assess civic

engagement, critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, and written communication, plus two other outcomes selected by the institution. These four core competencies are defined as follows:

- 1) **Critical thinking** – the ability to subject one’s own and others’ ideas, arguments, assumptions, and evidence to careful and logical scrutiny in order to make an informed judgment, draw a sound conclusion, or solve a problem.
- 2) **Written communication** – the ability to develop and communicate ideas effectively in writing as appropriate to a given context, purpose, and audience. It includes a variety of styles, genres, and media, including computer-mediated communications.
- 3) **Quantitative reasoning** – the ability to manipulate, analyze, and/or evaluate numbers and numerical data. It may involve calculation and/or analysis and interpretation of quantitative information derived from existing databases or systematic observations, and may be based in a variety of disciplines, not limited to mathematics and the natural and physical sciences.
- 4) **Civic engagement** – an array of knowledge, abilities, values, attitudes, and behaviors that in combination allow individuals to contribute to the civic life of their communities. It may include, among other things, exploration of one’s role and responsibilities in society; knowledge of and ability to engage with political systems and processes; and/or course-based or extra-curricular efforts to identify and address issues of public or community concern. (p. 4)

Our additional two areas are oral communication and inquiry. You can see more on our Mason Core assessment page on external reporting agencies and requirements: <https://oiep.gmu.edu/institutional-effectiveness/mason-core-assessment/external-reporting-agencies-and-requirements/>. The *Just Societies* requirement and our new QEP are partly intended to help bolster our learning outcomes for civic engagement, which is one of the SCHEV-required outcomes.

Additional Guidance from Organizations that Establish Best Practices

In addition to these formal legal and policy-making bodies that govern higher education, there are policies and recommendations from organizations that help to establish best practices and clear definitions to help guide institutions of higher education and their governing boards.

Association of Governing Boards (AGB) Guidelines (linked from SCHEV page for governing boards):

[AGB on shared governance](#): “Traditionally, governing boards delegate the responsibility of strategic planning and daily management to presidents, while faculty lead educational delivery. Delegation of authority between key constituents on campus strengthens institutions by championing meaningful engagement and inclusive, transparent decision-making.”

[AGB on Academic Affairs](#): While academic administrators and faculty members are responsible for setting learning goals, developing and offering academic courses and programs, and assessing the quality of those courses and programs, boards cannot delegate away their governance responsibilities for educational quality.

AGB empowers trustees to make sure their board and its appropriate committees not only make understanding the elements of educational quality a central feature of their agendas, but also consistently ensure their institution's programs and resources are focused on the total educational experience, not just traditional classroom activity.

Statement on Government of College and Universities

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) jointly formulated a [statement on the government of colleges and universities](#) that further details the work of shared governance and defines academic freedom. Section 5 details the role of the faculty and firmly assigns primary responsibility for curriculum and evaluation of faculty competence for tenure and promotion:

The faculty has primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process. On these matters the power of review or final decision lodged in the governing board or delegated by it to the president should be exercised adversely only in exceptional circumstances, and for reasons communicated to the faculty. It is desirable that the faculty should, following such communication, have opportunity for further consideration and further transmittal of its views to the president or board. Budgets, personnel limitations, the time element, and the policies of other groups, bodies, and agencies having jurisdiction over the institution may set limits to realization of faculty advice.

The faculty sets the requirements for the degrees offered in course, determines when the requirements have been met, and authorizes the president and board to grant the degrees thus achieved.

Faculty status and related matters are primarily a faculty responsibility; this area includes appointments, reappointments, decisions not to reappoint, promotions, the granting of tenure, and dismissal. The primary responsibility of the faculty for such matters is based upon the fact that its judgment is central to general educational policy. Furthermore, scholars in a particular field or activity have the chief competence for judging the work of their colleagues; in such competence it is implicit that responsibility exists for both adverse and favorable judgments. Likewise, there is the more general competence of experienced faculty personnel committees having a broader charge. Determinations in these matters should first be by faculty action through established procedures, reviewed by the chief academic officers with the concurrence of the board. The governing board and president should, on questions of faculty status, as in other matters where the faculty has primary responsibility, concur with the faculty judgment except in rare instances and for compelling reasons which should be stated in detail.

Appendix G: DEI in Program Accreditation Requirements

Key:
A: requirements in student learning outcomes
B: faculty and/or student recruitment, composition, and retention
C: career placement and/or employer/alumni satisfaction with ability to work with diverse populations
D: strategic management: included in program strategic plan, ongoing assessment, and/or required financial resources
E: guiding principles and/or organizational statement on diversity

Program(s)	Specialized Accreditor or Approving Body	Link to standards	DEI addressed
College of Education and Human Development			
BS in Kinesiology (Exercise Science)	Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP)	https://www.caahep.org/program-directors/standards-and-guidelines	Yes A
BS in Athletic Training	Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE)	https://caate.net/Programs/Professional/Professional-I-Program-Standards	Yes A, B, D
MS in Athletic Training	Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE)	https://caate.net/Programs/Professional/Professional-I-Program-Standards	Yes A, B, D
All programs leading to Educator Preparation in schools at the Initial-licensure Level	Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)	https://caepnet.org/accreditation/caep-accreditation/caep-accreditation-resources	Yes A, B, C, E
All programs leading to Educator Preparation in schools at the Advanced Level	Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) / National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)	https://caepnet.org/accreditation/caep-accreditation/caep-accreditation-resources	Yes A, B, C, E
BS Recreation Management	Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions (COAPRT)	https://accreditationcouncil.org/Programs/Standards	Yes A, B
MED Curriculum and Instruction, Concentration in International Baccalaureate Education	International Baccalaureate	https://www.ibo.org/globalassets/new-structure/become-an-ib-school/pdfs/programme-standards-and-practices-2020-en.pdf	Yes E
MED Curriculum and Instruction, Concentration in Advanced Studies in Teaching and Learning: Advanced International Baccalaureate Research	International Baccalaureate	https://www.ibo.org/globalassets/new-structure/become-an-ib-school/pdfs/programme-standards-and-practices-2020-en.pdf	Yes E

Program(s)	Specialized Accreditor or Approving Body	Link to standards	DEI addressed
CERG International Baccalaureate in Teaching and Learning	International Baccalaureate	https://www.ibo.org/globalassets/new-structure/become-an-ib-school/pdfs/programme-standards-and-practices-2020-en.pdf	Yes E
All programs leading to Educator Preparation in schools at the Initial and Advanced Levels	Virginia Department of Education	https://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching-learning-assessment/teaching-in-virginia/educator-preparation-becoming-a-teacher ; https://law.lis.virginia.gov/admincodefull/title8/agency20/chapter543/	Yes A
College of Engineering and Computing (CEC)			
Computer Science (BS) Information Technology (BS)	Computing Accreditation Commission of ABET	https://www.abet.org/accreditation/accreditation-criteria/	Yes E
Bioengineering (BS) Civil and Infrastructure Engineering (BS) Computer Engineering (BS) Cyber Security Engineering (BS) Electrical Engineering (BS) Mechanical Engineering (BS) Systems Engineering (BS)	Engineering Accreditation Commission of ABET	https://www.abet.org/accreditation/accreditation-criteria/	Yes A, B, E
College of Public Health			
College of Public Health (in process)	Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH)	https://ceph.org/about/org-info/criteria-procedures-documents/criteria-procedures/criteria-revisions-deia-2023/	Yes A, B, C, D, E
BS in Health Administration	Association of University Programs in Health Administration (AUPHA)	https://www.aupha.org/certification/certification-docs	Yes A
MS in Health Informatics	Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM)	https://www.cahiim.org/accreditation/health-informatics/accreditation-standards	Yes E
MHA, Health Systems Management	Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education (CAHME)	https://cahme.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/CAHME-HMA-Self-Study-Handbook-2021-Standards-2023_10_11.pdf	Yes A, B, E
BS in Nursing MS in Nursing Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP)	Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE)	https://www.aacnnursing.org/ccne-accreditation	Yes A

Program(s)	Specialized Accreditor or Approving Body	Link to standards	DEI addressed
BS Community Health MPH Public Health MS Global Health MS Health Informatics (newly aligned) PhD Public Health PhD Health Services Research	Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH)	https://ceph.org/about/org-info/criteria-procedures-documents/criteria-procedures/criteria-revisions-deia-2023/	Yes A, B, C, D, E
BSW in Social Work MSW in Social Work	Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)	https://www.cswe.org/getmedia/bb5d8afe-7680-42dc-a332-a6e6103f4998/2022-EPAS.pdf	Yes A, B, D, E
MS in Nutrition	Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND)	https://www.eatrightpro.org/-/media/files/eatrightpro/acend/accreditation-standards-fees-and-policies/2022-standards-and-templates/2022-accreditation-standards-for-nutrition-and-dietetics-education-programs.pdf?rev=945401f2f4704e48a56bb04437369142&hash=59C63A134B10D96C1C125D1F31F5792B	Yes A, B
BSN Nursing	Virginia Board of Nursing	https://www.ncsbn.org/nursing-regulation/education/approval-of-nursing-education-programs/nursing-approval-guidelines.page	Yes A
College of Humanities and Social Sciences			
PhD in Psychology with a Concentration in Clinical Psychology	American Psychological Association (APA)	https://accreditation.apa.org/accredited-programs	Yes A, B, D, E
Certificate, MA, and PhD in Human Factors and Applied Cognition	Human Factors and Ergonomics Society (HFES)	https://www.hfes.org/Resources/Graduate-Programs-Directory	Yes B, E
College of Science			
BS in Chemistry	American Chemical Society (ACS)	https://www.acs.org/education/policies/acs-approval-program.html	Yes B
MS in Geoinformatics and Geospatial Intelligence Graduate Certificate in Geospatial Intelligence	US Geospatial Intelligence Foundation (USGIF)	https://usgif.org/education/	Yes A, B, D

Program(s)	Specialized Accreditor or Approving Body	Link to standards	DEI addressed
College of Visual and Performing Arts			
BA Theater, Theater Education Concentration Theater Education Graduate Certificate MAT Art Education BM Music Education PhD Music Education	Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)	https://caepnet.org/accreditation/caep-accreditation/caep-accreditation-resources	Yes A, B, C, E
BA Music BA Music Composition BM Jazz Studies BM Music Education BM Music Performance BM Music Technology MM Composition MM Conducting MM Jazz Studies MM Music Education MM Pedagogy MM Performance MM Collaborative Piano DMA Performance DMA Conducting PhD in Music Education Graduate Artist Certificate in Performance (Keyboard, Vocal, Instrumental)	National Association of Schools of Music (NASM)	https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/	Yes B, E
INTO Mason			
INTO Mason Academic English and Workplace English programs	Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA)	https://cea-accredit.org/about-cea/standards (uses various cultural competencies and cultural difference instead of DEI language)	Yes A, B

Program(s)	Specialized Accreditor or Approving Body	Link to standards	DEI addressed
Costello College of Business			
Accounting, BS Accounting, MS	AACSB International – The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business	https://www.aacsb.edu/educators/accreditation/accounting-accreditation	Yes E
Business Administration, MBA Executive MBA Finance, BS Management, BS Management, MS Marketing, BS Technology Management, MS	AACSB International – The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business	https://www.aacsb.edu/educators/accreditation/business-accreditation/aacsb-business-accreditation-standards	Yes A, B, D, E
Schar School of Government and Policy			
Master of Public Administration	National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA)	https://www.naspaa.org/accreditation	Yes A, B, D, E
Scalia Law School			
Juris Doctor	American Bar Association (ABA)	https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/standards/	Yes B

Appendix H: Student Evaluations of Teaching

<i>Responses to all student evaluation of teaching items. (Spring 2023)</i>														
	All Undergraduate Courses							Mason Core						
	% of students with each response							% of students with each response						
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>
7. I completed all assigned tasks before class.	4.34	0.92	2.19	3.82	6.50	32.39	55.09	4.33	0.92	1.97	4.03	7.39	32.46	54.16
8. I consistently contributed to class activities/discussions.	4.13	0.99	2.35	4.84	14.41	34.07	44.33	4.16	0.97	2.12	4.68	13.41	34.56	45.23
9. I gained an understanding of the main concepts in this course.	4.31	0.91	2.54	3.19	6.25	37.26	50.76	4.31	0.91	2.47	3.13	6.39	36.88	51.13
10. I learned through a variety of learning opportunities (e.g. assignments, projections, papers, discussions, group work, peer review, exams) provided.	4.23	0.99	3.11	4.55	7.72	35.21	49.42	4.24	0.99	3.07	4.54	7.81	34.95	49.62
11. I found the instructor's feedback helpful for learning.	4.18	1.10	4.78	4.99	9.51	29.12	51.60	4.21	1.09	4.70	4.66	9.12	28.29	53.23
12. I learned due to the instructor's teaching methods/style.	4.09	1.16	5.75	6.11	10.47	29.19	48.48	4.11	1.15	5.46	5.94	10.17	29.01	49.41
13. The instructor created an environment that facilitated by engagement with the course content.	4.21	1.06	4.34	4.43	8.62	30.63	51.98	4.25	1.05	4.22	4.08	8.18	30.20	53.33
14. The instructor encouraged expression of diverse perspectives.	4.30	0.97	3.22	2.47	10.12	29.04	55.15	4.34	0.96	3.07	2.30	9.01	28.37	57.25
15. The instructor offered opportunities for students to provide feedback on the course.	4.25	1.02	3.47	4.04	9.14	30.37	52.98	4.25	1.01	3.42	3.94	9.67	29.84	53.12
16. The instructor offered opportunities to meet outside of class time, such as virtual or in-person office hours.	4.35	0.89	2.32	2.15	7.68	34.05	53.80	4.36	0.89	2.22	2.23	7.92	32.93	54.71
17. The instructor used technologies and/or resources/tools that increased my engagement with course content.	4.23	1.00	3.36	3.82	9.22	33.43	45.17	4.24	0.99	3.31	3.63	9.40	33.28	50.37
18. The course organization supported my learning.	4.16	1.08	4.60	5.00	8.76	32.71	48.93	4.18	1.06	4.44	4.48	8.79	33.26	49.03
19. The instructor clearly communicated course requirements to students.	4.36	0.96	3.26	3.22	5.24	31.03	57.24	4.38	0.94	3.07	3.15	4.89	30.60	58.30
20. The instructor clearly presented the course content.	4.33	0.98	3.49	3.51	5.86	30.50	56.64	4.36	0.96	3.27	3.29	5.53	30.17	57.75
Note: The number of respondents for each item for Mason Core courses ranged from 15841-16693, with variance due to non-response. The number of respondents for each item for all undergraduate courses ranged from 43627 to 45811. Items 7-8 are related to student participation; items 9-12 are related to learning outcomes; items 12-17 are related to course environment/experience, and items 18-20 are related to instructor preparation and course organization. Response options are SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, N = neither agree nor disagree, A = agree, SA = strongly agree.														

Responses to all student evaluation of teaching items. (Fall 2023)

	All Undergraduate Courses							Mason Core						
			% of students with each response							% of students with each response				
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>
7. I completed all assigned tasks before class.	4.34	0.91	2.11	3.77	6.59	33.02	54.50	4.36	0.91	2.14	3.58	6.10	32.19	55.99
8. I consistently contributed to class activities/discussions.	4.10	0.99	2.29	5.14	15.17	34.75	42.64	4.12	0.99	2.35	4.88	14.57	34.96	43.24
9. I gained an understanding of the main concepts in this course.	4.29	0.91	2.68	2.97	6.42	38.87	49.06	4.30	0.90	2.57	2.80	6.18	38.55	49.90
10. I learned through a variety of learning opportunities (e.g. assignments, projections, papers, discussions, group work, peer review, exams) provided.	4.22	0.98	3.12	4.34	7.84	36.89	47.82	4.24	0.97	2.90	4.22	7.60	36.58	48.69
11. I found the instructor's feedback helpful for learning.	4.18	1.07	4.35	4.89	9.52	30.82	50.43	4.19	1.07	4.25	4.87	9.47	30.85	50.56
12. I learned due to the instructor's teaching methods/style.	4.08	1.14	5.35	6.08	10.93	30.99	46.65	4.09	1.13	5.17	6.05	10.88	30.67	47.22
13. The instructor created an environment that facilitated by engagement with the course content.	4.21	1.05	4.11	4.32	8.93	32.18	50.46	4.22	1.04	4.02	4.14	8.85	31.95	51.04
14. The instructor encouraged expression of diverse perspectives.	4.30	0.96	3.04	2.23	10.23	30.64	53.86	4.30	0.95	2.99	2.19	10.58	30.71	53.52
15. The instructor offered opportunities for students to provide feedback on the course.	4.25	1.00	3.23	3.85	9.26	31.79	51.87	4.27	0.98	3.05	3.73	8.84	31.74	52.64
16. The instructor offered opportunities to meet outside of class time, such as virtual or in-person office hours.	4.34	0.88	2.32	1.85	8.16	34.73	52.94	4.35	0.88	2.30	1.70	8.09	34.57	53.34
17. The instructor used technologies and/or resources/tools that increased my engagement with course content.	4.23	0.98	3.21	3.59	9.57	34.68	48.94	4.25	0.97	3.08	3.37	9.24	34.24	50.08
18. The course organization supported my learning.	4.16	1.06	4.23	4.84	9.16	34.59	47.19	4.17	1.05	4.25	4.78	8.59	34.25	48.14
19. The instructor clearly communicated course requirements to students.	4.35	0.94	3.13	2.85	5.56	32.85	55.62	4.25	0.97	3.08	3.37	9.24	34.24	50.08
20. The instructor clearly presented the course content.	4.32	0.97	3.33	3.24	6.25	32.14	55.05	4.17	1.05	4.25	4.47	8.59	34.25	48.14
Note: The number of respondents for each item for Mason Core courses ranged from 29006-30325, with variance due to non-response. The number of respondents for each item for all undergraduate courses ranged from 47400 to 49664. Items 7-8 are related to student participation; items 9-12 are related to learning outcomes; items 12-17 are related to course environment/experience, and items 18-20 are related to instructor preparation and course organization. Response options are SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, N = neither agree nor disagree, A = agree, SA = strongly agree.														

Appendix I: Definitions of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Related Terms

SACSCOC definitions

- **Diversity** - variety or differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, age, sex/gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, culture, religious beliefs, political views, family status, educational background, profession, and socioeconomic status
- **Equity** – process of ensuring freedom from bias or favoritism such that all individuals can achieve their full potential; a measure of achievement, fairness, and opportunity for all in education
- **Inclusion** – process of improving participation for all, including those who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, economics, or any other status or difference.

Accrediting Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) definitions:

- **Inclusion** is the intentional, proactive, and continuing efforts and practices in which all members respect, support, and value others.
- **Diversity** is the range of human differences, encompassing the characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. Diversity includes, but is not limited to, the following characteristics: race, ethnicity, culture, gender identity and expression, age, national origin, religious beliefs, work sector, physical ability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, physical appearance, and cognitive differences.
- **Equity** is the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, achieved by intentional focus on their disparate needs, conditions, and abilities.
- **Accessibility** is the design, construction, development, and maintenance of facilities, information and communication technology, programs, and services so that all people, including people with disabilities, can fully and independently use them.

Governor Youngkin's Executive Order One:

For the purposes of this Executive order “inherently divisive concepts” means advancing any ideas in violation of Title IV and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, including, but not limited to of the following concepts (i) one race, skin color, ethnicity, sex, or faith is inherently superior to another race, skin color, ethnicity, sex, or faith; (ii) an individual, by virtue of his or her race, skin color, ethnicity, sex or faith, is racist, sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or subconsciously, (iii) an individual should be discriminated against or receive adverse treatment solely or partly because of his or her race, skin color, ethnicity, sex or faith, (iv) members of one race, ethnicity, sex or faith cannot and should not attempt to treat others as individuals without respect to race, sex or faith, (v) an individual's moral character is inherently determined by his or her race, skin color, ethnicity, sex, or faith, (vi) an individual, by virtue of his or her race, skin color, ethnicity, sex, or faith, bears responsibility for actions committed in the past by other members of the same race, ethnicity, sex or faith, (vii) meritocracy or traits, such as a hard work ethic, are racist or sexist or were created by a particular race to oppress another race.

Appendix J: The Impact of DEI Efforts on the Mason Student Experience

The Impact of DEI Efforts on the Mason Student Experience was developed to inform the DEI Committee report presented at the November 30th Board of Visitors meeting. The survey was distributed to Mason students, faculty and alumni to gather their opinions on how Mason's diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts has impacted their experience. The survey received 311 responses (239 students, 11 alumni, and 61 faculty).

The Impact of DEI Efforts on Mason Student Experience					
	% of students with each response				
	VU	U	N	S	VS
2. How satisfied are you with Mason's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts on campus?	6.47%	11.21%	21.12%	34.91%	25.86%
Note: The survey was distributed to students, faculty and alumni and of the 239 student responses received 232 were analyzed. Student responses submitted with a Gmail account were removed from the data. The survey consisted of multiple choice and free response questions					
Response option for question #2 are VU = very unsatisfied, U = unsatisfied, N = neutral, S = satisfied, VS = very satisfied					

3. If you answered Very Satisfied or Very Unsatisfied to the prior question, we encourage you to use the space below to explain what contributed to your answer. (Question #2)

- I answered very satisfied! The DEI office has been a great help in making sure that I can fight against the horrific racist and toxic environment that I've experienced. Unfortunately, my racist experience has led me to being hospitalized and I think it's unfair that racism on this campus has reached to a point where a current student couldn't showcase their heritage and culture out of fear of racism and prejudice!
- The community, people stood behind me that I never ever would have thought would be behind me because of different backgrounds, cultures and experiences because we all shared one trait " of being first generation college students. DEI programs such as the First Gen+ Center have given me the support system, protections/securities, and confidence which has alleviated some of the many barriers in higher academia coupled with the materials and resources I have provided to students that I have mentored through this program. Continuing programs like the First Gen+ Center, CCEE, DEI, Black Male Success Initiative, LGBTQ Resources and many others will allow safe and bleary spaces for education/awareness, access, and flourishing student body. I have seen many students excel in these spaces and learn how powerful their intersectional identities truly are and the lasting impact on others their perspectives provide.
- I selected Very Satisfied because of how diverse the campus is.
- I have gone to DEI multiple times for innocents that have currently happened and they were extremely unhelpful
- The marketing campaign is there. Clearly shows that they care about diversity.
- I have been exposed to a number of different cultures and identities and experiences which center around them, as well as my own. I have been able to learn about these through university efforts.
- I'm satisfied
- I love how people accept diverse cultures
- I can see inclusiveness while walking around campus
- I see lots of diversity at GMU and I think it's great.
- I believe that this program helps minority groups have equal opportunities and feel connected to the college. This can be applied for international students who aren't used to being in a different country
- Diversity is essential to the success of any organization.
- Provided continued support for me and my fellow Jewish students on campus.
- the classes

- there are plenty of events and organizations that celebrate diversity
- The Governor's ability to change the school's initiative to meet the needs of the students needs
- BMSI is just a great experience overall which has left me satisfied
- I think George Mason has a lot of diversity and has many options to include people in certain clubs
- The BSMT program has not only helped me learn more about the different faculties at mason, it also helped me meet more people like me, which definitely made my college experience infinitely better.
- DEI offices really make the school lovable and easier for students who don't fit in. For a college that prides themselves on "Diversity", this is very contradictory
- Mason Staff
- I think it does an amazing job at making people feel included in college spaces.
- I have never experienced any hate on campus, and I have only seen inclusion on campus.
- The DEI has helped me feel safer.
- I chose very satisfied because I am apart of CCEE and I see the effects that we have on individuals from all backgrounds. We cover first gen, black male success initiative, LGBTQ+, and more.
- As a student of color coming to a PWI, I felt that my voice as a student would be lost compared to white students in this campus, but DEI services for both the CCEE and the office in CEC help me when issues came up between me and Mason and where the only offices where both my voice and concerns felt that they were heard
- I selected very unsatisfied because my decision to come to Mason was heavily influenced by how inclusive and diverse it claimed to me. When I got here, I didn't see a lot of people that looked like me and even then, there was no "culture" here on campus. I also feel that rather recently I have seen nothing but disdain for how the University has treated or has responded to certain communities here on campus. Regarding the topic of diversity, and while I can't speak to other facets of their identity, I just don't see how a board of a white male majority has a say on anything that pertains to diversity efforts. They will never experience what it is like to be a member of a marginalized community, so, they can't definitely can't speak for us. While I realize that Mason doesn't select these members, I don't feel that much is being done about the possibility of funding being reduced or cut for a school that once again, prides itself on inclusivity and diversity. It comes off as performative and hypocritical.
- Mason has a heavy emphasis and focus on Diversity. It is honestly far too much. The efforts feel fake and scripted. I am fortunate to not be a member a minority group. I feel mason does not focus heavily enough on academics and the use Diversity as a focal point. I don't know what more could be done to increase this.
- Mason's DEI programs are the reason I can attend university here. Not only does GMU clearly strive to include all students in its programming, including disabled students like me, they provide education to help others be inclusive too. That means a lot when coming from an underrepresented group; just knowing I am supported has made a world of difference in my success in higher education.
- Organizations like FCA, VSA, KSA JSA ETC, create such a fun and welcoming environment for the Asian community in GMU. I have made so many new friends and overall. made my first semester as a freshmen enjoyable.
- Constant neglect of the Native American community
- The group in lounge.

4. How have Mason's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts impacted your student experience? Provide a brief description of your experience(s) below and their impact.

- They have not, but i haven't noticed anything bad so it should mean that things are going well, yes?
- No
- No they haven't
- I don't have experience specifically about the broader DEI office but I know we lump in other stuff like Title IX and ADA into it here. They're crazy small and understaffed for what they have to do. We've had a couple tuition raises in the past couple years that were justified by saying you'd expand offices like these and CAPS/ODS and it never results in more than 1 or 2 new full time hires for each. Please reprioritize.
- Even with DEI on campus it still feels very unsafe on campus. There are weekly protesters yelling at you to go to hell and call you slurs. Posters and threats are constant problems, especially the recent antisemitic ones.

- The little DEI we have and DEI staff is all some of us have to feel some form of comfortability and safety on this campus. get rid of that and it'll be more dangerous.
- Can we also mention that removing DEI literally proves that we are a political pawn and that the students are not cared for as much by the BOV as the political reputation of this campus is.
- I'm part of student government and the director and co-director has been of great help on bringing an initiative about creating a multicultural board up to life. Again, if it wasn't for DEI I wouldn't have been alive!
- I have learned many identities that I hold could be powerful and supported through DEI programming. We have programs at Mason that aren't at any other institutions in the nation and that is due to the students experiential impact. Students are who have perpetuated changed and allowed for future generations to feel adequately provided for and supported. Coupled with administrators and faculty to create programs like BMSI, STEP, First Gen+ Center, and many others around the university have bridged gaps and provided critical resource help for students struggling and some even fighting for their lives. My experience with these programs have provided me lasting friendships, support systems, letters of recommendation, and critical hard/soft applicable skills. I have held educational trainings alongside DEI work and brought awareness to many issues and topics all in bringing clarity to the issue.
- As a first generation college student and a daughter of immigrants, GMU has an environment where I don't feel excluded.
- As a member of the LGBTQ community, i have found that Mason is a place where i can be open about my sexuality without fear. It's been amazing to be myself
- I haven't had an experience with Masons DEI efforts. I haven't seen anything across campus
- I went through disability services to be able to bring me emotional support animal to school with me. I've severely struggled with mental health and was grateful that George Mason offered these services and would allow me to have my rabbit who really supports me. When choosing a school, a big factor in my choice was diversity and George Mason stood out because they seemed to do a great job opposed to many other options. Along with my own experiences, my younger brother has considered going to Mason too. He has autism and ADHD. He is a brilliant student, but needs accommodations. When he's been looking at colleges, it has been important to my family to choose a school that could accommodate him so that he can excel and have the best college experience possible. Because it's so important, George Mason has been a school that can really match his needs. However, without these accommodations, Mason won't be a good fit for him and Mason will have lost a genius prospective student.
- Creating spaces for LGBTQ students to find community among their peers in a dictated space
- It bring a lot of people from different backgrounds and cultures into my daily college life
- It has made me feel great. It's great to interact with people with different backgrounds and get to know each other.
- They made me feel that the university does not care about the safety of students
- Not personally but right now it matters so much because of what's going on in Palestine but mason doesn't appear to be in support of Palestine and it's making us question hope much mason actually cares abt DEI
- It's awesome to hear from people from all over the world here at this school.
- I have been able to learn about and experience a diverse array of cultural and ethnic identities in a safe and intellectual space without being embarrassed to ask questions, especially about those I had only limited exposure to previously.
- As a queer disabled student I've found community in spaces such as the LGBTQ Resources Center, CAPS, and ODS. These programs have been fundamental to my success as a student, and the fact that GMU Administration barely supports them and they are coming under attack is a very real threat to the Mason student body.
- Masons diversity efforts have impacted my student experience
- Mason needs to be more inclusive and more liberal
- Yes, because I do not need to feel stress when I met people. It affects to my mental health
- Being a first-generation Asian student, Mason's DEI help me realized there's a lot of student who have the same struggles as me.
- Great experience, but a lot of the automatic push button doors don't work and need to be fixed because a lot of students in wheelchairs including me need those buttons to work. It is hard to push the doors open by hand, the

doors hit our knuckles and cut them, some of the doors are so heavy and they lock preventing students from getting into some buildings. Also, sidewalks, walkways need to be smoothed out, so that our chairs can roll smoothly and there are no bumps that can cause manual wheelchair users to fall as their chairs will flip and fall down.

- it creates a fair and equal environment
- They keep us updated on things going on around campus
- I feel included in immediate ways, like with understanding professors/mentors, but on a large scale I feel as if our diversity is not represented by actions taken at a university level.
- I'm honestly not sure :)
- I have made more friends and can relate to certain groups better
- They have assisted in addressing antisemitism on campus that my friends and I have experienced. They helped make us feel more safe on campus and communicated our concerns
- I have access to interpreters for class and I am grateful for the safety net I have surrounding accessibility and accommodation as a Hard of Hearing individual.
- It's hard to see lots of the minority groups at the university.
- Contemporary student services is good
- Not bad but not good enough because I don't feel like there is enough support and Mason is starting to become an unwelcomed place for me
- DEI provided a crucial training about racial microaggressions during my freshman year after there was an incident of racist harassment against one of the people in my building.
- Mason's DEI impacted my student experience because it allowed me to take equal opportunities like everyone else and being able to know that we have a diverse group of people. We need this program so everyone can feel included
- DEI efforts have made me more aware of the language that I use when talking in class or on the go. As a white person, it is incredibly important that I educate myself on how to include people who may experience prejudice due to their identity. I think Mason does a great job with that. The various offices and programs that the university provides have made me more aware of my privilege as a white, cisgender person, and how to recognize the disparities between me and my friends who don't have the privilege I do.
- Prefer not to say
- They personally aren't impacting my life directly, but I feel that if one walks around campus you can see how it negatively affects students
- Broadly speaking, as an Autistic person at Mason, Mason's programs to include people like me have been invaluable to my experiences. My life has been deeply impacted positively by Disability Services and LGBTQ+ resources in particular. Disability Services' accommodations system is essential for my rights as a disabled person to be protected, and their outreach to students has allowed us to help Mason become more accessible. Meanwhile, it's difficult to make friends as a queer identifying Autistic person and LGBTQ+ resources have been a great place to make friends. So many of my close friends today come from those two places and other places aimed to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion that I'm worried that I'll be alone without them.
- I want to see these places expanded, get more support, and receive more funding. They are essential to my experiences as a Mason student.
- I've felt welcomed as a transgender student and felt typically safe on campus. However, I believe further efforts could be made to be inclusive, such as improving services and accessibility for disabled students.
- Mason's DEI efforts have positively affected my time on campus through services like the LGBTQ+ center :3
- I don't feel ignored
- I work closely with the Patriot Pantry as a volunteer and have found that a majority of users are international students. I am concerned that this issue disproportionately affects these students and more awareness needs to be spread about it. Personally, I feel that DEI efforts have had a positive impact on my student experience.
- It has not yet!
- They are the reason that I came to Mason in the first place. The people are so welcoming and supportive, and having all these different opinions allows me to experience what it is like in the job market and areas that I will be in after college.

- I feel welcome at GMU. That's not the case everywhere I go.
- I have been part of the international student advisory board, which works to connect the large international population to the area and promote cultural awareness among mason's domestic population. we have thrown successful cultural events and the student body seemed really receptive.
- As a first-gen student and a woman of college Mason's DEI offices have made me feel valid and have helped me navigate the system that wasn't built with me in mind. I feel empowered by my identity now and I feel confident enough to give back to my community because of the validation Mason's offices have given me.
- As a queer Jewish student having access to things like the lgbt resource center and inclusive events has made me feel safe and included on campus.
- Provided, trainings, provided, resources, and most importantly provided support in time in need and critical incidents
- I specifically chose to transfer to GMU because of its diversity and its dedication to creating a welcoming environment for people of all backgrounds. Of all the universities that claim the label of "diverse" I personally feel that GMU is the only one that truly devotes itself to honoring this.
- Mason's DEI office has allowed me to feel protected as a Jewish student and is there whenever I or another Jewish student faces antisemitism on campus.
- I felt very supported when the Provost and VP of Student Life attended a community support event hosted by Chabad, Hillel, and AEPi. I feel unsafe on campus when I see antisemitic propaganda being passed out. I understand free speech, but seeing graphic images from protestors on the way to class can be upsetting. I also feel unsafe when people leave protests with their faces entirely covered and circle the JC with signs saying I am a terrorist for believing in my people's self-determination, even though I completely am against the actions of the government in Israel. There is no accountability with anonymity and intimidation. Mason is diverse, but there is still much work to be done in the name of inclusion.
- As someone who is a child of immigrants and first generation American, diversity is very important to me. In fact, diversity was my deciding factor in where I went to university. Diversity efforts on campus have made me feel seen and appreciated and like a true patriot in this community.
- great
- I believe that Mason's DEI has made it possible from students of different backgrounds feel a sense of community and belonging on campus. This then creates safe space for students and lets them have a support system that can help motivate them to be resilient during the hard time in college, I know for me the ability to find a community among Latina individuals has helped me grow out of my shell and more open minded about learning things around me.
- they have made me much more satisfied with where i go to school and more motivated to do better
- With the rising tensions between Israel and Palestine I worry about my safety on campus as a Jew. It made it worse know that there was someone giving out antisemitic flyers on campus!
- The potential is there, but with the current governor's ability to change the name, allocation of resources, and other metrics of success, it leaves Mason students, faculty, and staff vulnerable to standards of discrimination and direct based on fear and hate.
- I have seen the impact they can have and how much they fail to support students. While they do what they can, they are unable to provide the amount of support some students need especially with how large this school has gotten. They need to increase their ability to focus on individual students rather than the red tape barriers.
- I'm first gen, disabled, child of immigrants, and lgbtq+. I have only really interacted with disability services, but they have been disappointing with accommodating my needs.
- DEI is an everyday and important part of my life. I feel like in recent times, DEI has been attacked and villainized despite its positive impacts on the different communities on campus. It has helped get used to college life since I'm a freshman
- The African Student Union is very important to me because, it made me feel like I was home.
- The DEI has impacted me very positively as, for example, the BMSI has helped me connect and notice the amount of diversity that George Mason advertises so much. I am only a freshman, so I don't have a lot of experience, but I do enjoy these programs and I would not like to see them discontinue.

- I have not really experienced any discrimination here. I feel that everyone here includes each other, no one is being treated unfairly, and it is somewhat diverse here.
- My experience has been good, I have been able to view and become part of different clubs and organizations that deal with my personal identity and inclusion.
- The DEI program has helped me meet more black students like me, which has helped me feel more connected to mason.
- Mason's DEI officers have given me and countless other students some guidance where it wasn't offered anyone else on campus. There have been times where DEI Offices have been there for me when no one else on campus was.
- None, because I have not seen any.
- They made my experiences better. It's fun seeing people of different backgrounds. Made me feel like I went to a school that is accepting of all.
- Being an international student, it was a difficult transition for me to settle in a foreign land, but the DEI efforts of Mason made the transition easier and accessible for me
- Through the STEP program i was able to be more prepared to start my college career and also know that i have a support group that can help me succeed
- I've seen a couple of the events they do and it definitely makes me feel more comfortable knowing that there are people I can connect with because of these efforts
- The MASI (Mason Autism Support Initiative) program has been a help in terms of getting used to campus.
- I feel included in the statements made on the syllabi, it uses gender inclusive language, and offers help.
- As a neurodiverse and transgender student, this has helped me to feel more comfortable around staff and feel accepted.
- Too many racists, fascists, and religious extremists on campus who don't go here and should not be here.
- I can visibly tell mason is one of the most diverse universities since my time here dating back from 2020. It's nice to know my university is a melting pot like the US was founded on!
- they have in efforts for more scholarships and funding, however in terms of roles of faculty not much at all
- I am specifically apart of the black male success initiative. Some positive impacts it's had on me are being more engaged with the larger Mason community, more outreach, communication, leadership, and cooperation.
- It has been nice to see there some spaces for cultural groups to meet and share experiences with each other. I like that there's some things like that. I just there was more intersectionality among all these groups.
- Yes it has
- The efforts are there, but their impacts could be better
- Out of every office that would either turn me away or write me someone's email in an effort to get me to leave, DEI offices took my problems and worked with me to figure solutions. For example Christopher Carr office in the CEC is the only office I feel comfortable going to if issues with Professor arise. I have made attempts to go into the Undergrads office but I'm so quickly turned away by the people at the front desk who seems confused at what they are supposed to do. BMSI and CBM both gave me a space to be able to meet and identify with other black men on campus and be able to find others who think like me. It also gave me the ability to help out with other peoples problems in classes I have done before.
- When coming to this school, I was lucky to be able to enroll in UNIV 108, a section of UNIV 100 provided by the Black Male Success Initiative. From the class, I got a lot more acclimated with the overall program which provided me with a healing space where I could voice anything that was on my mind. It felt like home. It felt like Mason should be lifting, but when it comes to things like BMSI or any other program or student organization, there seems to be no effort from the University itself in uplifting them. Going back to the idea that the University is the "most" inclusive or diverse. Statistically, maybe, but culturally, definitely not. Outside of BMSI and familiar Black and queer spaces, I often feel alone and ostracized. At this point, I can't trust that the overall university has my best interest at heart. With the recent threat of having funding being reduced or cut completely, it makes me worried that I won't have a space or place to call home on campus while I am away from my actual home.
- I do not have that impact as a student. But I found some gatherings and programs where people from all cultures were invited.

- International
- I was exposed to lot of cultural events socially. This has inspired to learn more and more about diverse cultures and professions.
- I am a disabled student. I can confidently say that without Mason's DEI efforts, I would not be able to go to university. Mason's focus on accessibility, inclusion, and equity have truly made me be able to have an equitable, successful college experience.
- It has made me a lot more outgoing and self-accepting of myself. Being a part of these orgs and community has made me more motivated to do well in school too because the people in these communities have motivated me to be authentic and goal-driven. I love DEI efforts because it made me feel more accustomed to college life as a student.
- It hasn't
- As a Native American student, tribal affiliation Oglala Lakota Sioux, who has left my community I did not expect a lot of representation or awareness of natives on campus. Since finding out about the native student alliance, after a long semester of not knowing it had existed, I have been happy to have community on campus. However, I've been shocked to see how much cultural insensitivity the campus has, including to specific departments that showcase themselves as culturally diverse and inclusive on campus communities. I would like to see more from George Mason in being inclusive for the Native American and Indigenous community on campus. Although we are small, a community is a community and it is imperative for the overall campus wide retention, development and overall experience to lift up Native and Indigenous students and our communities.

Appendix K: Mason Student Surveys

Patriot Success Survey (2022)							
	% of students with each response						
	<i>M</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Overall, how would you rate your experience at Mason?	4.56	1%	2%	11%	31%	36%	19%
4. I feel like I belong at Mason	3.94	1%	4%	18%	50%	26%	
5. I feel valued as an individual at Mason.	3.83	2%	7%	22%	47%	23%	
6. Instructors at Mason care about my success.	3.98	1%	5%	18%	48%	29%	
7. Academic support staff (e.g., advisors, librarians, tutors, etc.) care about my success.	4.01	1%	3%	18%	47%	30%	
8. Student Services staff (e.g., career services, student activities, housing, etc.) care about my success.	3.85	2%	5%	25%	43%	25%	
9. Administrative support staff (e.g., admissions office, registrar, financial aid office, Mason Student Services Center (MSSC), etc.) care about my success.	3.76	3%	6%	26%	43%	22%	
10. I feel safe at Mason.	4.29	0%	1%	11%	44%	43%	
<p>Note: The Patriot Success Survey is administered during the fall of each academic year to all enrolled and registered undergraduate students. To protect student anonymity, survey results with less than five respondents will not be accessible. There were 2,739 respondents to the survey</p> <p>Response options for the Patriot Success survey are on a six point scale(1-6).</p> <p>*Question #1 is based on a 6-point scale: Excellent =6 – Very Poor =1</p> <p>** Questions #2 -#7 are based on a 5-point scale: Strongly Agree =5 – Strongly Disagree = 1</p> <p>*** Question #8 is based on a 5-point scale: Very Often =5 – Never = 1</p>							

Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (2017)							
	% of students with each response						
	<i>M</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. How important is it to you that your institution provides the following? - Opportunities to interact with students from different backgrounds (social, racial/ethnic, religious, etc.)	4.94	3%	3%	7%	18%	25%	45%
2. During the coming school year, about how often do you expect to have discussions with people from the following groups? - People of a race or ethnicity other than your own	3.46	1%	8%	35%	56%		
3. During the coming school year, about how often do you expect to have discussions with people from the following groups? - People with religious beliefs other than your own	3.4	1%	10%	37%	52%		
4. During the coming school year, about how often do you expect to have discussions with people from the following groups? - People with political views other than your own	3.23	1%	17%	41%	42%		
<p>Note: The Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) collects data about first-time, first-year students' academic and co-curricular experiences in high school and their expectations for college. The survey received 1053 responses.</p> <p>Response option for the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement are on a six point scale(1-6). *Scale 6=Very important - 1=Not important. Percentages do not total 100% (due to rounding)</p> <p>Questions 2-4 are based on a 4-point scale, 4=Very often - 1=Never. Percentages do not total 100% (due to rounding)</p>							

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) (2018)								
	% of students with each response							
	<i>M</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following? – Connected your learning to societal problems or issues	2.63	10%	36%	36%	19%			
2. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following? - Included diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions or assignments	2.55	15%	33%	35%	18%			
3. During the current school year, about how often have you had discussions with people from the following groups? - Had discussions with people of a race or ethnicity other than your own	3.3	4%	14%	30%	52%			
4. During the current school year, about how often have you had discussions with people from the following groups? -Had discussions with people with political views other than your own	2.93	6%	30%	28%	36%			
5. During the current school year, about how often have you had discussions with people from the following groups? -Had discussions with people with religious beliefs other than your own	3.22	4%	17%	31%	48%			
6. How much does your institution emphasize the following? - Institutional emphasis: Encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds (social, racial/ethnic, religious, etc.)	2.84	10%	25%	35%	30%			
7. How much does your institution emphasize the following? - Providing support for your overall well-being (recreation, health care, counseling, etc.)	2.76	11%	27%	38%	24%			
8. How much of your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas? - Understanding people of other backgrounds (economic, racial/ethnic, political, religious, nationality, etc.)	2.89	9%	24%	36%	31%			
Select the response that best represents your ability to do the following: Contribute to the well-being of your community	5.11	2%	2%	7%	19%	27%	25%	17%
Select the response that best represents your ability to do the following: Lead a group where people from different backgrounds feel welcomed and included	5.21	2%	2%	7%	16%	27%	26%	19%
Select the response that best represents your ability to do the following: Resolve conflicts that involve bias, discrimination, and prejudice	4.73	2%	3%	11%	25%	30%	18%	10%
<p>Note: The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is a survey designed to collect data in five areas: (a) participation in educationally purposeful activities, (b) institutional requirements regarding coursework, (c) perceptions of the college environment, (d) educational and personal growth, and (e) student background information. The survey received 1974 responses.</p> <p>Response option for the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) are based on a 4-point scale, 4=Very Often/Much - 1=Never/Very Little.</p> <p>*Questions #9- #11 are based on a 7-point scale, 7=Excellent 1=Poor</p> <p>Percentages may not total 100% (due to rounding)</p>								

Graduating Senior Exit Survey (2020-2021)					
	% of students with each response				
	<i>M</i>	1	2	3	4
3. To what extent did courses in your major contribute to your competence in the following areas - i. Ability to engage in civic activities (e.g., be involved in political systems or process, identify and address issues of public/community concerns)	2.74	14%	27%	31%	28%
11. To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements about academic advising? – When I met with an academic advisor in person, I felt like he/she listened to my concerns and created an open, respectful, and inclusive atmosphere.	3.4	4%	5%	39%	52%
41. How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your Mason experience? - Overall Mason experience	3	4%	12%	64%	20%
41. How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your Mason experience? - Sense of belonging	2.89	6%	16%	60%	18%
<p>Note: The Graduating Senior Survey typically collects data in seven areas: (a) enrollment and employment history, (b) education and writing experience within the major, (c) scholarly and creative activities, (d) interaction with faculty and staff, (e) enriching educational experiences, (f) global knowledge or experience, and (g) overall satisfaction. The survey received 2450 responses.</p> <p>Response options for the Graduating Senior Exit Survey are based on a 4-point scale, 4=Very Satisfied - 1=Very Dissatisfied.</p>					

Graduate Student Exit Survey (2020-2021)					
	% of students with each response				
	<i>M</i>	1	2	3	4
How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your graduate program - Sense of belonging/community within your graduate program	3.1	5%	13%	49%	33%
"Overall, how satisfied are you with your Mason experience?"	3.31	3%	5%	51%	41%
<p>Note: The Graduate Student Exit Survey is administered to masters and doctoral students who have filed their intent to graduate. The survey collects data regarding (a) enrollment and employment, (b) academic program evaluation, (c) overall satisfaction, (d) time to degree and (e) financial support. The survey received 1384 responses.</p> <p>Response options for the Graduate Student Exit Survey are 4-point scale, 4=Very Satisfied - 1=Very Dissatisfied.</p>					

Appendix L: Mason Employer Surveys

Our local employers clearly demonstrate that they value diversity, equity, and inclusion and have active strategies to promote DEI within their organizations and in their hiring practices. In Fall 2023, Career Services asked a few top employers the following questions. Here is a summary of the responses:

How does the diversity of the student body impact your decision to recruit at Mason?

- We choose to recruit frequently at Mason in large part because of the highly qualified and widely diverse student population.
- The diversity of the student body at Mason definitely has a positive impact on our recruitment decisions. It not only helps us access a more varied talent pool but also fosters innovation, creativity, and cultural competence. These factors align with our organization's values and strategic goals, making Mason an attractive choice for our recruitment efforts.
- DE&I is a major focus across our organization, including at the college recruitment level. We consistently want to improve upon our DE&I initiatives and come up with ideas on how we can do so. Engaging with schools that have diverse student populations is one means of doing so. As Mason is one of the most diverse schools in the region, we strongly desire to meet and hire students from GMU.
- It 100% impacts our decision to recruit at George Mason University! Enterprise mirrors the diverse communities that we serve so it's important to us to have a diverse pool of candidates to consider.
- It's an important factor that we take into consideration when prioritizing our schools... One of the top 5 considerations.
- A diverse student-body is the forefront of a successful recruitment process. KPMG is constantly seeking candidates that accurately represent the various cultural and ideological identities in our current society.
- Strongly impacts my decision making.
- Norfolk Naval Shipyard embraces diversity across its workforce and we look for the same in our partner schools.
- The diversity of the university and the large pool of CS students makes George Mason an important recruiting destination.

Compared to peers at other universities at which you recruit, do you think Mason students/alumni are uniquely prepared to work in a diverse and inclusive organization? Please explain.

- I think Mason alumni enhance the diversity of our organization because they bring an attitude of acceptance and confidence that comes from being a part of the GMU community.
- Yes, Mason students are well prepared to work in a diverse organization. Students at GMU seem to be accustomed to working alongside individuals with a variety of backgrounds and perspectives. That could be in the classroom, student organizations, and/or socially. These are essential experiences to have as they replicate interactions that happen at organizations.

- Absolutely, George Mason students are set up for success through their educational and interpersonal experiences at George Mason. The D.C. Metro area offers students the opportunity to live and study in an area rich with culture and opportunities to learn and grow.
- Yes because they are coming from a diverse learning environment
- GMU students are poised to succeed in diverse settings as Mason's classroom environment highlights the melting-pot of identities that has made Northern Virginia a cultural hub. The student body is composed of international, first-generation, neurodiverse, out-of-state, non-traditional and many personalities from all walks of life.
- Yes, there are diverse class offerings and professional development events hosted by the Career Center
- GMU students are well prepared to discuss their goals with our recruiters at career fairs. GMU alum employed at NNSY have been a welcome addition to our workforce.
- I don't perceive a difference - the younger generation are generally very accepting. We run internships with 12-15 people with a great deal of diversity and they get along really well year after year. We bring a diverse set of recruiters, so maybe we're attracting people that want to see diversity in companies - and so we're not having issues.

Why do you think today's college graduates need to have a foundation in DEI principles/practices for professional success?

- College graduates need to be able to effectively communicate with people from all different backgrounds in order to excel professionally, regardless of their chosen career. Having a solid understanding of DEI principles is essential for anyone who wants to succeed in an organization that values a diverse and inclusive perspective.
- A foundation in DEI principles and practices is vital for today's college graduates because it equips them with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in an increasingly diverse and globalized workforce. It also fosters innovation and contributes to a more inclusive, socially responsible, and competitive professional landscape.
- DE&I is a core pillar for many large organizations. Initiatives are practiced and implemented in everyday life at work. There are numerous benefits to DE&I at organization, one being a major driver of innovation and value. Therefore, diversity will likely be a staple going forward in the long-term future.
- DEI is part of many organizations. Having a DEI platform is not enough, action is the key to a successful program. Our business is successful because we mirror our communities in our workforce, and we've built strong relationships with the communities we serve.
- It's a very important element of developing successful, productive, high-performing teams
- What makes the transition from university-life to corporate successful is a learning attitude that doesn't stop at graduation. Our professionals are constantly required to acknowledge diversity internally as well as externally with clients and key-stakeholders. The easier one can acknowledge differences the closer we are to creating solutions and strides forward at an organization and in society.
- For cultural humility and awareness to succeed in diverse and global workplaces
- Our workforce is constantly changing and DEI plays a large role in the success of our organization.

- This really starts at the home through good upbringing. If these things are not understood by the time people arrive at college, I think it takes more than classes/lectures to change deeply rooted attitudes - it takes significant life experiences with people from other cultures to get people to see others as humans deserving of respect.

Appendix M: Listening Session

The Committee held a listening session on April 17, which was attended by approximately 150-175 people in person and 424 online via Zoom. Of those, 42 individuals shared verbal comments with the committee in the JC Cinema, and an additional 33 comments were submitted via email. There was clearly significant interest among the Mason community about this topic and those comments are summarized below. A large majority of the comments were in support of both the DEI infrastructure and Just Societies requirements with only two oral comments that were mixed (e.g. not completely in favor) and only one written comment that opposed DEI programs, plus a few comments that let us know about challenges with volume on Zoom.

In order to rapidly analyze the comments in an objective manner, we used AI-assisted thematic analysis. First, we combined the transcript of the verbal comments shared during the listening session and the comments sent via email into a single file. Next, we used a [ChatGPT Splitter](#) to generate instructions and separate chunks of text that could be pasted into [ChatGPT](#) to allow the entire body of comments to be treated as a single qualitative data file, and then asked ChatGPT to conduct an in-depth qualitative thematic analysis of the comments. We used subsequent prompts to ask the software to include direct quotations with the explanations and to identify the percentage of comments that fit each theme. (Note: many comments were extensive and fit into several themes; thus percentages add up to more than 100%.)

The analysis that was generated is presented below:

1. **Support for DEI Initiatives (25%):**

- **Explanation:** Many respondents expressed strong support for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives at Mason, emphasizing their importance in driving academic success and fostering a supportive environment for all students.
- **Quotations:**
 - "Diverse experiences are needed and valued; and their diverse perspectives are what drive the academic success and economic growth of this institution."
 - "DEI A is the heart of Mason. Nobody can survive without a heart."

2. **Concerns about Threats to DEI (20%):**

- **Explanation:** Respondents voiced concerns about potential threats to DEI efforts, highlighting the negative impact that reducing funding or support for these initiatives could have on Mason's reputation and its ability to support marginalized student populations.
- **Quotations:**
 - "I hope the BOV makes the accurate decision: Continue to support DEI-efforts and Just Societies; as reducing their funding... will ruin the reputation of Mason."
 - "Supporting first-generation students, low-income students, students of color, immigrant students, disabled students, students who are parents, military veterans, etc. happens because of organizational commitments and resources dedicated to supporting students through DEI infrastructure."

3. **Critique of Anti-DEI Views (15%):**

- **Explanation:** Some respondents critiqued anti-DEI views, arguing that they are detrimental to marginalized communities and contrary to the principles of equality and inclusivity.
- **Quotations:**
 - "Anti-DEI is anti-Poor, anti-first-generation college student, anti-low-socioeconomic-status, and anti-American."
 - "Critics of Just Societies curriculum and critics of DEI believe that DEI is a synonym for Black people."

4. **Call for Inclusive Curriculum (20%):**

- **Explanation:** Respondents advocated for inclusive curriculum, particularly supporting the Just Societies requirement, which they believe exposes students to diverse perspectives on justice theories and fosters critical thinking skills.
- **Quotations:**
 - "I support the work of the Faculty Core Curriculum committee in creating the Just Societies requirement... I think it absolutely necessary that our students be exposed to different perspectives on justice theories."
 - "I encourage the BOV not to underestimate the capacity of students to understand ideas and understand what is being asked of them when they grapple with them in context."

5. **Testimonials and Personal Experiences (10%):**

- **Explanation:** Some respondents shared personal experiences and testimonials, highlighting the positive impact of DEI initiatives such as the Black Male Success Initiative on their academic and personal growth.
- **Quotations:**
 - "Being in the Black Male Success Initiative has brought me memories and happiness I can never forget."
 - "Due to DEIA, for the first time I felt that I belonged somewhere, where my gender, my religion, my ethnicity was not a hindrance."

6. **Critique of Opposition to DEI (10%):**

- **Explanation:** Respondents critiqued opposition to DEI initiatives, arguing that such opposition amounts to censorship and discrimination against marginalized identities.
- **Quotations:**
 - "Removing resources, removing access to information...is that not also censorship? Is that not also an attempt at indoctrination to your viewpoint?"
 - "To not [cut every program that supports diversity, equity, and inclusion of ANY identity] suggests that this is not about DEI: this is about discrimination of a few specific identities that you do not believe are worthy of support."

7. **Emphasis on Community and Support Services (10%):**

- **Explanation:** Several respondents emphasized the importance of community and support services provided by DEI initiatives, highlighting their role in promoting emotional well-being, academic success, and personal development.
- **Quotations:**
 - "We as CCEE are providing emotional and mental health support, consistently humanizing our students' experiences because Mason says, 'Our Students Come First.'"
 - "We do that through initiatives such as our male success initiatives that addresses the low graduation and matriculation rates... All of which are co-led by students and professional staff which allow students to find community, find themselves, find their voices."