

# George Mason University

## 2018 Legislative and Budget Priorities

### University Priorities

#### **Financial Aid: Provide Affordable Access for All Students**

George Mason University has a diverse undergraduate student body with nearly 40% being the first in their family to attend college. Approximately 30% of Mason students qualify for need-based Pell Grants. More than 70% of Mason students work full- or part-time. Due, in large part, to lower tuition and gainful employment upon graduation, Mason students maintain one of the lowest student loan default rates in the nation ~2%. George Mason University will work with other universities to secure additional student financial aid to address the unmet financial need as defined by the state. Specifically, Mason will seek \$2.0M general fund and \$0.5M non-general fund in the first year and \$4.0M general fund and \$1.0M non-general fund in the second year of the biennium.

#### **Compensation: Support Salary Compensation Increases**

Northern Virginia is among the highest cost of living regions in the United States. The competition to maintain and recruit highly talented faculty and staff is intense, particularly when one considers the number of nationally ranked universities in the region as well as the expanse of research and development programs who employ people with faculty credentials. In FY 17, the overall turnover of faculty and staff was 12%. The top reason for leaving during exit interviews was compensation. George Mason University is grateful to the Commonwealth for reversing the trend of no pay raises by providing increases the past three years, but additional compensation is essential. Mason will work with the Administration and General Assembly to secure competitive benefits. Mason is seeking a 3% salary increase. An increase of 1% has a \$2.1M impact on the general fund.

### **Enrollment Growth: Equitable Resources for Past Enrollment Growth**

At the urging of the Commonwealth, George Mason University has continued to embrace enrollment growth while maintaining low tuition and a large percentage of in-state students (80%). Over the past nine years, Mason has accounted for nearly 50% of the undergraduate enrollment growth of all of the four-year institutions – a net increase of more than 5,000 students. This increase is equivalent to the size of Christopher Newport University or Longwood University. George Mason University's per student general fund appropriation is just 77% of the doctoral institution per student general fund appropriation each year. In actual numbers, Mason receives a per student appropriation of \$5,658, which is \$1,200 **less than** Virginia Commonwealth University and \$1,650 **less than** the average of the doctoral institutions. Due to the large imbalance, it will take several biennia to close the gap. Mason will seek funding to address this shortfall.

### **Research: Promote Innovation and Job Creation**

In 2016, George Mason University was recognized with the highest research designation as a Carnegie Tier 1 Research University (R1). There are only 115 such universities nationwide. R1 institutions are our nation's most elite and only a handful without a medical school achieve this status. The R1 designation demonstrates the quality of the research being conducted at Mason, and this increased stature is considered in competitive grant processes. In order to maintain the R1 status, additional state funding is required. The biennium request will be \$4.5M general funds and \$3.0M non-general fund in the first year and \$4.75M general fund and \$3.25M non-general fund in the second year. The funding will allow Mason to foster multidisciplinary research institutes in order to promote innovation and job creation.

### **Capital Outlay: Improve Telecommunications Network Infrastructure**

The 2017 General Assembly authorized planning funds for phase I of the improvement of the telecommunications network infrastructure. George Mason University is at a crossroads as it relates to technology. The need to replace the aging IT infrastructure is critical. Mason also needs to expand the bandwidth available to accommodate the increase of more than 5,000 students in recent years – nearly all of whom possess more than one wireless communication device. Inaction at this time will leave the university's information network at risk of failure, which in the 21<sup>st</sup> century would leave Mason unable to meet its academic mission. Phase I will require \$11.4M.

## Partnership Priorities

### **ADVANCE: Mason and Northern Virginia Community College Partnership**

In recent months, George Mason University and Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) announced a groundbreaking partnership, ADVANCE, that will assist students as they transfer from a two-year program to earn a Bachelor's degree. ADVANCE will increase graduation rates and smooth the path to a degree while saving students time and money. It will also work in collaboration with Northern Virginia employers to adapt and create workforce programs to fill the region's critical high-demand positions. The program creates a single point of contact in admissions and financial aid with a dedicated advisor. It also ensures a seamless alignment of curricula to ensure that students do not lose credits when they transfer. ADVANCE is expected to welcome its first students into NOVA in the fall of 2018. The plan is to add five academic programs to the partnership every year. The annual state appropriation to support the partnership will be approximately \$600,000 in general funds support.

### **Masters of Social Work Veteran Certification: Advanced Professional Training for Mental Health Professionals**

Growth in the number of veterans and military families in Virginia provides both opportunities and challenges. Part of Virginia being the most veteran friendly state in the nation includes the need to have mental health professionals trained to work with their unique needs. At the request of the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs, George Mason University has partnered with the Virginia Department of Veterans Services, the College of William and Mary, and Virginia State University to create programs to address veteran needs. Specifically, Mason has proposed developing a specialization in the existing MSW program. The MSW certificate – *Behavioral Intervention with Veterans and Active Duty Members and Families Certificate* – will ensure that the MSW professionals will be adequately equipped to navigate the processes to secure available benefits and to provide high quality services to veterans and their families. The required funding for Mason is approximately \$450,000.