

George Mason University

2020 Legislative and Budget Priorities

Financial Aid: Provide Affordable Access for All Students

The Governor and the General Assembly were very supportive of additional financial aid for Mason students during the 2019 legislative session. Even with the recent increase, Mason lags in the necessary funding to address the unmet need goals of the Commonwealth for our students. The challenge is made more difficult when considering that as Mason's enrollments have increased the number of students applying and qualifying for financial aid have increased. Seven years ago, Mason had 12,785 students apply for undergraduate financial aid. In 2018-19 that number jumped to 18,182. Because more than 33% of our undergraduate students are eligible for need-based Pell Grants and 36% are the first in their family to attend college, additional financial aid funding is required to meet the unmet need goal of the Commonwealth. During the 2020 legislative session, Mason will seek \$5M in additional funding for undergraduate and graduate financial aid.

Compensation: Support Salary Compensation Increases

George Mason University is grateful for the support of the Governor and the General Assembly for additional compensation appropriated for faculty and staff during the 2019 legislative session. Regular salary increases and competitive compensation are critical for Mason to retain and recruit talented faculty and staff. The university continues to address the challenges of being located in one of the highest cost of living regions in the United States. Mason also must continually contend with the large number of nationally ranked universities and private sector research organizations in Maryland and Washington, D.C. who are hiring away our faculty and staff. Mason will work with the Administration and the General Assembly to seek an overall increase of 4% for a FY21 compensation adjustment, matched with a similar increment from Mason's non-general fund resources. In order for our high-performing faculty to achieve the Commonwealth's stated goal of meeting the 60th percentile in compensation with our institutional peers, Mason would need a 24.5% increase.

Access, Student Success and Enrollment Growth: Equitable Resources for Past Enrollment Growth

The university has been and continues to be committed to the Commonwealth's higher education goals for enrollment growth, two-year transfers and educational program development to support economic growth. Over the past decade, Mason has been a major contributor to the Commonwealth's growth of in-state enrollment. Mason's undergraduate enrollment growth has accounted for approximately 60 percent of the overall state's increase. During this period, Mason has shown that growth is compatible with improvements in quality with increases in average SAT scores and high school GPAs. In addition, Mason continues to welcome the largest transfer student body, from two-year institutions numbering more than 3,000 students per year – representing more than 25% of the total transfer population for the Commonwealth each year. During the last two legislative sessions, the Governor and General Assembly provided a down payment toward the additional operating funds for Mason to address the enrollment growth funding shortfall. Given the current enrollment levels, if Mason is to continue our trajectory of academic and research excellence, it would require a total of \$41.3M to bring Mason's per student funding for in-state students in line with the mean of the other doctoral institutions in Virginia. In taking an incremental approach, Mason will be seeking an additional \$15M during the 2020 legislative session to address this shortfall. It is critical that the Governor and General Assembly continue to provide annual incremental support to offset the ongoing enrollment growth funding shortfall.

Research of Consequence

In 2016, George Mason University was recognized by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education as one of the top research universities in the United States producing quality research with broad impact. This designation was reaffirmed in 2018. Over the past four years, Mason has created three new university-wide institutes designed to promote multidisciplinary research. During the 2020 legislative session, Mason will seek a total of \$4M for the Institute for Biohealth Innovation (IBI), the Institute for a Sustainable Earth and the Institute for InnovAtion (IDIA). The funding will support the creation and growth of new life sciences companies in partnership with Virginia's research universities, support community engaged projects that enhance the resilience of Virginia communities and support the increase of successful tech start-ups in Virginia to grow our innovation economy.

Capital Outlay

Arlington Innovation District

George Mason University will work with the Governor and the General Assembly to seek formal authorization for the construction of academic space to house the Institute for Digital InnovAtion (IDIA). The facility will allow Mason to expand the number of students graduating in computing, cyber security and other related programs ensuring that the Commonwealth meets the commitment to Amazon and the business community workforce needs. The total appropriation request is \$250M which includes \$84M state revenue and \$84M non-general funds for the construction of an academic building. The remaining appropriation will be for the needed operating expenses. Mason has already committed \$7.5M in non-general funds toward the demolition of an existing structure on the Arlington Campus site.

IDIA will be part of the Arlington Innovation District which will house tens of millions of dollars in tech-based research and development programs, hundreds of faculty innovators and thousands of graduate students in tech programs. In addition, it will attract high growth incubator/accelerator programs, convening and collaboration programs essential to innovation and venture capitalists, co-working spaces for start-ups and small business and corporate innovation labs. Finally, it will include public amenities and services that benefit the Arlington community and add to the vibrancy of the diverse Ballston-Virginia Square corridor.

Academic VIII Building

Mason will seek authorization to construct the Academic VIII Building on the Science and Technology Campus. Academic VIII supports the continuing expansion of STEM-H programs at Mason. The targeted growth in enrollment for disciplines such as science and engineering supported by this project is being coordinated with Mason's R-1 research portfolio and economic development efforts. The estimated cost for construction is \$185.6M, including \$7.5M for preliminary design/planning costs.

Telecom/Network Infrastructure Phase II

The University secured authorization for Phase I of the needed telecom/network improvements during the 2019 General Assembly Session. The project is progressing on schedule. Mason will be seeking approval for Phase II of the project this year, which will allow for improvements of an aging infrastructure and to address the strain on the

available bandwidth due to the large increase in students in recent years. The project will cost approximately \$25M in general funds and \$20M in nongeneral funds.

Online Programs Expansion

In keeping Mason's commitment to online education for adult learners, working professionals and veterans, we will seek an appropriation of \$11M to be matched by the private sector. This initiative will allow Mason to accelerate online offerings in high demand jobs. Such offerings will be also available to students utilizing the Virginia Online Network. The target enrollment of 15,000 students taking courses fully or mostly online is expected in 2026.

Tier 3

The concept of tiered schools was created in 2005 in order to provide universities operational flexibility and to provide monitoring mechanisms for goal achievement. Mason is currently at Tier 2.5 and plans to work with the Administration and the General Assembly over the next 15 months to move to Tier 3.