

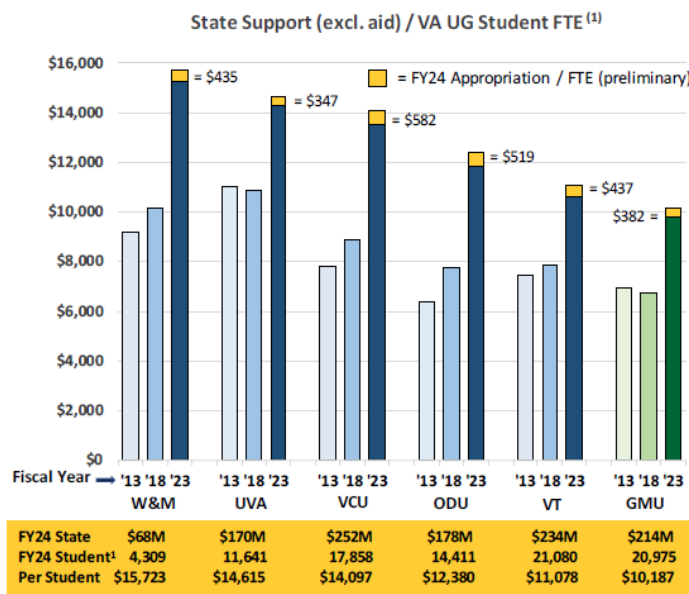
# George Mason University Budget Priorities

## 2024 General Assembly Session

### Operating Budget Alignment

George Mason University is the largest and most diverse institution of higher education in Virginia. With more than 40,000 students, Mason’s goal is to provide access and opportunity for any student who wants a degree, workforce credential or tools to start and grow a business in the Commonwealth. Mason provides this critical support for Virginia’s economy, and addressing historic funding disparities is paramount to reaching these shared goals. As the State considers adjustments to base budget funding to establish equitable and sustained investment in higher education, Mason echoes the recommendations of the State Council for Higher Education (SCHEV) and is seeking \$18 million for FY 2025 and \$18 million for FY 2026 in support for base operations.

### State Appropriations per In-State Undergraduate (FTE) E&G General Fund (excluding aid)



1 - FY24 Appropriation is preliminary. FY24 in-state undergraduate student FTE is based on FY23 (Fall 2022) enrollment.

**Slower appropriations growth has put Mason further behind over last decade**

**Mason per student vs peer median:**

- FY13: \$859 below
- FY23: \$3,710 below
- FY24: \$3,910 below

**If Mason received funding equitable to our nearest peer, it would offset our operating shortfall by \$19M**

### Predictable and Sustained Student Support

George Mason University is grateful to the Governor and General Assembly for approving a significant increase in financial aid funding, which serves as “pass through” funding directly to students. This funding is critically important for Mason’s student body where 24% are first-generation and 29% are eligible for federal need-based Pell Grants.

### Virginia Military Survivors and Dependent Education Program (VMSDEP):

The VMSDEP aids Virginia’s veterans by waiving tuition and required fees and providing a stipend to their dependents pursuing higher education. Over the past four years, the estimated cost of the tuition waivers has quadrupled, growing from \$12 million in FY 2019 to \$19.4 million in FY 2020, to \$31.3 million in FY 2021, and \$46.3 million in FY 2022 for all institutions. Mason is proud to be one of the most military friendly universities in Virginia, with robust support services for this community and thus the financial impact specific to Mason is significant. The FY 2022 impact was \$6 million, FY 2023 was \$8 million and FY2024 is projected

to be \$10 million at the current rate of growth. In consort with SCHEV's budget recommendations, Mason hopes to secure \$4.5 million for FY 2025 and \$7.5 million for FY 2026 in state support to continue to honor the promise of the State mandated tuition assistance program

## **Develop and Maintain Capital Investments**

George Mason University has experienced significant enrollment growth over the past ten years. Mason has consistently been recognized by SCHEV for effective utilization of classroom and laboratory space. Mason is in critical need of additional academic space and improvements to its technology infrastructure. The top two projects on the current capital outlay six-year plan include:

- **Student Innovation Factory** – This 60,000 square foot building will be a one-story open warehouse space designed to accommodate capstone coursework for science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) students. The learn-by-doing pedagogies associated with STEM programs require increased need for dedicated, secure, weatherproof project space to store equipment and works in progress. Mason is requesting \$30 million in the 2024 session.
- **Interdisciplinary Science & Engineering Building** – Due in large part to enrollment growth and aging facilities, Mason is seeking approval for a 150,000 square foot interdisciplinary science and engineering building on the Fairfax Campus. Currently, Mason exceeds specialized instructional spaces at twice the recommended SCHEV standards for utilization. This space will address some of the past and anticipated enrollment growth needs at Mason as well as respond to strategic initiatives such as the Commonwealth's Tech Talent Investment Program (TTIP). This five to seven story building will require approximately \$150 million in bond authorization. Planning and design funding for this project is approximately \$7.4 million.

## **Maintenance Reserve Support**

The University is requesting an approval of \$12 million to address critical deferred maintenance of facilities. Funding will be used on a number of E&G buildings across all campuses, including;

- Replacement of aging roofs
- Repairs to existing firewalls
- Replacement of failing electrical equipment, fire alarm systems and generators
- Replace HVAC equipment that have reached their useful life
- Replacement of elevators and lifts at the end of their useful life

Despite serving the largest number of students, the annual maintenance reserve allocation is an average of 64% less than our next closest peer. The University buildings are nearing a 30-year average age. This is the age that most major systems need to be repaired or replaced. Further delay will add to the overall cost of maintenance.

## **Regional Investment in Small Business Across the Commonwealth**

George Mason University manages 26 Small Business Development Centers (SBDC), the most extensive business development program in the Commonwealth, providing professional advising, training, and resources to help grow and strengthen businesses and the economy. Last year, Virginia SBDC provided 34,000 hours of 1:1 counseling for more than 13,000 clients, of which 57% were woman-owned, 47% minority owned and 11% veteran owned. SBDC deployed more than \$183.4 million in federal investment across all regions of Virginia. Mason is seeking \$2 million in State funding to strengthen support and management of this impactful program.