2023 SIX-YEAR PLAN NARRATIVE (Part II)
INSTITUTION: George Mason University

OVERVIEW

The six-year plan should describe the institution's goals as they relate to the Commonwealth's goals as articulated in the *Pathways to Opportunity: The Virginia Plan for Higher Education*; the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2011 (TJ21); the Restructured Higher Education Financial and Administrative Operations Act of 2005; and the Governor's objectives to prepare every graduate for success in life. Please use this opportunity to outline your institution's plans and objectives, especially as they relate to the Commonwealth's goals.

The instructions within the institutional mission and priorities section below ask for specific strategies related to affordability and access to quality postsecondary education that prepare students for success in life. Other sections offer institutions the opportunity to describe additional strategies to advance institutional goals and Commonwealth needs.

Please be comprehensive but <u>as concise as possible</u> with responses; you are encouraged to use bullet points vs. prose. Consider this a starting point for the dialogue with OpSix; you will have the opportunity to further elaborate on the narrative in your review sessions later this summer.

Please save this narrative document with your institution's name added to the file name.

SECTION A: MISSION & PRIORITIES

Key question: What are your institution's unique strengths and how do those inform your strategic priorities?

A1. What is your institutional mission? Please share any plans you have to change your mission over the six-year period.
Mission: To be an innovative and inclusive academic community committed to creating a more just, free, and prosperous world. **Vision and purpose**. As a public, comprehensive, R1 institution, Mason provides opportunities and access to excellence for those who seek a quality, affordable education. Mason leverages our collective talents to solve the world's most pressing challenges. Mason's mission is reaffirmed in our [Strategic Directions](#)   - Deliver a distinctive and inclusive student experience that fosters lifelong engagement.   - Expand the impact of Mason's research, scholarship, and creative enterprise.   - Expand partnerships for economic and social impact.   - Exemplify a university culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion.   - Invest in faculty and staff success

A2. What are your institution's greatest strengths and areas of distinctiveness that it should continue to invest in? What are your institution's greatest opportunities for improvement?

Strengths and Distinctiveness:
- Unparalleled access and opportunity for all commonwealth residents evidenced by:
    - Mason educates more in-state undergraduates than any other Virginia 4-year.
    - Mason's admission rate of nearly 90% reflects our access mission.
    - Extraordinary 1-year retention and 6-year graduation rates for an institution with such a high admit rate, exceeding the mean for R1/Access (admission rates of 80% or higher) peers by as much as 9ppts, reflecting our success in educating and enabling social mobility for underserved populations.

Source: IPEDS	1 Year Retention Rate (Fall 2020 Cohort)	6 Year Graduation Rate (Fall 2015 Cohort)
Mason	84	71
Peer Mean/Median/Min/Max	82/84/68/92	62/65/37/81

- Mason's graduates contribute to the Commonwealth's tax base at higher rates than other public 4-year institutions, the effect of which is amplified by the volume we serve.
    - 73% of in-state graduates remain in Virginia, exceeding the mean for all public 4-year institutions by 3ppts.
    - 29% of out-of-state graduates also stay in Virginia, again exceeding the mean for all public 4-year institutions by 9ppts.
- Mason is cost efficient. While FY 22 E&G expenses per student is at the median for all VA public 4-year institutions, Mason operates in the most expensive commonwealth market by far. Indeed, it is one of the most expensive markets in the United States.
- A comprehensive institution serving the diverse needs of a diverse population, Mason's innovative program portfolio, mindful of workforce and pipeline development includes:
    - Virginia's first College of Public Health
    - Tech Talent programming, including programs in cyber-security, artificial intelligence, and the ethics of artificial intelligence.
    - Our acclaimed College of Visual and Performing Arts includes the Virginia Serious Game Institute which cultivates and supports Mason-founded startups, rapid prototype development, high-value knowledge job creation, and regional economic development.
    - In 21-22 Mason graduated more than 150 students in each the following programs, demonstrating our role in meeting a broad spectrum of workforce needs: Psychology, Computer Science, Information Technology, Information Systems and Operations Management, Special Education, Criminology, Law and Society, Biology, Curriculum and Instruction, Nursing, Accounting, Business, Government and International Politics, Global Affairs, Management, Communication, Community Health, Data Analytics Engineering, Integrative Studies, Economics and Law.

The undergraduate students Mason serves (25% low income, 17% middle income, 61% minority, 23% first generation) often require additional, targeted support compared to students from other types of backgrounds. Unlikely to add additional expense to their education goals, many students from Northern Virginia choose Mason because it is cost effective for themselves and their families. Given the cost of living in Northern Virginia, the value of the work Mason does to enable social mobility while meeting workforce demands is undeniable. But it comes with funding needs commensurate with those factors.

Mason's start as a commuter school with significant capital needs contributed to the nature of funding requests and appropriations over time, which included an inequitable distribution of non-financial aid general fund appropriations to support the students we now serve as an R1 Access institution.

- A highlight that identified the base budget funding disparity was noted in a 2005 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission report that provided information on agencies with the most growth in total operating appropriations (excluding capital appropriations) between 1996 and 2005; while Mason was in the top 20 agencies for growth during that period, Mason's increases still lagged significantly behind other institutions of higher education.
- In 2014, Mason Government Relations focused efforts on addressing the funding disparity, which has resulted in certain Mason appropriations increasing annually at a higher comparative percentage rate, although increased appropriations were received at all institutions.
- Mason seeks Commonwealth support to narrow the funding gap further across universities and align funding with our R1 Commonwealth peers, mindful of the students we serve and the cost of living in Northern Virginia.
- As with the Governor's proposal to invest in K-12 public education to align with other states, as documented in the July 2023 JLARC report titled Virginia's K-12 Funding Formula, Mason asks for similar investments to align our funding with our R1 peers.
- Simply aligning in-state undergraduate support levels between Mason and our closest peer would have provided more than $35 million in FY23, significantly reducing our current operating shortfall and closing our future year funding equity gaps to reduce potential operating shortfalls.

To that end and to continue our support for the Governor's higher education agenda, we seek funding to:

- Continue investments in our core missions of student academic success and research including:
  - Technology improvements/enhancements to increase efficiency, enhance student services, reduce costs, and enable long-term tuition control, e.g., continuing the decade long investment in Salesforce to improve student experiences.
    - Mason is consolidating the multiple Salesforce instances into a streamlined single student lifecycle CRM.
    - The effects of which will allow Mason to improve processes and services to students through enhanced coaching and advising, real-time interventions, and engagements.
    - In turn, this will enhance retention and graduation rates and build the base for deeper alumni engagement after graduation.
- Offer competitive compensation for our skilled and talented staff (all of whom are also contributing to the prosperity of the Commonwealth).
- Continued investments in a variety of inter-institutional partnerships.

Additional details can be found in both the deep dive conversations below and the financial workbook.

A3. What are the top 3-5 strategic priorities you are currently pursuing or planning to pursue in the next six years? Please explain how each strategy relates to the strengths and/or opportunities for improvement mentioned above and will ultimately drive better outcomes for students.

Mason's mission and value proposition are reaffirmed in our Strategic Directions, each of which was developed to build upon our strengths paired with strategies that provide opportunities for innovation and exceptional learning:

- Deliver a distinctive and inclusive student experience that fosters lifelong engagement.
- Expand the impact of Mason's research, scholarship, and creative enterprise.
- Expand partnerships for economic and social impact.
- Exemplify a university culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Invest in faculty and staff success.

A4. What support can OpSix provide to help you achieve those strategies? Please include both budget and policy requests and reference Part I of your submission where appropriate.

The value proposition Mason provides to the Commonwealth is indisputable. However, our exceptional performance is not sustainable given inflationary pressures paired with years of comparative underfunding.

- While Mason's costs are at the median of all 4-year VA institutions, Mason's FY22 E&G expenses of $21K per student FTE is 15% below the median of our Commonwealth doctoral peers, i.e., UVA, VT, VCU, ODU, and William & Mary, which stands at $24K. See chart below.
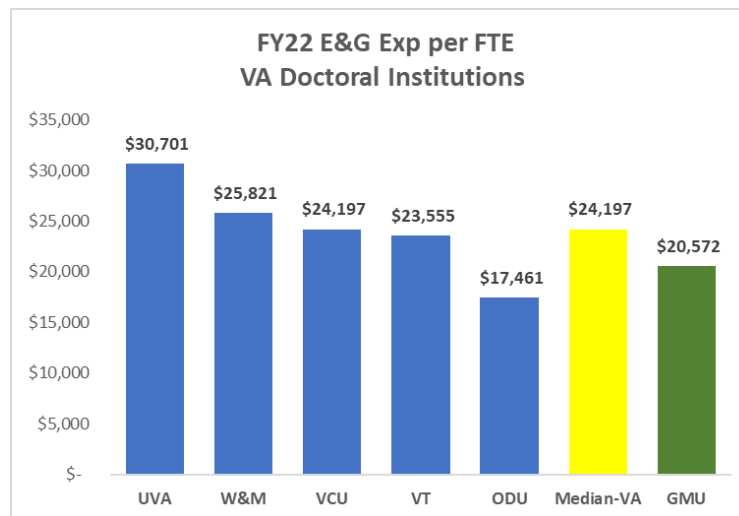
(FP02: E&G Expenditures by Program & Annual Per FTE)

- Organizationally lean, Mason is understaffed with salaries that are below industry medians.
- The effects contribute to challenges in staff turnover and recruiting.

Following the review of all 6-year plans, Mason seeks a realignment of the general fund appropriation for universities with an eye towards equitable funding for Mason students. Consideration should be given to all available revenue sources, enrollment, tuition rates, unfunded mandate impacts, and the regional cost of living with the DC metro being the 5th most expensive area in the United States.

In addition to addressing the foundational issue of funding, Mason also seeks the following policy support:
- Grant Mason the autonomy to manage its cash reserves to generate investment / interest income for operational deployment.
- Allow Mason to use auxiliary reserves to purchase revenue-generating component assets, the effect of which would enable Mason to eliminate debt service on component unit facilities and save millions of dollars in operating expenses.

Mason has detailed strategies aligned with our strategic directions for which additional budget support, beyond what the institution is already investing, is requested totaling $139.3M over the biennium including:
- Student Success: $74.7MGF ($35.2M FY 25; $39.5 FY26)

- Impactful Research: $19.2M GF ($12.6M-FY25; $6.6M-FY26)
- Partnerships: $10.8M GF ($5.4M-FY25; $5.4M-FY26)
- Faculty and Staff Success: $34.57M GF ($16.6M FY25; $17.97M FY26)

Mason will mitigate its FY23 budget deficit of $41.5M with planned use of reserves. Our FY24 budget projects a $41.4M budget deficit, which we plan to mitigate with a combination of budget reductions ($10.4M), limited use of reserves, and new revenue generating opportunities.

Highlighting the continuing impact of Mason's funding inequity relative to our Commonwealth R1 peers:
- Mason's 6-year plan projects an E&G operating deficit of ($18.9M) in FY25, declining to ($11.7M) in FY26. This projection includes:
  - Savings to be realized with ongoing budget reductions, and
  - A 5% tuition increase in FY25 & FY26.
- A cumulative draw against reserves of $103.1M is planned to offset anticipated deficits in FY23-FY26. This is financially unsustainable.
- The combined impact of both a 0% tuition increase from FY27-FY30 and flat Commonwealth general fund appropriation for FY27-FY30 will result in a spike in our ($11.7M) operating deficit from FY26, increasing to ($23.7M) in FY27 to ($54.5M) in FY30 just to meet core operating expenses. This does not include funding for new initiatives (See Tab 5- Proforma).
- Further, without additional E&G funding, Mason may potentially face layoffs which impact student services, as well as the Virginia economy.

SECTION B: STRATEGIC DEEP DIVE – ENROLLMENT VOLUME & COMPOSITION
Key question: How is your institution managing enrollment in light of state and national trends, and what are the financial implications?

B1. What do you see as the primary drivers of recent enrollment trends for your institution? Please reference any specific academic programs that have had a significant (positive or negative) effect on enrollment, if relevant.

While there is a national "enrollment cliff", Mason's primary enrollment pipeline is based on Northern Virginia high school graduates. For the next few years, this population is growing and will level off at a value higher than this year's graduation production. In addition, our programs and initiatives will result in growing market share.

- Projections for that specific population are far more impactful to Mason enrollment projections than either Commonwealth or national projections.
- However, there is increasing competition for this population from institutions within and outside the Commonwealth.
- Mason enrolls more transfer students than any other institution in the Commonwealth, expanded pipelines with Northern Virginia Community College and other VCCS institutions insulate against enrollment stress.

Overall institutional enrollment trends reflect:

- Continued growth in first time in college cohorts which has increased 12.7% in the last 5 years.
- Master's level growth (11.6% in the last 5 years) specifically driven by international students (many from India) where enrollment growth in the last 5 years has increased 92.3%. Growth out of India has helped offset losses within our primary markets.
- Interest at all degree levels in all programs that contribute to the Commonwealth's Tech Talent Identification Program (TTIP.) Enrollment has dramatically increased in these programs over the last 10 years (194% at the undergraduate and 203% at the graduate level.)
- Lingering effects of the pandemic:
    - Diminished pipeline for transfer students coming from 2-year institutions, specifically Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC)
    - As enrollment at NVCC stabilizes, Mason is poised to increase the number of new transfer students for the first time since mid-way through the pandemic.
    - Diminished pipeline of Commonwealth master student populations

B2. Please summarize your enrollment management strategy moving forward and the specific actions (if any) you are taking to implement that strategy.

Mason's strategy of modest, predictable growth built on undergraduate enrollment from within the Commonwealth, up 4.4% in last 5 years, paired with our comprehensive program array allows Mason to counter contradictory trends in the market.

Specific actions include:

- Direct admissions–proactive offers of admissions to students without an application, specifically targeting students from high schools with low college-going rates. We expect to offer more than 1,000 students an offer of admission through this program.
- Expand the transfer pathway program ADVANCE to other Virginia Community College System (VCCS).
- Increase undergraduate online program offerings.
- Launching a partnership for a centrally organized effort to recruit-back former Mason students who have stopped or dropped out.
- Expand Mason Virginia Promise (MVP) grants which guarantee gift aid equal to the cost of tuition and fees for in-state undergraduates with an annual (household?) income below $60,000). In the previous aid year, 472 students received this grant totaling $1.5M in institutional aid.
- Double the size of our Early Identification Program (EIP), currently at 750, which targets early interventions for high ability, low resource students beginning in grade 9.
- Consider implementing differential tuition pricing strategies within the DMV and neighboring states.
- Expanded service models, enabled by technology, to improve communication, automation, and online learning experiences to enhance student retention and progression including:
  - A new learning management system (LMS).
  - An enhanced operationalization of the Constituent Relationship Management (CRM) software.
  - Integrating student coaching/advising/mentoring within the envisioned student lifecycle CRM, connected to the currently operational, and to be expanded, one-stop shop.

B3. How ambitious/realistic/conservative are the enrollment projections you most recently submitted to SCHEV? What are the greatest unknowns or risks that could lead enrollment to differ significantly from your projections? Please reference national and statewide enrollment trends/projections and cite any other data (e.g. regional trends, performance of prior enrollment strategies) that informed your projections.

Mason's enrollment goals are realistic and achievable.

- Northern Virginia high school graduates are not expected to decline to the same degree as will be found in other parts of the Commonwealth.
- High school population growth in the DC area will likely mitigate national enrollment declines. In addition, Mason is developing direct entry programs that have the potential to increase acceptance rates and ultimately enrollment.
- Recent investments by the Commonwealth in need-based financial aid for Virginia students enhances Mason's ability to serve our sizable populations of low and middle-income students.
- Mason is also developing more specialized certificate programs in anticipation of changes in demand for degrees and to support lifelong learning and career development.

Mason relies on historic and current K-12 enrollment data (by grade, by county) from the Virginia Department of Education Fall Membership Reports to project future new in-state student enrollment. Grounded by historic trends, Mason projects future 12th grade enrollments in each county with the application of cohort survival ratios. Mason then estimates the percentage of future 12th graders in each county and, again, based on a historic application rate by county, for how many will apply to Mason.

Mason continues to invest in an aggressive out of state new undergraduate student enrollment strategy. At the graduate level, meeting workforce needs is a primary focus in both recruiting talent from out of state and enabling Commonwealth citizens to enhance skills through advanced study.

B4. Explain the implications of your enrollment strategy on your institution's financials. Please consider impacts on both revenues (e.g., discounting, financial aid, net tuition revenue) and expenditures (e.g., costs to implement enrollment management strategies, costs of enrolling more students or students with different needs, cost-per-student impact of flat/decreased enrollment).

- In FY22, Tuition and Fees comprised 67.7% of Mason E&G revenue (36.3% of Mason's All-Funds revenue), our primary source of funding.
- Mason leverages merit and need-based aid to achieve freshmen enrollment.
  - o Mason attracts, admits, and enrolls a large percentage of middle- and low-income students unable to afford the full cost of attendance without assistance.
  - o 83% of Mason's Virginia undergraduates with need come from households that earned less than $100,000 annually in 2021-22, more than 10ppts higher than the 72.3% among all Virginia publics. (Source: SCHEV FA01)
  - o Individual student discounting is an essential component of achieving enrollment goals.
  - o A 2022 JLARC study titled "Higher Education Financial Aid Grant Programs and Awards" noted that:
    - ▪ Mason would need an additional $35.7M in order to meet the financial need of its students.
    - ▪ Mason's student body is challenged by the limitations placed by the Commonwealth on assistance to part-time students. For Fall 2022, 25% of Mason's undergraduate enrollment was part-time.

SECTION C: STRATEGIC DEEP DIVE – PROGRAM ALIGNMENT & PERFORMANCE
COMPLETION OUTCOMES

Key question: How is your institution supporting all students to succeed in completing their degree in a timely manner?

C1. What are your highest-priority completion outcomes targets, both overall and for particular student segments? Please include aspirational targets, realistic expectations, and qualitative targets and specify by when you are aiming to meet those targets (e.g., X% 6-year graduation rate for Pell students by 2030).

Mason's impressive performance and future goals are summarized below

	1 Year Retention (Fall 21 Cohort)	6 Year Graduation (Fall 16 Cohort)
Overall	85.2	70.5
African American	82.9	69.3
Asian American	89	78.7
Hispanic	83.4	68.4
Pell	86.9	67.5
1st Generation	83.7	66.6
Threshold	**86**	**69.8**
Target (Target Cohort)	**88 (2023)**	**72 (2018)**

While gaps between populations are small, especially for 1-year retention rate, our goal is to ameliorate all gaps while maintaining our notably outstanding performance.

C2. What specific strategies/actions are you planning to take to achieve those goals? How will you draw on successes/challenges from your prior completion outcome improvement strategies?

Mason's student success strategies, aligned with our student experience initiative detailed in our strategic directions and appropriately connected to our enrollment management strategies, builds on our successes, and innovates based on our knowledge.

- Mason Virginia Promise Grant financial aid initiative expansion:
    - Reduce out-of-pocket tuition expenses for Virginia students
    - Include all Virginia Pell-eligible students
- Expand Mason's ADVANCE program to all institutions in the Virginia Community College System.
- Grow the number of students participating in Mason's college preparatory Early Identification Program (EIP).
- Launch a direct admissions pilot program to qualified students enrolled at low-income Virginia high schools.
- Increase accessibility to place-bound learners through expanded online offerings.
- Adopt new technologies (learning management and customer relations management systems) to enhance the student experience and success.
- Implement an integrated student support framework inclusive of academic advising, success coaching, and career opportunities.
- Add new shared services delivered directly to students through an integrated one-stop-shop model.
- Expand Bachelors-to-Accelerated-Masters (BAM) programs and develop academic program partnerships with other Virginia institutions.
- Strengthen well-being, mental health, and accessibility services for students.
- Develop on-campus employment/retention task force targeting middle-income students.

Further, Mason has adopted several initiatives to increase student retention for targeted student populations:

- Emergency financial support
- Scholarship opportunities connected to majors and/or affinity groups.
- Increase childcare support for student parents, including military families.
- Assign Success Coaching for targeted at-risk populations.
- Continue to build the First-Generation Peer Mentoring program.
- Enhance understanding of the black male student experience to increase retention and graduation rates.
- Increase tutoring services for all students.
- Enhance language support for multi-lingual learners.

C3. How will you use existing/recently provided resources to execute those strategies? Will you be requesting incremental state resources? Please state the request and rationale and explicitly tie to Part I of your planning template.

Existing and recently provided resources will support:
- Additional financial aid base for the expansion of the MVP grant.
- Invested in and implemented:
    - Shared and student support services offered through the Mason Student Services Center, aka one-stop-shop.
    - Enhanced exploratory academic advising and success coaching.
    - New technologies (i.e., Salesforce, Stellic, Kognito and others) to enhance operational efficiency and the student experience.
    - Market-based salaries for faculty and staff to attract and retain top talent.
    - Investment in research institutes and initiatives.

POST-COMPLETION OUTCOMES
Key question: How is your institution preparing all students for success beyond completion (e.g., career preparation)?

C4. Please explain how you monitor post-completion outcomes (e.g., employment rates, wage attainment, debt load, upward mobility). What data do you collect? What metrics are you monitoring most closely? What do the data reveal about your institution's greatest strengths and areas for improvement with respect to post-completion outcomes? Please include any relevant data/reports in the appendix or as a separate attachment, including any data that captures outcomes by school/department/program.

To track post completion outcomes, Mason monitors several external sources in addition to collecting information from our graduates.

- The Post-Secondary Educations Outcomes dashboard from the US Census enables Mason to track 1-, 5-, and 10-year wage outcomes by fields of study.
- Mason's Educational Destinations dashboard leverages National Student Clearinghouse data to determine if and where our graduates are pursuing additional education drillable to school/department/program.
- The Career Plans Survey, paired with social media data collection, provides for schools/colleges, departments, majors and degrees employment and salary outcomes as well as information regarding who is employing Mason graduates.
- Mason has requested (not yet received) from SCHEV further data on 1-year, 3-year, 10-year, 15-year student loans and wage averages for all degree programs at Mason compared to all reporting institutions to use in our analyses.

Mason is currently engaged in building a comprehensive student/alumni engagement platform using Salesforce. This will result in more comprehensive connections with our graduates, providing greater clarity on career outcomes.

Our strengths include:
- 75% or more lower-income students achieve upward mobility 5 years post-graduation. Given the volume of low- and middle-income populations that Mason serves, the value proposition is clear.
- Mason bachelor and master graduates' median income 3 years post-graduation is $23k and $38K more respectively, per year, than a high school graduate.
- Approximately 40% of Mason graduates hold degrees aligned with high-growth occupations in terms of workforce development. Of course, many graduates will also be employed in those areas, as the nature of high-growth fields inherently draws in degree fields outside of 1-1 matches.
- Close to 20% of Mason graduates are working in VEDP-designated priority industries.

C5. What specific strategies/actions, including potential changes to your program portfolio or curriculum, are you planning to take to maximize the career readiness and job attainment of all students across programs of study, including increasing early career exposure for students (e.g., internships) during their time at your institution? How will you draw on successes/challenges from prior initiatives?

Mason strives to provide opportunities for transformational experiences that enable our students to grow in their personal and professional goals. To maximize student potential for job attainment and enhance opportunities for career exposure specifically, several strategies are in place:

- The creation of program life cycle analyses for enhancing curricular program development: Research on national trends in undergraduate and graduate education paired with Mason program array informs curricular development. Consistent program review ensures that Mason is responsive to workforce needs.
- Increased focus on experiential learning, internships, and other high impact practices: As majors are increasingly including experiential learning and internship opportunities as part of their curriculum, students are afforded the option of earning college credit for this work. We are increasing these opportunities so that every student has an opportunity to engage in this high impact practice as part of their college experience.
- Enhanced opportunities for employer round tables and work force summits to maximize learning initiatives and new partnerships. Previous work in this area has informed the development of new majors and concentrations, supports industry credentials and updates curriculum. For example, both the cyber security and cloud concentrations as part of the Bachelor of Applied Studies program were informed by this type of conversation.
- Expand new Learning Initiatives/CPE to include more opportunities for credentialing at both the graduate and undergraduate level. In addition to industry credentials, Mason is offering more opportunities for badging and certifications that provide ways to enhance majors and ease students into new learning opportunities, e.g., a masters level student could earn certificates that build upon each other, stacking into a graduate degree.
- Create internship opportunities within university administration to give students real-world experience while also facilitating university efforts to improve systems and processes (example: Automation Center of Excellence) This model already exists at our Mason Korea branch campus and is a highly effective way to engage students in work-based learning.
- Increase study abroad opportunities for online Mason students and partnerships with other schools in the Commonwealth. Mason will expand the ways that students can enhance their global understanding through both face to face and virtual study abroad experiences. An example of this effort was developed during the pandemic when students studied environmental issues across continents, creating a documentary on Nepal and the impact of climate change.
- MasonWorks: an expanded student employment opportunity program.

C6. How do you intend to use existing/provided resources to execute those strategies? Will you be requesting incremental state resources? Please explicitly tie to Part I of your planning template

Mason's total institutional investment in the student success, access and financial aid strategies outlined in the workbook thus far is $40.8M. Mason is requesting the Commonwealth contribute $44.8M over the biennium to support this continuing work (See Strategy 1a-1c.)

WORKFORCE ALIGNMENT

Key question: How are your institution's programs of study and degree conferrals aligned with the evolving talent needs of the Commonwealth?

C7. For which specific workforce needs is your institution best positioned to supply talent, based on regional, industry, or occupation alignment?

As a critical regional partner for government, corporation and nonprofit entities, Mason graduates, at higher rates than other public 4-year institutions, choose to remain and work in Virginia and the DMV region upon degree completion.
- 73% of Mason in-state graduates remain in Virginia.
- 29% of Mason out-of-state graduates remain in the state effectively creating talent importation for the Commonwealth.
- 38% of Mason graduates consistently enter industries with the highest job growth in Virginia, and the proportion in the VEDP designated high priority tradable industries (18.5%) reflects a growing number of graduates.

Mason will continue to address workforce needs with the following plans:
- Greater integration of experiential learning and internships in alliance with the public and private sectors including the federal, state and local governments as well as corporate and non-profit organizations into degree programs.
- Better alignment of programs to careers. Majors to careers are not one-to-one, however, over 30% of Mason graduates have degree programs aligned with high growth occupations.
- Address specific gaps in critical areas such as nursing and education, with abbreviated approval processes and new curriculum design.
- Increased focus on workforce development through the new Learning Initiatives area that expands the work of Continuing/Professional Education; and
- Expand TTIP to ensure that Mason meets agreed upon state goals.

C8. What specific strategies/actions is your institution planning to take to better align your program offerings or degree conferrals to current and projected workforce needs? Please provide a list of specific programs you intend to sunset or grow in the next 6 years to increase alignment, partnerships/initiatives you intend to launch or deepen, etc. If you intend to launch any new programs, please explain why your institution is particularly well-suited to succeed in that area.

Mason's innovation and flexibility to meet Commonwealth needs can be demonstrated in a variety of ways.

- Appendix B details proposed degree/certificate programs, along with rationale, for the next 6 years
    - The MS Information and Security Assurance is scheduled to close this summer due to low enrollment.
    - Mason consistently reviews and closes programs. We anticipate other degrees/certificates may close as new programs, aligned with workforce needs become available.
    - Since January 2019, Mason has launched 15 new degree programs and 42 certificate programs.
    - At the same time, Mason has closed 21 degree programs and 22 certificate programs.
- Mason currently meets a broad spectrum of workforce needs as demonstrated by our 21-22 graduation cohort wherein more than 150 students graduated in each of the fields of study: Psychology, Computer Science, Information Technology, Information Systems and Operations Management, Special Education, Criminology, Law and Society, Biology, Curriculum and Instruction, Nursing, Accounting, Business, Government and International Politics, Global Affairs, Management, Communication, Community Health, Data Analytics Engineering, Integrative Studies, Economics and Law.
- Opportunities for targeted program growth for which Mason is well positioned, based on current success and alignment with critical state needs around technology and transfer student success, include:
    - The launch of Virginia's first and only College of Public Health which is partnering with INOVA, particularly related to meeting nursing education needs.
    - The intersection of Robotics and AI, Law and Policy.
    - Computer Science.
    - Bachelor of Applied Science programs in Cyber Security and Cloud Computing
    - Programs aligned with ADVANCE pathways including Psychology, Business, IT, Criminology, Law, and Society.
    - Educator preparation.
    - Artificial Intelligence and the ethics of AI.

Mason's Centers and Institutes support and enhance our program array and supports workforce needs with leading edge research in critical areas:
- Institute for a Sustainable Earth
- Institute for Digital Innovation
- Quantum Science and Engineering Center
- Center for Humanities Research
- Center for Advancing Human-Machine Partnerships
- Cybersecurity Manufacturing Institute (CyManII)
- Institute for Biohealth Innovation
- Center for Adaptive Systems of Brain-Body Interaction
- Criminal Investigations and Network Analysis
- Center for Advancing Human-Machine Partnerships
- Center for Resilient and Sustainable Communities
- Center for Health Workforce

SECTION D: STRATEGIC DEEP DIVE – FINANCIAL EFFECTIVENESS & SUSTAINABILITY
AFFORDABILITY FOR STUDENTS & FAMILIES

Key question: How is your institution accounting for and improving affordability for students and families?

> **D1. What specific strategies/actions do you plan to take to improve affordability moving forward across your overall student body and priority subpopulations, and what is the expected impact? Please account for a broad range of factors including the full cost of attendance, net price, time to degree, debt load, etc.**

- Mason adjusts aid/discount strategies based on privileging the neediest students while remaining mindful of the strategic use of aid to achieve both headcount and revenue targets.
  - Even with tuition increases, the total cost of attendance annual growth of 2.5% over 10 years reflects keeping pace with HEPI & CPI.
  - The impact of tuition increases for our neediest students has been offset with increased institutional aid.
  - As a result, annual borrowing/FTE (-2.4%) as well as % of students borrowing to attend GMU has declined.
- Expand the transfer pathway program ADVANCE to other Virginia Community College System (VCCS).
- Increase undergraduate online program offerings.
- Expand Mason Virginia Promise (MVP) grants which guarantee gift aid equal to the cost of tuition and fees for in-state undergraduates with an annual household income below $60,000.   In the previous aid year, 472 students received this grant totaling $1.5M in institutional aid. Our first step is to expand this grant to all Pell-eligible students.
- Double the size of our Early Identification Program (EIP), currently at 750, which targets early interventions for high ability, low resource students beginning in grade 9.
- Mason budgets $2.3M in emergency student funding through its Stay Mason program.

REVENUE

Key question: How is your institution approaching pricing and revenue management? What are the implications on long-term top-line financial health?

> **D2. Please explain the rationale behind your full pricing (i.e. published tuition & fees, including mandatory non-E&G fees) and financial aid award strategy (i.e. net tuition revenue projections). What data informed your assessment of T&F increase feasibility (e.g., market comparisons, student capacity to pay) and estimates of discounts/ waivers/unfunded scholarships? What informed your strategy around financial aid awards, merit and need-based, particularly for various student segments by income level and academic preparation?**

Mason deliberately determines price in the context of our student's price range in order not to price ourselves out of affordability. We provide a high value education at a reasonable cost while maintaining accessibility as per our mission. Tuition and fees are proposed based on an analysis that includes:

- Competitor price monitoring. Competitors are identified using National Student Clearinghouse data.
- Surveys of primary markets directly for price sensitivity every three to five years.

Mason adjusts aid/discount strategies based on prioritizing the neediest students while remaining mindful of the strategic use of aid to achieve both headcount and revenue targets.

- Even with tuition increases, the total COA annual growth of 2.5% over 10 years reflects keeping pace with HEPI & CPI.
- The impact of tuition increases for our neediest students has been offset with increased institutional aid.
- As a result, annual borrowing/FTE (-2.4%) as well as % of students borrowing to attend GMU has declined.

Mandatory non-E&G fees are balanced between the needs to provide co-curricular academic and student service support programming with operational and service costs.

Further aid award strategies include expansion of programming in:

- Mason Virginia Promise
- Stay Mason: emergency assistance funding.
- VMSDEP which has seen significant annual program growth as an unfunded, highly beneficial, mandate.

D3. What do you expect to be the impact of your pricing/discounting approach on enrollment numbers/mix (if any) and net tuition revenue moving forward and why?

Mason has a core commitment to affordability and access. Mason's in-state tuition pricing is comparatively low relative to other R1 universities (5th of the 6th lowest I/S UG tuition among our 6 VA R1 peers), University of Maryland, and other Washington DC universities.

However, in the absence of additional Commonwealth funding through a realignment of funds, Mason will need to increase tuition.

- Given our student population, Mason has substantially increased institutional aid between 2014 and 2022 (11.6%).
- This institutional aid growth has outstripped both Commonwealth financial aid increases and gross tuition revenue increases (6.3%) over the same period.
- Annual net tuition revenue growth has equaled 5.6%.
- Since FY21, Mason has reallocated one-third of additional revenues generated from a tuition rate increase to incremental institutional aid.
    - Doing so has allowed the launch several initiatives to address substantial unmet need, e.g., the Mason VA Promise grants which guarantee gift aid equal to the cost of tuition and fees for in-state undergraduates with an adjusted gross family income below $60K.
    - The additional institutional aid reallocation has been an important lever in our strategy to achieve freshman and transfer enrollment increases.
- Mason expects to increase enrollment of Pell-Eligible and needy students as a result of our expanded discounting strategy.
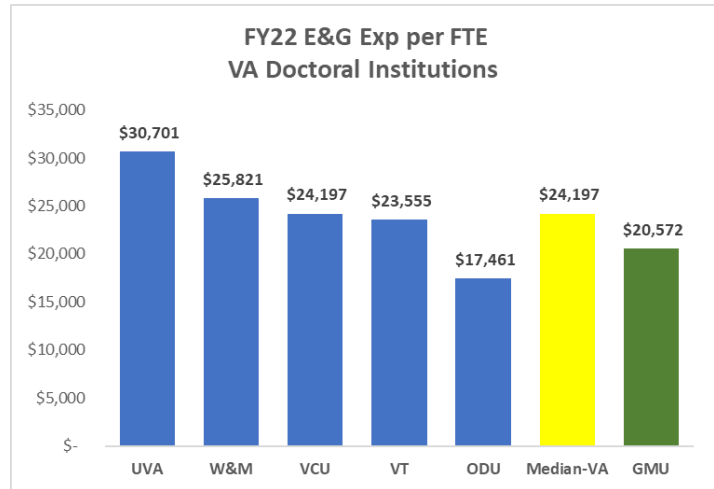
COST EFFECTIVENESS

Key question: How has your institution maintained bottom-line financial health and focused investment on the levers that will drive improvements in student outcomes?

D4. Reflect on the categories/subcategories of cost that have recently experienced the most significant increases on an absolute or per-student basis. What have been the primary drivers of those increases? Please be specific and include supporting data.

As responsible and efficient stewards, Mason is taking steps to be efficient; however, Mason is challenged to optimize excellence given the current funding model in the face of our annual costs as detailed in GMU's Fact Pack slide 47.

- Mason's spending is commensurate with the delivery of our core educational mission.
- While Mason's costs are at the median of all 4-year VA institutions, Mason's FY22 E&G expenses of $21K per student FTE is 15% below the median of our Commonwealth doctoral peers, i.e., UVA, VT, VCU, ODU, and William & Mary, which stands at $24K. See chart below.

FY22 E&G Exp per FTE
VA Doctoral Institutions

Institution	Value
UVA	$30,701
W&M	$25,821
VCU	$24,197
VT	$23,555
ODU	$17,461
Median-VA	$24,197
GMU	$20,572

(FP02: E&G Expenditures by Program & Annual Per FTE)

Top 5 Service Area (Slide 47)	Annual Growth	FY22 Spend
General Academic Instruction –$389M	5.3%	58%
Higher Education Institutional Support-$81M	6.1%	12%
All Other Subprograms (Academic Support)-$66M	7.8%	10%
Operations and Maintenance - $60M	5.4%	9%
Higher Ed Student Services- $37M	5.1%	6%

Drivers for expense growth:
- Increased compensation driven by market competitiveness and critical retention.
- Post pandemic, compensation costs have increased 9% and 14% in FY22 and FY23, respectively, driven by hiring and market compensation in the highest cost region in the state.
- Although we have made strides in improving compensation competitiveness, we still have market gaps in key functional areas and disciplines that we need to address.
- State provides cost share on authorized 5% salary increase. In FY23 the state provided $13.4M, ~45% of the total $30M increase. Mason covered the remainder from tuition. (State policy change recommendation)
- Compensation increases lag approximately one year (State policy change recommendation) and hiring replacements and new positions at market rate has dramatically increased compensation.
- Enrollment growth increases the need for additional student services and personnel to deliver those services.
- Institutional support and Operations & Maintenance expense drivers:
  - Contract Services price escalations (utilities, janitorial services, consultants)

- Increased costs related to compliance (research, foreign influence, Conflict of Interest)
- Previous underinvestment has resulted in infrastructure investment need.
- Optimization of processes and technology improvements, coupled with human resources, to enable efficiency and service delivery expected at an R1/Access institution.

D5. What specific strategies/actions do you plan to take to contain/reduce key costs and improve fiscal health going forward while improving student outcomes? What are your objectives and what have been your results to date of any already-launched initiatives? What is the expected impact and timeframe of these strategies? Include any short-term costs that would need to be incurred to implement the strategies.

As a demonstrably efficient institution and responsible steward of Commonwealth resources, our ability to sustain our performance requires a multi-year commitment focused on improving our infrastructure, optimizing and upgrading existing systems, eliminating redundancies and automating processes including:

- Providing greater financial transparency through Banner Optimization/Chart of Accounts. Launched in FY23, this work will allow insight into leveraging our resources and the creation of enhanced analytics/report development.
  - The new Chart of Accounts allows streamlined processes by leveraging system functionality. Mason is currently developing a pilot with selected units for FY24 to quantify savings to assess broader savings targets for FY25.
  - Eliminating resource-wasteful processes such as manual processes, duplicate data entry, etc. with investments in technology solutions (e.g., Automation Center of Excellence).
- Enhancing student support through a student focused CRM to improve student advising, retention and completion FY24-27.
- To improve donor cultivation, fundraising analysis and capacity, through a development focused CRM.
- The implementation of a formal retirement incentive program for both Instructional / Research Faculty and Administrative / Professional Faculty beginning in FY25-26.
- Implement unit reorganizations which requires Commonwealth partnership for exceptions from state code and policies to provide the necessary flexibility to achieve efficiencies and optimizations.
- Enhancing human resources operation through the deployment of technologies to quicken time to hire, performance management processes, class and compensation analyses and process. Tools include Page Up (launched in FY23) Performance Management System (FY25), and other HR Capital Management Systems.
- Replacing the outdated degree audit and scheduler tool to enhance the student experience and allow for integration with other state-level systems such as the TransferVA portal.
- Creating a robust data management program and data infrastructure as part of the Mason Impact: Data to Analytics Solutions (MIDAS) initiative.
- Implementing new Identity and Access management system to enable automatic role-based provisioning to improve efficiency and reduce operational risks.
- Transitioning to a new learning management system in FY24/25 will provide greater flexibility and consistent design elements, increasing value for student users and the faculty who create course content.
- Optimizing space utilization.
- Refining our Electronic-MOU system to better manage contract and negotiation processes.
- Budget Development & Planning Tool (FY25)
- Establishing task forces in a variety of functional areas (HR, research, finance) to explore shared service opportunities in academic and administrative units.
- Collaborations with other institutions such as University of Mary Washington. Current initiatives include:
  - Smithsonian School of Conservation (at which UMW students take GMU courses and spend a semester at the Front Royal, VA facility).
  - Army ROTC program through which UMW students can participate in ROTC through coursework and training offered at UMW.

> - Charting pathways from UMW Bachelor's degrees to accelerated GMU Master's degrees.
> - Collaborations with external entities (Government, Business, Non-Governmental Organizations, etc.) on projects that are revenue generating.
>
> These strategies will result in long-term savings and Mason is reallocating resources towards these critical cost-saving measures. However, cost will exceed reallocations. Commonwealth support will accelerate our capacity to achieve long-term returns on investments. In the absence of the implementation of an equitable general fund formula, Mason anticipates base budget reductions in FY24 and FY25 to balance our E&G budget.

D6. Provide information about your institution's highest-priority E&G capital projects and requests (including new construction as well as renovations) over the six-year plan period and how they align to your enrollment trajectory, student outcomes improvement plans, or other strategic priorities. Please also reflect on your current E&G facilities utilization (especially classrooms, labs and student service areas), particularly in light of any recent trends that might impact space needs (e.g., enrollment trends, shifting learning modalities). How has square footage per student changed over time and why? What efforts have you made to reassess and further optimize the use of your existing facilities, and what has been the impact of those efforts to date? What do you intend to do in the next six years to increase utilization?

Highest Priority E & G Capital Requests:

CAPITAL NEEDS				Projected Expenditure Plan ($Ms)							
Capital Project	Campus	Type	GSF	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	Total GF	Total NGF
E&G Projects											
Real Estate Acquisitions Phase 2 (VSH)	Arlington	New	NA	107	--	--	--	--	--		107
Student Innovation Factory Bldg.	Fairfax	New	205,363	1	13	21	3	--	--	37	
Interdisciplinary Sci. & Eng. Bldg.	Fairfax	New	150,000	0	8	33	67	49	8	165	
Business School	Fairfax	New	150,000	0	13	37	62	46	7	165	
Critical Deferred Maintenance	Fairfax	Reno	0	10	3	2	11	10	--	36	
Academic VIII	Sci Tech	New	200,000	1	26	41	72	52	8	200	
									Tota	603	107

See https://planning.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/FY24-Capital-Budget-Requests.pdf for details on capital projects above.

Our space data presently reflects nearly a net neutral change to our total assignable square footage (ASF). We anticipate additional ASF with the opening of Fuse at Mason Square and reductions in the off-site lease space needed

- Lessons learned from our successes and abilities to provide instructional alternatives to our students, as well as demand for those online courses, resulted in our emergence from the pandemic with a new steady state with less in-person instruction and more online instruction than before 2020.
- Working to mitigate the impact that shift has on our classroom utilization.
- Transitioning to University Registrar-managed classrooms to increase utilization rates.
- Renovation and operational modifications reflect a reduction in the total number of classrooms scheduled from 432 in 2018 to 393 in 2022 in order to address other campus space needs, preserve our utilization rates, and acknowledge shifts in our need for physical space to meet current instructional needs.

Assessment, Optimization and Future Utilization:
- Continued study to adjust and repurpose our classroom and class lab uses in response to changes in instructional methods and the continued need to improve and expand our inventory of wet labs.
- A 500K square foot program to perform anonymized occupancy detection analyses for all space types occupied by faculty, staff and students to help us better identify underutilized spaces of all types in support of our continued enrollment growth, additional new programs and the corresponding support spaces

Mason is also optimizing space utilization by:
- Realigning administrative and office space given the increase in remote and hybrid work environments.
- Reviewing offsite leased spaces for savings as we more efficiently utilize Mason-owned space.
- Creating financial incentives for units to relinquish underutilized/unused space.

SECTION E: BUDGET REQUESTS

E1. Provide additional information for any budget requests in Part I of your planning template that are not described elsewhere in your narrative.

Mason appreciates and deploys the ~$4.4M of Higher Education Equipment Trust Fund (HEETF) funding received annually. However, a refresh of the HEETF funding allocation formula that will more equitably align Mason's HEETF funding with other VA R1s in terms of relative institution size and infrastructure support needs for instructional, research, and administrative technologies is requested. Our current allocation is dramatically below our Virginia R1 doctoral peers of similar size.

SECTION F: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ANNUAL REPORT

F1. Provide a link to any report your institution has produced about its economic development contributions. You may also share it in the appendix or as an attachment

 See Appendix C: Briefing Paper GMU Economic Impact FY 2022

SECTION G: FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND INQUIRY, FREE SPEECH, ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT

G1. Provide a copy of any policy or reports your institution has produced and provide information about annual training or orientation related to this topic.

Mason is committed to, and proudly recognized for, fostering an environment that welcomes free speech for all.

- Earns top national ranking ([green light rating](#)) for campus climate from the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education ([FIRE](#)) and ranked 17 in 2023 nationally for encouraging free speech.
- Ranked 7th nationally for being an LGBTQ friendly campus.
- Mason affirms the principles outlined in the Chicago Statement: "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 wrong-headed."
- Co-Curricular student programming:
  - "Rights and Responsibilities" during New Student Orientation
  - "Self, Others, and Community" offered during Preamble/Welcome Week and throughout the academic year.
- Course offerings:
  - Schar School of Policy and Government: Civil Rights Law, Social Media Privacy and Innovation, Constitutional Law, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, and the Democracy Lab Undergraduate Learning Community.
  - Antonin Scalia Law School: Foundational courses in Constitutional Law, Free Speech Clinic, Freedom of Speech and First Amendment Law, training on respectful discussion and debate during orientation;
  - College of Humanities and Social Sciences: Free Speech and Ethics course is offered that satisfies a Mason Core, general education requirement.
- Statement of Faculty Principle: Affirms the faculty's commitment to "respectful debate and the full and open exchange of ideas." Published [here](#).
- Liberty & Law Center's Public Discourse Project
- Mason's provides online resources to guide legal and safe First Amendment expressions at [Mason Climate](#) and [Free Speech at Mason](#).
- The [Student Media](#) offers hands-on training, co-curricular learning experiences, campus-wide events, publishing opportunities to elevate student voices, and connections to practicing media professionals and national organizations that protect free speech.
- Expansion goals:
  - Freedom & Learning Presidential Speaker Series.
  - Freedom of Speech teach-in series.
  - Constructive Dialogue Institute to be incorporated into first-year programming.
  - Expanding freedom of expression modules into student organization leadership training.

SECTION H: NEW SCHOOLS, SITES, AND MERGERS

H1. Provide information on any new instructional sites, schools, or mergers supported by all types of funding that your institution is considering or planning to undertake during the six-year period.

- No new instructional sites are currently scheduled for development.
- Plans to change the School of Business to the "College" of Business and increase the number of schools located in the unit, e.g. the formation of a School of Accounting. The approval process for making this shift will be submitted to SCHEV before the end of the 2023 calendar year.
- A strategy to improve recruiting out-of-state students and provide study abroad opportunities for domestic students revolves around locating programs internationally. This includes conversations with our current campus in South Korea, subject to the constraint that any such programs would also have to be self-supporting.
- Building alliances and collaborations with University of Mary Washington including:
  - Smithsonian School of Conservation (at which UMW students take GMU courses and spend a semester at the Front Royal, VA facility).
  - Army ROTC program through which UMW students can participate in ROTC through coursework and training offered at UMW.
  - Charting pathways from UMW Bachelor's degrees to accelerated GMU Master's degrees.

[OPTIONAL] SECTION I: RESEARCH

I1. [OPTIONAL] Highlight any strategic research priorities, programs, or key areas of investment (e.g., hiring plans, critical research agendas, interdisciplinary centers, business partnerships, commercialization efforts) and IP dissemination and commercialization priorities you intend to pursue over the next 6 years that have not already been mentioned in this narrative. What are the anticipated benefits to your faculty attraction/retention strategy, student value proposition, and the economic competitiveness of the Commonwealth?

As appropriate for an R1 university with an impressive trajectory, i.e., achieving R1 status after only 43 years as an institution in 2016, Mason supports a wide array of research initiatives with strengths concentrated around key areas of urgent societal need. Driving discovery and the creation of new knowledge, Mason seeks to meet current and future challenges and supports the creation of game-changing opportunities yet to be imagined. The products of Mason's bold research agenda are key resources in our local community, the commonwealth, and the US providing unparalleled access, capacity, and leadership in innovation, job creation, partnerships, workforce development, and economic growth.

Mason supports 908 tenured or tenure-track faculty and continues to attract top research talent to the Commonwealth. These researchers, in turn, provide rich experiences for our students, compelling partners for companies, and engines for economic growth including startups and workforce advancement, reskilling, and expansion opportunities.

Over the past 5-yrs Mason's research enterprise has grown by 105% reaching $230M in FY22 research expenditures (as measured by the NSF HERD Survey).
- Leveraging national best practices, Mason began a research administration initiative focused on improving processes and tools to better manage the regional and national stakeholder investments in Mason's faculty and student researchers.
- To attract student and faculty researchers, nationally and globally leading educational experiences, industry partnerships, and federal investments, this effort requires extension to drive efficiencies in research operations to support emerging laboratories in areas of intense national interest (e.g., high performance computing, augmented reality, data analytics, infectious diseases, disaster resilience, cybersecurity) including:
    - Computing
        - In addition to funds needed to refresh the Mason computing infrastructure on a 5-year cycle ($1M Annually), immediate needs include replacing the underlying server infrastructure that underpins much of the Mason computing environment. ($6M One-time)
        - Management and student support to provide research service and cross-functionality. ($1.5M Annually)
    - Labs: Manager support for core shared facilities and buildings across campus. ($600K Annually)
    - Shared service operational support across the Office of Research, Innovation and Economic Impact, beyond research administration. ($750K Annually)
    - Eminent Scholar program funding to recruit, support and retain top talent and provide leadership support for research institutes. ($2M Annually). These scholars will lead key transdisciplinary research centers and institutes that address urgent societal needs such as national security (RPRC-$42M expenditures), sustainability (ISE-$57M expenditures), biohealth (IBI-$36M expenditures), and digital innovation (IDIA-$62M expenditures).
    - Experiential education for our students, such as those engaged with our award-winning Office of Student Scholarship, Creative Activities, and Research (OSCAR) ($750K Annually)
    - Funds to support the Coulter Program that provides entrepreneurship training to commercialize technologies ($4M Annually)
    - Mason Enterprise, a proven leader for entrepreneurially focused economic development programming, supports 28 SBDC's and the well-regarded ICAP program among others. Growth in this area to provide full-service tech entrepreneurship support to nascent ventures throughout the commonwealth, these startups will receive industry leading entrepreneurship training, support

for commercialization, and mentorship in order to support the regional development of tech startup culture in key sectors like biohealth, digital innovation, sustainability. To that end, Mason seeks additional support for Tech Mentor funding to enhance federally funded I-Corps Programs, state funded ICAP programs and other commercialization activity to increase the number of new ventures and start-ups. ($1.4M Annually).

[OPTIONAL] SECTION J: COLLABORATION

J1. [OPTIONAL] Outline any existing or potential initiatives you have not already highlighted in this narrative that feature collaboration across public higher education institutions (and other state agencies as appropriate) in furthering the goals outlined in sections B-D. What is the expected impact and in what timeframe? What is the timeline for the initiative and how far along is it? What (if anything) would be required from a budget or policy perspective to facilitate the success of the initiative?

Several projects are underway to expand collaborations with other public higher education institutions in the Commonwealth. These partnerships are designed to enhance opportunities and increase affordability for all students to attain a college degree. They include:
- Partnership with the University of Mary Washington to enhance opportunities for graduate work through accelerated Masters' pathways.
- Looking ahead, given geographic proximity, we anticipate several additional options for collaboration with UMW, including faculty and course sharing, shared library resources and services, and programmatic collaboration such as through Honors programs and co-curricular activities.
- Partnership under discussion with Virginia Military Institute to provide accelerated master's pathways for cadets.
- Library collaboration and prospective integration with University of Mary Washington.
- Expansion of the ADVANCE program:
    o Partnerships signed with Piedmont Virginia, Tidewater, and Germanna.
    o Current conversations with Virginia Peninsula, Laurel Ridge and Danville.
    o Given funding, Mason anticipates additional community colleges partnerships over the next six years.
- Development of Lab School proposal to include Mason, Fairfax County Public Schools, and Northern Virginia Community College.
- Mason is a founding partner of the Online Virginia Network, a collaboration between James Madison University, Old Dominion University, and the Virginia Community College system.
- Robotic Process Automation and Centers for Excellence (Tier 3s).
- Governor's School, located on the Science and Technology campus, and operating in collaboration with the Northern Virginia School Divisions, is a successful long-term initiative that attracts high achieving students to STEM fields.
- Expansion of Ellucian (Banner) knowledge share and potential for contract savings through Council of Presidents and Council of State Business Officers.

Mason also engages in a wide breadth of research partnerships including:
- In the context of biohealth, Mason partners with Prince William County through the Institute for Biohealth Innovation that supports life science startups.
- In addition to the Institute for Sustainable Earth, the Virginia Climate Center acts as an extension agency for sustainability and resilience.
- The Institute for Digital Innovation is inclusively shaping the future of our digital society, promoting well-being, security, and prosperity. IDIA is a sector leader that provides transdisciplinary research, innovation, and next-generation workforce development strategy across the university for scaled, sustainable growth in digital innovation
- Leveraging the wealth of national security expertise in Northern Virginia, Mason is building a network focused on rapid, innovative technology start-ups with a defense focus via the Rapid Prototype Research Center.
- Under Auxiliary related projects, we are evaluating our West Campus, Mason Square (Arlington) and SciTech assets for new development partnerships which would provide additional revenues to offset current E&G shortfalls driven by market compensation and funding disparity challenges.

[OPTIONAL] SECTION K: STATE POLICY

K1. [OPTIONAL] Use this section to outline any state policy changes you have not already mentioned in this narrative that would enhance your ability to achieve greater success on the topics, strategies, and initiatives referenced in this narrative. What existing policies, if any, are hindering your ability to maximize outcomes and value for students? What new policies might create conditions that are more conducive to achieving those goals? What strategies or initiatives would these policy changes enable your institution to do or try that you are not yet able to do today? Please be as specific as possible.

Support for current unfunded mandates:
- VMSDEP: Financial impact of FY23 tuition and mandatory student fee waiver = $7.7M; Average annual increases of 36% since 2019.
- Compensation increases should be fully funded:
  - The Commonwealth cost share funding lags one year lag, such that the compensation base budget increases are on a lower base than year they are executed.
  - By not fully funding State authorized salary increases (GMU cost share=49.7% on a one-year lag basis) requires institutions to allocate NGF resources to meet compensation requirements that are effectively mandated increases.
- Freedom of Speech orientation and programming mandates
- Increased compliance expectations for distance learning, licensing requirements, and DOE mandates that, in turn, require substantial institutional resources to fulfill.
- Expectations for transfer students and partnership with VCCS through TransferVA requires significant commitment and oversight, including personnel and technology.

Policy changes:
- Greater autonomy to manage cash reserves in order to increase interest income and yields to generate additional revenues to support operations (Mason and JMU did not receive cash management authority as Tier 3 institutions).
  - With cash management authority, Mason would invest a portion of reserves that do not require immediate liquidity in low risk, longer duration investments, which could generate more annual interest income than interest income received from the Commonwealth's highly-liquid portfolio. This also increases yield for the Commonwealth as a whole.
  - Remove code requirement to transmit all receipts of state funds to the Treasury for institutions with cash management authority. Currently, institutions wire funds to the state daily, only for the state to wire them back to the institution, resulting in increased administrative burden, inefficiency, and unnecessary transaction fees for both the institution and the Commonwealth.
- Allow Mason to invest auxiliary reserves to purchase revenue-generating component unit assets.
- For institutions of Higher Education, provide for or allow performance-based increases for classified staff, rather than across-the-board increases.
- Policy 1.30 Higher Education exception for Classified Staff and reorganization or layoff – addition of another rubric for measurement vs. identifying least senior employee in the work area for layoff or reorg for comparable position (concern that more recent hires should receive equal consideration depending upon additional job knowledge, performance, capabilities and other) - OR – if positions realigned, ability to consider removal of timeframe for position abolishment in an extraordinary circumstance such as institutional expense reduction in force needs at material level (current DHRM policy states the position cannot be reestablished for one year).

- Procurement terms and conditions flexibility (e.g., ability to accept agreements governed by laws of other states, indemnification, waiver of jury trial, etc.)
  - Commonwealth agencies spend substantive time negotiating with vendors to remove indemnification clauses which are standard business practices. By addressing long standing contract language issues, the Commonwealth will increase efficiency and effectiveness in all state agencies.
- Program 108: Integrate Unfunded Scholarships with Program 108 tuition revenue reallocations since unfunded scholarships reflect need-based aid which institutions fund with tuition revenue reallocation as well. This would simplify administration and reporting of these programs for greater transparency and consistency.
- Allow part-time students to be eligible for state financial aid awards (VGAP). This would significantly benefit the large number of non-traditional students who are completing their undergraduate degrees on a less-than-fulltime schedule due to work commitments or other external factors.
- Reset current process for starting a capital project that currently requires multiple layers of forms and approvals at the start of a project and with every modification. The information is redundant across forms (CO-2, CO-8, BEX), offices (Division of Engineering and Buildings, Department of Planning and Budget), and systems resulting in unnecessary delays and inefficient use of multiple Commonwealth staff resources performing duplicative processes. This would create operational efficiencies and cost reductions across all Commonwealth agencies.
- Accept standard IRS Form W-9 for vendor registrations in lieu of the current COV Substitute W-9. Many businesses/institutions have the IRS form readily available and state agencies can quickly obtain and upload it, whereas completing the COV-specific form creates re-work and inefficiencies for both the state agencies and the vendors

[OPTIONAL] SECTION L: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

L1. [OPTIONAL] Use this final section to provide any additional context and/or supporting materials you feel should be incorporated into the six-year planning process.

We recommend that the 6-year plan requests include a separate section/category for Unfunded State mandates.