

**BOARD OF VISITORS  
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**

**Planning Conference Meeting  
July 25, 2019  
MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Rector Davis, Vice Rector Hazel; Visitors Bhuller, Chimaladinne, Iturregui, Kazmi, Marquez, Moreno, Moss, Prowitt, Reagan, Rice, Witeck, and Zuccari; Faculty Representative Davis; Student Representative Gelbvaks; President Cabrera; and Secretary pro tem Cagle

**ABSENT:** Visitors Blackman and Roth; Student Representative Layton

**GUESTS:**

Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees  
President's Council  
President, Alumni Association  
President-elect, Alumni Association  
Faculty Committee Representatives

**I. Call to Order**

Rector Davis called the meeting to order at 8:37 a.m. He called on Dr. Cabrera for opening remarks.

**II. Welcome Remarks**

President Cabrera provided welcoming remarks. He reminded the attendees of the Board of Visitors Annual meeting taking place the next day, July 26, 2019. President Cabrera spoke about the previous sessions of Mason's Annual Planning Conference and the attendees that included the Vice Presidents, President's Council and Deans.

He recognized the groups and individuals in attendance: The newly appointed members of the Board of Visitors (BOV): Mr. Mehmood Kazmi, Mr. Juan Carlos Iturregui, Ms. Simmi Bhuller and Ms. Carolyn Moss; Alpaslan Ozerdem, new dean of the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution; Ali Andalibi, interim dean of the College of Science; Shannon Davis, Faculty Senate Chair; the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees; Mr. Peter Freeman, Chair of the George Mason Research Foundation; Lester Arnold, new Vice President of Human Resources and Payroll; Rene Stewart O'Neal, Associate Vice President for Strategic Budget and Planning; Mr. Sumeet Shrivastava, incoming Chair of the Alumni Association; and Ms. Jen Shelton, President of the Alumni Association. They were met with applause.

President Cabrera provided an overview of the day, noting the morning framing presentation by Provost Wu would be followed by breakout groups at four presentation stations. President Cabrera explained that a few of the participants were preselected to provide feedback on a particular station to the larger group. The noted the morning presentations would focus on Mason's programs, students, and research. The afternoon

## **Board of Visitors**

**July 25, 2019**

**Page 2**

framing presentation by Carol Kissal, Senior Vice President for Administration and Finance, would be followed by station presentations focused on the financial side of the University.

President Cabrera spoke to the uniqueness of George Mason University. Mason was reclassified as R1 Research university and is among 130 universities driving research and scientific progress in the nation. He reaffirmed Mason's mission of Access to Excellence, to provide opportunities to more students. President Cabrera noted that the University seeks ways to better serve populations excluded from higher education. He continued to reaffirm the University's belief that an educated world is a better world and the commitment to education. President Cabrera commented on the stress of Mason's growth on its system due to this commitment. He noted that Mason's mission of Access to Excellence is to create a University where anyone with talent can attend and benefit from learning from top level faculty. He explained that Mason is the largest, fastest-growing, most diverse university in Virginia and Mason's student graduation and student loan repayment rates are almost on par with elite universities. President Cabrera spoke to the University's mission of Innovation and Inclusion and the many obstacles the University overcame to create a Law School and a Bachelor's program for mechanical engineering. He encouraged big ideas to transform the University and maximize the impact of the University. He discussed the University's mission of Inclusion as not just a diverse place, but an environment where people of various backgrounds can thrive, have options and opportunities that are not limited. President Cabrera explained that Mason is a better university because of the various perspectives we have, and our students learn from diversity, being surrounded by people who are different from themselves. He briefed the group on the three topics of discussion during the previous two days: instituting a medical school, online education, and Arlington Innovation Neighborhood.

President Cabrera introduced Interim President-elect Anne Holton and asked for her insights on the Planning Conference. She recognized and thanked the Board of Visitors and the leadership team for their warm welcome. She reiterated the University's mission of Innovation and Inclusion, and noted that it was also evident in discussions regarding medical education and providing 21st Century medicine that is inclusive and diverse. She spoke to online education as an opportunity to deliver on the University's goals of inclusion. President-elect Holton commented on the collaborative and collegial nature of the leadership team.

President Cabrera introduced Provost Wu and commented on his commitment to Access to Excellence.

### **III. Opening Remarks**

Provost David Wu framed the morning topics and spoke to the Mason Momentum. He noted some of the University's highlights over the past seven years: enrollment has increased by 20% which constitutes over 60% of the growth in Virginia. He explained that the University has become a majority minority university, with no disparity among its many groups. He further explained that the ADVANCE program has formalized the

transfer pipeline from NOVA and the University has doubled its global education goals through study abroad programs. Provost Wu noted that during the past seven years the Mason Korea campus was established and stabilized and Mason became a Carnegie R1 research university. He explained that university research activity has increased by 80%. Provost Wu noted that the day's discussions would be framed around Mason's six-year plan. He explained that the six-year plan includes twelve strategies that outlines Mason's alignment with the Commonwealth and includes projections for enrollment and non-general fund requests. He explained that the six-year plan will be presented to the State Council for Higher Education of Virginia (SCHEV) and to the BOV for final approval. He noted that the morning presentation stations represented four primary missions of the University, with questions for discussion, as follows:

- **Expand Access: How can Mason expand access?**
  - Financial Aid to attract diverse students
  - Enrollment degree production
  - Expanding online degrees
  - Accessible pathways
    - ADVANCE
  
- **Student Success: How can Mason ensure student success?**
  - Mason Impact Initiative
    - Learning outside of the classroom
    - Research
    - Civic engagement
    - Global Studies
    - Entrepreneurship
  - Student Care Network
  
- **Research Impact: How can Mason maximize its research impact?**
  - Carnegie R1 Level Research growth
    - Investment
    - Create multi-disciplinary institute
  
- **Faculty Support: How can Mason's faculty remain competitive?**
  - Resources for compensation and retention

#### **IV. Breakout Sessions**

Mr. Frank Neville, Chief of Staff, provided instructions for the breakout groups and rotations at each station as follows:

- Station #1: Expand Access – Facilitated by Michele Marks
- Station #2: Student Success – Facilitated by Rose Pascarell
- Station #3: Research Impact – Facilitated by Deb Crawford
- Station #4: Faculty Support – Facilitated by Kim Eby

**V. Report Out and General Discussion**

Provost Wu called for the morning reporters and explained that the reporter for each group would provide a concise account of the presentation and discussion from their assigned station. He asked them to cover the questions posed to each group, which were:

1. What are your main takeaways? What did you learn that left an impression on you?
2. What are the main questions we should be asking on this topic in the coming year?
3. What does success on this topic look like? How do we define success? How do we measure it?

**Station #1: Expand Access**

Visitor Kazmi noted that the easiest way to expand Mason's access is to focus on online education. He explained that the return on investment would be high due to the low infrastructure costs relative to the impact it can have. He noted the group discussion was around the 'why' and 'how'. He continued to explain, that Mason should do this because of the shortage in supply of talent in technology and education. He noted the nature of the diversity in those populations and that adult students have different needs. Visitor Kazmi reported that one path to doing this would be to further the partnership with Wiley, which includes their \$25 million initial investment.

He shared his group's main questions:

- What is the investment from Mason?
- What is the effect on the Mason brand?
  - Positive or negative?
  - How to control marketing?
  - Potential dilution risk?
- Issues with educational integrity and security?
- Issues of integration in interaction of online and offline courses?
- Questions about the partner
  - Does our relationship with Amazon HQ2 change the dynamics of partnerships?
  - Does this make Mason more competitive or less competitive?
- Supply and demand management
  - Will this take students out of the classroom who are needed in the classroom?

Visitor Kazmi explained what success in this topic would be raising significant or all of Mason's share of the seed capital for the project and signing a partnership with Wiley for better.

**Station #2: Student Success**

Visitors Bhuller and Witeck reported that the group's main takeaways focused on Mason's undergraduate population, noting: 20% of Mason's undergraduate population is over 25 years old; Mason's graduation rate is hovering over 70% and is above the national graduation rate; there is no disparity between different groups; and 40% of Mason's students graduate without debt. They noted that the Mason Care Network could

positively impact the graduation rate and on-campus student population is increasing. Visitor Witeck commented on Mason's mission of equity and inclusion being incorporated into all of the presentations and their effect on student success. He shared the questions posed by this group:

- The goal is a 78% graduation rate by 2024. How is that accomplished each year? Where is the focus each year? What are the mechanisms put in place for freshman etc.?
- How are students using the Student Success Center? What are the benefits of using it? How can Mason market it? How does Mason get the word out effectively?
- How will Mason address student services for an older undergraduate population? What services will be needed? What is the investment Mason needs to make?
- With the Student Care Network scheduled to launch next year, how can Mason get advisor and coaching systems and networks to talk to each other? What is the technology platform we have and what is the progress being made in that area?
- With a dramatic access to mental health care, how are we keeping an eye on students off campus?

Visitor Witeck noted the need of providing the right balance between online and human connection and posed the questions: Does Mason know how to deliver the right balance? Can Mason provide that to all students? He further noted the importance of keeping it empathic and human even online. He commented on housing issues and the need for Mason in its unique position to be the model of common sense, student voice, civility and engagement in being appropriate, responsible and maturing.

Provost Wu noted that the Student Care Network is referenced as the Student Experience Redesign and regular updates are provided to the BOV in the Academic Programs, Diversity, and University Community Committee (APDUC).

### Station #3: Research Impact

Visitor Prowitt reported that in 2017 research expenditure support was \$100 million and today Mason is at \$140 million; by 2024, Mason will be at \$225 million. She continued to note the main takeaway questions from her group were:

- How can we help support and sustain Mason's research growth?
- How does Mason maintain its Carnegie R1 research status, and continue to grow?

She explained that success in this area is providing infrastructure and tenure track faculty to continue research and noted the unique capacity Mason has in multidisciplinary research and diversity in student population. She shared the following questions from her group:

- How does George Mason University compete the pool of Carnegie R1 Research institutions?
- How can Mason increase private sector corporate research funding?

Provost Wu commented for those interested, that during the BOV Research Committee meetings, Deborah Crawford, Vice President for Research, highlights one or two areas of specific faculty research.

**Station #4: Faculty Support**

Visitors Chimaladinne and Moreno reported that their main takeaways were that the faculty growth will not be able to keep up with the student growth and that Mason has challenges in recruiting and retaining faculty. Visitor Chimaladinne shared several takeaway questions from the group:

- How is Mason doing in comparison to other Virginia universities?
- What is the root cause in recruitment? Is it funds or the availability of talent in the area?

He noted that several members of the group shared that the compensation package was a large factor in recruitment efforts. Visitor Chimaladinne noted the room for improvement in terms of diversity in the faculty.

Visitor Moreno thanked the presenters for their work and shared her experience as a Visitor this year compared to last year. She spoke to Mason's mission of Access to Excellence and the importance of faculty to realize this goal. She further spoke to Mason's unique position in sought after areas of data analytics, technology, artificial intelligence, engineering etc. Visitor Moreno noted the importance of faculty retention in meeting the university's student enrollment growth by 2024. In terms of online education, she posed the following questions:

- Will the existing faculty teach online courses? Will the online initiative have its own faculty resources?
- What is Mason giving back to the faculty?
- Are there additional mechanism for faculty to interact with leadership and have a voice in decision making?

Visitor Moreno spoke to the importance of sustainability and noted the following questions: What is the profile of the Mason faculty? How is Mason addressing issues of retention succession, retirement, growth etc.?

She explained that success would be having well-compensated, motivated faculty members, excited to teach students, and a University able to provide needed services to older students and incorporating online opportunities with those services.

Provost Wu thanked the presenters and opened the floor for discussion. Visitor Moss commented that the message conveyed is that Mason needs more state, federal and private funding. She asked if the University has had an economic impact study conducted and how it contributes to the region, the state and beyond. She further asked what data the University has to help make the case for financial funding.

Provost Wu called on Paul Liberty, Vice President of Government and Community Relations, to respond to Visitor Moss' questions. Mr. Liberty noted that a couple of years

ago Steve Fuller, Schar Endowed Chair, conducted a study on the economic impact the University has on the state and that it is due for an update. He noted that there would be more information in his afternoon presentation.

**VI. Lunch Recess**

Rector Davis called for a lunch recess at 12:04 a.m. and advised the meeting would reconvene at 1:00p.m.

**VII. Opening Remarks and Financial Framework**

The meeting reconvened at 1:05 p.m. and Carol Kissal, Senior Vice President of Administration and Finance, provided framing remarks for the afternoon session.

Ms. Kissal introduced new members of her senior staff: Lester Arnold, Vice of Human Resources and Payroll; Bill Dracos, Associate Vice President for Auxiliary Services; and Rene Stewart O'Neal, Associate Vice President for Strategic Budget and Planning.

Ms. Kissal provided the background on Mason's financial framework, the need for a financial framework, the contents of developing that framework and how to make that framework work at Mason. She explained the need for a financial framework that allows for changes as needed throughout the year and a framework that aligns with performance outcomes in the University's strategic plan. She spoke to Mason's growth pertaining to Research, tuition as Mason's most stable revenue source and the declining state contribution to the University. Ms. Kissal noted Mason's six-year plan serves as a contract with the state, the need for updates and Mason's steep growth rate. She explained that a study was done and adjustments need to be made to the University's planning and budget operations.

She shared her goal to provide a transparent, integrated system for budgeting. She further explained the need for a Capital Funding Plan, setting priorities and finding other mechanisms to fund University projects. Ms. Kissal noted her goal of Mason obtaining a Tier 3 credit status in the next year, which will provide more financial autonomy from the state. She explained the steps to instituting a financial framework and discussed the financial health of the institution, how it affects certain areas of the University and Mason's credit rating, debt trends and future budget plans. She spoke to an integrative process beginning with strategic planning and aligning the operating budget with the capital plan. Ms. Kissal opened the floor for discussion, Visitor Kazmi posed a question regarding credit worthiness of public institutions. Visitor Iturregui posed a question regarding budgetary reserves, P3's and creative financing frameworks. Discussion ensued. Carole Scott, member of the Board of Trustees Executive Committee, posed a question regarding budgetary planning in terms of tuition online versus on-campus and providing key financial talking points. Discussion ensued.

**VIII. Breakout Sessions**

Mr. Neville provided instructions for the afternoon breakout groups and rotations for each station as follows:

Station #1: Tech Talent & Smart Growth – Facilitated by David Wu

Station #2: Arlington Innovation Neighborhood – Facilitated by Deb Crawford, Steve Goldin & Frank Strike

Station #3: Fundraising – Facilitated by Trishana Bowden

Station #4: Government Relations – Facilitated by Paul Liberty

**IX. Report Out**

Ms. Kissal called for the afternoon reporters for presentations from their assigned stations and reviewed the three questions posed to each group:

1. What are your main takeaways? What did you learn that left an impression on you?
2. What are the main questions we should be asking on this topic in the coming year?
3. What does success on this topic look like? How do we define success? How do we measure it?

**Station #1: Tech Talent & Smart Growth**

Visitor Iturregui provided the main takeaways for his group noting Mason's goal of adding 25,000 students to programs in computer sciences, computer engineering and related fields in the coming years. He posed the following question regarding smart growth: Where will the funds come from to pay for 500 – 600 new faculty by 2026? He noted Tech Talent projections and specific targeting of online programs for this group, noting about 30% will be served online. He spoke to challenges of underutilization of the Arlington campus and the additional marketing analysis needed. He noted that success in this area would be meeting the metrics outlined by Provost Wu.

Rector Davis noted that lack of local talent and the need to look nationally and globally. He spoke to the opportunities available and the challenges, the need for state funding, and providing more certificate programs versus degrees.

**Station #2: Arlington Innovation Neighborhood**

Rector Davis reported that at this point the Innovation District is an idea, more planning needs to be accomplished, there are challenges with zoning, and 20 parcels around the area are not University-owned. He noted that the key to realizing this goal is to control the parcels and future tenants, thus controlling the University's growth. He also noted the upfront cost, the value of the land and its importance to the project and Mason branding. Rector Davis explained the challenges with state funding, the cost of tearing down and rebuilding, and the importance of planning and coordination of the project.

**Station #3: Fundraising**

Visitor Zuccari thanked those who put the Planning Conference event together. She reported her group's main takeaways and noted that the best donations are of time, talent



## Board of Visitors

July 25, 2019

Page 9

and treasures. She shared the fundraising focus which has two goals: (1) internally assisting colleges and schools to optimize alumni and donor engagement, and (2) the external goal of connecting donor interest with University needs. She noted that Mason has 200,000 alumni and there are software needs in order to facilitate better communication. She explained that the process includes analyzing not only donor degrees, but their interests, as well as reintegrating them into Mason's campuses. Visitor Zuccari shared that donations in FY19 totaled \$123.1 million, there were 12,000 donors and 5,700 of those were alumni. She commented that donors give to cause they care about and like, and encouraged outreach as ambassadors sharing Mason's story. She briefly shared stories of the work and accomplishments of Mason students.

Visitor Marquez expressed her well-wishes to President Cabrera and welcomed Interim President-elect Holton. She shared the fundraising goal of \$60 million and posed the question: How will Mason reach this goal? She explained that it will take the work of many and that the Board members have a responsibility to assist the University reach its goals. Visitor Marquez invited the Board members to consider hosting a fundraising dinner this year or next year on behalf of Mason. She suggested featuring and highlighting more stories of the work accomplished by Mason students through videos on the website and opening the University to the business community. She spoke of continuing engagement with the 73,000 donors of the Faster, Farther Campaign.

### Station #4: Government Relations

Visitor Moss shared the takeaways on behalf of her group. She noted that Mason currently does not have Northern Virginia delegates in leadership positions; however, with the upcoming election, there is the potential for six Northern Virginia legislators in leadership positions. She noted that the second unique positioning for the University is the appointment of Interim President-elect Holton. Visitor Moss noted that Mason needs to be prepared for status quo or great opportunities. The University needs to provide good data and research in order to make progress with the General Assembly. She noted the importance of preparation with regard to Mason's list of new programs and the need to engage a wider group of advocates for the University. She noted the importance of support from various facets of Mason and the opportunity to share the University's story.

Visitor Rice shared the need to present the university's case to members of the legislature when possible. He noted the importance of garnering support for Mason as Board members, through parents of Mason students, or with Mason neighbors. He posed the group's questions:

- How can we influence or elect more supportive legislators?  
He noted supporting candidates with higher education included in their platform.
- How can Mason propose initiatives that will provide non-formula funding? He noted the need to attract new sources.

Visitor Rice shared the group's last point that Mason needs more, longer-lasting funding and the ability to plan growth and funding in future.

Visitor Moss briefly commented on Mason's preparation for possible issues with state funding with regard to support from Amazon HQ2.

Ms. Kissal thanked the reporters and noted common theme of communication, influence, fundraising and sharing the Mason story.

**X. Reflections & Closing Comments**

President Cabrera shared that the takeaway from the day is the excellence and extraordinary talent at the University. He noted the Mason's undergraduate class has grown more than those of many other Virginia universities combined while outcomes improved. He shared that this led to Mason's invitation to join the elite schools in the American Talent Initiative and noted the University's accomplishments, including becoming a Carnegie R1 Research institution while facing financial challenges. President Cabrera shared his optimism and satisfaction in Mason to include the people, the culture and the dream. He thanked and named those who arranged and provided support for the Planning Conference.

**XI. Adjournment**

Rector Davis adjourned the meeting at 4:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kathy Cagle  
Secretary pro tem