

**BOARD OF VISITORS  
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**

**Planning Conference Meeting  
July 29, 2021  
MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Rector James Hazel, Vice Rector Horace Blackman; Visitors Anjan Chimaladinne, Juan Carlos Iturregui, Mehmood Kazmi, Ignacia Moreno, Carolyn Moss, Dolly Oberoi, Jon Peterson, Nancy Prowitt, Paul Reagan, Edward Rice, Denise Turner Roth, and Robert Witeck.

**ABSENT:** Secretary Simmi Bhuller and Visitor Wendy Marquez

**ALSO, PRESENT:** Erin Rogers, Staff Representative; Melissa A. Broeckelman-Post, Faculty Representative; Steven Zhou, Student Representative; Gregory Washington, President; Ken Walsh, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Chief of Staff; Mark Ginsberg, Provost and Executive Vice President; Carol Kissal, Senior Vice President for Administration and Finance; Christine Landoll, President-Elect of Alumni Association; Robert Matz, Campus Dean, Mason Korea; Keith Renshaw, Department Chair/Professor, Psychology; Rachel Wernicke, Associate Dean and Chief Mental Health Officer; Shernita Rochelle Parker, Assistant Vice President, HR Strategy and Talent Management; Wendi Manuel-Scott, Associate Professor, Integrative Studies and History/Art History, AF, African & African American and Women & Gender Studies; Saskia Campbell, Executive Director, University Career Services; Liza Durant, Associate Dean, Strategic Initiatives and Community Engagement; Board of Visitors Committee Faculty Representatives, Members of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees, Members of the President's Council, Members of the Alumni Board Presidents, and Sunshine & Bourbon Representatives.

**I. Call to Order**

Rector Hazel called the session to order at 8:17 a.m. He then introduced Dr. Washington for opening remarks.

**II. Welcome Remarks, Agenda Overview & Key Milestones/Achievements**

Dr. Washington provided the following remarks, highlighting the following:

- Thriving through Our Major Crises:
  - He highlighted what his first day looked like by noting he had to deal with a pandemic and financial crisis which created uncertainty for the campus, but Mason made it through.
  - Mason is looking at about \$10-12 million in extra funds this year to support the faculty, staff, and students.
  - Still largest institution in the state.
  - No staff layoffs or furloughs.
- Keeping Mason Safe:
  - Since August 1, 2020, there have been 901 total COVID cases which is low for a large campus. Dr. Washington put this into perspective by reporting some Virginia colleges had 1,500 cases in a week and some had 500 cases in a weekend.
  - Mason has vaccinated more than 88,300 people since January 2021 which was mostly accomplished by volunteers.
- Mason and National Graduation Rates:
  - The graduation average of Mason is at 70% which is higher than the national average.
  - Mason did not have a graduation performance decline due to the pandemic.
- Graduate Rankings:

- Mason continues to do well in the rankings.
- U.S. News & World Report ranked eight (8) Mason Graduate Programs among the top 25 nationally.
- Mason Impacting the World:
  - Lance Liotta, Co-Director of Applied Proteomics and Molecular Medicine and his team developed the COVID-19 rapid-result saliva-based test that allowed Mason to expand surveillance testing to greater than 5,000 per day. The saliva test costs about \$20-22 per test, which is a reduced cost compared to the original nose swab test that Mason used in the beginning that was \$150 per test.
  - Tyler Cowen is a Mason economist who launched the Emergent Ventures Fast Grants Program to incentivize and fund COVID-19 research. This program has awarded 247 grants totaling \$50 million. He noted this is important because during the early days of the pandemic the government could not get funds to researchers fast enough. Mr. Cowen's work allowed Mr. Liotta's team to develop the aforementioned saliva-based test.
  - Ed Maibach is a University Professor in the Department of Communication who was ranked seventh overall in the Reuters Hot List which identified and ranked the world's top 1,000 climate scientists.
- Access to Excellence:
  - The Mason Virginia Promise is a pathway toward a bachelor's degree or your own business for every Virginian that wants it.
  - While Mason admits many students, it does not admit everybody. The Mason Virginia Promise works by attending two (2) years at a community college and then attending (2) years at Mason for those that want a bachelor's degree.
  - The Mason Talent Exchange Program will provide employers with access to experienced Mason alumni.
  - Mason identifies the employer needs, aligns that with micro-credentials, the employer provides feedback and then interviews are accomplished.
  - Mason manages about 33 small businesses development centers throughout the state of Virginia so if for some reason someone does not want an advanced degree, Mason can assist them with obtaining their own business through the 33 small business centers throughout Virginia given that Mason manages all of these centers.
- Anti-Racism & Inclusive Excellence Initiative:
  - More than 100 faculty and staff came together to provided 62 recommendations. Work has begun on the first 15 of those recommendations.
- Local Ad Campaign:
  - Slides were shown which are a part of a massive ad campaign that could appear in the DMV or in regional airports. The ad and rebranding campaign were discussed in further detail later in the day.
  - Mason cannot be the best kept secret anymore.
- What Does This Mean?
  - Ongoing effort to hire and retain faculty.
  - Looking at expanding research programs and focusing research in areas of consequence, such as:
    - Institute for Biohealth Innovation (IBI)
    - Institute for a Sustainable Earth (ISE)
    - Institute for Digital InnovAtion (IDIA)
- Bring Innovations to Northern Virginia:

- Through the Institute for Digital InnovAtion (IDIA), this facility will support digital technology growth throughout Northern Virginia.
- Other Reinventing Initiatives:
  - A formal Strategic Plan launched yesterday.
  - Launching a comprehensive institutional branding renewal effort.
  - Launch an initiative to increase the university's rankings in the next five years. The goal is for Mason to be ranked as one of the top 100 universities nationally.
- Faculty & Staff:
  - Faculty and staff are understaffed because the university is underfunded which needs to be improved. Please continue to advocate, especially in Richmond, for Mason to receive the necessary support.

### III. Framing of the Day

Provost Ginsberg framed the day by providing the following information:

- Mason is defined by its values which remain at the foundation even through continued growth and evolution.
- Mason is a special R1 because it ensures applications are common practices and not just theoretical.
- Mason is about quality, accessibility, and affordability; an incredible center for excellence that is affordable.
- This is an opportunistic moment to take advantage of even coming out of the pandemic.
- Today is about dialog not deliberation nor decision making, and the key strategies are leverage, lift, integrate and sustain.
- For Mason, it is about going from great to greater.
- There will be breakout sessions this morning and afternoon. Branding and finances will also be discussed throughout the day. Candid, robust and consequential conversations were welcomed.

### IV. Breakout Sessions

Dr. Washington, provided instruction for the breakout groups and rotations at each station as follows:

- Station # 1: Mason as Tech Talent and Innovation Leader – Facilitated by Paul Allvin, Trishana Bowden, Liza Wilson Durant and Carol Kissal
- Station #2: Mason Students: From Access to Success – Facilitated by Saskia Campbell, Rose Pascarell and Rachel Wernicke
- Station #3: ARIE: Where We've Been and Where We're Going on Our Journey to Inclusive Excellence – Facilitated by Shernita Rochelle Parker, Wendi Manuel-Scott & Dietra Trent
- Station #4: Supporting Faculty & Staff Success: Driving Mason to Greater Greatness – Facilitated by Mark Ginsberg, Erin Iacangelo and Melissa Broeckelman-Post

### V. Branding Project

Paul Allvin, Vice President of Strategic Communications and Marketing presented the following information regarding Mason's branding project:

- Branding is dealing with the hard things, having a deep and honest conversations along with listening. He noted that what got Mason here will not get Mason to where it wants to be. The best brand practices must be installed to get Mason where it wants to be.
- Mason is the best kept secret. How can Mason not be the best kept secret any longer?

- Awakening Northern Virginia's sleeping giant:
  - Start the flywheel by having Mason promoting itself through advertising, public relations and digital strategy.
  - Optimize for scale through the "Secret's Out" campaign. Determine what channels are not working and which are. Then optimizing the channels that are working and cease investing in the channels that are not working.
  - Build momentum and enthusiasm around the university which has been lacking.
- 10 Superlatives
  - Out-of-home (OOH) Advertising is being tested to see which of the following methods work: airports, buses and Metrorail stops.
  - Communications will be sent through video vignettes and written articles.
  - There is a digital strategy being conducted through social medial integrations and Washington Post advertising.
  - Mason's superlatives will be displayed through digital communications and campus banners. Window clings on campus building and campus brand hotspot with QR codes directed toward students are in concept mode. The campus branding is to get current students excited.
  - National Superlatives:
    - Fastest-growing public research university.
    - No. 1 youngest university under the age of 50.
    - 1st cyber-security engineering program.
    - No. 1 part-time law program.
    - Top 10 homeland security studies program.
  - Virginia Superlatives:
    - Largest public university.
    - Most inclusive university.
    - No. 1 theater school.
    - 1st school of computing.
    - Most computer science grads in Virginia.
  - Slides were shown of ads in Dulles International Airport, Reagan National Airport, and Ballston Metrorail Station, along with the Metrobus route.
- Concluded by wanting Mason to be obvious and not a secret.
- Sunshine & Bourbon
  - Mr. Allvin introduced Jessica Ireland the Co-Founder of Sunshine & Bourbon a branding and creative firm that Mason is working with. Ms. Ireland then introduced her team.
    - The brand needs to reflect Mason's goals which it is tackling the world's biggest challenges.
    - What is a Brand?
      - It is who you are, what you do, and why you matter.
      - For organizations, this translates to your brand being a combination of your mission, values, strategy, relationships, impact — and their value to the world. It's a gut feeling about the promises you make and your reputation for keeping (or breaking) them.

- It's not what you say you are, it's what they say you are.
- Challenges:
  - Perceived lack of identity.
  - Defining Mason's full range of differentiators.
  - Gaining recognition for all Mason's brand attributes and achievements with its larger audiences.
- Opportunity:
  - Create a brand that unifies the multiple campuses, departments, and audiences of Mason.
  - Create a brand that will further legitimize the Northern VA/DC-region as a leading innovation center.
- Brand Purpose is defining Mason's cause/why Mason exists.
- Brand Requirements are uniquely and indelibly to Mason, relevant and universal to everyone and enduring.
- The initial truths are that Mason is ambitious, diverse, has a spirit of innovation and is visionary.
- Sunshine & Bourbon (S&B) has developed a four (4) phase approach to get Mason where it wants to be:
  - Research and Analysis – This is where S&B listens to those in attendance, students and other stakeholders in the community.
  - Brand Planning
  - Brand Development
  - Deployment Planning
- Today's S&B Agenda:
  - Introduction: Overview of the Branding Process
  - Group Engagement Session: Consumer Journey of our Audiences
  - Group Engagement Session: Imagine Mason's Future
  - Report from the Sessions
  - Facilitated Discussion: Identifying Mason's values, purpose, and differentiators
  - Q&A from Audience
- Branding Project Breakout Groups:
  - Instructions for two exercises were then provided to the eight (8) breakout groups.
    - The first exercise was for each group to pretend to be an assigned persona/assigned target audience, answer prepared questions as this persona with one member of the group taking notes on a provided white board. The target audiences are listed below:
      - University leadership
      - Students
      - Faculty
      - Alumni and donors
    - The second exercise was imagining Mason in five years (2026) and answering the same questions as themselves and not the assigned persona.
  - Group Report Outs

- Alumni and Donors – Christine Landoll, Business Engagement Director, reported that the common themes were faculty who really care, alumnus need to stop keeping Mason as a secret and be vocal about being a Mason Alum.
- Alumni and Donors – Kim Eby, Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs and Development report that students needed to be prepared for the future and for careers of the future. That scaling up what is always great about Mason as this will not dilute Mason’s access and affordability.
- Faculty – Amy Hutchison, Associate Professor of Literacy and Reading, reported the following reason why faculty choose Mason: diversity, innovation, R1 status, sense of community and boundary expanding institution. She noted Mason’s strengths of a creative campus and being able to cross disciplines. She continued to note Mason’s Challenges of low salaries and high cost of living. In five years, this group saw Mason students being more successful in jobs, that Mason will close the unemployment gap in Virginia and that Mason will become a well-known minority institution.
- Faculty – Andre Marshall, Vice President for Research, Innovation, and Economic Impact reported that Mason has a nice balance of research and teaching. That faculty come to Mason for the experience. There is a thread of closed mindedness/conservatism in some units. Mason units also have their own cultures. In the future maybe, PhD grads could be trained at teaching which could be a potential differentiator for the institution.
- Ms. Ireland stated that time has run out, apologized for not getting to all the reports and thanked everyone for being a part of their strategy session.

## VI. Lunch Recess

Rector Hazel called for lunch recess at 12:03 PM and advised the session would reconvene at 1:00 p.m.

Rector Hazel reconvened the session at 1:00 p.m.

## VII. Financial Framework Presentation

Carol Kissal, Senior Vice President of Administration and Finance, provided the following financial framework information and the long-term picture:

- Six-Year Operating Plan
  - Enterprise Financial Plan: Operating
    - Operating Plan Goals:
      - Access to Excellence
      - Research

- Competitive Faculty and Staff Compensation/Retention and Growth
- Funding Disparity
- Capital and Operating Revenues for FY22 and FY28:
  - The total budget for FY22 is \$1.25 billion. The state provides 18% of that budget.
  - The projection total budget for FY28 is \$1.84 billion. The plan is to double down on financial aid to be able to assist the neediest students.
- Capital and Operating Expenses FY22 and FY28:
  - Compensation is the biggest expense that Mason has for FY22 at almost 50%.
  - Contractual services and sponsored sub-awards are the next largest expense for FY22. This expense in FY28 is projected to grow from \$177.1 to \$304.0.
- Research Performance:
  - A graph was provided to show the NSF Total Research Expenditure Growth of between 2018 and 2020. In 2018 research expenditures was \$115 million and \$190 million in 2020. The plan is to go to \$250 million.
- Undergraduate & Graduate Enrollment (headcount):
  - The plan for FY23 is to grow enrollment for 41,893, which includes graduate, law and undergraduate students.
  - Mason is admitting a lot of students and has a 70% graduation rate.
- Graduation Rates: Mason & National
  - The national average of black students graduating is 44.7% and Mason's average is 73.7%
- Changes in High School Grads:
  - Reviewed the national demographics from 2019 to 2025 and 20119 to 2030.
  - Reviewed the regional demographics. Northern Virginia looks different than the rest of the state. 40% of children in Virginia reside in Northern Virginia. Three quarters of Mason students call Northern Virginia home. While the national demographics are interested it is important to also look at region demographics to understand trends.
  - The number of high school graduates in Norther Virginia are projected to peak in 2026 at 46,000 students. However, since the number of births has declined since the last recession in Northern Virginia and there has been a decline in families moving into the area there is projected to be a slight decline in Northern Virginia graduation rates in 2040.
- Operating Plan: Net Tuition Revenue:
  - The net tuition revenue for FY23 and FY24 is what was submitted to the state.
  - Will have planned increases in tuition.
  - Will increase financial aid
- Biennium Operating Request:

- Mason will spend \$20 million on core operating items that are needed to be successful.
- Mason requested \$39.2 million from the state to support strategic investments. The amount provided from the state in the past has not been enough to catch Mason up to the levels where the university needs to be.
- Six-Year Projected Funding Gap:
  - After all expenses are funded by increased tuition revenue a state appropriation, Mason's operating margin is not sufficient to fund identified strategic needs.
- Pro-Forma Six-Year Capital Plan:
  - The goals are to develop a living framework to support ongoing decision making.
  - Phase one will be to establish flexible programmatic identity for three campuses.
  - Phase two will be to develop physical plans to support program goals.
  - Phase One Summary:
    - The Arlington Campus is a professional campus.
    - The SciTech Campus is the medical campus.
    - For the Fairfax Campus there are two trains of thought which are a renewed campus and a reimaged campus.
  - Pro-Forma Summary Capital Plan:
    - Is a seven-year period.
    - Mason Government Relations will strategize the legislature for capital campaigns.
    - Mason can issue \$200 million in debt due to Tier 3 status and still meet all of Mason's financial metrics.
    - More lab space is needed.
  - Mason's operating cash flow and liquidity look good as well as Mason's financial health.
- Financial Plan Summary Risks and Opportunities:
  - An operating risk is that salaries remain low.
  - A capital opportunity is prospective capital projects would be transformative.
- Ms. Kissal summarized that Mason has the resources and potential resources that can match the strategy and then opened the floor for questions.
- The following questions were posed to Ms. Kissal:
  - Visitor Kazmi asked about investing in affordable housing and childcare facilities as an alternative way to compete with salaries. Ms. Kissal responded that subsidizing instead of building more housing has been considered.
  - Visitor Rice asked what doubling down in financial aid money meant. Ms. Kissal clarified by noting \$38 million is currently received from the state and doubling that to \$65 million for financial aid over the coming years.
  - Visitor Kazmi inquired if the graduate student headcount was on track. Ms. Kissal stated that it is not if Mason wishes to expand research. Mason is not in danger as there was a graduate enrollment increase but the graduate student headcount needs to be monitored.



### VIII. Breakout Sessions

Dr. Washington, provided instruction for the breakout groups and rotations at each station as follows:

- Station # 1: Efficiency, Effectiveness, & New Revue Opportunities – Facilitated by Kevin Borek, Bill Dracos, André Kinney, Carol Kissal & Frank Strike
- Station #2: Innovation Commission & Strategic Planning – Facilitated by Keith Renshaw & Ken Walsh
- Station #3: Building Blocks for Mason’s Next \$1B Campaign - Philanthropic Partnerships – Facilitated by Trishana Bowden
- Station #4: Legislative Priorities – Facilitated by Paul Liberty

### IX. Report Outs (Morning & Afternoon Sessions) & General Discussion

Rector Hazel called for the reporters for presentation from their assigned stations:

- Station #1 (Morning): Mason as Tech Talent and Innovation Leader
  - Visitors Moss and Moreno provided the takeaways from their group. Visitor Moss noted that Mason is uniquely positioned to become a national leader in tech talent and innovation leadership. There are two ways to do this. The first, is by branding and positioning the university as a trusted partner. The second, is to invest in new pathways and technology, not just to meet today’s needs but future needs. Mason needs to invest in faculty by recognizing innovation and by rewarding innovation. Innovation needs to become the priority. Mason also needs to be recognized as producing the most diverse and prepared talent pool for the surrounding community.
  - Visitor Moreno noted that Mason wants to be a destination for innovation and support for equity, talent and access to that talent which is an enhancement to where the university currently is. She also mentioned the importance of inclusion.
- Station #2 (Morning): Mason Students: From Access to Success
  - Visitors Roth and Iturregui provided the takeaways from their group. Visitor Roth noted that a major take away during this breakout session was some of the statistics. She mentioned the data of 40,000 students currently at Mason and the goal of having 45,000 students by 2024. The completion rate was also discussed, in their group and she appreciated that Mason is not only attracting students but is also graduating. Due to the pandemic many students are dealing with mental health issues and are struggling with how to reconnect with the world. She was happy to learn that there is a committee to address this concern.
  - Visitor Iturregui agrees that the numbers are impressive, and Mason should be proud to be helping so many students.
- Station #3 (Morning): ARIE: Where We’ve Been and Where We’re Going on Our Journey to Inclusive Excellence
  - Visitors Rice and Prowitt provided the takeaways from their group. Visitor Rice notified that group that there were two ARIE Townhalls during the 2020-2021 academic year and stated they are on the Mason website should anyone wish to watch them. He noted that the ARIE Taskforce has 60 recommendations, of which 15 of those will be implemented this academic year. In addition, the state developed the One Virginia Plan which meshes well with the recommendations of the ARIE taskforce.
  - Visitor Prowitt stated that Mason is well on its way to be the exemplar on how to handle anti-racism and inclusive excellence. She mentioned that the One

Virginia Plan came out after the ARIE Taskforce began. She also highlighted the ARIE Townhalls. A foundational course on ARIE will be implemented and offered during a student's sophomore year at Mason.

- Station #4 (Morning): Supporting Faculty & Staff Success: Driving Mason to Greater Greatness
  - Visitor Chimaladinne provided the takeaways from his group. He learned that Mason needs to hire more faculty and staff. He continued that the Mason faculty and staff is not as diverse as the student population and hopes this changes in the coming years. He mentioned that there are strategies in place to help with retention of faculty and staff.
- Station #1 (Afternoon): Efficiency, Effectiveness, & New Revenue Opportunities
  - Vice Rector Blackman and Visitor Iturregui provided the takeaways from their group. Vice Rector Blackman reported that this topic centers around three things: monetizing real estate, reimagining what the main access to campus looks like so it is more prominent, and reimagining how Mason interacts with the community.
  - Visitor Iturregui sees a little bit of gap between Fairfax City (Mason's host community) and Fairfax County (the broader governmental unit). He would like for them to become part of Mason and Mason a part of them to close that disconnect. Regarding monetizing, Visitor Iturregui would like to see senior incorporated as we are an aging society.
- Station #2 (Afternoon): Innovation Commission & Strategic Planning
  - Visitors Rice and Reagan provided the takeaways from their group. Visitor Rice stated they talked about establishing a brand, connecting university groups and how to get different university groups talking to each other. Their station talked about an idea of a debt free solutions for students. Currently, there are not enough places for students to work on campus. It was discussed to establish something similar to the EIP program for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders to tutor their way into Mason. There should be some recognition for faculty and staff when they go above and beyond the call of duty. There needs to be a balance of hybrid work and education. The culture of mentoring others in their career path is considered very important.
  - What resonated with Visitor Reagan was Dr. Washington starting the innovation commission process. There were eight lessons that the innovation commission identified. He hopes this is the beginning of the process in learning about the lesson of the pandemic. Visitor Reagan predicts there will be a major focus on the disruption of K12 education and how this disruption will affect the students and put them behind. He continued that it will be really important for institutions to be forward thinking on how to handle this disruption. He felt that the proposal for a debt free education and every student coming out of Mason with a job is a really positive notion. He felt that the strategic plan that was out lined was very inclusive, outstanding and believes it will be successful.
- Station #3 (Afternoon): Building Blocks for Mason's Next \$1B Campaign – Philanthropic Partnerships
  - Visitors Kazmi and Peterson provided the takeaways from their group. Visitor Kazmi is happy to be on board where there are not any big issues to address. The alumni participation campaign was about 23% in the last campaign. This year there has been 40% alumni participation. The message is everyone is welcome to participate and help raise the \$125 million for the Arlington project.

- Visitor Peterson expressed that his takeaway is that Mason is a university that comes up with ideas and then makes those ideas happen quickly. He continued to remark that other universities take much longer to make things happen. Mason is known as a pioneering university. When it comes to diversity, Mason is miles ahead of other universities and now we need to build on that.
- Station #4 (Afternoon): 2021-2022 Legislative Priorities
  - Rector Hazel began by welcoming the newest board member Dolly Oberoi. He continued that there are many challenges ahead and that Dr. Washington will share his goals during tomorrow's annual board meeting. None of the items that were priorities when Dr. Washington was hired were priorities when he started. Rector Hazel stated that Dr. Washington did a wonderful job with what he was given.
  - Rector Hazel noted that this is an election year and encouraged the board to get out there and talk to the candidates, telling them about Mason, the disparity in funding and the need for additional financial aid. Use this as an opportunity to turn the candidates into Mason allies if they are not already. He concluded that engaging with the candidates was the main take away from his group and then introduced Dr. Washington for closing remarks.

#### **X. Reflections & Closing Comments**

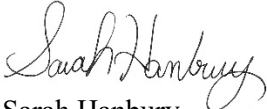
Dr. Washington provided the following reflections and closing remarks.

- He is tremendously proud with what Mason has accomplished this year given the uncertainty of how the year began. Other Virginia institutions are wondering how Mason did it. He applauded state government relations and Mark Smith, Executive Director of State Government Relations for fully engaging elected officials to obtain much needed support for Mason. He thanked the leadership team and continued that the university is great because there are great people running it. He concluded that a team has been assembled to handle the Delta Variant and then a brief video was shown addressing the variant.

#### **XI. Adjournment**

Rector Hazel adjourned the session at 4:40 p.m.

Prepared by:



Sarah Hanbury  
Secretary pro tem