



Pre-Meeting Workshop: Making the Case for Centralized Support for Graduate Education

*Presented by Laurence Bray
Associate Provost for Graduate Education
George Mason University*

Council of Graduate Schools
December 2022



OUR CAMPUSES

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY



Free Mason shuttle
from Fairfax
to Prince William County

34 miles from
Washington, D.C.

FAIRFAX



Free Mason shuttle to the
Vienna Metro Station
(Orange Line)

15 miles from
Washington, D.C.

MASON SQUARE



Free Mason shuttle
from Fairfax
to Arlington County

5 miles from
Washington, D.C.



MASON TODAY



LARGEST
public
research
university
in Virginia



39,000
Patriots
total
11,000
graduates



One of the
most
diverse
universities
in the
nation



2ND largest
residential
campus in
Virginia



Represented by
50
states and
139
countries

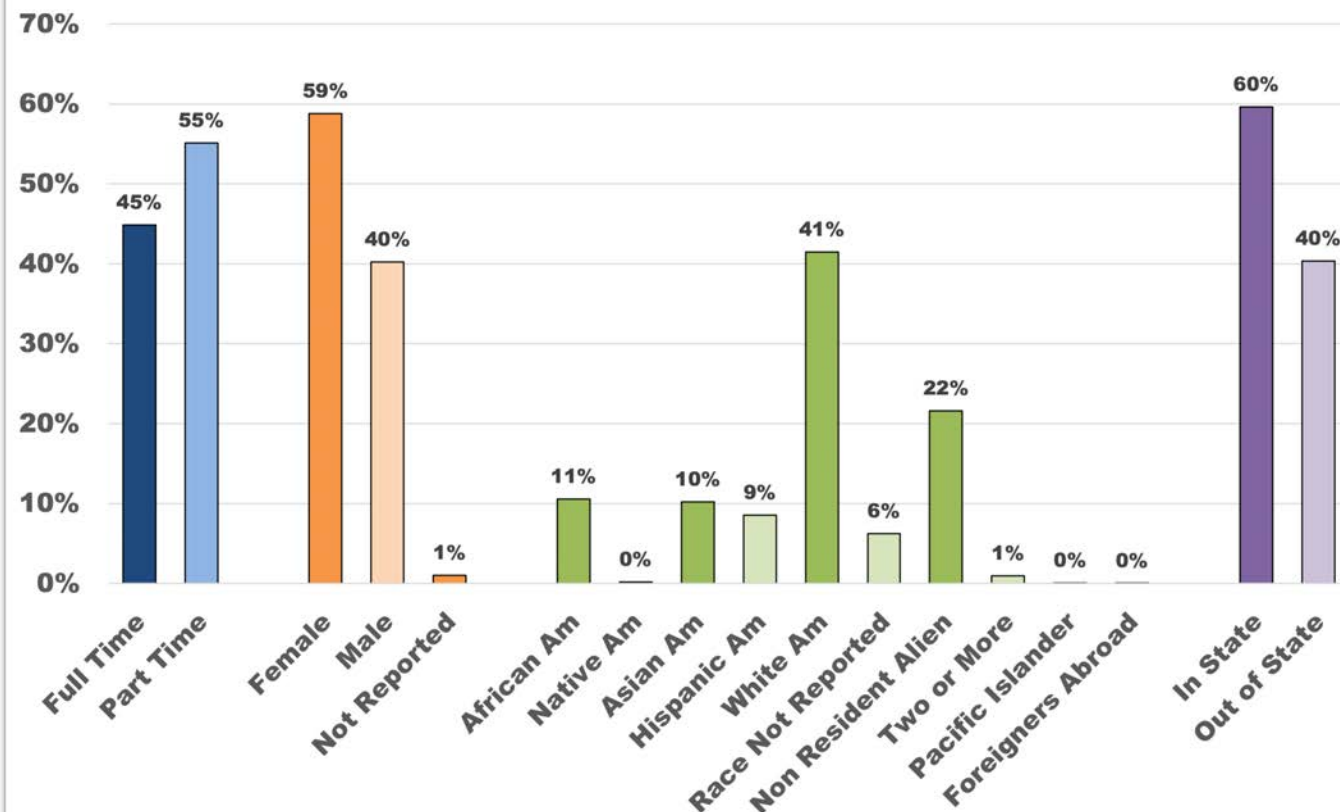


7,648
Master's
students

2,219
Doctoral
students

635
Students in
a graduate
certificate

Graduate Student Demographics



GRADUATE EDUCATION BY THE NUMBER
Fall 2022

Graduate Education: Sequence of Events

Summer 2019: Interim Associate Provost for Graduate Education

Fall 2019: Launch of National search

Spring 2020: Offered the permanent position of Associate Provost for Graduate Education with the charge of “fixing” the Office of Graduate Education and elevating Graduate Education at Mason

Summer 2020: Report to new Provost and new President announces his desire to have a Graduate School at Mason

Summer 2021: Restructuring of the Office of the Provost

Spring 2021 – Summer 2022: Led the Graduate Education Reimagine Task Force resulting in comprehensive recommendations and led four advisory groups resulting in a multi-year implementation plan

Fall 2022: Launch of the new Graduate Division

Fall 2020 Climate

Overall:

- Anxiety, fear, worry, some excitement, some frustration, and “PTSD”

From Academic Deans:

- Loss of decision-making authority and autonomy?

From Other Senior Leaders:

- Additional resources needed, loss of authority on some graduate functions?

From Central Offices:

- Loss of authority on some graduate functions, position security?

From Graduate Faculty and Staff:

- Another initiative, another change, position security?

From Graduate Students:

- Lack of understanding

From a Comment to Launch

January 2021- September 2021

**Exploration:
Graduate Education
Reimagine Task Force**

- Examine the current state of graduate education
- Identify and review current opportunities and associated challenges
- Review and consider strategic solutions that could help overcome these challenges by suggesting operational and structural enhancements

**Deliverable: Draft
Recommendation Report**

October 2021- December 2021

**Engagement:
Effective Communication
Strategies**

- Website
- Newsletter
- Presentations
- University-wide survey
- Lots of feedback
- Overall, 90% (77 out of 85) of the respondents rated the recommendations to be “good”, “very good”, and “excellent”

**Deliverable: Final
Recommendation Report**

February 2022 – June 2022

**Implementation Plan:
Four Strategic
Advisory Groups**

- Specific strategies to form and operationalize the new Graduate Division over five years
 - Graduate Recruitment Strategies
 - Graduate Academic Excellence
 - Graduate Student Success
 - Graduate Partnerships and External Relations

**Deliverable: Multi-year
Implementation Plan**

Exploration: Graduate Education Reimagine Task Force

Twenty-six (26) members – representatives from each college and school, the Faculty Senate, Graduate Council, Graduate Student Association, and a variety of other stakeholders

Bi-weekly meetings from April to November 2021

Draft Recommendations

Graduate School → Graduate Division

The Graduate Division should have an impact on the entire graduate experience journey by:

- Leading a coherent graduate marketing and recruitment plan to build an aspirational graduate student population;
- Facilitating effective and efficient graduate admission practices while supporting program-specific admissions processes within the academic units, maintaining standards, and ensuring compliance;
- Building a robust foundation to maximize graduate student academic success (retention, degree completion, and time-to-degree);
- Preparing well-rounded and diverse graduates to contribute to research productivity and workforce development;
- Leveraging external relations and alumni engagement to expand the impact of graduates;
- Fostering a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion that serves both the Commonwealth of Virginia and the nation; and
- Utilizing efficient and effective systems and technologies to make data-informed decisions to enhance the administration of Mason graduate education.

Engagement: Effective Communication Strategies

Through a variety of presentations, the Task Force provided information to and received feedback from more than 600 individuals from different stakeholder groups across academic units and central offices.

October and December 2021

Final Recommendations

Goal: Elevate Mason graduate education by increasing the impact of graduate students and programs, by fostering a collaborative culture of academic excellence, and by contributing to the research productivity and the workforce development appropriate to an R1 institution.

Leverage economies of scale, facilitate interdisciplinary initiatives, maximize strategic and targeted investments to augment and complement the efforts of local academic units

Dean's Council

GAPSA

Research Council

Faculty Senate

OGAL

Directors and Coordinators

Graduate Council (Special Meeting)

Executive Council

GAGAA

GRAC

Townhall

Townhall

Academic Council

Implementation Plan: Four Strategic Advisory Groups

Based on these recommendations, Mason Senior Leadership initiated an implementation planning process to establish a Graduate Division, with an anticipated initiation in fall 2022.

Bi-weekly meetings from March to June 2022

Multi-year Implementation Plan

including lead and supporting units, specific activities, resources, short- and long-term impact, success metrics, and collaborations within and beyond the Division.

- **Goal 1:** Promote Mason graduate education and enhance pre-enrollment strategies.
 - **Goal 2:** Strengthen graduate academic programs and increase their visibility.
 - **Goal 3:** Optimize the graduate student experience and engagement.
 - **Goal 4:** Bolster graduate internal and external relations.
-
- Graduate student funding enhancements
 - Division-wide operations and business intelligence
 - Overall financial, structural, and organizational impact
 - Activities that will positively and directly impact diversity, equity, and inclusion are tagged with the acronym “DEI.”

Launch and First Year's Priorities

Fall 2022: Official Launch of the Graduate Division

This year's priorities: “Low hanging fruits and small wins”

- University wide graduate student online onboarding platform
- University wide graduate teaching assistant training
- Mentoring for Anti-Racism and Inclusive Excellence Program

Coming Soon:

- Incentive-based model to increase GA support on sponsored research
- Graduate resource and academic success center

Fall 2022 Climate

Overall:

- Excitement, energy, trust, some fear and anxiety

From Academic Deans:

- Reassured, but wondering what this really means in practice?

From Other Senior Leaders:

- Additional resources needed, loss of authority on some graduate functions

From Central Offices:

- Interests in new possible partnerships

From Graduate Faculty and Staff:

- Eagerness about new possibilities and opportunities

From Graduate Students:

- Do not really understand the difference but start feeling the impact

Lessons Learned

What Contributed to the Successful Initiative

- Transparency
- Communication
- Inclusion
- Engagement
- Collaboration
- Teamwork
- Bottom-up approach
- Selection of task force and advisory group members

Limitations and Continued Challenges

- Visibility of the Graduate Division
- Reporting Structure
- Resources, especially personnel
- Disconnection between the Provost and the President's goals
- Competitive and territorial attitude from other senior leaders
- Politics
- External consultant



[Graduate.gmu.edu](https://graduate.gmu.edu)



THANK YOU!!