

# ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY

## The George Mason Vision

### Our Motto

Freedom and Learning

### Our Vision

Your World, Transformed

### Mission

A public, comprehensive, research university established by the Commonwealth of Virginia in the National Capital Region, we are an innovative and inclusive academic community committed to creating a more just, free, and prosperous world.

### Our Core Values

The pressures we face today may be different from the past, but our core values remain the same and continue to guide our actions.

#### Our students come first

Our top priority is to provide students with a transformational learning experience that helps them grow as individuals, scholars, and professionals.

#### Innovation is our tradition

We strive to find new and better ways to deliver on our mission while honoring time-tested academic values.

#### We are careful stewards

We manage the economic and natural resources entrusted to us responsibly and sustainably.

#### We thrive together

We nurture a positive and collaborative community that contributes to the well-being and success of every member.

#### Diversity is our strength

We include and embrace a multitude of people and ideas in everything we do and respect differences.

#### We honor freedom of thought and expression

We protect the freedom of all members of our community to seek truth and express their views.

#### We act with integrity

We hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards as educators, scholars, students, and professionals.

## The George Mason graduate is...

### An engaged citizen

- ethically oriented and committed to democratic ideals
- respectful of individual differences, rights, and liberties
- knowledgeable of important issues affecting the world
- focused on the well-being of others, today and tomorrow
- committed to building a just society

### A well-rounded scholar

- thinks critically and creatively and demonstrates professional competence
- possesses an inquisitive nature

- appreciates science, humanities, and the arts
- is skilled as a communicator
- is committed to lifelong learning

### Prepared to act

- innovative, resourceful, and entrepreneurial; ready to do or create a job
- interested and practiced in working with individuals from other cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives
- equipped to make positive and meaningful changes in society

## George Mason, the Man: Reflections from the Center for Mason Legacies

George Mason IV was the primary author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights and a vital contributor to Virginia's first state constitution, written in 1776. The principles expressed in these documents informed the language of the Declaration of Independence, many state constitutions, and the US Bill of Rights. Mason was a successful Virginia planter, dedicated father, and sometimes reluctant public leader. Although he attended the 1787 Constitutional Convention, Mason refused to sign the finished document because he believed that it failed to protect the rights of citizens.

Mason preferred life far from the halls of government. He relished time at his Gunston Hall plantation, where he wrote treatises on legal issues, commercial regulations, and property matters. Although he condemned the international slave trade, he was not opposed to the institution of slavery. While he decried slavery's "ill effects . . . upon the Morals" of White Virginians, he owned over one hundred children, women, and men of African descent. Putting the interests of his own family first, he bequeathed his enslaved laborers, along with vast landholdings, to his heirs. Several of the people owned by Mason resisted their bondage by running away from Gunston Hall, including a young man named Dick. Mason's principled calls for individual rights and liberties coexisted with his enslavement of Black people, reflecting a contradiction at the heart of the American founding.

In 1996, a powerful statue of George Mason presenting his Virginia Declaration of Rights was dedicated on the Fairfax campus. In 2022, the Enslaved People of George Mason Memorial, an interactive multi-sited installation, was unveiled near this statue in the new Roger Wilkins Plaza. The memorial focuses on the ideals of democracy and freedom embodied by Mason, the people he enslaved—including Penny, a 10-year-old girl, and James, Mason's manservant—and their legacies.

Benedict Carton, Associate Professor, African and African American Studies and School of Integrative Studies

Wendi Manuel-Scott, Professor, African and African American Studies, Department of History and Art History, School of Integrative Studies, and Women and Gender Studies

George D. Oberle III, Director, Center for Mason Legacies; History Librarian, University Libraries; and Associate Professor, Department of History and Art History

## University History

The idea for George Mason University was born in 1949 when the Northern Virginia University Center, essentially an adult-education extension of the University of Virginia at Charlottesville, opened under the direction of John Norville Gibson Finley. In 1955 and again in 1956, the Board of Visitors of the University of Virginia and Virginia legislature authorized the establishment of a two-year branch college to serve Northern Virginia.

The university's formal history began in 1957 as University College, the Northern Virginia branch of the University of Virginia, offering courses in engineering and the liberal arts. It opened in a renovated elementary school in the Bailey's Crossroads area with an enrollment of 17 students.

Eager to support the fledgling institution, the Town (now City) of Fairfax purchased 150 acres in 1958 and donated the land to the University of Virginia for a permanent branch campus. The following year, the University of Virginia Board of Visitors selected the name George Mason College. Construction of the campus' first four buildings was completed in 1964. In September of that year, 356 students began their studies in the new classrooms.

In March 1966, the General Assembly authorized the expansion of George Mason College into a four-year, degree-granting institution and gave it the long-range mandate to expand into a major regional university. The first senior class received degrees in June 1968. Graduate programs began in September 1970, with the first master's degrees conferred in June 1971. The George Mason College Board of Control, supported by citizens of the cities of Alexandria and Falls Church, and Arlington and Fairfax counties, acquired an additional 422 acres. By the end of 1970, the college's Fairfax Campus reached 572 acres; it is now 677 acres.

In 1972, the Board of Visitors of the University of Virginia recommended that the college separate from its parent institution. On April 7 of that year, the governor signed the General Assembly legislation that established George Mason University as an independent member of Virginia's system of colleges and universities.

Since 1972, the university's development has been marked by rapid growth and innovative planning. Enrollment has risen to more than 40,000 students. In 1979, George Mason was given the authority to grant doctoral degrees and began offering programs at this level. In the same year, the university acquired what became George Mason University School of Law, located at Mason Square, and now known as the Antonin Scalia Law School.

Since its beginnings, George Mason University has experienced a steady transformation from regional commuter school to national powerhouse. George Mason's rise is no coincidence, but instead reflects an audacity to ask questions others haven't and to prioritize the evolving needs of our community over the status quo. More than a half century later, George Mason's reach extends across the commonwealth and into the global arena, with a diverse student body comprising students from all 50 states and 130 countries, a campus in South Korea, and world-renowned faculty and researchers dedicated to both focusing on complex problems and nurturing the next generation of thinkers and leaders.

Even as George Mason makes a greater impact on the region, nation, and globe, we never waver in our commitment to inclusivity and our belief that higher education should be accessible to all.

Guided by our motto of Freedom and Learning, George Mason strides into the future with a spirit of determination and grit, an acceptance of wide-

ranging viewpoints and cultures, and a conviction to stand firm to our principles. In a rapidly changing world of increasing complexity, George Mason University embraces society's challenges as opportunities to find future solutions and bring positive change.

## Faculty and Students

The university's more than 1,400 full-time instructional and research faculty members are experts in a broad range of fields. They have published widely, contributed to major research findings, and consulted with government and business officials. Drawing prominent scholars from all fields, George Mason's outstanding faculty have received grants and awards from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Templeton Foundation, the National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities; they have won numerous awards such as Fulbright Scholar grants, Pulitzer Prizes, Mellon Fellowships, Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Centennial Medals, and Nobel Prizes. More than 47 endowed chairs at the university have also brought many internationally renowned artists and scholars to campus.

Of particular interest to undergraduates are the Robinson Professors, outstanding scholars in the liberal arts and sciences who have come to George Mason from prestigious positions elsewhere. They are concerned with broad and fundamental intellectual issues and are dedicated to undergraduate teaching and working with Honors College students. In 1984, the first Robinson Professors joined the faculty as the result of a generous bequest from the estate of Clarence J. Robinson.

George Mason University is Virginia's largest public research university. Located near Washington, D.C., George Mason enrolls 40,000 students from 130 countries and all 50 states. George Mason has grown rapidly over the past half-century and is recognized for its innovation and entrepreneurship, remarkable diversity, and commitment to accessibility.

## Accreditation

George Mason University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. Questions about the accreditation of George Mason University may be directed in writing to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097, by calling (404) 679-4500, or by using information available on the SACSCOC website (<https://sacscoc.org/>).

Individual programs or units may also be accredited by discipline-specific agencies. Additional information may be found on the accreditation page of the Provost's website (<https://provost.gmu.edu/academics/accreditation/>), or contact the Director of Accreditation, Susan Woodruff, at [swoodru3@gmu.edu](mailto:swoodru3@gmu.edu).

## George Mason University Foundation, Inc. Mission

The George Mason University Foundation, Inc. (Foundation) was established in 1966 to receive, manage, invest, and administer private gifts for the benefit of the University, including endowment and real property. The Foundation is an independent entity classified as a public charity as defined by section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. For more information, please visit the Foundation's website (<https://gmuf.org/>).