



A Lifelong Connection

Strategic Plan

2008 – 2010



President's Message

A Lifelong Connection

Alumni and friends,

Today the Mason Alumni Association is 120,000 people strong, comprised of graduates from George Mason College and the most recent graduates of George Mason University. The Alumni Association, founded in 1968, actually predates the granting of University status by four years. 2008 marks the 40th anniversary of the Alumni Association and this strategic plan lays the path toward our 50th.

The small number of graduates in 1968 having established this Association is tangible evidence of the Mason spirit that has grown exponentially with the University. That spirit has helped drive George Mason to become a leading institute of higher learning and research inside of four decades. To me, this makes our story a unique and inspiring one.

Mason spirit is strong, exciting, growing, and you are part of it. The Mason Alumni Association is active in a wide array of activities to keep the lifelong connection Mason alumni have to the University vibrant, fun, and enriching. The volunteer Board members of the Alumni Association work hard throughout the year to keep programs and events interesting and to provide meaningful service to alumni and the university.

We recognize that the future growth and success of George Mason is directly tied to alumni involvement and support. Listed on the following pages is the core of what the Alumni Association is and aspires to be. Just as the University continues to reach for the stars, so shall we, the George Mason University Alumni Association, continue to build *A Lifelong Connection*.

Sincerely,

Ted Arnn, BS '93

President, George Mason University Alumni Association

Mission Statement

To strengthen George Mason University by engaging alumni through fellowship, programs, and services which encourage active participation in the university community.

Core Values

We value the diverse alumni of George Mason University and are committed to strengthening the relations between alumni and the university through accessible and inclusive programs and services.

- We value the partnership between the Office of Alumni Affairs and the volunteers of the Alumni Association and support the office's goals and objectives.
- We value the faculty, staff, and administration of the university and their work in preparing future alumni for meaningful and successful lives.
- We value the role of communication and cultivation in engaging alumni in academic, social, and philanthropic activities.
- We value the future of George Mason University and its students—our future alumni.
- We value and understand the legacy we create at George Mason University.
- We value and recognize the importance of our stewardship of the Alumni Association.

Key Elements

ADVOCACY

Educate alumni about issues relevant to the university, facilitate legislative outreach, encourage alumni volunteer efforts in student recruitment programs, and facilitate general advocacy for the university.

COMMUNICATION

Inform and solicit input from alumni, report alumni interests and concerns to the university on a regular basis, and build programs based on alumni input.

INVOLVEMENT

Engage alumni in the life of the university by facilitating meaningful opportunities for volunteering and lifelong learning, engaging activities that bring alumni together and back to the university, and increased levels of engagement and support.

LEADERSHIP

Facilitate the development of a strong corps of alumni leaders through recruitment, training, and recognition. Represent the alumni voice with the university through leadership interactions.

PRESTIGE

Increase the reputation of the university by identifying prominent alumni and promoting alumni accomplishments. Build pride by informing alumni about university, faculty, alumni, and student accomplishments.

SUPPORT

Encourage and facilitate alumni giving by identifying, cultivating, and recognizing supporters. Support students through programs and scholarships, and facilitate Alumni Association involvement in all university campaigns.

George Mason University Alumni Association Guiding Principles

1. Alumni have a unique and permanent connection to our university.
2. Our voice, by virtue of that connection/bond and as a result of our individual experiences, has merit and value to the university.
3. Universities thrive when they embrace a broad collective of voices and perspectives. Forty years of history and more than 120,000 experiences represent a diverse and varied collection of educated voices.
4. Providing a meaningful post-curricular experience for alumni maintains and strengthens the relationship between alumni and George Mason University.
5. Involving alumni in the important business decisions and developments of the institution increases alumni investment in, advocacy for, and support of the university.
6. The Alumni Association of George Mason University is committed to facilitating strong bonds of mutual affinity through programs, services, and communication.

What we do:

- Recruit and develop leaders and facilitate volunteer opportunities.
- Leverage partnerships on campus to provide meaningful services to alumni.
- Nurture alumni network and relationships through strong alumni chapters, academic unit-based activities, affinity groups, and regional groups.
- Support academic unit outreach to alumni.
- Encourage alumni to support the university through volunteer service, philanthropy, and advocacy.
- Facilitate programs that bring alumni together for fellowship and professional networking with alumni, faculty/staff, and students.
- Support students through scholarships and mentoring.
- Inform alumni about university developments, achievements, and needs through the *Mason Spirit*, *MasonWire*, and events.
- Communicate with alumni to create higher levels of engagement and support.
- Recognize and celebrate alumni accomplishments.

Strategic Goals and Objectives 2008-2012

I. Leadership

Provide volunteer leadership through the Alumni Association Board, as the official voice of alumni, on matters of relevance to the university and alumni.

- A. Develop alumni leaders through recruitment, training, and recognition.

1. Establish new guidelines for chapter leader recruitment taking a more active role in the identification process.
 2. Modify standing rules of the bylaws to redefine the expectations of active chapters, focusing on leadership identification, cultivation, recruitment, and succession planning.
 3. Develop training programs including twice annual leadership development workshops for alumni leaders.
 4. Evaluate and enhance board nomination process and strengthen leadership pipeline by identifying and cultivating more alumni leaders.
- B. Represent the alumni voice to the university through leadership interactions.
1. Inform alumni serving on the Board of Visitors and the Board of Trustees of Alumni Association initiatives through interactions with executive committee members.
 2. Facilitate a high level of board participation in gatherings of university leadership boards. Establish interaction opportunities between the association's Board of Directors and university leaders.

II. Prestige

Enhance the reputation of the university and build alumni pride by sharing the stories of successful alumni.

- A. Identify prominent alumni. Leverage Board members' varied networks to identify alumni who are making a positive impact in their profession, community, and society. Work with schools and colleges to identify prominent alumni through faculty contacts.
- B. Recognize and promote alumni accomplishments through the Celebration of Distinction by involving deans and directors of academic units directly in the selection process. Working with university relations, send targeted press releases to promote the accomplishments of alumni and promote prominent alumni on the website and MasonWire.
- C. Build pride by informing alumni about university, faculty, alumni, and student accomplishments.
1. Use website, events, and other communication tools to share accomplishments.
 2. Know the facts about university milestones and accomplishments.

III. Advocacy

Advance the university's reputation and influence through active advocacy at the legislative and community level.

- A. Encourage legislative outreach. Use the alumni web site, *Masonadvocate.org* web site, events, and other communication vehicles to inform alumni about legislative issues relevant to the university and facilitate alumni participation in meaningful legislative advocacy efforts working closely with the university administration.
- B. Facilitate alumni participation in admissions activities. Actively support growth and development of the alumni/admissions partnership and program. Educate alumni about

student recruitment volunteer opportunities through various communication vehicles including the web site, events, and mailings.

C. Facilitate general advocacy for the university.

1. Prepare alumni to be effective advocates for the university by informing them about university milestones, achievements, recognition, strategic goals, and issues.
2. Ensure that the entire alumni association board is informed and actively advocating for the university by inviting senior administrators and academic leaders to board meetings. Create opportunities for interaction between university administrators and board members.

IV. Support

Contribute to the philanthropic goals and needs of the university, helping to increase support for the university from alumni and provide support to students.

A. Encourage alumni giving.

1. Ensure 100 percent participation of the Alumni Association board in annual giving.
2. Communicate messages to the alumni body about the importance and impact of support.
3. Foster close relationships with university/school development officers and find ways to acknowledge and engage current alumni supporters. Identify, cultivate, and steward supporters.
4. Cultivate a culture of giving and recognize donors to the Alumni Association and alumni donors in general.

B. Facilitate Alumni Association role in university campaigns.

1. Serve as advocates for university fundraising initiatives.
 - a. Educate board members about the goals, objectives, and messages of the campaign, enabling them to act as effective spokespersons, advocates, and influencers.
 - b. Encourage giving by effectively articulating the needs and the impact of private support on the success and advancement of university goals.
2. Capitalize on existing and emerging alumni networks and communication vehicles to encourage participation.
 - a. Share information, campaign updates, and individual stories that will inspire and motivate alumni to participate in the campaign, using the board, chapters, regional groups, communication vehicles, and informal networks.
 - b. Continue a broad range of efforts to increase alumni involvement with the association and the university and to engage in dialogue regarding advancement strategies.
3. Personally invest in the campaign.

4. Build student scholarship support.

- a. Identify and engage in specific strategies geared toward increasing the endowments of the existing Alumni Association scholarships and encourage support of scholarships in general by articulating the need for support.**
- b. Facilitate advocacy on the part of recipients of Alumni Association's scholarships.**

V. Involvement

Engage alumni in meaningful interaction with each other and the university in order to build pride and affinity and facilitate a lifelong mutually beneficial relationship with alma mater.

A. Facilitate volunteer opportunities.

- 1. Evaluate and enhance opportunities for alumni service throughout the university and community.**
- 2. Continue to support and develop alumni admissions programs, career programs, and student outreach activities.**
- 3. Track volunteer service and recognize volunteers.**

B. Engage alumni in activities and cultivate increasing levels of engagement and support. Provide programs to students that create alumni/student interaction and raise student awareness of university involvement opportunities after graduation.

- 1. Continue to build and enhance strong, traditional events including Homecoming, Virginia Gold Cup, and George Mason Birthday event, and maximize alumni interaction.**
- 2. Working with Office of Alumni Affairs and university stakeholders, develop Alumni Weekend program and launch in fall, 2009.**
- 3. Continue to offer and build a broad diversity of alumni activities on and off campus including arts and entertainment, social, recreational, professional development, and networking activities.**
- 4. Identify and target key affinity groups for special programming including age, ethnicity, student activity, and geographic location demographics.**
- 5. Track participation.**
- 6. Use events to promote the university and encourage further involvement and support.**

C. Facilitate lifelong learning opportunities.

Inform alumni about opportunities within the university to enhance their personal and professional development through formal and informal educational programs including graduate degree programs, continuing

education, lectures, and workshops.

- D. Foster strong working partnerships with university strategic partners including schools and colleges, Admissions, Career Services, University Life, University Relations, Athletics, Development and Alumni Affairs, Foundation, and senior administration.**
- 1. Ensure that chapter leaders are strong representatives of their academic unit, the university, and the association; engage in meaningful service; and support the university and their constituent alumni.**
 - 2. Ensure strong partnerships, regular communication, and buy-in/ownership that leads to better identification of key volunteers, leaders, distinguished alumni, and increased alumni giving. Key contacts include the provost, the deans, department chairs, key faculty, development directors and other external relations staff (includes alumni, communication/events, corporate relations, admissions and career services unit staff).**
 - 3. Encourage all schools, colleges, and academic units to be engaged with their respective Alumni Association chapter.**
 - 4. Restructure chapter reporting at the association's board of directors meetings to focus on schools and colleges with involvement of unit dean.**
 - 5. Collaborative events.**
 - **CELEBRATION OF DISTINCTION**
Goal: All schools and colleges present a distinguished alumni award selected by alumni, faculty, and leadership of the school. Award presented by the dean and alumni leader/chapter president.
 - **HOMECOMING**
Goal: All schools and colleges have a presence either through College Row or a separate event.
 - **CONVOCATION/COMMENCEMENT**
Goal: Have an alumni/Alumni Association presence at all convocations and Commencement and ensure that contact information for new alumni is collected.

VI. Communication

Inform and educate alumni about the university and opportunities to engage with alumni and students to build pride, affinity, and encourage high levels of involvement with and support of the university.

- A. Use various means to inform and solicit input from alumni.**
- 1. Use surveys, polls, focus groups, events, and individual interactions to assess alumni attitudes, ideas, and inputs. Engage alumni in an ongoing dialogue with the university to ensure that the alumni voice is represented. Help alumni feel like an integral part of the university today, and in the future, and a valued part of the university's history.**
 - 2. Use web site, MasonWire, *Mason Spirit*, departmental**

and unit newsletters and magazines, events, mailings, and other communication vehicles to inform alumni about university and alumni activities, points of pride, strategic directions and university, alumni, faculty and student accomplishments, and milestones.

3. Promote the Alumni Association and university at all events and activities with appropriate messaging and branding.
4. Conduct Alumni Attitude Survey in fall 2008. Report findings including comparison to the 2003 survey to alumni body and the university providing additional insights into alumni perceptions of and attitudes about engagement and their propensity to support the university.

B. Report alumni interests and concerns to the university.

1. Regularly share alumni input with senior leaders of the university, as well as volunteer board members and student leaders, through formal and informal meetings and interactions.
2. Create vehicles for “taking the alumni pulse” when issues arise in which alumni could have a stake.

C. Clearly articulate the mission and goals of the Alumni Association, as well as the value proposition of engaging with and supporting alma mater.

1. Share the Alumni Association Strategic Plan with senior administrators annually and provide progress updates.
2. Ensure that the Alumni Association board and chapter leaders understand the goals and strategies and incorporate them into chapter and committee plans.
3. Ensure that the mission statement, goals, and objectives of the Alumni Association are visible on the web site, and in print publications.
4. Ensure that the work of the Alumni Association and alumni volunteers is visible and valued by the university.

D. Experts on Alumni

As the official voice of the alumni community, the Alumni Association has a responsibility to speak from an educated vantage point. Ensure that board members are educated about the views, perspectives, needs/desires, and experiences of alumni as well as being educated about the university of today and tomorrow.

1. Frequently ask alumni for input and engage them in dialogue.
2. Know key goals and strengths of schools and colleges, university mission and strategic plan, and campaign goals.
3. Know who our prominent alumni are and help to identify new ones.
4. Identify alumni volunteer leaders and prospective leaders and cultivate and develop them on an ongoing basis.

VII. Board Resources

Develop and steward resources to ensure a sustained and dynamic association.

- A. Create long-term strategic budget plan assessing current resources and opportunities for new revenue to support current and future programs.**
- B. Develop strategies for increasing the Alumni Association endowment.**
- C. Engage the university in dialogue related to future space needs for the Office of Alumni Affairs/Alumni Association and the development of an Alumni Welcome Center which would provide a home to alumni returning to campus.**

HOW WE WILL KNOW WE ARE SUCCEEDING

- ✓ **Alumni leadership involvement in all levels of university decision making**
- ✓ **Alumni volunteers at all Alumni Association-sponsored activities and major university events**
- ✓ **Alumni leaders identified and engaged**
- ✓ **Increased event attendance**
- ✓ **Increased alumni giving**
- ✓ **Accurate contact information obtained from all GMUAA event participants**
- ✓ **Alumni accomplishments acknowledged via publications and events**
- ✓ **Alumni involved in legislative initiatives**
- ✓ **Increased number of alumni volunteers engaged in meaningful service**
- ✓ **Increased Alumni Association scholarship support for students**