

Executive Summary

Students as Scholars: Fostering a Culture of Student Scholarship Quality Enhancement Plan

George Mason University is an innovative, entrepreneurial public research institution with more than 32,000 students (22,000 undergraduates) located in the heart of Northern Virginia's technology corridor near Washington, DC. To develop the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) topic, "Fostering a Culture of Student Scholarship," Mason used a multi-year process led by broadly representative committees that consulted with the university community and reviewed institutional data and planning documents. Student scholarship is the process of generating and sharing knowledge or creative works, and includes undergraduate research and creative activities.

As the Mason community discussed the role of the QEP in transforming the undergraduate experience, it became clear that we had a vision in which scholarship would be pervasive across the university. The *Students as Scholars* QEP affords us the opportunity to connect our undergraduate students with the research and creative mission of the institution and our faculty. This topic will help Mason address issues around student participation in enriching academic experiences, student-faculty interaction, and academic challenge, which require strengthening as indicated by both institutional and National Survey of Student Engagement data.

Our QEP mission, goals, student learning outcomes, and program outcomes capture this vision. **The mission of our QEP is to foster a culture of student scholarship through increased participation in and celebration of scholarly activities. Student learning will be enhanced through a process of scholarly inquiry, where scholarship is valued as a core practice of the Mason student experience.** The three major goals of the *Students as Scholars* QEP are to 1) enhance the awareness and visibility of scholarship at Mason, 2) increase opportunities for scholarly inquiry, and 3) develop the infrastructure to support student scholarship.

The *Students as Scholars* QEP student learning outcomes are organized to build on increasing levels of student engagement in scholarship. Students will discover how knowledge is generated through scholarship and how they might engage in the process of scholarship; articulate scholarly questions and place concepts within a broader context; and create and communicate their own scholarship. Beyond impacting student learning, Mason expects to see improvement in a number of program outcomes as a result of implementing the QEP. These program outcomes relate to enhancing the visibility of student scholarship on campus, providing robust curricular and mentored opportunities for scholarly inquiry, increasing faculty support of these activities, and better preparing our students to meet their future career and academic goals. The student learning and program outcomes will be evaluated using both formative and summative assessment, and the QEP Leadership Council will review these results annually, adjusting QEP activities and processes as needed.

The Mason community strongly supports the *Students as Scholars* QEP. The university has budgeted resources that support each of the activities outlined in the plan. Our initiative is coordinated by the new Office of Student Scholarship, Creative Activities, and Research, which supports the development, communication, and assessment of student scholarly activities.

Our vision will be realized when Mason's *Students as Scholars* QEP is seen as a model of undergraduate scholarship. Students will enroll at Mason because of the unique opportunities to engage in active scholarship, and the university will continue to attract exemplary faculty because of our integration of scholarship and teaching. By infusing research and creative activities into the undergraduate experience, student scholarship will be a core practice and expectation at Mason.

For more information, please contact Dr. Bethany M. Usher, Director of *Students as Scholars*, through the Office of Student Scholarship, Creative Activities, and Research at George Mason University.

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