



STUDENT SUCCESS GUIDE



University Life
**STUDENT SUCCESS
COACHING**
George Mason University®

Welcome to The Student Success Guide!



The Student Success Guide is designed to be a tool to help you think about what success means to you and start taking action towards your goals. The Success Guide is organized by focus areas of the Success Coaching Focus Wheel.

The Success Coaching Focus Wheel drives the conversation when you meet with your Success Coach. These focus areas are a great place to start in helping you set your personal, career, and academic goals. Coaching conversations revolve around the focus area(s) that are most important and timely for **you**.



Success looks different for every student. The Success Guide is designed to be a “choose your own adventure” action plan to enhance your student journey while at George Mason University. We encourage you to engage with the focus areas that interest you most, in an order that works best for you. As you think about your specific goals and your experiences in these areas, bring your thoughts to an appointment with your Success Coach!

Introduction to Success Coaching

Success Coaches are here to help you thrive at George Mason! We'll work with you to set and reach your personal, career, and academic goals, connecting you to the right resources along the way. Think of us as your go-to partner to achieve your goals and for making the most of your Patriot journey.

All first year and transfer students are assigned a Success Coach by academic college. However, **all students are able to meet with a Success Coach!** To schedule an appointment with our coaches, schedule an appointment via Patriot Connect or send an email to your Success Coach directly. Our contact information can be found on our website: coaching.gmu.edu

Success Coaching meets students one-on-one or in a group setting. Appointments can be in-person, located in the Student Union Building I, Suite 3600, online, or over the phone. Coaching appointments are about 45 minutes long. We recommend meeting with a coach at least twice per semester, but you are welcome to meet with us at a frequency that is best for you!



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When Should I Meet with a Success Coach?

We recommend meeting with your Success Coach **at least twice a semester** to check-in on your success journey and create action plans towards your goals. You don't have to wait till you need help, check-in with your Success Coach when things are going well too!

Why Should I Meet with a Success Coach?

Tailored Support:

Coaching provides one-on-one and group support to help you define your definition of success, whether it's academic performance, career preparation, personal growth, or a blend of all.

Action Planning:

Success Coaches work with you to break down big goals into manageable, actionable steps, making goals and success feel achievable.

Accountability & Motivation:

Success Coaches serve as a consistent source of support and accountability, helping you stay on track and remain motivated, even when faced with challenges.

Navigating Challenges:

Coaches are a sounding board for academic hurdles, helping students identify create action plans, identify root causes and difficulties and connect with appropriate university resources (tutoring, writing center, disability services).





START YOUR JOURNEY

THERE IS NO SINGLE PATH TO ACHIEVING SUCCESS.

Throughout a student’s journey at George Mason University, they face new challenges, obstacles, and opportunities. Success Coaching guides students through a multitude of experiences they face that helps them advance their goals and feel confident in their post-graduation aspirations. These are the nine focus areas that Success Coaches utilize to assist students throughout their journey here at George Mason University.

The Success Coaching Focus Wheel drives the conversations when you meet with your Success Coach. The focus areas are instrumental in helping you set your personal, career, and academic goals.



In Student Success Coaching, we assist and support students in specific programs here at George Mason University in partnership with the offices who oversee these programs. These programs, and the students that belong to them, are defined as “strategic populations.”



Patriot Fellows is a program that financially assists students throughout their higher education experience while obtaining a degree at George Mason University.



ADVANCE streamlines the transfer process for community college students interested in pursuing a bachelors degree.



STEP and The DREAM.US provides students in their respective programs with assistance in their transition to college.



Housing and Residence Life Student Leaders student staff are supported as they develop and strengthen their leadership, interpersonal, safety, and programming initiatives.



EIP provides academic enrichment, personal and social development, and leadership opportunities to college-bound first generation college students.



DC-CAP provides fundamental and academic support to low-income DC families.



AVID is primary school program that ensures students are capable of completing a college preparatory path.

STAYING FOCUSED

Throughout your journey at George Mason, you may face new challenges, obstacles, and opportunities. Success Coaching guides you through the experiences you face allows you to advance your goals and feel confident in your post-graduation aspirations. These are the nine focus areas that Success Coaches most often assist with throughout your George Mason journey.

FINANCES



Paying for school and developing an understanding on how to manage finances.

ACADEMICS



Maintaining balance in coursework, projects, and exams. Develop studying skills.

CAREER



Recognizing the connection between graduation and career opportunities.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



Engaging with the local community efforts in service learning, volunteering, and advocacy.

EFFECTIVENESS



Help with staying concentrated, completing tasks, and being punctual with deadlines.

COMMITMENT TO GRADUATION



Personal motivation for completing school and striving throughout your academic years.

WELL-BEING



Developing practices that are beneficial to ones mental, emotional, and physical wellness.

SCHOOL COMMUNITY



Finding your community, feeling connected to the institution, understanding expectations and rules.

MANAGING COMMITMENTS



Successfully balancing school with competing priorities. (family, work, etc.)



ACADEMICS

ACADEMICS

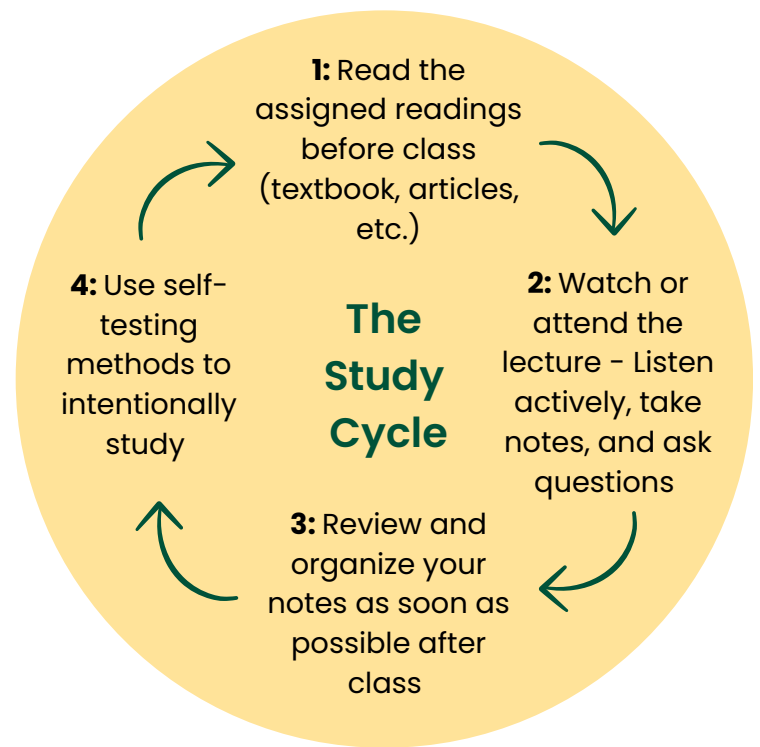


As a student, your academics are likely to be one of the most central components of your college experience. The following sections will include several tips and strategies to help you succeed in your classes. Keep in mind that everyone learns differently, so be sure to experiment with different strategies and see what works best for you!

Pre-Chapter Reflection:

How do you define being successful in academics?

How to Study: Using the Study Cycle



(Adapted from McGuire & McGuire, 2016)

PHASE 1: Read the assigned readings before class (e.g. textbook, articles, etc.)

- Reading dense textbooks and articles can sometimes be taxing and time-consuming. To make your reading process more active, try this trick (often called the SQ4R reading method):
 - Turn all the headings and sub-headings into questions by adding phrases like “Who”, “What”, and “How”. For example, “Who was Sigmund Freud?”, “What are Newton’s laws of motion?”. Then, write down the questions (e.g. on a sticky note, flashcard, Word document, or piece of paper).
 - Then, begin reading the section. After you read each sub-section, look away from the reading and answer your heading question in 1-2 sentences. Then, record your answer in your notes.
 - Later, you can use your questions and answers to study (like a practice test).

PHASE 2: Attend or watch the lecture – Listen actively, take notes, ask questions

- Listen Actively:
 - Put away your digital distractions.
 - Keep a distraction pad: Write down your distracting thoughts or add a tally mark every time you get distracted. This is meant to train your awareness so that you bring back your attention to focus.
- Take Notes:
 - Take notes in a way that makes the most sense for you. Try to focus on the main ideas and anything else the professor highlights.
- Ask Questions:
 - Challenge yourself to ask at least one question every class. If you are nervous about asking a question, perhaps come prepared with a few questions to choose from.

PHASE 3: Review and organize your notes as soon as possible after class

- Review your notes. Mark what information you already know, what information you somewhat understand, and what you don't understand. Then, decide what material you need to study later.
- Use graphic organizers (e.g. tables, mind maps, flashcards, etc.) to organize your notes.
- If you have any questions, communicate them to your professor, Teacher's Assistant (TA), or Learning Assistant (LA), or visit them during office hours.

PHASE 4: Use self-testing methods to study intentionally

- When studying, it's very important to actively recall information, rather than just passively review it. For example, test your knowledge with flashcards, practice problems, timed practice tests, or study guides. Additionally, predict the answers to essay questions, summarize or outline information, and explain concepts out loud by yourself or in a study group.
- Create a study plan.
 - When preparing for an exam, create a review schedule. Allow enough time to review all the sections and concepts you need to know for the exam.
 - When studying, it is best to review concepts repeatedly over several days or weeks. For this reason, it is not good to cram the day before an exam, because your brain does not memorize well under those conditions. You can break up your study time using the Pomodoro Method (**see pg. 21**).



SELF-REFLECTION: Reflect on Your Current Study Strategies

What study strategies do you find most helpful for you?

How do you stay focused and on-task when working on assignments?

What can you do to hold yourself accountable for reaching your academic goals?

LET'S CREATE A SMART GOAL TO KEEP YOU ON TRACK WITH YOUR ACADEMICS:

S SPECIFIC	WHAT SPECIFIC ASSIGNMENT OR TASK DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH?
M MEASURABLE	WHEN WILL YOU KNOW YOU HAVE FINISHED THE TASK? / WHEN DO YOU PLAN TO STOP?
A ACHIEVABLE	CAN YOU REALISTICALLY ACHIEVE THIS GOAL?
R RELEVANT	DOES THIS GOAL ALIGN WITH YOUR OVERALL GOALS THIS SEMESTER?
T TIME BOUND	WHEN DO YOU WANT TO DO THIS TASK / WORK ON THIS GOAL?

Meet with your Success Coach to talk through your goals and check in about your goal progress!



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learning Services: Learning Services has a TON of resources to help with your academics including on-demand videos on a variety of academic skills, academic skill workshops, and one-on-one academic coaching.

Academic Advising: Schools and colleges across George Mason offer a variety of academic advising services, including in-person and virtual advising meetings. These meetings can be scheduled appointments or drop-in advising where students are seen on a first-come, first-serve basis and no appointment is required. For more details on advising services for your major.

Knack Tutoring: Knack tutoring is available in person or online, at flexible hours. Check out the following link to see if your class is part of this service. If it is, visit gmu.joinknack.com and sign in with your Mason NetID and password to find out more and view available tutors.

Tutoring: Tutoring offers students free, course-specific assistance to enhance their academic level. Free tutoring and peer tutoring in a variety of subjects is available from George Mason University's colleges, schools, and academic departments. Remember, tutoring is a valuable resource to boost your academic success. Please visit the learning services tutoring page [here](#).

Learning Assistants: Learning Assistants (LAs) are undergraduates who are interested in unique educational opportunities such as participation in undergraduate instruction, course innovation, peer-to-peer tutoring and mentoring (etc.) and the chance to work closely with Mason faculty.

Writing Center: The University Writing Center supports writers at George Mason University through one-to-one consultations at any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming to the final phases of polishing.
(writing.gmu.edu)

ACADEMICS



POST-CHAPTER REFLECTION:

Now that you have worked through the activities, what areas do you still need help with that you can talk to your Success Coach about?

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT MASON?



Effectiveness

EFFECTIVENESS



Put simply, effectiveness is the ability to complete tasks by the deadline. However, often times, it can be difficult to get started or stay focused. If that is true for you, read the following section to learn a few tips about how to be more effective.

Pre-Chapter Reflection:

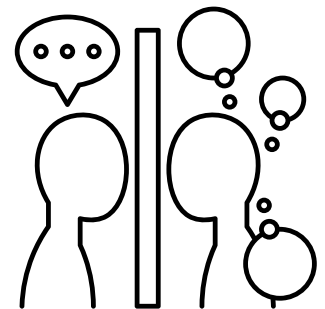
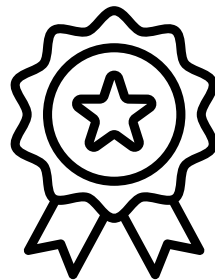
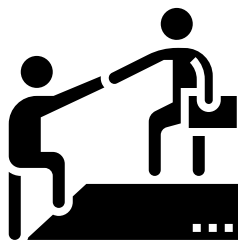
How do you
define being
successful in the
area of
effectiveness?

Overcoming Procrastination

The first step to overcoming procrastination is to plan ahead and create a schedule (see Managing Commitments, pg. x). Before getting started, notice how you're feeling about the task. If you feel like putting off your work, ask yourself why. Is the material confusing? Are you worried about getting a bad grade? Is there something else on your mind? If there is something you can do to alleviate those feelings, make an effort to do so. For example, if the material is confusing, ask your professor for help. If you're feeling worried, focus on what you can control, like how much time you spend on studying.

At some point, you will have to begin. Here are some strategies to help you start:

- Use the **5-minute rule**. Commit to working on the task for just five minutes and then decide if you want to continue. Chances are you will gain momentum and keep going.
- Make your plans public by telling a friend, family member, or your Success Coach, for example. That way, they can hold you **accountable**.
- Complete your least favorite tasks first to get them out of the way. Then, reward yourself with something you enjoy!
- If you're a **chronic procrastinator**, reflect back on all the times that you have had to rush at the last minute, and ask yourself how it affected your work performance and well-being. Remember that procrastination is a learned habit, just like washing your hands or brushing your teeth, and you can overcome it with time and practice.



One way to start overcoming procrastination is to determine WHY you are procrastinating. Consider the motivation blockers listed on the next page and brainstorm strategies to overcome the ones you find challenging.

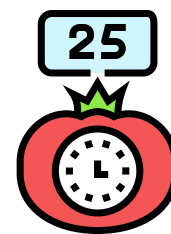
Why Am I Procrastinating?

Motivation Blocker	Strategy to Overcome
I am not interested in the topic.	
I don't think this topic is important.	
I am doing this because someone else wants me to, not because I want to.	
I get frustrated when I don't understand something.	
I am afraid that I will fail.	
I do not know what I am expected to do.	
This task is too hard.	
I don't have enough time.	
I am too overwhelmed.	
I don't think this topic relates to my major or career goals.	
I feel too guilty that I have not done it yet.	
I am a perfectionist.	

STAYING FOCUSED

Sometimes, even once you've gotten started, it can be difficult to stay focused. Here are some tips to help you concentrate:

- Choose a **study environment** that works well for you (e.g. your desk, the library, or a coffee shop). Try to avoid places where you would normally relax, such as your bed.
- If your schedule is flexible enough, study at times when you feel the most **alert**.
- Be mindful of any potential **distractions**, whether they are external (e.g. notifications on your phone, a friend talking about their weekend) or internal (e.g. feeling hungry or cold). Then, make a plan to remove them or remove yourself from them.
- Use the **distraction pad method**: Write down your distracting thoughts or add a tally mark every time you get distracted. This will help you train your awareness so that you bring back your attention to focus.
- Use the **Pomodoro Method** to ensure that you are taking regular breaks.
 - Choose a task you'd like to complete.
 - Set a timer for 25* minutes and begin working on that task without stopping
 - When the timer rings, take a short 5-minute break. Do something rejuvenating, e.g. take some deep breaths, stretch your legs, grab a snack, or listen to your favorite song.
 - After four cycles, (i.e. once it's been two hours total), take a longer break – 30 to 60 minutes is good. Again, do something that will revitalize you – eat a meal, exercise, hang out with a friend, or do any other activity you would enjoy.



*This time may vary based on your attention span or the task you're working on. You may want to set the timer for 15 minutes and take a 5-minute break or set the timer for 50 minutes and take a 10-minute break. Alternatively, you may want to take a break when you come to a natural stopping point in your work. Either way, make sure you are alternating between focused work sessions and short breaks.

SELF-REFLECTION:

Reflect on Your Current Level of Effectiveness

What environment do you feel the most productive in? What (if anything) gets in your way of being in that environment?

What are some things that distract you? How can you work to eliminate or manage those distractions?

When do you feel the most focused? How can you increase your focus when working on important tasks?

LET'S CREATE A SMART GOAL TO KEEP YOU ON TRACK WITH YOUR EFFECTIVENESS:

S
SPECIFIC

WHAT STRATEGY DO YOU WANT TO IMPLEMENT TO INCREASE YOUR EFFECTIVENESS?

M
MEASURABLE

HOW LONG DO YOU WANT TO IMPLEMENT THE STRATEGY BEFORE REFLECTING ON PROGRESS?

A
ACHIEVABLE

CAN YOU REALISTICALLY IMPLEMENT THIS STRATEGY?

R
RELEVANT

DOES IMPLEMENTING THIS STRATEGY ALIGN WITH YOUR OVERALL GOALS THIS SEMESTER?

T
TIME BOUND

WHEN DO YOU WANT TO START IMPLEMENTING THIS STRATEGY?

Meet with your Success Coach to talk through your goals and check in about your goal progress!



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Student Success Coaching: The Success Coaching team helps students identify resources to enhance their Patriot experiences, and develop and implement personal, career, and academic goals.



Post-Chapter Reflection:

Now that you have worked through the activities, what areas do you still need help with that you can talk to your Success Coach about?



Well-Being

WELL-BEING



Well-being is a key element for success. When you don't take care of yourself, it can be challenging to make progress towards your goals. Well-being is personal, so try to figure out what works best for you. Here are some ideas to help get you started.

Pre-Chapter Reflection:

How do you
define being
successful in
well-being?

Areas of Well-Being

Physical Well-Being consists of physical activity, diet, and sleep, preventing illness and injury, and managing chronic health conditions.

- Become aware of how **food, beverages, and substances** that can affect your body. Develop a well-balanced diet plan that works for you.
- Discover which **physical activities** you enjoy the most. Then, engage in regular movement to improve flexibility, strength, and cardiovascular health.
- Become **aware** of how **sleep** (or lack thereof) affects your body. Plan your day to prioritize an adequate amount of sleep.
- Gain comfort with your physical appearance and make choices to protect your **bodily autonomy**.
- Seek medical care for **illness, injury, and preventative care**.

Mental Well-Being: consists of appropriately managing stress and coping effectively with life.

- Become **self-aware** of how **stress** impacts you and find ways to manage your stress.
- Create space in your schedule to **enjoy leisure activities** to recharge your body, mind, and spirit.
- Develop **assertiveness** skills and practice setting **boundaries** when necessary.
- Become aware of your feelings and accept them as valid indicators of what you are experiencing. Find ways to process and **express your feelings** by yourself and with others.
- Become aware of how you view yourself. For example, practice positive self-talk to encourage **healthy self-esteem**.

Spiritual Well-Being is defined as exploring one's sense of purpose and meaning in life, including one's morals and ethics. It may or may not involve religious activities.

- Question and clarify your **personal values**. Become aware of how values develop and change from life experiences.
- Develop **integrity** by acting in ways that are consistent with your values.
- Become aware of the **differences** in others' personal values.
- Identify ways to **pause** and intentionally **reflect** on your beliefs and worldview.

Social Well-Being consists of satisfying relationships, a strong support system, and an overall sense of connection and belonging.

- Develop and maintain **relationships** that are healthy and reciprocal. Reflect on what it means to you to be a good friend.
- Reflect on your **social needs** and preferences. Ask yourself, how much time do you like to spend with others before needing time alone again, and vice versa?
- Learn to **balance** taking care of yourself while caring for others.
- Develop your **communication skills** to resolve conflict, set boundaries, and foster trust.
- Connect with your **community**. Engage with others who are both similar and different from you and learn to value diverse perspectives.

Digital Well-Being is the impact of technology on your physical, mental, social, and spiritual health. It encompasses everything from how much time you spend online to how you interact with others on social media.

- Be mindful of the amount of time you spend using technology. **Set limits** as necessary, especially if it distracts you from your other goals.
- Manage your notifications. **Turn off notifications** where possible and utilize focus modes on your devices to avoid constant interruptions.
- Become aware of how certain apps and content affect you. If you notice them affecting you negatively, change your engagement with them or **take a break**.
- Limit your **screen time before sleeping**. If you must use screens, consider reducing the blue light emitted by your device. Create a bedtime routine that includes winding down for 30 minutes before sleep. This can involve reading, listening to calm music, stretching, or taking a bath.
- Pay attention to your **mental health** as you scroll. Ask yourself, for example, is it helpful for you to think you're not good enough? Is it helpful for you to judge that other person's choices or life, or to compare your life to theirs?

****This list is not all-encompassing. There are many areas of well-being in life! A few additional areas are mentioned on the next page, where you can assess your own relationship with well-being.**

Not sure where to start?

Rate each area based on how well you are managing it, with five stars meaning 'very well' and one star meaning 'not very well'



Self-Care



Support Network



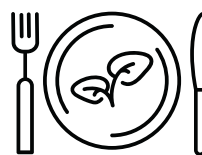
Stress Management



Sleep and Rest



Mental Wellness



Mindful Eating



Hydration



Positive Mindset



Fun and Recreation



Physical Wellness



Healthy Boundaries



What areas did you rate the lowest?

What areas are the most important to you?

What areas tend to be forgotten when you have a lot going on?

WELL-BEING SUPPORT

George Mason Support

Who can you get support from at George Mason University?

Other Support

Who can you get support from outside of GMU?

Positive Stress-Management Skills

What are some healthy ways you can manage your stress?

Motivation

What keeps you going, even when things are hard?

LET'S CREATE A SMART GOAL TO KEEP YOU ON TRACK WITH YOUR WELL-BEING:

S SPECIFIC	WHAT SPECIFIC TASK DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH?
M MEASURABLE	WHEN WILL YOU KNOW YOU HAVE FINISHED THE TASK? / WHEN DO YOU PLAN TO STOP?
A ACHIEVABLE	CAN YOU REALISTICALLY ACHIEVE THIS GOAL?
R RELEVANT	DOES THIS GOAL ALIGN WITH YOUR OVERALL GOALS?
T TIME BOUND	WHEN DO YOU WANT TO DO THIS TASK / WORK ON THIS GOAL?

Meet with your Success Coach to talk through your goals and check in about your goal progress!



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Student Support and Advocacy (SSAC): The Student Support and Advocacy Center assists students who are encountering a life crisis or significant barriers that impact their academic and personal success and/or overall functioning. The goal through individual consultations is to best understand the student's situation, answer questions, provide guidance, and make connections to appropriate on and off-campus resources.

The Center for the Advancement of Well-Being (CWB): Located at George Mason University, serving university populations and external audiences. Our senior scholars and scientists are engaged in research that deepens our understanding of the science of well-being and evidence-based practices. CWB offerings include programs and resources for students, faculty, and staff along with executive education programs for organizations, agencies, and individuals.

Student Health Services: Healthcare providers can discuss basic nutrition, healthy eating and meal planning with students. Services are provided at no cost. Schedule a consultation appointment by calling 703-993-2831 or online in the Patient Portal. You can also schedule an appointment with Student Health Services for one-on-one encouragement or to discuss these and other exercise and nutrition tips.

Timely Care: George Mason students are eligible for 12 free counseling sessions per year. Choose the day, time, and mental health provider that best works for you.

Counseling Services (CAPS): Provides in-person and virtual, free and confidential mental health services for enrolled students. When a student's needs require a different level of care, CAPS works with students to transition care to community providers. If a student is currently seeing a professional in the community for counseling and can continue to work with them, we encourage the student to continue care with their current provider.

Mason Rec: Mason Recreation has a multitude of services that we offer to students – take a look below to see what we can help you with! From instructional programming, to personal training, towels or locker rental and more, we offer something to make every visit with us exceptional.

**You have access to multiple well-being resources
for FREE as a student at George Mason!**



Post-Chapter Reflection:

Now that you have worked through the activities, what areas do you still need help with that you can talk to your Success Coach about?



School Community

SCHOOL COMMUNITY



School Community is all about feeling connected—to your campus, your peers, and the people who support your success. This could look like getting involved in student organizations, building personal and professional relationships, and knowing where to turn to when you need help. Whether it's joining a student organization, attending events, or just saying hi to someone you know, these connections help make your college experience more meaningful.

Pre-Chapter Reflection:

How do you
define having a
successful
school
community?

How to Build School Community

1. Define Your Ideal Social Circle

Think about the kind of community that makes you feel truly happy and supported. Do you prefer a large group of friends or a few close connections? What do you like to do with them? Maybe you enjoy attending events, having meaningful chats over a meal, or tackling more practical things like studying or working out together. Remember, everyone has unique schedules, finances, and social batteries, so figure out what works best for you.

2. Make the First Move

If you're looking to meet new people, you'll need to step out of your comfort zone. Try initiating a conversation with someone – perhaps before class, in the Johnson Center, at a campus event, or during a student organization meeting. You can start by introducing yourself and then engage in some friendly small talk. For instance, you could comment on an upcoming exam, ask about their major or where they're from, share a funny anecdote, or give them a genuine compliment. As you talk, try to identify common interests. These can be the perfect foundation for a new friendship.

3. Take the Initiative to Hang Out

Once you've made some initial connections, you can turn them into true friendships by being proactive and suggesting to hang out. You could plan to grab lunch, study together, or attend a campus event. If hanging out one-on-one feels a bit daunting at first, consider inviting another friend to join. Then, if you hit it off, consider making your plans recurring. Perhaps you could have lunch after class every week, join a student organization with regular meetings, or sign up for an intramural sport together. The key is to find what fits your schedule, interests, and comfort level.

4. Be Open, Kind, and True to Yourself

If you feel a little nervous about making friends, you're not alone! Many people feel the same way and will likely appreciate you taking the first step. Be open to chatting with all sorts of people because you never know who you might click with. At the same time, make sure to always be yourself. This ensures that you attract friends you genuinely get along with. Also, be willing to be vulnerable. For example, if you share with your friends how stressed you are during midterms, they can be there to support you and build a stronger bond. Finally, remember that you may not become best friends with every single person you meet, and that's totally okay! Ultimately, it's up to you to decide who you wish to build long-lasting relationships with.

SCHOOL COMMUNITY REFLECTION



- 1** What are your hobbies and interests? Do you want to continue exploring these or is there anything new you want to try?

- 2** What type of social environments do you prefer? (e.g. structured or unstructured meetups, one-on-one or group settings, etc.)

- 3** How much time and energy do you have or want to devote to community? What level of commitment are you looking for?

- 4** Who is in your support network? Are they on-campus or off-campus?

- 5** What values are most important to you? What qualities are you looking for in the friendships and community you build on campus?

Discover Your Next Destination At George Mason University

No matter what direction you head towards, there is a space for you in the many campus communities here at George Mason.



Clubs

- Fraternities and Sororities
- Registered Student Organizations
- Mason360 Platform

Campus Events

- Campus and Local Events
- Center for the Arts
- EagleBank Arena Performances & Games
- Rock the Block
- Gold Rush
- Mason Day

Leadership

- Emerging Leaders
- Student Government
- Student Organization Executive Boards
- Student Senate
- Mason Chooses Kindness

Volunteering

- Community Service
- Sustain Mason
- Service Learning
- Advocacy

Internships

- Career Development
- Career Fair
- Experiential Learning
- Networking

Recreation

- Intramural Sports
- Fitness Programs
- Outdoor Adventures
- The Edge
- Club Sports

Student Engagement

Research

- Undergraduate Research
- OSCAR
- Fellowships
- Teaching Assistant Positions
- External Presentation Opportunities



LET'S CREATE A SMART GOAL TO KEEP YOU ON TRACK WITH BUILDING COMMUNITY:

S SPECIFIC	WHAT SPECIFIC TASK DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH?
M MEASURABLE	WHEN WILL YOU KNOW YOU HAVE FINISHED THE TASK? / WHEN DO YOU PLAN TO STOP?
A ACHIEVABLE	CAN YOU REALISTICALLY ACHIEVE THIS GOAL?
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Meet with your Success Coach to talk through your goals and check in about your goal progress!



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Patriot Activities Council: Enhances the college experience for all Mason students by providing entertaining, impactful, low- or no-cost events that appeal to various interests in order to create a more engaged, connected, and active student body. PAC envisions inclusive, engaged communities where every student has the opportunity to create memorable experiences and connections.

Registered Student Organizations (RSOs): Student-led organizations recognized and guided by the Student Involvement Office.

Mason360: A specially designed platform for students to engage in and discover campus-wide events that are associated with RSO's, Sport Clubs, Greek Chapters, Colleges, and university wide events.

Sustain Mason: As a part of Facilities & Campus Operations, the University Sustainability team accelerates action in policy and practice. They collaborate with campus and community partners to improve and implement best practices, and with institutional peers to develop innovative solutions to grand challenges. They provide students, faculty, and staff with unique, on-campus experiential learning opportunities and funding to transform their careers and our campuses.

Mason Chooses Kindness: Here at George Mason University, we may be *"All Together Different"*, but one signature trait we possess is sharing and spreading kind actions towards one another. Mason Chooses Kindness is an initiative that instill, the practice of choosing kindness as we support the student, faculty, and staff patriot experience.

Patriot Experience: The Patriot Experience is intentionally designed to help students navigate through the wealth of information and events on campus. The Patriot Experience is an experiential learning program that helps you find the opportunities and resources on-campus that aligns with your interests. The best of all, it is a self-paced program that allows you to track your progress, and record your student involvement while you are in it.

Post-Chapter Reflection:

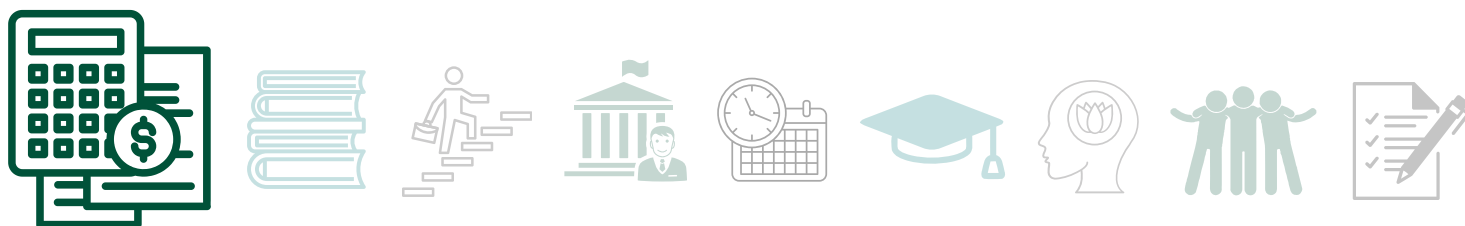
Now that you have worked through the activities, what areas do you still need help with that you can talk to your Success Coach about?





Finances

FINANCES



Finances are integral to planning for your college experience. To help support you in this area, this section has been split into two sections. First, there is information about many of the terms and policies that relate to paying for your education. Then, there is information about how to manage your personal finances. Remember, you do not need to navigate your finances alone. Student Success Coaching, (along with the other financial resources listed at the end of this section), is here to help you!

Pre-Chapter Reflection:

How do you
define success
with regard to
finances?

Educational Finances

Tuition and Fees

The **cost of attendance** is the estimated budget of the average educational costs associated with attending the university. Your actual cost will vary depending on your number of credits, fees, your choice of housing and meal plan, and other variables. Payment is due on the first day of the semester. Payment plans are available with a \$30 setup fee. Past due balances are subject to a late payment fee that is 10% of the balance, up to \$125. To view and pay your bill, you can visit Bill+Payment for Students or Bill+Payment for Authorized Users.

To be eligible for **in-state tuition rates**, a student must have been domiciled in Virginia for at least one full year before the semester for which in-state tuition is sought, or qualify through statutory exception. Students classified as out-of-state who believe they qualify for in-state tuition must file a domicile appeal form (i.e. the Request for Tuition Reclassification form) no later than the first day of classes for the semester in which in-state rates are sought. For more information about domicile status and appeals, click here: <https://registrar.gmu.edu/students/domicile/>.

For detailed information about tuition and fees rates, click here: <https://studentaccounts.gmu.edu/tuition-fees/>. For more information about tuition and fees policies, click here: <https://catalog.gmu.edu/tuition-fees/>.

Financial Aid

To receive financial aid, you must complete the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** every academic year. The FAFSA should be filed as soon as possible on or after October 1st for the following academic year. For priority consideration of limited state and institutional grant funds, students must submit the FAFSA by February 1. While the priority deadline needs to be met for consideration for limited funds, to be reviewed for any other aid options, students applying for aid should ensure their FAFSA is completed no later than one month before the end of the semester for which the student is applying for aid.

Undergraduate students who are ineligible to file a FAFSA can complete the **Virginia Alternative State Aid (VASA)** application. The application is designed to calculate students' Expected Family Contribution (EFC) which is then used to determine eligibility for state need-based financial assistance. For more information, including the application deadline, click here: <https://www.gmu.edu/financial-aid/virginia-alternative-state-aid-application-vasa>.

To continue receiving federal and state financial aid, students must maintain **Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)**. The standards of SAP are as follows:

- **Quantitative Standard** – This standard requires all students to complete at least 67% of the credits attempted. This is calculated by dividing the number of completed credits by the number of attempted credits. Attempted credits include both those earned at Mason and those transferred into Mason. For instance, if a student has attempted 70 credits and completed 62, the student is passing the quantitative standard ($62/70 = 88.6\%$). If a student attempted 15 credits and passed only 6, the student has failed the quantitative standard ($6/15 = 40\%$).
- **Time Frame** – All students must complete their program of study by attempting no more than 150% of the hours normally required for completion. For instance, if an undergraduate is expected to complete the degree requiring 120 credits, the student can attempt no more than 180 credits before they fail SAP for Time Frame. Please note, transfer credits brought into Mason count as attempted credits.
- **Qualitative Standard** – All students must meet minimum GPA standards, depending on their level.
 - Undergraduate students must maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0.
 - Graduate and doctoral students must maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0.
 - Law students must maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 2.15.

Students who do not meet the SAP requirement are automatically placed on financial aid **suspension** (unless the student is approved for a SAP appeal, see below). During suspension, the student will not be eligible for financial aid. Students may continue to acquire external scholarships and private loans that do not take SAP into account. Eligibility for financial aid will be returned when the student meets the SAP standard. Students may contact the Office of Student Financial Aid if they meet the SAP standard prior to the annual review.

All students have the right to **appeal** the suspension of their financial aid if there were mitigating circumstances that caused failure to meet SAP standards. Students may appeal twice for each academic degree. Each approved appeal must be for a different mitigating circumstance. Students whose appeals are approved will be placed on conditional approval for one semester. If approved, the student will remain eligible for financial aid and will continue to receive financial assistance during the approved semester. Students must submit their appeal three weeks before the end of the semester for which they are requesting an appeal to allow for processing time. If an appeal is submitted after this time, the Financial Aid office cannot guarantee aid will be processed.

Types of Aid

Loans are money that you or your parent/guardian borrow and repay with interest. Education loans are offered at low interest rates and have long repayment terms. Some loans require a demonstration of need, others do not. To learn more about loans, click here: <https://www.gmu.edu/financial-aid-parent/types-aid/loans>.

Grants are financial awards that are based on demonstration of financial need and do not have to be paid back. To learn more about grants, click here: <https://www.gmu.edu/financial-aid-parent/types-aid/grants>.

Scholarships are awards that do not have to be paid back and are based on student performance and talent. Some scholarships consider financial need when determining eligibility. To receive internal scholarships, students must submit the [Mason Scholarship Application](#) each year for consideration. To receive external scholarships, students can review the [Outside Scholarship List](#). To learn more about scholarships, click here: <https://www.gmu.edu/financial-aid-parent/types-aid/scholarships>.

Federal work-study (FWS) is a financial aid program that allows eligible students to earn money toward their educational expenses by working a part-time job at one of the George Mason campuses. To be considered for work-study, you must indicate your interest on the FAFSA form. If you are not awarded FWS in your initial award package, you can contact the Federal Work Study office by emailing FWS@gmu.edu. Once you have been granted FWS, you can apply for on-campus jobs on [Handshake](#). To learn more about federal work-study, click here: <https://www.gmu.edu/financial-aid-parent/types-aid/federal-work-study>.

On-Campus Jobs

All students are eligible to apply for **on-campus jobs**. Only students who are eligible for federal work-study (FWS) will be able to apply for FWS jobs. To apply for any on-campus job (FWS or not), you must apply on [Handshake](#). There, you can click the "On-campus" filter under "All Filters" or type "George Mason University" into the search bar. Students can also apply for jobs on jobs.gmu.edu or apply to retail jobs on their individual company websites (e.g. Panera, Barnes and Noble, Chipotle, Chick-fil-A, etc.).

Personal Finances

Budgeting

Everyone's finances are different, so it is important to figure out what works best for you and your individual circumstances. **Budgeting** is one great way to help you gain control of your spending and achieve your financial goals.

First, take into account what money is coming in and what money is coming out, so that you understand your baseline. You can track your **income** and **expenses** using a spreadsheet or an app – whatever works best for you! What matters most is that you get a full picture of your financial situation and spending habits. Once you have tracked your finances for a period of time, (like a week, a month, or a semester), subtract your expenses from your income to see whether you are overspending or whether you still have money left to save.

Now, it's time to create a budget! One popular method is the **50/20/30 plan**, where you aim to spend 50% of your income on your needs, 30% on your wants, and save the remaining 20%. If you have enough money to save, it's advisable to "pay yourself first". In other words, set aside your savings as soon as you get paid, so that you are not tempted to spend it. Then, calculate how much money you must allocate to your "needs", i.e. your necessary expenses like your rent, groceries, bills, and other planned payments. At that point, you will see how much money you have left to spend on your "wants", anything that is not absolutely necessary to buy but that you would like to spend your money on. If you realize you are overspending, try to be mindful of ways you can cut back. Set some **measurable goals**, like only eating out three times per week or making your coffee at home instead of buying Starbucks on the way to campus.

WANTS VS. NEEDS

Use this chart to brainstorm what you spend money on. What expenses are needs? What expenses are wants?

Needs	Wants

Instructions: Consider the wants and needs identified from the previous activity. Break down how much you are spending on those things in a specific time frame. Use this chart to track your spending, saving, and budget!

Income	Expected	Actual
Needs	Budgeted	Actual
Wants	Budgeted	Actual
Summary	Budgeted	Actual
Income		
Needs		
Wants		

LET'S CREATE A SMART GOAL TO KEEP YOU ON TRACK WITH YOUR FINANCES:

S SPECIFIC	WHAT SPECIFIC FINANCIAL BENCHMARK DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH?
M MEASURABLE	WHEN WILL YOU KNOW YOU HAVE MET YOUR BENCHMARK / WHEN DO YOU PLAN TO STOP?
A ACHIEVABLE	CAN YOU REALISTICALLY ACHIEVE THIS GOAL?
R RELEVANT	DOES THIS BENCHMARK ALIGN WITH YOUR OVERALL FINANCIAL GOALS?
T TIME BOUND	WHEN DO YOU WANT TO START WORKING TOWARDS THIS BENCHMARK?

Meet with your Success Coach to talk through your goals and check in about your goal progress!

Financial Resources

If you are still having trouble meeting your financial goals, you can schedule a meeting with a **Success Coach** to create a budget, find scholarships, or apply for a part-time job to earn a little extra money. You can also meet with a **financial well-being peer mentor** in the Student Support and Advocacy Center. These are fellow students who can help you develop your financial literacy by building a budget or a savings plan, understanding your financial aid package, managing your credit, or accessing financial resources.

Remember that you are not alone! Navigating college finances can be stressful, so do not hesitate to ask for help from the resources listed below:



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Mason Student Services Center (MSSC): MSSC is comprised of the Financial Aid, Registrar, and Student Accounts offices.

Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC): SSAC supports students' financial well-being with services including the Stay Mason student emergency fund, Patriot Pantry food pantry, and individual financial well-being consultations.



Post-Chapter Reflection:

Now that you have worked through the activities, what areas do you still need help with that you can talk to your Success Coach about?



Career

CAREER



As a college student, it can be difficult to focus on anything other than your academics; but what about your career development? Where do you want to work after you graduate? If you don't know the answer to this question, that is totally normal and perfectly okay. Instead, try to focus on small ways to define your career goals and gain experience, so that when you graduate, you will be one step closer to getting your dream job.

Pre-Chapter Reflection:

How do you
define being
successful in
career
development?

Career Development

When it comes to defining your career goals (or even choosing your major) it's important to first **reflect on yourself**. There are many elements that make up who you are, for example, your values, interests, personality, identities, skills, and experiences.

- **Values:** What is important to you?
- **Interests:** What do you love to learn about?
- **Personality:** What are the unique traits that make you, you?
- **Identities:** What are the social identities and groups that you are part of?
- **Skills:** What do you excel at?
- **Experiences:** What have you done in the past?

All of these qualities together can help you narrow down your ideal work environment.

Next, you need to **research what careers actually exist**, as the labor market is ever-changing. There are several ways to do this research:

1. Find information online
2. Talk to people in your network
3. Try out real-world experiences

When it comes to real-world experiences, it's important to push yourself out of your comfort zone. By **gaining experience**, not only are you building your resume, but you are also expanding your professional network. Additionally, you gain the opportunity to try out different roles and figure out what is the best fit for you.

Here are some examples of ways to gain experience:

- Get a job or internship
- Volunteer or engage in service learning
- Start your own business
- Conduct research
- Join a student organization
- Shadow or interview a professional
- Attend a career workshop or event
- Pursue certifications (e.g. through [LinkedIn Learning](#), [Google Career Certificates](#), or [Mason Career Academy](#).)

As you begin to develop yourself as a professional, it's important to keep track of your experiences and start building (or updating) your **resume**. You will also need to learn how to articulate your skills and experiences so that you will be ready to **interview** when entering your ideal career. For help with this (and more), be sure to schedule an appointment with [University Career Services](#) here at George Mason University. Their Career Advisors can help you with the following:

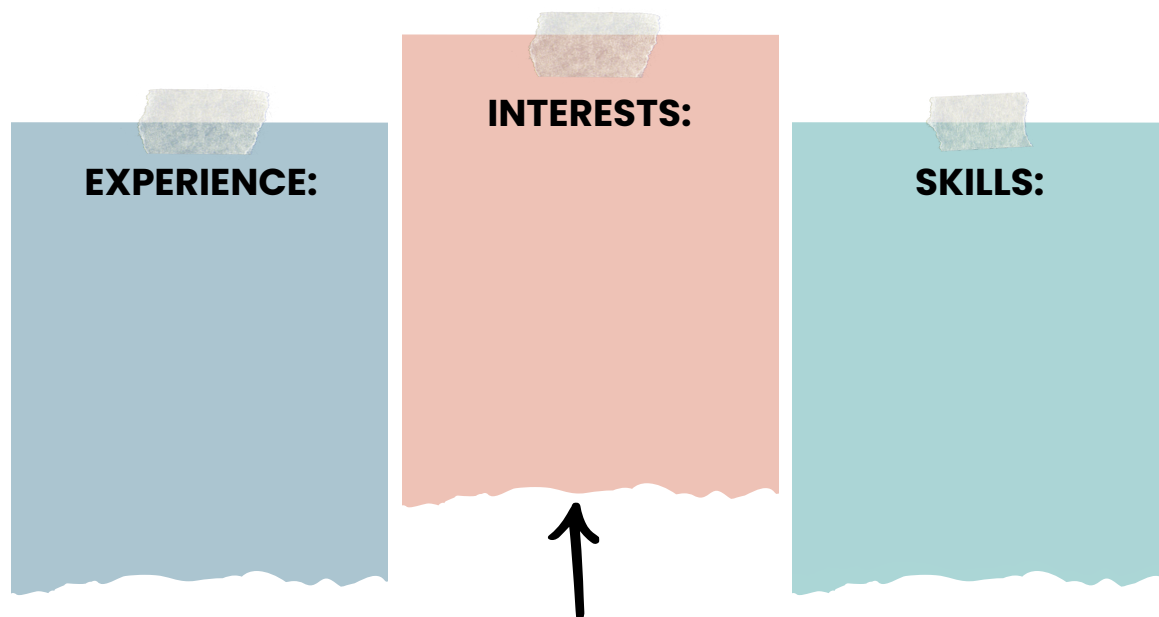
- Selecting a major or career
- Finding an internship
- Searching for a job
- Preparing for graduate school
- Preparing for an interview
- Salary negotiation
- Identifying employers committed to diversity and inclusion
- Any other career-related questions you have

Lastly, be sure to check out the [Career Readiness Guide](#) for in-depth information and reflective exercises regarding how to get ready for your career, and check out [Handshake](#) for job and internship postings, career events, and employer information.



My Ideal Career

Let's brainstorm! Write out how your current experiences, interests, skills, values, education, and involvement connects to your career goals and brainstorm what opportunities you hope to have in the future.



LET'S CREATE A SMART GOAL TO KEEP YOU ON TRACK WITH YOUR CAREER:

S SPECIFIC	WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH WITH YOUR CAREER PREPARATION?
M MEASURABLE	WHEN WILL YOU KNOW YOU HAVE FINISHED THE TASK? / WHEN DO YOU PLAN TO STOP?
A ACHIEVABLE	CAN YOU REALISTICALLY ACHIEVE THIS GOAL?
R RELEVANT	DOES THIS GOAL ALIGN WITH YOUR OVERALL CAREER GOALS?
T TIME BOUND	WHEN DO YOU WANT TO DO THIS TASK / WORK ON THIS GOAL?

Meet with your Success Coach to talk through your goals and check in about your goal progress!



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

University Career Services: University Career Services (UCS) is George Mason University's nationally recognized centralized career center. We are specialists taking an industry-focused approach to serving our students and employers.

Costello College of Business Office of Career Services: The Office of Career Services within the Costello College of Business provides career advising, job search support, and coaching for Costello undergraduate students, graduate students, and alumni.

Schar School Career Services: The Schar School of Policy and Government offers comprehensive career and professional development services to prepare students for success. Offering individualized assistance to students and alumni, the Schar School's career advisors will help you explore career and internship opportunities, define your goals, and develop the skills needed for a successful job search, including crafting a resume and cover letter that stand out.

Post-Chapter Reflection:

Now that you have worked through the activities, what areas do you still need help with that you can talk to your Success Coach about?



Civic Engagement

erve
OLDLY

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



At George Mason University, we are dedicated to empowering students to become active, engaged citizens both on campus and in their communities. Through a wide range of civic engagement opportunities including volunteer programs, voter education initiatives, community partnerships, and leadership development offices and fellowships—we help students connect their passions to meaningful action. By fostering a culture of participation and responsibility, we aim to equip Mason Patriots with the tools, experiences, and networks needed to make a lasting impact in the world around them.

Pre-Chapter Reflection:

How do you
define success in
the area of civic
engagement?

Community Action Plan

The Significance of a Community Action Plan

A Community Action Plan is vital for its proactive and structured approach to addressing concerns that arise at George Mason, promoting a resilient and compassionate campus atmosphere. By anticipating potential issues and outlining support mechanisms in advance, this plan guarantees that you can access timely and coordinated assistance during critical moments.

Reflecting on Community Safety and Vibrancy

Take a moment to think about the issues you are passionate about that contribute to creating a safer and more vibrant environment for everyone. Here are a few starter topics that may resonate with our student populations:

1. Access to healthcare
2. Immigration rights on and off campus
3. Availability of sustainable green spaces on campus
4. Peace-building and leadership fellowships that foster community unity and address conflicts through open dialogue and healing
5. Support for underrepresented student populations

Questions for Consideration

1. How can you apply your current skills in this context? Which skills do you believe will be most beneficial in achieving your objectives?
2. Who can you partner with on this plan? Are there any organizations or groups already engaged in this area of focus?
3. In which areas will you need to rely on the strengths of others? Where do you think you can find supporters for your initiatives?



Community Action Plan

Write down an issue that you are passionate about or something in your community you want to address

ISSUE YOU FIND IMPORTANT:

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ADDRESS?

HOW WILL YOU ADDRESS THE ISSUE?

PLAN:

MATERIALS NEEDED:

ASSESSMENT:

Social Identity Groups

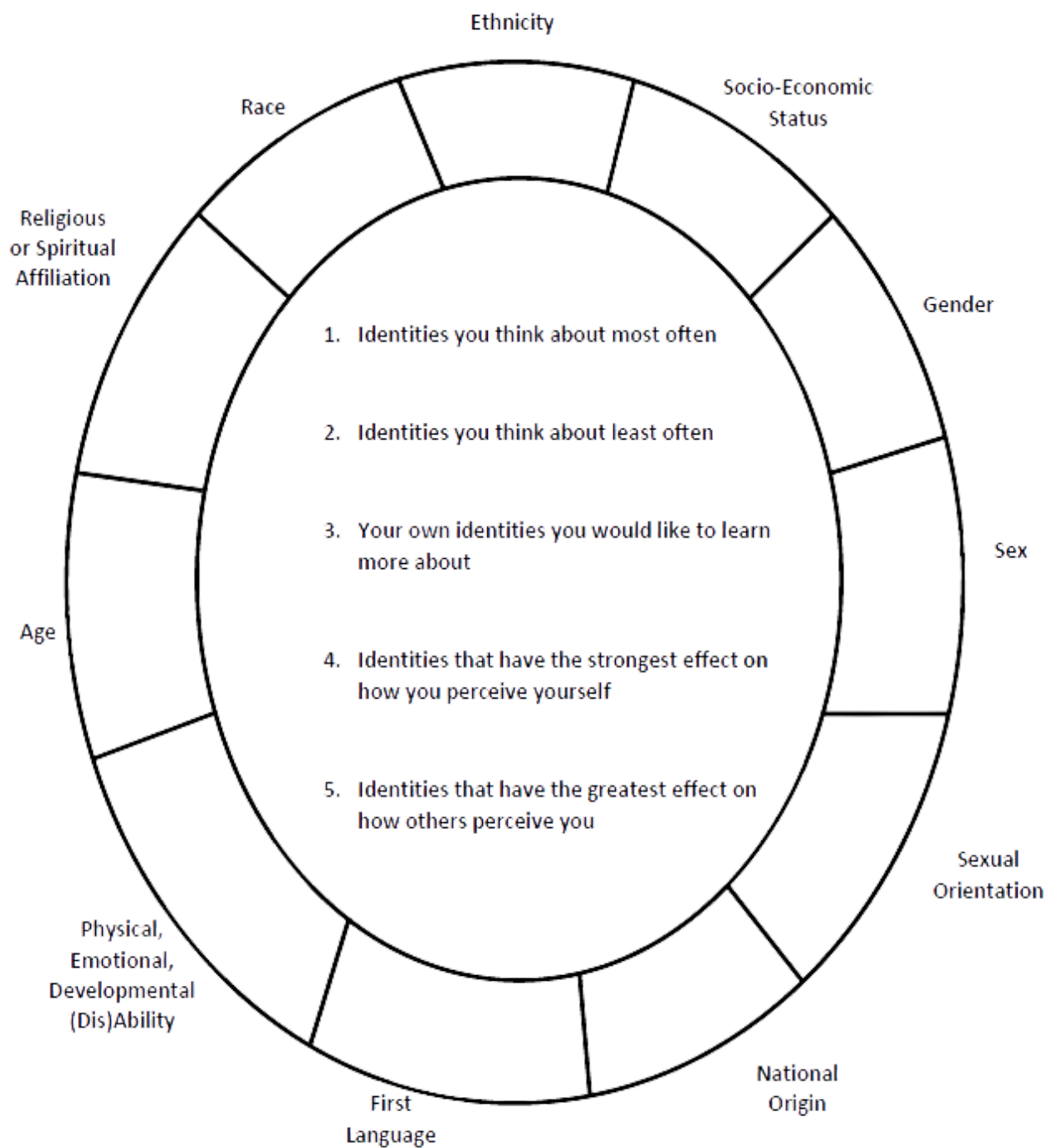
Social identity groups are based on the physical, social, and mental characteristics of individuals. They are sometimes obvious and clear, sometimes not obvious and unclear, often self claimed and frequently ascribed by others. For example, racial groupings are often ascribed as well as self-claimed. Government, schools, and employers often ask an individual to claim a racial identity group or simply ascribe one to an individual based on visual perception. Other social identities are personally claimed but not often announced or easily visually ascribed such as sexual orientation, religion, or disability status.

For the purpose of this self-examination please identify the memberships you claim or those ascribed to you. Below are examples of social identity groupings. Since issues of social identity often are the basis of much social conflict, it is reasonable to expect that even the terms we use to describe them may cause disagreement. So feel free to use your own preferred terms for the material below.

Gender • Woman • Man • Transgender • Post-Gender	Sex • Intersex • Female • Male	Sexual Orientation • Lesbian • Gay • Bisexual • Pan-Attractional • Heterosexual • Queer • Attraction • Questioning	Race • Asian Pacific Islander • Native American • Latina/x • Black • White • Bi/Multiracial
Race • Irish • Chinese • Puerto Rican • Italian • Mohawk • Jewish • Guatemalan • Lebanese • European-American	Religion/Spirituality • Hindu • Muslim • Buddhist • Jewish • Christian • Pagan • Agnostic • Faith/Meaning • Atheist • Secular- humanist	Social Class • Poor • Working Class • Lower-Middle Class • Upper-Middle Class • Owning Class • Ruling Class	Age • Child • Young Adult • Middle-Age Adult • Senior
Nation(s) /or Citizenship • United States • Nigeria • Korea • Turkey • Argentina	Tribal or Indigenous Affiliation • Mohawk • Aboriginal • Navajo • Santal	(Dis)Ability • People with disabilities (cognitive, physical, emotional, etc.) • Temporarily able-bodied • Temporarily disabled	

Marginalized Group: social identity groups that are disenfranchised and exploited
Privileged Group: social identity groups that hold unearned privileged in society

The Program on Intergruity Relations, University of Michigan



A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for additional notes or reflections.



Bias Check

We all see the world through our own unique lenses, shaped by our lived experiences, upbringing, culture, and environment. These lenses can lead to **biases**—unconscious assumptions that influence how we think, make decisions, and interact with others. While biases are a natural part of who we are, they can sometimes result in unfair and assumed judgments, missed opportunities, or inequitable outcomes.

That's why it's critical to engage in bias checking which is the practice of actively identifying, questioning, and working to unlearn our biases. Whether in personal relationships, the workplace, or interacting with those on Mason's campuses, checking our biases helps us foster fairness, community care and inclusivity.

By learning to recognize our biases, we can take the first step toward creating a more inclusive community on our campus. Here are some reflection questions to help you get started.

- 1. How do you connect with people who have different life experiences than you?**
- 2. What is a stereotype/generalization/belief you hold about people sharing a common identity with you. Where does that idea come from?**
- 3. What is a stereotype/generalization/belief you hold about people with a different identity than you. Where does that idea come from?**

Reflect on what you can do to combat any potential stereotypes or unconscious biases that you may hold about others:

LET'S CREATE A SMART GOAL TO KEEP YOU ON TRACK WITH YOUR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:

S SPECIFIC	WHAT SPECIFIC TASK DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH?
M MEASURABLE	WHEN WILL YOU KNOW YOU HAVE FINISHED THE TASK? WHEN DO YOU PLAN TO STOP?
A ACHIEVABLE	CAN YOU REALISTICALLY ACHIEVE THIS GOAL?
R RELEVANT	DOES THIS GOAL ALIGN WITH YOUR OVERALL GOALS?
T TIME BOUND	WHEN DO YOU WANT TO DO THIS TASK / WORK ON THIS GOAL?

Meet with your Success Coach to talk through your goals and check in about your goal progress!



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Office of Community Engagement and Civic Learning (CECIL): Develops strategies to help our students, faculty, and partners collaborate on positive social change in their communities.

Center for Leadership and Intercultural Engagement (CLIE): We are excited to announce that the Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment and the Leadership Education and Development Office have merged to form the Center for Leadership and Intercultural Engagement (CLIE). Merging the expertise and passion of two departments is no small task, but our staff is deeply committed to the educational and support services that we offer to the Mason community. We are working diligently to ensure a seamless transition and to evolve our outreach efforts, programming, and services. We ask for your continued support, flexibility, and trust as we embark on this new chapter together.

Mason Chooses Kindness: At George Mason, we believe that we *thrive together* with shared success as one of our core values. Our goal is to evolve as a model well-being university, providing a place for all members of our George Mason community where everyone thrives while contributing to others' well-being.

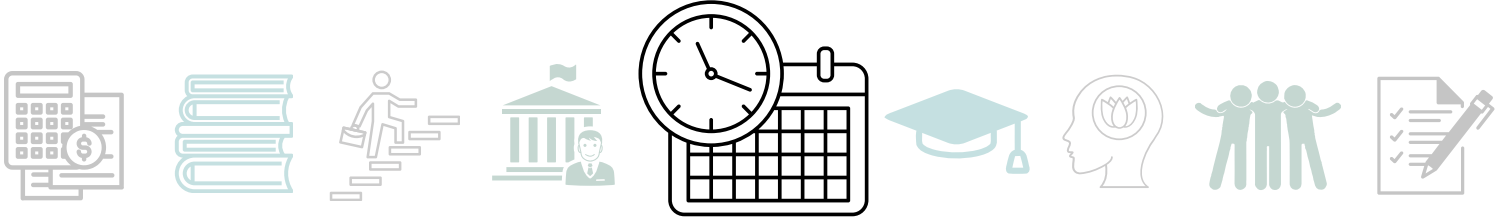
Post-Chapter Reflection:

Now that you have worked through the activities, what areas do you still need help with that you can talk to your Success Coach about?



Managing Commitments

MANAGING COMMITMENTS



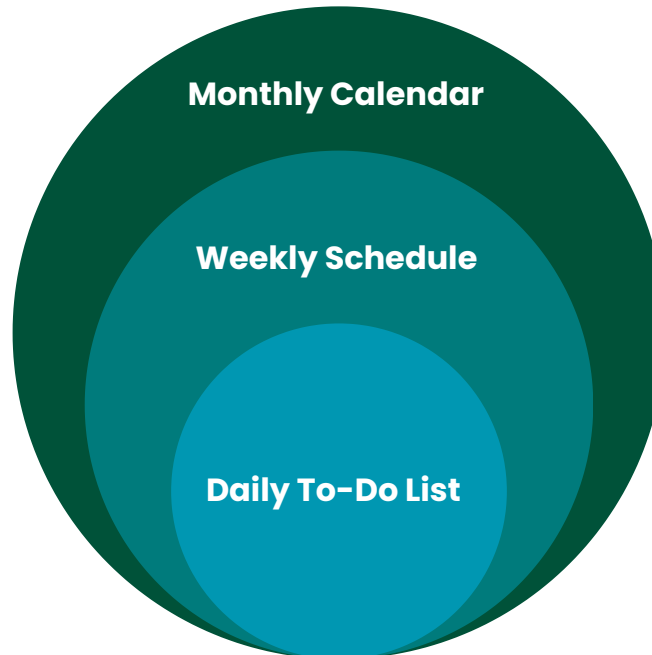
As a college student, you probably have more responsibilities than just school. In this section, you will learn about ways to manage your time and prioritize your commitments so that you can avoid feeling overwhelmed.

Pre-Chapter Reflection:

How do you define successfully managing your commitments?

Time Management

First, consider these three levels of time management:



1. **Monthly calendar:**

At the beginning of every semester, add all your high-level deadlines to your calendar (whether digitally or on paper). You can also add any non-academic events or appointments. For example:

Academic

- Exams
- Paper and project deadlines
- Last day to add and drop classes
- University closures and breaks

Non-Academic

- Social plans
- Medical appointments
- Events
- Travel Plans

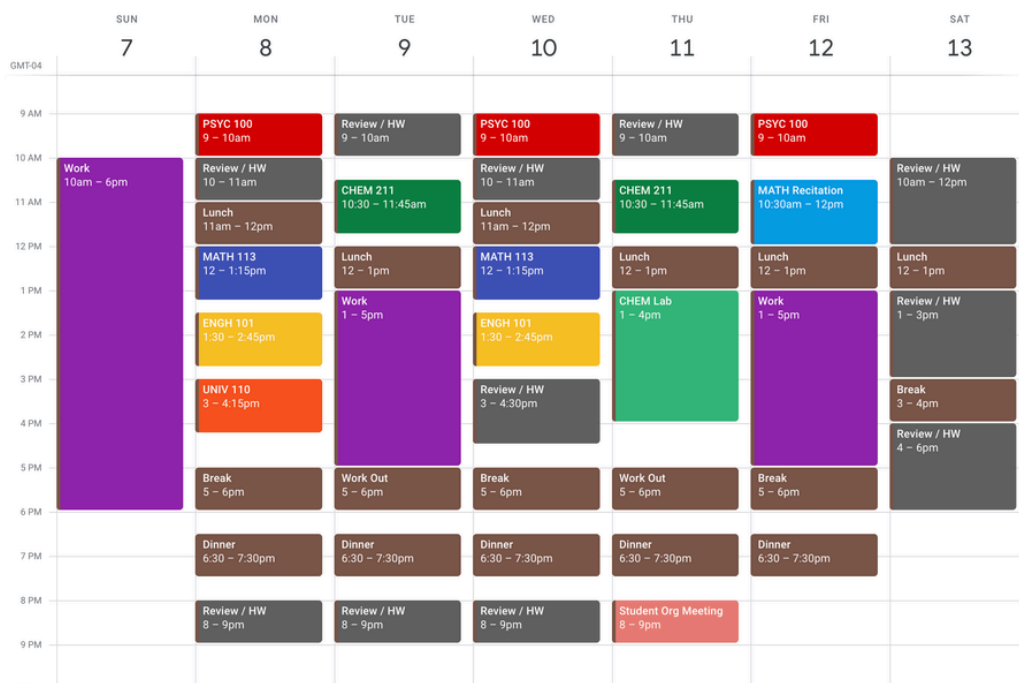
Once you have recorded everything, make a habit of regularly checking your calendar so that you can plan ahead for busier times, such as during midterms and finals, or when you're out of town.

2. Weekly schedule:

Next, create a weekly routine, which you can use to plan your days. Start by writing down all the recurring events in your schedule, such as class times, student organization meetings, religious activities, and work. Don't forget to include commute times.



Then, identify all the free time blocks in your schedule and decide when you would ideally like to study, eat meals, go to the gym, take breaks, etc.



This sample schedule was created using Google Calendar, but feel free to use any digital calendar or paper planner that works best for you!

If you don't know how much time to allow per week for studying, you can use the following formula for each class,

$$\text{Credit Hours} \times \text{Difficulty (1 for easy, 2 for moderate, or 3 for difficult)} = \text{Total Study Hours}$$

e.g. 3 credit hours x 2 (moderate difficulty) = 6 study hours

In other words, for every class, you can multiply the number of credit hours by the course's level of difficulty to calculate the recommended amount of study time per week.

3. Daily to-do list:

Once you have identified times in your schedule for intentionally focused work, you can create a to-do list. That way, you will know what exactly to work on during those periods. Once a week, (perhaps on Sunday night or Monday morning), review all the homework due for each of your classes that week. For example, you might have a quiz in MATH 108, a discussion board post for COMM 101, and a chapter reading for PSYC 100. Additionally, you may have larger projects or exams to study for that are due in one to two weeks. Break down those assignments into smaller tasks and make those tasks as specific as possible. For example,

Large Assignment	Specific Task
Write research paper for English	Read two research articles
Study for Chemistry exam	Do ten practice problems
Complete Computer Science project	Complete part one of the project

As you build your to-do list, try to estimate how long each task will take to complete. Also, consider how urgent each task is (see the next section on prioritization). Then, either assign all the tasks to a specific day or time during the week (see the example below), or have the list ready to refer to when you sit down to do work.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
First Priority	Take MATH 108 quiz	COMM 101 DB Post (if not already finished)	Work on Part 1 of CS Project	Finish Part 1 of CS Project	Do 10 practice problems for Chemistry
Second Priority	COMM 101 DB Post	Read Chapter 1 of PSYC textbook	Read Chapter 2 of PSYC 100 textbook	Read one research article	Read one research article

4. Prioritization:

Once you have your to-do list, you might not know where to start. To avoid getting overwhelmed, practice prioritizing using the Eisenhower Matrix.

		Urgent	Not Urgent
Important		Do Immediately • Upcoming deadlines • Emergencies Quadrant I	Schedule • Large projects • Exercising • Calling family and friends • Long-term goals Quadrant II
		Not Important	Delegate / Avoid • Distractions • Interruptions • Running into friends on campus • Other people’s priorities Quadrant III

(Based on the work of Maria Spinetti and Jack Crone from the Division of Student Learning and Academic Success at the University of Central Florida)

Urgent vs. Important

Urgent tasks require your immediate attention. These tasks can put you in a hurried mindset and generate stress. **Important tasks** help you achieve long-term goals. To know what things are actually important, you first have to figure out your own goals.

Quadrants:

Quadrant I: Important and Urgent

Tasks that you need to do right away: crises, problems, or deadlines. These are tasks that may have been in Quadrant II, but were procrastinated on until they became urgent. Even though tasks will always come up in Quadrant I, you can reduce them by focusing more time on scheduling and doing the tasks in Quadrant II. Still, it is important to take care of Quadrant I first before moving onto Quadrant II.

Quadrant II: Important and Not Urgent

Tasks that are important, but they do not have a pressing deadline (e.g. studying for an exam in two weeks). If they are not completed ahead of time, they will fall into Quadrant I. Quadrant II tasks can be broken down over a period of time, (see the Daily To-Do List section above). Self-care also falls into Quadrant II. Avoid stress and poor work quality by prioritizing your Quadrant II tasks.

Quadrant III: Not Important and Urgent

These tasks require immediate attention but do not help you achieve your overall goals. These tasks are often time-consuming. They are not necessarily bad, but they need to be balanced with activities from Quadrants I and II. They also invite you to set boundaries and to politely say no or reschedule so that you can focus on your priorities.

Quadrant IV: Not Important and Not Urgent

These tasks are mostly distractions and could take up most of the day if not moderated. These activities do not have to be eliminated, but they should be pushed until other important tasks are completed. After a busy day, watching TV or going on social media can help you relax. Just make sure that they are not taking most of your day!

As you try out all these time management strategies, pay attention to your preferences. Do you like having every minute of your day planned out, or do you prefer to keep your schedule open? Adapt your strategies so that you can figure out what works best for you. Also, remember, that things don't always go as planned. Regularly re-evaluate your schedule and to-do lists, and plan extra buffer time in case things take longer than expected.

LET'S CREATE A SMART GOAL TO KEEP YOU ON TRACK WITH MANAGING YOUR COMMITMENTS:

S SPECIFIC	WHAT SPECIFIC TASK DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH?
M MEASURABLE	WHEN WILL YOU KNOW YOU HAVE FINISHED THE TASK? WHEN DO YOU PLAN TO STOP?
A ACHIEVABLE	CAN YOU REALISTICALLY ACHIEVE THIS GOAL?
R RELEVANT	DOES THIS GOAL ALIGN WITH YOUR OVERALL GOALS?
T TIME BOUND	WHEN DO YOU WANT TO DO THIS TASK / WORK ON THIS GOAL?

Meet with your Success Coach to talk through your goals and check in about your goal progress!



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Academic Advising: Schools and colleges across George Mason offer a variety of academic advising services, including in-person and virtual advising meetings. These meetings can be scheduled appointments or drop-in advising where students are seen on a first-come, first-serve basis and no appointment is required.

Tutoring: Course-specific assistance to enhance their academic performance, regardless of their starting point. Free tutoring and peer tutoring in a variety of subjects is available from George Mason University's colleges, schools, and academic departments. Remember, tutoring is a valuable resource to boost your academic success. Don't hesitate to seek help when needed!

Post-Chapter Reflection:

Now that you have worked through the activities, what areas do you still need help with that you can talk to your Success Coach about?



Commitment to graduation

COMMITMENT TO GRADUATION



Commitment to Graduation is just what it sounds like—staying focused on the goal of earning your degree. It’s about remembering why you came to college in the first place and using that purpose to keep yourself motivated, even when times get tough.

Pre-Chapter Reflection:

How do you define being successful in your commitment to graduation?

When you start college, it may seem like a long road ahead before you reach your finish line: graduation. Throughout the journey, it can be challenging to stay motivated during the long hours of studying, tough exams, and seemingly endless homework, all while managing everything else going on in your life. Sometimes you might even feel like giving up, and that’s totally normal! That’s why it’s so important to cultivate a growth mindset and take advantage of resources like academic advising and success coaching. These supports can help you create a clear graduation plan and keep you moving forward, one step at a time.

Resilience:

Fixed Mindset vs Growth Mindset

When you hit roadblocks on your path to graduation, it’s important to try to be resilient. Simply put, resilience is your ability to bounce back after experiencing difficulties. Take a moment to think about a time when you overcame a challenge in your life. How did you feel before you overcame the challenge? How did you feel afterwards? What helped you push through?

One way to practice resilience is to develop a **growth mindset**, rather than rely on a **fixed mindset**. A fixed mindset is the belief that your abilities are set in stone, while a growth mindset is the understanding that you can improve through effort and learning. Here are few key differences:



Fixed Mindset	Growth Mindset
Avoids failure and fears mistakes	Willing to learn, even from mistakes
Avoids challenges	Embraces challenges
Gives up easily when facing obstacles	Keeps going despite obstacles
Sees effort as pointless	Sees effort as the path to success
Ignores feedback	Learns from useful feedback
Feels threatened by others’ success	Feels inspired by others’ success

When you're stuck in a fixed mindset, you can get lost in this cycle:

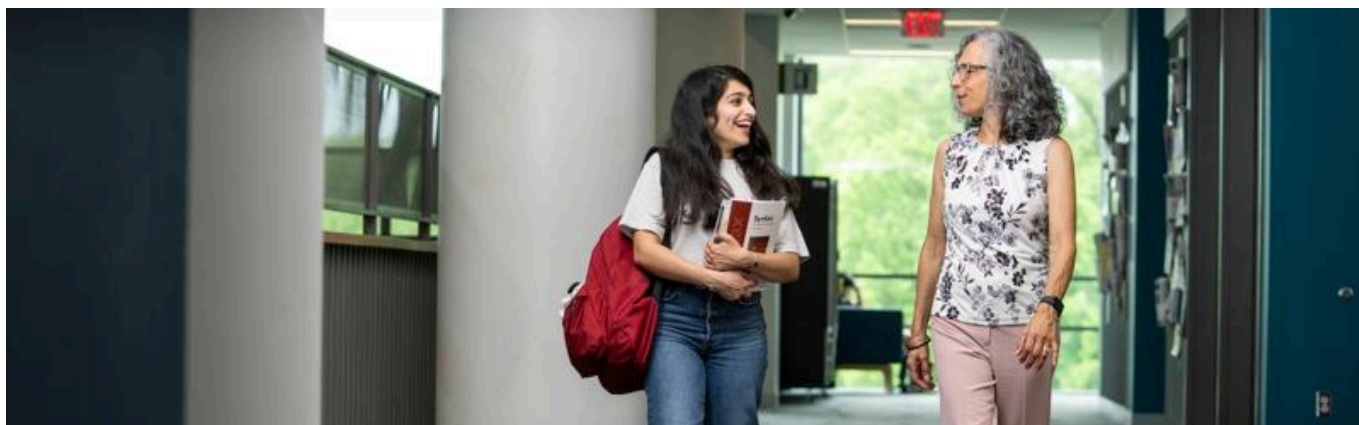


This cycle can hold you back from reaching your full potential. But when you adopt a growth mindset—thinking of your brain like a muscle that gets stronger with use—you open the door to greater learning and achievement.

So, next time you feel frustrated or ready to give up, take a deep breath and remind yourself why you started college in the first place. Know that with time, effort, and support, you can reach your goals. And remember, you're not alone—your professors, success coach, and academic advisor are all here to help.

Academic Advising:

To stay on track for graduation, it's important to connect regularly with your academic advisor. They are your go-to resource for understanding academic policies, selecting courses, and planning your degree path. Don't wait until your final semester—aim to meet with your advisor at least once per semester to review your progress. Ideally, schedule your appointment a few weeks before your registration date so you can determine which classes to take next. This proactive approach will help you build a clear course plan, ensuring you complete all your classes in the correct sequence and fulfill your degree requirements on time.



MOTIVATION REFLECTION



1 What is your purpose (i.e., your “why”) for being in college?

2 What keeps you going when you feel like giving up?

3 How do you stay motivated?

4 What barriers do you anticipate along your journey towards graduation?

5 How can you overcome those barriers?

LET'S CREATE A SMART GOAL TO KEEP YOU ON
TRACK WITH GRADUATION:

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Academic Advising: Schools and colleges across George Mason offer a variety of academic advising services, including in-person and virtual advising meetings. These meetings can be scheduled appointments or drop-in advising where students are seen on a first-come, first-serve basis and no appointment is required.

Office of Fellowships: Supports currently enrolled George Mason students, and recent alumni, as they prepare to apply to external, nationally competitive awards. These awards—or fellowships—can help recipients pay for school, study abroad, gain research experience, and more.

University Career Services: University Career Services (UCS) is George Mason University's nationally recognized centralized career center. We are specialists taking an industry-focused approach to serving our students and employers.

Resilience Badge: Resilience Badge will allow you to build your resilience through content knowledge and practices, all of which are backed by the science of resilience. Deepening your own knowledge in these areas and honing your self-awareness will allow your thinking to become more flexible, more adaptable, and more creative.

Clifton Strengths: George Mason University and Gallup have partnered to create a Strengths-based culture on our campus. Students, faculty, and staff can take the CliftonStrengths assessment for free. Learn what your strengths are, and how to use them well!

Success Coaching: The Success Coaching team helps students identify resources to enhance their Patriot experiences, and develop and implement personal, career, and academic goals.

Post-Chapter Reflection:

Now that you have worked through the activities, what areas do you still need help with that you can talk to your Success Coach about?

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ABOUT THE TEAM



REBECCA MATTERN, M.ED.
Senior Success Coach

A Northern Virginia native, Rebecca is a proud Patriot, earning both her Bachelor's degree in Integrative Studies and her Master's degree in Counseling and Development from George Mason. During her graduate program, she worked as a Graduate Assistant and Academic Coach with Learning Services and as the Graduate Career Counseling Intern with Career Services. These experiences fostered her passion for supporting college students. Rebecca joined the Student Success Coaching team in June 2022 where she continues to help students take steps toward achieving their goals.



RILEY REDD, M.A.
Senior Success Coach

Riley joined the Student Success Coaching team in June 2022. Riley earned her Bachelor's degree in psychology and communication studies from Christopher Newport University and her Master's degree in psychology from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Before joining the Student Success team at George Mason University, she served as an academic success coach at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro for 2 years. In her free time, Riley loves to watch and play sports, explore the D.C. and surrounding areas, and hangout with her pet rabbit. Riley is excited to learn about students and help them to grow in pursuit of their goals.



KATHERINE TREJO
ADVANCE Success Coach

Katherine (she/her) graduated from George Mason University in the spring of 2022 with her Bachelor of Arts in Conflict Analysis and Resolution with an individualized concentration in Community Engagement with Displaced Populations. She spent her undergraduate years working with first-generation students as a first-gen student herself, working on initiatives that supported various backgrounds of students on campus such as creating the 'Vuela' Scholarship alongside her team with the Mariposas Mentoring Program in 2020. She has a strong commitment to helping students achieve success in their academic and personal endeavors.



MELANIE (MJ) JALIM
Communications Specialist

Melanie Jalim graduated from George Mason University with a major in Communications, concentrating in Public Relations and a minor in Tourism and Event Management. She has worked with multiple departments around campus, including Housing, SSAC, and the LEAD office. She strongly encourages students to partake in opportunities that will help them thrive not only as a Patriot, but to fulfill their own aspirations when on their journey in higher education and beyond. Before Mason, she worked on the NOVA Loudoun Campus with the Student Life department, where she helped create events and workshops for leadership and social engagement. During her free time, Melanie loves to travel, thrift, spend time with family and friends, and create chocolates for her small business.