

University of Mary Washington

Strategic Vision – 2022-2027

Approved by the Board of Visitors, November 18, 2022

Who we are

Started by the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1908 as a normal school to train teachers, and named after the mother of the nation's first president, Mary Washington is classified as a national liberal arts institution because of our commitment to academic excellence in undergraduate education.

In recent decades, many institutions of higher education have pursued growth strategies where bigger is better, and we are happy to have them as partners providing postgraduate opportunities for our students. But for us, being neither too big nor too small **matters**. We believe that close and personal interactions surrounded by plentiful opportunities make a difference in our students' lives. Our low student-to-faculty ratio, small classes, and commitment to personalized attention make us **the public university in Virginia best positioned to truly know our students**.

UMW intentionally creates the space for students to take giant leaps – intellectually, socially, and personally. This is true whether they are competing for our NCAA Division III athletic programs, taking part in some of our 150-plus student clubs and organizations, or engaging in service throughout the community. They are already emerging leaders in their own right, and they leave Mary Washington accountable, agile, and ready for what comes next. We support students in finding meaningful relationships that will sustain them throughout their lives, and we connect them with opportunities to maximize their impact on the world through life and career.

What we are not

While many schools are defined by what they are, we also like to define ourselves by what we are not. We do not have a football team, but we are internationally known for our rugby program. We do not have Greek life, but our newly renovated residence halls and apartment buildings teem with community and social events, launching lifelong friendships.

And we have no teaching assistants – zero. More than 95% of our courses are taught by faculty with terminal degrees in their field. Many without terminal degrees are career professionals with a lifetime of work experience, often within the corridors of power and influence in Washington, D.C., and beyond. Also, we have Fulbrights, a Goldwater, and one of the highest percentages of students who go on to the Peace Corps of any school our size in the country.

Our values

Our values are the bedrock of the University of Mary Washington. *Accountability. Scholarship. Personal and Institutional Integrity. Inclusive Excellence. Respect and Civility. Engagement. ASPIRE.* They are our true north, defining the contours of the student experience and positioning our graduates as citizens of a complex and rapidly changing world. These values matter in the small but rich community that is Mary Washington. They shape our traditions, our practices, and the ways we teach, learn, and live.

General education, UMW style

All universities can lay claim to the liberal arts tradition. At Mary Washington, we take an innovative approach. Soon after we developed our strategic vision, UMW began a general education review designed to transform the student experience.

Yes, UMW still provides students with a broad liberal arts education that positions them to know and make meaning of the world. However, it also demands that students engage in interdisciplinary conversations to embrace their community, gain diverse perspectives, and develop digital fluency. And it places a premium on life-changing learning experiences beyond the classroom.

In 2020, we rolled out an “After Mary Washington” requirement because we know students (and their families) care about what comes after college, and we have an obligation to help them be career-ready when they leave us. We are especially keen on helping students translate their liberal arts experience to effective, meaningful employment.

Our location

All of this comes together and is reinforced by our location. UMW is ideally situated in Fredericksburg, Virginia on the I-95 corridor midway between Washington D.C., and Richmond, Virginia. It is one of the country’s most historic and fastest growing regions. UMW is strategically located in a region where industry, government, politics, healthcare, technology, and military installations provide opportunities for undergraduate internships, field trips, and research. These experiences often turn into high-quality, highly paid jobs. It’s also a pretty fun place to live, work, and learn with abundant opportunities for recreation, entertainment, dining and community involvement.

Our strategic vision

In 2017, UMW adopted a strategic vision that identified four goals:

1. Promoting the values of service and community and civic engagement.
2. Immersing our students in applied, impactful learning experiences.
3. Adapting the liberal arts to an age of accelerations and a global digital environment.
4. Creating a diverse and inclusive community as an essential requirement for academic

excellence and academic success.

Five years on, these goals have served us well, especially as we navigated the disruption of the last two years. However, much has changed since 2017. A new General Education Program was adopted which aligns the liberal arts curriculum with the goals of the strategic vision. COVID shifted our classes to remote instruction and changed teaching and learning in ways that were unimaginable just five years ago. At the same time, higher education has entered a new more uncertain future with new risks and opportunities while the marketplace in Virginia has become even more competitive. And, despite all of this, many of the action items established in the strategic vision in 2017 have been realized.

In spring 2022, President Paino convened working groups to evaluate the strategic vision and its associated action items and to recommend appropriate changes. This revised strategic vision with goals and action steps reflects those efforts and the hard work of many members of our community. As we prepare for the next five years, we have considered how these goals and their action steps will be modified given all that we have learned and within the context of the challenges ahead. With these revisions, UMW is well-positioned to continue serving Virginia and our nation as a national public liberal arts and sciences institution with an enduring commitment to providing students with an education that **matters**.

Our goals for the next five years

Goal 1: Promoting the values of service and community and civic engagement

As a public liberal arts and sciences institution, UMW seeks to realize the public purpose of our mission. Drawing inspiration from our 1908 founding as a public school to train teachers as well as the legacies of the students, faculty and staff who inspire members of our community to pursue things greater than self, we equip students to address society's complex challenges and to be active citizens in our pluralistic liberal democracy. UMW graduates have the knowledge, skills, and capacity to improve their lives, their communities, and the world around them.

Action Steps:

1:1 Building active citizens and engagement with our region. Develop curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular programs that promote civic and community engagement, volunteerism, and service learning with partners in the greater Fredericksburg region and across the Commonwealth.

1:2 Partnership with K-12. Focus on meeting teacher shortages in critical areas (computer science, science, mathematics, literacy, special education) through partnerships with districts and community colleges, the development of post-baccalaureate and +1 programs to recruit nontraditional/re-career individuals to the teaching profession, and support for graduates in finding opportunities in underserved regions.

1:3 Post-graduate opportunities for leadership and service. Develop programming, support, and opportunities for students to explore, plan for, and successfully secure post-graduation opportunities and careers related to public service in the region, across the country, and around the world (e.g. local, state, and federal government, the nonprofit sector, organizations such as the Peace Corps and AmeriCorps, and at Dahlgren).

1:4 Sustainability. Promote stewardship of the planet and the region's abundant natural resources through educational and community based sustainability initiatives which enhance the University's visibility and reputation as a "green" campus that aims along with the City of Fredericksburg to be carbon neutral by 2035.

Goal 2: Immersing our students in applied, impactful learning experiences

From the moment they arrive at UMW, students are immersed in high impact learning experiences preparing them for intellectual and professional success and to be productive and engaged community members. UMW students learn in environments built for cross-curricular collaboration with peers, faculty, and staff as well as our off-campus partners; these collaborations promote creative thinking and reflective learning as students make connections among concepts and experiences. Students explore and refine their own interests and values as they relate to those in a diverse society. Whether on or off campus—classroom, playing field, stage, lab, workplace, office, or residence—UMW students are challenged to extend what they know through shared leadership and service. Core experiences, such as undergraduate research and internships prepare UMW students to develop and apply skills and dispositions that they will need for a future of lifelong learning.

Action Steps:

2:1 Employment based learning experiences/internships: Create an internship program which provides all students with opportunities for a paid work-based learning experience during their time as undergraduates.

2:2 Undergraduate research: Expand support for undergraduate research and project-based learning involving student-faculty collaboration on undergraduate research and creative projects.

2:3 Cocurricular transcripts: Develop a cocurricular transcript which captures the many non-credit learning opportunities and experiences students have (e.g. athletics, leadership positions, and student clubs and organizations).

2:4 Interdisciplinarity: Create opportunities for interdisciplinary conversations in support of collaboration and curricular innovation, programming and scholarship.

2.5 Career readiness: Establish a comprehensive career readiness curriculum for all students which has clearly identified competencies and multiple and individualized pathways to completion. Implement a comprehensive assessment plan which includes a

plan for tracking post-graduation outcomes of UMW student by employment, wages, well-being and other measures of success.

2:6 Pathways to graduate and professional opportunities: Expand partnerships and agreements with graduate and professional programs in Virginia and beyond to create pathways to post-graduate opportunities and placements for undergraduates.

2:7 COVID after-action review: Conduct an analysis of the impact of COVID on teaching and learning and compile lessons learned to include classes, teaching (pedagogy and modalities), work modalities, and community relations.

Goal 3 Adapting the liberal arts to the knowledge economy and a global digital environment

UMW must prepare our students to live, work, and serve effectively in a global digital environment with a rapidly changing knowledge economy. We do so by intentionally fostering the ability in our students to consume and produce digital knowledge (critically, ethically, and responsibly) and to adapt to and make use of new and emerging technologies.

Action Steps:

3:1 Online and Hybrid Teaching: Advance COVID necessitated insights to further define the way in which online interactions and teaching are a part of UMW's vision while developing the appropriate research and policy to guide further investment.

3:2 Digital Fluency and in-demand credentials: Increase efforts to expand digital intensive course creation, develop advanced digital fluency skills for students, and provide opportunities for students to gain credentials for in-demand proficiencies (e.g. social media and marketing analytics, Microsoft).

3:3 Simpson Library: Renovate and modernize Simpson Library.

3:4 Employee development: Improve digital skills and business practices of all UMW employees.

3:5 Open education: Recommit to open education and open scholarship through increased faculty support and resources.

Goal 4: Creating a diverse and inclusive community as an essential requirement for realizing our strategic goals and objectives.

That UMW be representative of the diversity of the Commonwealth is imperative if we are to meet our mission of preparing Virginia's citizens to lead meaningful and productive lives in the years to come. Academic excellence and student success require the infrastructure, environment and supports necessary to sustain community in the face of rapid global change, demographic

shifts, and an increasingly polarized public sphere. An inclusive UMW is one guided by our core values, an understanding of diversity in all its forms, and which has the capacity for meaningful dialogue across difference.

Action Steps:

4:1 ASPIRE values. Develop and implement a plan to bring UMW’s core values (Accountability, Scholarship, Personal and Institutional Integrity, Inclusive Excellence, Respect and Civility, and Engagement) to life as a fundamental aspect of the student experience.

4:2 Recruit, retain, and graduate underserved students. Design and implement enhanced efforts through admissions, access partnerships, summer bridge and new pathways to support the recruitment, retention and completion of underserved students in the region and around the Commonwealth.

4:3 Free speech and expression. Create an interdisciplinary program with curricular and co-curricular opportunities for participation focused on civil discourse and debate to support the free exchange of ideas and diverse perspectives as well as to support training for students, faculty and staff in having difficult conversations across differences.

4:4 Campus accessibility. Develop and implement a plan for capital improvements to address campus accessibility issues.

4:5 Mental health and well-being. Enhance the capacity for employees to support students with mental health needs through “gatekeeper” training as well as resource development, programming, and communication of services and supports for the well-being of all students, faculty, and staff.

4:6 Campus Safety. Enhance campus safety and build connections between and among UMW Police and students, faculty, and staff through an advisory board that emphasizes community policing principles and the significance of safety to a vibrant campus life.