Well-Being at George Mason University

Research shows that our ability to thrive and succeed – as a student, as an employee, as an organization, and in our lives – is directly correlated to our degree of well-being (Rath & Harter, 2010). We define well-being as building a life of vitality, purpose, resilience, and engagement. The good news is that well-being can be learned and developed at any age, and the benefits cross over to all aspects of life.

Each of us can actually change the chemistry of our brain to produce more positive and hopeful responses (Davidson & Begley, 2012). Our levels of well-being can be elevated through engagement in the practices and mindsets that raise positive experiences, build resilience, and increase hope for a better future.

When these evidence-based techniques become part of our everyday life, they increase our ability to make choices and take actions that lead to increased personal and professional success. Enhancing individual and organizational well-being is the goal of Mason’s Center for the Advancement of Well-Being.

Our collective work at Mason provides individuals and organizations with tools and resources to more positively influence others and the world around them, creating a ripple effect to a world that’s thriving together.

Assumptions

• People can intentionally learn, build and cultivate well-being.
• A well-lived life is a life full of meaning and purpose; grounded in self-awareness and infused with inquiry and curiosity.
• Well-being involves subjectivity and can be measured with rigorous science.
• Facilitating the well-being in others and providing opportunities for learning and growth is a responsibility of everyone involved in the leadership process.

In 2013, Mason’s Board of Visitors approved a new 10-year strategic plan with twelve goals. Well-being earned one of these coveted spots. Goal #7 reads: “Become a model well-being university that allows all of its members to thrive.” Inclusion of well-being in this strategic plan indicates widespread institutional support for this effort. It also indicates the multi-disciplinary nature of this work, as all disciplines and fields will contribute to a deeper understanding of the science and application of well-being.

Mason’s Center for the Advancement of Well-Being, Human Resources and Payroll, and University Life are committed to helping Mason realize this goal of being a model well-being university that other organizations look to as an example of how to encourage the development and awareness of well-being in the lives of its community members in innovative and intentional ways. A range of programing for students, faculty, staff, alumni and even the greater local community is offered in support of this goal. One of the many ways we do this work is through Spring Into Well-Being, a six-week multiple campus education campaign to draw attention to this goal and to the opportunities at each of Mason’s campuses to engage in developing and understanding well-being. The efforts are holistic but also categorized into the six areas of well-being: physical, career, psychological, financial, social, and community.
As a model well-being university, Mason will help students, faculty, staff and alumni build a life of vitality, purpose, resilience, and engagement – [http://wbu.gmu.edu](http://wbu.gmu.edu)

We will help build **vitality** through the development of positive relationships and physical well-being through:

- Creating and sustaining positive relationships and social support networks
- Treating one another with civility and respect
- Demonstrating leadership abilities that promote well-being and positive change
- Pursuing a balanced life of healthy nutrition, regular exercise, and adequate sleep

We will help develop **purpose** through values, and work engagement by:

- Clarifying personal, professional, and community values
- Pursuing and engaging in behaviors that are congruent with values
- Striving for a life of purpose and meaning
- Preparing to thrive and make meaningful contributions in future careers

We will help develop **resilience** through:

- Increasing self-awareness through honest and continuous self-reflection
- Increasing psychological flexibility
- Recognizing and adapting to various situational demands that enable and promote values-driven behavior
- Finding and fostering resiliency to overcome stress and adversity
- Responding to stressful situations and managing stress in healthier ways

We will help develop **engagement** through:

- Identifying, developing and applying strengths in daily activities
- Opportunities for individuals to do what they are best at on a regular basis
- Deepening one’s sense of belonging and connections with others
- Finding opportunities to make connections with others in meaningful ways
- Pursuing community service, service-learning, and collective action toward a common good as ways to contribute to others’ well-being