Report on the Response of the George Mason University to the Impact of the Aging of Virginia's Population

Fairfax, Virginia
May 1, 2008

Agency Description

The Innovative University for the Information Society

George Mason will be the university needed by a region and world driven by new social, economic, and technological realities.
We are in the right place: The nation's capital region is the epicenter of the world's political web, its information and communications network, and its new economy.
We are ready: In an age that demands originality and imagination, George Mason is among the nation's most innovative universities.
George Mason will:

- Be a magnet for outstanding faculty who will devise new ways to approach problems, invent new ways to teach, and develop new knowledge for the benefit of the region and nation.
- Attract inventive, industrious students of all ages and cultures and produce citizens who are intellectually and technologically literate people who will lead by the force of their ideas.
- Transform into knowledge and wisdom the vast amounts of information now accessible through new technologies.
- Build strong alliances that bring the know-how of business and the community into the university and take the knowledge of the university into the workplace and the larger society.
- Be a center of inquiry, knowledge, and professional expertise in fields with vital implications for human needs and opportunities in the future.
- Remain innovative, resourceful, and responsive, while drawing on the intellectual and cultural heritage of the classical university.
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Agency Mission

George Mason University will be an institution of international academic reputation providing superior education for students to develop critical, analytical, and imaginative thinking and to make well-founded ethical decisions. It will respond to the call for interdisciplinary research and teaching, not simply by adding programs but by rethinking the traditional structure of the academy.
The university will prepare students to address the complex issues facing them in society and to discover meaning in their own lives. It will encourage diversity in its student body and will meet the needs of students by providing them with interdisciplinary and innovative undergraduate, graduate, and professional courses. The university will energetically seek ways to interact with and serve the needs of the student body.
The university will nurture and support a faculty that is diverse, innovative, excellent in teaching, active in pure and applied research, and responsive to the needs of students and the community. The faculty will embody the university's interactive approach to change both in the academy and in the world.
The university will be a resource of the Commonwealth of Virginia serving private and public sectors. It will be an intellectual and cultural nexus between Northern Virginia, the nation, and the world.

Pursuant to legislation enacted by the Virginia General Assembly of Virginia, George Mason University submits this report of its progress in addressing the impact of the aging of Virginia's population.

J. Thomas Hennessey, Jr. Ph.D.
Chief of Staff

1. To the extent such data is available, the number of persons who received services from the agency in the past fiscal year who fell into each of the following age ranges: 65-74; 75-84; and 85 and older. If the agency can provide data that compares such numbers to numbers of senior citizens served in the past, please do so. If the agency lacks specific information about the numbers of senior citizens it serves, but has other evidence indicating that it is serving more or fewer senior citizens than it has in the past, please describe the basis for that estimation.

   Mason hosts one of the largest "Life-Long Learning" communities in the United States. Mason provides administrative and classroom space on campus for the Osher Life-Long Learning Institute (OLLI) on the Fairfax campus, the Arlington Learning in Retirement Institute at its Arlington Campus, and their affiliates at the Prince William and Loudoun campus locations. More than 1200 senior citizens between the ages of 65 and 95 are enrolled in classes taught by a combination of visiting, resident, and Mason faculty during the year. In 2007-2008, more than 100 individual courses were offered at the various sites with class attendance exceeding 2500. In collaboration with the University, the OLLI has received a $1million dollar endowment to support its operations.

2. Identify the agency services that are utilized by senior citizens 65 and older in significant numbers. Indicate whether the agency has the capacity at present to serve all interested seniors or whether the demand for certain services exceeds the agency's capacity. If so, does the agency maintain waiting lists for services?

   Mason has two major programs that are utilized by citizens 65 and older in significant numbers, the fitness and aquatic centers at the Fairfax and Prince William campuses and the Center for the Arts at the Fairfax campus. All three sites and facilities have the capacity to serve all interested seniors. All three require membership and/or fee for service entry. There is currently no waiting list for membership at any of the facilities. Senior citizens 65 and older are able to take classes at George Mason provided there is space in the class. Unfortunately, Mason's rapid growth over the past decade has provided little space for senior citizens. There is often a waiting list for classes and senior citizens are included on those wait lists.

3. Identify current agency programs, specifically designed to serve seniors 65 and older, that fall into any of the following six categories: Health Care/Wellness; Education; Public Safety; Recreation; Financial Security (including Housing); and Transportation.

   George Mason University, within its Department of Health Administration and Policy, College of Health and Human Services, offers the ***Program in Assisted Living/Senior Housing Administration***. This is the nation's first undergraduate and graduate curriculum dedicated solely to this rapidly growing field. The Program is designed to provide graduates with the operational, marketing, resident care, and hospitality services skills required to become effective leaders and managers of assisted living/senior housing communities. Equally important, the program provides exposure to and understanding of the unique philosophy of assisted living/senior housing relative to choice, dignity, autonomy, and quality of life for older adults. Courses offered include:

   - HAP 307: Assisted Living Management & Philosophy
   - HAP 378: Health Care Delivery in the United States
   - GCH 480: Health Aspects of Aging
   - NURS 492: Death, Dying, and Decision Making

- HAP 498: Health Management Internship
- GCH 585: Care and Management of Persons with Alzheimers
- GCH 637: Normal Aging and Health Deviations
- HAP 650: Assisted Living/Senior Housing Management & Operations
- HAP 678: Introduction to the US Health System
- HAP 705: Healthcare Strategic Management and Marketing
- HAP 790: Health Management Practicum and Capstone Seminar

4. Identify the extent to which your agency provides "consumer-oriented" publications and websites online that are designed to be "senior-friendly." If the information you currently provide is not readily accessible to seniors, identify any steps your agency is taking to improve accessibility.

   George Mason's commitment to providing websites and publications that are fully ADA compliant ensures that senior citizens will find them "senior friendly" and no further action is contemplated.

5. Describe the effect that the aging of the agency's own workforce will have on its ability to deliver services. Consider the number of retirements expected in the next two years, the effect these retirements might have (*e.g.*, loss of leadership or institutional knowledge in certain programs), how losses might be replaced (*e.g.*, promotions or transfers, recruitment, use of wage staff, including retirees, reengineering, outsourcing), and the costs or savings from the replacements (*e.g.*, staff development cost, salary savings). This item might be addressed by summarizing relevant portions of the agency's workforce plan.

   The aging of Mason's workforce will pose some interesting challenges and opportunities. With a workforce of some 5,000 faculty and staff, roughly half of whom are over 50, the university enjoys the contributions of many experienced workers. Interestingly, while the Corporate Leadership Council Benchmark[1] indicates an upward trend in the retirement rate from 14% in 2003 to 16.2% in 2005, Mason's trend is rising, but at a slower rate, 10.1% in 2003 to 11.3% in 2007. This could be because universities provide opportunities for employees to start their second, third, or fourth career and Mason, in particular, hires experiences workers. In the last 12 months, of 547 new hires, roughly half were age 50 and over.

   We anticipate that 64 faculty and staff may retire over the next 24 months. In analyzing the currently available data, we see "hot" areas where the university could experience a loss of institutional knowledge without carefully constructed succession plans. However, we also see ample opportunity to harness the energy and experience of up and coming faculty and staff to fill in these positions. Additionally, we are fortunate in that our geographic location, near Washington D.C., provides us with a rich, diverse, and a highly trained candidate pool.

   Succession planning from within may prove to be the most cost effective and will almost certainly help us retain our most talented staff as they will have room to grow within their careers. It will also permit us to maintain continuity in the delivery of services to the students and the university as a whole. To this end, Mason has mentoring programs on

[1] Corporate leadership Council Benchmark data reflects the median of the turnover rates reported by 20 organizations (As cited by the University of Michigan in their 6. Describe any other services or programs that the agency has implemented or plans to implement in the future to address the impact of the aging of Virginia's population. Human Capital Report, 2006).

both the faculty and the staff side which will continue to grow and enhance their outreach in the future. We are also working to retain a connection to our retirees. In 2004, we created the Retirement Connection, a special recognition for employees who retire from Mason. The Retirement Connection package includes a retiree ID, a complimentary annual parking permit, and tickets to arts and sporting events. Mason is committed to staying connected with retirees and is adding new opportunities for retirees including inviting them to attend events and seminars as well as developing a volunteer service program and flexible employment options for part-time or project-based work.
We will continue to track the impact of the aging workforce at Mason and will always endeavor to creatively respond to our faculty and staff to ensure that Mason remains a competitive employer of choice.

6. Describe any other services or programs that the agency has implemented or plans to implement in the future to address the impact of the aging of Virginia's population.

The University is in the process of negotiating an agreement with the University Senior Living Foundation for the construction of a University Based Retirement Center. This Continuous Care Retirement Center (CCRC) will provide, in Phase I, approximately 222 independent living apartments, 44 assisted living suites, 24 memory care units and 30 private nursing beds. What is planned as the premier learning laboratory in the nation, this facility will also house the university's Center for Senior Living (see paragraph 3, above) and the Osher Life Long Learning Institute, OLLI, (see paragraph 1, above).