



# Mason LIFE Program Information Session – Welcome!

<https://masonlife.gmu.edu>

September 26, 2023



# Our Core Admin Team



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# What is the Mason LIFE Program?

Four-year inclusive postsecondary, non-degree certificate program, educating students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Opportunity for support staff to gain practical experience learning from and working with individuals with disabilities.

<https://masonlife.gmu.edu/>

# Who are we serving?

- 46 students total
  - 1<sup>st</sup> years – 16
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> years – 18
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> years – 9
  - 4<sup>th</sup> years – 3
- Students from:
  - Virginia
  - Washington D.C.
  - Maryland
  - North Carolina
  - Illinois
  - Texas

# Our new class: 2027



- 16 new 1<sup>st</sup> year students
- 15 in-state; 1 from D.C.
- 10 male, 6 female students
- 7 are living on-campus

# Philosophy

The Mason LIFE program strives to be a model postsecondary education program that focuses on research, academic progress, campus integration, employment opportunities, and the development of independent living and social skills. The goal of the program is not to duplicate the K-12 experience, but rather assist students in becoming independent and advocating for themselves on their own.

As a certificate program, we mirror the degree-seeking student experience.



## •STUDENTS

- Do you want to learn in the classroom?
- Do you want to make friends and try new activities that you have not tried before?
- Are you interested in working?
- Can you stay on your own for up to 4 hours?
- Can you take care of yourself (e.g., hygiene, simple cooking, chores around the house)?
- Do you know when and how to ask for help when needed?
- Can you handle your emotions if things don't always go well?



## •FAMILIES

- Are you interested in your son/daughter learning at a higher level?
- Do you feel comfortable knowing that students in the program are interfacing with the entire college campus? (People, activities/events, clubs)
- Students are not supervised 24/7. Are you ok with knowing that students will be on their own at times?
- Communication is very different from the K-12 setting. While we believe family support is critical, it will feel different. Staff will not contact you other than when the students initiate that request or if a student is referred to an office outside of the program (e.g., Title IX, GMU PD, Student Conduct).
- Schedules are built based on the degree seeking experience. Students will not be in class from 9-5. There will be blocks of time that a student is expected to be independent on campus.
- Students are responsible to adhere to all university policies and procedures as well as specific program expectations. Additionally, the program cannot implement additional support services specific to an individual (e.g., therapists, OT/PT, coaching).

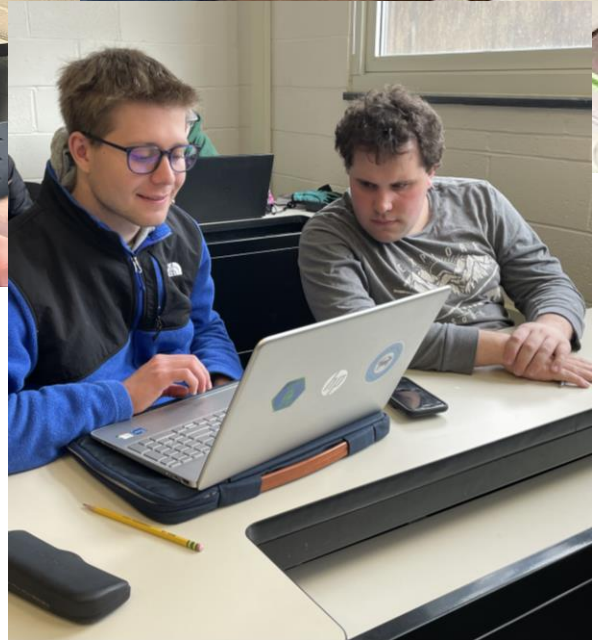
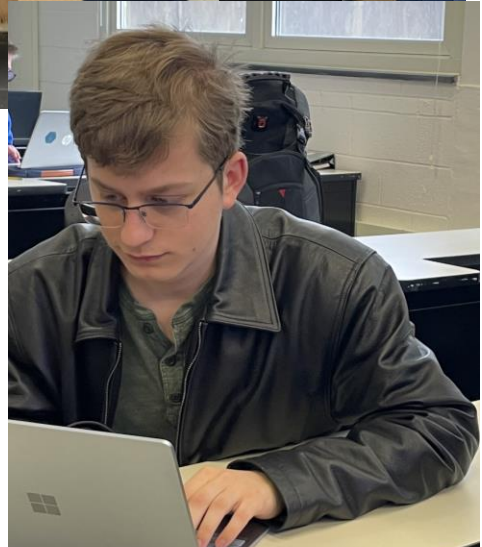
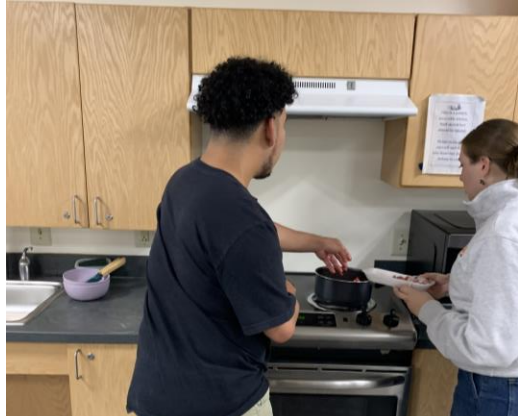


# Components

- Academics
  - Foundational Academics (Mason LIFE only)
  - Exploration (University courses)
- Employment
  - On and off campus internships
- Housing
  - Living on-campus (optional)
- Community Involvement
  - Joining clubs, attending university events, creating lifelong friendships

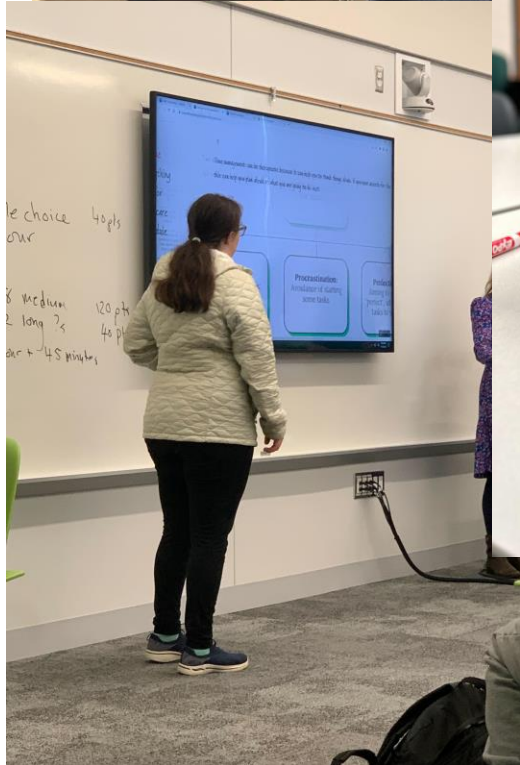
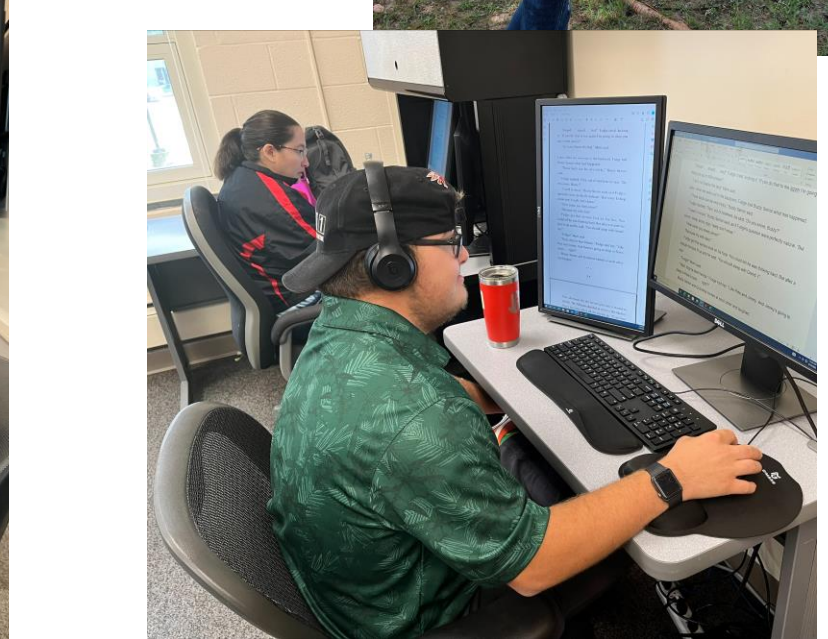
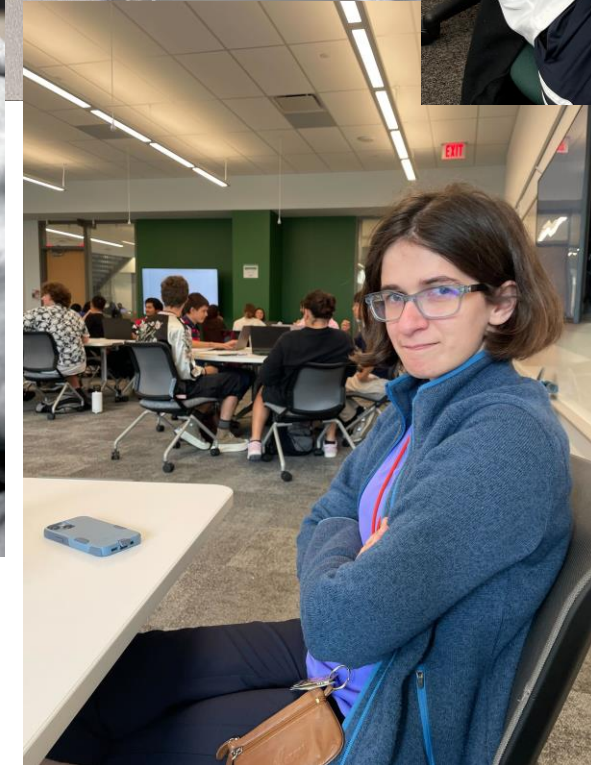
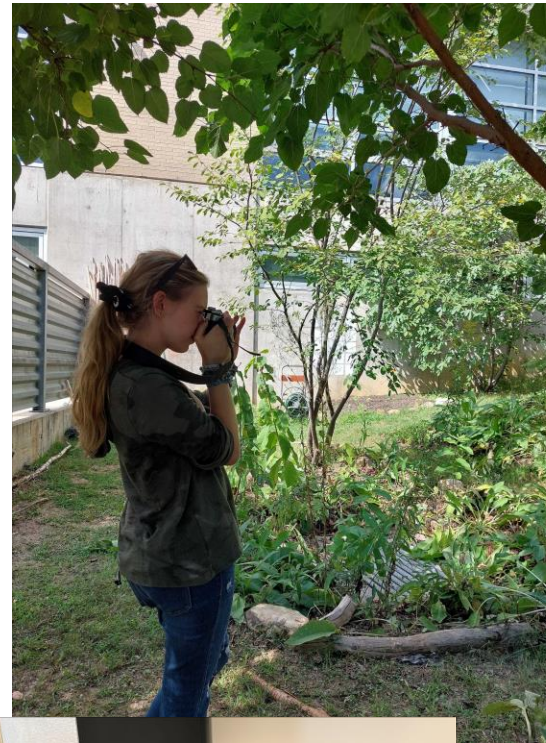
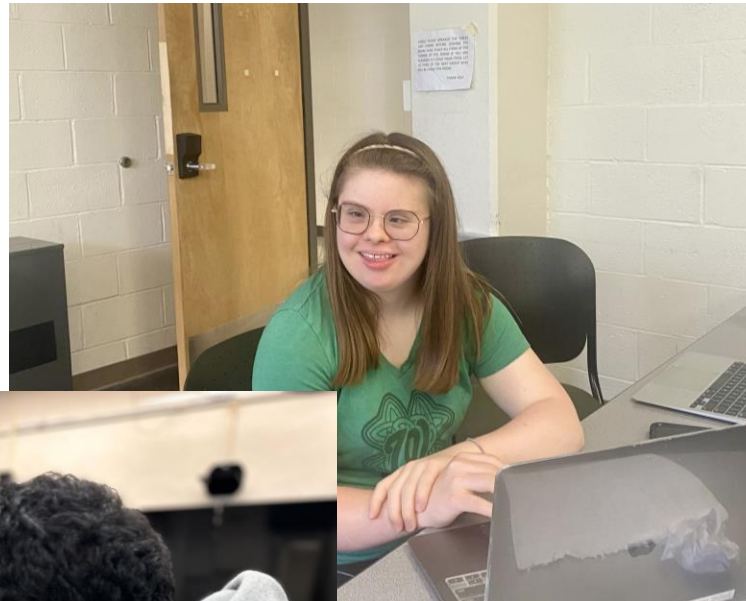
# Foundational Academics

- Foundational Academics (FA) provides continuous education for Mason LIFE students, where instruction is delivered predominantly by graduate-level support staff (FASS) pursuing a special education career path.
- Mason LIFE students are required to take a minimum of one semester of core classes which include Literature, Math, Writing, Human Sexuality and Relationship Fundamentals and Self-Regulation.



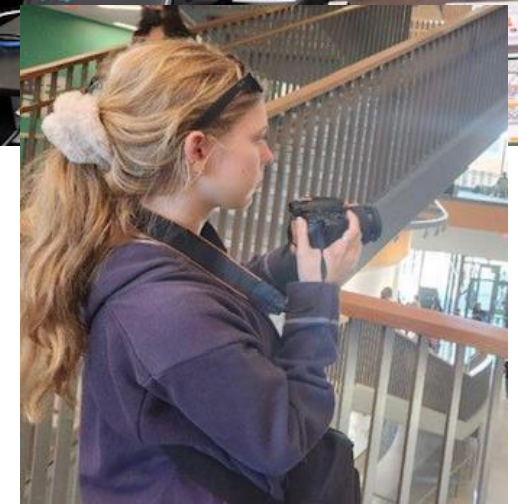
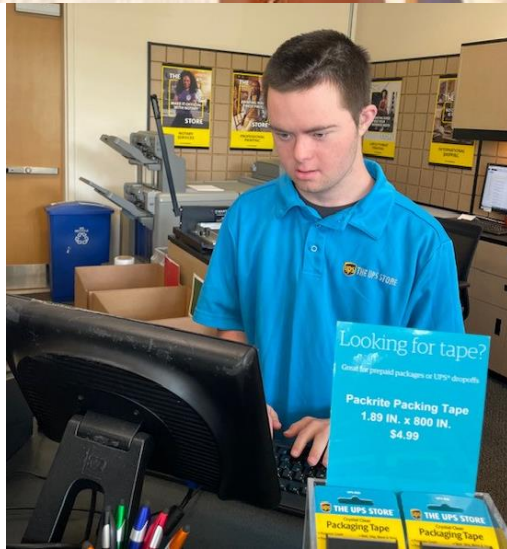
# Exploration

- As diverse learners, Mason LIFE students will participate in university courses and will be supported accordingly. Through these courses, students will learn academic skills, build autonomy, and learn to apply their knowledge. Faculty must give prior approval before enrolling a student in class.
- Students earn a certificate of completion at the end of this program which includes a Comprehensive Concentration of their choice.
- The students will also be enrolled in a support class for additional assistance. These support classes provide an opportunity to do homework, class assignments, and review course materials. Since Mason LIFE students do not earn course credit, all coursework will be individualized.



# Employment

- Supports individuals with diverse abilities in learning job-specific tasks, general employee responsibilities, and social behaviors appropriate for the work environment.
- Support the employment sites in developing a relationship with the new colleagues and learning how the individual learns/works best.
- Students work on and off campus, paid and unpaid
- Students will take an Employment Skills seminar each year in addition to worksites or internships.
- Aids in development of professional portfolio.





# Alumni Stats:

- 82% Employed
- 70% Work independently
- 45% utilize public transportation or drive to work
- On a ranking scale of 1-5; the average response was 4 in alumni feeling the skills and experiences from the Mason LIFE program helped prepare them for their current employment.

National Gallery of Art





# Housing

- Students will develop daily living skills related to knowledge of personal care, overall safety, meal preparation, household management, and budgeting.
- Students are expected to safely and productively spend a minimum of a 3-4 hour period without support.
- All students will take a housing class to further their skills in daily living, recreation, and relationships.
- All students will participate in team-building to understand interpersonal interaction and connections.



# Community Involvement

- Students are required to participate in on and off-campus opportunities including student organizations, intramural clubs, sports, and university-wide events.
- Community Involvement promotes the social engagement of the Mason LIFE students within the program and the greater Mason community by matching individual students to their self-selected social activities.
- Students are expected to participate in at least 1 activity per week and join at least 1 **new** on-campus organization. There are more than 400 Mason student organizations to choose from!





## •WHAT IS A DAY LIKE IN COLLEGE?

- High School:
  - No Case Manager
  - Parents/Families call in on your behalf
  - If you are missing assignments, someone will remind you
  - You will receive grades regularly and your support (families) will be informed on-going
  - You will have an IEP Meeting
  - You will have class from 8/9:00am – 3/4:00pm
  - Your support(families) can call in for information about you at anytime
- College
  - Email Support Staff for help
  - You ask Support Staff for help
  - Everyone is given directions and it is up to you to complete and hand in your assignments
  - You will receive mid-term grades and final grades. It is up to you to inform your support (families) of your grades
  - You will have a Person-Centered Planning Meeting that you will gather information from your support staff and present a ppt
  - Your schedule will not include classes all day long. You will have breaks in the day so that you may enjoy the campus outside of class
  - Except for crisis, you must give permission to the staff to talk with your families



# Welcome

## Student & Alumni Panel



# Program Costs

## **Fall 2023/Spring 2024 Tuition Rates:**

In State: \$21,537/year, \$10,768.50/semester

Out-of-State: \$29,458/year, \$14,729/semester

## **Housing On-Campus Program Fees:**

Room Fee: \$13,710 per year

Support Fee: \$12,587 per year

Total Housing Costs: \$26,297 per year

# Financial Assistance Resources

- Federal financial aid/Pell Grant funding (based on federal criteria through FAFSA <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>)
- Virginia529 College Savings Plan or ABLEnow accounts
  - Pays only tuition portion of the Mason LIFE program
  - <https://www.virginia529.com>
  - <https://www.ablenow.com>
- Community Service Board (Fairfax County residents only)
- Mason LIFE offers a several competitive scholarships to qualified students to help defray costs associated with attending Mason LIFE:
  - **Bridget Healy Memorial Scholarship** – open only to continuing LIFE students, not incoming students; GPA requirement
  - **Mats Hormel vQ Endowed Scholarship** – open to incoming and continuing LIFE students
  - **Thomas and Carol Wheeler Fund Scholarship** – open to incoming and continuing LIFE students

*Scholarships require recipients to demonstrate financial need as determined by the Free Application for Federal Student Financial Aid (FAFSA). Students should complete their FAFSA by the priority deadline (January 15<sup>th</sup>) each year.*





Applications will be  
open online early  
October!

<https://masonlife.gmu.edu/>



**THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING**

Please feel free to reach out with any questions.

703-993-3905

[gmulife@gmu.edu](mailto:gmulife@gmu.edu)



**What questions,  
comments, or concerns  
do you have?**

