Presenters

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  Director of Research and Analysis

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Agenda

- **Institutional Context** –
George Mason University, a large public R1

- **Academic Planning** –
A new approach to college/school level strategy and goal setting

- **Academic Program Review** -
A new approach to department level strategy and goal setting

- **Examples** –
Aligning goals across institutional processes

- **Lessons Learned** –
Next steps for Academic Planning and Academic Program Review

Institutional Context

George Mason University, a large public R1

George Mason University at a Glance

Facts and Figures:

40,044 students enrolled

1,705 full-time faculty

211 degree programs
- 78 undergraduate
- 133 graduate

Regional and Accreditation Agencies:
- SACSCOC reaffirmation in 2022
- State Council of Higher Education for Virginia

George Mason University Locations:
- Fairfax Campus
- Arlington Campus
- Science and Technology Campus
- Mason Korea

Carnegie Opportunity Colleges and Universities Ranking

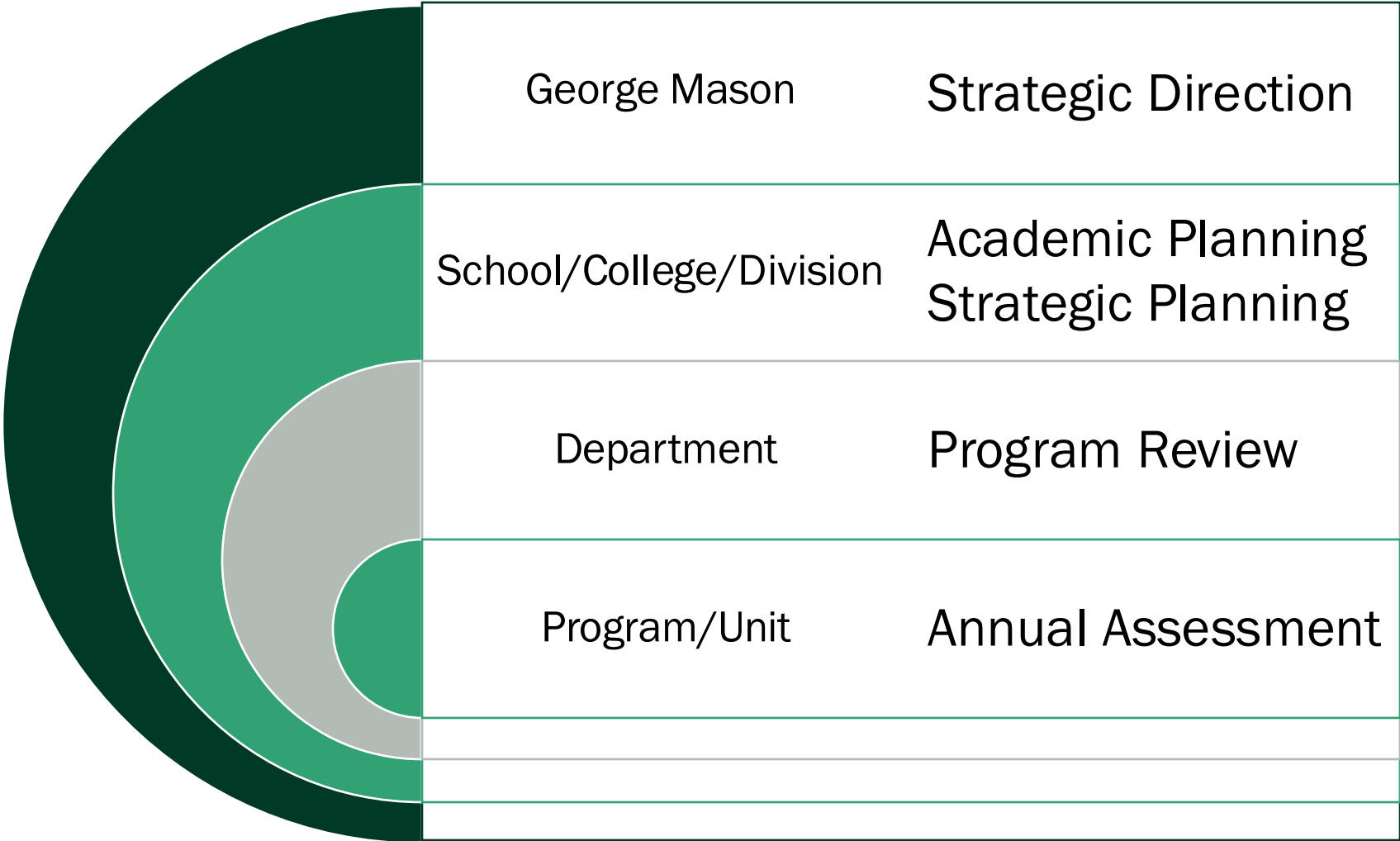1 of 6 very large R1 institutions recognized for high access and high outcomes

Academic Planning = Request for $

- Unstructured annual academic planning process
  - Lengthy written narrative
  - Unfocused discussion
  - Focus on funding requests
- Deans' agendas drove the discussion
  - Highlighting achievements
  - Lamenting perceived lack of funding
- No metrics or analytics to support success or progress on initiatives
- Enrollment-centric incentives led to unrealistic target proposals
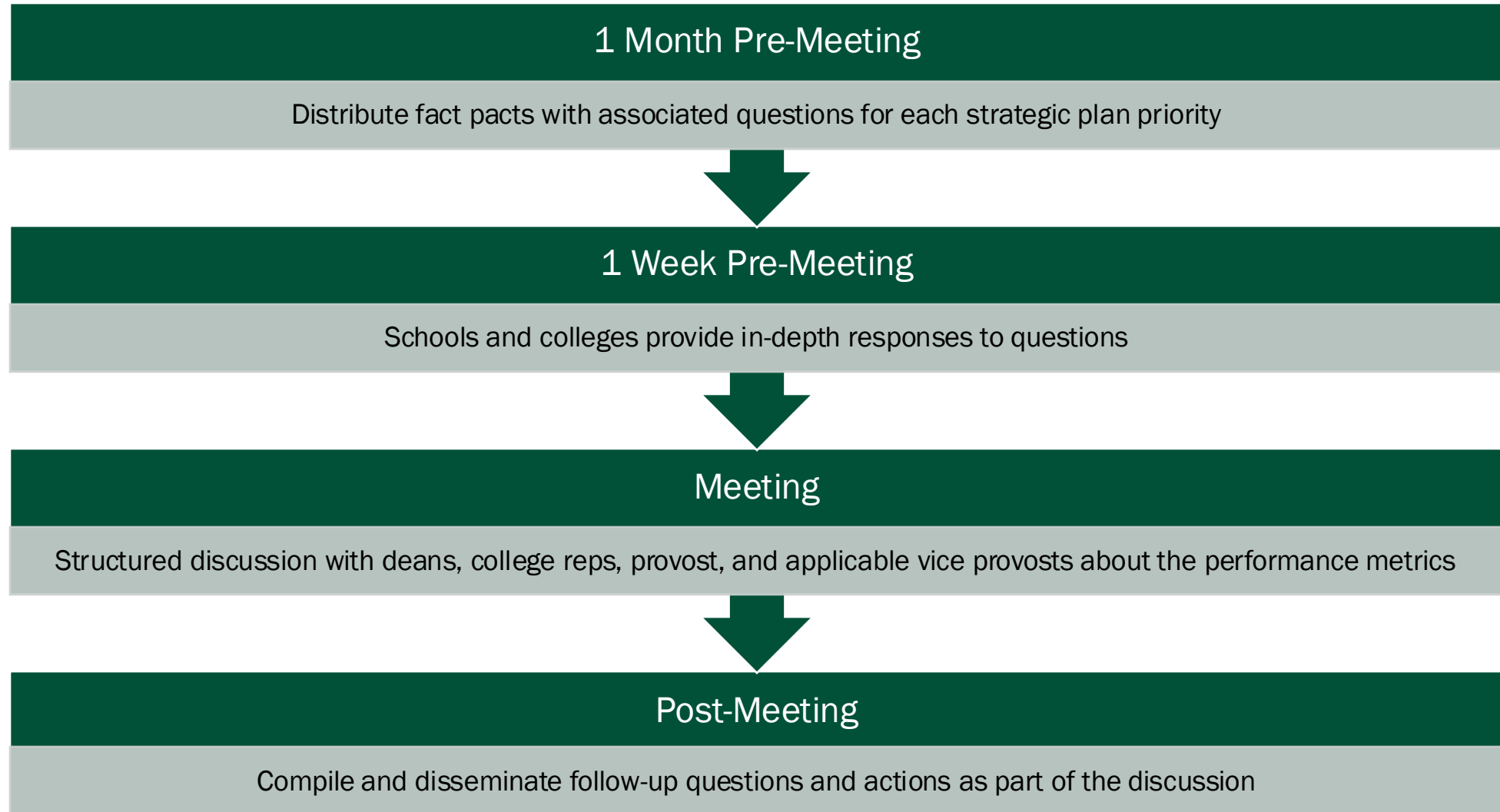
Layers of Assessment and Planning

George Mason	Strategic Direction
School/College/Division	Academic Planning Strategic Planning
Department	Program Review
Program/Unit	Annual Assessment

Academic Planning

A new approach to college/school level strategy and goal setting

A New Approach to Academic Planning

- Adapt the 6-Year Planning Fact Pack

- Framed by goals within George Mason Strategic Directions

- 2 focused conversations:
  - Student Success
  - Research, Scholarship, & Creative Activities

- 2 Fact Packs for 10-11 Schools/Colleges = @20 Fact Packs

- Included focus on:
  - Collaborative opportunities between central offices and services and school/college
  - Sharing best practices and opportunities

The Plan

1 Month Pre-Meeting

Distribute fact pacts with associated questions for each strategic plan priority

1 Week Pre-Meeting

Schools and colleges provide in-depth responses to questions

Meeting

Structured discussion with deans, college reps, provost, and applicable vice provosts about the performance metrics

Post-Meeting

Compile and disseminate follow-up questions and actions as part of the discussion

Ex. Student Success Fact Pack Metrics

Metric	Metrics Related To:		
	Mason Strategic Directions	SCHEV 6YP	SACSCOC Accreditation
5-Yr Undergraduate Enrollment Trends (New Freshmen, New Transfers, Continuing Undergrad)	1	Direct	
5-Yr Graduate Enrollment Trends (New Master's, Continuing Master's, New Doctoral, Continuing Doctoral)	1	Direct	
Top 3 Growing, Declining, and Volume Programs (5-Yr Trend)	1.1.2	Direct	Section 9
10-Yr Attrition Trends of Full-Time, First-Time Freshmen (Years 1-6)	1	Direct	Section 8
10-Yr Attrition Trends of Full-Time Master's (Years 1-6)	1	Direct	Section 8
10-Yr Attrition Trends of Full-Time Doctoral (Years 1-10)	1	Direct	Section 8
Course Availability (Ranked by Sections, by Enrollment, by Waitlist)	1	Indirect	Section 8
Curricular Analytics Complexity Scores	1.1.2	Indirect	Section 8
Top 10 DFW Courses by Volume	1.1.2	Indirect	Section 8

Ex. Student Success Fact Pack Questions

- Detail enrollment strategy including mix of students, drivers of enrollment trends, impact of academic programming, risks

- Detail retention strategy broadly and for subpopulations? Consider student support service engagement and encouragement you provide to students to engage?

- How are you addressing DFW rates to encourage greater student success?

- How do you manage capacity needs/anticipate student demand for courses?

- How does your proportion of enrollment compare to your proportion of degrees? Do retention rates track with graduation rates?

- Informed by low enrollment program data, what are the plans for program retirement/initiation aligned with market demand and student interest? How does that affect enrollment strategy?

- Provide detail on experiential learning opportunities

Academic Planning Next Steps

- Introduce dynamic dashboards w/ core metrics

- Set individual school/college metrics in response to goals

- "What gets measured gets managed"... DFW and retention goals

Example Goals:

|			
Reduce advisor case loads	Early alert strategies for at-risk students	Assess duplicative content in course portfolio	Re-engineer master's program to cohort model
Enhance recruitment for international graduate students	Keep median time to degree for doctoral programs <6 years	Create clear metrics and SLOs for PhD program	Reduce program complexity and roadblocks to degree

Academic Program Review

A new approach to department level strategy and goal setting
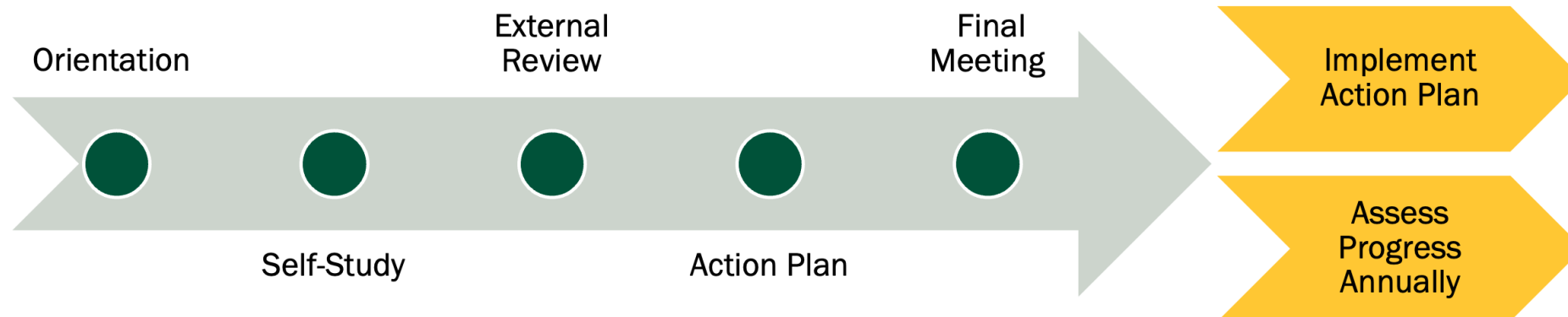
Updating APR Procedures

- Peer reviewers internal to the university from different disciplines
- Limited data involvement
- Difficult to find metrics
- Ambiguous roles between OIEP and faculty
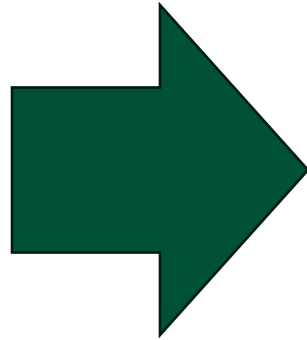
- Peer reviewers external to the university from the same discipline
- Data centered discussions
- APR specific dashboard (launching Fall 2025)
- OIEP provides resources, faculty provides analysis and goals

Current APR Process

- Opportunity to critically examine the current state of the unit, its programs, relevant institutional data, and the faculty/student experience

- Review occurs over 4 semesters

- Use this analysis to inform goals for the next seven years

Orientation

External Review

Final Meeting

Implement Action Plan

Self-Study

Action Plan

Assess Progress Annually

APR Goal Setting and Closure Process

- Closure shifted from an MOU to Operational Action Plan and integrates leadership feedback
- Focuses on goals set by the unit and what actions will be taken to reach them
  - Timeline mapped across next 7 years
  - Check-in points established
  - Goals tracked in assessment management platform

Examples

Aligning goals across institutional processes

School/College 1

Academic Planning College Goals

- Identify and begin working to reduce program complexity and roadblocks to degree completion, including reduction in DFW rates.
- Leverage success coaches to expand one-on-one registration conversations for first-time undergraduates.
- Enhance recruitment efforts for international graduate students and establish a program for internship opportunities.

Academic Program Review Goals
(Selected from 2 units in this College)

- Establish long-term educational and research partnerships with every college-level unit on campus
- Revise the PhD program to improves retention, time-to-completion, and placements of graduates
- Substantially improve the student experience across all programs
- Modernize and improve the curriculum

School/College 2

Academic Planning College Goals

- Launch a master's cohort aimed at recent college graduates
- Create clear metrics and assessments for PhD programs
- Track student advancement
- Require students to show progress

Academic Program Review Goals
(From central unit and two programs)

- Continuously monitor and analyze in-person versus online versus hybrid offerings for the evaluated programs
- Continuously improve developing and using SLOs across programs in annual reviews in the Nuventive system
- Establish a retention program prioritizing at-risk students
- Establish an alumni advisory board

School/College 3

Academic Planning College Goals

Undergraduate

- Continue to monitor DFW rates in select courses and develop individualized metrics and mitigation plans
- Expand and enhance student engagement programs: First Year Experience Learning Community, First Year (Freshmen & Transfer) Achievement, Learning, Assistant program, students at academic risk program

Graduate

- Keep median time to degree for doctoral programs below 6 years; master's below 3 years (including part-time students)

Academic Program Review Goals

(Selected from 1 School within the College)

- Build a New Brand and Reframe Marketing Strategies
- Update Curriculum
- Increase faculty development and mentoring opportunities to strengthen community building and improve communications
- Continue to build evaluation and improvement into program/curriculum

Lessons Learned

Next steps for Academic Planning and Academic Program Review

What We Learned: Academic Planning

- While schools and colleges unequally contribute to any one institutional goal, they are all EQUALLY VALUABLE to George Mason

- The trick is to focus on balancing within AND across considering:
  - School/College strengths, weaknesses, role
  - Industry opportunities/standards
  - Trend and time flexibility
  - Enrollment

- Focusing on strategic goals shifts conversations towards feasible changes within a given environment

What We Learned: APR

- Streamline data resources
  - Combine dashboards
  - Integrate Curricular Analytics
  - Integrate Lightcast reports
- Increase engagement in between APR Cycles
- Bridge connections with the annual assessment of student learning outcomes process and APR
- Build on the goals from Academic Planning and link them into APR

What We Learned: Relating AP and APR

Academic Planning
- Includes research expenditure information
- Includes funding discussion
- Includes assistantship count discussions
- All data presented at the college level
- Identifies growing/declining programs in the college
- Years discussed varies (3, 5, or 10 years)

Academic Program Review:
- Includes student learning outcome assessment data
- Includes peer institution comparison data
- Includes alumni outcome discussion
- Data is reviewed at the unit or program specific level
- Looks at 7 years of data

Both AP and APR:
- Metric centric discussions (enrollment, retention, complexity, etc.)
  - Ends with setting goals and establishing an action plan

Thank you!

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GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY®

CIMA Summer Meeting

July 15, 2025

Resources

- [Academic Program Review Template](#)

- [Academic Program Review Guide](#)

- [Academic Planning Template](#)