

# Ensuring the Next Generation's Access to Higher Education



***Your support directly benefits two important programs at George Mason University.***

## **A PATH TO COLLEGIATE SUCCESS**

Established in 1987, the Early Identification Program (EIP) provides educational resources for middle and high school students who will be the first in their families to attend college. More than 1,300 students have participated. Each year, a new class of rising eighth graders from seven school districts in Northern Virginia are accepted into the program. High school student participants dedicate three weeks of their summer on Mason's Fairfax and Prince William Campuses for the program's Summer Academy, which focuses on building skills in math, English, technology, and science, and offers workshops on college preparation, leadership, career development, and life skills.

During the academic year, EIP students participate in Saturday workshops and seminars.

Part of the appeal—and success—of the program has been its efforts not only to work with students to prepare for college, but to incorporate families as well, something that is mandatory for the program. EIP parents are required to participate in the Strengthening the Family workshop as their children enter the program. Many of the parents go beyond the workshop and volunteer at events.

For many college-bound EIP students, Mason is a natural choice because of the years they have already spent on Mason's campus. Currently 150 EIP students attend Mason. The program offers a built-in community and support for those students.

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## **TAKING THE NEXT STEP**

The Student Transition Empowerment Program (STEP) is an initiative in the Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education office created to enhance the recruitment, engagement, and retention of first-generation college students accepted to George Mason University. The goal is to empower students through academic skill development, access to resources, community building, self-discovery, and the global citizenship needed to compete in today's college environment and beyond. STEP includes two key components: STEP Summer and STEP Academic Year. STEP Summer is a six-week residential program from July to early August (including weekends) for selected, first-year George Mason students. During the summer, a cohort of 25 to 30 students live on campus and take their first two academic courses. These courses are used to satisfy Mason core requirements. The courses vary depending on the students' incoming credits and potential academic field.

STEP students who successfully transition from the summer continue on as STEP Scholars. STEP Scholars take UNIV 100 together in the fall and participate in ongoing support and programmatic initiatives throughout their time at Mason. To participate, students must be Virginia residents accepted and committed to attending Mason until graduation.

Before its current iteration began in 2005, STEP was a federally funded program administered by the Commonwealth of Virginia that served primarily African American and Latino/a students from Virginia. When funding for the program ended, Mason decided to carry on and open the program to first-generation, in-state residents.