



University Business  
Consulting

# INAUGURAL REPORT FISCAL YEARS 2020–2022

HELPING PATRIOTS SOLVE PROBLEMS  
ONE PROJECT AT A TIME

# UNIVERSITY BUSINESS CONSULTING

## FISCAL YEARS 2020–2022 INAUGURAL REPORT

Mason launched University Business Consulting (UBC) in early 2020 and since then has built a team that is committed to identifying and capitalizing on opportunities for innovation, turning data into insights, and increasing efficiency across George Mason University.

Using our experience in higher education, consulting, project management, analytics, and strategic planning, we work alongside our Mason clients to devise solutions that support them in reaching their goals across the university. As an internal consulting practice, we provide the following benefits:

1

We are invested in Mason's mission

2

We are already connected across campus

3

We provide complimentary services

4

We develop institutional knowledge that stays at Mason

## + Letter from the Director



**Whitney Owen,**  
Director of UBC

When I saw the posting for the UBC Director position, I thought, "Wow, how interesting – Mason is starting up an internal consulting practice" and I immediately knew I wanted to be a part of it. Now, almost two and a half years later, I'm so glad I took the chance to try something new and become a Patriot. Though it took a little longer than planned to get our feet off the ground thanks to the diversion of COVID-19, I'm thrilled to report that UBC is now a thriving, collaborative team of seasoned and creative consultants dedicated to making this university a better place. We've had the pleasure

of working with many great partners across campus on so many exciting and varied projects in our first two years (some of which you can learn about in this report), and yet there's so much more to be done! The bottom line is we want to say THANK YOU - thank you for investing in us, thank you for partnering with us, and thank you for continuing to bring us your hard, challenging problems to solve together. I can't wait to see what the future brings!

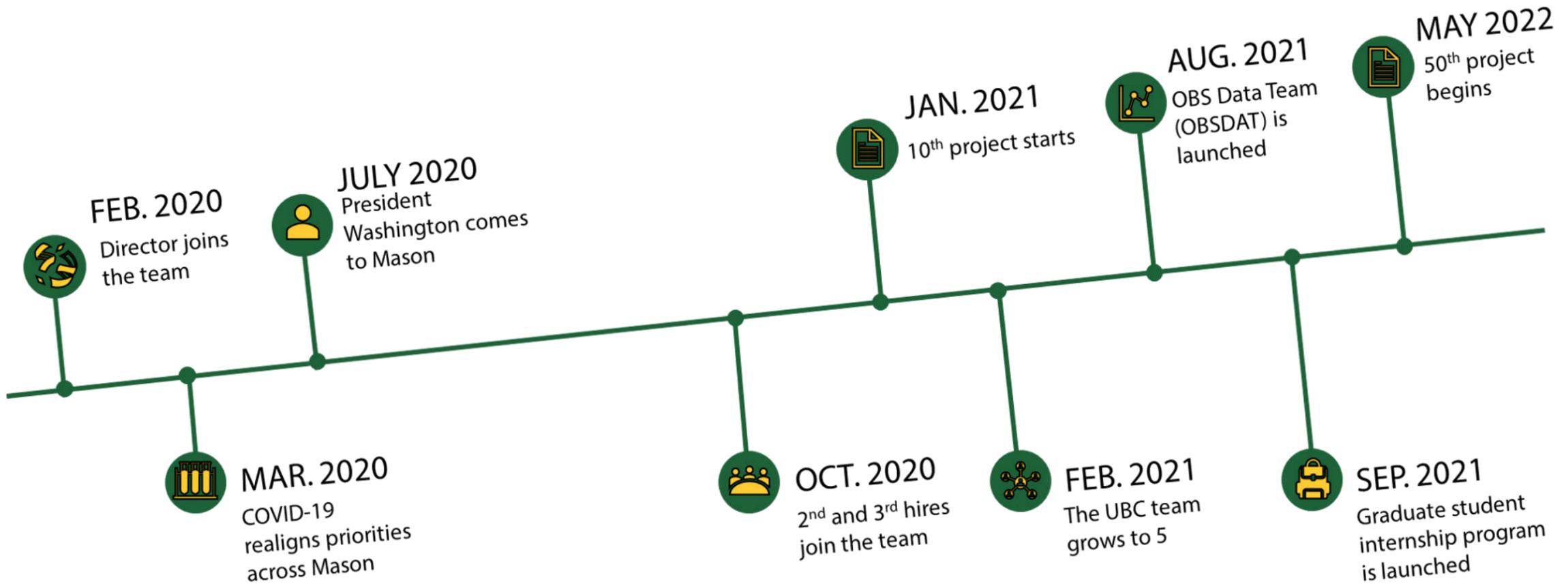
Sincerely,

*Whitney Owen*



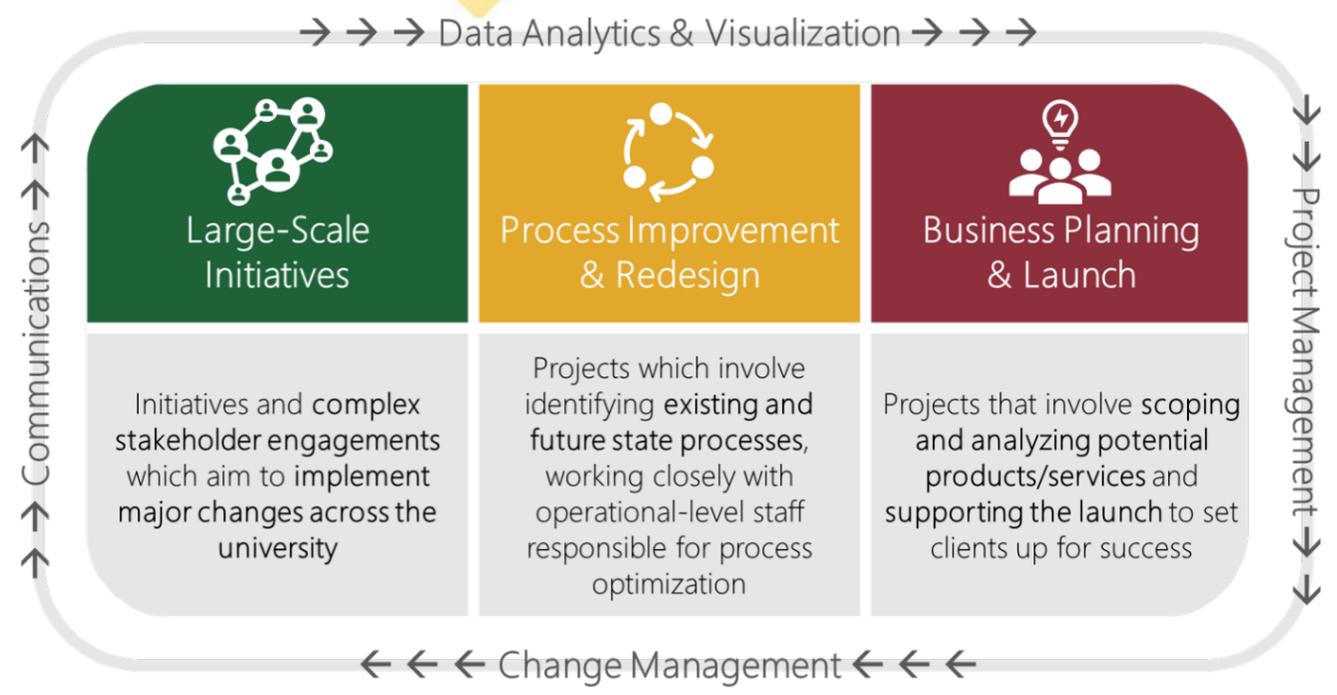
The UBC team is located on the Fairfax Campus in Northeast Module 1 (affectionately called "NEMO").

# AT A GLANCE: UBC'S FIRST TWO YEARS



<b>63</b> TOTAL projects	<b>31</b> COMPLETED projects	<b>\$1.7m</b> in realized savings from a transportation project
procurement support for <b>7</b> Requests for Proposal (RFPs)	project stakeholders come from <b>85%</b> of units on campus	<b>20</b> client dashboards managed
managed <b>13</b> university-wide projects	project sponsors span <b>19</b> different units on campus	<b>4</b> external consulting engagements
		<b>&gt;50%</b> of project sponsors have become REPEAT CLIENTS

Since 2020, UBC has developed and provided the following service offerings to our clients.



# USING DATA TO INFORM

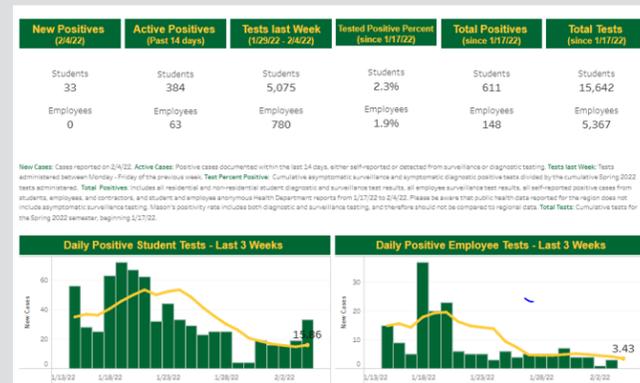
# CLIENT DECISION-MAKING

UBC combines skills in project management with data analysis and visualization to turn information into data-driven recommendations that improve outcomes across Mason.

The dashboards below are examples of how our data analysis and visualizations allow users to quickly identify key metrics and trends to help answer specific business questions.

## MASON PUBLIC COVID-19 DASHBOARD

Working with Mason's Safety, Emergency and Enterprise Risk Management (SEERM) team, UBC integrated data from numerous health datasets into a **public-facing dashboard** which reports on positive rates, tests processed, and vaccination status. The dashboard received an **A+ rating by a coalition of Harvard and Yale epidemiologists**, and has been viewed over 90,000 times!



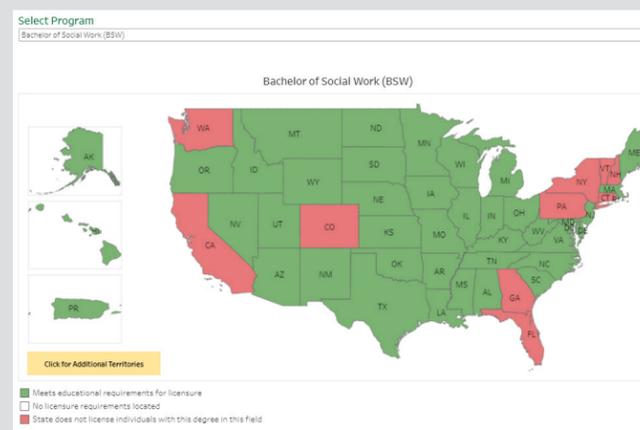
## SHUTTLE RIDERSHIP DASHBOARD

In Fall 2021, UBC analyzed Mason's current shuttle ridership and created a dashboard that illustrates the hourly ridership trends for each shuttle. Comparing this information to the university's costs per shuttle and shuttle capacity, UBC was able to recommend a series of service adjustments that resulted in an **estimated savings of \$1.7 million per year**.



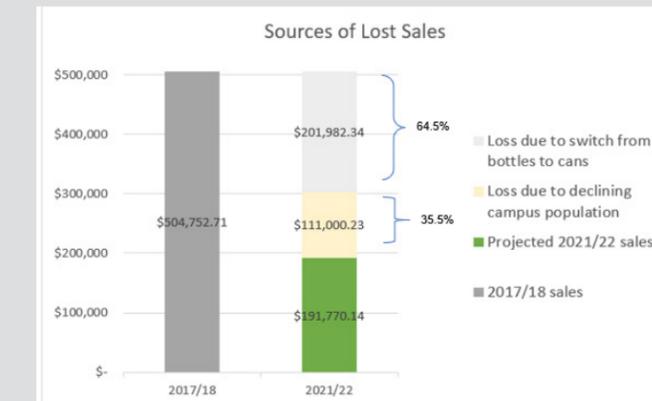
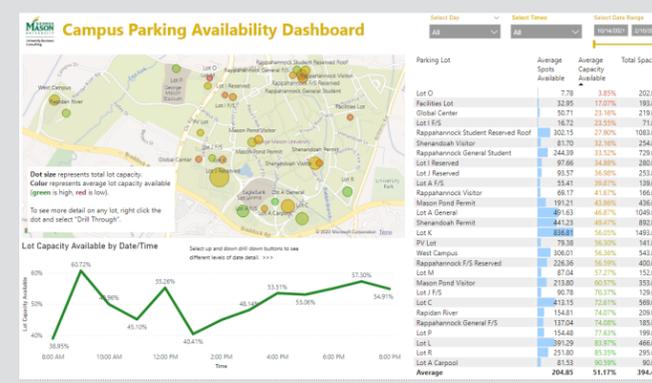
## PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE DASHBOARD

UBC created a new dashboard for the Provost's Office's website to show in which states different Mason academic programs are licensed. The dashboard been **viewed over 5,000 times**.



## PARKING SPOT AVAILABILITY DASHBOARD

Working with the Parking & Transportation team, UBC created a new form and an automated process for the parking staff to record parking spot availability, thereby replacing the more labor-intensive pen and paper method. From the data, UBC built a dashboard that shows parking lot capacity trends over time, which has been useful in understanding how parking patterns have changed since COVID-19.



## EXECUTIVE ORDER 77 ANALYSIS

In response to Executive Order 77, which aimed to reduce Virginia's use of single-use plastics at state agencies, UBC modeled the impact of the policy on consumption and revenue for Mason's food and beverage vendors.

## PARKING PERMIT RATE SETTING

UBC worked alongside the Parking & Transportation team to analyze peer and historical parking rates, sales data, and parking availability data with the aim of developing a proposed parking structure that increases revenues to cover costs, while keeping costs low for the lowest-income students and staff.

**The proposed rates may generate over \$1 million** to support parking and transportation improvements.



Mason's vaccination clinics have served Mason students, faculty, and staff and also the broader Fairfax community.

## Safe Return to Campus and On-Going COVID Response Program Management

Since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, UBC led the project management support to the COVID Director for Mason's Safe Return to Campus COVID response. This effort included launching and coordinating 21 different working groups made up of units across campus focused on all aspects of Mason's planning and response: procuring critical supplies, adjusting HR policies, instructional and research continuity, communications, event planning, travel restrictions, financial management, and many others. UBC, in partnership with the COVID Director, established a governance and reporting structure for the work of these groups that kept senior leadership informed on progress towards opening in hybrid form in Fall 2020 and beyond.

As the response continued, UBC also coordinated with the Safety, Emergency, and Enterprise Risk Management (SEERM) team and Student Health Services as Mason successfully executed its COVID testing strategy – leading to over a quarter million tests being provided by Mason at time of report publication. This group developed the testing plans – including expanding surveillance testing and pre-move in testing – and then implemented the plans by coordinating across various teams, primarily focused on Test Site Operations and Logistics, HR, ITS, Procurement, and the College of Science. Mason set up its own internal labs in the College of Science to process the tests, which required IT systems, additional staffing, procurement of robotics, and an operational plan that aligned with the lab's throughput capacities, and more. UBC coordinated these internal efforts, as well as negotiated external contracts for at-home test kits to accommodate surge and peak period testing needs. UBC's capabilities in project management, stakeholder engagement, financial modeling, and procurement have supported the successful containment of COVID cases on Mason's campuses.

UBC saved the university \$90,000 during negotiations regarding unused at-home test kits with an external testing vendor.

Whitney and the UBC team worked diligently to ensure the project management surrounding our COVID planning, response, and recovery were organized, documented, and moving forward. They worked collaboratively with many unit leaders across 21 working groups, quickly earning a positive reputation during a stressful time.

– Julie Zobel, PhD, Associate Vice President, Safety, Emergency, and Enterprise Risk Management

UBC has reorganized the 50th Anniversary Committee in such a way that allows all of the Tiger Teams to work independently but in seamless alignment with the overall committee. The results have been extraordinary.

– Jennifer Robinson, Associate Vice President for Alumni Relations

## Mason's 50th Anniversary

April 7, 2022 marked the 50th anniversary of when Virginia Governor Holton signed Virginia General Assembly Bill H210, thereby separating what was then known as "George Mason College" from the University of Virginia.

UBC has supported the Office of University Advancement and Alumni Relations and the Office of University Branding in the planning for a year of events and initiatives that recognize and celebrate Mason's exponential growth to its current status as Virginia's largest, most inclusive, and most innovative university.

UBC has worked alongside the 50th Anniversary Planning Committee co-chairs to provide project management support, communications, meeting facilitation, senior leadership briefings, budget request tracking and management, and project plans for large anniversary events. Through use of tools such as online trackers and dashboards, UBC has increased collaboration amongst 50th Anniversary Planning Committee representatives from across the university.

## Business Plan for Biomedical Research Laboratory

Mason's Biomedical Research Laboratory (BRL) is a highly-specialized research facility and part of a network of similar, regional laboratories funded in part by the National Institutes of Health. The BRL is a unique resource to Mason and the surrounding region, and its success is a key component of Mason's research strategy.

UBC is working with the Office of Research, Innovation, and Economic Development to create a business plan and related financial model for the BRL. Using our standard approach, UBC will craft a business plan that lays out the strategic vision for the BRL as well as its short and long-term goals. The plan will discuss current and future capabilities, lay out the existing and new resources that will be required to maximize those capabilities, and discuss risks and offer mitigation strategies. The related financial model will quantify those resources and provide estimates for expected revenues. The model will allow for scenario analysis that will enable flexible implementation of the BRL strategy.



President Washington addresses attendees at the 50th Anniversary Commemoration in April 2022.

## Capital Strategy and Planning Framework and Organization Development

UBC provided a full year of dedicated support to assist in the development of the framework and staffing plan for the newly launched Capital Strategy and Planning (CS&P) unit. The completed work enables CS&P to carry out consistent and uniform planning and prioritization of capital expenditures, alignment with university strategic goals, integration with Mason's budgeting processes, completion of the Six-Year and Two-Year Capital Outlay Plans, and hiring of three new CS&P employees. During the course of the project, UBC interviewed over 15 Mason staff, researched best practices, reviewed current CS&P processes, and reviewed and documented the Commonwealth of Virginia CS&P requirements, processes, and systems. UBC also defined and scoped a Mason Small Capital Improvement Program that was executed in Spring of 2022.

“...UBC was there with me, every step of the way, and did what it took to launch the vision I had for CS&P. They took the lead in hiring, and I have a stellar team as a result. They helped me fight fires on any number of matters, and there were many... I couldn't have asked for a better partner to set up a new shop in a complex environment.”  
 – Tobi Walsh, Assistant Vice President, Capital Strategy and Planning



Members of the Mason Department of Police and Public Safety.

## Helping the Mason Police to Develop and Deliver

The UBC team has established a strong relationship with the Mason Police and Public Safety Team on several projects over the past two years. The relationship began with UBC facilitating a “peer review” between Mason's Police and leadership from UVA and Virginia Tech's law enforcement. Since then, we developed a community policing improvement plan that informs the work of the new Community Outreach Team, and our data team has built a salary adjustment model that not only will help recruitment and retention of Mason's force, but was so popular it was quickly adopted by the Fairfax police force as well!

“Whether the issues involved building a first-rate community policing plan, policy development, or pay/restructure, [the UBC] team went the extra mile to study our industry and learn our work processes, challenges, and goals. Then, they truly partnered with us to help develop and deliver best practices to the department and the community. Their business-like approach has been a major benefit to the Mason Police Command Staff and the department as a whole.”  
 – Chief Carl Rowan, Chief of Police, Police and Public Safety



UBC team members met potential interns at the graduate student job fair.

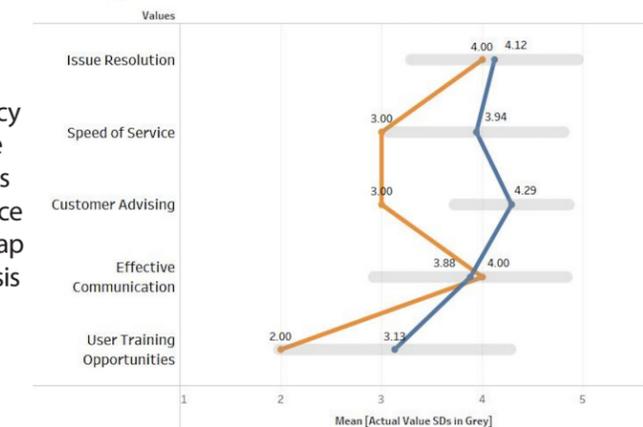
## Providing Mason Graduate Students the Opportunity to Explore Consulting

Established in Fall 2021, the UBC internship program aims to provide an experiential learning opportunity for Mason graduate students. To date, UBC has had the opportunity to host four interns – all of whom have been exceptional students with interests in consulting, data analytics, and problem-solving. During their time with UBC, interns are provided with hands-on experience in higher education, process improvement, financial analysis, data analysis, and visualization through a variety of projects with our campus partners. Interns also get to hone their teamwork, communications, and collaboration skills through one-on-one mentorship and career development support.

## University Life Value Mapping Process and Goal Setting

Value mapping is an exercise that allows service providers to better understand their customers and in doing so, set strategic goals that increase the value providers deliver to customers. Value mapping involves a three-step process. First, the provider determines and ranks the values that the provider thinks are most important to its customers – such as responsiveness, communication, and efficiency – and rates its performance against each of those values. Then, the provider connects with its customers and validates the results of its analysis by mapping and comparing its perception of its performance against those values with its customers' perception. The resulting map clearly identifies areas of strength and weakness and forms the basis for effective goal setting.

UBC has worked with the Office of University Life (UL) to conduct a value mapping exercise to help set strategic goals. UBC trained the UL team in the theory and practice of value mapping, and then helped the client to identify key service lines to be analyzed and (within those service lines) the customers' values where UL's performance should be addressed. UBC supported the collection of data from customers and then analyzed the resulting data, combining it with the internal data to create a value map for each service line.



An example of perceived vs. actual scores in a value-mapping exercise.

## Mason Revenue and Cost Allocation Model Creation



UBC worked with the Office of Strategic Budgeting & Planning and various stakeholders on a campus-wide initiative to develop a new revenue and cost allocation model. The goal of the model is to distribute the cost of central services and functions to all relevant units (both academic and non-academic) based on use and in a manner that is transparent, simple, and equitable.

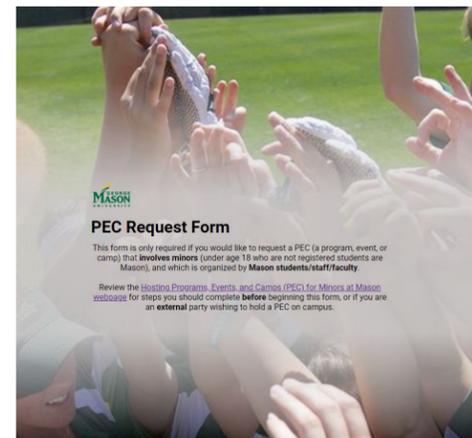
By utilizing our capabilities in consultative problem-solving, project management, facilitation, stakeholder engagement, and change management, UBC supported stakeholders as they moved through the process of developing the complex methodology and defining a new model based on that methodology.

## Programs, Camps, and Events Form and Workflow Development



Mason regularly hosts dozens of programs, events, and camps (PECs) for minors every summer. In Spring 2022, UBC was engaged by Operations and Business Services to help streamline the request form and the associated approval process that happens before a camp organizer can begin registering minors for their PEC.

UBC conducted over a dozen interviews in order to build a new streamlined process that cuts down on the average time it takes a camp organizer to submit the request, replaces manual emails with automated notifications, and includes customized approval dashboards for key approvers such as Fiscal Services, Risk Management, and Human Resources. The new process has increased transparency and accountability, and received positive feedback from users.



**General Camp Information**  
Please fill out the following information for the camp you wish to hold at Mason.

Will this PEC be attended by minors (defined as people under the age of 18 who are not registered Mason students) AND be organized by a Mason student/staff/faculty? \*

Yes     No     Unsure at this Time

What is the name of your program/event/camp (PEC) serving minors? \*

Please provide a description of the PEC and its purpose, including the benefit to the University (i.e., merchandise sales, non-credit course registration, tickets for events, registration fees, etc.) \*

What age groups will be present? \*

Approximately how many participants will be on campus for this PEC? \*

What is the website for the PEC? \*

Enter N/A if no website currently exists.

Do you want your camp(s) to be listed on Mason's camps website (camps.gmu.edu)? \*

Yes     No

Select a start date for your PEC \*

If you are requesting a recurring PEC, list the start date for the first instance.

Select an end date for your PEC \*

If you are requesting a recurring PEC, list the end date for the first instance.



All faculty/staff must use the updated PEC Request Form to submit potential camps with minors that will be held at Mason.

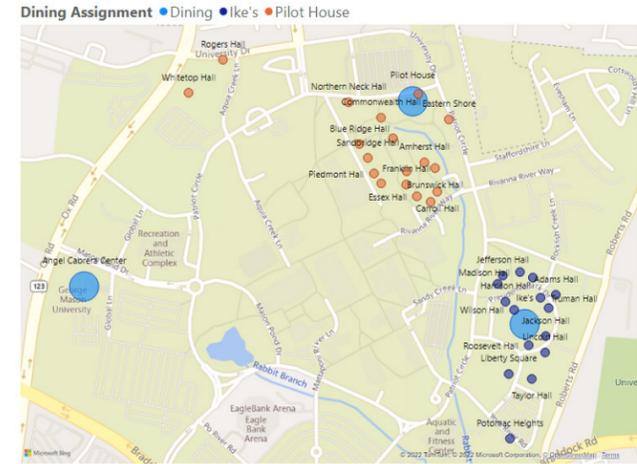
*We can't say enough good things about UBC... Thank you so much for all of your team's help. I am in awe of your organizational strengths.*  
– Rachel Quinn, Assistant Vice President, Events and Operations

## Enterprise Business Network Development and Launch



Mason has 12 schools and colleges, and over a dozen large administrative units. To help promote collaboration amongst the chief business officers and finance directors across the university, UBC supported the development of the Enterprise Business Network (EBN). The EBN serves as a platform for members to regularly meet and address strategic challenges across Mason and to pursue effective and efficient stewardship of financial and other resources.

UBC drafted the framework and governance structure for the group and then worked alongside the EBN's members to finalize a charter, elect its first leadership, and prioritize the group's first strategic priorities. UBC's facilitation skills have helped the group move forward on multiple initiatives in its first year.



Part of the Q/I Playbook included a process for assigning students to different meal pick-up locations based on their Q/I location.

## Quarantined and Isolated Student Dining and Housing Playbook Project



As campus prepared to reopen in the Spring of 2022, Mason's leadership anticipated that a wave of quarantined/isolated (Q/I) students from the Omicron variant – combined with campus staffing restraints – would require a new process for meal delivery. Although a process already existed for the handful of Q/I students on campus at any time, the process needed to be refined and scaled quickly to accommodate potentially hundreds (or even thousands) of students. UBC coordinated with Dining Services, Housing and Residence Life, and Student Health Services to write a Playbook detailing step-by-step instructions for different scenarios based on increasing numbers of Q/I students. The Playbook included process maps, workflows, reports, and a communications plan that could all be rolled out with limited advanced notice.

During the first week of classes, Mason had to quickly put the Playbook into action. The clear instructions and planning guidance helped ensure that all parties were aware of their responsibilities so that students in Q/I housing received the information and meals they needed.

*Thank you for your very detailed work on this playbook! It is very helpful for us to have all the nuances of this plan written down!*  
– Shannon Jordan, Associate Dean and Chief Housing Officer for Housing and Residence Life



## Chart of Accounts Business Process Prioritization and Alignment



In 2021, UBC was asked by Fiscal Services to identify and document business processes that would be impacted by the upcoming Chart of Accounts (CoA) redesign project. We designed a survey around nine financial and business processes performed by both academic and non-academic units. The survey allowed us to gather information around what systems, reports, data, and process/approval steps those units used to complete the processes under the old CoA and how they saw these processes being affected by the new CoA.

UBC then partnered with an external consulting firm to analyze those survey results and conduct 17 focus groups to gather more detailed feedback on the various processes and the impact the new CoA would have on individual units.

The team turned the findings into recommendations the CoA redesign team could use to prepare for the new CoA launch at the start of FY23 to ensure units were prepared for the upcoming changes, business processes would not be unduly interrupted, and that stakeholders' concerns were heard.

# OUR TEAM



**WHITNEY OWEN, Director of University Business Consulting**  
Whitney brings expertise in strategic and operational planning, stakeholder facilitation, project management, budgeting, and change management. Prior to joining Mason, Whitney was the Director of the Health & Human Services Market at LMI, where she led a \$40m portfolio and a 150-person team supporting healthcare clients across the Federal government.



**TONY PILLARI, Director of Special Projects**  
Tony has refined his skills in strategic planning, financial modeling, and operational implementation over a career spent in higher education and healthcare. Before joining Mason, Tony worked in the higher education and healthcare practice at PwC. He also spent several years in medical education while working at the medical schools at New York University and Columbia University.



**PAM PROMISEL, Consultant Manager**  
Pam has extensive program and project management expertise with a strong focus on relationship building, change management, and stakeholder buy-in. Before joining Mason, Pam was part of George Washington University's internal management consultant team.



**ADAM BOOKMAN, Senior Consultant**  
Adam specializes in data visualization and analysis, grant and contract management, training and facilitation, and project management. Prior to joining Mason, he led several analytic and human capital improvement projects for defense and civilian Federal clients in the Advanced Analytics practice of LMI. Before entering consulting, Adam was at the Department of Education.



**NIKKI SMITH ACIERTO, Consultant**  
Nikki brings to Mason a variety of experiences in education and health policy, which helped her hone skills in project management, communications, facilitation, and analysis. Prior to joining Mason, she worked for a Federal government consulting practice and as a high school math teacher.

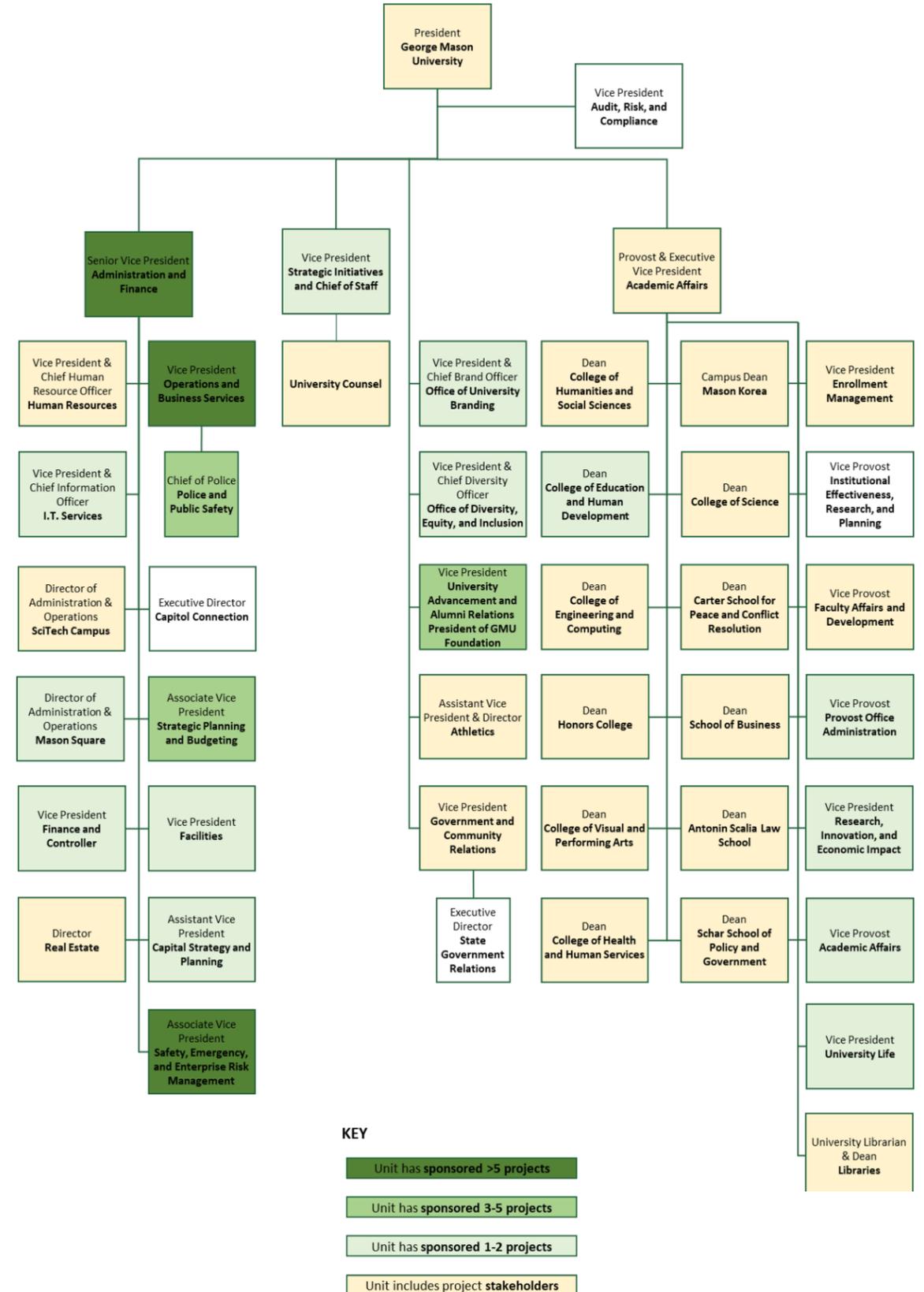


**JOHN TYREE, Consultant**  
John comes to the team with over 8 years of IT industry experience and has an MBA with a focus in Business Analytics. He specializes in process improvement and utilizing data to make business decisions. Prior to joining the UBC team, John worked as an Associate Director of Information Technology at Mason.



**SILKE VROULETIS, Administrative Assistant and Analyst**  
Before joining Mason, Silke worked in higher education at Virginia Tech, where she was part of the Advancement Division. She brings skills in process improvement, strategic thinking, organizational assessment, and human resource functions.

# OUR CLIENTS



Thinking back to our start in 2020, UBC has since had the opportunity to work on several important initiatives that have reached a large part of Mason. As we look to our next chapter, we are excited to bring our expertise and tools to serve clients across the university as we solve even more challenges and help propel our community to the next level of excellence.



The University Business Consulting team welcomes opportunities to work with clients to devise solutions that support them in reaching their goals across the university. Please fill out the Project Request form on our website and our team will contact you shortly.

Photos courtesy of the Office of University Branding.

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