



## RAMPing up Research Support at Mason

By Michael Laskofski

When you think of George Mason University, research excellence and growth should come to mind. Mason is one of the nation's leading research universities and continues to significantly improve its research profile. Mason grew from approximately \$80M in research expenditures in Fiscal Year 2010 to approximately \$215M in fiscal year FY2021 while achieving R1 status in FY2016.

Mason is in the process of building on and investing in its foundational infrastructure to support the needs of a growing R1 research university. This investment includes the planned implementation of a new Research Administration Management Portal (RAMP).

RAMP will provide a modern, unified platform for Mason's research applications including Grants and Agreements, Conflict of Interest, Export Control, Institutional Review Board, and Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. The benefits of implementing a new unified research administration platform include:

- Reducing the administrative burden on faculty and staff
- Streamlining sponsored research work processes
- Improving access and user experience for faculty
- Improving workflow transparency to track record status and next steps
- Eliminating duplicate and shadow systems
- Enabling better reporting for decision making
- Improving compliance with sponsor regulations

RAMP uses the Huron Research Suite web-based 'Software as a Service' system. Huron is a leader in the research administration software market with more than 50 percent of R1 universities using it.

"As Mason's research enterprise continues to grow in scale and complexity, these research infrastructure investments including tools, talent, and training will provide the critical

foundation to secure our future as a leading public R1 university,” Andre Marshall, Vice President for Research Innovation and Economic Impact, said.

The RAMP implementation project is well underway with the first modules, Grants and Agreements, planned for deployment in July 2022. The [Project Team](#) includes representation from the Office of Research Innovation and Economic Impact, Fiscal Services, ITS and the Academic Units. There also are advisory committees including the [Academic Representatives Group](#) and the [PI Advisory Committee](#) that meet monthly and provide feedback and advice regarding various aspects of the project. The project team will continue to provide outreach and support to stakeholders from across the Mason research community throughout the development, implementation, and deployment processes.

In addition to RAMP, the university is also undertaking a thorough review of Research Administration at Mason to ensure all faculty have strong research administration support at the local level and in the Office of Sponsored Programs. There are efforts underway to streamline business processes, develop consistent roles and responsibilities, and support the hiring of experienced research administrators in the academic units to better assist and support faculty in securing external funding for research and help manage the growth Mason has experienced in recent years. This has been a team effort between Research Services, Fiscal Services, Human Resources, and the Academic Units and is occurring in parallel with the RAMP implementation and will help to ensure a smooth transition to the new system.

“Through extensive collaboration and partnership across Research and Finance, multi-year funding will be provided for research administration support in academic units to enable faculty to focus on research as Mason continues its significant growth trajectory,” said Deb Dickenson, Vice President for Finance.

For details about RAMP, visit the [project website](#) or email [ramp@gmu.edu](mailto:ramp@gmu.edu) with questions or input for the project team.