


Kelly Schrum, Higher Education, CHSS

Cultivating Creativity: Create a Better Mascot

HE703 Mascot Assignment — Student feedback from previous semesters indicated that an activity in HE703 felt redundant. At the same time, I was interested in seeing if a classroom assignment could engage students in using Mason’s Makerspace (MIX). In order to address the concerns and test this hypothesis, I revised the assignment to encourage students to learn and then utilize a MIX tool. Evidence includes the assignment, photographs of the class in action, and a CHSS news story about the project.

Assignment


TASKMASTER 

Task: Part I

Design the best George Mason University mascot for the next 50 years.

Create a prototype using materials provided in the MIX.


You have 30 minutes. Your time starts now.

TASKMASTER 

Task: Part II

During the next 4 weeks, take one MIX workshop each. Using your new skills, work together to create a more permanent version of your George Mason University Mascot.

You have 6 weeks. Your time starts now.

TASKMASTER 

Task: Part III

Post an image of your Mason Mascot along with a short reflection (250 words) on lessons learned from this assignment.

Bring the mascot to class on November 13 along with your pitch for why this should be Mason's next mascot!

Prototypes



Final Mascots



CHSS. (2023, December 1). [Higher Ed grad students turn to the MIX to communicate institutional values.](#) CHSS News. George Mason University.



News

Higher Ed grad students turn to the MIX to communicate institutional values

Higher Education in the Digital Age (HE703) students gained hands-on experience in visual communication this semester with a project that challenged them to create a new mascot for Mason's next 50 years. As part of the project, students created a prototype, completed at least one Mason Innovation Exchange (MIX) workshop, and created a more permanent version of their mascot.

Higher Education professor **Kelly Schrum** designed the project with exposure to the MIX in mind. "In addition to being a fun, creative assignment, the goal was to learn about the MIX and makerspaces in higher education," she said. "Students learned to experiment with new digital tools, think creatively and visually about communicating institutional values, and made amazing mascots!"

The project culminated with each team pitching their mascots to judges, all Mason communication professionals. Judges scored the students' presentations on five criteria: memorable and recognizable; cultivates pride and affection for Mason; unique and Mason specific; compatible with marketing, communications, athletic and non-athletic events; and looks good in every medium while performing tasks and displaying emotions.

Hayley Hinley and **Susan Grunder** received the most points for Declaration!, whose name comes from the Virginia Declaration of Rights, drafted by George Mason in 1776. Both agreed the most difficult part of the process was coming up with a concept, but they were up for the challenge.

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It's a good reminder that not all technology lives in our computers. These physical advancements are also technology in higher education.

—Charlie Kreitzer





Susan Grunder and Hayley Hinley present the winning mascot, Declaration! Photo by Melanie O'Brien

"This is by far my favorite project I've ever done in undergrad or grad school," Hinley said in her class reflection. "I learned a lot about the MIX and especially the 3D printers which I will be using again very soon."

Charlie Kreitzer, whose mascot Murphy, a small, sprightly weasel, was a runner up to Declaration!, also appreciated the exposure the project gave him to the MIX. "I thought it was cool to try out a 3D printer and feel confident that, if I ever had something I wanted to make, I could go over and print it—something I would never have done before," he said. "It's a good reminder that not all technology lives in our computers. These physical advancements are also technology in higher education."



Judges **Maureen Nasser**, Associate Athletic Director, Communications, Intercollegiate Athletics, **Logan Lilly**, Enrollment Marketing Operations Coordinator, Office of the Provost, and **Eric Woodall**, Associate Vice President, Brand Marketing, Office of University Branding, pose with the final Mascot projects. Photo by Melanie O'Brien