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Message from the Dean

Dean Fernando Miralles-Wilhelm

Dear Alumni and Friends,

Last month, the Mason nation celebrated the investiture of our eighth president, Dr. Gregory Washington.

Usually held at the conclusion of the president's first year, this academic ceremony presents opportunities to welcome a new era and celebrate as a community.

This investiture ceremony itself included many academic traditions and protocols; attendees saw an academic procession of delegates from other colleges and universities as well as Mason's own faculty sporting their colorful academic regalia; we enjoyed musical selections

from the university's Wind Symphony, Chorale and the Green Machine; and we heard numerous greetings from members of the university, government and surrounding community leaders. And we also heard a rallying cry…"It's Mason's time!"

Some say the generation of World War II was our greatest, living through the Great Depression and World War II. Yet, President Washington proclaimed our challenge is to prepare the next great generation who are surviving the COVID-19 pandemic, and will face great challenges like climate change in a data driven society. He anticipates we will rely on them to save our world, again.

During a panel discussion on "grand issues of our time," Washington stated that "to be a successful university, you have to be big in the big things." I encourage you to watch the panel discussions and the Investiture ceremony.

President Washington proclaimed, "It's Mason's time," while discussing education and its role to transform the lives of students on our quest for a healthy economy, healthy people, healthy society, and a healthy planet.

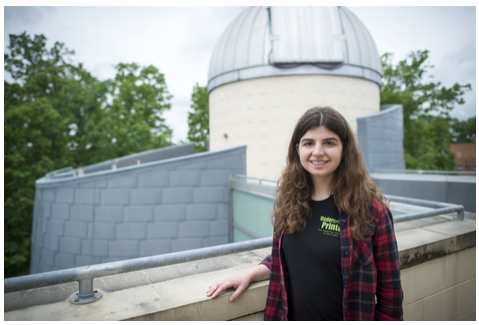
Our College of Science is poised at a tipping point. As Mason Science Patriots, we must identify and capitalize on our strengths and be bold and brave enough to move beyond what may hold us back—silos, insecurities, even fear to try new things.

Our new normal shows us anything is possible with hard work, innovative idea sharing, and open minds. It's our time to show why science matters.

Thank you for your ongoing support and friendship.

Sincerely,
Fernando

Alumni News



NASA Goddard Space Flight Center features Mason alumna

Jenna Cann earned her BA and PhD in Physics from Mason, as well as a National Science Foundation Fellowship. She is now a postdoc at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, which recently fatured her work as an early career scientist, what inspires her, and her path to becoming an astrophysicist.

College of Science Alumni Dr. Steven Monfort

Appointed as New UC NRS Leader

After an extensive national search, Steven L. Monfort, D.V.M, Ph.D., has been announced as the next Executive Director of the University of California National Reserve System (UCNRS), effective November 4, 2021. Dr. Monfort supersedes Dr. Peggy Fiedler, who retired in June 2021 after serving as executive director with excellence for 12 years.

Previously, Dr. Monfort was the John and Adrienne Mars Director of the Smithsonian National Zoo in Washington, DC and the Conservation Biology Institute (SCBI) in Front Royal, VA. He served in both roles simultaneously since 2017. He served as director of the SCBI since 2006.

By far, the UCNRS is the largest university system of field stations in the world. Its 41 reserves span the complete biodiversity of the State of California. Collectively, they encompass 47,000 acres owned by the UC; provide access to millions of acres of public lands; and host more than 100,000 student and researcher visits each year. Headquartered in the Office of Research & Innovation, the UCNRS is uniquely poised to contribute to systemwide efforts on immediate and long-term climate challenges in California and beyond, for example. Under Dr. Monfort's leadership, the UCNRS can heighten its impact by engaging a range of new and emerging fields of science, engineering, the humanities, health, and others.

Dr. Monfort brings a unique background, relevant expertise, and extensive experience to the UCNRS. At the National Zoo he oversaw the collection of more than 1,800 animals, representing 300 species. At the Conservation Biology Institute, headquartered on 3,200-acres in Front Royal, VA, he led teams of scientists, who are studying and breeding more than 20 species, including some that were once extinct in the wild. More than 300 SCBI scientists are working to save species in over 30 countries.

Dr. Montfort is a subject matter expert in zoo biology, animal health, reproductive biology, behavioral ecology, and conservation biology. He pioneered noninvasive hormone monitoring techniques that revolutionized assessments of reproduction and stress in wildlife species maintained in zoos and in nature. He has published over 150 scientific papers in the broad discipline of reproductive physiology, endocrinology and behavioral ecology. In addition, he was a wildlife veterinary practitioner for 20 years.

As an adjunct faculty member at George Mason University, he co-founded the Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation, an in-residence program at SCBI with a mission of "Sustaining global biodiversity by advancing the theory and practice of conservation biology with transformative, transdisciplinary education." As a conservationist, Dr. Montfort is a founder of a number of important initiatives, including the Sahara Conservation Fund; Conservation Centers for Species Survival; Panama Amphibian Rescue & Conservation Project; and the Global Tiger Initiative. He has served as the chair of the AsianWild Horse

Species Survival Plan, and he is currently a member of several specialist groups of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Dr. Montfort is a native Californian. He received a BA in Biology from U.C. San Diego, the doctor of veterinary medicine and master's degrees from UC Davis, and a doctorate in environmental biology and public policy from George Mason University.

The Mason Environmental Alumni Network is now live!

The Mason Environmental Alumni Network is now active and open to any interested Mason alumni. Our goal is to build a community of Mason alumni, from both inside and outside the College of Science, who are pursuing careers and other opportunities to help our environment, ecosystems, sustainability, climate, and related things we cherish. The goals of this community are to improve the sharing of ideas and resources, increase collaboration and change-making capacity, and provide encouragement, support and mentorship for current students and life-long alumni learners. If you are interested in joining, please fill out this information form. Questions? Email committee chair, Emma Gregory at ecoalumn@gmu.edu .

Mason, FARO announce partnership to advance forensic science research

Mason's Forensic Science Program

has further established its place as one of the nation's premier programs in its field with a partnership with FARO Technologies, Inc. that will result in the world's first FARO-certified forensic science laboratory. The partnership gained media attention from NBC4, Fior Reports, and the Herndon and Alexandria Patch.

Read More

Mason Science News

Mason's Potomac Science Center Selected by Landscape Architecture Foundation

Congratulations to the Potomac Science Center, an extension of George Mason University, which was recently published in the Landscape Performance Series Case Study Briefs, a searchable database of over 150 exemplary built projects around the world with quantified environmental, economic and social benefits.

Before

After

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Student Spotlight

Science, Not Silence

In March 2020, four Physics and Astronomy students from under-represented groups came together to create a support system for other students along their academic journeys within the field. This effort created the student organization known as SPECTRUM: the Society for the Promotion of Equal Chances To Represent Underserved Minorities. SPECTRUM aims to foster a diverse and inclusive community among all Mason physics and astronomy students, faculty, and staff.

Mason's award-winning student organization, SPECTRUM, created a support system for underrepresented Physics and Astronomy students while increasing inclusion and diversity within the department. Jenna Cann (top left), Natasha Latouf (top right), Kathryn Fernández (bottom left), Carly Solis (bottom right)

Events & Announcements

President Washington says 'It's Mason's time'

Declaring “It’s Mason’s time,” Mason President Gregory Washington laid out ambitious plans for the university at his Investiture ceremony and, in a moving close to his remarks, dedicated his presidency to Mason students. Find out more about the ceremony. Read his remarks. Watch a video of the ceremony. See more photos.

Photos by Shelby Burgess/Strategic Communications and Ron Aira/Creative Services

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"Two Mason climate experts share a conversation about the fight against global climate change and the loss of biodiversity"

Dr. Thomas Lovejoy

Dr. Ed Maibach

The two global icons in their field spoke frankly during the September 22nd Mason Science Series appearance at the Country Club of Fairfax called “Sustaining the Planet for Our Children and Grandchildren.” Their unscripted 40-minute conversation included their views of what must happen globally if the world is to prevent a “cascading series of public health catastrophes that will be a pox on humanity for generations to come.”

A recording of the event can be found here.

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Hakeem Oluseyi says “hope, hustle and help” got him here

George Mason University Visiting Robinson Professor Hakeem Oluseyi attributes his unlikely rise from the pull of poverty and crime to hope, hustle and help, and he’s hoping to pay that blessing forward.

Now a renowned astrophysicist, inventor and author who regularly offers his expert analysis on TV, Oluseyi credited education as the gateway to a better life for him. Raised by a single mother with little education, he lived in some of the nation’s toughest neighborhoods while constantly moving around and eventually being drawn into criminal activities at a young age.

Hakeem Oluseyi recently was a speaker for the Mason Science Series on October 13th, where he talked about his new book "A Quantum Life: My Unlikely Journey from the Street to the Stars."

If you are interested, a recording of the event can be found here.

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"The New IPCC Climate Report: The Reality, the Inevitable, and Hope for the Future"

Dr. James Kinter, Director of the Center for Ocean-Land-Atmosphere Studies, made a presentation on August 25, 2021 which can be viewed here.

Dr. Mariaelena Pierobon presents on personalized medicine for breast cancer treatment

Mariaelena Pierobon, M.D., Ph.D. presented at the Galileo's Science Cafe to bring awareness during Breast Cancer Awareness Month. She provided an overview of the role precision medicine currently plays in oncology, how it can be used to develop tailored treatment, and its impact on patients' survival.

To learn more about this, and future Galileo's Science Cafe speakers click here.

To stay up-to-date on our events, you can follow our **calendar here**.

E-mail us for more information.

If you have a question you'd like us to answer in a future newsletter, please write to us!

Follow us on social media:

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