A shared focus and compassionate approach

by Fernando Miralles-Wilhelm

As our spring semester begins, consider how each of us views this opportunity and the way we approach the next chapter of our educational, professional, and personal lives. Do we embrace it like the clean slate or momentum building moment it is? Do we charge forward eagerly or with caution? Perhaps some of us are still somewhat or completely exhausted from the semester before.

Quite honestly, I’d suggest many of us are all across that spectrum of excitement and feeling overwhelmed based on the many things that are going on around each one of us; that is completely understandable. As I mentioned in a reflection earlier this week, there are many current events affecting or individual and collective physical and mental realities. Please know we will do our best to meet and support you wherever you are. As a Mason core value: we thrive together.

The good news is, there’s not just one way to successfully navigate the academic, research, and personal situations and challenges we face. We are unique in the compilation of life’s elements that
demand our focus and energy yet in our Mason Science community, we are brought together by two things, our scientific curiosity and commitment to our students’ success.

**MASON SCIENCE COMMUNITY**

Mason biologists collaborate on bee pollen DNA analysis research

*by Charish Bishop*

In collaboration with George Mason University’s Honeybee Initiative, Dr. H.C. Lim, Assistant Professor, Biology, with a background in evolutionary genomics, heads a project that lets Mason Science students use DNA sequencing and barcoding to investigate pollen resources of honeybees.

Mason Science offers Compassionate Conversations Workshop

Join Dr. Erikca Brown, Office of DEI Inclusive Education Manager and Dr. Paula Danquah-Brobby, Director of AJEDI for a faculty and staff workshop on compassionate conversation. Compassionate conversation refers to the skillful ways people can talk together to feel understood and more able to understand one another.

Upcoming workshop dates and times:

- **February 7, 2023 | noon to 1:30 p.m.**
- **February 15, 2023 | noon to 1:30 p.m.**
- **February 24, 2023 | 1 to 2:30 p.m.**
#FacultyFriday highlights neuroscience and SSB professor

This past #FacultyFriday highlighted Dr. Frank Krueger, Professor, Neuroscience and School of Systems Biology. Krueger is interested in understanding the psychoneurobiological underpinnings of human-human and human-machine trust by combining methods from psychology, ergonomics, and neuroscience. His primary research focuses on the psychoneurobiological mechanism of interpersonal trust. In fact, he recently edited the book “The Neurobiology of Trust.” [View the original post](#).

See recent faculty highlights

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**RESEARCH & DISCOVERY**

**Multidisciplinary Mason team using technology to break down harmful biofilms**

*by CEC Communications*

Professor Monique van Hoek, a microbiologist in the School of Systems Biology, as well as Mason Assistant Professors Jeffrey Moran in the Department of Mechanical Engineering and Rémi Veneziano in the Department of Bioengineering, applied for and recently won the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering (NIBIB) R21 Trailblazer award. Through the award funds, the team will use their backgrounds and spend about three years developing a brand-new technology that dissolves harmful biofilms, without harsh removal methods. *Photo by Evan Cantwell/Creative Services.*

More on their work

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Mason scientist to identify natural mechanisms of boosting immunity to fight infectious
George Mason University Associate Professor of Infectious Diseases and Microbiology, Ramin M. Hakami, recently received $265,000 to research natural mechanisms of boosting the immune response. The natural immunity effort will build on prior funded research on use of processed COVID-19 patient samples to explore natural mechanisms that are available to fight and protect against COVID-19 infection.

IN THE NEWS

Northern Virginia Magazine highlights Mason's Forensic Science program

Mason Science's Forensic Science Program is making headlines as a leader in forensic education. *Northern Virginia Magazine* spoke to several of the program's scientists including Assistant Professor Kelly Knight, Director Mary Ellen O'Toole, and Associate Professor Joseph DiZinno, as well as graduate student Maddie Bowers.

Happening at Mason

The 2023 Cherry Blossom Prediction Competition is now open

Mason's second international prediction competition, “When Will the Cherry Trees Bloom?”, will be open
How to participate

How to participate

**MITRE Capstones Project Portal**

As part of its University Innovation Exchange (UIX) initiative, MITRE is partnering with universities to offer technical advisors and capstone project ideas that reflect real problems facing the United States government. The MITRE Capstones Project Portal is a web-based platform for university faculty and students to browse, select, and execute capstone projects with a MITRE technical advisor. There are several exciting opportunities currently on the Project Portal.

**Events**

**Mason Athletics celebrates Black and African Heritage Month**
February 1, 2023 | 7 to 9 p.m.

*George Mason Athletics will recognize Dr. Michael West Nickens “Doc Nix” at the men’s basketball Black African Heritage Month game. As part of Black African Heritage Month, the Mason vs. UMASS game presentation will include performances by Doc Nix and the Green Machine Emerald Desire and a special halftime presentation.*

**Real Talk: Exploring the intersection of identity and career**
February 7, 2023 | 4 to 5 p.m. | Virtual

*During this virtual panel discussion, we will explore phrases like “professional attire” and “dress for success” and how you show up in your job. Bring your questions about cultural, religious, and gender inclusive clothing in the workplace, with a special focus on expectations for the Career Fair. [Registration required.]*

**Evening Under the Stars**
Join us for the next Evening Under the Stars for a public talk followed by telescope viewings, weather permitting. For the foreseeable future, all Evening Under the Stars events will be held both in-person and virtually. All are free to attend.

**Working Moms Support Group**
February 8, 2023 | Noon to 1 p.m. | Virtual
The Working Moms Support Group is one way faculty, staff, and students can come together, discuss the issues confronting working parents, and spur changes on campus. Check out the full schedule. Or, join the Microsoft Teams group for more information.

**Adjunct Faculty Social Hour**
February 13, 2023 | 5 to 6:30 p.m. | Merten Hall 1201
Meet Provost Ginsberg and mingle with fellow adjuncts in this community-building event. Email RSVPs to Shannyn Snyder, Co-Chair of the Adjunct Faculty Committee.

**East Coast Optimization Meeting: Optimization and Game Theory**
April 13, 2023 | 10 a.m. thru April 14, 2023 | 4 p.m.
The focus of the third ECOM will be on Optimization and Game Theory. Researchers from all optimization areas are encouraged to participate. The meeting comprises of mini-courses by two distinguished speakers targeted toward students and early career researchers, and public lectures. There will be some invited and contributed talks. Registration is mandatory and deadline to register is April 7, 2023.

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