Mason graduate students take science to the next level

by Fernando Miralles-Wilhelm

Did you know there are more than 11,000 graduate students at Mason? Last week, I had the opportunity to interact with many of our science-focused graduate students on the Fairfax and SciTech campuses during our ScienceConnect events. I also attended a Graduate and Professional Student Association (GAPSA) organized luncheon to learn why some of these students chose to embark on a graduate education, and how they are connecting and performing research in our current COVID-19 state. The faculty and administrators who attended also shared suggestions to build their networks and to make the most of their time at Mason.

More than one in four students in our college currently pursue graduate studies or are actively engaged in research at the graduate level to further their professional development and improve their income potential. With 10 accelerated masters, 14 graduate masters, 13 graduate certificates, 11 graduate PhD fields of study, and numerous postdoc opportunities, there are plenty of robust and challenging options for the 1,053 graduate students within our science community.
Mason Science #FacultyFriday highlights chemistry assistant professor

Mason Science continues to celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month by highlighting Liana Chafran, Assistant Professor, Chemistry. Chafran started at Mason two years ago as a Research Associate specializing in biomaterials. Now an assistant professor on Mason’s SciTech campus, she continues her research on the synthesis of smart biomaterials for biomedical applications. Both inside and outside of the lab, Chafran strives to create opportunities for her students.

Antil studying algorithms and numerical methods for optimization with partial differential equation constraints

by Elizabeth Grisham

Harbir Antil, Professor, Mathematical Sciences; Director, Center for Mathematics and Artificial Intelligence, is studying optimization problems with partial differential equation (PDE) constraints. Antil received $340,000 from the National Science Foundation for this project. Funding began in August 2021 and will end in late July 2024.
Mason scientists make meaningful contributions to rescuing rhinos

*by Anne Reynolds*

Just a few days ahead of World Rhino Day, a diverse group of rhino expert scientists, including Environmental Science and Policy alumni, have come together to create the American Institute of Rhinoceros Science (AIRS). Made possible by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the group includes a number of leading organizations in the fight to save the five species of rhinos.

---

**IN THE NEWS**

**Mason forensic scientist discusses Gabby Petito case with CBS News**

[Forensic Science Program](#) Director and former FBI profiler, [Mary Ellen O'Toole](#), spoke to [CBS News](#) about the newly released 911 calls made prior to the disappearance of Gabby Petito.

---

**Happening at Mason**

**Meet Sharnnia Artis, Mason’s new chief diversity officer**

*by Colleen Kearney Rich*

Sharnnia Artis recently joined Mason as the new vice president for diversity, equity, and inclusion and chief diversity.
Learn more about Shamnia Artis

Southern New Mexico and Western U.S. Dust Symposium now accepting abstracts and registration

Register to attend or speak at the Southern New Mexico and Western U.S. Dust Symposium from October 25 to 27, 2021 via Zoom. The symposium is run in partnership with George Mason University, NASA, and the New Mexico Environment Department. Deadline to submit an abstract is October 8, 2021. The event is open to all and free to attend.

Events

Virtual CDS Colloquium on CSS/CSI
September 24, 2021 | 3 to 4:30 p.m.
Join Anamaria Berea, Associate Professor, Computational and Data Sciences for her lecture that explores evolutionary game theory agent-based models within the context of astrobiology.

Mason Vision Series
September 27, 2021 | 7 p.m.
Join University Professor in AOES and Managing Director of COLA, Jagdish Shukla, for his lecture on "Climate Change: Science, Politics and Ethics."

School of Systems Biology Colloquium Speaker Series
September 28, 2021 | Noon to 1 p.m.
Join Bioengineering's Michael Buschmann for a lecture on "Designing ionizable lipids and lipid nanoparticles for mRNA vaccines."

Save the Date: State of the College Address by Dean Fernando Miralles-Wilhelm
September 29, 2021 | 2 to 3 p.m.
Faculty, staff, and students can attend a live or virtual viewing of the address in Research Hall 163, Exploratory Hall 3301, or IABR 1004 at SciTech. In-person attendees must register in advance to attend and complete the Mason COVID health check. Seating is limited. We will confirm in-person attendees for each location on a first come, first served basis following COVID room restrictions. Register.