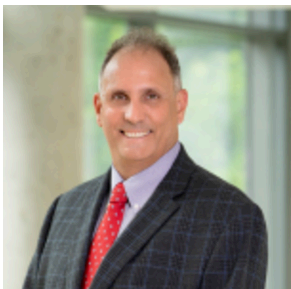




COLLEGE OF SCIENCE
George Mason University®

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A message from the Dean
FERNANDO R. MIRALLES-WILHELM

Dear friends and alumni,

Last month, we welcomed more than 900 Mason scientists to the College of Science alumni chapter. Join me in celebrating their success! And a special thank you to our alumni mentors who helped cultivate scientific curiosity and created many of the pathways these graduates now pursue.

Like many of our graduates, I also look back at the last four years I've had at George Mason

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research shifted into a great unknown. At first, we started somewhat isolated, which was not easy. But we embraced the challenge with grit and determination, fostering new collaborations and ways of learning. I'll take the lessons from this life-changing experience with me as I transition to my next chapter as President of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science and Vice Chancellor for sustainability of the University System of Maryland.

I'm pleased to announce that Cody W. Edwards, senior associate dean for faculty and academic affairs will be interim dean for the College of Science beginning on July 1, 2024. Dr. Edwards has served as the executive director of the Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation (SMSC) for nearly eight years, where he helped strengthen the bridge between education and research. He will continue to serve in this role during the transition. His experience and dedication to research excellence, leadership, and student success will make him an excellent leader for our college.

As we welcome Dr. Edwards, celebrate our newest graduates, and I depart Mason, I thank the many members of the Mason Science community for providing a safe and nurturing place to cultivate ideas and dream big goals. The impact of our Mason Science community has no limits and I look forward to watching the college continue to thrive under new leadership, and watching our alumni, faculty, and students soar to new heights.

Thank you to my colleagues and friends for four wonderful years at Mason.
Sincerely,
FMW

Your Impact Made a Difference

\$30K

**MASON
VISIONDAY**

**GEORGE
MASON
UNIVERSITY**
College of Science



Thanks to the support of more than 75 donors we raised over \$30,000 for the College of Science! Your dollars will directly contribute to advancing our mission of excellence

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contribution, no matter what size, made a significant difference in empowering Mason Science to thrive.



A message from Alumni Chapter President
MARK MONSON

Dear fellow Mason Science alumni,

This is my final column as president of the College of Science Alumni Chapter. The past four years as president have been very fulfilling and rewarding. I've had the opportunity to meet many of our Mason Science alumni and work with some stellar people in the college and the broader Mason Alumni Association. Some of my favorite moments have been with Dean Fernando Miralles-Wilhelm, who will soon be leaving us for new adventures on the other side of the Potomac River. Fernando has been a tremendous supporter of Mason Science alumni, an excellent leader for the College of Science, and a great representative for George Mason in the community. I wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

I am stepping down as president to pursue other endeavors. I hope, though, to continue working with the Mason Science alumni board as an at-large member. I am very pleased to say that the leadership of the Mason Science alumni chapter will be in good hands. Michelle Ryan is poised to step in as the new chapter president. Michelle has a PhD in environmental sciences from George Mason, has served as an at-large member on the Mason Science alumni board for several years, and was instrumental in developing and implementing the Mason Science mentor program, which aims to connect Mason Science alumni with current College of Science students interested in advancing their career development. I look forward to Michelle's term as president and hope to have the opportunity to work with her in the future.

As I write this, the spring 2024 graduation is just a few weeks behind us. It was an honor for me to participate in the commencement ceremonies as a Golden Patriot (alumni who graduated 50+ years ago – for me, 1974). As I left the ceremonies and walked down the main aisle past thousands of new alumni, I was especially pleased to know that 900 of our newest alumni were College of Science graduates. We had a record-breaking number of undergraduates this year and more than 70 new PhDs from 11 disciplines! That so many of them pursued their degrees through the depths of the pandemic is a testimony to what they will bring to the scientific world.

working, and accomplishments you want to share. We also want your ideas and suggestions for ways that we can help you and other College of Science alumni stay connected. Please email us at cosalum@gmu.edu or connect with us on [LinkedIn](#). We want to hear from you.

Mark Monson
President, College of Science Alumni Chapter
George Mason University



Cathy Becker, Environmental Science and Policy MS '96 named the College of Science Distinguished Alumni

Join us as we congratulate Cathy Becker on being awarded the College of Science's Distinguished Alumni Award. We will celebrate Becker and her fellow awardees on Thursday, October 17 at the 2024 Celebration of Distinction.

Becker spent 21 years as a U.S. Naval Officer, before pursuing a long-time desire to undertake environmental studies. She chose the Environmental Science and Policy MS program at George Mason University, graduating in 1996. Mason prepared her for employment in the energy data management field for the next 20 years.

Cathy and her husband, Richard J. Becker, have sponsored the Becker Environmental Science and Policy Graduate Research Fellows since 2016. This matching program with the College of Science will likely extend through 2030. The Beckers view this program as a way to facilitate the development of leaders and researchers who will tackle environmental problems and promote responsible stewardship of the earth and its magnificent resources. In 2020, room 3301 in Exploratory Hall was named the "Catherine Z. and Richard J. Becker Conference Room" to commemorate their sponsorship.

Both were raised in California and earned undergraduate degrees there. They earned MBAs at George Washington University while serving in the Navy. They first met at the Pentagon, married, and recently celebrated their 50th anniversary. They have resided in Fairfax County since 1979. They enjoy traveling and have seen much of North America on their Goldwing motorcycle. They continue to expand their horizons through the Lifetime Learning Institute (LLI)/NOVA classes and

their involvement with George Mason University. Cathy serves on the board of directors of LLI, NoVA Lights Chorale, and Friends of Fairfax County Senior Centers.

Gabriele Belle, associate professor of physics and astronomy, will also be honored at the event as the Faculty Member of the Year Award recipient.

Join us to celebrate Becker and Belle on October 17

Maryland town turns up heat in effort to fend off rising water

Despite forecasts suggesting that nearly all of Crisfield will be underwater in just a few decades, local officials and town residents on Maryland's Eastern Shore have decided to make a stand to save the city.



According to several observers, the impetus behind Crisfield's progress so far can be traced to one city employee: grant administrator Jennifer Merritt, Environmental Science and Policy, MS '10, and Biology, BA '06. Her experience includes working in a circuit rider program as a part-time assistant city manager for Crisfield and as a development coordinator for a local land trust. She joined the town in her current role in November 2022.

Read about Merritt and her work to save Crisfield



Join us in congratulating and welcoming your 2024-2025 alumni board!

- **President: Michelle Ryan - PhD, Environmental Science and Policy '15**
- **Vice President: Ida Kondori - BA, Biology '04**
- **Secretary: Seth Ellsworth - BS, Biology '22**
- **Treasurer: To-Be-Announced**
- **At-Large: Mark Monson - BS, Biology '74**

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- **At- Large: Kellie Perry - PhD, Biosciences Microbiology and Infectious Disease '15**

Student Spotlight



College of Science master's student receives funding to study endangered Virginia plant

The health of our planet depends on the diversity of its organisms, from the tallest trees to the smallest microorganisms. If species disappear, the ecosystems that provide the air we breathe and the food we eat will begin to deteriorate. Scientists, like George Mason University master's student, Emily Poindexter, are at the forefront of the fight against this threat. Poindexter, who is pursuing a master's in environmental science and policy, received funding from the Virginia Native Plant Society to support her study of Ozark Milkvetch, a small, perennial plant native to south-central United States as well as parts of Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia.

[More about Poindexter's fight to save this Virginia plant](#)



Neuroscience PhD student pens novel rooted in Middle Eastern mythology

George Mason University neuroscience PhD student Rania Hanna has been writing since she was a child. All those years of storytelling paid off this spring with the publication of her debut novel, *The Jinn Daughter*, published by Hoopoe Press.

Reviewers have called her book a “haunting homage to Middle Eastern folklore,” and Hanna, a Syrian American,

said she draws from stories she heard as a child for inspiration.

[More on Hanna's novel](#)



Going global as Mason Korea's first computational and data sciences graduate

education.

Traveling abroad has been part of Jimin Jeon's life for as long as she can remember. She traveled with her mom during every school vacation, which allowed her to visit 23 countries by the time she was a college student. Being exposed to different cultures from a young age helped her develop a desire to pursue her college education abroad. That brought her to Mason Korea after 12 years of Korean public school

[Learn more about Jeon's experience](#)

Mason News



George Mason University receives over \$1.1 million to revolutionize Lyme disease testing

With tick bites on the rise, the College of Science and College of Public Health are collaborating to improve detection, diagnosis, and treatment with urine testing. [Alessandra Luchini](#), systems biology professor in the College of Science and Mason's principal investigator with [Lance Liotta](#), professor in the College of Science, co-director of Mason's Center for Applied Proteomics and Molecular Medicine, and [Melissa J. Perry](#), dean of the College of Public Health as co-investigators.

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“We have developed a urine test for Lyme disease that detects the bacteria (*Borrelia* species) that causes Lyme disease, making it a direct test to confirm an infection soon after the tick bite. This leads to earlier treatment when necessary and could prevent the long-term debilitating effects of the disease,” said Luchini,

[More on the \\$1.1M grant](#)

2024 Student Excellence Award Winners

Congratulations to the 2024 student award winners recognized for their commitment to academic excellence, research, and service.

[2023-2024 Student Award Winners](#)



George Mason University completes long-term rebrand with new logo

George Mason University unveiled a redesigned logo as the capstone of its three-year-long comprehensive rebrand. The new look, which will include a single logo for the university and its athletics program, asserts George Mason’s emerging identity as a national top 50 public university and Virginia’s top-ranked university for innovation and upward mobility, as well as the commonwealth’s largest, most innovative, and most diverse university.

[Read more about the rebrand](#)

Studying optimization for neuromorphic imaging and digital twins

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[Harbir Antil](#) (PI), director of the Center for Mathematics and Artificial Intelligence (CMAI), professor of Mathematical Sciences, and [Rainald Löhner](#) (co-PI), director of Computational Fluid Dynamics Lab, professor of Physics and Astronomy, received funding from

the Air Force Office of Scientific Research (AFOSR), under the prestigious DURIP program, to establish a neuromorphic imaging and digital twins lab with capabilities to design new optimization algorithms.

[More on Antil and Löhner research](#)

Access to Excellence Podcast features Jeremy Campbell, associate director for strategic engagement in George Mason's Institute for a Sustainable Earth

[Jeremy Campbell](#), associate director for strategic engagement in George Mason University's Institute for a Sustainable Earth, says that at its current pace the vast Amazon rainforest, could pass a tipping point and transform into grasslands. Within five to ten years. That process, fueled by deforestation and climate change, is a threat to the biodiversity and socio-cultural aspects that define the region and has global implications as well. In this fascinating conversation, Campbell explains to Mason President Gregory Washington the magnitude of what the loss of the Amazon rainforest would really mean, and how the Institute for a Sustainable Earth is on the front lines in the region.

[Listen to the episode](#)

**Announcements
& Events**



Remembering Professor Randy McBride

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Mason Science Patriots,

It is with great sadness we announce the passing of Professor Randy McBride. Professor [Randy McBride passed away on Sunday, May 5, 2024](#), at the age of 64, after fighting a courageous battle against pancreatic cancer.

McBride channeled his passion for coastal geology, geomorphology, and oceanography as a George Mason University Professor of Geology in the Department of Atmospheric, Oceanic, and Earth Sciences, and served as a Resident Faculty Fellow at George Mason's Potomac Environmental Research and Education Center (PEREC).

Randy McBride was born on September 26, 1959, in Grove City, PA and received his bachelors degree in Physical Geography and Geology from Wittenberg University, in Springfield, OH in 1982. During that time period, he studied abroad in Salzburg, Austria before earning his master's degree from the Department of Geography & Anthropology (coastal geomorphology & processes) at Louisiana State University (LSU), Baton Rouge, LA in 1986. He earned his PhD from the Department of Oceanography & Coastal Sciences (geological oceanography & geology) also at LSU in 1997. Prior to his PhD studies, Randy worked as a research associate conducting coastal geology research along the US Atlantic and Gulf coasts with the Louisiana Geological Survey and the Coastal Studies Institute, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA.

Randy joined George Mason University initially in the Department of Environmental Science and Policy in 1997 after receiving his PhD.

"As a Resident Faculty Fellow, Randy and his research lab were an integral part of the Potomac Environmental Research and Education Center from the beginning," said PEREC Director and long-time collaborator, R. Christian Jones. "He was a well-respected scientist, an enthusiastic teacher, and a valued colleague." Jones added.

From 2012-2014 he was the Academic Director of Study Abroad Program in Columbia where he led and taught his international field course Geology of Columbia: Volcanoes, Volcanic Hazards, Glaciers & Surficial Processes. He worked as a visiting principal fellow at the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences at the University of Wollongong, Australia in 2016.

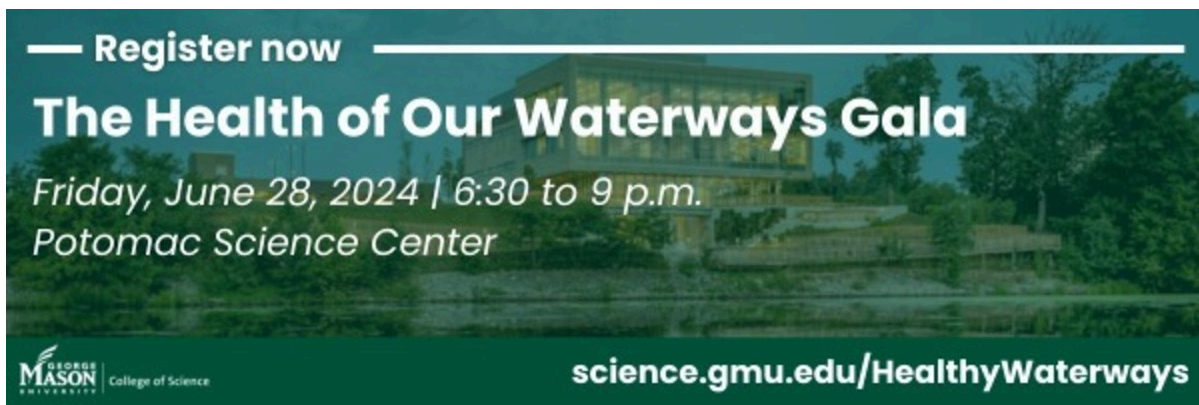
Since 2017, McBride was Academic Co-Director of George Mason's Geology Field Camp in Camerino, Italy that focused on geologic field mapping of the Apennine Mountains and around Naples and Rome. An internationally recognized expert in the field of coastal geology, geomorphology, and sedimentology, McBride authored over 100 scientific publications. He was particularly proud of the publication in the 2022 Treatise on Geomorphology entitled "[Morphodynamics of Modern and Ancient Barrier Systems: An](#)

and international co-authors.

Memorial contributions made in memory of Professor Randy McBride supporting the Department of Atmospheric, Oceanic, and Earth Sciences, will provide vital funding for the unit to continue offering a premier education for its students.

Randy will certainly be missed by many in the College of Science, George Mason, and his community. We will provide information on the future memorial as we become aware of next steps.

**Make a donation in memory of Professor
Randy McBride**



Join neighbors and friends, along with R. Chris Jones and the faculty of the Potomac Environmental Research and Education Center (PEREC) for a discussion on the health of our waterways and a sunset gala.

This benefit event supports the mission, research, and outreach of the Potomac Environmental Research and Education Center (PEREC). The event will kick off with a cocktail reception with views of the Belmont Bay, followed by an engaging discussion. The evening culminates with a champagne toast to the Center and the health of our waterways.

Individual tickets are \$125 (\$50 benefit) and include one (1) event ticket, heavy hors d'oeuvres, two (2) drink tickets, a champagne toast, and complimentary garage parking.

Sponsorship levels for the gala range from \$25,000 - \$1,000.

Reserve your seat now

Celebrate Science every day

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Join scientists around the globe, your fellow alumni, and the college as we celebrate science days in June and July!

- June 5: [World Environment Day](#)
- June 8: [World Oceans Day](#)
- June 20 - 21: [Summer Solstice](#)
- June 23: [International Women in Engineering Day](#)
- June 30: [Asteroid Day](#)
- July: [Plastic Free Month](#)
- July 8: [National Video Game Day](#)
- July 20: [National Moon Day \(Anniversary of Apollo 17\)](#)
- July 22: [World Brain Day](#)

Did we miss a day? [Email](#) us and let us know!

Stay Connected with Mason Science

Follow us on social media, read our newsletters, or attend one of our many events to stay informed on everything happening in the College of Science.



View the College of Science [calendar](#) and the [Mason Alumni calendar](#) for upcoming events.

Have questions, comments, or updates? [E-mail us](#).

We want to know what you are doing.

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