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A message from the Dean **FERNANDO R. MIRALLES-WILHELM**

Dear friends and alumni,

Thank you to those who have donated to the College of Science Vision Fund in response to last week's message. With Mason Vision Day coming up next Thursday, April 4, I wanted to make another appeal for your support and the opportunity to be part of this special day.

As I look to the future and [leaving George Mason University's College of Science](#), I have said many times that this new opportunity is bittersweet. It has truly been a tremendous privilege and honor to serve as dean of this extraordinary college. The faculty, staff, students, alumni, and

friends are among the most talented, resilient, and hard-working individuals I know. Mason Science will most certainly continue to thrive due to your commitment and “can do” attitude.

As an expression of my gratitude, and in recognition of Mason Vision Day on April 4, I have decided to match donations of up to \$10,000 to the [College of Science Vision Fund](#). This fund provides flexible and timely support for a wide range of needs across the college: Emergency student needs, outreach activities, and research support are among the initiatives that the College Vision Fund supports.

I invite you to join me in supporting this exceptional College. **My goal is to achieve a record number of donors to the College; every donation makes a difference and no amount is too small.** Your contribution represents your appreciation for our teaching, research, and our community outreach programs.

[Support Science at Mason](#)

Thank you for your friendship and support during my tenure as dean of Mason Science.

Sincerely,
FMW

P.S. I start my new position on July 1, so I am not leaving quite yet. I hope you all can join me on Wednesday, April 24 for my final Mason Science Series featuring Ramin Hakami (details below). This series has been one of my favorite events during my tenure and has led to great conversations with our alumni and community.

Mason Science Series: Treating the Next Pandemic Using our Own Immune System's Toolkit

Join Dean Fernando Miralles-Wilhelm on April 24 for an intriguing conversation with [Ramin Hakami](#). Hakami’s research could provide an important piece of the puzzle for treating the next pandemic.

Using innate mechanisms of our bodies to boost the immune response to infection, Hakami has taken a bench-to-bedside approach to investigating the natural mechanisms of protection against infectious diseases at a molecular level.

Doors will open at 3:30 p.m. with a light reception and the program will run from 4 to 5 p.m., with continued conversation following.



Fernando Miralles-Wilhelm
Dean, College of Science



Dr. Ramin Hakami
Professor, Systems Biology

[Reserve Your Seat Now](#)



A message from Alumni Chapter President **MARK MONSON**

Dear Fellow Mason Science Alumni:

As I write this, students are returning this week from spring break. The semester is just about halfway done, which means another graduation ceremony is but mere weeks away. Another 600 College of Science alumni will be added to our ranks. Undergraduate and graduate students who have been diligently working for years toward their science degrees will finally have the opportunity to walk across the stage, receive their diplomas, and become members of the Alumni Association. Please join me in congratulating them and wishing them every success as they pursue their desired careers.

I continue to be amazed and awed at the research and accomplishments of our Mason Science faculty and students. Every semester, cutting-edge research results in new findings that advance science and help make our world a better place to live in. If you haven't had the opportunity to read it, here is a link to the [College of Science 2022-2023 annual report](#). I encourage you to take a few minutes to peruse it.

Nominations for elections to the College of Science Alumni Board are now open. All of the positions are available. Being on the board is a great way to stay involved with your fellow alumni. You should have received an announcement from me in a separate email. If not, you can contact Lesley Irminger at lirminge@gmu.edu for more information. The link to the nomination form can be found below, and nominations can be submitted until April 19. All Mason Science alumni are eligible and you are welcome to nominate yourself.

[Submit a nomination](#)

On a final note, it is with mixed feelings that we say goodbye to Dean Fernando Miralles-Wilhelm. After four years of excellent and successful leadership at Mason, Fernando is leaving the College of Science to take a new job as the President of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science and Vice Chancellor for Sustainability of the University System of Maryland. He will assume his new position this coming July 1. This is a wonderful opportunity for him. It marries leadership with the ability to continue his environmental science research. Fernando has been a terrific supporter of alumni and will be greatly missed here at Mason. We wish him every success in his new endeavor. A nationwide search will be conducted for the next dean of the College of Science, and we will receive more information on that later. The university is currently selecting an interim dean who should be announced in the upcoming months.

In closing, please remember that we want to hear from you. What you're doing, where you're working, what 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](#).

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

Alumni News



Remembering and Honoring Janice Ipsan, BS Geology '15

Mason Science Alum writes song for son while battling cancer

Mason Science alum, Catherine Janice Ipsan, BS Geology '15, better known by her stage name, Cat Janice, wrote an award-winning song dedicated to her son while battling an aggressive form of cancer.



Facing the end of her life, Janice wanted to publish the song, "Dance You Outta My Head," which began as a bonding moment with her seven year-old, and direct the single's proceeds to him. She released the music on January 19, the day before her birthday. The song has since soared to the top ten tracks on iTunes and has been used in more than 34,000 TikToks.

[Sadly, on February 29, Janice passed away,](#) leaving behind a legacy in her son, her music, and her passion for geology.

[Learn more about Janice's Journey](#)



Mason postdoc leads scientific breakthrough that could revolutionize cancer treatment

It isn't often that someone graduates with a PhD and a scientific discovery, but George Mason University researcher Marissa Howard was no ordinary student.

Howard, BS Bioengineering '17, PhD Biosciences '22, leads a team of scientists who have discovered a way to "eavesdrop" on cellular communications that could revolutionize treatments for cancer and other maladies.

All cells are constantly communicating with other cells using what Howard calls "an internet of molecular information." Researchers at Mason's Center for Applied Proteomics and Molecular Medicine (CAPMM), where Howard has worked since she was an undergraduate, are the first scientists to successfully tap into this communications system, which tumors use to trick or block

the immune system and attract normal cells.

[Read more about Howard's research](#)



Oh, the places our Mason Science alumni will go...

Where will your degree in biology take you? The work of Jessica McCabe, BS Molecular and Microbiology '20 and Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation Spring '20 at Fossil Rim Wildlife Center can show you. Jess is one of Fossil Rim's hoofstock care specialists. Enjoy a behind-the-scenes look at her daily routine where she cares for the animals at the center.

[Watch the video](#)

Student Spotlight



Sky Ratcliffe, PhD Mathematics

Some people's interest in space exploration begins in elementary school, while others grow a fascination through sci-fi television shows or movies. For Sky Ratcliffe, a George Mason University student in the second year of their PhD in mathematics, it was a personal connection through their great uncle, a former NASA engineer who worked on Apollo 11, 12, and 16.

[Read more about Ratcliffe's passion for math](#)

Nikita Lad, PhD Environmental Science and Policy



National Science Policy Network (NSPN) member Nikita Lad likes to make things better. From her local community to international educational opportunities, she's using her academic background and policy interests to make the world more sustainable and equitable through data and evaluation.

Nikita's journey began with a love for science and aspirations of becoming a medical doctor, eventually leading her to pursue undergraduate and master's degrees in microbiology and bioanalytical sciences in India. But her path took an unexpected turn towards regulatory affairs.

[Read NSPN's article on Lad](#)



Jason Mercado, BA Biology '23

From the moment Jason Mercado, a biology major in the College of Science and a member of the Honors College, came to George Mason University as part of the Student Transition Empowerment Program (STEP), he embraced all the possibilities of campus involvement. From being an orientation leader to working as an environmental field interpreter for school programs, Mercado made the most of his time at Mason.

[Learn more about Mercado's Mason experience](#)

Mason News



Mason researcher prepares vulnerable communities for wildfire impact

George Mason University scientist [Alireza Ermagun](#) is leading a collaboration to establish a disaster resilience prototype using an



interactive map to protect vulnerable regions in California.

Ermagun, assistant professor in the Department of Geography and Geoinformation Science, leads a National Science Foundation (NSF)-supported project titled “Snuff It Out: Extinguishing the Disparity of Access to Shelters for Disadvantaged Communities in Wildfire-Prone Areas” to optimize response to the growing menace of wildfires.

[Read more about Ermagun's work](#)

Forensics Science lab topic of Mason podcast

In January, Forensic Science Program director, Mary Ellen O'Toole, appeared on Mason's *Access to Excellence* podcast, admitting to President Gregory Washington that forensics research on human donors is not for the faint of heart. But the university's new outdoor research and training laboratory is a valuable addition to the study of human decomposition in various environmental conditions for the purpose of solving crimes. It also positions the program as a national leader in forensic science and forensic anthropology.

O'Toole was the guest speaker at our March Mason Science Series, which you can now watch in case you missed it.

[Listen to podcast episode](#)



Empowering girls in STEAM at the Potomac Science Center

George Mason University's [Potomac Science Center](#) hosted the Girls in STEAM Empowerment Conference in February. This annual event welcomed 60 middle school students for a day of science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics (STEAM). The event promotes

STEAM careers for young women through engaging discussions and hands-on activities.

[Read more about the conference](#)

Mason scientist receives NASA funding to aid supermassive

black hole observations

Physics and Astronomy professor, Shobita Satyapal, received funding for: "The Diagnostic Potential of Coronal Line Emission in the Study of Active Galactic Nuclei: An Exploration with XMM-Newton." This project is the first large-scale systematic survey of a comprehensive set of 20 optical coronal lines in a large sample of Type 1 AGNs for which virial black hole masses have been compiled.

[Learn more about Satyapal's work](#)

A \$6 million NSF grant will translate research into practice to help local communities become climate-resilient

George Mason University scientists and partners will leverage their climate expertise and the university's resources into broader societal implications, thanks to a \$6 million grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) that is going to translate research into practice to support the creation of climate-resilient communities across Virginia.

[Explore the NSF grant and its impact on our community](#)

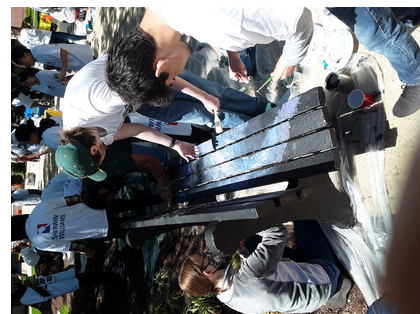
Announcements & Events



Mason Vision Day 2024 -Thursday, April 4



**COLLEGE OF
SCIENCE
VISION FUND**



Mason Science Patriots,

Mason Vision Day is Thursday, April 4. This is your opportunity to give back and make an impact on science at Mason and around the world. Mason Vision Day is a 24-hour period where all Mason supporters - alumni, friends, volunteers, faculty, staff, parents,

and students - are encouraged to come together to make a difference by supporting one of our College's many causes. Vision Day is a vital part of our commitment to the Mason Now: Power the Possible Campaign.

What's your Mason Vision?

This year the College of Science is focusing on raising funds for the College of Science Vision fund. As one of the the university's largest research contributors, the College of Science is quickly becoming an engine of innovation and discoveries relevant to the greatest challenges of our time. Your support of the College of Science Vision fund allows us to meet our college's most urgent and important needs, from groundbreaking research to student support, community/alumni engagement events, and departmental operational costs.

Please mark your calendars for April 4 and join us in making a difference through your contributions to the College of Science Vision Fund. Together, we can continue to power the possibilities for the future of science at George Mason University.

Support Mason Vision Day and the College of Science

Celebrate Science every day!

Join scientists around the globe, your fellow alum, and the college as we celebrate science days in April.

- April 6 - 14: [National Robotics Week](#)
- April 8: [Total Eclipse](#)
- April 22: [Earth Day](#)
- April 23: [World Laboratory Day](#)
- April 25: [National DNA 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 nformed 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.

We want to hear from you, stay tuned for an alumni survey.

Follow Mason's Science Alumni on social media:



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