



In this Issue

- [Message from the Dean](#)
- [Save the Date: Mason Science Series](#)
- [Message from COS Alumni Chapter President Mark Monson](#)
- [Alumni News](#)
- [Student Spotlight](#)
- [Mason News](#)
- [Events and Announcements](#)



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

Dear Friends and Alumni,

The College of Science is a global leader in research related to climate change, conservation, and environmental issues. From our Department of Environmental Science and Policy---the first academic Department in the country to offer a Ph.D. in this field---to our Department of Atmospheric, Oceanic, and Earth Systems Science (AOES), we are engaged in research that will help ensure a sustainable planet.

My own field of research is water. As a trained hydrologist and water resources engineer, for decades I've studied water and its connection to food, energy, ecosystems, health, and economics around the world. A portion of my research considers how humans drive future water scarcity changes across future socioeconomic development pathways. I've also explored climate-hydrology-vegetation interactions and the resilience of the natural systems that provide us with this vital elixir. The vast majority of my work has concentrated on modeling surface and groundwater systems and applying remote sensing techniques to hydrologic cycle processes and water quality.

Temperature increases due to global warming and deforestation intensifies these problems. When we take out trees and clear out land, the water moves through the land much quicker and rivers that naturally drain into coastal areas do so much faster. When we build cities and roads, we are replacing natural systems (that can regulate water flow and can absorb it, and can prevent flooding from happening), with pavements and buildings that tend to concentrate water, and that's where we are having the flooding problems around the world.

I recently had the opportunity to join [George Mason University President Washington](#) and [Mason's Honors College students](#) and University Scholars on the [Our Future, Transformed](#) series to think about water as a commodity like oil, and its optimized use and effect on people and communities that rely on it.

And I'm honored to work with colleagues like Dr. James Kinter, a world-renowned climate scientist who is leading the Virginia Climate Center, an interdisciplinary group of faculty and students at Mason who are helping communities in the Commonwealth of Virginia increase resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Jim will be joining me in a conversation on June 28th with Congressman Gerald Connolly, who sponsored and shepherded the funding through the U.S. House of Representatives.

I hope you—our alumni and friends of the college—will join us for this special upcoming Mason Science Series event, and learn more about how Mason Science is working toward a more sustainable planet.

Sincerely,

FMW

[Support Science at Mason!](#)

**June 28: Mason
Science Series**

Featuring Rep. Gerry Connolly and Dr. Jim Kinter

MASON
SCIENCE SERIES

Preparing for a New Normal: Making Mason and the Commonwealth of Virginia More Resilient to the Impacts of Climate Change

Wednesday, June 28, 4 to 6 p.m. ET

Country Club of Fairfax

A conversation with:

Dean Fernando Miralles-Wilhelm, the Honorable Gerry Connolly, and Dr. James Kinter

For more information and to register: science.gmu.edu/climatechange



Fernando Miralles-Wilhelm
Dean, College of Science



Jim Kinter
Director, The Center for
Ocean-Land-Atmosphere
Studies (COLA)



Rep. Gerry Connolly
U.S. House of Representatives
from Virginia's 11th District

Join us for our final Mason Science Series this year for a conversation with

Congressman Gerry Connolly and **Jim Kinter**, professor of climate dynamics and

director of the **Center for Ocean-Land-Atmosphere Studies (COLA)**, to discuss the role of the **Virginia Climate Center** and how it is helping communities in the Commonwealth of Virginia increase resilience to the impacts of climate change.

The Virginia Climate Center was established in 2022 with funding from NOAA, made possible by the efforts of Rep. Connolly, who sponsored the funding in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Kinter recently spoke to PBS about threats facing various Virginia areas as a result of climate change and what the Virginia Climate Center is doing to help. [Check out the PBS Special featuring Professor Kinter.](#)

[Reserve Your Seat Now!](#)



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

Dear Fellow COS Alumni:

Just a few days ago, we added 911 undergraduate and graduate alumni to the College of Science Alumni Chapter. That is almost a thousand new folks added to the over 15,000 people who have graduated with a science degree from George Mason stretching back 55 years to the first graduating class of George Mason College in 1968.

As I was contemplating this, a thought occurred to me..... What is an alumni? Like many folks, the first place I turned to was the Oxford Dictionary. According to Oxford, an alumnus is "a graduate of a particular school, college, or university; a former member of a group, company, or organization." Digging a little further, I learned that "alumni" stems from the Latin word meaning "to nourish." That leads to another definition of alumni: one who is being or has been, nourished. Well, being easily seduced by new and interesting information, I was quickly pulled down the Wikipedia rabbit hole. Here's what I learned:

The Latin noun alumnus means "foster son" or "pupil." It is derived from PIE *h₂el- (grow, nourish), and it is a variant of the Latin verb alere "to nourish".

Separate, but from the same root, is the adjective almus "nourishing," found in the phrase Alma Mater, a title for a person's home university.

Under Roman law, *alumnus* was a legal term to describe a child placed in fosterage.

According to the contributors to Wikipedia, in ancient times, unwanted children were often abandoned in the wilderness, either to die (due to hypothermia, hunger, thirst, or animal attack) or perhaps to be collected and brought up by those unable to produce their own children. When the latter happened, Roman law needed a way to define and protect these foster children.

According to John Boswell, the late historian and full professor at Yale University, the word *alumnus* referred to exposed children who were taken into a household where, according to Boswell, they were "regarded as somewhere between an heir and a slave, partaking in different ways of both categories. ... an *alumnus* might be treated both as a beloved child and as a household servant."

Climbing out of the Wikipedia rabbit hole, I felt a little unsettled and definitely unsatisfied by the origins of a word that has vastly more positive connotations in modern usage. So, I decided to amend my question to, What does it mean to be an alumni? I'm pleased to say I found many, far more satisfying answers. Their common denominator is connections.

Being an *alumnus* of the George Mason University Alumni Association, and of the College of Science chapter in particular, provides a whole host of opportunities to stay connected. One such opportunity is MEAN – the Mason Environmental Alumni Network. All alumni, regardless of degree program/major, who are interested in the environment are invited to join the MEAN network, which is part of the COS Alumni Chapter. The goal of MEAN is to build a community of Mason alumni, from any discipline, who are pursuing careers and other opportunities to help our environment, ecosystems, sustainability, climate, and related things we cherish. **Please sign-up using this [link](#), and feel free to pass it along to any other alumni who might be interested.**

MEAN is but one way you can stay connected. You can volunteer, be a mentor, participate in a Science Series lecture, attend an alumni function, serve on the COS alumni board, and of, course, financially support such efforts as student scholarships and COS research. Just how you stay engaged with the University is up to you. Whether it's in-person or virtually, we want to help you stay connected.

Please remember, too, 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 drop us an email 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

Alumni News





"The Only Requirement is Passion!"

George Mason University alum, Wren Bell (Class of 2022, Environmental Science and Policy) shares her passion for stream ecology and story. Bell advocates for accessibility in the sciences and states, "I've talked with many disabled people who feel like environmental science is completely inaccessible to them, despite their passion and interest. There are so many ways to get involved and some that can be tailored to your specific needs and limitations. You don't have to be able to run long distances or trek through a mountainside to be an environmentalist. The only requirement is passion."

[Read Bell's Full Story here.](#)

From undergraduate field studies to dream job

Alex Murphy, who graduated from ESP in May 2022, recently met up with ESP associate professor Dr. Cynthia Smith at a K-12 teacher training workshop that she led at Windy Knolls Farm in Nokesville, in partnership with the Prince William Soil and Water Conservation District (PWSWCD).



[Read Murphy's full story here.](#)

Student Spotlight



Billy Bates, Computational Physics

While most college seniors are counting the days until graduation and finishing up coursework, George Mason University physics major Billy Bates decided to take on a new challenge. In the fall of 2022, he ran for Fairfax City Council and won. He was sworn in in January.

[Read more about Bates and his service to the community.](#)



Jessica Roberts, Ph.D. Environmental Science and Public Policy

Mason researchers explore techniques to successfully reintroduce captive birds into the wild. George Mason doctoral student Jessica Roberts and biology professor Dr. David Luther examined various conservation management methods from the past 50 years to identify the most successful and cost-effective reintroduction strategies.

[Read more about Roberts and Luther's research here.](#)

Mason News



Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger Visits Potomac Science Center

On Wednesday, April 12, **Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger** visited George Mason University's Potomac Science Center in Woodbridge, which is now part of the congresswoman's district. Mason

President Gregory Washington met with the congresswoman to introduce her to the research and education programs at the Potomac Science Center and share the contributions the center is making to the preservation of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

[Read More about Spanberger's Visit.](#)

New Office of Community College Partnerships to support the Mason Virginia Promise

George Mason University is launching an **Office of Community College Partnerships** to expand the Mason Virginia Promise, a

program that guarantees every Virginian the opportunity to earn a four-year degree or assistance to start a business.

“George Mason University is in the success business, and the Office of Community College Partnerships will help more Virginians be successful in reaching their academic and professional goals while strengthening the economic fabric of the commonwealth,” Mason President Gregory Washington said.



Featured on PBS NewsHour last year, the ADVANCE Program has been lauded nationally. **ADVANCE students who come to Mason graduate two semesters faster than non-ADVANCE transfer students, and 92% of ADVANCE transfers graduate from Mason in less than two years.**

[Learn more about the Office of Community College Partnerships.](#)

Mason's Forensics focus on STEM and Women in Science

A recent segment on NBC 4 News highlighted the women in [Mason Science's Forensic Science Program](#), including Director [Dr. Mary Ellen O'Toole](#) and [Associate Professor Kelly Knight](#). Both spoke to the quality of Mason's education and the important role women increasingly play in the sciences. The segment also featured two forensic science students and their academic preparation for a career in forensics. "

[Watch the news segment here.](#)



Dean's Blog: Cultivating spring STEM community Connections - Visit from City of Fairfax Major and Mason alum, Catherine Read

City of Fairfax Mayor and Mason alum, Catherine Read recently met with Dean Mlrealles-Wilhelm on Mason's Fairfax campus to get an overview of our strategic

direction and brainstorm ways to collaborate with her constituents to collectively support our shared community. She also met with Mason AOES professor Jim Kinter, who co-directs the VA Climate Center, to learn about how we are helping communities build resilience to Virginia's changing climate.

[Read the full blog and learn more about Mayor Read's visit.](#)

'Our Future, Transformed" - A new video series hosted by President Gregory Washington

Honors College launches new YouTube series addressing global challenges. The inaugural video features College of Science professor, [Hakeem Oluseyi](#) discussing how fusion energy might transform the way we live, and how the Artemis moon project is a stepping stone to technological advances that will help us on Earth.

[Read more about the series here.](#)

[Watch Our Future, Transformed: Fusion Energy.](#)

Announcements & Events



MEAN: Mason Environmental Alumni Group Network Kickoff event - Wednesday, June 28 following the Mason Science Series

Interested in learning more about our newest College of Science alumni group, **MEAN (Mason Environmental Alumni Network)**? Then join us on Wednesday, June 28 for our final Mason Science Series and for a networking reception. The reception will immediately follow the conversation.

What is MEAN? Mean is a sub-chapter of the COS Alumni Chapter and aims to:

- Improve sharing of ideas and resources;
- Increase collaboration and change-making capacity
- Provide encouragement, support, and mentorship for current students and life-long alumni learners.

For headcount purposes, please RSVP below by Wednesday, June 19. This is a FREE event.

Want to know about future MEAN Events, get the MEAN newsletter, etc?

[Sign up HERE!](#)

[RSVP for MEAN Kick-off Networking Reception.](#)

Celebrate Science every day!

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

- May 31: [Autonomous Vehicle Day](#)
- June 5: [World Environment Day](#)
- June 8: [World Ocean Day](#)
- June 30: [Asteroid Day](#)

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

Congratulations to the Mason Science recipients of the 2023 Presidential Faculty Excellence Awards

George Mason University President Gregory Washington has announced the recipients of the 2023 Presidential Awards for Faculty Excellence, honoring 12 Mason faculty members for their work on behalf of the university, students, and the broader community.



Congratulations to the three College of Science faculty who were selected for their respective awards. Recipients will be honored at a reception on May 11. The awards honor faculty with up to six years of service, six to 12 years of service, and more than 12 years of service.

Winners include:

- [Dr. Gwendolyn Lewis](#), Faculty Excellence in Teaching
- [Dr. Giorigo A. Ascoli](#), Faculty Excellence in Research
- [R. Christian Jones](#), Excellence in Social Impact

To learn more about the awards and our faculty award recipients, [click here](#).

To stay up-to-date on our events, you can follow our College of Science [calendar here](#). Also, check out the [Mason Alumni calendar](#) for more events.

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

Questions you'd like us to answer in a future newsletter? Please write to us!

Follow us on social media:





George Mason University | College of Science | Exploratory Hall | 4400 University Drive, MS 5C3 |
Fairfax VA 22030 USA

**The George Mason University Foundation is a registered 501 (c)(3), EIN: 54-1603842.
Your gift is tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by the law.*

Have you moved, or changed your phone number and/or email address?

[Update your information.](#)

The content of this message is solely intended for the addressed recipient. Sharing or forwarding the contents of this message to others will disclose the recipient's personal information.

Share this email:



[Manage](#) your preferences | [Opt out](#) using TrueRemove®

Got this as a forward? [Sign up](#) to receive our future emails.

View this email [online](#).

4400 University Drive Exploratory Hall 3200
Fairfax, VA | 22030 US

This email was sent to .

To continue receiving our emails, add us to your address book.

[Subscribe](#) to our email list.