



Office of Sustainability

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George Mason University
Office of Sustainability
4400 University Drive
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Dear Selection Committee,

We at the [Office of Sustainability](#) are writing to nominate Dr. Daniel “Dr. Dann” Sklarew for an AASHE Lifetime Achievement Award.

With an extensive career spanning more than 25 years, Dr. Dann’s is one rich with achievements that promote sustainability inside and outside of higher education. In fact, Dr. Dann’s unique approach to education emphasizes that the work and learning that occurs inside the classroom must be intimately connected with the rich world outside the classroom. Dr. Dann does not draw boundaries between an institution and what is “other,” rather he removes those barriers to promote access to learning, education, and impact for all.

Before addressing Dr. Dann’s specific higher education experience, it is first important to highlight his extensive research background which includes time spent at [Boston University’s Center for Adaptive Systems](#), the [Smithsonian Institution](#), the [United States Environmental Protection Agency](#), Water Brothers International (which he founded and directed), [Science Applications International Corporation](#), [General Dynamics Information Technology](#), [Tides](#) (“an American public charity and fiscal sponsor working to advance progressive policy in areas such as the environment...” and many others), the [United Nations Office for Project Services](#), and at [George Mason University](#) where he is currently a Full Professor for [Environmental Science and Policy](#) as well as the Coordinator of Sustainability Initiatives with the [Office of the Provost](#).

Dr. Dann first joined Mason as an Adjunct Instructor and Researcher and spent 1993-1998 teaching and team-teaching numerous courses that brought together technology, ecology, and biology in addition to conducting impactful research that studied the Potomac River while also assembling and managing an online data warehouse for Potomac research. Soon thereafter, Dr. Dann earned his PhD from Mason in 2000 and worked outside of higher education where, among many other things, he managed a \$1.94 million grant from the [United Nations Development Programme](#) to implement the [Global Environment Facility's \(GEF\) International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network](#) (IW:LEARN) while working at [Tides](#) as the Project Director/Chief Technical Advisor. Additionally, he authored a 4-year, \$6.28 million Full-Sized Project (FSP) proposal for the GEF’s IW:LEARN project and secured over \$4 million in cost-share commitments in his role as the Project Director/Chief Technical Advisor with the [United Nations Office for Project Services](#).



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In 2008, Dr. Dann returned to Mason, and if you look at anything sustainability-related at Mason since that time you'll certainly find Dr. Dann's fingerprints. Mason joined the [Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education](#) (AASHE) [Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, & Rating System](#) (STARS) as a Charter Participant in 2010 because of his efforts. Dr. Dann hosted a charette-style course that informed the publication of Mason's first-ever, [Climate Action Plan](#) in 2010 of which he was a primary author and member of the Core Planning Committee. In 2011, Dr. Dann authored the Provost-endorsed, "[Vision for Sustainability in Academic Endeavors at Mason](#)" and created Mason's "[Green Leaf](#)" designation for sustainability-related courses and programs which now boasts 24 programs and 136 courses. Mason joined the [United Nations Global Compact](#) in 2012 after Dr. Dann recommended to senior leadership that the institution integrate sustainable and socially responsible policies throughout its operations. And that's not all.

Dr. Dann's consistent support of sustainability at Mason and his contributions to its second AASHE STARS report helped Mason earn a "[Gold](#)" rating in 2014, the first school in Virginia to do so. And Dr. Dann was a key contributor to Mason's AASHE STARS report in 2017 when it earned its second "[Gold](#)" rating. Additionally, Mason participated in the creation of, and [joined](#), the [United Nation's Global Coalition](#) in 2019 because of Dr. Dann's consistent emphasis that the [UN's Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) must be an integral part of the university's operation. As the Coordinator for Sustainability Initiatives with the Office of the Provost, a role he has held for more than four years, he continues to integrate sustainability across the university's curriculum.

It is evident that Dr. Dann is a sustainability advocate and inspiration at the institutional level and the same is true at the interpersonal level; Dr. Dann is a committed instructor, mentor, and supportive colleague. Dr. Dann's classes are rich experiences full of profound insights and opportunities to practically apply theoretical knowledge and information. Dr. Dann does everything he can to ensure his students succeed by building strong relationships rooted in mutual respect – he takes the time to learn about each of his students personally while also exploring their future career and academic aspirations. Dr. Dann is a constant resource for career advice and guidance, mentors students as they complete complex and challenging research, and helps students publish their research in competitive journals. As a demonstration of Dr. Dann's commitment to education, it is important to note that, with a grant from the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) (NOAA) and in partnership with researchers from Mason's [Potomac Environmental Research and Education Center](#) (PEREC), he founded the [Bay Watershed Education and Training Program \(BWET\)](#) in 2009; this program provides environmental stewardship field experiences for Northern Virginia secondary school students, with more than 100,000 expected to complete the program by 2020. In 2009, Dr. Dann, who served as the Associate Director of PEREC from 2008-2018, [said](#), "As young people explore the watershed beyond their classrooms and practice how to care for its natural wonders, their science education becomes more personally relevant and their interest in becoming environmental stewards grows."



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Additionally, Dr. Dann supports students' co-curricular learning. In the fall of 2019, he mentored students and helped them organize the ['Fridays for Future' Climate Rally](#) that resulted in Mason's senior leadership instructing the Mason Sustainability Council (a council Dr. Dann urged Mason's senior leadership to create) to draft the institution's first-ever Strategic Plan for Sustainability and to update the Climate Action Plan (CAP). He also serves as the Faculty Advisor for Alpha Kappa Chi (AKX) which is a gender-inclusive, environmentally-focused fraternity. In addition, Dr. Dann served as one of the Faculty Advisors for the [Virginia Environmental Justice Summit, an event completely organized by students](#), which hosted the first event of its kind in March 2020.

To further emphasize Dr. Dann's focus on impactful learning, it is important to highlight that his spring 2020 class, "Sustainability Planning for Communities," won a [Social Action and Integrative Learning \(SAIL\) Seeds of Change Award for Outstanding Partnership/Collaboration/Project](#). This class brought together undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff (including the [Office of Sustainability](#)) and created key documents, one of which is a draft Strategic Plan for Sustainability, that lead Mason towards a sustainable future.

Throughout his career, Dr. Dann has remained a committed advocate for sustainability education and has consistently leveraged his expertise, skills, and knowledge to create beneficial impacts for higher education, people, and the environment. Dr. Dann's journey is made even more remarkable by the fact that his focus has always been on collaboration and community; his ability to bring people together is a defining marker of his career.

Dr. Dann is far too humble and far too kind to seek this type of recognition so please consider this nomination from people who wish to recognize, support, and sustain his work. His experience clearly demonstrates that he is an outstanding sustainability leader, both as an academician and as a practitioner, whose contributions to sustainability in higher education continue to drive positive change for people and the planet.

Sincerely,

George Mason University's Office of Sustainability

Greg Farley – Director of University Sustainability

Ben Auger – Sustainability Program Manager, Education and Outreach

Sarah D'Alexander – Sustainability Program Manager, Patriot Green Fund

Donielle Nolan – Sustainability Program Manager, Greenhouse & Gardens

Amber Saxton – Sustainability Program Manager, Campus Efficiencies