



SPACE COLLABORATIVE
George Mason University®



George Mason Space Day 2026

EXPLORING OUR GALAXY AND BEYOND

Saturday, September 26 • 1 to 5 p.m.
Johnson Center, Dewberry Hall, Fairfax, VA

**Pre-registered check-in and on-site
registration opens at 12:30 p.m.**

Event Schedule:
science.gmu.edu/MasonSpaceDay

A joint partnership with the College of Science, College of Engineering and Computing,
the Schar School of Policy and Government, and Costello College of Business.



George Mason Space Day • September 26, 2026

Johnson Center, Dewberry Hall

- 12:30 p.m. **Doors open for Opening Remarks, Astronaut Keynote**
(Seats are on a first-come, first-served basis.) Please be seated in Dewberry Hall by 1 p.m.
- 1 p.m. **Opening:** **Gabriele Belle**, Associate Professor, Physics and Astronomy
The Honorable Catherine S. Read, City of Fairfax Mayor
Laura Lautz, Senior Associate Dean for Strategic Initiatives, Innovation, and College Affairs, College of Science
- 1:20 p.m. **Keynote: General Nick Hague, Assistant Deputy Chief of Space Operations for Operations, United States Space Force**
A meet and greet will take place in the Gold room immediately following General Nick Hague's talk. Exit the right side of Dewberry Hall where a queue will form for all interested in photos with the astronaut.

2:10 p.m. **Break**

Dewberry Hall "Mission and Engineering" Talks

- 2:35 p.m. **Keynote and Q&A:**
Dominic Benford, Program Scientist, NASA
- 2:45 p.m. **Steve Dam**, President and Founder of the Systems and Proposal Engineering Company (SPEC Innovations)
- 3 p.m. **Michael Summers**, Professor, Physics and Astronomy, College of Science
- 3:15 p.m. **Colleen Kardasz**, Director, Fairfax City Economic Development and CEO of the Fairfax City Economic Development Authority
- 3:30 p.m. **Break**
- 3:35 p.m. **Engineering panel: Engineering and Space**
Moderated by: **Phillip M. Cunio**, Professor of Practice, Department of Mechanical Engineering at George Mason University.
- Guiping Hu**, Chair and Professor, Department of Systems Engineering and Operations Research at George Mason University.
- Piotr Pachowicz**, Associate Professor, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, George Mason University
- George Rankin**, Aerospace Engineer, industry leader in space systems and mission operations, and an adjunct professor at George Mason University.

4:15 p.m. **Break** *(After the 5-minute break, please meet in Dewberry Hall for the closing panel discussion and raffle.)*

- 4:20 p.m. **George Mason Space Collaborative panel:**
Moderated by: **Leslie Frieden**, Associate Director, Associate Director for Research Development, Office of Research Innovation and Economic Impact (ORIEI)
JK Aier, Senior Associate Dean, Academic Affairs and Global Engagement, and Associate Professor, Department of Academic Affairs and Global Engagement
Anamaria Berea, Associate Professor, Department of Computational and Data Sciences, George Mason University
Hina Kazmi, Adjunct Faculty, Schar School of Policy and Government, George Mason University
Leigh McCue, Chair and Professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering, George Mason University
Ferah Munshi, Associate Professor, Department of Physics and Astronomy, George Mason University
Anne Osterman, Dean of Libraries and University Librarian, George Mason University
Laura L. Sauls, Assistant Professor, Global Affairs Program, George Mason University

4:50 p.m. **Raffle**

6 p.m. **Screening of *Cosmic Dawn*, Johnson Center Cinema**

Johnson Center Cinema "Science and Policy" Talks

- 2:15 p.m. **Keynote and Q&A:**
Keiichi Wada, Director, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) Washington D.C. Office
- 2:45 p.m. **Eileen Kragie**, Founder, Dark Sky Friends
Tom Reinert, Board Member and Former President, DarkSky International
- 3:00 p.m. **Samantha Thompson**, Astronomy Curator, Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum
- 3:15 p.m. **Break**
- 3:25 p.m. **Policy panel: Examining the Economics, Governance, and Ethics of Commercial Space Exploration**

Moderated by: **Hina Kazmi**, Adjunct Faculty, Schar School of Policy and Government, George Mason University
- Mike French**, Boston Consulting Group, Former NASA Chief of Staff
- Zack Hester**, Head of Novaspace U.S. Office
- Zachary Pirtle**, Deputy Director, Consortium for Science, Policy, and Outcomes, Arizona State University

Kid Space Zone Activities • The Bistro

Inflatable Planetarium | Kids Space Zone, The Bistro ***Shows will start every 20 minutes and last 15 minutes.***

Come relax in our planetarium and view the night sky as nature intended without all those pesky city lights. *This show is not suggested for guests with sensitivity to flashing lights, dark environments, or enclosed spaces.*

Down, Down, and Away

See how parachutes protect the astronauts as they journey back to Earth.

Spread Your Wings

Design and create your own paper airplanes to see whose can fly the furthest.

Cosmic Secrets

Learn how astronomers determine what something is made of by looking at specific colors of light.

Round and Round You Go

Experience the method that engineers use to control the direction a satellite is pointing.

Create Your Own Constellation

Enjoy drawing and coloring a variety of space scenes including creating your own constellation.

Tours and Activities

George Mason Observatory Tours

Meet in front of the Bistro

Tours start every 20 minutes and last 25 minutes.

Radio Dish Tours

Meet in front of the Bistro

by the George Mason Radio Station

Tours start every 40 minutes and last 30 minutes.

Sun viewing with telescope

Johnson Center, Outside South Plaza

All tours and shows have a limited number of timed tickets. They fill up quickly so plan your day accordingly.

Where to Eat?

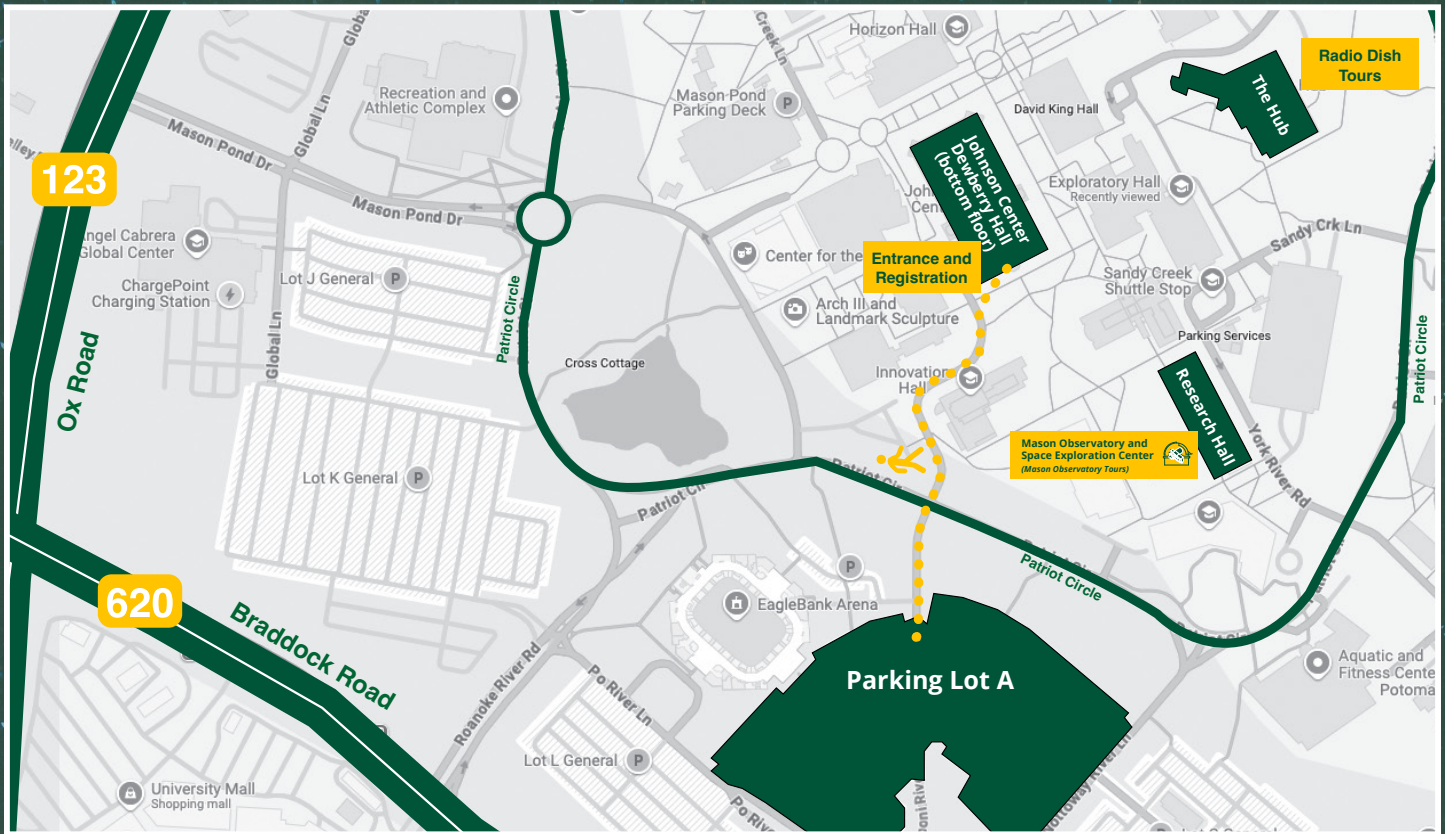
During the event, food will be available for purchase at several Johnson Center eateries (*first floor*).

Vendors and Participating Organizations

Analemma Society
Because Science
George Mason College of Science
Dark Sky Friends
DarkSky International
George Mason Costello College of Business
George Mason Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering
George Mason Department of Engineering and Computing
George Mason J. Shukla Department of Atmospheric, Oceanic and Earth Sciences
George Mason Department of Physics and Astronomy
George Mason Schar School of Policy and Government

George Mason Observatory
George Mason Chemistry Club
Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA)
High Power Rocket Club
NASA
Northern Virginia Astronomy Club (NOVAC)
Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum
SPEC Innovations
U.S. Space Force

Event Map & Parking



All minors MUST be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian at all times.



Share your feedback on George Mason Space Day 2026

Whether you attended today's event, volunteered your time, were a community or university partner, or supported our event at any level, please let us know what you enjoyed and what we can improve. **Share your feedback by Friday, October 2, to be eligible to win a space day prize pack.**

Thank you for joining us. See you next year for the Sixth Annual George Mason Space Day on **Saturday, September 18, 2027.**

A special thank you to:

Gabriele Belle (chair), Rob Parks, Tracy Mason, Phillip Cunio, S Falgiano, Natasha Gilliam, Hina Kazmi, Ferah Munshi, Laura Powers, Steven Robeson

Department of Physics and Astronomy, Welcome to Mason, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Paul So, Affiliate Faculty, Physics and Astronomy, George Mason University, Mason Space Exploration Center (MSEC), George Mason Space Collaborative