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Dear Mason Communication Community,

Please join us with hope and determination to meet the challenges our current world brings to communication professionals. In this issue, you can read about the Annual Fall Communication Industry Forum (hosted by the Insight Committee, our external advisory board) that each year brings together alumni, faculty, and industry professionals to mentor our students as they navigate communication career entry in this challenging era. If you would like to be involved in the Forum, please do not hesitate to contact us. We always need your involvement as panelists, speakers, or mentors.

Mason’s Department of Communication continues to thrive, with exciting courses, active student organizations, and faculty who bring excellence in research and practice.

As always, we would like to have a closer relationship with you, our majors and alumni. Please keep us updated on your professional activities and personal milestones. We are working to build a more robust Department of Communication alumni network, with career mentoring events and social gatherings. Soon, we hope to recruit a slate of Communication Alumni Society officers to help with these plans. Please let us know if you are interested.

You can use this link to join the Mason Communication Alumni Society, provide us with updates, and volunteer for participation in events: https://gmuchss.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8Dgqa2AikpTofAh. Stay tuned for information on upcoming events and gatherings! Finally, please don’t forget to:

Like our Communication Alumni Facebook page: Mason Communication Alumni Society https://www.facebook.com/pages/Mason-Communication-Alumni-Society/393472614154905

Like our Communication Department Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/gmucommadvising

Follow us on Twitter @MasonCommDept and our new Instagram page @masoncomm

Until next time, many best wishes to you and yours!

Sincerely,

Dr. Anne Nicotera
Czarniak repeated this advice many times at the October event in Dewberry Hall on the Fairfax Campus, saying that if students took one thing away from her speech, that should be it.

“The biggest thing in getting a job is to get your foot in the door,” Czarniak said. “It is important to make a contact in the industry that you want to be in and reach out to them, and they will be very willing to answer your questions. If you treat people well and work hard, you can do anything, and things will go your way.”

Czarniak’s appearance as keynote speaker was part of the annual forum presented by the Insight Committee, the Department of Communication’s board of external advisors. The annual forum offers discussion and professional advice to communication students and any other Mason students with a career interest in communication. At October’s event, nearly 20 communication professionals and Mason alumni led mentoring sessions with students in order to provide advice on workplace skills and to better prepare them for future jobs.

“There are many ways that the Communication Forum benefits students,” Communication professor Carl Botan said. “The obvious way is the mentoring opportunities that are offered and that people get to spend time around tables with senior industry members. However, in addition to getting direct information about jobs and opportunities, students may come away from the event with an increased sense of confidence in their career choices.”

Support Your Department of Communication

To contribute online, visit communication.gmu.edu and click on the word “Give” in the top right corner. You can also make check donations payable to “George Mason University Foundation, Inc.” You can indicate “Communication Department” in the memo line or the name of the fund you would like to support. If you have any questions about donating to the department, please contact Mark Hall, CHSS Assistant Director of Development, at mhall19@gmu.edu.
RODGER SMITH: Professor Rodger Smith, a Communication faculty member and faculty advisor for the WGMU radio station, has been featured in Mason Spirit. The article, written by Mason student Lindsay Bernhards, describes how Professor Smith became interested in radio and how he ended up as a professor at Mason. "While still in high school, Rodger Smith already had his sights set on radio. 'Some kids say they want to be a doctor or a lawyer or a businessman when they grow up,' he says. 'I wanted to work in radio.'" Today, Smith brings his years of passion for radio and communication to Mason students. To read the article and learn more about Mason faculty and alumni, please click here. https://spirit.gmu.edu/2018/10/meet-the-mason-nation-rodger-smith/?fbclid=IwAR1sTK4dakBPWaSmASPCBMZl-gREcBMSrtA1n_IDYaEs_FijVhgdP-u52BA

STAR MUIR: Last year, Dr. Star Muir served as the First Vice-President of the National Communication Association. As the Vice-President, Muir helped plan the 2018 convention, held last November in Salt Lake City, Utah. In the lead up to the 2018 convention, among other responsibilities, Star created the theme (“Communication at Play”), gathered a team of programming coordinators, scheduled a series of panels, organized an opening role-playing session with Protagoras, Abraham Lincoln, Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Marshall McLuhan to discuss “What makes a nation great?”, and organized a welcoming reception with street performers (jugglers, magicians, caricaturists) and a meme quiz. Star was assisted in these efforts by Farah Latif, a graduate student in the Communication program. Professor Muir is now the President of the National Communication Association. As President of NCA he will guide the association and the Executive Committee in their meetings and deliberations during 2019. By: Star Muir

The 105th Annual National Communication Association Convention (NCA) will be held in Baltimore during November 2019, under the theme “Communication for Survival.”

As noted, the theme of the 2018 convention was called “Communication at Play”. For more information about NCA, the 2018 convention, and Dr. Muir’s work as the NCA First Vice President, please see this link: https://www.natcom.org/nca-104th-annual-convention-communication-play.
NEW: CHARM RESEARCH LAB

Dr. Sojung Kim directs the Communication, Health, and Relational Media (CHARM) Lab, where she conducts research on strategic message design and evaluation with eye tracking technology. So far, she has launched two eye tracking experiments both independently and in collaboration with colleagues at Mason. As an unobtrusive and direct measure of visual attention, cognitive processing, and working memory, eye tracking technology can complement subjective self-reported measures by providing more accuracy and precision in social science research. A recent review of eye tracking research in communication, however, revealed that most eye tracking studies were employed in advertising, opening room for further utilization of the technology in other fields such as health and climate change communication. The first study aimed to explore individuals' visual attention and information processing of six different campaign posters: these posters were created and developed by the Center for Climate Change Communication (4C) at Mason to raise awareness on negative impacts of climate change on public health outcomes. Results from the first study will be shared at the 2019 DC Health Communication Conference. The second study is in progress now and investigates if the public can identify misinformation on social media such as Twitter and if so, how they process the misinformation to reduce or reinforce their beliefs about a health topic.

NEED HELP WITH YOUR COMMUNICATION SKILLS?

by Andie Malterud

The new Communication Center opened during the fall 2018 semester for COMM 100 and 101 students. The Communication Center offers a variety of services to students, including practicing an individual speech or group presentation, building interviewing and interpersonal skills, and providing help with researching, outlining, and more. The Communication Center is located in the One Button Studio in Mason’s Gateway Library and offers high-quality video recording in order to help students see where they can improve and where they are already succeeding. The Communication Center is run by trained undergraduate student coaches who have excelled in either COMM 100 or 101. In fact, many coaches compete for the Mason Forensics team. The Communication Center is modeled from current research that speaks to the success of these types of centers in other Universities across the country.
MARCELLA ROBERTSON, BA 2011

What work are you doing now?
I’m currently working as a reporter in Washington, D.C. at WUSA9. I’ve been there for just a short time, but have been reporting for about 5 years. During that time I’ve had stops as a reporter in Charlottesville and Norfolk, VA.

What do you like about it?
I love that every day in this business is different. You never know what you’re going to cover or what interesting people you will meet. You really have the power to share peoples’ stories and that can be an amazing feeling. So often reporters find themselves as being the voice for people who don’t necessarily have one.

How did your degree in the college prepare you to do this work?
My Comm degree allowed me to get a good idea of what the journalism industry was all about. I was exposed to shooting video, editing and interviewing long before I ever got my first job at a news station. There are so many opportunities at Mason for students to take advantage of. The course that still stands out to me today is the Broadcast Writing class.

What advice would you give current students about developing their careers?
The best advice I can give is to network. Networking is such a huge of this industry because you never know when someone can put you in touch with the right person. Don’t be afraid to reach out to someone in the field that you admire, or reach out to someone to ask for help to guide you in the right direction.

JESSICA GARON, BA 2008, MA 2011

What work are you doing now?
I manage several of the association’s communication vehicles including a weekly newsletter, bimonthly magazine, and social media accounts.

What do you like about it?
Since I am responsible for reviewing and editing a vast array of documents created by leaders and experts in our field, I get to learn the ins and outs of health and human services – something that was brand new to me when I was first hired. I’ve always wanted to have a career that contributes to making our world a better place, and working to improve and transform the delivery of health and human services does just that. It’s also an interesting and rewarding challenge helping the general population understand how health and human services touch everyone’s lives by contributing to stronger, healthier communities that we all live, work, and play in.

How did your degree in the college prepare you to do this work?
Choosing how, when, and where we communicate our messages plays a vital role in advancing the association’s mission and Mason’s communication degrees equipped me with the skills and confidence necessary to make these decisions. One of the hot topics in our office right now is framing (i.e., changing the conversation on social issues) and I love it because I can look back to 2010 when I was writing a paper in my strategic communication course about the science of framing – a true testament to communication skills standing the test of time!

What advice would you give current students about developing their careers?
Don’t lose sight of the importance of two simple things: a positive attitude and attention to detail. As time passes and stress builds, people can be quick to lose both. Strive to always embrace these qualities and you are sure to stand out amongst the crowd!
SUZIE CARMACK, Ph.D. 2014

While completing her PhD in Strategic and Health Communication at George Mason University in April 2014, Dr. Suzie Carmack promoted health and well-being at local, national and international levels.

As Dr. Carmack said, “although I came to Mason with 20 years of professional experience in consulting and college teaching, my doctoral studies in communication afforded me the opportunity to really take my career to the next level, and to become a translational scholar. The opportunities to research theory, best practice and evidence-based solutions have all greatly influenced the ways that I tackle any consulting project. I greatly enjoy the process of bringing the findings of the latest scholarship into user-based campaign and project design. Mason taught me how to do that, and has also challenged me to bring lessons learned from strategic health campaign design back into scholarship. I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to study at Mason as a funded scholar.”

While at Mason, Suzie served as a research assistant to Dr. Gary Kreps and taught courses in the areas of interpersonal and health communication. She also taught sport communication for the School of Health Recreation and Tourism, and conducted an audit of well-being amongst Mason faculty staff and students with funding support from the Center for the Advancement of Well-Being.

Continue reading: https://communication.gmu.edu/programs/la-phd-com/meet-an-alum/438

Interested in having a featured alumni profile?

If you would like to be featured as an alumni on our main website, alumni newsletter, or on Department of Communication social media accounts, please email the Undergraduate Program Coordinator, Megan Edmondson at medmond3@gmu.edu for more information.

NCA 2018 AWARDS:

Congratulations to our 2018 COMM Alumni winners at the annual NCA conference

Pictured: GMU Alumna Gina Castle Bell, winning the NCA Service Award. Also pictured, Mark Hopson (GMU and Mark Orbe (WMU)

Pictured: GMU Alumni Deion Hawkins, winning the Outstanding Dissertation Award, via the African American Communication and Culture Division at NCA. Also pictured, Shardé Davis

Pictured: GMU Alumna Camella Rising, winning the Outstanding Book Award under the Communication and Aging Division.
Italian Media, Society, and Culture in Milan with Dr. Catherine Wright

The Milan Study Abroad month-long program will be offered for the twelfth consecutive year in June 2019. This study abroad program gives undergraduate students from all majors and members of the general public the opportunity to learn more about Italy and its rich history and people through lectures and excursions. Dr. Catherine Wright, who created and has led this trip since 2008, said, “Anyone who wants to learn more about Italy through its film, fashion, media, food, history, its art, politics and culture should absolutely plan to attend! I’d love to have them come with me this summer!”

Italian professors, who are experts in their field, have warmly welcomed participants for 11 years and thoroughly enjoy sharing what they know! All professors are fluent in English and have traveled the world, including the U.S. They love learning more about who we are, what we are studying, and what we are learning in Italy. Wright says it’s a testament to the quality of Mason students that these professors continue to work with our students each summer.

To enhance the lectures, participants engage in numerous weekly excursions. Participants are guided by English-speaking experts in their field while they learn about the historic city of Turin and the Roman city of Pavia. They learn about the Black Plague and its importance not only to Milan, but to the world as we know it today. There is a special visit to see Leonardo daVinci’s The Last Supper, with a guide who knows it intricately.

For Wright, there is one day that students especially love—the day-long personal cooking lesson overlooking Lake Como with Chef Moreno! There, participants learn to cook Italian dishes such as gnocchi and pasta and learn how to make tomato sauce from scratch. Wright said “This one day changes the way people think about the Italian food we’ve eaten in the US and is a guaranteed favorite.”

If you are a current Mason student, or even an alum, Dr. Wright would love you to come on this trip!! For more information, please email Dr. Wright at cwright5@gmu.edu, and to apply, please visit the Global Education Office (GEO) website: studyabroad.gmu.edu. (Click on the Italian Media, Society, and Culture in Milan link.)
During January 2019, 17 students arrived in Paris to take classes in the morning and embark on field trips and ethnography observations in the afternoon. Their weekends were free to explore French museums and cafes. In groups, students explored Paris and made life-long friendships as they experienced culture shock together. In addition, individual students observed French communication behavior for their ethnographies at the National Mitterrand Library, at the artists square at Montmartre, or another site of their own choice. The highlight of the program was a visit to a Parisian high school, Lycee Sophie Germain, in the heart of Paris in the Marais Arrondissement. During this visit, Mason students were placed with small groups of French students to engage in conversations about cultural similarities and differences. These conversations served as cultural bridges and helped Mason students learn about France through the perspective of their French "informants."

This program has grown through word of mouth among communication majors who participated in the past, and also is growing among other majors such as Sociology, Global Affairs, Social Work, and Health Administration, Management—and even Bioengineering! Participants have expressed how intercultural communication concepts can come alive through experiential learning, and that this trip was an experience that was applicable to their diverse majors and career goals. Some have saved for a year or more to embark on this trip, and others received scholarships through the Global Education Office. Many have expressed how this program has fulfilled their expectations and learning goals, and several students are planning for more study abroad experiences in the future.

Contact Dr. Esther Yook eyook2@gmu.edu for more information.
The 2019 Global Public Relations Study Abroad Program in London
Lessons from London: Takeaways from #UKPR19

by: Angelique Arintok

This winter, 17 George Mason University students embarked on a journey to London with Professor Suzanne Lowery Mims. The study abroad program, Global Public Relations in London, takes students on a deep dive into the professional communication industry for a two-week period.

Most of class time was spent visiting public relations (PR) agencies like Ketchum UK, Stripe Communications, H+K Strategies and more—all with London offices. Our time was also split with other companies like Disney, ASOS, and The Daily Telegraph.

As a media production concentration student, I specifically went into this program wanting to learn more about the professional communication side of public relations. Among these visits and the experience of speaking to professionals in the London communication industry, I learned a lot more than I expected. Here are some common trends I noticed from the class visits. Most especially, these points were what shocked me the most about #UKPR19.

**Critical face time with big-time industry leaders:** Prior to signing onto the program, I knew that majority of the time would be spent visiting London agencies and companies. However, getting the chance to sit down and have conversations with high-profile professionals in the industry was always done in such an intimate and welcoming manner. Among some key presenters in the program, three people specifically inspired me to pave my own path in professional communication. Rachel Bremer (ASOS) leads in the fashion global communication industry, Jo-ann Robertson (Ketchum UK) pioneers as one of the few female CEOs in the UK, and Matt Grossman (Disney) holds the Disney narrative and brand strong with the EMEA audience. Plus, getting the chance to ask them questions first-hand is something you can’t do anywhere else.

**The re-emphasis of empathy:** In a world that often seems so negative, especially with the hatred and bullying projected on social media, we can’t forget to have empathy for others. I enjoyed hearing this life aspect re-emphasized at multiple visits, especially at companies like Hill+Knowlton and the talk from chartered PR professional Eva Maclaine. Perhaps this is self-explanatory, but I’ve also learned that empathy for both your clients and their target audience is critical for telling a compelling and striking narrative.
Your network is your net worth: When our visit to the US embassy fell through due to the government shutdown, Professor Mims quickly contacted her colleague David Gallagher, who was able to arrange two more afternoon visits for the class. Because of that, #UKPR19 came out on top for the most company visits in the program’s history. David Gallagher pulled some strings and got us in touch with Portland Communications and Stripe Communications. That day showed me first-hand exactly how valuable connections and networking can be. Building a network, kept up in person or even on social media platforms like Twitter and LinkedIn, can be incredibly helpful for the post-graduation job hunt and for the rest of your career.

What’s actually key in PR: Most class visits for #UKPR19 were at agencies across a wide range of small, mid-size, and large teams. Although the agencies’ specialties differed, a common theme I gathered from their advice was to tell a narrative which speaks to a sense of service and purpose. One of the fundamentals of PR, corporate social responsibility (CSR), is an important aspect to portraying company morals and social contributions. During this trip, I've learned that CSR and corporate messaging have blurred together now more than ever. The rising age of technology is increasing companies’ public visibility, and thus their accountability.

A profession in PR doesn’t always mean a 100% background in PR: The U.S. and its education system, especially at the collegiate level, has such a strong emphasis on focused studies and a career path toward that subject. Skills in PR and the communication field have a lot of overlap with other industries, but some of the most accomplished people at our visits did not always get their “start” in PR. It was surprising to hear about Marshall Manson’s (Brunswick) background in U.S. Republican campaigns and politics, as well as our ASOS tour guide Jonathan Kipp’s major in Psychology during his university studies. Overall, bringing a sense of diversity to PR—in aspects of background, race, gender, etc.—brings more creativity, ideas, and thought to the table.

These past two weeks have taught me a lot about the public relations industry. But, more importantly, I’ve learned how to be a professional communicator in my own way. I’ve learned to pick and choose the pieces of wisdom that I can implement now and later in my career path. The lessons above are some of my largest and most surprising takeaways.
SARA MATHIS, Ph.D.
Term Assistant Professor

Dr. Sara Mathis is the Introductory Course Coordinator and Term Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication. This is her first year at George Mason University. Sara holds a B.S. in Speech Communication Education from Illinois State University, an MA in Communication from the University of New Mexico, and a PhD from University of Utah. Prior to coming to GMU, Sara served as the Assistant Basic Course Director at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas. Her work there included developing new curriculum for Comm 100 (Public Speaking), Comm 102 (Interpersonal Communication), and Comm 104 (Critical Thinking & Public Argument).

Sara's research interests include: basic course pedagogy, graduate teacher assistant training, curriculum development, assessment, and examination of the role of identity in the experience of graduate teaching assistants and undergraduate students, with an emphasis on intersections of gender and race.

KATE SWEENEY, M.S.
Term Assistant Professor

Kate Sweeney is the new Journalism Program Coordinator in the Department of Communication. She holds an M.S. in Science Journalism from Boston University, and a B.A. in Anthropology from Colorado College. Prior to joining George Mason University in 2018, Kate taught film and journalism courses at Asbury University and communication courses at the University of Kentucky.

Almost 20 years ago, Kate launched her professional career as a nonfiction media producer. As an Associate Producer at National Geographic Television & Film, she earned multiple producing credits for documentary projects that explored everything from groundbreaking scientific discoveries to life on the front lines of conflict. Later, Kate served as the Supervising Producer on the creative team that launched Smithsonian Networks, a joint venture between CBS/Showtime and the Smithsonian Institution. She was also the Executive Producer for TPI, an international distributor of fiction and nonfiction films. Kate’s productions have taken her from Bangkok to Burbank and aired all over the world on networks including History, MSNBC, Al Jazeera, Showtime, National Geographic, and Smithsonian Channel.
Star Muir received the 2018 David J. King Award. This award honors significant, long-term contributions to the university’s educational excellence, and is named for Dr. David J. King, who served as Mason’s Vice President for Academic Affairs from 1982 until his retirement in 1988. Dr. King is acclaimed for advancing the teaching experience at Mason, a quality embodied in this award.

Congratulations, Dr. Muir!

David J. Miller, Director of the Media Production and Criticism concentration in the Department of Communication, was recognized as an Online Teaching Excellence Teacher of Distinction. Professor Miller has also been honored and one of the winners of the 2018 Blackboard Catalyst Award for furthering flexible and experimental learning for his work with COMM 380 Media Criticism.

Congratulations Professor Miller! Read more here: https://www2.gmu.edu/news/513171

Dr. Anne M. Nicotera was the recipient of the National States Advisory Council Service to the State Award. She was presented this award at the 2018 National Communication Association (NCA) conference. She was nominated for this award for her work with the Virginia Association of Communication Arts and Sciences (VACAS) at George Mason University.

Two years ago, when the organization was losing support and membership, Susan Tomasovic approached Dr. Nicotera asking to discuss the dilemma. They discussed several possibilities of the reorganization and salvation of VACAS and ultimately it was decided that the Department of Communication would help host it. Without reservation, Dr. Nicotera took the “I/we can do” approach. She spoke with the GMU Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. The logistics and reorganization was on the way and the state organization moved forward.

Because of Dr. Nicotera’s efforts working with the CHSS dean, VACAS, and the Communication faculty, she encouraged the whole department to become actively involved. Dr. Nicotera made this happen and these individuals gave their time to assist with the smooth operation of VACAS while working at GMU.

Congratulations Dr. Nicotera!
MASON'S CHARACTER ASSASSINATION AND REPUTATION POLITICS (CARP) RESEARCH LAB
HOSTS ITS SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

George Mason University’s Character Assassination and Reputation Politics (CARP) Research Lab will host its second international conference “Character Assassination and Populism: Challenges and Responses” on March 15-17, 2019.

One primary characteristic of today’s global society is the growing public distrust in many traditional authorities. In the context of institutional legitimacy crisis, there is a great demand for new voices to trust. These changes provide opportunities for populists and charismatic opinion leaders of all kinds to promote their agendas and influence public opinion. Populist politicians often become primary newsmakers for clickbait content in the media that proliferates personal opinions, falsehoods, and unwarranted ad hominem attacks. Belligerent rhetoric also normalizes the culture of incivility which has negative consequences for civil debate in a well-functioning democracy. The keynote address and official sessions take place at 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. on Saturday, March 16, 2019 and Sunday, March 17, 2019 in Founder’s Hall at Mason’s Arlington, Virginia Campus.

For more information please contact Sergei Salmoilenko (ssamoyle@gmu.edu)

2019 COMMUNICATION CAREER FAIR

The annual Communication Career Fair will be held on March 19, 2019 at the Fairfax main campus. Every year, the Department joins with students from the Mason PRSSA hold a Career Fair in the Spring semester that invites companies and organization looking for students for communication specific positions. Recent graduates are also welcome to attend the COMM Career Fair if they would like to network and explore communication related opportunities. Please reach out to Megan Edmondson (medmond3@gmu.edu) or our PRSSA advisor Christina Wenks (cwenks@gmu.edu) if you are interested in having your company attend the COMM Career Fair in March 2019. It is free for both employers and students! For more information, visit https://communication.gmu.edu/Events/7346

ALUMNI NEWS

If you have any happy or good news about yourself that you would like to share with us and your fellow Mason Communication Alumni (this may include and not limited to; weddings, engagements, new babies, new jobs, awards, etc.) then please email cdprint@gmu.edu! We would love to hear about it and share your story on the Alumni Newsletter!
Innovative 2019 D.C. Health Communication Conference

The Department of Communication at George Mason University announces the innovative 2019 D.C. Health Communication Conference, “International and Global Health Communication Research,” April 25–27, 2019 at the Hyatt Regency Fairfax at Fair Lakes. The preconference on Thursday April 25th will focus on the theme, “Grant Writing 101: Boot Camp with NIH” with a variety of invited speakers and interactive panel discussions.

Submission deadline for the conference has passed and notifications of acceptance will be going out in the coming weeks.

Registration for the conference will also be open by the start of February. We look forward to seeing you in April.

Scholars, undergraduate students, and graduate students are invited to submit research (either completed or in progress) for presentation at the VACAS conference March 29-30th at Radford University in Radford, Virginia. Submission deadline is February 15. The 2019 conference, “Redrawing Boundaries,” invites individual and group papers, panels, posters, and video presentations that challenge existing social boundaries and explore new borders by connecting research and theory to Communication practice. We welcome proposals that seek to answer questions such as the following: How can we create new boundaries that include greater inclusivity, participation, and engagement? In what ways can we collaborate to broaden the mindset of existing boundaries? In this time of political and social upheaval, how can we, as practitioners, encourage and motivate others to engage in positive social change? For complete submission details and more information, please visit www.radford.edu/vacas.

Links and Information:

Faculty Directory: http://communication.gmu.edu/people/full_time_faculty
COMM Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/gmucommadvising?ref=hl
COMM Alumni Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/pages/Mason-Communication-Alumni-Society/393472614154905?ref=hl
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Join the Society/Update us: email medmond3@gmu.edu