

COMM CONNECTION

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

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THIS IS

MASON COMM

COLLABORATE. CREATE. COMMUNICATE.

CONGRATS COMM 2020 GRADUATES

The world was not prepared for the COVID-19 Pandemic that ultimately brought society to a screeching halt in early March 2020. Life as we all knew it has, for now, changed completely, especially for students all over the country planning to graduate in spring. For our department, many of our events were cancelled, classes resumed virtually forcing students to complete their final semester from home and online. To all of our COMM graduates, congratulations! Take a moment, in these stressful times, to reflect on your wisdom in choosing a major in Communication. In times like this, what are we relying on to push through and thrive? Communication.

Communication is powerful and empowering. The need for strong communication and skilled communicators is more vital now than we could have imagined. Where is communication in our current turbulent and uncertain world? It is in the messages we share with our loved ones near and far. Interpersonal communication is pervasive when we are apart and when we are concerned. We have found creative ways to share our art, our teaching abilities, our concern for our neighbors and our own self-care. Communication is a cornerstone for our media and journalistic outlets to keep us informed, especially as misinformation, disinformation, and conflicting opinions are so rampant. We are analyzing the political communication between government agencies and constituents. Organizations and public relations specialists are communicating to their employees and consumers how we will work through these challenges this together.

Companies are communicating how they will keep essential workers and customers safe. Health communication is connecting us to the issues at hand and what we are doing to find better treatment. Our local, state, federal, and global leaders are using the skills that you have chosen as your major in an effort to inform the world during a global pandemic and support us in our struggle to move through it. You are the next group of communication professionals that will approach our ever-changing workforce and forever-altered lives. Your communication prowess is needed now more than ever.

CONGRATULATIONS 2020 MASON COMM GRADUATES!



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WELCOME TO FALL 2020: GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Mason Communication Community,

Greetings! I hope that you are reading this from a place of wellness and peace in these tumultuous times. As I pondered the best way to write this opening letter for our Fall 2020 newsletter, COVID-Bingo swirled through my head -- All those words that have become at once overused and ever-appropriate: unprecedented, resilient, historic, uncertain, and my personal (un)favorite: Pivot. I suspect that, like me, you would like to never hear these words spoken again. And yet, here we are. Working through unprecedented problems in this historic season of uncertainty that tests our resilience and forces us to pivot to new strategies at a moment's notice.

These are difficult times in higher education. It is best for our students to continue our academic programming so that their education proceeds uninterrupted. Yet, disruption is the order of the day, and many of our students, staff, and faculty have had their professional and personal lives thrown in to chaos. Yet, we have pulled together; our faculty, staff, and students have admirably risen to the occasion. Summer course enrollment boomed, including several students who secured and completed virtual internships!

Communication professionals are among the best in the world at remaining flexible and creative in times of crisis, and I am proud to say that my colleagues, our students, and our entire MasonCOMM community has risen to this occasion again and again since March. In their admirable responsiveness to the needs of Mason students, when our university administrators announced with two days' notice at the end of April that Fall registration would begin May 1, our inimitable faculty rose to the occasion and pivoted (yes, I said it) their plans for Fall courses to create synchronous online course sections. We held out hope (and held onto classroom reservations) that the public health situation would resolve sufficiently to allow face-to-face classes, but we knew this was a slim hope. Communication faculty spent the busiest summer ever taking online classes themselves to build their skills to offer our students a fully robust and rigorous set of Fall classes in a virtual environment. Our staff worked diligently to provide a stable virtual organizational environment and to prepare our office spaces for safe social distancing for those planning to work on campus. And so, we have "Zoomed" into the Fall semester with enthusiasm and excitement for our students and all that we can continue to accomplish in our new virtual environment. Through it all MasonCOMM has again and again, remained COMM and carried on.

I could not be prouder of our staff, faculty, and students for the way they have all responded to our current situation with good humor, hard work, and commitment to excellence. I salute all of them. I could not be prouder to be at the helm of MasonCOMM. This community never ceases to fill me with joy and admiration. The indelible Mason Spirit is truly embodied in MasonCOMM. We struggle, but we struggle together and we thrive.

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 Department Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/gmucommadvising?ref=hl> Follow us on Twitter @MasonCommDept, our Instagram page [masoncomm](https://www.instagram.com/masoncomm). Until next time, many best wishes to you and yours!

Sincerely,

Dr. Anne Nicotera



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<http://comm.gmu.edu>



DEPARTMENT RE-CAP

SPRING 2020

COMM Undergraduate and Graduate Awards

We've made it through the most challenging semester ever. Every Spring the Department of Communication holds an Awards Ceremony to celebrate some of the most notable achievements of our students and to honor their hard work and accomplishments. Since we can't do that this year, we've produced four tribute videos. Please join us in celebrating, not just the students and faculty featured in these videos, but all of our wonderful students and faculty. MasonCOMM is a community of dedicated, high-achieving, flexible, and compassionate people

who come together in our shared commitment for excellence in communication. MasonCOMM family, we salute you!

— Undergraduate Program Director: Dr. Cathy Wright

Undergraduate COMM Award Videos: Academic Achievement:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M44rcI7ZnsQ>

Special Achievement: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=533bZNe77Nw>

Journalism and PR: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TKy2t3aMDsMedia>:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5w4ugcNDtE>

Grad COMM Awards: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4ZvecOrN00>



Congratulations to the Spring/Summer Class of 2020!

We will miss you and hope for only success in your future endeavors and careers. If you would like to keep in contact with the Department of Communication, share and receive emails about student & alumni news, departmental news, upcoming events, etc. please join our COMM Alumni Society. All you need to do is to email the Undergraduate Program Coordinator, Megan Edmondson (medmond3@gmu.edu), to join.

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.

New Department of Communication LinkedIn!

Connect with us: Dept. of Communication, George Mason University

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/department-of-communication-george-mason-university/?viewAsMember=true>

STUDENT NEWS

PR & SM Blog, Mason COMM Students Target Fake News, Social Isolation, and Support for Front Line Health Workers in Social Media for Social Good Campaigns

(April 30, 2020) -- How does a PR and Social Media class manage to run a multi-faceted, team-based project amidst the last-minute transition to online teaching during the pandemic? "Sensitively and strategically," answers Professor Suzanne Lowery Mims. Her 30 students were expecting to dig into their social media campaign assignment after spring break. The issues had been chosen and teams established. The next step was for the groups to collaborate on the necessary research and develop a working plan, but the context of the pandemic called for major changes. "Agility is a requisite for anyone working in social media," Mims said. "Students immediately adapted their campaign proposals to the context of the pandemic." "Help our Heroes," was created to raise awareness and support for frontline health care workers. The #VAH2O campaign included original visual and video content across all platforms, raised over \$300, and was liked, shared and re-shared by Dove, Virginia Hospital Center, and a dozen of Mason clubs and organizations. "Originally, we wanted to focus on promoting greater civility and inclusivity among the Mason community. We saw helping Virginia's frontline health workers as an opportunity to really use social media for social good, so we quickly revamped our efforts," said senior Janae Dixon. Read more here: <https://communication.gmu.edu/articles/14435>



MORE STUDENT NEWS

COMM Alumni Profiles

Interested in learning what the Mason COMM Alum are up to since graduating? Want to help inform current students about what career paths they can take once they graduate? Submit a Mason COMM Alumni Profile! Email the Undergraduate Program Coordinator, Megan Edmondson (medmond3@gmu.edu), for more information. We want to thank COMM Alum Kelli Dent for sharing what she's up to since graduating!

Mason Communication Alumni Profile:
Savannah Norton

Year Graduated: 2016
Degree: Communication
Concentration: Media Production & Criticism
Job: Communications Intern
Company/Organization: K12, Inc.

What work are you doing now?

I am currently a Communications Intern at K12, Inc. I plan and write blog posts for their corporate blog, along with sharing news hits about K12 powered students and teachers to K12's social media websites. I am gaining great experience with writing, social media, and public relations.

What do you like about it?

I absolutely love to write. Everyday I get to interview students and teachers about their passions and education, and turn it into a story for others to read. I now have more than 30 published pieces to add to my writing portfolio. I am grateful for such an experience to further my corporate communications skills and writing experience.

How did your degree in the college prepare you to do this work?

I am grateful for my wonderful teachers, classes, and clubs I was involved with at George Mason University. The Office of Student Media was my second home. I wrote for Freshman Focus my Freshman year, was Lifestyle Editor for the student newspaper, Fourth Estate, for three years, and had amazing opportunities to go on field trips to news stations/publications with the Society of Professional Journalists organization on campus. A fellow GMU student also helped me get my first internship at FOX News in Washington, D.C. where I was able to get hands on experience in a newsroom. All of these opportunities and job experiences have given me the confidence and skills to get to where I am now and excel in my future career in the world of media!

What advice would you give current students about developing their careers?

My advice for students just starting out in their careers is to never miss an opportunity to better yourself. Say yes to new experiences, clubs, and classes that you might not normally participate in. Do as many internships throughout your college career as you can because you can never have enough experience on your resume.

The Department of Communication is Virtual!

FYI! If you are a COMM student and need to make a virtual advising appointment, please visit <https://app.acuityscheduling.com/schedule>

If you have any questions regarding the COMM Undergrad program please email cdprint@gmu.edu

If you have any questions about the COMM Grad program email commgrad@gmu.edu



FACULTY NEWS

Edward Maibach receives Presidential Awards for Faculty Excellence

By: Anne Reynolds



Prior to Mason's Celebration of the Class of 2020 on May 22, Interim President Anne Holton continued a university tradition, naming four members of Mason's faculty as recipients of the 2020 Presidential Awards for Faculty Excellence. Two of the college's faculty members are recognized with the awards this year. Edward Maibach, University Professor for Communication and director of Mason's Center for Climate Change Communication, has received the Beck Family Medal for Excellence in Research and Scholarship. "Since the day I arrived 12 years ago, Mason has consistently supported my research in every way possible," said Maibach. "I am so grateful for that, and for the recognition that comes with the Beck Family Presidential Medal." Maibach's research explores public opinion, understanding, and concern about climate change. In its announcement of the Beck Family Presidential Medal, the university noted that his work "addresses the communication and behavior change challenges associated with climate change, such as where and how citizens learn about the issue, and has impacted public policy discussions nationally and globally." "In our weekly research seminar," said Maibach, "Professor Silvio Waisbord of George Washington University presented his thoughts on public scholarship to us. According to his definition, public scholarship connects individuals, institutions and ideas; fosters bonds beyond academia; and makes important problems and ideas more visible. That connected deeply with me. For the first time, I came to see my work as public scholarship."

Article:
<https://communication.gmu.edu/articles/14514>

THANK YOU DR. GIBSON!



"I speak for myself and the rest of the class in saying THANK YOU for everything you did for us these past two semesters in COMM 490 and 491! Especially when we transitioned to online learning, you went above and beyond in providing resources to make sure that we successfully completed our projects. We put together this virtual card to show you that even when we're apart, we're together in this. But more importantly, to show our appreciation. Again, thank you for everything that you did! And thank you for helping us finish our last semesters strong!

All the best,
Madi Wiernusz and COMM 491"

WELCOME OUR NEW FACULTY!

Dr. Emily Brennan-Moran

Emily Brennan-Moran received her PhD from the Department of Communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Dr. Brennan-Moran's research focuses on the ethics and politics of commemoration. Her current work explores the complexities of naming the dead in commemorative contexts. She is broadly interested in performance studies, rhetorical theory and criticism, memory studies, and critical cultural theory.

Tyler Watkins

Tyler Watkins is the Assistant Director of Forensics and a basic course Instructor at George Mason University. Tyler Watkins received his B.A. in Political & Persuasive Communication in 2015; and his M.A. in Health & Strategic Communication in 2017 from George Mason University. Tyler was previously the Director of Individual Events at Concordia University, Irvine. Tyler's research interests focus on mental health promotion in the Black community, topic avoidance, and crisis communication. As a speech coach, his current research centers around speech writing, performance, and advocacy.



UPCOMING EVENTS

FIND YOUR FUTURE

A virtual communication career forum

Sponsored by The Insight Committee of the Department of Communication

Career mentoring sessions will take place in Zoom video conference rooms Fridays, 10 a.m. – 11 a.m.

October 2, 2020 - ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION



Craig Fifer
Director of Communications and Public Information, City of Alexandria
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Diana Gulotta
Director of Communication Services, Prince William County Public Schools
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October 9, 2020 - DIGITAL & MEDIA PRODUCTION



Pat Fernandez
Digital Content Specialist, Deloitte; GMU alum
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Rob Lyall
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October 16, 2020 - JOURNALISM



Marcella Robertson
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Ross Wilkers
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October 23, 2020 - POLITICAL COMMUNICATION & JOURNALISM



John Lippman
Deputy Director for Programming, Voice of America
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Dan Foster
Vice President, Counter Point Strategies
[t](#) @DanFosterType

October 30, 2020 - PUBLIC RELATIONS & CORPORATE COMMUNICATION



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President of Growth and Development International, Omnicom
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Lana Petruzzo
Global Corporate Communications, Hilton; GMU alum & IC
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November 6, 2020 - SPORTS & FASHION COMMUNICATION



Brandon Parker
Communications Manager, NFL Players Association
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Blake Simpson
Senior Vice President Global Communications, Philanthropy and Events, Under Armour, Inc.
[in](#) blakesimpson

Links and Information:

Faculty Directory:

https://communication.gmu.edu/people/full_time_faculty

COMM Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/gmucommadvising?ref=hl>

COMM Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/MasonCommDept>

COMM Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/masoncomm/>

Connect with us on LinkedIn:

Dept. of Communication, George Mason University

Donate Button "Give button" on our main website:

<https://communication.gmu.edu/>

Join the Society/Update us:

Email medmond3@gmu.edu

REGISTRATION REQUIRED [Click here to register](#)



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