

Department of Communication

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**COMM students Zoom in and connect to professional communication mentors**

*COMM’s annual fall career forum offers professional networking opportunities to students every Friday through November 6, 2020.*

**Fairfax, VA — October 2, 2020** — George Mason University’s Department of Communication and the Insight Committee kicked off their virtual Find your Future mentoring sessions with a full house, starting with organizational communication professionals — Diana Gulotta and Craig Fifer.

The first session exemplified what the Find Your Future series is all about: soon-to-be communication professionals getting first-hand advice from industry professionals on how to prepare for interviews and the workforce.

“I was so impressed with the smart and engaged GMU communications students during our inaugural mentor session,” said Julie Murphy, partner and senior vice president at Sage Communications. “Our collective goal on the Insight Committee is to inspire and mentor students as they enter the workforce. Diana and Craig gave valuable and action-packed advice that students can use immediately as they begin their workforce journey.”

As the Director of Communication Services at Prince William County Public Schools, Gulotta offered valuable insight into the communication climate in the public education field. She emphasized the importance of having a strong writing foundation and how those skills can be achieved.

“I was honored to be invited back to participate in the career mentoring session because I enjoy helping future communications graduates best prepare for success,” said Gulotta, “The GMU students are always so engaging, and it is such a pleasure to share my experiences and answer questions. The career mentoring sessions are a great way for students to connect with professionals in the field, and I am always impressed with how GMU executes the sessions.”

Craig Fifer, Director of Communications and Public Information for the City of Alexandria, encouraged students to go after their true passion. He also shared insightful tips on virtual networking and authentic relationship building.

"I really enjoyed spending time with students who are eager to take what they've learned at Mason and apply their skills to real-world challenges,” said Fifer, “The annual mentoring forum is a great opportunity for interaction between experts in their fields and our next generation of professionals."

The organizational communication mentors also took the time to discuss industry trends prior to and during COVID-19”.

**Upcoming Sessions:**

Upcoming sessions on Oct 9, 16, 23, 30 and Nov 6, feature mentors who are professional journalists, public affairs specialists, multimedia producers, sports industry communicators, and political communication specialists.

The mentoring sessions take place in Zoom conference rooms on Fridays from 10 to 11 a.m. Students must RSVP for one of the 16 available spaces in each session.

George Mason University’s Department of Communication is cohosting the Find Your Future mentoring series with the department’s Insight Committee.

"I am grateful to the Insight Committee and to the mentors for their dedication to providing this alternative to our usual Fall Forum,” said Dr. Anne Nicotera, Communication Department Chair, “I am proud of our MasonCOMM students, and I am so pleased that they are making the time to attend and prioritizing their professional development."

The Insight Committee of the GMU Department of Communication is a group of communication professionals from both the university and industry organizations. The committee hosts events that help bridge students to the professional world, including the annual Communication Forum.

Each session consists of small group meetings with two mentors specializing in a wide array of communication fields, from digital and media production to sports and fashion communication. Networking and mentorship opportunities develop student-professional connections, educate students about field experience, and foster employment options for current and future professionals.

Compared to the previous in-person communication forum mentoring sessions, this virtual change-up allows students to have more time to engage with these experts as they get ready to enter the job force.

The George Mason University chapter of Public Relations Student Society of America (GMU PRSSA) representatives will be live-tweeting from the Communication Department’s account, @masoncommdept, every Friday morning during the sessions, highlighting pertinent tips and advice from the mentors.

**Career Mentoring Sessions**

When: Fridays, 10 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Where: Zoom video conference rooms

**Upcoming Sessions:**

**Oct. 9, 2020 - Digital and Media Production**

● Patrick Fernandez, Digital Content Specialist, Deloitte; GMU alum

● Rob Lyall Cinematographer and Producer, National Geographic, PBS, Discovery

**Oct. 16, 2020 - Journalism**

● Marcella Robertson, Reporter, CBS/Channel 9

● Ross Wilkers, Senior Staff Writer, Washington Technology; GMU alum

**Oct. 23, 2020 - Political Communication and Journalism**

● John Lippman, Deputy Director of Programming, Voice of America

● Dan Foster, Vice President, Counter Point Strategies

**Oct. 30, 2020 - Public Relations and Corporate Communication**

● David Gallagher, President of Growth and Development International, Omnicom

● Lana Petruzzo, Global Corporate Communications, Hilton, GMU alum

**Nov. 6, 2020 - Sports and Fashion Communication**

● Brandon Parker, Communications Manager, NFL Players Association

● Blake Simpson, Senior Vice President Global Communications, Philanthropy and Events, Under Armour, Inc.

For more information about the forum, contact Megan Edmondson at medmond3@gmu.edu or visit <https://communication.gmu.edu/co-curricular-activities/annual-career-forum>. The Insight Committee encourages early registration for this event at Find Your Future- VIRTUAL Communication Career Forum.

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