Graduating #MasonCOMM Seniors, Remember to Join the COMM Alumni Listserv:

We will miss our recent graduated students 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.

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Facebook: @MasonCOMMDep | Twitter: @MasonCOMMDep
Website: communication.gmu.edu
Dear Mason Communication Community,

Greetings friends and colleagues! I am excited and proud to be at the start of another academic year. We are in our 40th anniversary season for the Department of Communication and our undergraduate program. This is an exciting milestone for all of us.

It seems we are now inhabiting our “new normal” in a post-COVID world. The pandemic is not over, but it certainly seems that things are infinitely better than they were just 9 months ago when I last greeted you. We are more flexible, resilient, and creative than ever before to get our work done in the classroom and beyond.

With COVID figuring to be part of our lives and landscape on a semi-permanent basis, we feel ready to take on that challenge. In that endeavor, we remain grateful for our expertise in communication. Never has the world needed us, our students, and our graduates more.

Congratulations to those who graduated in May and August 2022, and to those looking forward to graduating in December 2022! Welcome to our MasonCOMM alumni community! Please reach out to us if you want to remain involved after you graduate.

If you are planning to be on campus, please let us know and be sure to come by our offices in Horizon Hall. It is a gorgeous space, and we are very much enjoying our centrally-located and superb facilities!

Like and follow MasonCOMM to stay updated. Please take care of yourselves and one another.

Sincerely,

Dr. Anne Nicotera
Dr. Warren Decker Retires from George Mason University and the Department of Communication after Nearly 50 Years

As George Mason University launched the celebration of its 50th Anniversary as an independent institution, one of its most successful teams celebrated the career of its coach—a career that spans nearly as long.

Warren Decker, director of Mason’s debate program, joined the Department of Communication in 1976, in a year in which the fledgling program included only one student who had ever been to a tournament.

“I came to Mason when it was still in its infancy, and it was a neat place to be,” said Decker. “There were no other state universities in the area, so it was a great place for a debate program.”

By 1979, Mason sent its first team to the National Debate Tournament, and the success of the team has grown ever since. During Decker’s nearly 50 years of tenure as director, the Debate Team has become one of the most successful debate programs in the country, boasting top spots in the American Debate Association, Cross Examination Debate Association, and National Debate Tournament ranking championships.

Dr. Decker has touched the lives of hundreds of undergraduate students who have competed for the George Mason University Debate Team. During his tenure as director, the team has become one of the largest debate programs in the country, boasting top ranks in the American Debate Association, Cross Examination Debate Association, and National Debate Tournament ranking championships.

Due to his passion for access to debate, Mason Debate has introduced many undergraduate debaters to the debate activity. His desire to make debate an activity of learning for any undergraduate student interested also lead to his part in being founder of the American Debate Association.

Warren’s commitment to debate and education will leave a lasting mark on both the George Mason Debate program and the national debate community as a whole.

Leadership gift honors Debate Team director’s years of service

Nearly fifty years in the making—the George Mason University Debate Team has a legacy as a national powerhouse and at the core of their leadership is Warren Decker. During the 48 years that Decker led the team, they qualified for the national debate tournament 56 times, and for the last decade, they have ranked among the top two teams in the country.

Decker’s building of the Mason debate program took place over the same decades as the university, which celebrates its 50th Anniversary this year, itself came to prominence.

“Warren has directed and coached more debate students than any other college debate coach in the country—and changed the lives of countless students,” said College of Humanities and Social Sciences Dean Ann Ardis.

Mason alum Leonard Bennett, BS Finance ’89, JD ’94, was part of the Debate Team in the 1980s and recently returned to the Fairfax Campus to help honor Decker’s years of service during a retirement reception earlier this spring.

Bennett’s generous gift of $1 million will provide programmatic and scholarship support for the Debate Team, as well as create the “Warren D. Decker Professorship Endowment” to support the named coaching position Warren Decker Director of Debate. This fund will enable the department to recruit and retain top talent to help ensure Mason Debate’s excellence in coaching.

Mason debate alum Len Bennett has been a trial attorney and consumer advocate since 1994. Bennett is the founding partner of Consumer Litigation Associates (CLA), a Virginia-based law firm empowering consumers nationwide to fight against predatory lending, credit discrimination, inaccurate credit reporting, identity theft, background check errors, and other consumer abuse. He has been a trial attorney and consumer advocate since 1994.

Bennett shared the magnitude of Decker’s achievement in building this debate program since the 1970s and how he has helped all students, from every background and demographic, from beginners to seasoned debaters, since his career began.

“The special skill Warren Decker has is to coach the span of debaters in this program—from the novice to the superstar—and make us all successful,” said Bennett. “He taught us to be able to speak in front of and to all types of people, no matter who was in the room.”

This is a true testament to our core values at Mason. And the synergy created by this diverse team is manifested through their long-standing success and national recognition. Read article in full: https://www.gmu.edu/news/2022-06/leadership-gift-honors-debate-team-directors-years-service

Mason Debate was founded in 1974 and has been a core program fulfilling the university’s history of excellence within research and advocacy. The team has been consistently ranked in the top five programs in the country by the Cross Examination Debate Association, the American Debate Association, and the National Debate Tournament sweepstakes championships. Mason Debate is a co-curricular program housed within the Department of Communication at Mason’s College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

To join Bennett in supporting the team, visit alumni.gmu.edu/22HSSII.

Congrats to the New Mason Debate Director: #MasonCOMM’s Jackie Poapst!

Jackie Poapst is the NEW Director of the university’s nationally ranked intercollegiate debate team where she was previously the Assistant Director. She received her PhD and M.A. in Communication from George Mason University in 2019 and 2015. Jackie’s research centers on critical legal communication, specifically the ideological and rhetorical justifications for legal doctrines. Her dissertation performed a critical analysis of the Supreme Court’s use of the Chevron doctrine. Jackie has also pursued work in queer rhetorical analysis, critical media studies, co-cultural activism research and research in anti-blackness studies.

Outside of her academic work, Jackie’s large focus is on skills development and tournament travel with the #1 nationally ranked GMU Debate Team. Her efforts in the past season helped contribute to one of the best years that the Mason Debate Team has ever had. Jackie also currently serves as the Director of the George Mason Debate Institute, which is the largest middle school and high school debate camp in the state of Virginia.
DEPARTMENT NEWS

Edward Maibach named to Research.com’s 2022 listing of top scientists

The Research.com website has named two CHSS faculty members to its 2022 Ranking of the Top 1,000 Scientists.

Edward Maibach, University Professor and director of Mason’s Center for Climate Change Communication, was recognized in the areas of social sciences and humanities. He is ranked #193 in the world ranking and #97 in the United States.

David Weisburd, Distinguished Professor of Criminology, Law and Society and executive director of the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy, was noted in the categories of Law and Political Science. He is ranked #27 in the world and #19 in the United States.

In making its rankings, Research.com considered the profiles of over 10,571 profiles of scientists on Google Scholar and Microsoft Academic Graph.

The rankings considered the publications, citations, and h-index (which evaluates the impact of a researcher’s scholarly output by considering the quantity of publications and the number of times they are cited by other researchers) values collected in December, 2021. More information on the selection is available on the site’s methodology page.

Welcome New
#MasonCOMM Faculty!

The Department of Communication is proud to announce we have five new faculty members who will be joining us for the Fall 2022 semester

SHELBY BROBERG
Professor Broberg is joining us as the new COMM Center Director!

PRATITI DIDDI
Dr. Diddi is joining us from Lamar University as a new Assistant Professor!

BETH JANNERY
Professor Jannery is returning as the Director of the Journalism Concentration!

IAN LOWERY
Professor Lowery is joining us as the new Assistant Debate Director!

ANDREW RUDD
Dr. Rudd is joining us from Malone University as part of the COMM Basic Course Faculty!

#MasonCOMM’s Maria Carabelli is June Employee of the Month

Maria Carabelli knew from a young age that she wanted to be a part of the George Mason University community.

She followed her older sister, who attended college at Mason, and has been here ever since, now helping to improve the lives of students, faculty and staff as the office manager for the Department of Communication within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Carabelli, a Mason employee for nearly 20 years who was selected as the June Employee of the Month, said she enjoys what she does.

“I love that no day is ever the same, and there are new challenges and new experiences to work through,” she said.

“I love that I get to meet so many people and learn about their cultures, lives and stories. I love that I get to help our students, staff and faculty and be a source of support to them all.”

How she got to Mason:
I grew up in Burke, Virginia, and went to Lake Braddock High School. My sister attended GMU and in coming to visit her, I decided I wanted to be a part of the Mason community.

Best day on the job:
Winning the Mary Roper Award in 2016 was definitely a highlight of my time here at Mason in the Communication Department. (The award is given annually to honor a classified staff member who has shown outstanding service in support of the core goals of the college. The award is named for Mary Roper, who worked in the Department of Biology and in the dean’s office of the College of Arts and Sciences for a total of 14 years.) It afforded me the opportunity to thank all of the people who have had an influence on my career and those who have been such an amazing support system through good days and bad ones both in a professional and personal way.

What you like best about working at Mason:
Honestly, all the great people that I get to work with every day, some of whom have become really close friends of mine. And, knowing how I’ve been able to help so many students throughout the years in their journey at Mason in any way I can/could.

What you do when you are not working:
Spend time with my family, who live close by, and my husband and 7-year-old boy. We love to travel, take long drives in the country, work in the garden and just spend time together.

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What you do when you are not working:
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MasonCOMM was honored to host the National Communication Association 2022 Doctoral Honors Seminar which brought together 30 doctoral students and 9 distinguished faculty from across the nation. It was a productive and transformative experience for these students and we are so grateful to our mentors who shared their expertise. We are excited to see the dissertations and published work that emerges from this generative workshop experience. Special thanks to our chair, Anne M. Nicotera for hosting and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences for their support.

The seminar theme was “Communication Scholarship in a Fractured World: Relevance and Redemption.” There were three tracts: Media Theory and Research, Communication Theory and Research, and Rhetorical and Performance Theory and Research.

#MasonCOMM was proud to announce the winners of the 2022 Bruce Manchester Award, Walker Evans and Savannah Martincic.

The Outstanding Academic Achievement Award was presented to Ryan Balint, Katherine Bran-Martinez, Jayla Brown, Audrey Butler, Winkhael Coburian, Pheung Chi Dao, Nataly Delgado Vega, Matthew Ferbrache, Elise Hall, Luka Harris, Sofia Havashi, Kery Herrera, Nicole Hinjosa, April Horenzy, Nomin Imaac, Mariisa Joyce, Sudishka Kochi, Sierra Laser, Gwena Lewis, and Kevin Lin.

The Kevin Athari Memorial Scholarship was presented to Walker Evans and Savannah Martincic.

#MasonCOMM hosted its first in-person Undergraduate Student Award ceremony since 2019 back in March 2022. We are so proud of our 2022 Undergraduate Award winners!

HONORS IN COMMUNICATION RESEARCH
Ryan Balint, Sydney Barlow, Annalise Emara, Walker Evans, Valerie Lanneu, Sierra Laser, Mckenna Martin, Teneya Murphy, Kashaf Rashid, and Olivia Reed

MEDIA PRODUCTION AWARDS I
Excellence in Photo Montage – “Virtual U.S. Presidential Retirement Event”
Julian Lee
Best Editing in Digital Post Production – “The People’s Baker”
Walker Evans

EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM
Jayla Brown, Sudishka Kochi, Savannah Martincic, Audrey Lynn Morales, Kashaf Rashid, Margaret Roth, and Madison Mae Rudolf

WGMU AWARDS
WGMU Announcer of the Year: Ricky Chang
WGMU Broadcaster of the Year: Julian Lee

MEDIA PRODUCTION AWARDS II
Best Demonstration Project – “How to Make Brigadeiro”
Stella Cilumbriello Costa Hanson
Best Music Video Project – “Where I End, and You Begin”
Luke Givens

COMM AMBASSADOR OF THE YEAR
Amberly Silva Arriaga

PRSSA SPECIAL RECOGNITION
Sarah G. Fitzsimmons and Cecilia Isabel Aguilar

MEDIA PRODUCTION AWARDS III
Best Commercial Project (Parody/Satire) – “Genie Drops”
Stella Cilumbriello Costa Hanson, Abner Herbas, Makoto Partin, and Carlota Ana Roldan LaFuente
Excellence in Media Production – “Media Production Program Promo”
Vincent V. Nguyen

“The Communication Scholarship in a Fractured World: Relevance and Redemption.”

#MasonCOMM alum Jorge Andres announces for Telemundo

#MasonCOMM alum Jorge Andres, announced the Super Bowl LVI for the American Spanish language network Telemundo with as many as 35 million people tuning in nationwide. “It’s a milestone for me, for sure,” said Andres, 37, a former ESPN “SportsCenter” anchor who graduated from Mason in 2007 with a BA in communication. “But this isn’t just about me, but as much as it is for so many people who believed in me. I got the opportunity, and I ran with it. Fast forward 15 years and I’m about to call the biggest football game on the planet to a country that is growing leaps and bounds in its Spanish demographics.”

Mason’s Rodger Smith was hardly surprised with his former student’s meteoric rise up the sports journalism ranks. Smith, a professor in the Department of Communication within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and a faculty advisor to WGMU radio, remembered Andres as an extremely dedicated student who always sought to produce his best work. Andres spoke virtually to one of Smith’s classes last spring.

“He’s taken advantage of his opportunities, gotten experience and parlayed that into the ultimate responsibility of calling Super Bowl LVI,” Smith said. “He’s a one-in-a-million. It’s awesome what he’s doing.”
UPCOMING EVENTS

• #MasonCOMM Welcome Back!
  ○ Wednesday, September 7
  ○ Starting at 10am - 2pm
  ○ Horizon Hall 5th floor kitchen
  ○ RSVP: https://communication.gmu.edu/events/13661
• 2022 Communication Industry Forum
  ○ Tuesday, October 25th
  ○ JC Meeting Rooms (third floor)
  ○ https://communication.gmu.edu/current-career-forum

All COMM event info can be found on our website:
communication.gmu.edu

The Department of Communication is In-Person!
Horizon Hall, suite 5200 (fifth floor)

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 combadire@gmu.edu

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

Links and Information:

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

COMM Facebook:
https://www.facebook.com/gmucomadvising?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

Horizon Hall Video Tour:
https://www.facebook.com/Masonulife/videos/horizon-hall-tour/921046095113241/?extid=SEO----&redirect=false

Re-designed Wilkins Plaza:
https://www2.gmu.edu/news/2021-08/redesigned-wilkins-plaza-fairfax-campus-open#

Memorial to Enslaved People of George Mason:
https://www2.gmu.edu/taxonomy/term/3471

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 Nikkie Ouellette, CHSS Assistant Director of Development, at njermone@gmu.edu.