INSIDE THIS ISSUE:
LEARNING THROUGH INTERNSHIPS
MASON’S "VOICE OF BOOKS"
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STUDENTS ROCK WITH THE GREEN MACHINE
Cornerstone is published annually by the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at George Mason University. Cornerstone is intended to keep alumni, the Mason community, and the public informed about the activities, growth, and progress of the college. Articles reflect the opinions of the writers and are not those of the magazine, the college, or the university.

We welcome your questions and comments. Please e-mail us at chssalum@gmu.edu or mail a letter to Editor, Cornerstone, 4400 University Drive, MS 3A3, Fairfax, VA 22030. Please send address changes to Alumni Relations, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, George Mason University, 4400 University Drive, MS 3A3, Fairfax, VA 22030. E-mail: chssalum@gmu.edu

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Dear Alumni,

As you receive this magazine, I will be approaching the completion of my first year as dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. Although the dean’s position is new to me, Mason is not. I arrived at Mason in 1984 and have seen tremendous changes since then, including the formation of this college, which was ably led for seven years by our founding dean, Jack Censer. I would be remiss if I didn’t start this letter by thanking him for his tremendous vision in establishing the college and the wisdom with which he ran it. I have inherited an incredible group of faculty and staff who are committed to making the Mason experience vibrant and rich for all students and alumni.

I would also be remiss in not taking this opportunity to thank Dr. Peter Stearns for his service as provost over the last 14 years. Although I had admired Dr. Stearns for his administrative skill from a distance, in the past year I have had the chance to get to know him on a more personal level. As he prepares to step down from his position as provost, I can say that I will miss his warm humor (especially the puns), his strength as a leader, and his guidance. My consolation in going forward is that he will be staying with us as a member of the Department of History and Art History.

As you will see in this issue, we continue to change our programs, with new degrees in creative writing and in writing and rhetoric. This year, we have also expanded our Global Politics Fellows program in Arlington, adding the Nonprofit Fellows, which is coordinated by faculty in New Century College. This step allows the program to serve more students, local businesses, government agencies, and nonprofit entities.

This issue also highlights current and past students and the impact that our faculty has on the community, both inside and outside the university setting. I must say that one of the joys of my new position is the opportunity to meet students from all our programs, along with intriguing, successful alumni and faculty who make a difference through research, creativity, and commitment to Mason.

Not specifically featured in this issue but a large part of the past year has been the development of a set of college initiatives that build on the university’s new strategic plan. The college’s vision is to “teach, connect, transform” as a leader in liberal arts education, research, and community engagement. We hope to enrich the lives of our students by providing them with an education that prepares and challenges them to lead extraordinary professional lives in a global context. Thus, in the coming year, I will be working to invest in new activities that will contribute to these goals. I look forward to sharing them with you as we move forward together.

Yours in Patriot Pride,
Deborah A. Boehm-Davis

ERRATUM

On page 3 of the 2013 Cornerstone, it is erroneously noted that James M. Buchanan, LL.D (Hon.) ’87, distinguished professor emeritus of economics and advisory general director of the Center for Study of Public Choice, founded the center in 1983 while a professor at Virginia Tech and that he moved the center to George Mason University when he joined the faculty in 1986.

Professor Buchanan founded the center in 1957 while a professor at the University of Virginia, and named it the Thomas Jefferson Center for Studies in Political Economy. In 1969, while Buchanan was on the faculty of Virginia Tech, the center was reestablished at that university under its current name. Buchanan joined George Mason in 1983, and the center moved to Mason at that time.
Save the Date!

The College of Humanities and Social Sciences is hosting its 4th annual beer tasting on September 20, 2014 as part of Mason’s Alumni Weekend!

For more information, visit chss.gmu.edu/alumni
New Programs

BFA in Creative Writing Prepares Students for Futures in Writing

In fall 2013, Mason’s Department of English established a bachelor of fine arts degree in creative writing, one of only 30 creative writing BFA programs nationwide. Students in the program choose from three concentrations: fiction, poetry, or nonfiction.

The goal of the program is to afford students the opportunity to write and think creatively while developing professional writing skills that will add value to the workplace. The students will conduct independent research, participate in public service, engage in the globally related activities available through language courses at Mason and study abroad, and look toward their future careers.

“This program is geared toward students who are dedicated to the process, discipline, and craft of written expression,” says William Miller, MFA ’87, director of the program. “It is an excellent choice for an enthusiastic writer who wishes to fully develop his or her skills.”

New PhD Focuses on Writing and Rhetoric

George Mason University’s doctoral program in writing and rhetoric, launched in fall 2013, offers its students an approach to persuasive and effective written communication that is based on theory and practice. It emphasizes rigorous, integrated study of rhetoric, technology, culture, and research methodologies, and prepares its graduates for writing and teaching in 21st-century organizations.

Students in the program are expected to bring to it their own experience as writers, teachers, or scholars, and to follow a course sequence that builds on this previous experience. Graduates will be well-versed practitioners, ready to bring rhetorical and pedagogical expertise to

- colleges and universities
- public schools
- government and nonprofit programs
- corporate workplaces
- the broad public spheres crafted via the Internet and mass media

The program will prepare students to write, research, and teach with a deeper understanding of the intellectual and administrative tools that can enhance the work they do within industry, government, nonprofit organizations, universities, and public schools. They will be uniquely prepared to teach and lead programs in areas such as writing program administration, writing across the curriculum, technical communication, and media studies. Industry and government will benefit from the availability of professionals to conduct research, manage development, and analyze policy in the use of new communication technologies.

“The doctorate in writing and rhetoric not only allows students to more deeply examine the elements of powerful communication, but lets them obtain a meaningful credential that positions them auspiciously in a competitive workplace,” says Debra Lattanzi Shutika, MA English ’93, professor and chair, Department of English. “We are pleased to offer this opportunity to our students.”
Fellows Programs Immerse Students in Internships, Global Experiences

By Anne Reynolds

Beginning in spring 2012, two departments and one center within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences embarked on a program to capitalize on the Arlington Campus’s excellent facilities and proximity to Washington, D.C., and offer its students a form of internship immersion. The Departments of Global Affairs and Public and International Affairs joined together to develop the Global Politics Fellows (GPF) program, and the Center for Leadership and Community Engagement launched the Nonprofit Fellows program.

These programs, which combine school-year internships with courses that directly support the internship experience, give hard-working and motivated students the opportunity to take on the responsibilities of a focused internship semester with a small group of student peers.

GLOBAL POLITICS FELLOWS

The GPF program is open to juniors and seniors who are majoring in government and international politics or global affairs. A selectively chosen cohort of 20 to 30 students meets at the Arlington Campus to take part in classes that focus on the role of government in society in the United States and abroad. In addition to small classes that encourage active student discussion and the inclusion of guest speakers relevant to the program, the true hallmark of the program is its internship component.

Each student enrolls in three academic courses and one 6-credit internship course for the semester. The academic courses are scheduled during two days of the week, allowing students to participate in an internship for the other three days of the work week.

Intense internship assignments allow students to enhance their learning and work opportunities and make the interns even more of an asset to the host organization, explains Kristin Leonato, the GPF program coordinator. Each student is responsible for finding his or her own internship, with support from the fellows program and Mason’s career center.

“Students learn how much they are really capable of during their semester as a fellow,” says Leonato. “They leave the program more confident and better prepared for life after graduation and with lots of new connections to help them along the way.”

During the program’s first two semesters, students interned at high-profile government agencies and organizations, such as the Council on American-Islamic Relations, Human Rights Watch, the National Republican Senatorial Committee, C-SPAN, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center. They have taken part in lunch seminars featuring speakers from government and nonprofits. Most important, they have benefited from sharing their experience with like-minded, motivated peers.

Jose Gonzales II was one of the first students to participate in the program when it launched in spring 2013. He found the course work to be challenging, yet rewarding and reports that his favorite part of the experience was working with his classmates: “Having that interaction since it’s a small cohort, to really know everybody, and to get to work together. . . People are interested in the same things you are, it’s worthwhile.”

Gonzales’s experience was rewarding in more than one way. His internship host, Just Consulting, hired him to continue working with the firm three days a week while he finishes his senior year. Gonzales plans to stay at Just Consulting after graduation, as well.
Putra Kusdarman, a junior global affairs major, interns at the US Pan Asian American Chamber of Commerce Education Foundation, a national nonprofit organization that promotes Asian American and minority-owned small businesses. During the spring 2014 semester, he has worked to build interest in a business conference planned for the summer.

Kusdarman found that the experience has helped him “become more responsible and better at managing my time and money,” in part because of the commute from the Fairfax Campus to Arlington for classes and into the District for his internship. “Participating in this program is helping me kill four birds with one stone,” he says, “get an internship, fulfill my upper-division credits, complete my international development concentration credits, and learn what commuter life is like.”

NONPROFIT FELLOWS

The Nonprofit Fellows program takes place during the fall semester. As does GPF, the Nonprofit Fellows comprise a select group of students who combine three courses during the semester with a 6-credit internship. At the conclusion of the semester, the students earn a nonprofit studies minor.

“Global Politics Fellows is truly one of the most innovative programs we have launched. It serves as a bridge not only between college and career, but also between Mason campuses and the Washington metropolitan community.”

—Lisa Breglia, director, Global Affairs Program
The program was designed and launched by Mason professor Wendy Wagner, director of Mason’s Center for Leadership and Community Engagement. She identifies three main strengths to its approach:

- Close faculty collaboration ensures that topics across the courses flow together and integrate the internship experience into assignments and class discussions. Students find that the ability to discuss their internship experience in connection with their studies brings more meaning to both the classes and the internships.
- The cohort arrangement gives students the experience of small classes made up of highly motivated classmates in a close, supportive community. The shared experience lends itself to the formation of lasting friendships.
- The co-scheduled classes allow students to take part in additional experiences outside their internships to create a classroom truly integrated to the world. Between classes, the students benefit from a lunchtime speaker series. On one occasion the group took part in a full day of site visits in Washington, D.C., that concentrated on food insecurity. They visited nonprofits in the city that address that problem in different ways: research and policy analysis, education, urban farming, and serving meals to underserved populations.

Students have interned at agencies and organizations such as Volunteer Fairfax, Special Olympics of Virginia, Our Daily Bread, FACETS, the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, and George Mason University Hillel. The length of the students’ internships allowed them to take charge of projects and make substantial contributions to the work of their host organizations.

Jaqueline Blanchard is a senior integrative studies major with a concentration in international studies and minors in nonprofit studies and in consciousness and transformation. She spent her nonprofit fellows internship with ActionAid USA, an international nonprofit agency that fights poverty by addressing the effects of climate change, responding to natural disasters and international conflicts, assisting smallholder farmers around the world to augment the supply of food, and working for women’s rights.

Blanchard commends the organization’s human rights-based approach; it works directly with the people and encourages the U.S. government to enact policies that support developing countries. She worked in many aspects of the organization’s mission, including speaking to congressional staff about the Assessing Progress in Haiti Act of 2013. She assisted with marketing efforts and recruiting students from around the world to take part in advocacy courses presented by Global Platform, which teaches youth to become well-informed citizens who will drive social change.

Blanchard appreciated how the internship allowed her to “be in the middle of the D.C. nonprofit world” and hopes to continue her international philanthropy following graduation in May.

Both of the Fellows programs serve their students, the employers providing the internships, and the community. “I love my job,” says Leonato. “I have great students who are motivated to make positive changes in their local communities, in our country, and around the world. This program gives me the chance to introduce students to new career options and show professionals in various fields what wonderful students we have here at Mason.”

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**Food Security Agencies Highlighted in Nonprofit Fellows Curriculum**

**D.C. Central Kitchen** prepares 5,000 meals per day and distributes them at little or no cost to 100 homeless shelters, transitional homes, and nonprofit organizations, and operates a culinary job training program for unemployed men and women. This is all part of their mission to use food as a means to strengthen bodies, empower minds, and build communities.

**D.C. Greens** works through schools and communities to ensure that Washington, D.C., residents can afford fresh local fruits and vegetables. By boosting school gardens and farmers markets and supporting best practices at nonprofit organizations, D.C. Greens aims to improve the local food system for all Washington, D.C., residents.

**Common Good City Farm** is a demonstration site within the city that offers hands-on training in food production, healthy eating, and environmental sustainability. Their goal is to welcome people who reflect the diversity of Washington, D.C., and help them to learn about healthy food, gain access to it, and exercise in the process of growing it.

**Martha’s Table** works on several levels to develop sustainable solutions to poverty through educational, recreational, and tutorial programs for youth; family support services including provision of food and clothing; and working directly with nonprofit organizations and individual volunteers to empower them to help their neighbors.
Opportunity and Success through Service

By Maria Seniw, BA Government and International Politics ’07

When Tuan Nguyen, BIS ’12 noticed that some of his younger classmates were arriving late to class or showing up with incomplete homework assignments, he wondered what was wrong with these kids. Then he realized he was just like them when he had first set foot in a college classroom years ago.

Nguyen started studying information technology (IT) and computer science at the University of Virginia directly after high school, but he recognized he still needed some time to mature. Attracted to the discipline, camaraderie, and potential work experience, Nguyen enlisted in the Army National Guard in 1991 with the intention of serving for six years and earning educational benefits. Nguyen did not know what to expect by enlisting, but he promised to do his best and see where it led.

Nguyen is a noncommissioned officer in the Virginia Data Processing Unit supporting Army Cyber Command. His unit’s mission is to assess the Army’s web servers, ensuring they are secure and any information released does not provide enemies with insight. When he is not mobilized, Nguyen’s service schedule includes one weekend a month and 15 days throughout the year. Nguyen is also the founder and president of Eminent Solutions Inc., an IT consulting firm.

Throughout his career with the guard, Nguyen has gained a tremendous amount of IT training and education. During his second mobilization (he is currently on his fourth), Nguyen expanded his education by completing an associate of science degree in IT from Northern Virginia Community College. He then took the next step of enrolling in George Mason University’s Bachelor of Individualized Study (BIS) program, an interdisciplinary concentration for adult learners working toward degree completion. This unique degree allowed Nguyen to design a curriculum based on military operations and IT.

Nguyen describes the BIS program as “rigorous. It’s fair and challenging but also gives you the flexibility of pursuing a degree that is helpful in your current career endeavors.”

Nguyen did not know what to expect by enlisting, but he promised to do his best and see where it led.

Nguyen’s service quickly became a passion and now, after 20 years, he has earned the honor to retire but plans to stay with the guard while it remains fun and challenging. Since his guard service can be as brief as 39 days a year, he emphasizes the importance of treating each day as a job interview because there is so much weighing on each encounter. He says, “if you’re asked to show up two days a month, and you don’t, it shows and it’s a reflection on your reputation.” If Nguyen can improve a process or a system, or a younger soldier’s outlook, he believes these small pieces will have a larger outreach.

Today Nguyen actively mentors younger soldiers, advising them on how to succeed in the military and translate their skills to the civilian world. He reminds them that service provides soldiers the opportunity to succeed but work performance, character, knowledge, and skills still have to be earned. Nguyen has returned to the classroom and is currently pursuing his masters in management of secure information systems within George Mason’s School of Management.
Alan Cheuse has a book for you. More than one, actually.

There are the books that he has written: five novels, four collections of short stories, one memoir, and a collection of travel essays. But if you recognize his name, or more particularly his voice, it may be because you heard it on NPR (formerly National Public Radio). NPR has dubbed him the “voice of books,” mellifluously suggesting books by the hundreds to millions of people.

At George Mason University, students are privileged to avail themselves of Cheuse’s expertise and experience firsthand. As a University Professor and a faculty member in the English and creative writing programs, Cheuse has lent his literary acumen to the education of countless writers, critics, and readers in teaching them the craft and the business of writing well.

After earning a PhD in comparative literature, Cheuse taught at Bennington College, the University of Michigan, the University of the South, and the University of Virginia.

Throughout his teaching career, he has continually added to his body of written work, and his extension of this vocation informs his teaching. “The MFA in many ways is an editorial program for the students,” he explains, “more professional than the undergraduate program.” He appreciates that at Mason, he is able to “stay home and write and then bring that experience into one-on-one tutorials and into workshops and the literature classes.”

This experience is his distinct contribution to his curriculum: “It’s important to know, especially for the writing students, but also for the critics and the literary historians in training, what it’s like to make it work from the inside out.”

And Cheuse reads. “Reading is as much an experience as flying an airplane or serving in the military or raising a family or falling in love,” he says. “It’s a psychological reality. We read for entertainment, you know, say, Michael Crichton or Stephen King, which I do all the time. But you read Tolstoy or Dostoevsky or Saul Bellow or Joan Didion, that is both medicinal and philosophical—and also entertainment—or else you wouldn’t stick around.”

Even beyond entertainment, he explains, reading allows the reader “to know other minds of other people and you get the feel of life in other places, which you can’t possibly know in one lifetime. So it really increases your lifespan, in a way. And it makes real life—ordinary life—a layered experience, where you have your everyday physical life that you move through, involving everything from sickness and health, happiness and sorrow, and everything that you read makes you understand those things a lot more than if you don’t.”

Cheuse’s devotion to reading naturally bolsters his reviews and recommendations of books for others. In the earlier stages of his career, he worked from a prescribed diet of reading material. “I started at a review service in New York, and they handed me one book a day and I just wrote about that, whatever it was, from a mystery to Eisenhower’s memoirs,” he says. “I had no choice at all. But you sort of tailor your abilities to that situation, and it showed me that I could, when I needed to, write quickly without too much damage.”

Now, with reviews appearing in the New York Times Book Review, the Los Angeles Times Book Review, Chicago Tribune, San Francisco Chronicle, Washington Post Book Review, Dallas Morning News, Baltimore Sun, USA Today, and elsewhere, the choice of material is his own. Since the 1980s, he has contributed to NPR’s All Things Considered program, where he has reviewed an impressive variety and volume of books.

“Where I am now,” he explains, “I can pretty much write about anything I want. And what I want fits into the plans of a radio show and a bunch of newspapers that I write for.”

With all that freedom to choose, how does he select a reading project? He doesn’t limit himself to just one: “[While recently] traveling through California, I read
Reading allows the reader “to know other minds of other people and you get the feel of life in other places, which you can’t possibly know in one lifetime. So it really increases your lifespan, in a way. And it makes real life—ordinary life—a layered experience.”

– Alan Cheuse

three, four, five books that I’m now writing about. At my bedside, I have one book, and . . . at my desk, I have another book. There’s an ebb and flow, and I haven’t really thought about what I’m reading and not reading at any one time. It’s usually a couple, four, five, six at the same time. If I’m at home, whatever mood comes over me, I can find a book for that mood. If I’m traveling, I want to be sure that I have a bunch of things that definitely interest me. I get some of my best reading done that way.”

But at the heart of his teaching, reading, and reviewing, Cheuse remains a writer. During the spring semester of 2014, he is anticipating the publication of his fifth collection of short fiction, An Authentic Captain Marvel Ring. These short stories and novellas include elements of family, loss, and a nod to Moby Dick. Cheuse will be spending some time this spring traveling to promote the book but will also focus on the creation of a new novel.

And he will almost certainly find time to read.
Coast to Coast, Community to Community

MASON’S CENTER FOR EVIDENCE-BASED CRIME POLICY TESTS NEW FOCUS FOR HOT SPOT POLICING

By Rashad Mulla, BA Communication ’11

In the 1982 book, The Criminology of Place, David Weisburd, Elizabeth R. Groff, and Sue-Ming Yang presented the results of a 16-year study of Seattle, Washington, that aimed to pinpoint causes of crime by studying geographic areas as small as street segments. The researchers found that half of Seattle’s crime occurs on about 5 percent of city streets, a finding that hatched Weisburd’s concept of hot spot policing.

“When I began my career, most scholars believed that the police could not affect crime and that crime was the function of broad social problems that the police had no control over,” says Weisburd, the winner of the prestigious Stockholm Prize in Criminology in 2010. “A colleague and I decided that it wasn’t that the police couldn’t do anything about crime, it was that the police needed to change the way they worked.”

Armed with an educated hypothesis that crime was focused and concentrated in a few relatively small “hot spot” areas, Weisburd began his study with 110 hot spots in Minneapolis and then moved on to other cities. He found that crime levels varied, street by street, even in the most stigmatized neighborhoods. For example, 86 out of 24,000 streets in Seattle were responsible for most of the juvenile crime in the city. The findings were new and surprising to criminologists unaware of hot spot policing tactics. Soon, the Campbell Collaboration, the National Academy of Sciences, and other independent research review organizations began recognizing the legitimacy of hot spot policing.

Now, in 2014, the theory of hot spot policing is widely accepted and respected. This year, George Mason University’s Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (CEBCP), led by executive director Weisburd and deputy director Charlotte Gill, returned to Seattle for a new emphasis in its study of hot spots. Now, the focus has evolved from crime analysis and solution to a deep, intensive look at the origins of crime in two neighborhoods with notorious reputations.

Two current CEBCP projects—one funded by the U.S. Department of Justice and the other by the Bureau of Justice Assistance—focus on three hot spots of juvenile crime in West Seattle and five in Rainier Beach, Washington, in the southern part of the city. Both neighborhoods are popularly known as dangerous and crime-riddled, but as with Weisburd’s original findings, crime in these areas is concentrated to a few street blocks. These few streets essentially characterize the entire neighborhood’s reputation.

The two projects focus on the social issues faced by youth in the area and aim to intervene before a crime is committed, rather than looking to the criminal justice objective of solving a crime afterward. In addition, the projects seek to avoid arrest-based methods and instead focus on community nourishment in the two neighborhoods, using community members and leaders as communicators and recreation centers as local hangouts. As Weisburd and Gill note, evidence strongly suggests that criminal justice processing for juveniles can lead to a long-term life of crime, so the two are determined to avoid that result.

“Crime prevention for juveniles requires a more supportive environment for youth to flourish, rather than having rather heavy-handed police tactics,” Gill says. “Treatment for young people in a family setting has a better result, and we’ve taken this idea and applied it to crime prevention.”
The Seattle projects employ hot spot tactics, such as the monitoring of individual street blocks with high concentrations of crime. But as Gill noted, the idea has evolved. Hot spot research is useful for more than just policing; it can be used to identify a number of social ills, such as poverty or gang activity, that could lead to crime. Researchers will spend the next few months trying to determine what aspects of a juvenile hot spot actually draw crime into the area.

“There has been a progression of hot spot research, from crime policing to its driving social factors,” Gill says. “What kind of structural, geographical, and social features drive crime in those hot spots?”

Seattle’s local leadership had an intense interest in answering this question and helped the CEBCP grants take off. Mariko Lockhart, director of the Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative, works with community-based agencies in various neighborhoods to mobilize residents and advocate for 1,500 youth in the city. Lockhart saw an opportunity to further an already existing partnership with the CEBCP, as her goals matched those of the center. She was directly involved in the process that saw the Department of Justice award Seattle with the almost $1 million Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Grant.

“Seattle has a very strong engagement process with our neighborhoods,” Lockhart says. “So the Rainier Beach neighborhood had already undertaken a comprehensive neighborhood planning process, and public safety was one of the key components of it. They had included in this plan that they wanted to work the Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative and that they wanted to focus on hot spot policing. It just seemed that all the stars were aligned for us to come together.”

Lockhart and the CEBCP, as well as the Department of Justice grant itself, stressed the non-arrest objective. Lockhart had previously worked with youth in Newark, New Jersey, and she, as have many others from the Seattle team working on the grant, believes that to reduce crime in a sustainable way, there must be prevention and intervention strategies, rather than a heavy police crackdown.

“There has to be a way to intervene before a crime happens,” she says.

From her vantage point as projects coordinator for the Seattle Neighborhood Group, Barb Biondo finds the Rainier Beach project to be a smart way to allocate resources and cure some of the lasting causes of youth crime in the area.

“We want to know what’s wrong with a certain neighborhood. Over the past 20 years, there have been new schools, new kids, new community centers, and new businesses, so why has crime persisted over these decades?”

“If you do take responsibility for your community and take the time to know and build a relationship with your neighbor, and you have a common interest in making this place the best it can be, that can really turn the tide of your neighborhood.

“I believe there is a nexus between communities with a low level of collective efficacy, high levels of crime, and low levels of voter turnout.”

– Michael Davis

Michael Davis, former Chief of Police in Brooklyn Park and now the director of public safety at Northeastern University, finds that community members are of the utmost importance in creating neighborhoods.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance awarded David Weisburd, Charlotte Gill, and Alese Wooditch a $700,000 grant to undertake a research project on community involvement and collective efficacy in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, crime hot spots.
In April 2014, the Campbell Collaboration announced that it will award its 2014 Robert Boruch Award to David Weisburd, based on his use of evidence-based policy in the areas of criminology and policing.

The annual award, named for one of the earliest advocates for the use of randomized experiments to inform decision-making in public policy areas, recognizes an individual who has made a notable contribution to research on social interventions that advance public policy.

The Campbell Collaboration, in its award announcement, notes that Weisburd’s work on policing based on the role of place — not people — as a focus of crime prevention has demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach. The collaboration also lauds Weisburd’s contributions to the work of evidence-based organizations. The awards ceremony will take place in June 2014 in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

![David Weisburd](image)

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She says, “Why is this area a hot spot, and why are crimes not occurring three blocks north of here?”

Those on the frontlines in Rainier Beach continually talk to the individuals living and working in the community and look at the physical blocks and environmental conditions. They hope to gather information over the next few months that will help educate them on possible recommendations and intervention strategies.

“What we’re doing here is saying that we know it’s a crime hot spot, so that tells us that there is a higher amount of crime occurring there than in other areas,” Biondo says. “But this is only a sliver of the story. We know that the people that know the community live there, work there, own businesses there, and catch the bus there. We are working side by side, but they are the ones that are leading and filling in the gaps about the knowledge of these places and helping us think through some of the risk factors.”

Gill takes it a step further, recognizing that community members are invaluable to the solution.

“Community cohesion can be the ultimate form of protection from crime in the area,” she says. “Without community support and recognition, the community buy-in will not be there, and that’s really important in realizing how the crime prevention can continue.”

As the researchers, along with Seattle community leaders and local officials, have looked to the community in an effort to establish hot spot crime prevention, a major shift has been in asking the police department to reevaluate, or at least stand back and refocus, its patrol tactics and level of interpersonal involvement.

Captain Jim Dermody, narcotics section commander in the Seattle Police Department, previously redeployed officers based on recommendations and research from the CEBCP. Now, he underscores the role of community involvement and its importance in solving and, more important, preventing crime in hot spots.

“I think [community involvement] is one of the keys to sustaining positive public safety outcomes and a better quality of life in a particular neighborhood or on a particular block face,” Dermody says. “Successful neighborhood turnarounds, small, medium, and large, are rarely successful without some level of community involvement and investment, in my opinion as a practitioner.”

Seattle’s neighborhood configuration allows residents to look out for one another, says Clark Kimerer, assistant chief and a 31-year veteran of the Seattle Police Department. It’s that ethos, he says, that will allow researchers and practitioners to unlock a lot of doors.

“At the very basic level, police cannot single-handedly establish the acceptable level of public safety in the neighborhood,” Kimerer says. “Neighborhoods have to be
SCHOOL EMPHASIS OFFICER PROGRAM

The City of Seattle awarded Charlotte Gill, Kirsten Hutzell, and the University of Maryland’s Denise Gottfredson a $100,000 grant to evaluate the Seattle Police Department’s School Emphasis Officer program, which places in schools police officers who are specially selected for their interest in working with youth.

Weisburd, armed with supporting research from these projects, hypothesizes that hot spot policing combined with community involvement will be instrumental in unlocking the secrets to juvenile crime prevention. To illustrate, he offers an anecdote of a trip to Israel.

“During the Rosh Hashanah holiday, I was sitting in the back of a bus, next to a group of kids who looked like they were trying not to behave,” Weisburd says. “There was an old man walking through the bus and giving everyone incense. I was worried as he walked to the back of the bus. He gave the kids incense . . . and they kissed his hands!”

“I might have thought that they were up to no good, but this man exhibited a level of informal guardianship over them. In places that have high poverty and high levels of social disorganization, there are low levels of collective efficacy. This program is aimed at increasing the level of involvement within the community. If we can do that, we achieve a great deal.”

Weisburd and Gill hail the Seattle projects as a logical progression of hot spot research. Once it was determined that small areas produce the majority of crime in a city, there would need to be a solution to prevent the crime, rather than solve it. In this way, Seattle has embraced hot spot policing, from its early days as part of Weisburd’s 16-year study to its latest iteration of finding hot spot social ills.

Kimerer believes that Seattle’s relationship with the CEBCP has yielded positive results and, more important, is a partnership that many police departments and academic centers and departments need to emulate.

“We really have taken David’s early theories to heart,” Kimerer says. “Namely, practitioners and the academic community have to be in a healthier and a more open relationship. David exerted quite distinguished leadership in saying that we needed to be in the service of the needs of the practitioner. It is precisely that type of relationship that will yield the best results.”
George Mason University boasts a variety of scholars with expertise in a wide range of fields. We asked College of Humanities and Social Sciences faculty and students, how do you measure the impact of your own work?

Keith Clark, Associate Professor, English
Since coming to the Department of English in 1993 to begin my career, my scholarship has focused on African American literature, foregrounding issues related, but not limited, to African American male representation through the lenses of gender theory, masculinity studies, and queer theory. These concerns are treated extensively in two publications: Black Manhood in James Baldwin, Ernest J. Gaines and August Wilson (University of Illinois Press, 2002) and The Radical Fiction of Ann Petry (Louisiana State University Press, 2013).

I strive to spotlight the richness of the African American literary tradition, which until the late 1970s had failed to receive the scholarly, academic, and popular attention it merits. While many have at least heard of heralded authors such as Wilson, less attention has been paid to authors deserving wider critical attention, such as Petry and Gaines. The intended impact of this scholarship is to show that well-known authors, such as Wilson, imagined nuanced ways of thinking about masculinity in their works, while the relatively unknown Petry also complicated masculine representation in her novels The Street (1946) and The Narrows (1953).

I am especially invested in trumpeting the importance of Petry. The first African American woman to publish a novel that would sell a million copies, she still has not received the attention she and her work deserve. Ultimately, in addition to these scholarly objectives, I strive to convey the salience of African American literature beyond the Ivory Tower. To this end, I’ve lectured at libraries throughout the state, taught courses to retirees here at Mason, and spoken to local high school students. My overall aim is to help illumine a luminous African American literary heritage, both in its own right and as symbiotically connected to the broader, multihued American literary tradition.

Afra Ahmad, BA ’08, MA ’12, PhD Candidate, Psychology
My primary research interests are diversity issues in the workplace. I’m interested in how employees with invisible identities, such as religious affiliation, manage that particular aspect of their identity in the workplace and what some consequences of disclosure decisions may be. We conducted experimental field research on the real-world experiences of job applicants identifying as Christian, Jewish, and Muslim, and examined the level of interpersonal discrimination they received from retail store managers based on their level of religious disclosure.

This research will help employees from various backgrounds understand the benefits and consequences of bringing their religious identity to work. In addition, since religion is one of the protected classes under the Civil Rights Act, managers will be more aware of how they react to employees from different religious backgrounds and ideally work toward an equitable work environment.
Peter Pober, Distinguished Service Professor, Communication

It’s all about the process. Engagement and the application of knowledge are crucial for impact. Never teach to the expected level of understanding. Always presume the capacity to comprehend at much higher levels. I teach semiotics in a 100-level class, Foucault and Derrida in a 200-level, and ask students in my 300-level to apply Phaedrus and Lacan to their everyday world experience. They can and they do.

I expect my graduate students each semester to become scholars on a demographic they previously have never studied. Many have become renowned researchers who have impacted the world in recognizable ways. One graduate student chose to study the genesis of AIDS rhetoric in southern Africa and went on to lead some of the most successful HIV and AIDS awareness campaigns on the continent. One undergraduate chose to study the impact of secondhand smoke on children and, after graduating at the top of his Harvard Law class, successfully litigated one of the largest settlements in history. One of my Forensics Team students studied the negative effects of abstinence-only sex education, was influential in changing the curriculum of one of the largest school districts in the United States, and went on to testify before Congress. I measure my impact by their impact. It’s all about the process, what we learn together and how it can impact the world around us.

Angie Hattery, Director, Women and Gender Studies Program

One of the areas in which I do a great amount of research is intimate partner violence (IPV). As any researcher does, I certainly hope that my research affects the way other scholars think about and investigate IPV; however, I believe my greatest impact can be with two other groups: practitioners and students.

Practitioners, those who work in the trenches delivering much needed services to victims and interventions for abusers, rarely have the time or resources to conduct research and analyze this research through a theoretical lens. Often, what I have identified in my research matches with their sense of things; my work can provide the statistics and framework they need to demonstrate their worthiness to potential funding agencies.

As far as students go, the highest risk for experiencing certain forms of IPV, especially stalking, is during high school and college. By bringing my research, especially my discussion of the early warning signs, into the classroom, I am able to provide tools to women and men as they evaluate their own relationships and the relationships of their friends. If I can help even one woman each semester detect an early warning sign and leave a potentially dangerous relationship, then my work has been worth it. If I can help one man each semester understand more about how to be a partner in a healthy relationship, then I know my work improves people’s relationships and lives.

Abigail Hall, MA ’13, PhD Candidate, Economics

I measure the success of my work in two distinct ways. My first aim is to provide productive input into the work of other scholars. My work is successful if, in its development and dissemination, it is a catalyst for others’ work, provides a perspective scholars find relevant to their research, or provides a challenge to their perspective. Successful work is that which contributes to and advances academic discourse.

The second way in which I measure success is through my students. Bringing research into the classroom and discussing its contents can be a powerful tool. If my work allows students to better understand material or become interested in economic questions and the economics way of thinking, then I am indeed successful. Productive research is that which not only moves discussion forward among scholars, but also draws individuals into a discipline. Hearing students say, “I’d never thought about this issue this way,” or, “This really helped me understand,” is an overwhelming achievement. My work is successful if it encourages my students to actively study and question the world around them.

Lisa Breglia, Director, Global Affairs Program

After years of working as a cultural anthropologist with fishing communities affected by intensive offshore oil drilling on Mexico’s Yucatan Peninsula, one thing I know for certain is that impact can be measured in multiple ways. Through my research, I learned that the impact of oil drilling on the everyday lives of coastal residents did not always show itself in headline-generating, million-barrel spills. Rather than showing itself as a single, devastating oil slick on a white sand beach, the impact of oil on the environment, communities, and how they make their livelihoods is sometimes silent and invisible. But without a doubt these other effects—on air quality, on the kinds and amounts of fish and shellfish captured, and on health and well-being—is long term, cumulative, and just as detrimental. Long-term ethnographic research in communities on Mexico’s Gulf Coast allows me to understand how ordinary people understand and respond to those deep impacts that fail to make the headlines.
I’m With the Band

MASON’S GREEN MACHINE IMPACTS STUDENTS AND THE COMMUNITY THROUGH MUSIC

By Anne Reynolds

Where were you in 2006? For George Mason University men’s basketball fans, it was a big year. It was the year the sports-watching nation saw the Patriots come from virtually nowhere to stride across the national stage of the NCAA Tournament’s Final Four. That unlikely run gave the Mason community an immense shot of pride and identity, and a new reason to swagger.

But after the madness of March came and went, taking the 2005-06 school year with it, another change came to George Mason, bringing with it identity, pride, and, yes, swagger. But this change was musical in nature.

When Mason’s director of athletic bands, Michael “Doc Nix” Nickens, arrived at the university a few months later, he found a pep band but not the musical powerhouse Green Machine that entertains basketball fans these days.

“When I showed up, there was a student-run group called the Mason Pep Band, and it was mostly made up of music majors. There may have been one or two non-majors in the group,” says Nickens.

Size was a problem. The earlier pep band was small, not much larger than the 30 members that NCAA regulations allow to play at basketball events. Maintaining the pep band’s numbers so close to the requirement meant that almost all the band’s members needed to be available for games.

One of Nickens’s first changes was to open up the membership. The music majors who had made up the majority of the pep band soon found themselves with students from all over the university, sometimes playing instruments not traditionally seen in sports arenas. Violins, oboes, DJs, singers, rappers, and even a harp now lend themselves to the Green Machine’s unique sound. “It definitely causes some practical challenges,” says Nickens, “but I’d rather just get up for those and solve them than exclude somebody who has passion or even just curiosity. Inclusive is really important, really important to me.”

Nickens estimates that as many as 60 to 70 percent of the Green Machine’s members are not College of Visual and Performing Arts majors. Nevertheless, they do not take their roles lightly. “Even though I am talking about non-majors, that doesn’t mean they aren’t committed musicians. They just haven’t enrolled in a [music] degree program, and some of our best performers in that group aren’t [working toward a music] degree at all. But they very much identify themselves as musicians. Included in those ranks are students from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.”

Keandra Diamond, working toward a BS in psychology, finds that participating in the Green Machine provides a safe haven in her busy days of study. Having been a musician for nearly eight years before coming to Mason, Diamond appreciates the “enthusiasm, support, and talent” of her band mates. “I strongly believe that music is life,” she says, “and without the Green Machine, I would be out of my normal environment.”

“It empowers me,” says Diamond, “and having a student body that stands behind us makes it a truly spectacular experience.”

Sophomore criminology, law and society major Sarah Pineda finds that her involvement with the band has tied her to the entire university community in unexpected ways:

“I’ve had the opportunity to attend many school events like basketball games where the crowd can depend on us to spread school spirit through the music we play. Doc Nix and the rest of the band create such an infectious energy
at every gig that it’s almost a privilege to be a part of the experience . . . It’s an honor to see how incoming and current students, as well as alumni take pride in what we do, not only within the school but also beyond.”

Pineda credits the Green Machine with giving her the chance to participate in important university events such as President Ángel Cabrera’s 2013 inauguration, the fall premiere open house for prospective students, the spring preview for admitted students, and winter graduation. Though she initially joined the group solely to continue with music while focusing on her studies, she now considers it her “second family.”

Senior history major Paul Bernfield found that his participation in the Green Machine has made him an identifiable part of the Mason experience for other people. “Everyone knows me as the drummer for the Green Machine,” he says. “I’ll see basketball players on campus, and they’ll recognize me, which is always a trip. I once did a gig for a friend who’s a high school director and when I was done, two parents came up to me and told me how great I was with the Green Machine. I always wear a Dr. Seuss hat [during performances] and a girl that I had just met saw my hat in my car and yelled excitedly, ‘You’re hat guy!’” All of this, he says, “made me realize that being a part of the Green Machine isn’t just playing for basketball games or for Mason events, it’s being a leader in a community and inspiring others.”

**Sophomore criminology, law and society major Sarah Pineda finds that her involvement with the band has tied her to the entire university community in unexpected ways.**
Carol Bentley, a criminology, law and society major with a minor in forensic science, appreciates how working with the band has allowed her to reclaim the enjoyment she’d had playing piccolo, an activity she had not been able to pursue in her earlier years at Mason. “I really only intended to join the Green Machine and see how that went last semester,” she says, “but I ended up also rushing the band service fraternity Kappa Kappa Psi. So with joining Green Machine and creating that family, I also got another family, my new brothers.”

Along with the family (and local fame) that these students describe, Nickens feels their involvement benefits them in ways more directly related to their academic life. One of those benefits is learning to take on challenges. “Sometimes we do things that are very difficult,” Nickens says. “I ask a lot of that band. The most difficult things we do, I can’t even believe we pull them off.” Though entry to the band is fairly accessible (while those who play certain instruments must audition, most of the musicians are free to play if they have musical experience), Nickens’s musical standards are high, and the musical choices are ambitious.

“Sometimes that means I’ll tell you what we’re going to do and you [think ‘that’s] impossible!’ And sometimes I’ll tell you what we’re about to do and you have no concept of what I’m even saying. And then all of a sudden you find yourself doing it. There’s a charge from both of those. I love destroying people’s doubt, and a lot of times I don’t even know if it’s possible myself, but we’ve had so much success that I think, ‘Of course we’re going to try.’”

One reason this works, stresses Nickens, is teamwork. “Even if I have lots of musicians who aren’t committed at the highest levels, they probably have someone sitting next to them that is. So any questions they might have can easily be answered, or they might not even have to ask, but they can just see it done in a way that they want to do it, and you’re going to be able to find your way to it, now that you can see with your own eyes.”

And it obviously all comes together. In September 2013, BleacherReport.com, an online sports reporting site, named the “full throttle” Green Machine the “most entertaining pep band in college basketball,” and the Washington Post has noted that the Green Machine boosts the profile of the whole university.

Nickens hopes to spread that profile even further with Mason’s entry into the Atlantic 10 conference this year. As he looked forward to the A10 Championships at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn, New York, in March, Nickens planned to bring the whole complement of the Green Machine.

Only 30 band members were allowed to perform during the tournament, but most of the band went to New York and played in other places around the area, including high schools in Long Island and Connecticut, where the band was invited by Mason alumni who teach there.

“And they’ve probably never, well, no one’s ever seen a group like us,” Nickens says.

This outreach reflects the fact that the Green Machine is not a pep band just for music majors or for basketball fans or even for all of the musicians who love to be a part of it. “I start with the belief that the band belongs to the entire community, belongs to everybody,” says Nickens. “Everyone in the high schools, everyone in the seats, everyone who comes into contact with us, somehow it’s their band.”
Alumna “Links” Education to Golf World Success

By Maria Seniw, BA Government and International Politics ’07

Elisa Gaudet, BA English ’90, came to George Mason University with aspirations of becoming an overseas correspondent. She was attracted to George Mason’s proximity to Washington, D.C., and its diverse student body. Her life on campus included being coxswain for the varsity club rowing team, working as an ROTC aerobics instructor, and minoring in art history. Gaudet would eventually use the writing and creative skills she learned at Mason, but not as an overseas correspondent. Instead, her career took some unexpected turns.

Gaudet’s parents felt her dream might be too hard to attain, and her father preferred that she study business over the liberal arts. Gaudet began a master’s program in business, international policy, and history at Stanford University. After two semesters, she found that she wanted a more substantial business education. She applied to George Washington University’s MBA program and was accepted, but chose to defer and satisfy her strong wanderlust.

Gaudet moved to Los Angeles to start a modeling career. She pragmatically gave herself three months to find an agent and book a photo shoot or return to graduate school. She quickly signed with Abrams Artists Agency and began working on international contracts. For Gaudet modeling was an opportunity to see the world. She spent eight summers in Spain, four months in Tokyo, and four months in Cape Town. As a result, she learned Spanish by immersion and was in South Africa when Nelson Mandela was president.

After her modeling career, she worked for the Latin Golf Tour. While in Argentina, she met an executive with the PGA Tour who offered her a position running the EMC World Cup of Golf in Mexico. She spent the next 18 months planning the large-scale golf event, an experience she calls her MBA.

Next, she launched Executive Golf International, a strategic marketing and consulting firm that promotes golf and golf-related products. After eight years, she was inspired to write Two Good Rounds. In this lighthearted book, Gaudet interviewed 36 of the world’s top golfers and asked them to share their favorite drinks, “nineteenth holes,” and hole-in-one memories. Her aim was to bring out each player’s personality and create a connection between the amateur and the professional golfer. Gaudet’s next book, Two Good Rounds—Superstars, asked 54 of the world’s top athletes the same questions about their golf game. Her third book, Two Good Rounds—Titans, will focus on elite business leaders who own golf courses.

Gaudet’s larger mission is to create a lifestyle resource for golf enthusiasts. Because, as she says, “many people enjoy golf, live on golf courses even if they don’t play,” Gaudet sees an opportunity to do for golf what Martha Stewart did for home design. She admits that any woman working in a field dominated by men will face unique frustrations, but she balances innovation with tradition.

Looking back, Gaudet did not become the overseas correspondent she dreamed of, but her life experiences were similar. With a laugh, she advises not always to listen to your parents. The student experience is a time to experiment, take classes out of pure interest, and then, when possible, take chances to experiment later in life.

Gaudet feels blessed to have spent time with so many different cultures, a goal she traces back to her time at Mason. She has visited numerous countries around the world and in many situations found herself the only American. On a visit to Tunisia, Gaudet rode a camel down the 18th fairway, which she describes as her favorite golf memory.

She demonstrates that life is like a round of golf: We may not always hit it straight, but sometimes we get a much cooler shot.
Bringing Generations of Music to Life

By Anne Reynolds

Murphy Hicks Henry, MAIS ’99, has led a musical life. Her love of bluegrass, combined with a strong sense of fairness, has led her to tell the stories of women pioneers in bluegrass and open the genre for the next generation of female artists.

Raised in northern Georgia on a musical diet of piano lessons and a background in ukulele and guitar, Murphy was a pre-med student at the University of Georgia in the early 1970s when she attended her first bluegrass festival in Lavonia, Georgia.

The festival was a decisive juncture in Murphy’s life and career. It was here, she explains, that she was “bitten by the bug.” She has never looked back. She switched her university major to food science and completed her studies; met and married her husband, mandolin player Red Henry; and started playing banjo. Then, “at the tail end of the folk boom,” she joined her first bluegrass band, Betty Fisher and the Dixie Bluegrass Band, as a bass player.

Her musical career has spanned more than 40 years. Murphy learned to play banjo from the banjo player in the Dixie Bluegrass Band and soon began playing the instrument in another band, Lowcountry. With Red, Murphy formed the band Red and Murphy, and recorded seven albums from 1976 through 1985.

Murphy has also become a successful music instructor, creating and teaching the Murphy Method of playing banjo, mandolin, guitar, fiddle, bass, Dobro, and ukulele to thousands of students around the world. The key to the Murphy Method, she says, is to teach students solely by ear, with no reliance on paper music. “Bluegrass is improvisational music,” she says. “You need to train your ear.”

She began teaching the Murphy Method in the early 1980s. Initially, she taught the classes in person and on cassette tapes then on videos and now on DVDs. The business remains a family affair, with husband Red handling the engineering and daughter Casey, also a musician, taking care of the downloads. Murphy and Casey teach at her studio in Winchester, Virginia, and offer camps and jam sessions for local students. The jam sessions are among her favorite teaching activities because they allow the class to “become a community, become a family.”

A recent addition to the camp offerings is a weeklong all-women’s banjo session, which surprised Murphy with a completely different atmosphere. Where the coed camps tended to attract mainly middle-aged men, the women-only camps had a much wider age range, from 12-year-olds to 70-year-olds. She combined less-experienced campers with more seasoned players and found that the more experienced musicians worked to help the newer ones. Henry noticed that they were “supportive and generous; patient, not competitive.”

“I love teaching,” says Murphy. “I am always trying to actively find a better way to teach.”

In the 1990s, Murphy’s music students included the late George Mason University professor Michael Kelley and his wife, Robin. They planted the idea of Murphy returning to school for a master’s degree, and in summer 1995, she enrolled. Her studies for her master of interdisciplinary studies degree, with a concentration in women’s and gender studies, were shaped in large part by her experience in the world of bluegrass.

In September 1993, Murphy attended the International Bluegrass Music Association awards show with her banjo-playing, then 15-year-old daughter. As part of the program, the organizers introduced a band of five young male musicians, the Bluegrass Youth All-Stars, and pronounced them “the future of bluegrass music.” Murphy says that she was apoplectic at the lack of female players and the characterization. When the show’s organizers explained that they had tried and failed to find a young woman to be part of the group, she resolved to raise awareness of the women in the bluegrass community.

Murphy began to construct a database and developed it into a quarterly newsletter, Women in Bluegrass, which she published from 1994 to 2003. During this time, she was busy fulfilling the requirements of her master’s degree, all while teaching music and playing. She wrote her master’s thesis on Sally Ann Forrester, whom Murphy terms, “by definition, the first woman in bluegrass,” Forrester played...

The book is a comprehensive history about women bluegrass recording artists. It is divided by decades, beginning with the 1940s, which were the early days of bluegrass music as a distinctive genre. Murphy continues through the 1990s and beyond, recounting the stories of more than 70 female performers or group acts. In addition to Forrester, Murphy introduces the reader to Rose Maddox, the Stonemans, Gloria Belle, and Hazel and Alice. More current artists, such as Alison Krauss, Rhonda Vincent, and the Dixie Chicks, are also included.

Murphy’s eight years of thorough research for the book consisted of extensive scrutiny of *Bluegrass Unlimited*, a monthly magazine dedicated to the genre; interviews with the artists; and “going to the music of the women”—simply listening to their songs. Through her book, she brings to life fascinating portraits of a collection of women with whom she shares a profession, passion, and heritage.

The book ends with the note that its focus is limited to women recording artists, and not those who were primarily singer-songwriters, or who handled the business of music for other musicians, or the women who write and publish about bluegrass. Murphy limits her study mainly to women who recorded music, because of the accessibility of information about them. Though she laments the necessity of leaving out the women musicians who delivered their music primarily through live radio shows and personal appearances, she has a remarkable catalogue of performers. She describes a world of musicians who struggle to be heard and appreciated.

By introducing the lives and music of these women pioneers, “bring[ing] their stories to the table,” and introducing and training the next generation of women in bluegrass, Murphy Henry is ensuring that these voices will be heard, appreciated, and serve as the foundation for bluegrass music for future generations.

*Through her book, Murphy brings to life fascinating portraits of a collection of women with whom she shares a profession, passion, and heritage.*
Cornerstone magazine had the pleasure of interviewing senior Yara Mowafy during the spring 2014 semester. Mowafy is majoring in global affairs and minoring in Arabic and conflict analysis and resolution. She and Jordan Bivings, a senior conflict analysis and resolution major, recently gained university and media recognition for their roles as co-founders of the Student Meal Assistance Fund at George Mason University. The fund provides meal vouchers to students in need.

Mowafy discussed the origins of and day-to-day operation of the fund, her packed schedule, her academic career, internships, and much more.

On the origins of her work with homelessness on campus . . .

In one class, I was assigned to talk about something I was passionate about, and in another class, I was supposed to write a paper about something that would change the world. Using these opportunities, I began to research unused meal plans on campus.

FACETS (an organization in Fairfax serving those in need) told me that there were homeless Mason students going there for meals and shelter, and we found in our research that there were about 30 students who were homeless on campus, and those were only the ones who reported themselves as such.

My initial idea was to donate unused meal plans to homeless shelters. In the process, I contacted several people who referred me to Jordan. I met her and found out that she had been trying to do the same thing but for a year longer than I had. She had an organization on campus called Mason Meals. Meanwhile, I had started a [meal sharing] petition that received 3,000 signatures from faculty, staff, students, and alumni, and then gained the support of Student Government.

On the Student Meal Assistance Fund . . .

It is a donation-based fund, and vouchers are distributed to students on a strictly confidential basis. As of March we raised nearly $5,000.

[Editor’s note: Those interested in helping support this fund may do so through give.gmu.edu.]

On why helping others is her personal passion . . .

I have always wanted to help those less fortunate than myself, and [the Student Meal Assistance Fund] is just one of my ways of doing so on campus. When I first started working on those class assignments, one part of the project was to get the students to sign the petition. To have everyone in the class sign it without hesitation, without being required to do so, really hit me. I hate to see people who don’t have anything be suppressed even more. And I don’t like leaving things unfinished.

On her daily schedule . . .

I am a full-time student, and in fall 2013 I worked three jobs. I interned with Partnerships for Finance and Development, a consulting company for World Bank, and worked two other paid front-office positions. I worked a total of 62 hours per week, in addition to my class schedule. I am also the president of Oxfam America at Mason and the vice president of community service for the National Society of Collegiate Scholars at Mason.

This spring, I was accepted into the Global Politics Fellows program in Arlington, and I am interning with the Fund for Global Human Rights. I was accepted into the accelerated master’s program in global affairs, and I plan on graduating in fall 2015.

I just have to stay busy. I’m very good at overloading myself. Every minute of my life is planned.

On why she stays busy . . .

I’ve had a job since my sophomore year of high school. I literally feel like it’s my mission to stay busy. I personally am very productive. I’m trying to fit in as many things as possible, make life as exciting as possible, and plan to continue that way for the rest of my life. I like doing different things, researching, and going to different countries, and not finding work and living life in the traditional ways. A lot of my friends had no idea I was doing this stuff. It’s surprising to them. In fact, school takes the least amount of time out of my day.
On her connection to Egypt . . .

I was born in Egypt, and I moved here when I was 12 years old. I speak Arabic, French, and English. But last spring, I went to Egypt for a study-abroad program at the American University in Cairo (through Mason’s Center for Global Education). While there, I interned and conducted research for an NGO [nongovernmental organization], which monitored the status and conditions of homeless children.

On her work in Egypt . . .

Every Tuesday, I did something called the Sense of Community Index Assessment at a local orphanage. Through several research tools, I figured out how these children felt, and if they felt like they belonged in the shelter or in the street. Shockingly, many of them said they felt more of a sense of belonging in the street. The cultural and traditional practices that took place in this institution contradicted the mission of the organization. I am going back in June 2014 to refocus on that project and fix the missing link, whether that be employee training, awareness, or other solutions.

On how boredom contributed to her work . . .

On the plane ride to Egypt in summer 2013, I got bored, so I drafted a cover letter to send to NGOs in Egypt, which I sent during a layover in Frankfurt. I ended up getting one of the internships I applied for.

On the demand for her expertise . . .

Ever since we were profiled in the media, we have been recognized in several ways. We recently achieved a huge milestone when the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors honored us. I spoke at Sacred Heart University in Connecticut and also Arizona State University. I did a video call with a student organization at the University of Alabama, and I am in talks to host a Ted Talk at Mason soon.

On her long-term goals . . .

I would love to intern with the United Nations in New York after obtaining my master’s degree, and I would particularly like to work for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency or the United Nations Development Programme.

On her short-term goals . . .

I want to complete the Global Politics Fellows program and my internship this semester, and then I want to travel to Egypt this summer. Last semester, I worked 62 hours a week, so now, being done at 3 p.m. each day, I don’t know what to do with myself.

Mowafy and Bivings (above) have received acclaim for their work combating homelessness on campus, most notably from the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. In addition, several media outlets have picked up on their work, including the Washington Post, WUSA 9, WTOP, the Fairfax Times, and Patch.

Mary Bauer, MA Foreign Languages ’90, established the Mary’s Scholarship for Homelessness Awareness and Advocacy at Mason. Mowafy, pictured above, and senior Yemesrach Mehari, at left, were the first two recipients of the award.

Students Yara Mowafy, left, and Jordan Bivings are recognized by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors for co-founding the Student Meal Assistance Fund, which offers meal vouchers to students in need.
Dream Big, Travel Bigger

By Rashad Mulla, BA Communication ’11

From a very young age, Peyton Lausch had a set of goals she was determined to accomplish. While in elementary school, she volunteered at the North Dakota Democratic Convention. The experience formed her ambition to intern for a U.S. senator. She decided before the age of 10 that she wanted to study in Paris. And one year, during an annual 24-hour road trip from her hometown of Fargo, North Dakota, to visit family in Virginia, she heard about George Mason University and decided this was the place she wanted to spend her undergraduate college career.

Lausch, now a senior economics major, has accomplished these goals—and more.

Lausch traveled from one end of the country to the other to get to George Mason, and once here she did not stop to take a breath. She immediately signed up for Mason Ambassadors, then Patriot Leaders, serving in some of the most time-consuming and critical roles in the university’s orientation and student leader endeavors.

“I could tell early on in our relationship that Peyton is the type of student who leads by example,” says Kaitlin Oyler Cicchetti (PhD candidate), associate director in the Office of Orientation and Family Programs and Services. “Peyton was always poised, friendly, mature, and set a great example for her peers in terms of professionalism. As I got to know her more over the years I learned that she is consistently this strong in terms of her leadership skills and abilities. She was a fantastic Patriot Leader and a strong student leader overall.”

Lausch brought her ambition and goals with her from Fargo, and from Fairfax she began to achieve them. In spring and summer 2013, she completed her long-held goal of studying abroad, first in Paris and then in Oxford, England.

“I wanted to study abroad in France since I was about 8 years old,” Lausch says. “And one of the items on my bucket list is to be bilingual. The program in France was the best fit for me as an economics major. I took four economics classes and one French language course. And I did a lot of sightseeing.”

Surpassing her elementary-school ambition, Lausch followed the trip to France with travel to Oxford, where she studied history, politics, and society (and fulfilled the requirements for two more economics classes). When she returned home, she turned to her career.

In 2011, Lausch made her foray into politics, with a yearlong internship with Senator Kent Conrad (D-ND). She answered constituent phone calls and mail and attended briefings and meetings for staff members. When the experience taught her that politics was not for her, she began searching for an opportunity to intern in the field of economics, which appealed to her in its balance of social science and mathematics.

Lausch seized the chance to follow this new objective at the American Trucking Associations, which needed an economic intern to make calculations and prepare reports for each state’s member organizations. (Perhaps, in addition to her background in economics, Lausch’s 24-hour
family drives across the United States prepared her for working with a professional organization based on long hours on the roads.)

Lausch’s position involved creating complex weekly and monthly reports. She found that the trucking industry provided a surprising picture of the economic climate of the nation.

“The trucking industry is fascinating to an economics major because trucks fuel so much of the economy,” Lausch says. “If trucks are going, that means goods are being sold. It’s a very large industry that people don’t usually think about.”

Now, Lausch has two internships on her resume, two trips abroad, valuable leadership experience, and a decent grasp of the French language, as long as the person speaking to her knows she is a non-native speaker, she adds. Just four years ago, Lausch only dreamed of these things, but perhaps the achievement isn’t as surprising as it seems.

“Peyton is confident in herself and her abilities, and really knows what she wants out of life both personally and professionally,” Cicchetti says. “She has used her experience at Mason to the fullest and has taken advantage of internships, involvement, leadership positions, study abroad, and other opportunities that have continued to strengthen her professionally and help her grow personally.”

Although her college career has been full of terrific experiences outside the classroom, Lausch has maintained excellent grades. She notes that her busiest semesters were sometimes the ones in which she did her best in the classroom and adds that she wouldn’t change her whirlwind schedule if she had to do it again. She learned by doing.

“For a lot of the things I did, I would not have learned while only sitting in a classroom,” she says. “I would have wanted to get into politics, I would not have found an economics internship, and I would not have been globally aware had I not done these internships, studied abroad, and gained experience in a practical sense.”

“If I had to do it all again, maybe I would study abroad a semester earlier. Because, you know, I have the travel bug.”

“I wanted to study abroad in France since I was about 8 years old. And one of the items on my bucket list is to be bilingual. The program in France was the best fit for me as an economics major. I took four economics classes and one French language course. And I did a lot of sightseeing.”

—Peyton Lausch
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The latest faculty addition to the Department of English Creative Writing Program, poet Peter Streckfus, MFA ’00, resides this year at the American Academy in Rome, where he represents George Mason University as the 2013–14 Brodsky Rome Prize Fellow in Literature. He and his wife, poet and translator Heather Green, begin teaching at Mason in September.

The following two poems come from Streckfus’s poem sequence “Videos of Fish.” The sequence speaks to the spirit of the poet’s late father, adapting devices from Dante and the biomechanics of the most primitive of vertebrate bodies, the fish, to envision paths of the disembodied soul. The poems are featured in Streckfus’s second collection, Errings, published this year by Fordham University Press.

**BODY OF WATER**

*My mother is a fish* declares Faulkner’s youngest in the novel that finds its points of view on the pathway to Hades. All things, at their base, are water,

Thales, the first Western philosopher, tells me. In life, my author, you chose birds to speak to, whistling at them through the threshold of your door from your wheelchair. I make now this poem, luminous, hollow channels, to give you a place to occupy—I give you water now, of which all things in this work are composed. Be now a fish in this sky mirror, soul body of the vertebrate animal, chordata—head of light holes and life hole, notochord, tail. As you lay dying, I gave you this—drops for your tongue, subtle rider of words, mute body of words:

here, a plastic straw to carry water to your lips.

**BODY OF MOVING AND LIGHT**

Like a silvery fish pulled out of the dark water. And so the opportunity for confusion or clarity is intensified seven times.

The camera shakes, disorienting—attached clandestinely to a belt, hidden below a backpack worn front-wise, it enters the market through an aisle between two ice covered, shallow cases that hold numerous fish, some still moving—a cod head, disembodied,

opens its life hole repeatedly, as if respiring, occupying the transitional state between tank life and the next, the state of ice,

and then the interior of the fish market, beyond the ice trays, tanks filled with separate species, each tank large enough to hold a full-grown person inside.