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George Mason University is an equal opportunity employer that encourages diversity.
Dear Alumni,

It’s my pleasure to welcome you to this issue of Cornerstone, your college’s magazine dedicated to alumni. Every issue takes up a theme and explores it in relation to the college and university. The focus this year is location, totally appropriate to a university whose existence and curricular offerings depend so much on our geographical locale as an important part of the regional community, the nation’s capital, and international concerns.

This issue explores the concept of location from different perspectives, including the curricula focus on global education, faculty interest in location as an abstract concept, and the Silk Road, which was so important to the integration of East and West some centuries ago. Scott Berg’s feature points to universities as the last locale of small town America. Other related features, such as the class notes, allow alumni to keep up with one another and allow the university to recognize the achievements of our former students.

Professor David Weisburd, a criminologist in the Administration of Justice Department, pens a feature on his theory on crime prevention. He argues that it is best to focus, not on criminals, but on places of crime in “hot spots.” Weisburd posits that, denied a favorable location, illegal activity declines or dries up.

On a side note, I want to mention that Weisburd has this year won the Stockholm Prize, the world’s greatest prize in the field of criminology given for lifetime achievement. The award, presented in Sweden on June 15, 2010, is modeled on the Nobel Prize.

Such an achievement, stunning, as it is, is not, I am happy to say, new to the college. Past and present members of your college have been awarded two Nobels, two Pulitzers, and a half dozen Guggenheims. Several have been inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and two (one a student) won McArthur “genius” grants. All this takes place in a college that values excellent teaching and community and university service.

I must note that even in these difficult economic times George Mason University continues to be committed to excellence in teaching, research, and service. High achievement in these areas has always focused us, and now with budget cuts a central fact of life, we are working even harder to achieve goals. You, as an alumnus, can help us, and I ask for that help now more ardently than ever before.

I ask for a donation to Mason. Your support will be used directly on the departmental and college level to support students, maintain a low student-to-teacher ratio, and continue the strong tradition of teaching. Please give as generously as you can. If you are unable to make a large gift, please make a small one. If every one of the nearly 50,000 alumni of this college gives even a small amount, those small gifts together will make a big difference. And I can assure you that today’s and tomorrow’s students will appreciate your support.

Sincerely,

Jack R. Censer, Dean
Go Patriots!
For first-year students, getting lost is a tradition as old as college itself. Failing to find a timely parking spot, misreading a campus map, wandering into the wrong classroom—all serve as physical analogues for deeply felt psychic disorientations. The nightmare that many of us can’t shake in later life (the one where we show up for the test but we don’t recognize the instructor, classmates, or room) is the tenacious expression of a freshman fear.

Beginnings don’t last forever, however, and our intellectual and social maturation as students occurs side by side with our growing familiarity with campus. As sophomores, we’ve staked out preferred dormitories, parking decks, vending machines, and computer labs. Then in a blink we’re juniors with majors, inhabiting ever more specialized academic spaces, better equipped to absorb the increasing seriousness of our ambitions. By the time we approach graduation, we’re stopping for a chat and getting coffee between classes while the first-years complain that 15 minutes isn’t enough time to get from Building X to Building Z. Finally, the place fits us, becomes us. We know where we feel most like ourselves; we have a clearer sense of how and where we belong.

College campuses infatuate me. I love them all: the several I’ve attended, the dozens I’ve visited, and the thousands I’ve never seen. Size doesn’t matter and neither does age. I love campuses that tuck themselves almost anonymously into urban neighborhoods, and I love campuses rising out of wheat fields in the middle of nowhere. I love the way giant land-grant campuses democratically absorb all comers and the way small liberal arts enclaves value their separateness and isolation. I must especially love campuses in the woods because I spent my first two years of college at St. John’s University almost solely because I’d made a single visit there during high school and was wide-eyed to find several poured-concrete buildings by the Hungarian-born modernist architect Marcel Breuer perched amidst the pine forests and freshwater lakes of northern Minnesota. I’ve made my infatuation an inheritance: My wife and I often spend weekend afternoons roaming the grounds of the University of Virginia or the University of Maryland in College Park with our sons. The
younger of the two, age four, attends Mason’s on-campus preschool, where field trips occasionally take his class to the Patriot Center to see a show or the lawn in front of Fenwick Library for a game of tag or duck-duck-goose.

For many years, while I’ve tackled more immediate writing deadlines, I’ve been gathering material for a possible book on the history, planning, and architecture of U.S. colleges and universities. As with most book ideas at this stage, the general thesis is three-quarters-baked, but here it is: in an era when some cities are barely affordable and others are barely livable, when far-flung suburbs and their autocentric arrangements encourage us to huddle inside our personal castles, when rural regions have undergone wrenching changes that have upset traditional community rhythms, the college campus has become the last place where we can still inhabit our image of an ideal American small town.

Like the best small towns or big-city neighborhoods, campuses insist that we be pedestrians. It’s an easy observation with enormous consequences. No matter how many thousands of students crowd our plazas, quadrangles, and walkways, the individual is king. Students use every inch of open space to play games of Frisbee, touch football, soccer, and, at Mason, even cricket. Eccentric professors become our landmarks; successful athletes and their coaches, our celebrities; campus presidents, our mayors. Campuses mimic towns in many other ways. They have their own governments, their own infrastructures, their own police forces, and their own switchboards and mail delivery systems. Main Street, under siege in the rest of America, is alive and well at college.

Campuses don’t exist simply because a railhead once popped up nearby or a highway once went past or a river happened to widen on a certain point on a surveyor’s map. Rather, at their best they are planned places, designed to satisfy complex functional and metaphysical needs. The language of learning is, after all, the language of architecture: the halls of academe, the portals of learning, the Ivory Tower. To say “in the classroom” connotes much more than sitting at a desk. Teachers move or retire, programs change, but rooms, buildings, and landscapes stay, sometimes changed and sometimes remarkably unchanged, for the rest of our lives helping us measure the staying power of our education.

Campuses go wrong when their metaphors become confused. Too many colleges insist on dressing all their buildings in the same material—red brick, sandstone, stucco, take your pick—working to create a timelessness and conformity that run counter to the essential purposes of higher education. Some campuses search too closely for models in the corporate world, reveling in large lobbies, oddly luxurious materials, and generic glass exteriors. Worse yet are campuses that fail to signal any relationship at all between elements, their buildings seemingly plopped down onto undifferentiated landscapes like objects hurled from the moon.

Campuses, like all architecture, work best when they speak honestly and with clear purpose. If you haven’t been back to Mason in awhile, you’ll find that its setting has been made almost new. Long gone are the days when its buildings and exterior spaces felt second-hand, rushed into being as the state realized it needed to provide educational options for the growing bedroom communities of Fairfax County. I do wish that some of our architectural metaphors were more self-confident, above all that our campus hub, the Johnson Center, hadn’t quite so self-evidently seemed to take its cues from the design of shopping malls. Like many others, I wish we could grab Old Town Fairfax by the collar and drag it two miles closer to campus. And we all wish we’d pioneered some

continued on inside back cover
The students surveyed are some of the 2009 recipients of the Dean’s Challenge. These scholarships are awarded to exceptional students who have excelled at Mason while making academically challenging choices. Funding comes solely from alumni donations to the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. For more information on this award, please visit chss.gmu.edu/deanschallenge.

Notes from the Field: DEFINITION

We asked graduating students to tell us about a specific experience that speaks to how they define themselves as students at George Mason University.

Susan Douglass, Doctor of Philosophy in History
The remarkable thing about beginning my doctoral program at an advanced stage in my professional career has been the way in which it has seamlessly integrated into what I have been doing all along. Formal education is often thought of as a suspension from ordinary life—as a series of hoops to jump through. This experience has been the opposite. The first two courses I took produced a web-based history project that found outside funding. I was granted an assistantship at the Center for History and New Media, where I contribute to the digital history project Children and Youth in History, a type of work I have been doing for more than a decade. My work at Mason informs and strengthens my career and has opened up many opportunities for teaching, writing, and research.

Megan Fowler, History and Theater
During fall 2007, I interned at the Folger Theatre. Coming from Memphis, Tennessee, I was a novice to Metro commuting. I quickly found that fitting in meant being rushed and occupied with either book or newspaper (Heaven forbid we talk!). On one such day, I was reading The Express (a free daily tabloid published by the Washington Post), when I noticed a sidebar about Nelson Mandela opening a mall in Johannesburg, South Africa. The article was brief, but I was breathless reading it. Having taken two courses on South Africa, I wanted to tell everyone to read the article: “Don’t you know this is important! It’s a landmark to the cultural, social, and economic progress South Africa has made!” Knowing that no one would listen, I sat with pursed lips until I came to work and blurted out everything to my employer and co-workers. That’s when I knew that I was without a doubt a history major.

Lubna Ghazi, Integrative Studies with Concentration in Organizational Administration, and Minors in Nutrition and Nonprofit Studies
All too often during my time at Mason, I have run into seemingly mundane situations that end up becoming unexpectedly major opportunities decided by my having to make an on-the-spot decision. As the type of person who likes having plans and thinking all my options through exhaustively, these situations have not exactly kept me in my comfort zone. One weekend, a friend of mine invited me to a student organization’s regional meeting. Not even having heard of the organization’s regional arm, I reluctantly went and ended up being surprisingly vocal. Toward the end, I discovered that this meeting also happened to be elections for the new board. To my surprise, I was nominated—and to my greater surprise, I accepted. Ordinary situations, major decisions, and a touch of spontaneity define my greatest experiences as a Mason student after that day.
One day this past semester when I was studying abroad in Australia, I was having a conversation with a group of other international students. One student began talking about Albania, and I found myself surprised at the number of other students who had never heard of the country. I quickly realized that the only reason I did know about the country was because two students I met at Mason were originally from Albania. It was at that moment that I realized how proud I was to be a Mason student. I realized not only how much I have learned over the past three years in the classroom, but also how much the Mason community in general has enabled me to become a more intelligent, worldly person. My exposure to members of diverse cultures at Mason is how I define myself as a student there.

If there were any one experience that speaks to how I define myself as a student at Mason, it would have to be the practical research experience I gained as a graduate research assistant. My assistantship has allowed me to experience the field of criminology and criminal justice research beyond the classroom. Throughout my assignment, I have had the opportunity to work with a number of different professors as well as criminal justice agencies, which has helped widen my knowledge of various topics within the discipline of criminology and criminal justice. In addition, while in this position, I’ve had the opportunity to help design research studies and learn the trials and tribulations of collecting data for sound research. Overall, this experience not only has helped develop my practical skill set, but also helped foster a passion for research that I hope to continue in my career.

“My work at Mason informs and strengthens my career and has opened up many opportunities for teaching, writing, and research.”

—SUSAN DOUGLASS, DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN HISTORY
American higher education has long been characterized by a considerable commitment to the liberal arts, that is, to exposing students to issues, modes of thought, and data in at least several disciplines in the social sciences and the humanities. Of course, the commitment varies with type of school, and the liberal arts are themselves constantly redefined—few now see a Latin requirement as an educational essential. But the commitment has survived in some ways remarkably well. At Mason, to take the example dearest to my heart, upward of a quarter of an undergraduate’s time in any of the schools and colleges will be taken up with liberal arts components of the general education program, complemented by additional work in the sciences and art.

Yet, the liberal arts are routinely under attack, and certainly concerns mount in the current economic climate. State legislators, and many donors, are often far more impressed with arguments about higher education’s role in job training—labor force development—than in the expansion of mental horizons. Concern about higher education’s role in citizenship (one of the arguments for the liberal arts) has declined. Growing interest in trying to save money on higher education, among other things, by shortening programs risks victimizing the liberal arts above all.

External attacks are not the only problem. Many liberal arts disciplines have become increasingly specialized and narrow, with fewer and fewer faculty interested in teaching more general courses or working on basic student habits of mind. A few disciplines have become so devoted to abstract theory and jargon that some of what is rated as top scholarship can’t really be translated into liberal arts education at all.

Yet, the liberal arts do remain vital, and their definition can be updated in ways that enhance their defense. Their most crucial role—at least pending some massive and unexpected improvement in levels of secondary school training—is in broadening the student mind, exposing students to types of problems and methods of thinking that will help them in their jobs (however technical these jobs may prove to be) and their lives as a whole. They provide experience in critical thinking in general, creative problem solving, and intellectual flexibility. At a time when we know that most students will go through a number of specific work assignments in their lives, as well as dealing with all sorts of issues and opportunities off the job, liberal arts habits of mind and mental agility are absolutely crucial. Revealingly, a number of foreign observers, for example, from China, Syria, or South Korea, are calling on institutions such as Mason to help devise liberal arts components for their systems, precisely because of the kind of creativity and out-of-box thinking that they can foster.

And in the American context itself, it becomes increasingly clear that along with established types of service, the liberal arts are also fundamental to helping expose students (again, regardless of major and ultimate job choice) to the issues and perspectives of an increasingly interconnected world. The humanities play an expanded role in exposing students to cultural differences and how to manage these intellectually. The social sciences help students explore the nature of the increasing connective economic and political systems that constitute the second principal feature of globalization. This occurs in a context in which, in the best liberal arts tradition, global trends are subjected to critical inquiry, neither blindly accepted nor blindly rejected.

Properly focused, the humanities contribute not only opportunities to explore cultural differences whether at literary or anthropological levels, but also to appreciate unexpected similarities and, perhaps most important, what happens in cultural encounters. Global systems—the social science side—sometimes get less attention, but it’s vital to help students explore how, for example, contemporary economic exchanges or global health systems have emerged and how they operate. Now, as in the past, the liberal arts can renew their definition and enhance their functions—another area where Mason programs have been pointing the way over the past several years.

Peter Stearns is the provost of George Mason University and author of more than 100 books. He is known on campus for his dry sense of humor, clever puns, and spontaneous quips.
Mason’s Global Higher Education Initiatives

As modern methods of communication continually increase efficiency, the world becomes a smaller and smaller place. The effect of this phenomenon on university and intellectual life has been nothing short of amazing. Whereas in the past ideas traveled in print over time and distance, today they move literally with the speed of light. Consequently, universities float, much like the structure of the internet, in a sea of ideas bombarded with ideas from every side. Professors and students who do not make the most of this reality inevitably lose ground.

Although most of the university’s intellectual interaction takes place on an individual rather than an institutional level, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) wants to create formal bonds with those in the international higher education community. We see these institutional links as critical to the education of our students and our faculty, and so we have begun to move forward.

Among the most active initiatives at present are those with three top Russian universities: Moscow State University (MSU), Saint Petersburg State University, and the Higher School of Economics (Moscow).

CHSS has launched joint undergraduate degrees in economics and business with MSU and Mason’s School of Management. The matriculating Russian students will spend most of their time here, with instruction from MSU and Mason professors.

With the other two Russian institutions, we are trying to establish dual master’s degrees in which Russian and Mason students earn degrees from both Mason and one of our partners. At this writing, the focus is on international relations and economics. The advantage for students would be considerable because they would be credentialed on two continents across a wide range of experiences.

Mason’s largest existing international effort is an endeavor with China, which partners Mason with other American universities and their Chinese counterparts. Chinese students admitted to the program divide their time with a home institution and one of the university locations abroad. At the end of an arduous schedule, Chinese students end up with two bachelor degrees. Mason professors and students benefit from their interaction with highly motivated students from different backgrounds who often hold differing viewpoints.

Perhaps, the most ambitious effort is still being planned. Korean government officials have invited several American universities and one English school to create a global campus in Incheon, a suburb of Seoul. Among the possible collaborating schools are the University of Southern California, Georgia Tech, North Carolina State, the State University of New York at Stony Brook, and the University of Delaware. Mason’s contribution would focus on global issues related to politics, the economy, and the environment, as well as take advantage of the Mason and the Korean locations so students could pursue internships in a variety of places. Planning will continue for at least several months before a final decision is made.

These three areas are just a sample of how individual faculty members and students contribute to the worldwide flow of ideas and concepts. Everyday, Mason faculty members work with academics and professionals around the world, and CHSS sends students to study-abroad programs on almost every continent. The sharing of ideas in a formal educational setting is a link that CHSS will continue to pursue.
Police practices are focused primarily on people. The practices often begin with people who call the police and are focused on identifying offenders who commit crimes. They end with the arrest of those offenders and their processing through the criminal justice system. Catching criminals on a case-by-case basis and processing them through the criminal justice system remains the predominant police crime prevention strategy.

My research, however, suggests that police should put places, rather than people, at the center of their practices. My point is not simply that places should be considered in policing, but that they should be a key component of the databases that police use, of the geographic organization of police activities, and of the strategic approaches that police use to combat crime and disorder.

What is a “Place”?

Place-based policing is not simply the application of police strategies to a unit of geography. Traditional policing in this sense is place-based, since police routinely define their units of operation in terms of large areas such as precincts and beats. Place, in place-based policing, refers to a different level of geographic aggregation. Places in this context are small micro units of analysis such as buildings or addresses, block faces or street segments, or clusters of addresses. Such places where crime is concentrated are commonly called “hot spots.”

Policing Places: What Is It?

Place-based policing emphasizes the specific places where crimes are concentrated. It begins with an assumption that something about a place leads to crimes occurring there. In this sense, place-based policing is theoretically based on routine activities theory (Cohen and Felson, 1979), which identifies crime as a matter of the convergence of suitable targets (e.g., victims), an absence of capable guardians (e.g., police), and the presence of motivated or potential offenders. Of course, all these elements must occur within the context of a place or situation. Accordingly, place-based policing recognizes that something about specific places leads to the convergence of these elements.

The strategies of place-based policing can be as simple as bringing extra patrols to high crime places, as Lawrence Sherman and I did in the Minneapolis Hot Spots Policing Experiment (1995). But place-based policing can also take a much more complex approach to the amelioration of crime problems at places. In the Jersey City Drug Market Analysis Project (Weisburd and Green, 1995), for example, we used a three-step program (comprising identifying and analyzing problems, developing tailored responses, and maintaining crime control gains) to reduce problems at drug hot spots.

The Advantages of Policing Places

In the Seattle Crime Trends at Places Study (Weisburd et al., 2004), my colleagues and I showed that crime is highly concentrated in a small number of places in a city. Over a 14-year period, about 4 percent of the street segments each year were found to contain half of the crimes recorded. This concentration seems to be even greater for specific types of crime. For example, we found that 86 street segments out of 29,849 accounted for one-third of the total number of juvenile crime incidents in Seattle (Weisburd, Morris, and Groff, 2009). Comparing the concentration of crime across people as opposed to places, we found that about one-quarter as many places as people accounted for 50 percent of crime in Seattle. These data suggest that there are important opportunities for the police to identify and do something about crime by focusing on crime hot spots.

The Stability of Place-Based Targets

There is perhaps no better-established fact in criminology than the variability and instability of offending across the life course. It is well-established that a primary factor in this variability is the fact that most offenders age out of crime often at a relatively young age. But there is also evidence of strong instability in criminal behavior for most offenders, even when short periods are observed. This may be contrasted with developmental patterns of crime at place, which suggest much stability in crime incidents over time.
In our Seattle study (Weisburd et al., 2004), we found not only that about the same number of street segments were responsible for 50 percent of the crime each year, but that the street segments that tended to evidence very low or very high activity at the beginning of the study period in 1989 were similarly ranked at the end of the period in 2002. While there are developmental trends in the data, what is most striking is the relative stability of crime, at place, over time. This also means that if the police are able to do something about crime hot spots they are likely preventing long-term chronic crime problems.

The Effectiveness of Place-Based Policing

Lawrence Sherman, Lorraine Green, and I were among the first researchers to show that hot spots policing could be effective in doing something about crime. At a time of skepticism regarding the effectiveness of police practices, we found that concentrating patrols on crime hot spots could benefit crime prevention. One long-standing objection to focusing crime prevention geographically is that it will simply shift or displace crime to other places not receiving the same level of police attention, that crime will simply “move around the corner.”

Given the common assumption of spatial displacement, my colleagues and I at the Police Foundation conducted a study in 2006 to directly test whether hot spots policing strategies did simply “move crime around the corner.” The study was singularly focused on examining to what extent immediate spatial displacement occurred as a result of hot spots policing strategies. The findings in this study reinforced a growing challenge to the displacement hypothesis. No evidence of immediate spatial displacement was found; however, strong evidence of spatial diffusion of crime control benefits was found. Places near targeted areas that did not receive special police intervention actually improved.

That study provided us with the advantage of qualitative data collection to understand why place-based policing does not simply push crime around the corner. We

continued on next page
found that offenders did not perceive all places as having the same opportunities for crime. For example, easy access for clients was a critical criterion for drug dealers, as was relatively few residents who might call the police about prostitutes. The need for special characteristics of places to carry out criminal activity meant that crime could not simply displace to every place in a city. Indeed, the number of places evidencing such characteristics might be relatively small. In turn, spatial movement of offenders from crime sites often involved substantial effort and risk by offenders. As one drug dealer told us, “...you really can’t deal in areas you aren’t living in, it ain’t your turf. That’s how people get themselves killed.” Moreover, offenders, like nonoffenders, come to feel comfortable with their home turf and the people they encounter.

Increasing Prevention while Decreasing Incarceration

Over the past two decades, we have begun to imprison Americans at higher and higher rates. Spending on prisons has increased at more than double the rate of spending on education and health care. About 2.3 million Americans are in prisons or jails, institutions that are often dehumanizing and degrading. Policing places puts emphasis on reducing opportunities for crime at places, not on waiting for crimes to occur and then arresting offenders. Successful crime prevention programs at places need not lead to high numbers of arrests, especially if methods are developed that discourage offenders. In this sense, place-based policing offers an approach to crime prevention that can increase public safety while decreasing the human and financial costs of imprisonment for Americans. If place-based policing were to become the central focus of police crime prevention, rather than the arrest and apprehension of offenders, we would likely see at the same time a reduction of prison populations and an increase in the crime prevention effectiveness of the police.

What Must Be Done?

For place-based policing to succeed, police must change their unit of analysis for understanding and doing something about crime. My research suggests that it is time for police to shift from person-based policing to place-based policing. While such a shift is largely an evolution in trends that have begun over the past few decades, it will nonetheless demand radical changes in data collection in policing, the organization of police activities, and particularly the overall worldview of the police. It remains true today that police officers see the key work of policing as catching criminals. It is time to change that worldview, so that police understand that the key to crime prevention is in ameliorating crime at place.

Bibliography


George Mason University senior Megan Fowler has spent much of the past two years connecting the past and the present with a series of events titled “Never Forget.”

Fowler, a 23-year-old double major in history and theater, has brought Holocaust survivors and World War II veterans to campus in an effort to “use eyewitness testimonies and media to reach current generations,” she says.

Fowler drew from a network she built during her internships at the Holocaust Museum, the Folger Theatre, and the Smithsonian to bring powerful speakers to Mason.

In 2008, Manya Friedman headlined the inaugural Never Forget event. Friedman, who lived in the ghettos and survived a death march and a concentration camp during World War II, shared her experiences with those in attendance. Fowler worked with Friedman during her internship at the Holocaust Museum. As part of her internship, Fowler worked vigorously to locate survivors of the Holocaust. Her fluency in French helped her research and contact French Holocaust organizations.


“I think one of the big things the Never Forget series has done—because it’s such an embracing program—was to really put Mason out there to these institutions in D.C. and local organizations in Fairfax,” says Fowler.

The series, which was funded partially by the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, helped Fowler bridge a gap.

According to Fowler, the Never Forget series “shows that Mason is aware of the historical significance of past generations to our current one, that we need to connect with those generations and keep the collective memory because we can learn from them.”

“My biggest issue is that people don’t talk to their elders,” she says. “That’s my big goal for these programs; for people to get away from the TV, put down the Xbox, go talk to these people before they leave.”

Fowler will graduate in the spring and hopes to become an educational programmer for a museum. Her goal is for another Mason student to continue connecting past and current generations and keep the Never Forget series alive.
“Silk Road”—the very name is romantic, evoking camel caravans loaded with treasures crossing the glistening sands of Asia. Actually, it’s a 19th-century German term that has come to stand for a host of things, real and imagined.

There never was a single road. Rather, the term is used by scholars to stand for the complex of overland trade routes and trade relations that linked Chinese markets to those far to the west, across the mountains and deserts of Central Asia, through the caravan cities of the Islamic world and ultimately to the Mediterranean. Marco Polo has become its popular hero, though he was unusual; most merchants traded their goods between local markets. While the occasional carpet or porcelain bowl may have traveled the whole distance, their human agents rarely did.

In recent years, “Silk Road” has been used metaphorically to describe collaborations between far-flung Asian cultures, as in cellist Yo-Yo Ma’s Silk Road Ensemble of musicians from across Asia. It has become a popular name for restaurants, boutiques, and anything Central Asian. In China, it is a popular tourist circuit that connects Xi’an, the ancient capital, with the oasis cities of far-western Xinjiang Province. In Turkey, the term is used to lure tourists into silk shops in the ancient bazaars of Istanbul and Bursa. All these uses have some legitimate connection to the history of east–west overland trade and the trading cultures along the way.

Overland trade has always carried a cargo of ideas as well as luxury objects. The ancient and medieval merchants of the Silk Road were fundamental to the spread of Buddhism to the east and Islam to the west. Missionaries traveling with the caravans carried Zoroastrian, Jewish, Manichean, and Christian ideas from Iraq and Iran as far east as China, supported by the rulers of states through which the Silk Road touched. The arts of ancient and medieval Asia were as profoundly affected by the exchange of spiritual ideas as they were by the exchange of luxury goods along the way.

The Silk Road carries some romantic nostalgia as well, suggesting a golden age when people of different races and creeds traded peacefully and productively across the vast distances of Asia, spurred to creativity by cultural encounters. The contrast with the current situation in Afghanistan—once a crossroad of ancient trading routes—looks sharp and compelling. If Marco Polo is the hero of the Silk Road in popular imagination (and pasta his trophy), the Taliban may seem the antithesis, blowing up the great Buddha statues of Bamiyan on the evening news in March 2001. All these notions are simplistic, of course. There were notable periods when the trade routes across Asia moved goods and ideas efficiently, notably in the Mongol era when Marco Polo traveled. For most of Asian history, however, trade conditions varied from state to state, from ruler to ruler, and the routes shifted accordingly. The same can be said of religious rivalries and the treatment of sacred sites.

I think it’s no accident that the Silk Road became a popular notion in the 1980s and 1990s. Like many people, I was first drawn to the topic by Peter Hopkirk’s wonderfully engaging book Foreign Devils on the Silk Road (1980). It portrays a raucous world of Western archeologists and spies, often the same people, plundering western China around 1900 for its treasures and uncovering a hitherto unsuspected world of lost Buddhist oasis kingdoms. It was a new story for most of us, coinciding with the boom in tourism to China and the Indiana Jones movies. Shortly thereafter, the breakup of the Soviet Union into the “-stans” of Central Asia and the opening of China’s Xinjiang borders made long-distance overland trade a reality again. In 2002, the annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival turned the National Mall into a Silk Road extravaganza, with exhibits, music, and craft demonstrations grouped around major
theme sites stretching from Japan to Venice. Tibetan monks and Italian pasta chefs rubbed elbows in a hot, dusty, historical fantasy landscape.

For me, Silk Road studies have been a happy combination of my diverse interests and experiences. Trained in Byzantine and Islamic art and architecture, I am familiar with the Turkish and Mediterranean end of the trade routes. Over the years, I’ve developed strong side interests in China and the history of textiles, and have always loved travel and languages. My scholarly interest in the Silk Road concerns the material culture—the visual arts, cultural objects, and architecture—of culturally mixed places along the trade routes. My own work explores the architecture of mosques in China, Chinese temples in Indonesia, Mediterranean centaurs in the textiles of the Taklamakan desert, and so on. I am also interested in the way our museums display and interpret the art of the Silk Road, which challenges so many of our traditional categories and expectations.

In traditional art history, we are taught to seek out the paradigms: Italian Renaissance art should look like it does in Florence and Rome, for instance, not how it looks in the provinces. Nowadays, however, we like to be broader, more global if you like, in our outlook. Silk Road studies are all about margins, interactions, transferred traditions, and hybrid results. Teaching the art of the Silk Road at Mason is a challenge on the one hand and a joy on the other. The challenge is that so many of the names, places, categories, and histories are new and remote for most of my students. The joy is that Mason students are so culturally diverse and becoming so globally aware that they embrace the challenge. Our endless wars in Afghanistan, our complex engagement with the Islamic world, the developing states in Central Asia, and the rise of China and India have made the study of the medieval Silk Road seem less exotic and more important every year.

So did Marco Polo really bring pasta back from China to Italy? Oh, it’s probably a myth, but that isn’t really the point. Simply asking the question opens up whole new ways of looking at the premodern world.
THE GLASS GIRL

He sees

He sees her kneeling on the riverbank. She tips her face towards the rushing current and opens her mouth.

The way the icy water flows through her crystal veins makes him want to pick up a limb and drink—perhaps from her palm, a natural cup, but one with no lip on which to rest his lip. Instead, his teeth would clank clumsily against her cold smoothness, ill-equipped to pierce her, to make even the tiniest of holes.

The fluid in those fingers, that palm, glistening in the sunlight, in her raised arms and upturned hands, taunts him,

makes him wish for her to be broken. He could break her, at the wrist or elbow, and drink from her, the jagged-edges splitting his lip, his blood mixing with her water before cooling his parched throat.

THE GLASS GIRL

She wants

She has a secret: she wants to collect wispy dandelion clocks, the white fluffy heads made of so many delicate hairs that it is impossible to hold them in a bunch and keep them whole.

She wants to hold one at a time and gasp, the intake of air making her stomach rise before forming her mouth into a perfect “O” and blowing out from deep in her lungs.

She wants to watch, as the perfect gauzy white sphere breaks apart, each wisp getting carried by her breath, by the wind, before falling to the ground.

She wants to stand in the same spot long enough to see the yellow heads pop up out of the green grass, the sun marking its trail.

She wants to lie down among them with arms spread out wide, palms up, eyes closed, seeing red.

She wants to be interrogated. What will you ask her?

—Erin Kemper

Erin Kemper received a BA in English and history from Georgetown University and an MFA in poetry from George Mason University. She currently teaches English at George C. Marshall High School.
Tennille Parker was a high school senior, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, who had never heard of George Mason University when she received a brochure and an application in the mail. Receiving an actual application did the trick. She sent it in, came down to visit the campus, and fell in love. That was more than 15 years ago. Today, Parker is married to fellow Mason alumnus Jerod M. Parker, BS Electrical Engineering ’97; a season ticket holder to men’s basketball; president-elect of the George Mason University Alumni Association; a regular donor to the university; and already planning to encourage her two-year-old daughter to apply to Mason.

Some of Parker’s fondest memories of her years as a government major (now government and international politics) are of her time in the classroom, but many are of her life outside academics. She smiles as she recalls one snowy dawn when a scheduled track practice turned into a morning of sledding on meal trays—she quickly skims over the part of the story when she landed head-first in the snow.

And so many Mason traditions are now deeply rooted within her: Mason Day, basketball, college food, class registration, Patriot Pride. But when Parker does think about how her academic experiences at Mason influenced her life, she thinks about the powerful opportunities she has had. Internships at the Children's Defense Fund and the Urban Institute led her into graduate school at Syracuse University and a career in local government. The challenges of upper-level courses and the “freedom to think out loud” gave her the confidence to take intellectual risks and speak her mind. In addition, the school’s proximity to Washington, D.C., enabled Parker to experience all the cultural and entertainment opportunities in the nation’s capital.

Today, Parker is a program analyst for the City of Falls Church, Virginia. She works on housing and human services program development. She parlayed her Mason degree into a challenging and exciting career, through which she can give back to her community.

And her blood still runs green and gold. As president-elect of the Alumni Association, she is poised to build that feeling of Patriot Pride in 120,000 alumni worldwide. When asked why she would take on such a daunting task, Parker replies, “When you are a part of something great, you want to see that ball keep rolling. I remember those who invested in me and saw possibilities in me that I couldn’t even begin to fathom. Mason invested in me, and I want to make sure that someone else has that same opportunity. My Mason experience as a student might be over, but my connection to this university will be lifelong.”
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1972
Rita Fletcher has retired from teaching history in the Union, South Carolina, public school system but remains involved in promoting the teaching of history and social studies in South Carolina.

1973
Kathleen Clarken Buschow was appointed the city clerk for the City of Falls Church, Virginia, in January 2000. She has earned her first credential as a certified municipal clerk and is working on her master municipal clerk designation. An active member of the Virginia Municipal Clerks Association, she finds working in local government to be the most fulfilling of all her previous jobs.

1974
Marjorie Stahl (Warren) competed in a decathlon in 2007 and won her age group (75–79) at the world championship in a decathlon in 2007 and won her age group.

1975
Jim McCarthy is vice president, program management division of QORE Property Sciences, one of the nation’s largest design firms. He is responsible for QORE’s relationships with its largest architecture, engineering, and construction firms. Although McCarthy travels throughout the southeast, his office is based in the Orlando, Florida, area. He and his wife, Liz, have two sons attending the University of North Florida.

1976
Kathy Zaccardi started teaching English for speakers of other languages in the Fairfax County Public School system in 2000.

1977
Bernadette L. Grigonis is a publications officer and an editor for the federal government.

1978
Ramon E. Planas Jr. retired from the Fairfax County Public Schools and, since 2004, has taught Spanish at Mason.

1980
Bill Vogt retired in 2003 after 38 years working with various Department of Defense agencies. He currently resides in Henderson, North Carolina.

1981
David Lear received an MPA from Mason in 1989 and then founded Lear International in 1990. From there, he transitioned into his current position, performing finance and contracts administration under contract to the Australian government.

1982
Einar S. Olsen is the assistant regional director-management analysis for the National Park Service in Washington, D.C.

1983
Joel Coulter is a business development manager for Omega Systems.

1984
Stanley Tetlow retired from the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service in August 2000 as a battalion fire chief. He now helps the Stafford County Fire Marshal’s Office by doing fire safety inspections. Tetlow is a member of the advisory board of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at George Mason University.

1985
Rick Lowrey is the executive vice president for products and strategy for Deltek, a Northern Virginia-based enterprise software organization.

1986
Lou Bell Pollard was honored as a Ray of Hope for her volunteerism in the Hampton Roads, Virginia, area, where more than $300,000 was raised to help provide essential services to at-risk youth. Pollard; her husband, Bill; and daughter, Betsy, reside in Suffolk, Virginia.
1987
Michael P. Vandermark is an inspector with the Department of Homeland Security.

1988
Joseph A. Esposito was appointed director of the Center for the Study of Catholic Higher Education. He is the editor of *The Newman Guide to Choosing a Catholic College: What to Look For and Where to Find It* (2007) and is a former deputy undersecretary for international affairs at the U.S. Department of Education.

Wade R. Townsend lives in Burke, Virginia, with his wife and four children, and has worked for the Department of Homeland Security since 2002.

1989
Nancy Meyer has worked for the Department of Veterans Affairs for 17 years as a program analyst in software development. She lives and works in St. Petersburg, Florida.

1990
Christine Black lives in Overland Park, Kansas, with her husband, Steve, and children, Drew, Matthew, and Kara.

Nancy (Kasen) Ritchie lives in Virginia with her husband and two children. Ritchie is employed by Cranial Tap, a virtual world development company.

1991

Maria I. Bryant was awarded the 2007 Faculty Excellence Award for teaching at the College of Southern Maryland.

Daniel Louie designs slot machines for WMS Gaming (Chicago and the United Kingdom), with recent games designed after the movies *Airplane!* and *The Wizard of Oz*.

1992
Robyn H. Snyder is a program manager of supplier diversity for Defense Messaging Systems Group. She is responsible for the Undersea Systems Group in Manassas, Virginia; Riviera Beach, Florida; and Mitchel Field, New York.

Miriam Van Scott has had two reference books on comparative religion (*Encyclopedia of Heaven* and *Encyclopedia of Hell*) published and has worked on programs for the History Channel, ABC’s 20/20, the Learning Channel, Cronkite Ward Media, ABC World News, Media General Cable, and Sci-Fi. She also wrote a children’s book, *Candy Canes in Bethlehem*, which highlights Christmas traditions from around the world.

Sylvia Van Voorthuizen has been an international language guide in the Washington, D.C., area and an art teacher for Fairfax County. Her most recent work includes setting up art therapy classes for a homeless group in Washington, D.C.

Jennifer D. Washeleski has been a member of the U.S. Department of State Foreign Service since 2002. She is currently serving in Washington, D.C., as country assistance coordinator for the Caucasus, managing more than $170 million in U.S. foreign assistance to Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. On April 18, 2009, she married Swen Janke.

1993
Jennifer Buchko lives in Dumfries, Virginia, with her husband, Mark (a 1989 Mason alumnus), and two children, Emma and Timothy. She teaches third grade in Fairfax County.

Tobin Foryt is the national director of sales and marketing for a regional reference laboratory in Rochester, New York.

Joan Irwin has worked for the Fairfax County Department of Family Services for more than 11 years. She supervises a team of workers that determines eligibility for persons in need of public assistance.

Barbara Kukrus Knauf was promoted to senior assistant director of alumni affairs at St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York, in 2007. She is responsible for reunion and special projects fund raising.

1994
John Goodman works as a project manager for a small, growing software development company in San Diego, California, that focuses on government contracting.

Christopher Polk has worked for the Army Inspector General since November 1995. In December 2008, he was promoted and transferred to Fairbanks, Alaska.

Kevin Scott has worked for nonprofit organizations and taught seventh-grade history for seven years.

Meg Ventrado has been the executive director of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art in Staten Island, New York, since July 2004. She is also a board member of the Staten Island Not-for-Profit Association, an organization that advocates for and assists local nonprofits.

1995
Laura Delisi is a teacher in the Fairfax County Public School system.

Michael Jones is a grants management associate for the Community Foundation, serving Richmond and central Virginia. He also is a volunteer group facilitator and member of the Curriculum Development Committee for the Richmond Organization for Sexual Minority Youth Board. He and his partner of nine years, Shawn McNulty, reside in Henrico County.

Shonda (Mason) Milhon is a project manager on a 90-person contract with the U.S. Navy.

Mary Walters is a medical/surgical intensive care nurse at a large community hospital in Richmond, Virginia.

1996

1997
Owen Conner works as a museum curator at the National Museum of the Marine Corps.

Daniel Lash is a certified financial planner.

Tennille Smith Parker has been working for the City of Falls Church, Virginia, Housing and Human Services Division since 2003. She is also the president-elect of the George Mason University Alumni Association.

Natalie Sposato has been working in the counseling and social services field since leaving Mason.

Doug Trout works for the Jefferson Scholars Foundation at the University of Virginia.
1998
Brooks Robinson joined the U.S. Department of Defense (Navy) as the economic advisor for the U.S. Pacific Command in Honolulu, Hawaii, in December 2007.

1999
Joseph P. Harrington is a colonel in the U.S. Army. He and his bride, Nancy, welcomed their first child, Patrick, into the world on March 17, 2009. Shortly thereafter, the family packed up their Georgetown home and moved to Oklahoma, where Harrington assumed command of the 75th Fires Brigade at Fort Sill.

Lara Henry worked in the charity management field until 2005. She then moved to Ireland and is now a stay-at-home mother to her daughter.

Robert Murphy is vice president of business development and sales at Holocom, a California-based company specializing in secure network infrastructure for the U.S. military and government agencies.

Lindsay Rubin works for a global public relations firm, Edelman, in its New York office, where she is in the consumer marketing practice and represents major brands.

2000
Ruth Molyne is pursuing a second bachelor’s degree in psychology with a minor in international comparative studies.

2001
Dave Bjerke married Annika Krusch on October 27, 2007. He works for the Fairfax County, Virginia, Office of Elections as an election specialist.

Cathy Champigny accepted a staff position with the undergraduate program in Mason’s School of Nursing in March 2007. She recently became a member of Mason’s Staff Senate.

Ronda L. Dearing is a licensed psychologist in New York and a research scientist at the University at Buffalo’s Research Institute on Addictions.

Leslie Hawkins works for the National Institutes of Health and oversees its knowledge management program.

Delores Lucas has taught in the Prince William County Public Schools since graduating from Mason. She earned a master’s in education in 2004.

Buzz Solomon has been teaching as an adjunct professor at SUNY Orange Community College for the past nine years.

Craig Williams lives in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and serves as the director of administration and finance for the Fort Wayne-Allen County Airport Authority.

2002
Kevin Cigler works for the MITRE Corporation. He is the team lead for the videoconferencing division of the information technology network group and manages four full-time technicians, a college intern (whom he hand-selected from Mason), and a high school intern.

Kristina Dorville was named deputy chief of staff for the National Protection and Programs Directorate with the Department of Homeland Security. Her directorate comprises roughly 800 employees, with an operating budget of $1.3 million. The department’s main portfolio areas are in cybersecurity, infrastructure protection, risk management, and the U.S. VISIT program (biometric data capture). She also is in her fifth season as the head swim coach at Washington-Lee High School in Arlington, Virginia.

Joshua Marks resides in California and is a freelance journalist based in Los Angeles, California. He is a web editor for the Hollywood trade newspaper Variety and blogs about hockey for a web site called SportsFanLive.com.

2003
Ilir Ibrahimi is the vice president of public affairs at the American University in Kosovo.

Matthew Jackson is a partner relationship manager at Research in Motion in Ontario, Canada.

Tatiana Guerra Miró worked for five years at the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators as a policy and communications coordinator. Last May, she completed a master’s in public communications from American University. She currently works as a public relations consultant for area nonprofits.

Jennifer Topscher is back in school pursuing a degree in nursing at Northern Virginia Community College.

Kevin Turner works as a contractor for the federal government and is a freelance videographer.

IN MEMORIAM
Jeff Chamberlain
1949–2009

The university mourns Jeff Chamberlain. Chamberlain joined George Mason University’s Department of Modern and Classical Languages in 1983, where he taught French linguistics and Latin.

He served the Mason community well as associate chair of Modern and Classical Languages for four years, chair of the department for eight years, and university marshal between 2000 and 2008.

Donations may be made in his memory to the George Mason University Foundation, Jeffrey T. Chamberlain Endowed Fund for Modern and Classical Languages (www.give.gmu.edu) or call 703-993-8706 for more information.
Bryan K. Weaver works for the Federal Bureau of Investigation as a management and program analyst in Washington, D.C.

2004
Melissa Bradby received a master’s in political science in 2008 from Mason and joined the Teach for America program. Currently, Bradby is the assistant to the head of a charter school in southeast Washington, D.C., that serves fourth through eighth grades.

Andrea Rittman Lassiter is a professor at Minnesota State University.

Brian Zetlin is employed with Northrop Grumman as a financial analyst III and is working on a master’s degree in management.

2005
Chantee Christian is a government contractor in the Washington, D.C., area.

Ashley Jackson is in graduate school at the University of Chicago, School of Social Service Administration, pursuing a master’s in social work.

Safaa Nhairy moved to London, England, in 2005 and completed a master’s in international law. She established a magazine called The Leader World.

Abeye Tedla is married and living in Alexandria, Virginia, with his wife and two children. Since leaving Mason, he has acted in the film Teza by renowned director Haile Gerima. He received the award for best male supporting actor at the Carthage Film Festival in Tunisia in 2008, and Teza received best screenplay at the Venice Film Festival in 2009. Also in 2008, Tedla went to Louisiana as a data management contractor for the Federal Emergency Management Agency as part of the Gulf Coast Recovery effort for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. In addition, he was a contributing author to the IBM textbook Introduction to the Main Frame Computing.

2006
Ethan Bailey lives in Chicago and works in business development with the sports marketing agency Intersport.

Eric Chapman moved to Asheville, North Carolina, after leaving Mason. He gained experience and expertise in the wine industry and then moved back to Northern Virginia. Chapman has worked alongside producer and director Ron Maxwell on a documentary project. He also attained his Level II Wine and Spirits Education Trust Certification.

Zachary Dettwyler moved to the Sacramento, California, area and is in the process of having his first novel, a fantasy-science fiction piece titled Canon Fodder published.

Juanita Gavan is a prekindergarten teacher at Bright Horizons in Fairfax, Virginia.

Paul S. Henriques is the legislative librarian for Dickstein Shapiro LLP.

Ryan Lowry works in Falls Church, Virginia, in human resources for ExxonMobil.

Shanna Soles is employed by Booz Allen Hamilton.

Lauren K. Vessey joined Technology and Management Services as an analyst in June 2009. She provides support for the Office of Fossil Energy’s Environment, Security and Health Division at the Department of Energy. In February, she traveled around India for three weeks to sightsee and participate in a program at the Sangam Girl Scout World Center in Pune.

Jessica Williams is an associate for Travesky and Associates, a consulting firm in Fairfax, Virginia. She also is an assistant cheer coach at Mason.

2007
Bruce Baldwin has a career in the Foreign Service as a special agent with the Department of State’s Diplomatic Security Service.

Kristina Downs, a lecturer at Northern Virginia Community College, has accepted an invitation from the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology at Indiana University, Bloomington, to pursue a PhD in folklore.

Kim Hilton is an office manager for Mason's student centers.

Robert “Trent” Moyer is studying Zen at the Zen Center of Los Angeles, California, and works as a host at a restaurant in Beverly Hills.

Jesse Rhodes is an editorial assistant at Smithsonian Magazine in Washington, D.C.

Allison Ruyak is a government contractor event planner for the U.S. Air Force.

Rebecca Struwe completed a master’s degree in international relations from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. She joined the Foreign Service in June 2009.

2008
Afra Ahmad received a Fulbright Fellowship after leaving Mason and has been in the United Arab Emirates conducting research under the fellowship and learning Arabic through a Critical Language Enhancement Award.

2009
Michaela Acker married Michael Witzak in October 2009.

Mariat Algharabally is pursuing a master’s in multilingual and multicultural education at Mason.

David Anderson works in Arlington, Virginia, as senior historian for the Air National Guard History Office, National Guard Bureau.

Latoya Banks works for the Department of Justice as a paralegal.

Megan Barnes is a high school English teacher in Roanoke, Virginia.

Dan Blau is studying Chinese in Changchun, China.

Katie Bowen has enrolled in the higher education and student affairs track at the University of South Carolina to pursue a master’s degree.

Martha Brach is a sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade social studies teacher and head of the middle school department at Holy Cross Elementary School in Garret Park, Maryland.

Docia Casillas is a labor relations supervisor with the Department of Justice. Casillas has oversight of 10 attorneys and 7 nonattorneys who represent the agency in third-party proceedings on employment issues.

Paul Coffield is enrolled at George Washington University, where he is pursing a master’s in public policy.

Carol Dockham has been accepted into Georgetown University’s PhD in history program.

Leah Donnelly works in a library and attends librarian school.

Sean Eddy is attending graduate school at Virginia Tech for a master’s in community counseling.

Franklin Fong is employed by New Horizons Security Services.
Mason’s Center for Global Education offers international study, research, service, and leadership opportunities to Mason students, alumni, faculty, staff, and members of the general public. Last year, dozens of alumni took advantage of Mason study-abroad opportunities, particularly during the holiday breaks.

In this photo, Mason students on safari are searching for large herbivores and carnivores to further understand their role in the conservation of Kenya’s Great Rift Valley ecosystem.

Programs are available in more than 50 countries. Visit globaled.gmu.edu to find out where you can go.
Claire Forman is an associate with the Charles G. Koch Charitable Foundation in Arlington, Virginia. She is based in Midland, Michigan, at the Mackinac Center for Public Policy as the research analyst to the president.

Johanna A. Gotay is pursuing a master’s of public policy at Mason’s School of Public Policy. She also is an admissions representative in Mason’s Office of Admissions and a fellow for a nonprofit in Washington, D.C.

Alan Hughes teaches at Northern Virginia Community College.

Regine Jean-Francois is pursuing a master’s in public health at Mason.

Randy Karl works for the Department of Defense doing procurements.

Elizabeth Kimbell is going to London where she will intern for Global Radio News.

John Lamanna works for an experimental e-marketplace headquartered in Vienna, Virginia.

Katherine Lister is the assistant director of financial aid at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia.

Alex Lord works for Kadix Systems, a management and information technology consulting company based in Arlington, Virginia. She is currently a program analyst on a Kadix contract with the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Dominica Martin is going to law school, where she will focus on international studies and gender equity.

Valerie Manuel is a branch manager at a credit union.


Khalil Menzies is getting married and studying Arabic and Farsi to become an iman in Iran.

Al Nadir is a major in the U.S. Army and is being deployed to Afghanistan.

Maria Obando is enrolled in graduate school at the University of North Carolina for her master’s and PhD in English.

Nicole Osier is preserving Civil War battlefields with the Civil War Presentation Trust.

Trevor Owens is continuing his work at the Center for History and New Media and working on his PhD in educational technology.

Isaac Pacheco is attending Georgetown University and is the editor of American Veteran Magazine.

Andy Palumbo started his own design business: Outside the Lab.

Marisol Pine is an account executive for Computer Consultants Corporation in Washington, D.C.

Nicole J. Sealey has been accepted into Mason’s PhD program for education.

Rana Shirzadi has enrolled at Mason to earn a master’s in organizational development.

Raphael Sikorra is working at the National Museum of Women in the Arts.

Tarren Smarr is attending law school in the United Kingdom. Smarr hopes to work toward a PhD on returning to the United States.

Jason Smith has been accepted into Mason’s PhD in sociology program.

Jennifer Snook works with the U.S. Department of Labor as a lead contracting officer.

Casey Sparks is planning to teach English in Japan.

Jennifer Spitalnik is pursuing a PhD in English at the University of Missouri-Columbia in the folklore and cultural studies program. She received the university’s G. Ellsworth Huggins Fellowship.

James Steele is returning to Mason as an adjunct faculty member.

Jairo Vargas works for the Department of Defense.

Lindsay Washington works in the community and hopes to join the human or social services industry.

Stay Connected

The MASONLine Alumni Directory allows you to search for classmates and update your contact information with the click of a mouse. Receive all the latest news, events, and happenings at your alma mater, including the Mason Spirit magazine and the monthly e-newsletter, MasonWire.

www.gmu.edu/alumni
www.gmu.edu/alumni/alumnidir.html
Life on Campus, continued from page 3

An unprecedented way to provide underground parking for 10,000 automobiles. But 10 years of rapid growth have given the campus a forward-looking physical vitality that can be harder to find at older, more tradition-bound universities, whatever their other beauties and charms. More than two dozen buildings have been built or renovated on the Fairfax Campus since the turn of the century. Like an upperclass student starting to understand his or her own intellectual capacity, Mason is beginning to more comfortably fill the dimensions created by its increasing enrollment and reputation, and seems to be doing so without losing its sense of balance and proportion.

I like that Mason’s growth has created four or five public plazas, depending on how you count, each with its own personality. I like the way its three student unions speak to three distinct periods of growth, much like tree rings. I like that the campus is bigger and spread more widely than you’d imagine when you drive its perimeter, a departure from the surrounding suburban scale that never fails to surprise first-time visitors. I like the way that the university’s open spaces have stretched to create three intersecting vistas, all hundreds of yards long, one running from the Southside dining hall to the statue of George Mason, one between Northern Neck and Student Union Building II, and one between Robinson Hall and the new observatory attached to Research I. Most of all, I like the paradoxical way that the university’s growth has increased the likelihood that students will find small-scale, personal places of their own: a single carrel behind the library stacks or wedged under the stairs, an empty classroom, a study lounge on Saturday morning, a lab late at night. The more the campus fills, the more these and other kinds of niches will turn up, offering the stillness and physical separation necessary to achieve the precious condition called autonomy of mind.

This enfolding isn’t limited to students, of course. Each morning, my routine involves parking in the brand-new Rappahannock Parking Deck, dropping off my son at his preschool, and then stopping at the Northern Neck Starbucks, where in proper small-town fashion, you’ll hear the clerks greet many of their customers by name before they commiserate about finals, midterms, a paper, a registration snafu, or whatever. Then it’s another three-minute walk to my office, windowless and small but clean (relatively) and well-lit (fluorescently), a niche of my own to write, read, conduct research, and meet with students.

As an undergraduate, I always found visiting faculty offices an anxious, intimidating experience. I now understand the origins of that anxiety: these disheveled, idiosyncratic rooms were simply mapping out my own way forward, though with no guarantee that I’d ever reach my destination. I would need to do some traveling first, but eventually I’d learn to appreciate such a useful set of directions.

From top to bottom: Long and Kimmy Nguyen Engineering Building, Recreation Athletic Complex (RAC), Art and Design Building, Public Safety Building, and Northeast Sector Dorms

Skyline Fitness Center (left) and Southside Dining Hall (right)