Shaping Positive Connections

The impact of meaningful relationships on our lives.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:
THREE MINUTE THESES
TOXIC TALK
DON GALLEHR: ACADEMIC IRON MAN
ALUMNI SERVING THE COMMUNITY
The College of Humanities and Social Sciences at George Mason University is committed to providing a challenging education to undergraduate and graduate students, expanding the frontiers of knowledge through research, and contributing intellectual leadership to the community. The college values the rich scholarly traditions of the past while embracing evolving disciplinary and interdisciplinary innovations. It believes that a liberal arts education is the best preparation for a multitude of careers and a lifetime of success.

Visit chss.gmu.edu to learn more.
Dear friends,

If you have been paying attention for the past few years, you might have noticed humanities and social sciences schools really emphasizing the value that comes from pursuing an education that is not centered upon science, technology, engineering, or math (also known as STEM).

This posture is taken with good reason. As students try to ensure a return on their educational investments, they may believe that the STEM or business fields offer a more clear or straightforward path to a career than study within a humanities or social sciences curriculum.

As College of Humanities and Social Sciences alumni, you know the benefits of studying the liberal arts: collaboration, writing, synthesizing information to reach an objective, and the critical thinking central to understanding. Employers know this as well. Work cannot be done in a vacuum; it benefits from the cross-pollination of ideas that is a vital part of the liberal arts tradition and its future.

In this issue of Cornerstone, we explore what that means through discussions with current and former students and faculty members who bring our teaching and ideals to life.

You will read about alumni who have used their educations to serve the local community, and two students who have found that the liberal arts deepened their experiences in ways they never expected. You will learn about how prompting doctoral students to speak about their work in a concise fashion yields benefits to the students, to the university, and to the community, as evidenced in the introduction of the Three Minute Thesis at Mason.

You will learn about the college’s alumni chapter (and how you can take part). You will meet Mason’s longest-serving faculty member, who happens to teach in the Department of English. You also will see how the college’s involvement in the university’s Faster Farther campaign supports programs that enhance the scholarship of our students and faculty members.

The thread that runs through all of this work is the idea of service—service to our students and service to the community. As humans, we understand that we are at our best when we are working within and for the interests of a larger community, and it is the study of humanities and social sciences that prepares us to play that vital role.

In Patriot Pride,

Deborah A. Boehm-Davis
In Memoriam: Roger Wilkins

By President Ángel Cabrera

This spring, we lost one of our brightest stars. I’m saddened by the news that retired Robinson Professor Roger Wilkins has died.

Wilkins’ life was the kind of story you couldn’t possibly imagine. He was a champion of the civil rights movement who served Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. His work contributed to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Later on, he was among the first black editorial writers at both the Washington Post and the New York Times. His editorials about the Watergate scandal earned him a share of the Post’s 1973 Pulitzer Prize for public service, and his work was cited alongside the investigative stories written by Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein.

We were fortunate to earn a place in his marvelous life. Wilkins spent nearly two decades teaching history and American culture at Mason, writing books and helping to put a then-fledgling university on the map.

His students spoke glowingly of his devotion to helping his fellow man. This passage from one of his students, written at the time of his retirement from Mason in 2007, captures his impact:

“Students who have taken his classes or spoken with him at length embark on their lives more enlightened and understanding of others because of him…. With his departure, Mason loses not only a professor, but a man with an enormous heart and the willingness to make the university as distinguished an academic institution as possible. He is irreplaceable.”

This tribute originally appeared as a message from President Cabrera to the George Mason University community.
In Memoriam: Walter Mircea-Pines

In January 2017, George Mason University was saddened to learn of the loss of an esteemed colleague, Walter Mircea-Pines, PhD Education ’09. A faculty member in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages who served as an instructor of German and as the IT coordinator for the department, he specialized in instructional design and development with an emphasis on assessment.

Mircea-Pines was born in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. He earned a bachelor’s degree in Germanic languages and literature at Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, in 1985. Upon graduation, he began teaching foreign languages at a local high school. He spoke ten languages, six fluently.

In 1990, Mircea-Pines and his family moved to Buffalo, New York, where he completed an MA in education at the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1996, while working as a foreign languages teacher at the Mount St. Joseph Academy. He and his family relocated to Northern Virginia in 1997.

Mircea-Pines worked with the U.S. Department of State as a translator and an escort-interpreter, and in 1998, joined Mason’s Department of Modern and Classical Languages. Throughout his career as a German language instructor and information technology coordinator, he cultivated his computing skills and appreciation for technology; having specialized in instructional design and development, he emphasized assessment and foreign language acquisition.

While overseeing the language department’s digital instruction, Mircea-Pines designed and tested placement and proficiency exams for both graduate and undergraduate students. He went on to earn a PhD in education at Mason in 2009. His doctoral dissertation, An Examination of Reliability and Validity Claims of a Foreign Language Proficiency Test, was published in 2012.

Among his many achievements, Mircea-Pines was also a member of the Board of Trustees of the San Miguel School, Washington, D.C., where he mentored scores of pupils.

Mircea-Pines is remembered by his friends and colleagues as a scholar who used the theoretical insights of his studies to transform his practice as a professional educator, technologist, and applied psychometrician. He is fondly remembered by his students as a great instructor; his friends regard him as a true and devoted friend who generously gave of his time and expertise. Both faculty and students were enriched by his cultural experiences and deep ties to his native Romania and global outlook.

While seriously dedicated to everything he did, Mircea-Pines was a fun-loving person. He exuded love for his family, his work, and his friends. He was known to all as the “Yellow Man” because of his yellow car, iPad, Apple Watch, and the extensive collection of yellow casual or formal attire that he wore daily. He said that the color yellow symbolized the feeling of freedom that he enjoyed in America.

Mircea-Pines is survived by his wife, Mirela; his mother, Pia; his brother, Paul, his wife Marcela, and their son Andrei.

The Department of Modern and Classical Languages has established a fund in his memory. For further details, please contact the college’s development office at chssalum@gmu.edu.

Jones received a PhD in linguistics in 1985 at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Before coming to George Mason University, he taught linguistics at the University of Connecticut in Storrs and the University of Wisconsin in Madison. He has published articles on theoretical syntax in various linguistics journals and conference proceedings. He published the book Purpose Clauses in 1991.

In addition to his brother, Stephen Jones of Durham, New Hampshire, and sister, Susan Clark of Bedford, New Hampshire, Jones is survived by his beloved wife of 42 years, Elaine Sheep Jones, and their sons, Jules Buck Jones of Austin, Texas, and Miles Eli Jones of San Diego, California.

The Jones family and the Linguistics Program are establishing a Charlie Jones Linguistics Award for graduate students. Contributions can be made by check payable to George Mason University Foundation, with “Charlie Jones Linguistics Award” in the note area. Contributions are tax-deductible and can be mailed to The Charlie Jones Fund, c/o Steven H. Weinberger, Director of Linguistics, Department of English, George Mason University, 4400 University Drive, MS 3E4, Fairfax, VA 22030.
Earning a doctoral degree is a pinnacle of academic achievement reached after arduous years of study, examinations, forging partnerships with faculty advisors, research, funding, more research, and writing, all of which culminates in a dissertation defense before a committee of experts. It is a marathon process that generally takes between 5 and 10 years to complete.

Imagine summing up and presenting all of this work in three minutes.

This is the genius of the Three Minute Thesis (known as 3MT) competition, which was held at Mason for the first time this spring. An annual international competition that originated in 2008 at the University of Queensland, Australia, 3MT has quickly spread to more than 350 universities in 58 countries around the world.

The rules of the competition are straightforward. Each participant is a doctoral-level student who presents his or her research in three minutes with one visual aid. The presentation must be understandable to a general audience that may not have any background in the participant’s research area. Electronic media and props (including written notes, costumes, and laboratory equipment) are not permitted. Presentations are made in spoken word form, not performed as songs, poems, or rap. Competitors whose presentations exceed three minutes are disqualified.

The inaugural 3MT competition at Mason was sponsored by the Office of Graduate Education. Cody Edwards, associate provost for graduate education, had been interested in bringing the event to Mason since he learned about it at a meeting of the Council of Graduate Schools. When the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education included Mason in the R1 category of Highest Research Activity in 2016, the time was right to introduce 3MT to Mason.

Edwards emphasizes the great benefits in learning to concisely present a topic. “As a student it’s really a nice intermediate step in preparing yourself to be a professional in any field,” he says. “In most of our jobs, we have to talk to people, right? And in most of our jobs we don’t have 30, 45 minutes to make a case about something. We have to be succinct.”

He also sees how the 3MT format offers opportunities for the university to share its students’ work within the local community. “It’s imperative that we showcase more of the work that’s done within the university in terms of research,” he says. “You can have a beautiful website, and it conveys information … but when I can sit and hear someone talk passionately about their research—it doesn’t matter if it’s in my field or not—I get excited about that. And I think that’s what you see from the community as well.”

Mason’s colleges and schools took on the competition with enthusiasm, with applications exceeding the initial space for 40. In all, 45 Mason students competed in the preliminary rounds. Many of these students represented the Volgenau School of Engineering, which prepared students with coaching, practice time, and faculty support at the competition itself. Four orators represented the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

But Edwards is encouraged that future competitions will see more participants from across the university. “What I’m hoping is that everyone will see that this is the right thing to do to showcase the talents of our students. I’ve had conversations with colleagues from school/colleges where we didn’t have the representation we were hoping for. So next year, knowing when it will happen, knowing what it’s going to look like, [they] will start recruiting within their own colleges this fall.

“And then we’d have a better mix of students. And that’s really what makes these competitions fantastic.”
Toxic Talk:

New Research Center Seeks to Understand and Counter Character Smears

By Kristin Leonato

The Department of Communication launched a new and timely research lab in fall 2016. The Character Assassination and Reputation Politics (CARP) Research Lab is led by an interdisciplinary research team of scholars particularly interested in the deliberate destruction of an individual’s reputation or credibility through character attacks. More importantly, the team is examining how to combat these attacks in an ever-changing media landscape.

Sergei Samoilenko, MA Communication ’07, is a Mason alumnus as well as a faculty member. With his expertise in public relations, crisis communication, and new media, he is well-equipped to lead the CARP Research Lab. Samoilenko's interest in the study of character assassination began several years ago, inspired by the work of his friend and Mason colleague, Eric Shiraev.

A political scientist and an expert in the role of identity and culture in politics and international relations—and a faculty member in the Department of Psychology and Russian and Eurasian Studies Program—Shiraev co-edited Character Assassination Throughout the Ages (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) with Martijn Icks of the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. Samoilenko was fascinated by the book, especially when viewed through his own scholarly lens in the field of communication.

Keenly aware of the overlapping influences of media and politics, Samoilenko and Shiraev developed a new special topics course for undergraduates, Character Assassination and Reputation Management in Public Relations. Offered for the first time in fall 2015, and open to students majoring in either communication or government and international politics, the interdisciplinary course struck a chord with Mason's politically savvy students.

Communication major Mary Chris Cobb, BA '17, was one of those students. She remembers the class as "primarily discussion-based, and the conversations were both engaging and stimulating. I found myself becoming more interested in character assassination as the class went on… Scholars on Mason's campus have moved the phenomenon forward a tremendous amount, and to hear them speak firsthand with passion and dedication immediately peaked my interest."

Cobb says what she learned in the course continues to inform her study of communication and her life outside of class. She shared that “as a student living close to the nation's capital, it is important to educate yourself on politics. Looking at the 2016 presidential election cycle, reading transcripts of debates, watching social media, and getting all the information possible on scandals was not a way I anticipated to learn about candidates. Since my eyes had been opened to character assassination, I viewed this election differently.”

Samoilenko also intently followed the 2016 U.S. presidential election, but with a sense of alarm; he found his academic interest playing out in real life in the daily coverage of the presidential primary elections and caucuses. Samoilenko recalls feeling completely "overwhelmed by the incivility of the political discourse." Worse, his research had informed him that such incivility, symptomatic of "a toxic media environment," could very well "lead to a legitimacy crisis" not just for individual politicians, but also for government institutions and the basic tenets that underpin a democratic society.

Samoilenko and Shiraev often discussed the extraordinarily negative tone taken during the 2016 election cycle. Their research, expertise, and experience gave them a unique insight into the causes and effects of the various political tactics on display, but that same research, expertise, and experience inspired them to do something about what they saw as a vicious cycle with dire consequences. The idea for the research lab for Character Assassination and Reputation Politics (CARP) was born, and they quickly got to work.

Jennifer Keohane, a recent addition to the Department of Communication faculty, joined Samoilenko, Shiraev, and Icks in their efforts. Keohane's research interests make her a natural fit for the CARP research team. Her doctoral research centered on character attacks used against political and labor movements, specifically the practice of
“Character attacks’ repercussions travel beyond individuals to groups and even geographic regions.”

“redbaiting” in the 1950s and beyond, and her current focus is on the particular and often gendered rhetoric used in the organizing of labor movements in the United States. Keohane’s expertise in rhetoric, rhetorical criticism, and the underlying ethical issues at play make her an effective professor of public speaking and public communication, and her scholarly pursuits bring additional depth to the CARP team.

With the final addition of Mason alumnus and international professional political operative Jason Smart, BA ’07, the CARP Research Lab has garnered immediate interest among scholars and practitioners in a variety of fields. Samoilenko says the most common response is “We’re so glad someone is working on this!” He continues to be surprised and pleased by the level of “enthusiasm and engagement” of those interested in their work.

Samoilenko shares that the lab’s first challenge has been to consolidate “the scattered research on a social phenomenon that has been around for centuries under one umbrella.” It is this work that truly proves the importance of maintaining a multidisciplinary research team.

Keohane feels this work has already demonstrated that the concept of character is “real and is important” and that character attacks “can have very real implications. And not just for individuals, but also for entire groups or even geographic regions.”

Samoilenko says his truest hope is that the CARP Research Lab can become a place to really test new research or best practices. He finds that studying the impact of character attack is especially interesting because “it’s very scientific, but also very hands-on.” He says he’s often asked “Why would you actually study this or teach [character assassination] to students?” He feels it’s an important example of how science can help people, and he studies character assassination “like doctors study a disease. You have to understand the disease to know how to counteract it and fight against it.”

CARP’S INAUGURAL CHARACTER ASSASSINATION CONFERENCE

To further the discussion, those involved with the CARP Research Lab spent much of the academic year organizing their first conference. Held at Mason’s Arlington Campus March 3-5, 2017, the two-and-a half-day conference, Character Assassination in Theory and Practice, hosted 40 presenters and participants from across the United States and eight other countries.

continued on next page
Richard Sheehe, a senior research fellow and practitioner in residence at Mason, describes the ultimate goal of the conference as the beginning of an “attempt to overlay a critical perspective based on thought, analysis, and research, on to what’s already happening.” He notes that it is only from this critical perspective that we can find the answers to why character assassination “seems to be so prominent, how to fight back, the ethical boundaries, and best practices for reputation management.”

Panels included historical and theoretical analysis, but mostly focused on contemporary issues surrounding character assassination and the many forms it can take in the modern media landscape. The majority of speakers and panelists concentrated on character attacks on political candidates, campaigns, or movements in the United States and abroad (including multiple presentations on the 2016 U.S. presidential election), but the gathering of scholars and practitioners also took on issues of reputation management for private individuals, publicly held companies, nonprofit organizations, and even terrorist groups.

Samoilenko says his favorite aspect of the conference was its inherent multidisciplinary nature. He jokes, “Where else can you find an expert on Cicero and an astrophysicist studying climate change on the same panel?”

Given her continued interest in the subject, communication major Mary Chris Cobb says she “jumped at the opportunity” to be a research assistant for the conference and was one of several Mason undergraduate and graduate students who attended. Aside from boosting her research and organizational skills, Cobb says, “My experience with [the CARP Research Lab] allows me to bring a different insight to my classmates as we discuss character attacks, social media posts, and communication theories. I have had stimulating conversations with students in and out of the classroom about the meaning of character assassination, reputation management, and where the phenomenon is headed. CARP is helping advance the study of communication and it is always exciting taking knowledge I have directly gained through CARP to my fellow Patriots.”

Following its conference success, the CARP Research Lab is already on to its next project. The information presented at the conference is now being synthesized into a white paper highlighting the main takeaways from the inaugural gathering. The research and best practices presented at the 2017 conference and elsewhere will also be collected and published as the Handbook of Character Assassination and Reputation Management, edited by Samoilenko, Shiraev, Icks, and Keohane, and due to be published by Routledge in 2018.

The team also plans to hold its second conference in 2019, hopefully at a location abroad. It’s been an auspicious start for the CARP Research Lab and a good indicator of what’s to come.

Keep up with the CARP Research Lab through its website at communication.gmu.edu/research-and-centers/carp, or on Twitter at @CARP_Lab.

Communication major Jeanne Abella was one of several undergraduate and graduate students who provided invaluable support during the CARP Research Lab 2017 conference.
50 Years In, Gallehr Keeps Writing New Chapters

By Colleen Kearney Rich, MFA ’95

In April, Dean Deborah Boehm-Davis was privileged to remark on the career of a man who is one of a kind: English professor Don Gallehr is Mason’s first faculty member to celebrate 50 years at the university. Noting the profound influence that the “academic Cal Ripken” has had on his students, and the generosity and positivity for which he is known by his colleagues, Boehm-Davis expressed the university’s gratitude for the many ways in which Gallehr brightened the experiences of the entire Northern Virginia writing community.

In recognition of Gallehr’s longevity and impact, the Mason Spirit offered five facts about the well-loved professor.

He didn’t have his PhD when he started working at Mason. Gallehr was working on his graduate studies at Fordham University when he interviewed for the job. “Dr. Krug said, ‘You are going to finish your doctoral degree, aren’t you?’” recalls Gallehr. “And I said, yes, of course. It never occurred to me that I wouldn’t.” Gallehr got the job and then finished his PhD at Catholic University of America in 1974, taking a class or two a semester while teaching.

He founded the Northern Virginia Writing Project (NVWP). Gallehr heard of the National Writing Project (NWP) before it went national and traveled to California to take part in one of the summer institutes. Mason held its first summer institute in 1978 and the NVWP was born. His leadership role in the NWP led to visits on Capitol Hill to get funding to support the project nationally.

He has taught more than 11,000 students. That number is based on a quick calculation (roughly 110 students per semester) and doesn’t include summer classes. He keeps in touch with many, especially the teachers he has mentored during his work with the NVWP, and he writes many letters of recommendation. In 2008, he received the David J. King Teaching Excellence Award.

He does his homework. Gallehr does every assignment along with the students. “It makes me a much better teacher,” he says. He also workshops his essays in class and tries to work with a different class group each week.

Tibetan monks think he is a stitch. When the Dalai Lama was looking for a writing teacher for his monks, he contacted the NWP, which sent him to Gallehr, who is well-known for incorporating meditation into the writing process. In 2010, he taught 33 Buddhist monks in a 15-day workshop in northern India. “They were the happiest group of students I have ever taught,” he says. “They would laugh their heads off. It was a wonderful 15 days.”

This article appears in the Spring 2017 edition of the Mason Spirit magazine.
New Programs in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences

CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY MINOR/CONCENTRATION

Clinical psychology is the largest specialty area in the field of psychology, accounting for approximately half of all jobs within the discipline. Clinical psychology takes theories and research findings about people’s biological, psychological, and social functioning and applies it to the assessment, treatment, and prevention of mental illness and abnormal behavior. At Mason, students working on their doctoral degrees in psychology may select a concentration in clinical psychology as they prepare for their work in the field.

This opportunity will now be available for undergraduates. A new clinical psychology minor for non-psychology majors and concentration for psychology majors is intended to help students learn about the primary roles of clinical psychologists: assessment, treatment, research, prevention, and consultation with other health professionals. The students also learn about the research on underlying biopsychosocial causes of specific mental disorders and evidence-based assessment and treatment techniques. The minor could benefit any student who may work with psychologists in the future or want to better understand people’s psychological functioning.

KOREAN STUDIES MINOR

The Department of Modern and Classical Languages is offering a new minor in Korean studies. The move is supported by a strong interest in Korean language and culture studies, evidenced by enrollment data from the Modern Language Association and information gathered from students currently enrolled in Mason’s Korean language classes.

The university has offered a Korean language program since 2006. Interest in the program—and course offerings—has grown steadily; in August 2013, the Korean Studies Program became part of the 4-VA shared curriculum, offering classes to students at James Madison University via telepresence. Mason supports two Korea-based study-abroad programs in Yonsei University in Seoul and Mason Korea in Songdo.

The minor’s prerequisites are the elementary, intermediate, and gateway to advanced Korean courses (or demonstrated proficiency at the level of the gateway to advanced Korean). Students will complete 9 credits in Korean language and culture at the 300 and 400 levels in Korean and an additional 3 credits in Korean literature, culture, or society in English. The remaining 6 credits may be taken through relevant electives offered elsewhere in the university.
WOMEN AND GENDER STUDIES CONCENTRATION IN THE SCHOOL OF INTEGRATIVE STUDIES

The School of Integrative Studies is offering a new concentration—women and gender studies—within its bachelor of arts in integrative studies major. This move complements the current option for a minor in the discipline, and the concentration has been designed to serve as a conduit into the accelerated master’s degree in interdisciplinary studies with a concentration in women and gender studies.

Kelly Dunne, executive director of the School of Integrative Studies, says the partnership with the Women and Gender Studies Program makes sense. Because of the range of courses taught through the integrative studies curriculum, many of them support the coursework appropriate for the women and gender studies degree.

“Offering the major within the established framework of an integrative studies degree allows the program to expand its curriculum offerings without the need for additional resources,” she says. “We hope that this collaboration with women and gender studies is the first of many partnerships with other units around the university.”

Angela Hattery, director of the Women and Gender Studies Program, is enthusiastic about the concentration. “Our students, faculty, and staff are thrilled to work with SIS,” she says. “The experiential emphasis is absolutely in line with all that we care about.”

WELL-BEING MINOR IN THE SCHOOL OF INTEGRATIVE STUDIES

The School of Integrative Studies (SIS) is reshaping its minor in consciousness and transformation to a minor in well-being, to reflect the changes within the university’s structure and to realign the minor with the changing emphases of the faculty’s teaching. Kelly Dunne, the school’s executive director, explains that a program in consciousness and transformation “made sense when [Mason] had a Center for Consciousness and Transformation. But that center has evolved into the Center for Advancement of Well-Being, and . . . as the center has evolved, [the faculty’s] teaching has evolved more into areas around well-being.

“What we did is basically call the minor what it is,” says Dunne. “It aligns much better with the university’s goals and mission.”

The well-being minor draws its core courses from SIS, as well as from the Department of Global and Community Health in the College of Health and Human Services. Electives for the minor include courses within the College of Health and Human Services, the College of Visual and Performing Arts, the College of Education and Human Development, and, of course, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. Dunne notes that the mix goes beyond “interdisciplinarity,” to a mix that is truly cross-university.
Come Join the Action

The CHSS Alumni Chapter helps alumni continue their Mason connection beyond graduation.

By Anne Reynolds

The College of Humanities and Social Sciences has been around as long as George Mason University has been granting degrees, but did you know that the college’s official alumni chapter is only three years old? Toby Hettler, senior assistant director of development in the college, worked with Dean Deborah Boehm-Davis and Mason’s Office of Alumni Relations to organize the chapter. Prior to the college’s chapter, he explained, some individual department societies had held events for their alumni, but a college-level group offers opportunities for all of the college’s alumni to get together and take part in activities throughout the Washington, D.C., area.

And the chapter has assisted in hosting events both social and service-oriented, from mentoring lunches, where alumni join college students for lunch, networking, and information-sharing, to the Sciences of Beer event during Alumni Weekend, where the college joined with the College of Science for an afternoon of beer education and tasting.

A particularly popular event has been the early summer clean-up of the George Mason Memorial Statue. For the past few years, a team of alumni has gathered in East Potomac Park near the Thomas Jefferson Memorial to offer some TLC to the area surrounding this beautiful corner of the National Mall. This year, the event will take place on June 3, with plans to open the event not only to alumni but to college faculty, staff, and students.

To keep abreast of plans for this terrific chance to make your mark on the Mall, as well as for the host of other activities that the chapter has in mind, make sure to keep an eye on the Alumni Chapter of the college’s website, watch the Dean’s Twitter account, and find the College of Humanities and Social Sciences on Facebook.

The celebration doesn’t end with your degree! Come join the growing number of CHSS alumni! The college’s growing group of CHSS alumni offers a wealth of opportunities for continued fun, learning, and community.
College alumni and friends pose with George Mason while tending to his Washington, D.C., memorial.

Kevin Augustyn, the college’s director of development, and Evan Del Duke, assistant director of development at the College of Science, welcome alumni and guests to the colleges’ alumni weekend collaboration.

Attentive alumni gather for trivia during Alumni Weekend 2016.

Alumni chapter social at the Caboose Brewing Company in Vienna, Virginia.

Mason alumni and staff enjoying the Sciences of Beer event. The college’s Alumni Weekend collaboration with the College of Science was an enjoyable blend of information, conversation, and fermentation.
Exploring the Physical and Theoretical World around Him

By Laura Powers

In simplest terms, Dillon Berger’s aspiration is to discover and fully understand the world around him. To do this, he looks at physical and analytical elements—majoring in both philosophy and physics with a minor in mathematics.

Last summer, Berger took part in a National Science Foundation Research Experience for Undergraduates at Cornell University. There he worked with the physics department on research projects that taught him about computers, coding, accelerator physics, and more; subjects that, according to Berger, he would not have otherwise had the opportunity to experience as an undergraduate. Berger’s immediate goal after earning his degrees from Mason is to attend graduate school for physics. He hopes to eventually become a professor, encouraging students and helping them see their potential, the way a professor did for him.

Currently, Berger works with students as a tutor within the Math Tutoring Center at Mason. “Being a tutor has helped me learn to see where people’s sticking points are,” he says. “When somebody is having a problem getting their head around something . . . I lead them, not by telling them, but by this Socratic method of making them think and get to something they thought they couldn’t arrive at on their own.”

In 2016, Berger won the Dean’s Challenge Scholarship, which recognizes exceptional undergraduate students who have excelled while making academically challenging choices. In the 2013-14 academic year, the Department of Modern and Classical Languages recognized his talent for language with the Outstanding Dedication and Perseverance in Upper Level Latin Award. He also received the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute Scholarship in Spring 2016.

“I never let people call me smart,” he says, “because it’s really about hard work and falling in love with something. I would say it’s more important to fall in love with something, because when you do that, the hard work just comes out in the wash. You’re going to do it because you enjoy it. And then it doesn’t feel like hard work. It doesn’t feel like studying.”

This article appears as a Meet-a-Student profile related to Mason’s bachelor’s degree in philosophy, philosophy.gmu.edu.
Advancing Her Career and the Lives of Young Women

By Laura Powers

With her diploma all but in hand, master of arts in interdisciplinary studies student Valencia Long continually uses the academic and personal support provided by her women and gender studies concentration to advance her career and pay her success forward through a nonprofit for young women.

Long transferred to George Mason University with a background in the fashion and beauty industries. She says the Women and Gender Studies Program is not a discipline she found, but one that found her. The program offered multi-track learning opportunities that have had a strong influence on Miss FancyPants, the nonprofit organization that Long has run since 2010, and even encouraged her to apply for a career position she would not have previously considered.

The company, Long explains, was primarily interested in someone with a human resources background. After studying the job description, she says she recognized it as an opportunity for her to sell the company on her skills, her passion, and what she would be able to offer.

“The Women and Gender Studies Program allows me to celebrate things that I’ve done and to not be afraid about the spaces that I’m entering into,” she says. With this instilled confidence, Long says she explained during her job interview that her multifaceted background brought many skills to the table, ones the company may not have even realized it needed.

Long was hired soon after her interview and now works as an instructor relations manager at Management Concepts, a workforce development company. Her primary responsibility is to track the company’s pool of more than 300 workforce development instructors and maintain a high standard of performance. She reviews instructor evaluations, manages policy, and follows up with any coaching or training necessary for instructors experiencing issues in or out of the classroom.

Long believes that her work in women and gender studies has enhanced her skills in understanding other people, respecting their values, and seeing where their opinions and positions stem from.

“I love understanding people,” she says. “I’m not always successful, but the Women and Gender Studies Program helps me explore that.”

Women and Gender Studies also influences Long’s work outside of Management Concepts. In 2010, she launched a Brooklyn, New York-based nonprofit called MissFancyPants, a self-esteem building program for girls ages 8 to 18. Inspired by Long’s own experiences in fashion and modeling, the program aims to help young girls celebrate their natural selves, see their natural beauty, and shed light on messages and images often seen in the media. Her goal is to teach young women that there is beauty in being brave. She wants all women to trust themselves.

“The Women and Gender Studies Program is 100 percent embedded into what I do,” Long says. “They celebrate everything I believe and provide a space to think about things differently.” She adds that her studies of feminist theory greatly influence her organization’s workshops and summer camps. Her peers in the program often provide timely and constructive feedback.

“It is important to believe that you are important. The Women and Gender Studies Program has transformative power. I will never be the same; my degree has already proven to be much more than a piece of paper. I am a change agent,” she says.

To learn more about Long’s nonprofit and its mission, visit missfancypants.org.
(Even) Faster, Farther

The college’s director of development offers an update of college initiatives within the university’s campaign.

By Kevin Augustyn

George Mason University is halfway through the public phase of its historic and ambitious $500 million comprehensive campaign, Faster Farther. As a university we are well on our way to achieving, and indeed surpassing, the fiscal goals of the campaign even before its official close in December 2018. Just as Mason has historically moved faster and farther than anyone has anticipated, so too has this campaign. As in all things Mason, however, we are just getting started.

The funds raised to date represent the same objective as the support that continues to come in throughout the remainder of the campaign: to build upon Mason’s storied past and surpass all expectations in the future. The university’s students, alumni, faculty, staff, and friends have joined together to support Mason’s award-winning faculty, its diverse student body, and the facilities where the community learns and lives. Together we have created a world-class research university recently recognized as such by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education.

The Faster Farther campaign has provided important opportunities for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences to create infrastructure and plans for a comprehensive and sustainable advancement approach in each of its departments, centers, and programs. These opportunities are bearing fruit in a wide variety of ways, and we would like to share some examples of new initiatives and important advances in providing funding for the great work that takes place in the college.

ECONOMICS: THE BUCHANAN-SMITH LEGACY CAMPAIGN

Mason’s Department of Economics has been the home of two recipients of the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences: Professors Emeriti James M. Buchanan and Vernon L. Smith. In November 2016, on the 30th anniversary of James Buchanan’s receipt of the Nobel Prize and the 15th anniversary of Vernon Smith’s award of the same prize, the Department of Economics launched the Buchanan-Smith Legacy Campaign for the Future of Masonomics.

The campaign is an effort to secure the legacy and expand the future success of the study of economics at Mason, recognizing the department’s profound impact on economics education and research as well as on the broader culture. As part of this effort, Mason’s Board of Visitors and President Ángel Cabrera renamed two buildings in these great scholars’ honor. Effective July 2017, Mason Hall on the Fairfax Campus will become James Buchanan Hall, and the Metropolitan Building on the Arlington Campus will become Vernon Smith Hall.

With a goal of $15 million, the department is seeking funds to attract and retain top-quality scholars remarkable for their research and classroom instruction, to assist with graduate fellowships and undergraduate scholarships, and to support various centers and projects.
THE CENTER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE COMMUNICATION

Complementing its impressive research portfolio and public outreach, and with new funding from a variety of sources, the Center for Climate Change Communication’s Program on Climate and Health has recently helped convene the Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health. The consortium represents more than 400,000 medical professionals and is a vehicle enabling them to speak with one voice about how climate change is harming Americans’ health today, as well as advocating for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and taking further steps that lead to sustainability. These professionals have committed themselves to becoming champions for climate and health in their communities, especially for the most vulnerable, who disproportionately experience the impact from climate change.

OMAR SCHOLARSHIP

Two years ago, Mason alumni members of the Omar family established a university scholarship fund to honor Mohammed H. Omar, their beloved father and uncle. Because of the extraordinary generosity of family and friends, the fund has recently reached the required endowment level of $25,000 and will now be awarding a $1,000 scholarship in his name each year.

Thank you to the Omar family for your generous support!

The scholarship awards are based on financial need and academic merit, and will be given to an undergraduate student who is actively involved in activities in support of Palestine, with preference given to students of direct Palestinian descent.

CHEUSE CENTER

Through the generous support of donors, the college launched the Alan Cheuse International Writers Center at George Mason University in the 2016-17 academic year. Named in honor of the late American writer and cultural commentator who taught at George Mason University for almost 30 years, the Cheuse Center celebrates the art of creative writing as a means of international dialogue, education, and understanding. Using the methods of cultural exchange and diplomacy, the center is a dynamic institution enriching George Mason's creative writing students and faculty, the broader George Mason community, the Washington, D.C., area, and creative writers and writing organizations around the world to foster the tolerance and understanding a more connected world requires.

The center’s immediate goals are to host visiting international writers for a one-semester residency and sponsor Mason's creative writing MFA students to study abroad. As a nascent organization, the future of the Alan Cheuse International Writers Center is one of unlimited possibility.

MARION DESCHEMUKH FUND

Through the generosity of donors, the Department of History and Art History is paying tribute to the career and work of Professor Emerita Marion Deshmukh by establishing the Marion Deshmukh Faculty and Student Scholarship Support Fund.

Deshmukh, who retired in 2015 after 45 years of service to George Mason University, was Mason’s first Robert T. Hawkes Professor of History. In her retirement, she has left a strong legacy as an outstanding scholar, a beloved teacher, a dedicated administrator, and one of the faculty members instrumental in bringing the Phi Beta Kappa honor society to campus. While pursuing her own scholarly work and supporting her colleagues in a collective effort to the same, she also taught countless students to become scholars in their own right and has fostered the values of learning on Mason’s campus.

The Marion Deshmukh Faculty and Student Scholarship Support Fund will be used to pursue the same goals that Deshmukh worked so doggedly to pursue as a faculty member at Mason. The fund will be used to provide faculty members with the support they need to achieve their own intellectual goals, but will also include funds specifically for collaborative research projects between faculty and students.

This is hardly an exclusive listing of the efforts and successes of the college within the Faster Farther campaign. Other initiatives include:

• the launch of a $100,000 campaign for the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy in the Department of Criminology, Law and Society, which will be celebrating its 10-year anniversary this coming year;
• increased support for the Institute for Immigration Research, which infuses nonpartisan research into a hotly debated topic; and
• the launch of an external advisory board for the Center for the Advancement of Well-Being, which has created new initiatives thanks to members’ generosity.

With approximately one-and-a-half years to go on the campaign, much work remains to be done. With the participation and support of Mason alumni, students, parents, and friends, together we can move ever faster, ever farther.

fasterfarther.gmu.edu
Gail Bohan, BA English ’70, MPA ’82, became part of the George Mason community at a time when our institution was finding its roots as a new university. Her undergraduate experience was shaped by current events, such as the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal. The campus climate was one of continuous discussion around these and other political issues, and coupled with the campus’ proximity to Washington, D.C., offered Bohan a sincere connection to being part of this important dialogue.

Bohan returned to Mason in the early 1980s to focus her graduate work on researching government productivity. She was part of a group led by Professor John D. R. Cole that identified how to measure and show improvements to local infrastructure. She remembers this work fondly, and its importance toward preparing her for future projects.

Bohan’s professional career has been one of service to our local community. For 13 years she worked for Fairfax County’s Cooperative Computer Center. In this role she worked to develop strategic plans, policies, and organizational structure to manage the county’s IT systems. In 1997 she brought her expertise to the City of Fairfax, where she was director of IT until her retirement in 2013. Bohan was director at a critical point when technology was shifting and upgrades to all hardware and software was integral to maintain efficiencies. Bohan successfully led this charge and recalls her time in this role as the best job she ever had.

Another mark of service from Bohan’s career was her involvement with the team that created the Northern Virginia Emergency Response System (NVERS), which was developed from the Metropolitan Medical Response System in 2005. NVERS focuses on providing coordinated responses to emergencies across the region. Bohan continues this important work by volunteering locally with the Fairfax Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), an all-volunteer program that works with NVERS to provide help during medical emergencies. The Fairfax MRC also offers preventative care such as flu vaccinations and health screenings for school-aged children. Bohan enjoys this work because of the benefit it offers the community, and the ability to help without needing a medical background.

Bohan is also committed to strengthening our Mason community. She has served as president of the university’s Alumni Association, is a member of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences Dean’s Advisory Board, and is a volunteer with the college’s mentoring lunch program. She was recently awarded the George Mason University Alumni Association’s 2017 Alumni Service Award. Gail is especially devoted to giving back to help current students with the costs of tuition and books. She remembers not having loan programs available while she was in school, and the stress caused by working and going to school full-time. She hopes her gifts will provide a better environment for students, and enable them to focus on their classes.

Bohan’s best advice for students today? “You can’t predict what your future will be, so just do what you can, day by day. And save some money so that you can enjoy retirement while you’re still healthy!”
A Course in Perseverance

By Alecia Bryan

If you would like the opportunity to talk with Jack Fahey, BIS ’94, you may have to get in line. Just ask any student who has attended a session of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences’ mentoring lunch program. Jack has been volunteering his time with this group for eight semesters, and is a favorite mentor amongst the undergraduates. He’s usually found at the center of a group of students, thoughtfully responding to questions on what it’s like working for the federal government, his most memorable career experiences, or tips for finding a job after graduation.

The students’ draw to Jack is due in part to his 47 years of service with the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA). Jack has represented the U.S. government in more than 40 countries, been on assignment to the White House under Vice President Gore’s Reinventing Government Team to help coordinate and implement geographic information systems across multiple government agencies, and managed an organization of more than 1,500 employees within NGA. But it is Jack’s knack for storytelling and his relatable honesty, as he shares his career path of steady perseverance toward earning his undergraduate degree and becoming a proud George Mason alumnus, that peak their interest.

Jack started his college career at the University of Rhode Island in the mid-1960s. He earned a partial athletic scholarship but was unable to keep it due to his academic record. He dropped out of school and started working for a shipbuilding company in the Port of New York. He also spent a short time in the military, after which he landed in Washington, D.C., where he applied for a government job in mapping at the prompting of his sister. Jack got the job and began working for the Army Map Service (AMS). During this time he started taking classes in math and science offered to employees through George Washington University, and after years of work, he had earned 30 credits and was able to be designated as a “professional.”

In the early 1970s, AMS became the Defense Mapping Agency (in 1996 the agency was folded into the NGA), and Jack gradually moved up within the organization. With a colleague’s encouragement, he enrolled in a contract program offered by the University of Virginia, and at its completion, he had earned 30 more college credits and a Certificate in Procurement and Contracts Management. Jack now had 60 credits and a strong desire to complete an undergraduate degree. Another colleague told him about George Mason’s Bachelor of Individualized Study Program (BIS), which is designed to help adult learners integrate other college-level learning into university coursework. After working with the Registrar’s Office, he put a plan in place and in 1989 started working toward completing his undergraduate degree.

Jack’s new routine became one of night classes, work, and helping to raise his three children. His position within the DMA demanded a strenuous schedule, especially at the height of Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, when the agency provided direct support to the U.S. military. Jack made the difficult decision to put his degree work on hold for a year during this time, but he never lost sight of his goal. He was finally taking classes that interested him, and he was, for the first time, an A/B student. Jack’s classmates told him he brought a wealth of life and work experience to his class discussions, but he remembers best what he gained from his peers. He fondly recalls working with students of all ages and walks of life. He believes these interactions helped him to become a better manager and improved his ability to relate to others. After a long path to Mason and five years of coursework, Jack received his BIS degree in the fall of 1994.

Jack, now retired, is a regular guest lecturer to several BIS classes each semester. When asked what draws him to continue sharing his time, his answer is immediate: “I am absolutely in awe of the quality and diversity of [Mason] students.” His passion for Mason also stems from his gratitude for what the university has helped him accomplish. Earning his BIS degree opened doors in his career and gave him the satisfaction of reaching a personal goal. To help pay forward this appreciation, Jack recently endowed the Jack Fahey Giving Back Scholarship, which will present its first award to a deserving BIS student in fall 2017.
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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JANUARY 1, 2016–JANUARY 1, 2017

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Submit your class notes to Mason Spirit, the university’s magazine, at spirit@gmu.edu. Please be sure to include your graduation year and degree.

For more information, please visit chss.gmu.edu/alumni.

Save the Date for Alumni Weekend 2017! October 13–16 with a special event for CHSS alumni on October 15.

Please visit chss.gmu.edu for updates on all our events.
SALLY KEITH, an associate professor in the Departments of English and Creative Writing, has published four collections of poetry, most recently River House (Milkweed Editions, 2015). She has published individual poems widely, in publications that include Colorado Review, Conjunctions, New American Writing, A Public Space, and the New York Times Magazine. She has been awarded fellowships to the Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference, a Pushcart Prize, and the Denver Quarterly’s Lynda Hull Award.

In 2016, Keith was awarded a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, one of 175 fellowships awarded from a field of nearly 3,000 applicants. The Guggenheim Fellowships recognize the work of scholars, artists, and scientists whose careers have already shown notable promise.

Keith describes River House as a radical departure from her earlier work. A series of 63 short poems, the book weaves together reflections on travel, art, Keith’s experience in an intensive neutral-mask workshop (designed for actors to address the calibrating of their (e)motion on stage), and the untimely loss of her mother.

Due to the sudden, but fortunate, circumstance of adopting twin baby boys in December 2016, Keith intends to start her fellowship year in fall 2018, during which time she plans to work on a fifth collection of poetry. Of this new work, Keith writes, “I am not interested in repeating the poems of River House, but from that very formative experience I hope to find a way to keep active the dynamism of ‘voice,’ a nebulous term that, to my mind, relates to sentence-making, consideration of line, and also the possibility of pronouncing what might feel obvious. I hope to write candidly of a life, of my life, fully aware that apprehension of any writer’s experience—the work they do, the ways they are compelled to love—is profound only when it is able to speak beyond itself.”
1. How do you picture the shape of a year in your head
   Is a question my grandmother often asked.
   The jog at dusk ends at the point
to watch the sun disappear.
   We drag sticks in the sand to spell out our names.
   To myself I write: Happy Birthday.

   The few trees before the beach in silhouette.
   The sky is red, the boats in the small harbor, docked.

   On the Rappahannock my grandparents moved to retire.
   As they aged, my mother rented herself this house.
   Because the land is the same level as the water
   The house sits high up on stilts. At night, from bed,
The stars through the windows burn a circuit of lights.

   It all depends on where you start. A year is a circle,
   If not a point around which experience spirals.

   Because our mother is gone, we do not need the house.
   We tell ourselves this. Soon we will clean out inside.

5. The three-tiered bridge, Pont du Gard, I read about incessantly.
   At the end where the water finally empties out
After thirty one point six nine miles and ushered only by gravity,
   The castellum, walls adorned with silver dolphin swimming.

   That spring I was in France my mother spent alone
At the house on the river caring for her father who was dying.

   At high tide the road in is swallowed, making the house an island.
   Hard to describe, but the walls are thin, it isn’t easy getting
through storms.

   The day my grandfather died, I biked to town
   for our favorite cheese.
   I felt this as a celebration. Now, I want to know where
   my mother is.

   What kind of metamorphosis is death: beautiful or utilitarian?

   Sobin, writing on the aqueduct, ultimately surmises ostentation
   The motivation for the unusually difficult architectural feat.

   I have thought about this for too long not to just write it.
   There isn’t really an order that would be correct. An aqueduct
   By definition is an artificial channel. It gets one thing to the next.

21. Poem I wrote for my mother to say to me:

   Sweet child I made of fire, sweet child, little fire
   Bedeck the world with angels and ladders

   Little mirror, I give you my last ounce of breath
   I give you my breath to be emptied of life

   Here, little fire, here, here
   Little fire, lift my hand to feel a body emptied of life
   Lift my hand, little mirror

   Little fire, sweet child,
   Put flowers on top of the table
   Little fire, light candles in churches and cathedrals

   Fire catches, sweet child
   Bedeck the world with angels and ladders
   Climb, little fire, climb higher and higher

   I made you like this, little mirror, listen
   As the wind shifts, listen to the smallest drops of water

61. Really there is no one we want to take to the river with us.
   There is nothing to do there but nap, eat, and drive,
       White Stone, Kilmarnock, Irvington, a triangle.

   Along the roads there water seeps in like mirrors
   Reflecting back rings of wild.
   At a certain place you can stop to hear the peepers.

   “A strong song tows us” writes Basil Bunting.
   It feels like something once stacked is seeping.

   At the edge of the stage a masked actor is standing.
   She practices experiencing.
   Breathes. Tries to let out the tension in her shoulders.

   Told to imagine the freighter departing, she imagines
   The freighter an inch adding thickness to the line called horizon.
   The space between the mask and her face is a metaphor for living.

   She waves good-bye.
   She is practicing waving.