



THE MASON MINUTE

Winter 2013 Issue

Happy February, Colleagues!

*Amy Takayama-Perez, Dean of Admissions and
Executive Director of the Washington Scholars Program*

Happy February, colleagues! If you are like me, you are wondering where the first semester has gone, but are excited for the thought of spring right around the corner. Shortly before winter break I was named the new Dean of Admissions, and I could not be happier to continue to be part of this dynamic institution. As an alum of George Mason University, I know first-hand the opportunities and experiences that our students have, and how they translate these experiences into student success both inside and outside of the classroom. In this issue of the Mason Minute, you'll hear about two great examples – the Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation, and the Washington Scholars Program.



[Mason Conservation Studies](#) students are earning college credit while literally living with the animals. This unique partnership with the Smithsonian National Zoo is one of the coolest “classrooms” I’ve ever seen. With summer here before we know it, our team is also gearing up for our annual [Washington Scholars Program](#). We will host over 500 talented high school scholars and leaders in the areas of journalism/media and environmental science and conservation. It’s one of my favorite times of the year to spend a few weeks with this next generation of leaders!

As I write this, we are celebrating National School Counseling Week. So while we continue to review a record number of freshmen applications and you begin testing season and scheduling for next year, I want to take a moment

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and recognize all that you do for students and families. The letters of recommendation, the campus tours, parent conferences, student sessions, testing, paperwork...and more paperwork – we are all reminded every day how important our teachers and school counselors are! We know how much you sacrifice and simply say...thank you!

Stay warm...think spring...take care, and Go Mason!

Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation

A. Alonso Aguirre, DVM, MS, PhD, Executive Director, Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation

Do you know students who are excited about the environment, animals, and the outdoors? Are they interested in exploring careers related to conservation, biodiversity, or sustainability? Are they ready for a conservation challenge of a lifetime? Then check out the [Smithsonian-Mason Semester for Conservation Studies!](#)



The Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation is proud to offer two 16-credit programs for undergraduates committed to the study of conservation, based at the **Smithsonian Biology Institute** (SCBI) in Front Royal, VA. The campus is nestled alongside Shenandoah National Park, with the entire SCBI facility covering 3,200 acres of forest, grassland and pasture. Being located at an active research facility, which houses a range of endangered mammals, birds and amphibians, offers unique advantages to our programs and creates a compelling and engaging learning environment for our program participants.

Each semester-long program, **Applied Conservation Strategies** and **Ecology for Effective Conservation practices**, offers five integrated courses that include a practicum work experience with researchers at the SCBI as well as classes focusing on conservation theory and applications.

During the semester, students live and study in our new academic and residential facilities that provide a state-of-the-art living/learning environment. They benefit from a close-knit academic community that emphasizes active learning, teamwork, hands-on experience, public communication, and case

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studies, which prepares them for conservation-related professions and graduate study.

Here's what previous program participants have to say about their experience:

- “This semester was a great adventure! The opportunities available to us made each week exciting and a wonderful way to learn about so many aspects of conservation.”
- “During the Semester you meet people who are passionate about conservation efforts and are making changes in this field. You will be interacting with these people on a daily basis and it drives you to want to make a difference. It also gives you an opportunity to talk to these incredible people to help you focus on what you want to do as a career and it builds your network in the Smithsonian.”

These unique programs are open to upper-level and post-baccalaureate students from any college or university. For more information about these programs, please visit our website <http://SMConservation@gmu.edu>, contact us via telephone at 540-635-0065, or email us at smithsem@gmu.edu.

Washington Scholars Program

*Richard Friesner, Program Director,
Washington Youth Summit on the Environment*

We all know that there are several students every year that stand out to us with their exceptional potential for leadership and academic endeavors. For years, the Washington Scholars Program at George Mason University has offered these students two focused programs to develop their leadership skills and interests in a career field. This year, the [Washington Journalism and Media Conference](#) and [Washington Youth Summit on the Environment](#) would like to host some of your standout students.



I invite you to nominate your most talented sophomores and juniors to represent your state and school as delegates to these week-long residential

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leadership conferences held at Mason. In addition to developing important leadership and communication skills, students also earn **college credit** for their participation.

Visit our [website](#) for nomination instructions and scholarship information for these once-in-a-lifetime opportunities. Once nominated, student will receive nomination packets containing additional information about the programs. If you have any questions about these opportunities in youth leadership, please don't hesitate to contact us at (703) 993-5010 if you have any questions.

Our team recognized how hard you work for and care about your students. Thank you for all that you do!

Career Services, Internships, and Interviewing

Saskia Clay-Rooks, Assistant Director for Industry Advising & Employer Development

As you know, the professional world is often complex and difficult to navigate, particularly for a teenager with little or no “real world” experience. Firstly, there are literally thousands of occupations from which to choose, and more are being created (or eliminated!) all the time. Secondly, college majors do not always neatly align with careers. For instance, an English major is well-equipped with foundational skills for any number of jobs. Finally, hiring and recruitment processes vary dramatically across industries and types of organizations.



It is within this context that [University Career Services](#) exists to best meet the needs of students wherever they are in their career development. Students who are undecided about which major or career path they would like to pursue while at Mason are directed to meet with a career counselor. Through individual conversations, exploration activities, or use of assessment tools like the Myers-Brigg Type Indicator and Strong Interest Inventory tests, career counselors help students identify their interests, skills, and values, as well as recognize what careers might be a good fit.

Students who can articulate their career aspirations are encouraged to meet with

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an industry advisor. Industry advisors frequently interact with employers, both local and global, and are therefore able to provide important job/internship information, help students hone industry specific interview and job search skills, and offer networking tips. They have current information about hiring trends, recruiting timelines, and application processes particular to a student's industry of choice, and they can facilitate opportunities for the student to connect with employers.

Under this service-delivery model, students leave Career Services satisfied that their questions or concerns were addressed, and empowered to take the next step toward reaching their career goals. And, for those students who need a little extra structure and support, they can take a semester-long career-readiness course for academic credit!

A Mason Student Explores England

Kathleen Wills, Mason Class of 2015

Hometown: Bethesda, Maryland

Major: Neuroscience

This time almost two years ago, I started college. This time last year, I came back from a whirlwind adventure studying abroad. I remember waving goodbye to my parents, about to take my first overnight flight out of the country by myself. "10 hours," I said to myself. "I can handle that."

Fast forward and I'm moving in to a Holiday Inn suite, waking up my already unpacked roommate Jenna. Our conversation starter? "I think we're the youngest people on this trip. How old are you?"

Turns out, I was the only freshman on this trip, not to mention the only neuroscience major on a theater adventure.

Looking back on the video montages I have made from my travels (like my "[The Thrill of Travel](#)" video below!), I appreciate how much my life changed from that moment: I had a whole diverse group of friends and a thirst for more travel. Needless to say, I saved my fees and travelled to other parts of Western Europe and even Eastern Europe: France, Italy, Slovakia, Hungary, and Austria.



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Browsing through all of the pictures, video clips, playbills from the performances we got to see, etc, inspired me to volunteer for the Center for Global Education at George Mason to share my story. Because while those digital pieces of evidence are wonderful for the photo albums, it's the impromptu adventures that you remember:

- 1) Yelling "I'm an actor!" in a fake British accent while standing on benches and disrupting rush hour on the Tube
- 2) Running around Hyde Park chasing pigeons
- 3) Finding Narnia at Oxford Circle in a lighted alleyway
- 4) Relishing in McDonald's classy donuts
- 5) Being called Australian while bargaining for gloves



You can follow more of my videos and stories in the Admissions blog, [*The Patriot Life!*](#)

Welcome to the adventures that come with studying at Mason—cheers!

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