

In this Newsletter:

Events & Deadlines

1. [Adjunct Faculty Success Workshops](#)
2. [Teaching Squares Return in September](#)
3. [16th Annual Innovations in Teaching and Learning Conference](#)
4. [Check out our new podcast!](#)
5. [Inclusive Teaching Unit Credential](#)
6. [Inclusive Teaching Individual Credential](#)
7. [Campus Champions Program](#)
8. [First Year Five Program](#)

Digital Learning

1. [Welcome to Online Teaching in Fall 2024!](#)
2. [New LMS: Canvas](#)

Faculty Development Workshops

August:

1. [Introduction to the Writing-intensive Course](#)
2. [Teaching with AI: A Practical Guide to a New Era of Human Learning](#)

September

1. [Preparing Your Course and Yourself for Difficult Classroom Discussions and Situations](#)
2. [Mini course: Introduction to Artificial Intelligence Inspired Pedagogies](#)
3. [New STEM Faculty Meet-Up](#)

From Our Partners

Faculty Affairs

1. [Adjunct Faculty Success Workshop](#)
2. [Opportunity to Join an Affinity Group](#)

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Office of the Provost

STEARNS CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

George Mason University®

August 2024 Newsletter

From Our Director

Greetings, Friends,

On behalf of the team at the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning, I want to welcome you back to George Mason University for the new academic year and welcome you to the first of our monthly newsletters. We hope you were able to find opportunities over the summer to engage in projects, connect with friends and family, explore new places or ideas, and just catch your breath a bit from the previous academic year.

Our particular welcome goes to those of you who are connecting to GMU and the Stearns Center for the first time. The Stearns Center team uses this monthly newsletter to keep you up to date on good resources, advice, and events that can enhance your teaching, connect you with peers in your area and across campus, and help you grow as a teacher and leader on campus. (If you prefer, you can use the link at the end of this email to unsubscribe).

We are looking forward to reconnecting with **all** Mason faculty (full-time, part-time, and graduate student instructors) this fall. We invite you to check our [Events Calendar](#) to see our August and September offerings. Our pre-semester workshops and seminars especially are designed for people just like you: someone who is an engaged and committed teacher looking for great conversation and new ideas about how to connect with students and help them gain crucial strategies, knowledge, and skills in your field or profession.

1. [Undergraduate Research Scholars Program](#)
2. [Research Assistant Positions](#)
3. [Undergraduate Student Travel Fund](#)

[University Libraries](#)

1. [Streaming Video and Audio Collections for Teaching](#)

[CECIL](#)

1. [Collaboratory](#)

Please note, too, that **all adjunct faculty** (not just newcomers!) are invited to participate in any of the [Adjunct Faculty Success Workshops](#) held via Zoom on Saturday, August 17.

Our online resources also will help you complete your course planning and look ahead to Fall 2024 events:

- **Review new requirements:** As noted in yesterday's announcement, you should check our updated [Syllabus Guidance](#) page to see the **new syllabus requirements for 2024** and be sure that you are providing students with the information they need.
- **Build a complete syllabus:** See our resources for [Designing Your Syllabus](#) to provide complete and supportive information to your students.
- **See your classroom:** Definitely take a look at our updated [Classroom Guide](#) for photographs and technical information about your physical classrooms
- **Save the date:** Our [Innovations in Teaching and Learning Conference](#) is back for the 16th year—with our Zoom Thursday and our On-Campus Friday—on **September 19th and 20th**. Come listen and talk to your GMU colleagues about strategies and approaches to inclusive, engaging teaching across all disciplines, levels, and modalities.

Your Stearns Center colleagues recognize that, more than ever, **change is constant** in teaching in higher education. This fall, you may be teaching a new course in Mason Core, adapting your assignments to address Generative AI resources, migrating to Canvas for your LMS, incorporating more community-engaged material to align with our Quality Enhancement Plan, and/or building out a new unit or assignment based on something you encountered this summer.

You don't have to go through all this by yourself! Sometimes it's helpful to take an hour or two just to connect to and share ideas with other faculty who are experiencing the same challenges. We encourage you to check out our fall programming: whatever your interests or concerns, we have programming to support and energize you.

- **Brush up on fundamentals** by listening to one of our new 20-minute [podcasts](#), joining a workshop on inclusive teaching, or connecting with our Generative-AI community
- **Connect with peers** through a Teaching Square, our **new** Gen-AI Book Group, our **new** STEM Faculty Meetup, or our mindfulness community
- **Level up your teaching** by starting (or finishing up) our [CPD](#) teaching credential or our new [Inclusive Teaching credential](#), or starting a classroom research project
- **Build your Canvas skills** by registering for our [Canvas Boot Camp](#) August 13-15 or connecting with a faculty mentor

Along with our partners (including the Office of the Provost, Faculty Affairs and Development, Writing Across the Curriculum, Mason Impact, OSCAR, CECiL, Mason Core, Graduate Education, GradLife, University Libraries, Classroom and Lab Technologies, and Information Technology Services) we wish you an excellent conclusion to your summer and an energizing start to your Fall 2024 semester.

Shelley

E Shelley Reid, Ph.D.
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Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning
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Events & Deadlines

Adjunct Faculty Success Workshops:

All adjunct faculty at the university are invited to [register](#) to drop by any of our workshops on Zoom on Saturday, August 17:

10:05-11:05 am sessions: Dynamic first week, Teaching online, Designing assignments

12:35-1:20 pm session: Building inclusive classrooms

2:15-3:15 pm sessions: Blackboard or Canvas basics

3:20-4:10 pm sessions: Engaging students, Responding to student writing, Canvas Q&A

Teaching Squares Return in September

Teaching Squares: What do other faculty actually do in their courses? How are they adapting to new opportunities, engaging their students, providing feedback, managing their time, and supporting long-term learning? If you joined a Teaching Square, you could find out!

Stearns Center Teaching Squares are a kind of professional “pot-luck dinner”: a quick way to build your teaching network and learn strategies that will support your teaching. For Fall 2024, we will match interested faculty with a Square of colleagues from across the university (usually four people, but sometimes a little larger or smaller): your Square may just have a general focus, or you could connect with other faculty who are interested in one of our ongoing conversations (Generative AI, Inclusive teaching, or Teaching in Canvas). We will guide you through a quick four-part approach:

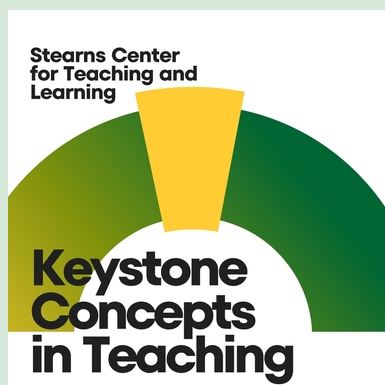
- Each Square meets once near the end of September for introductions and planning
- Each member of the Square shares some element of a course they’re currently teaching
- Each member provides feedback to the others by early October
- The whole Square meets in mid-October for a conversation about what they’ve learned and how they can support one another further

See additional information [on our website](#). To indicate your interest for Fall 2024, [please complete our two-minute form](#) by Monday, September 9, 2024.

INNOVATIONS in Teaching & Learning conference

16th Annual Innovations in Teaching and Learning Conference

We are excited to invite Mason faculty, graduate instructors, and staff to register for the 2024 Innovations in Teaching and Learning Conference! This year’s conference is hybrid, with online sessions via Zoom on September 19, 2024, and in-person sessions on September 20, 2024. Take a look at the [At-A-Glance program](#) to see a glimpse of the schedule and [register using the Sched app](#) to see the entire program and ensure you will receive updates about the conference.



Check out our new podcast!

Keystone Concepts in Teaching and Learning is a new podcast from the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning at George Mason University focused on discussing and sharing impactful teaching strategies that support all students and faculty. Join us as we feature conversations with experienced educators who discuss actionable, impactful, and evidence-based teaching strategies that may be applied across disciplines and instructional modalities.

Subscribe now to the *Keystone Concepts in Teaching and Learning* podcast on your favorite podcast platform to get notifications of new episodes as we explore teaching and learning small change strategies that you might even wish to try out in your course yet this semester!

Check out [our website](#) to listen to the podcast online or follow the links on that page to iheartradio or Spotify! Please give us a follow on one of these podcast platforms to stay up to date with our episodes published every two weeks.



Inclusive Teaching Unit Credential

Interested in... curriculum design or redesign? Retention? DFW rates? Supporting all students across your program? Intentional effort around supporting your faculty in professional development?

We offer customizable workshops and the opportunity for your unit to earn an inclusive teaching credential and be recognized widely. Units can be defined broadly as any group of at least 4-5 instructors including individual courses, as well as academic programs and departments.

For more information, please visit: <https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/inclusive-teaching-credentials-2/>



Inclusive Teaching Individual Credential

Are you coming up for promotion or wish to document your teaching efforts? Are you looking to connect with other faculty interested in teaching from across campus? Consider joining our open call workshops and earning an inclusive teaching credential! For more information, please visit:

<https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/inclusive-teaching-credentials-2/>



Campus Champions Program

Nominate yourself or another emerging leader to become a Campus Champion in teaching to support all students.

This program supports professional development and helps build your skills and network of leaders in this space.

Visit our website for more information:

<https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/campus-champions/>

Register here: <https://forms.office.com/r/3xL0A0eFTY>



The Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning invites new faculty – in their first or second years – to join the First Year Five program, increasing their own capacities as instructors while building a network of colleagues across the university, starting in their very first weeks.

Faculty who participate in First Year Five (FY5) will be invited to identify and participate in five hours of work that is intended to improve the inclusion and equity

strategies they use to teach at Mason.

Visit our website for more information: [First year Five Program](#) [Register here](#).

Faculty Mindfulness Explorations: Coaching & Community for Fall 2024

Have you heard that mindfulness practices can help you (or your students), but you're not sure how to get started, or you're uncertain how to sustain a reasonable practice? Have you already explored or even adopted some mindfulness practices but would enjoy connecting with other Mason faculty who have similar goals?

The Stearns Center is expanding our mindfulness resources for faculty—not as a panacea, but as a complement to our efforts to provide formal resources for teaching, our advocacy for better recognition of the workloads of teaching, and our support of faculty community-building in many spaces.

Let us know if you are interested in one-on-one mentoring in regard to your own mindfulness or meditation practice OR if you would be interested in participating in a faculty community this Fall semester regarding mindfulness practices: contact [Mark Thurston](#) from SIS/Center for the Advancement of Wellbeing directly or email [Stearns Center](#) for more information.

Digital Learning

Welcome to Online Teaching in Fall 2024!

If you are scheduled to teach a fully-online course in Fall 2024, or if you plan to incorporate online components into your teaching, the Stearns Center Digital Learning Team at George Mason University is here to help. We can provide assistance or direct you to relevant resources. The .pdf below has links to resources to support your online teaching this Fall.

Welcome to Online Teaching in Fall 2024

If you are scheduled to teach a fully-online course in Fall 2024, or if you plan to incorporate online components into your teaching, the **Stearns Center Digital Learning Team** at George Mason University is here to help. We can provide assistance or direct you to relevant resources. Here's are links to resources to support your online teaching this Fall.

George Mason is moving to a new LMS --Canvas! The first significant wave of courses to be offered in Canvas will be Fall 2024. The Spring 2025 semester will be the final semester any courses will be offered in Blackboard, as it will be retired in July 2025.

Stearns Center Website

Check out [our website](#) for "one-stop shop" for teaching and learning information for George Mason faculty for Fall 2024. Learn about strategies for teaching in all formats, including asynchronous online teaching, synchronous online teaching, and hybrid teaching.

Get Canvas Ready!

If you will be teaching online in Canvas this Fall, check out resources available to help you prepare, including:

- [Register for Canvas Boot Camp August 13-15](#)
- [Getting Started – Instructors \(Canvas LMS Transition site\)](#)
- [Getting Canvas Ready \(ITS site\)](#)
- [Blackboard- Canvas Comparison](#)
- [Canvas Instructor Video Guides](#)

ID Village

Check out the resources for online teaching in the **ID Village**, a resource for online course design and teaching created and curated by our ID Team. You also may connect with our IDs at this site. [Login](#) to Canvas to access the ID Village



Faculty Mentors

Contact your College's [Canvas Faculty Mentors](#) for guidance about teaching in Canvas. Their experience will guide faculty development as Canvas becomes available university-wide. Mentors can provide information and advice to colleagues in their disciplines as well as across the university.



Help and Consultations

Our Team is happy to help you with your online teaching needs! We are available via email, in-person or through Zoom (by appointment). Please submit your questions or request a 1:1 consultation from our Team [here](#) or by emailing Stearns Center directly at stearns@gmu.edu.



Technology Support

Reach out to [Information Technology Services \(ITS\)](#) if you need help with technology, including LMS, Kaltura, and other teaching tools.



For Canvas help, open the **Help menu** in your Canvas course to access 24/7 phone and chat support with Canvas experts.

Online Quality



Use our [Course Readiness Checklist for Canvas](#) to check on key elements before publishing your Canvas course.

Whether you teach in Blackboard or Canvas, as prepare your Fall online course, please review the Stearns Center Digital Learning's [Online Quality Checklist](#) for a list of important online course design and teaching elements, reflecting online quality standards. Learn more at Stearns Center's [Online Course Quality](#) web page.



Digital Learning | Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning
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George Mason University



George Mason University's LMS Transition

George Mason is moving to a new LMS --Canvas! The first significant wave of courses to be offered in Canvas will be Fall 2024. The Spring 2025 semester will be the final semester any courses will be offered in Blackboard, as it will be retired in July 2025.

View the transition timeline and read a list of frequently asked questions at [the Canvas LMS Transition website](#).

Faculty Development Workshops

August

Workshop: Introduction to the Writing-intensive Course

August 21, 2024 | 11:00am-12:30pm | Zoom | CPD Level 1 Design | Facilitator: Thomas Polk | [Register here](#).

Are you new to teaching a WI course or want a refresher on some of the basics? This workshop will focus on writing-intensive course design and help faculty prepare for the semester ahead or the WI enhancements process. Join WAC staff to learn more about the WI learning outcomes, consider your assignments, and get a strong start to the semester.

Stearns Center Fall Reading Group for Teaching With AI: A Practical Guide

August 27th 1:00-2:30pm or Thursday, August 29th 11:30-1:00pm | Facilitator: Laina Lockett

Join us for lively discussions this fall about José Bowen and Edward Watson's new book, as we explore how faculty can adapt our teaching to these new tools. Fall meeting dates and modality will be determined based on best availability for those who sign up to participate. Please [complete this interest form](#) to join the group and reserve your free copy of the book. If you've already joined, please use the form to indicate when you can pick up your copy!

September

Workshop: Preparing Your Course and Yourself for Difficult Classroom Discussions and Situations

September 10 | 9:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. | Zoom | Level 1: Inclusive Teaching Essentials | Facilitator: Rachel Yoho | [Register here](#).

Do you have strategies to prepare yourself and your students to handle difficult conversations? This could be when you are having difficult conversations about topics like race, sexuality, religion, politics, or similar. These situations also could result from a discussion comment that makes a student or group uncomfortable or might even be about grades. In this workshop, we will discuss how to design (or redesign) your course and prepare yourself to facilitate important or “hot topic” conversations in the classroom. Background information on how to design the course and prepare for facilitating important conversations in the classroom will be provided. This workshop is applicable to instructors across all disciplines for facilitating important conversations, whether or not their designed course topics include socially pressing issues. This workshop is part of a two-part series for Mason faculty to engage in anti-racist and inclusive education across all disciplines.

Please reach out to Rachel Yoho (ryoho@gmu.edu) with any questions.

Mini course: Introduction to Artificial Intelligence Inspired Pedagogies

September 3-October 29 (Every other Tuesday) | 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. | Zoom | CPD Level 2 | Facilitator: Laina Lockett | [Register here](#).

By now you've probably heard of ChatGPT or one of the other various new large language models (LLMs) that have taken the world by storm. But do you know how to deal with the ever-evolving artificial intelligence technology as it relates to your teaching? In this mini course you will be exposed to the basics of redesigning your course as it relates to learning outcomes and instructional activities. We will also explore how to get feedback from students regarding the changes that you make. (This is the same program as the Mini Course offered August 12-16, 2024.)

Please reach out to Laina Lockett (llockett@gmu.edu) with any questions.

New STEM Faculty Meet-Up

September 26 | 5:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. | Innovation Hall 427 | Facilitator: Laina Lockett | [Register here](#).

Come meet your Stearns Center liaison and other new STEM faculty at GMU. Share stories about your first month at Mason and build community with your colleagues. Snacks will be provided. Please register by Monday, September 23rd.

Contact Laina Lockett for more details: llockett@gmu.edu

From Our Partners

Office of Faculty Affairs & Development

Register for the Adjunct Faculty Success Workshop

The Office of Faculty Affairs & Development invites all adjuncts to participate in the day-long success workshop on Saturday, August 17th, 2024. The workshop is designed to meet the unique needs and challenges that adjunct faculty face, to support transition to campus, and to develop practical strategies for success with students. The day's session will include a broad overview of working at Mason, introductions to important policies, Canvas sessions and sessions to enhance teaching skills for online and in-person classes. **[Register now](#)**

Opportunity to Join an Affinity Group

As part of Mason's commitment to inclusive excellence, the Office of Faculty Affairs and Development supports several affinity groups. These groups provide our diverse faculty, doctoral students, and staff with a sense of community, inclusion, and belonging. The groups also serve as safe spaces for discussion of issues that impact the success and well-being of Black, Indigenous, Latine, Multiracial, Asian, Asian American, Pacific Islanders, as well as faculty/staff with disabilities and historically underserved doctoral students. Finally, the affinity groups facilitate connections and professional partnerships and champion strategic efforts to support the success of their members. The affinity groups are open to all faculty (tenured, tenure-track, term, adjunct, administrative, and professional), doctoral students, and staff. [Learn more about Affinity Groups here.](#)

AAPI—Asian, Asian American, Pacific Islander Faculty

BLIM—Black, Latine, Indigenous, Multiracial Faculty

SPARK—Scholars Promoting Access, Representation, and Knowledge

Juntos—Mason Hispanic/Latine Alliance

Disability & Neurodivergence Alliance (DNA)

To learn more about these groups, please contact [Ms. Amy Ayres](#) or [Dr. Millie Rivera](#) and we will send you the links for the meetings and add you to the listserv (if you so desire).

OSCAR

Undergraduate Research Scholars Program

URSP supports undergraduate students collaborating on a research, creative, or scholarly project with a faculty mentor. Three cycles each year. For more information [visit the OSCAR website.](#)

Research Assistant Positions

OSCAR is expanding opportunities for students to learn research, creative, or scholarly methods in their field and giving faculty free support on their projects at the same time.

[Learn how you can hire a research assistant.](#)

Undergraduate Student Travel Fund

The Undergraduate Student Travel Fund (USTF) supports research and scholarly related travel for undergraduates who are presenting their projects via poster, talk, screening, round table, performance, etc. USTF can support costs associated with presentations at virtual conferences. Students must apply 30 days before the start of the event. [Learn more here.](#)

University Libraries

Streaming Video and Audio Collections for Teaching

Are you aware that GMU has an extensive streaming collection available to faculty and students?

Covering more than 30 streaming video and audio databases the Music and Media collections provide over 200,000 videos in all subject areas.

Visit <https://infoguides.gmu.edu/media/streamingvideo> and explore the research databases for streaming video and audio, or check the Library's catalog to find videos <https://library.gmu.edu/>

Can't find what you need for your teaching? Contact, the Music, Films Studies, and Video Collection Librarian: Cindy Badilla-Melendez cbadilla@gmu.edu

CECIL



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Collaboratory: University-wide tracking database

The Office of Community Engagement and Civic Learning (cecil.gmu.edu) is excited to announce the launch of a university-wide tracking database that will provide a portrait of George Mason's footprint in the community.

With this new tool, faculty and staff will be able to share the details of their community engagement and public service activities, highlight their community-engaged teaching and research, effectively share research and services with potential donors, funders, and partners, and explore what other units and centers are doing across campus. We anticipate this tool to help leverage relationships with community partners that are already established on campus to assist with coordination, communication, and building trust with community. Collaboratory allows us to take a systematic approach to highlighting academic and co-curricular service with community organizations and support the institutional mission of inclusive excellence. To find more information about Collaboratory, please visit <https://cecollaboratory.com/>. If you are interested in being part of the pilot and including your community engagement and public service projects in the database, please contact Shanelle Highsmith, Program Manager for Outreach and Partnerships, at shighsm2@gmu.edu.

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