

## From our Directors

Greetings, Friends,

Finally, it's April! We hope you are cheered by the signs of spring: new flowers, longer days, and warmer temperatures.

For Stearns Center, April has typically featured our fabulous Celebration of Teaching Excellence. We missed that last year, and unfortunately, we are once again advised that it is not yet safe to invite you all to join us in person for this event. But we do want to showcase our excellent faculty. We have more information coming as we finalize our plans next week, but for now, please if you can put these two virtual events on your calendar:

- Virtual Celebration: 2020 Teaching Excellence Award Winners, Wednesday April 21, 2:00-3:00 pm
- Virtual Celebration: 2021 Teaching Excellence Award Winners, Friday, May 7, 12:00-1:00 pm

April is also our *springboard* into the upcoming months: our Faculty Writing Retreat in May, our summer Course ReDesign Academy and CPD Workshops, and even our fall orientations, webinars, and Faculty Learning Communities.

We realize that many of you may be so exhausted by a year of pandemic teaching and other emergencies that signing up for anything new just seems unfathomable. And in the spirit of self-care, your Stearns Center colleagues encourage you to say “no” to some things this spring and summer so that you can say “yes” to yourself, to your family, and to the many important tasks and events you have put off in the past year.

But if you think your future self would thank you for providing some motivation, community, and information to support you as you think about what the “new normal” of teaching in 2021-2022 will be like, we hope you'll use our resources to provide that kind of jump-start. You don't have to figure things out on your own! For instance,

- **April:** Could you write a one-paragraph proposal for ITL 2021 On-Demand, to share the cool strategy you worked on this spring?
- **May:** Might you join the May Virtual Writing Retreat, for support to kick off your summer projects?
- **June:** Would it help to collaborate with peers for Virtual Course ReDesign Academy?
- **Summer:** Maybe you'd be ready to join a one-hour workshop or webinar in mid-June and mid-August? (Schedule TBA)
- **Fall 2021:** We're recruiting now for once-a-month Faculty Learning Communities who will discuss blended learning, anti-racist pedagogies, teaching with writing, and scholarship of teaching and learning -- if you'd like to explore any of these areas with other faculty, let us know!

Along with our partners (including the Office of the Provost, Faculty Affairs and Development, Mason Impact/Undergraduate Education, Writing Across the Curriculum, University Libraries, Graduate Education, GradLife, and Information Technology Services) we are inspired by all you have achieved in the past 12 months, and looking forward to continued innovation (and maybe some nice spring afternoon walks among the flowers) in the upcoming months!

Shelley & Faisal

E Shelley Reid, Ph.D.  
Director for Teaching Excellence  
Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning  
Associate Professor, English Department  
[ereid1@gmu.edu](mailto:ereid1@gmu.edu)

Faisal Mahmud, Ph.D.  
Director for Digital Learning  
Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning  
[fmahmud5@gmu.edu](mailto:fmahmud5@gmu.edu)

## Events & Deadlines

### 2021 Innovations in Teaching and Learning Conference

September 20-24, 2021 | Online

Last chance! Deadline approaching for 2021 ITL Conference Proposals for the On Demand Collection

Have you tried something new in your teaching this semester or have some results to share from a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning project? There's still time to share your teaching experiences and insights by contributing to **the On-Demand Collection** (teaching artifacts with reflections or annotations, short videos, digital posters) until **Friday, May 21, 2021**, for this year's 13<sup>th</sup> annual **Innovations in Teaching and Learning (ITL) conference**. We are inviting Mason instructors of all ranks and disciplines to contribute. See our [RFP page](#) for more details.

Note: If you submitted a proposal by the previous proposal deadline, you should have a

received an email with your proposal status and asking you to confirm your intent to present.

## Faculty Development Workshops

### Stearns Center Faculty Learning Communities Reboot for Fall 2021

**Indication of Interest Deadline: April 19, 2021**

Stearns Center and our partners will sponsor four FLCs in Fall 2021; you can indicate your interest between now and April 5 by filling out our two-minute survey:

- The New “Blended” Learning: Strategies for Engaging Students Across Modalities
- Exploring Anti-Racist and Inclusive Teaching Across the Curriculum
- Teaching with Writing Across Disciplines
- SoTL and DBER for Everyone: Strategies for Inquiring into Your Own Teaching

Faculty who complete a yearlong FLC—participating in 4-5 meetings each semester—earn a Level 2 Professional Development Credential from Stearns Center.

If you have another idea for an FLC, you can propose to lead your own Faculty Learning Community to start in Fall 2021, and engage in thoughtful conversations with your peers. Up to \$3500 in funding (for facilitators and supplies) is available per year-long group. For more information about FLCs or to send a proposal, [see our website](#), or [drop us an email](#) with questions or ideas!

### CPD: Alternative & Authentic Assessments: Student Perspectives

**Friday, April 16, 2021 | 1:30 - 2:30 pm | Zoom**

Alternative and authentic assessments provide a more creative and experimental approach to evaluate student learning. What do students think about alternative & authentic assessment? Although changing from traditional assessment to alternative/authentic assessment is a significant paradigm shift for instructors, the benefits (for students) of using alternative/authentic assessments over more traditional assessments can far outweigh the challenges. In this webinar, (a) we will focus on what students think about assessment—since student perspectives will impact their motivation, engagement, and learning; (b) we will discuss the benefits and challenges of alternative assessments for students; and (c) we will share examples of alternative & authentic assessments from Mason online courses.

Through this webinar, you will gain an appreciation of student perspectives on assessment; you will identify potential benefits and challenges of alternative and authentic assessments for students; and you will consider examples and models for developing alternative/authentic assessment in your own courses. Using the webinar information, we encourage you (participants) to design & create an alternative or authentic activity or project to assess student learning in your own courses, as follow-up activity for Stearns Center Continuing Development Program.

[Register for this Zoom meeting](#)

### Summer Course ReDesign Academy

**Application deadline: April 19, 2021**

**Workshop Dates: June 8-9, 2021**

Are you already dreaming about what you'll do differently as we meet the “new new normal” in Fall 2021? Maybe you're looking ahead to teaching in person in an active learning classroom—like one of the brilliant new classrooms in Horizon Hall—or thinking about how to combine online and in-person modalities in a productive blend? Consider bringing a current course syllabus—or a plan for a new course—to June's Course ReDesign Academy.

For more information or to submit an application, [see our website](#).

### Register now for the Summer 2021 Faculty Writing Retreat!

**May 18 -20 | MS Teams**

Hoping to start the summer off with a blast of writing productivity? This three-day event—co-sponsored by Writing Across the Curriculum, the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning, and the Office of Faculty Affairs and Development—offers an active approach to uninterrupted writing time, a chance to learn from our guest speakers, and a supportive and collegial community of peers to boost your writing productivity. Participants work on a variety of research and creative projects at all stages of completion. Registration is open now through May 10. For more information please [visit our website](#). To register, complete our [registration survey](#).

## Online Teaching Opportunities and Resources

### Stearns Center Digital Learning YouTube Channel

Faculty are encouraged to make use of the Stearns Center's new [Digital Learning YouTube channel](#). In addition to the Center's existing resources/information space, the channel's short videos are a good way of learning and reflecting on various "how-to-do" things—such as teaching online tips, instructional design, multimedia, and technology—without spending time on text-heavy documents. Faculty can also use these Mason-specific videos without using or referencing other external links. Faculty will have a quick understanding of various topics relevant to teaching and learning, understand how to integrate and manipulate LMS features specific to Mason, and use these published videos for classes if needed.

The Stearns Center plans to publish and update relevant short videos on essential and helpful teaching and learning topics throughout the year. Subscribe to and visit our YouTube channel regularly and often, as we will be expanding our video offerings in the coming months.

## Stearns Center's Office Hours and Consultation

Stearns Center staff are teleworking and will be glad to assist you with any questions related to teaching, managing, and developing your face-to-face, hybrid or online courses; we can respond via email or Zoom. Please submit your questions by clicking [here](#). We work to answer your questions as quickly as possible; however, response times may vary.

## Self-Paced Courses to Improve Your Course Design Skills

Stearns Center is currently offering two self-paced courses, open to all faculty and instructors. Once you enroll, you can work through the modules in order, or you can skip to specific sections that will help you with your current course design. Each course has an "Ask a Question" discussion forum staffed by Stearns Center and is supported by office hours (see above) and by ITS Courses support through [courses@gmu.edu](mailto:courses@gmu.edu).

For more information or to enroll in a course, see our [Consultations, Webinars and Trainings page](#).

## Subscribe to our Online Teaching Newsletter

If you are new to teaching online, or you'd just like a little more support, we invite you to subscribe to our Biweekly Online Teaching newsletter. In each newsletter, you will receive tips, guidance and resources concerning a specific online teaching topic. By subscribing to the Stearns Center Online Teaching Newsletter, you will receive a newsletter issue about every 2 weeks.. Occasionally you may receive a special issue of the newsletter (i.e., outside of the biweekly sequence) or a two-part issue. The Newsletter will be available as a downloadable PDF so that you may save and refer to the online teaching topics when you need the information. [Subscribe here](#).

If you have a special request for online teaching information that you'd like to receive in a future issue, please contact [stearns@gmu.edu](mailto:stearns@gmu.edu). We will add your requested topic to the Newsletter list, create a special issue of the Online Teaching Newsletter, and send it out to all subscribers. You can view previous editions of the Online Teaching newsletter in [Our Newsroom](#).

# Stearns Center News

## The Stearns Center is hiring!

### Part-time Position: Office Manager

The Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning at George Mason University is currently seeking a part-time Office Manager. This position reports to the team's Operations Manager and serves a team of approximately 12 administrative faculty and classified staff. The Stearns Center is very active with multiple teams, projects and events that serve faculty across the university.

Primary responsibilities include fiscal management, general office management and acting as HR liaison, including support for candidate searches and staff on-boarding.

Posting coming soon! Email [Charlotte Petsche](mailto:Charlotte.Petsche) if you are interested in applying.

### Student Position: Media Specialist

The Office of Digital Learning within the Office of the Provost seeks a student intern Media Specialist to aid in the production and support of online learning materials including short videos, infographics, animations, and presentations. Students will gain first-hand experience working with instructional designers and faculty on media-based projects ideal for creating a compelling portfolio of work for future job searches.

This position is telework only, intended for around 10-15 hours per week. This position is open to undergraduate and graduate students.

[View the full position description and log-in to Handshake to apply](#)

# From Our Partners

## Organizational Development and Learning

### Crucial Conversations Skillshops

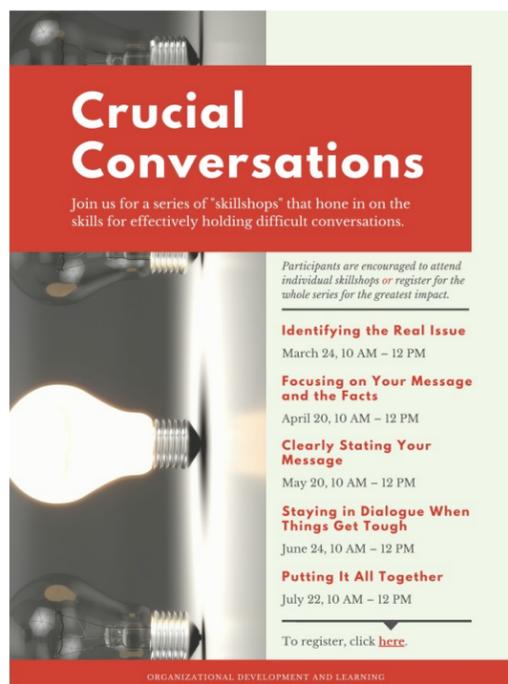
Thursday, April 20 | 10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Faculty and Staff are invited to join us for the second in a five-part series of "skillshops" that hone in on the skills for holding difficult conversations featured in "Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High." Led by certified trainers in the Crucial Conversations model, these sessions will focus on practicing the crucial skills needed to ensure your challenging conversations are handled effectively.

Session Two will focus on Starting with Heart (figuring out what you are really trying to achieve) and Mastering Your Stories (separating facts from your interpretations). At this session, you'll learn key questions to ask about the situation and your perceptions and tools for honing in on the real facts you need to share.

Through videos and role-play scenarios, you'll focus on how to ensure you start the conversation in a way that leads to productive dialogue.

To register for [skillshop two](#), as well as any of the other upcoming sessions, login



**Crucial Conversations**

Join us for a series of "skillshops" that hone in on the skills for effectively holding difficult conversations.

*Participants are encouraged to attend individual skillshops or register for the whole series for the greatest impact.*

- Identifying the Real Issue**  
March 24, 10 AM - 12 PM
- Focusing on Your Message and the Facts**  
April 20, 10 AM - 12 PM
- Clearly Stating Your Message**  
May 20, 10 AM - 12 PM
- Staying in Dialogue When Things Get Tough**  
June 24, 10 AM - 12 PM
- Putting It All Together**  
July 22, 10 AM - 12 PM

To register, click [here](#).

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

at [MasonLEAPS](#) and search "Crucial Conversations Skillshop". For questions, please contact [hrlearn@gmu.edu](mailto:hrlearn@gmu.edu). Please note: Participants are encouraged to attend individual skillshops or register for the whole series for the greatest impact.

## Center for the Advancement of Well-Being



### Rx Racial Healing Circles at Mason

Tuesday, April 13 | 9 a.m. - 12 noon  
Monday, April 19 | 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Mason students, faculty, staff, and alumni can join an upcoming [Rx Racial Healing Circle](#) (RHC) to build racial awareness, well-being, and community together through sharing stories.

To learn more, [visit our website](#). To register for any of those upcoming dates, fill out our [registration form](#).

### Mindful Mason Moments Online Mindfulness Sessions

Every weekday | 12:00 pm | Zoom

Mindful Mason Moments online mindfulness sessions give you an opportunity to take midday breaks in ways that can deepen your mindful awareness and overall well-being. Sessions run for 30 minutes Monday-Thursday and 20 minutes on Friday.

To learn more, [visit our website](#). To join the meeting, [select this Zoom link](#).



## Writing Across the Curriculum

### Friday Faculty Writing Sprints

Every Friday 9:00-11:00am | MS Teams

Our Faculty Writing Sprints are underway, and all faculty invited to participate. Every Friday morning, you can join colleagues from across campus to build some community around your writing and to set the pace for a productive academic year. After a few minutes of check-ins and goal-setting, we spend our time quietly working together.

To participate in the sprints, simply connect to our [Faculty Writers Community workspace](#) in MS Teams (make sure to sign in with your Mason credentials) and look for the meeting in the General channel.

Questions? Visit our [website](#) or email us at [wac@gmu.edu](mailto:wac@gmu.edu).

## Undergraduate Education



### Summer undergraduate research opportunity!

STIP is an interdisciplinary, faculty-led summer research opportunity. Students will have the opportunity to learn to tackle a global question or challenge, to work independently and on a team, and will contribute to the creation an original scholarly project and communicate their findings.

Students are expected to work full-time (40 hours a week) for ten weeks in the summer, and are paid a \$4,000 stipend. Applications for [STIP 2021](#) are currently open for undergraduate students! Find this opportunity by searching "Summer Team Impact Project" on Handshake.

## OSCAR

### Curriculum Impact Grants (CIGs)

Proposal Deadline: April 12, 2021

The Office of the Provost is pleased to invite you to transform your curriculum, have an impact on your students, and offer opportunities for your students to have an impact in the world through the Curriculum Impact Grants (CIGs). For the 2021-2022 cycle, the Curriculum Impact Grants are looking for teams of faculty, staff, and/or administrators designing innovative multidisciplinary curriculum at either the undergraduate or graduate level. Proposals involving programmatic

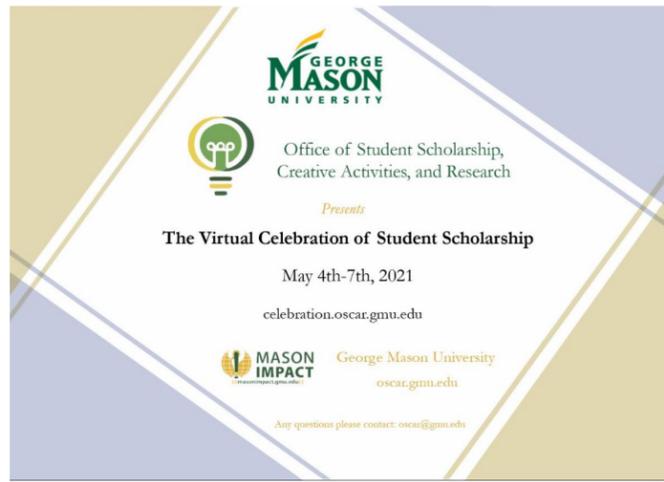
curriculum change (majors, minors, and master's programs) that are engaging with the United Nations Global Goals. Mason has already shown support for this program by becoming a United Nations Partner and through the creation of the Institute for a Sustainable Earth.

Please see the [Mason Impact site](#) for details. We look forward to seeing how you will have an impact on our students, and help your students have an impact in the world.

### Virtual Celebration of Student Scholarship

May 4 - 7, 2021

The Mason community is invited to join the Office of Student Scholarship, Creative Activities, and Research (OSCAR) for the Spring Virtual Celebration of Student Scholarship which runs May 4-7. Support the student scholars who worked hard all semester by viewing their pre-recorded presentations and asking them questions. Students represent colleges and programs across the university community.



Registration is not required. To access the celebration, [visit the OSCAR website](#).

### 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. During COVID-19 restrictions, USTF can support costs associated with presentations at virtual conferences. Students must apply 30 days before the start of the event. For more information go to the USTF page.

### 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 Research Scholars Program

Applications for the fall will open in April  
Deadline: May 26, 2021

URSP supports undergraduate students collaborating on a research, creative, or scholarly project with a faculty mentor. [Find more information on our website](#).

Share something for next month's newsletter

Add someone to our mailing list