From our Directors

Greetings, Friends, and Welcome Back!

We hope you were able to find opportunities for relaxation, connection, reflection, and rejuvenation over the summer, even if those events and moments didn't look like they did in previous summers.

We are looking forward to reconnecting with **you** this fall, in ways that are both familiar and new. For instance,

- Most of our Stearns Center Team is already familiar to you, but in this newsletter we want to introduce our **new Director for Digital Learning** , Dr. Faisal Mahmud
- Our website has all the great information you're used to, and a **new Fall 2020 landing page** that we hope will direct you to the resources you need right now
- You know our Innovations in Teaching and Learning Conference well after a decade, but this year we will be **new on Zoom** for a full week of events
- You watched us develop our Blackboard Template and our Online Course Design Primer last spring—and now there are even more ways you can access these supports, whatever modality you're teaching in this fall
- Our other regular supports and opportunities—consultations, Write-Ins, faculty communities, workshops, academies, and newsletters—will also have new incarnations, so keep reading!

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're looking forward to a wonderful second year.

Wishing you an excellent conclusion to your summer and an energizing start to your Fall 2020 semester,

Shelley & Faisal

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Faculty Development
Events & Workshops

Save the Date! Innovations in Teaching & Learning conference

September 21-25

Join us for the **Innovations in Teaching & Learning (ITL) conference**, the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning's signature annual event, that brings together Mason's instructors from across disciplines to share their strategies for teaching through lively virtual interactive workshops and panels. From the comfort of your home, brew a cup of coffee and enjoy over 30+ Synchronous and 30+ On Demand sessions September 21-25. You will walk away with something to use in your class the next day, week or semester.

Keynote speaker Bryan Alexander author of **Academia Next: The Future of Higher Education**(click link for FREE Mason access to his *e-book* thanks to sponsorship of University Libraries**)**, will invite us to reflect on how the landscape of higher education is changing and how technology can transform education, improving student experience and learning outcomes.

Whether you're full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, graduate student, or support office staff, we hope that you can join us for an inspiring week filled with conversation, fellowship, and fun! **Register** and find out more at **https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/itl**

SEEKING VOLUNTEERS: Volunteers make this event possible—even as we are online this year! We currently are seeking faculty, staff, and graduate students to "host" live/synchronous conference sessions to help the sessions run smoothly:
- "Session Hosts"- welcome participants to the conference, make a few conference announcements, introduce the speakers, keep the session on time, post an evaluation link at the end, and serve as a back-up to launch the Zoom session
- "Tech Hosts"- launch the Zoom session, move participants from the waitroom to the session, manage muting participants, assist with Zoom tool troubleshooting/disruptions

If interested, please complete our volunteer application form: **Volunteer Interest Form.**

Upcoming Webinars

See our website for a list of recorded webinars about online course design and teaching; Zoom and Collaborate Ultra; and about other Blackboard Tools. Throughout the Fall semester, the Stearns Center Digital Learning Team also will hold a series of webinars about specific topics for online teaching, including online discussions, class engagement and interactions, accessibility, mini-lecture videos, group work, and online course readiness & quality. Please check the Stearns Center website regularly for updates.

Zoom Webinar Recorded Session

356...and this is big! We had a total of 356 registered for our Zoom webinar (Using Zoom in Synchronous Online Teaching: Aligning Teaching Strategies to Enhance Class Engagement) facilitated by Dr. Faisal Mahmud, Director for Digital Learning. Recorded session and Q&A document will be posted on the **Stearns Center's website**. Faculty will be informed by email once both will be posted.

Self-Paced Courses: Online Course Design Primer and Pivotal Pedagogy Fundamentals

Our faculty support courses are now open for all faculty to self enroll. Once you self-enroll to these Blackboard courses, you will find topic-based modules and additional resources to assist you in your course design and teaching strategies for all teaching modalities this fall. For more information on the courses and instructions for self-enrolling, **see our website.**

Online Teaching Opportunities

Resources for New and Returning Online Faculty

If you are teaching an asynchronous course this fall, please read our **Welcome Letter**. 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 Coaching newsletter; **click here to subscribe.**

Virtual Teaching Squares

Stearns Center is exploring the option to create Virtual Teaching Squares for Fall 2020. In a typical teaching square, four faculty members each commit to a four-week period in which they
- each observe one meeting of the other three participants' courses, and
- schedule a coffee break at least once to share what they saw and talk about strategies they can all use (this is formative feedback, not supervisory judgment: what starts in the Teaching Square, stays in the Teaching Square).

As we re-imagine toward Virtual Teaching Squares, we can envision that participants could agree to share one of the following:
- an invitation to their Blackboard course site
- a copy of an assignment, course meeting plan, or plan to use a new educational tool
- a recording of a webcast class meeting
- a fundamental goal and/or a burning question they have for teaching in Fall 2020
- something else for the good of the group

And the follow-up "meeting" could be either text or video, or a combination of both. The same kind of limited timing would apply -- just a few weeks' commitment. If you think you might be interested in participating in a Virtual Teaching Square this fall, please **fill out our two-minute survey** by Monday August 31, and we'll be in touch!

Updates from the Stearns Center

Shout Out to Our Instructional Designers!

We would like to give a huge shout out to our amazing Instructional Designers of Digital Learning team who worked tirelessly to assist our faculty for online course design, one-on-one consultation, professional training, and additional support to adjust with Covid-19 teaching challenges during the Spring 2020 emergency and the preparation for Summer 2020.

Welcome Some New Faces!

Stearns Center Director for Digital Learning: Stearns Center is delighted to announce that Dr. Faisal Mahmud is our new Director for Digital Learning, joining our team from Old Dominion University Distance Learning. As Director for Digital Learning and co-director of the Stearns Center, Faisal oversees faculty and program support related to Mason's online courses and programs and holds a leadership role in Mason Online initiatives—and we're already benefitting from his Zoom expertise and his strong background in project management and data analysis (once a systems engineer, always a systems engineer!).

Mason Online: Our partners in Mason Online are equally excited to announce that Dr. Tom Ayers is the new Director for Online Operations, joining the Team from Broward College. As Director for Online Operations in Academic Innovations and New Ventures, Tom oversees the daily operations for Mason Online, and works directly with our online program partners.

Both Faisal and Tom bring their expertise, experience, and energy to lead growth, support, and innovation of online education—and online faculty—here at Mason. Welcome!

The Stearns Center is hiring!

Conference Assistants: We're looking for 2-3 Conference Assistants/Interns for ITL 2020. We are seeking an assistant who is self-directed, outgoing, and interested in learning more about innovative teaching and learning at Mason. The purpose of these positions is to assist with transitioning the conference to an online format, preference is given to people who have advanced experience with virtual conference platforms (e.g., Zoom) and electronic journals.

The position will require 2-5 hours per week May through September 2020, with possible extension through the end of the fall 2020 semester or into spring 2021. All tasks may be completed remotely.

Interested applicants can apply on **Handshake**. For any questions about the position, please contact the **Stearns Center**.

Faculty Fellow in STEM Digital Learning: We're looking for a faculty member to spend 5-10 hours per week this year supporting STEM faculty and creating course development resources for STEM-related online education. If you're interested in this position, please **contact the Stearns Center** and we'll send a job description and application information.

"New Normal" Faculty Consultants: Stearns Center has a few stipended ($500-$1000) positions this fall for faculty who are teaching in one of the new course modalities -- Face-to-face, Face-to-face-with-web-streaming, Face-to-face hybrid (half in class Tuesday, half in class Thursday), Synchronous web-conferencing (50-100% via Zoom or Collaborate) -- or teaching online in one of the more-challenging online-asynchronous fields, such as languages, arts, labs, practice, or field courses.

You don't have to be an expert in the new pedagogies to be a Consultant -- just an experienced teacher with an understanding of pedagogical strategies and an interest in supporting other faculty. Consultants would help design webinars and other online resources, join our office hours, and/or coach small groups of faculty for 1-2 hours per week this fall. If you're interested, please **email us** by Friday 8/28 with a cv plus a brief cover letter identifying the Fall 2020 teaching modality/focus you'd like to assist with and any prior interest or experience in supporting faculty colleagues.

From Our Partners

Writing Across the Curriculum

Fall Faculty Writers Community

Are you planning to be writing this semester—articles, book chapters, grant proposals, creative projects, new course lectures, letters to your elected officials? We know that while it's often difficult to make time to focus on your writing, faculty may face even more obstacles this semester, and we want to help!

Writing Across the Curriculum, in collaboration with Faculty Affairs and Stearns Center—the team that brings you Friday Faculty Write-Ins and our Faculty Writing Retreats—will be sponsoring the Faculty Writers Community. Beginning this fall, you can sign up to share weekly writing goals and know that you have peers to encourage you, intrigue you, and keep you on track! All faculty, at all levels, with any kind of writing projects, are invited. You can join the Community for a few weeks or for the entire semester to connect with other faculty writers on campus and to set the tone for a productive academic year. If you're interested in participating, please fill out the quick survey **on our page here**, and we'll be sure to include you to in our mailing list.

Graduate Student life

Gradstravaganza: Graduate Student Welcome

Friday, August 21, 2020 | 9:00am – 4:00pm

All new and continuing Mason graduate students are invited to Gradstravaganza, Mason's annual graduate student welcome event! Join us for a virtual version of Gradstravaganza, featuring mini-workshops highlighting strategies for success in graduate school, special sessions for Graduate Assistants (GRAs, GTAs, and GPAs), opportunities to meet and connect with fellow Mason graduate students, and more! Brought to you by Graduate Student Life, the Office of the Provost, the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning, and the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GAPSA). More details, including a full schedule of session and how to participate, will be available at **https://gradlife.gmu.edu/gradstravaganza/** in early August.

University Career Services

Career Content for your Classes This Fall

Request a Presentation Form: We are happy to join your courses and events this fall, as we have in the past. To request a presentation for your class meeting in person or synchronously, you can use our **Request a Presentation Form** on our website and a professional staff member will be assigned to your request. Please allow at least two weeks advance notice for requests.

Not meeting synchronously? We recommend our **Career Services Unpacked Video Series** or using some of the LinkedIn Learning workshops related to resume writing, cover letters and interviewing. We'll also continue adding recordings of our virtual workshops to our **YouTube channel** as we go.

University Libraries

Updates from the Mason Libraries

Contactless pickup/return service is now available in the **Fenwick Library lobby** on the Fairfax campus and the **Colgan Hall lobby** on the Science & Technology campus.

Hours for each library location have been updated and posted for the **Fall 2020 semester**. Please note that **Gateway Library** has closed permanently.

For Fall 2020, Course Reserves will feature electronic resources only; physical reserves will not be circulating. For more information, visit **https://library.gmu.edu/reserves**.

For Fall 2020, the Libraries will offer online library instruction by default. This includes both synchronous and asynchronous instruction. You can request instruction at **https://library.gmu.edu/instruction/request**.

Access to **e-books available via HathiTrust** has been extended.

Information on requesting and accessing Kanopy streaming videos (for instructors only) is available at **https://infoguides.gmu.edu/media/Kanopy**.

For updates from University Records Management, visit **https://recordsmanagement.gmu.edu/**

For more information and service updates, please monitor **https://library.gmu.edu** and review the FAQs at **https://library.gmu.edu/faq-page**.

OSCAR

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

Spring 2021 Application Deadline: October 28, 2020

URSP supports undergraduate students collaborating on a research, creative, or scholarly project with a faculty mentor. **Find more information on our website.**

Social Action and Integrative Learning (SAIL)

SAIL Presentations/Trainings

- Our SAIL staff offer workshops, programs and trainings around a variety of topics and presentations can be adapted/customized based on needs/objectives of the group. Please visit this link to learn more **https://sail.gmu.edu/program** and find our **form** to request a presentation.

9/11 Day of Service/Service Fair

- Join us on **Friday September 11, 2020** for our annual **George Mason University Service Fair** as part of the **Mason Nation 9/11 Day of Service.**
  - **Event RSVP Link: https://forms.gle/PwFoQgKDzfXRYwq49**

Alternative Break Leaders Needed – Apply Today!

- We are currently hiring paid **Alternative Break Leaders** and hope you will share this with your students and encourage them to apply. Please visit the **Alternative Break Leader Position Description** to learn more about what this entails. **The application will be due August 15th**.

Our New Resource

- We continue to pull together resources from colleagues across the country around community-based learning in the age of COVID-19. We hope this will be helpful as you navigate making changes to your curriculum. **https://sail.gmu.edu/for-faculty/covid-19-response-for-community-based-learning**

Share something for next month's newsletter

Add someone to our mailing list