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Stearns Center
for Teaching and Learning
Digital Learning | Teaching Excellence

From Our Directors

Greetings, Friends,
Have we said recently how awesome we think Mason faculty are? Here you are, 19 months into pandemic teaching, still showing up for your students, improvising your courses and labs, and supporting your colleagues. We know that for some and perhaps many of you, the cumulative stress is significant, and we hope you are finding ways to be as patient and generous with yourselves as you are with those around you.

We still have some opportunities for you to connect with us this fall—you might come just to say hello and engage with your peers in ways that renew your energy.

- November 10: Enhance your final course project directions through our Designing High Impact Writing Assignments CPD Workshop
- November 17: Join our webinar on inclusive teaching across all modalities
- November 15: Celebrate First Gen Week by joining our conversation with two experts on supporting first-gen students

And we're starting to look ahead to spring events and opportunities:

- Nominate a colleague for a 2021 teaching award: Adjunct TEA and Online TEA nominations are due December 3
- Apply to participate in Course ReDesign Academy for January (we'll still be mostly virtual)
- Review our new Online Course Quality Checklist as you design your spring courses
- Sign up to join our January virtual Writing Retreat
- ...and keep an eye out for our upcoming announcement about our new Syllabus Design asynchronous workshop coming in early January!

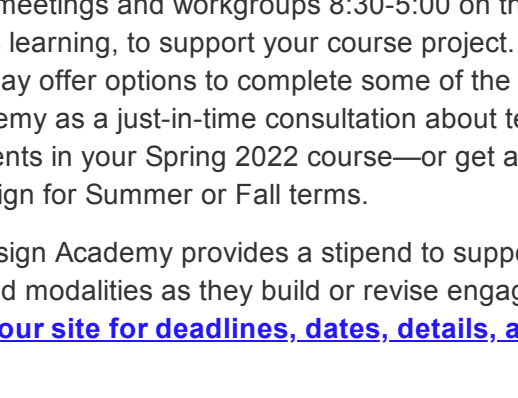
If you just have a quick question about finishing this semester's courses, remember you can [request a consultation](#), and you can find out more about other events on our [Full Fall Calendar](#) events page.

Along with our partners (including the Office of the Provost, Faculty Affairs and Development, Writing Across the Curriculum, Undergraduate Education/Mason Impact/OSCAR/CECL, Graduate Education, GradLife, University Libraries, and Information Technology Services) we wish you and your students the optimism, persistence, flexibility, and community support we all need in the shelling and month of Fall 2021.

Shelley and Faisal
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Events & Deadlines



Celebrate National Distance Learning Week
November 8-12, 2021

Check out the many resources Mason provides for online teaching and learning!

- [Get Blackboard Ready](#): View recorded trainings about Blackboard basics and tools.
 - [Contact Blackboard Support](#)
- [Creating Accessible REsources Guide](#) (CARES Guide): Find guidance for creating accessible instructional materials, and [how to use Blackboard Ally](#) to check accessibility of your online course documents.
 - [Contact AIT](#)
 - [Online Course Quality Checklist and Guidelines: Use Faculty Self-Checklist](#) to review your online course and online teaching.
 - [Contact Stearns Center](#)
 - [Online Learning Basics](#): Share this website about online education at Mason with your students.
 - [Contact Mason Online](#)
 - [Guide to Online Learning](#): Direct your students to Mason Learning Services for online study tips.
 - [Contact Learning Services](#)

Teaching Excellence Awards

Adjunct TEA and Online TEA Nomination Deadline: Friday, December 3, 2021

The 2022 George Mason University Teaching Excellence Awards are open to faculty with significant teaching experience at George Mason.

- **The Adjunct Teaching Excellence Awards** recognize excellence in the teaching of part-time faculty who have already completed teaching courses in at least six semesters at Mason.
- **The Online Teaching Excellence Awards** recognize teaching excellence in faculty members who have been teaching fully-online courses at Mason. Faculty may be full-time or part-time, and need to have taught online courses during at least four complete semesters at Mason.

- Students, faculty members, or administrators may nominate any faculty member for an award (we don't accept self-nominations). See more information [on our website](#).
- **To nominate**: Please use our [Qualtrics survey](#) to provide the information about your nomination and a few paragraphs about your recommendation for them.

Course ReDesign Academy is Virtual again in January!

Tuesday, January 11 and Wednesday, January 12, 2022

Application Deadline: Monday December 6, 2021

Course ReDesign Academy will be online again in January! We'll use a blend of synchronous meetings and workgroups 8:30-5:00 on the two key days, plus some asynchronous learning, to support your course project. Depending on participant interest, we may offer options to complete some of the sessions on campus, with cake! Use our academy as a just-in-time consultation about teaching in a new modality or with new assignments in your Spring 2022 course—or get a jump on a course you want to build or redesign for Summer or Fall terms.

Course ReDesign Academy provides a stipend to support faculty from all ranks, levels, disciplines, and modalities as they build or revise engaging, relevant, manageable courses. [See our site for deadlines, dates, details, and FAQs.](#)

Faculty Learning Communities Return for a Fresh Spring Start

Proposal Deadline: Friday December 3, 2021

You—yes, you!—might be the change you are looking for! Or part of it, anyway, as you work with other faculty to investigate better teaching strategies. Maybe you want to explore how to engage with more inclusive and equitable pedagogies, or energize your introductory-level course, or explore flipped or hybrid learning. Any faculty member can propose to facilitate or co-facilitate a Faculty Learning Community to start in Spring 2022, and engage in these or other exciting conversations. We have a few Enhanced FLCs available with up to \$3500 in funding (for facilitator stipends and supplies) 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!

The Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning & the First-Gen+ Center Invite Faculty and Staff to "Coffee and Conversation: Supporting First-Generation College Students on Campus and Beyond."

Monday, November 15, 2021 | 12:30 - 1:30 pm

November 8-15, 2021 brings First-Gen Week to the Mason community along with a host of terrific programs for students, faculty, and staff aimed at celebrating and supporting Mason's first-generation college student learners. National First-Generation Day is celebrated on November 8.

In collaboration with the [Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning](#), the [First-Gen+ Center](#) will host a three-part online discussion series featuring Dr. Blake Silver (Assistant Professor of Sociology, George Mason University) and Dr. Lisa Nunn (Director of the Center for Educational Excellence and Professor of Sociology, University of San Diego), as well as Mason experts. Both Dr. Silver and Dr. Nunn will share findings from their recently published books (*The Cost of Inclusion: How Student Conformity Leads to Inequality on College Campuses*; and *College Belonging: How First-Year and First-Generation Students Navigate Campus Life*, respectively) and invite questions from faculty and staff on how best to engage with and support success for first-generation college students.

You may attend one event or several; all will draw on Silver and Nunn's groundbreaking research. Registration for the each program will be required.

Register here: Zoom links to follow.

Questions? Please contact Dr. Amber Holton-Thomas | ahampoto@gmu.edu

Event 1: Monday, November 15, 12:30- 2 pm EST

First-Gen Success: Perspectives and Strategies
Special Guests: Blake Silver (GMU) and Lisa Nunn (USD)

Event 2: TBA – early December, 90 minutes

Facilitator: Amber Holton Thomas, Director of [First-Gen+](#) Center, GMU

Event 3: TBA - mid-January, 90 minutes

Building First-Gen Support into Your Spring Course

Facilitators: Graziella Pagliarulo McCarron, Assistant Professor (School of Integrative Studies) and First-Gen+ Center Affiliate Faculty, GMU and Shelley Reid, Director for Teaching Excellence, Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning, GMU



Stearns Center Events Calendar

Never miss an event! Bookmark our [Event Calendar](#) to stay up to date on all Stearns Center trainings, workshops, webinars, and deadlines.

Faculty Development Workshops

Online Teaching and Learning (OTL) Webinar Series

Stearns Center Digital Learning team will be facilitating online teaching and learning (OTL) series webinars in the fall. Our experienced QA team and instructional designers will share examples from designed courses with tips and strategies to make an online course highly effective. These webinars are open to all faculty regardless of the teaching modalities. Previously, faculty attending these webinars found it very effective for their F2F and hybrid teaching.

Inclusive Course Design and Teaching:

November 17, 2021, 1:00 - 2:30 pm

Mason is one of the most diverse student populations in the nation, and our online students also reflect this diversity. How to incorporate our students' diverse identities, backgrounds, and ways of knowing, to make online learning inclusive, relevant, and meaningful for all, including students from minorities or under-represented groups? Join us for this 90-minute webinar to discuss & explore best practices for inclusive and equitable online course design and teaching.

Facilitators: Laura Todd (Stearns Center), Darlene Smucny (Stearns Center), Dr. Michelle Williams (GCH, CHHS), Dr. Arya Evmenova (School of Education, CEHD)

Register here

Questions? Contact stearns@gmu.edu

Continuing Professional Development Workshops

The Stearns Center will offer the following workshops in November for new and continuing faculty as well as instructional TAs. These workshops will be offered through Zoom. Registration closes 24 hours before the workshop and these workshops will not be recorded. For additional descriptions, see Stearns Center's [Trainings](#) page. Please direct questions to Crystal Anderson, cander8@gmu.edu.

Creating and Grading Experiential Learning in Mason Impact Courses

November 9, 2021 | 11:00 p.m. - 12:00 p.m. | Facilitator: Crystal Anderson

In this workshop, you will redesign an existing assignment or activity by aligning the assignment's purpose and assessment in order to increase grading efficiency. [Register here.](#)

Designing High Impact Writing Assignments

November 9, 2021 | 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. | Facilitator: Tom Polk

This webinar is designed to introduce foundational practices for teaching with writing and designing writing assignments. Participants will learn about what research shows contributes to both meaningful and impactful writing assignments. [Register here.](#)

New Applications Help Students Engage Online: VoiceThread and Harmonize

In an effort to continuously improve opportunities for engagement and collaboration in Mason's online and hybrid courses, we are introducing two new tools within Blackboard: VoiceThread and Harmonize. Learn more about these tools, and watch the recorded demonstrations on the Stearns Center's [Webinar & Training page](#). To receive access to either application for your Fall 2021 course(s) or to look ahead to Spring 2022, please complete the [License Request Form](#). Licenses are limited during this pilot year and will be distributed on a first-come-first-served basis. Faculty are encouraged to describe a plan as to how they would like to use either tool in the upcoming year.

Writing Across the Curriculum

Winter Faculty Writing Retreat: Registration now open!

January 12-14 | Microsoft Teams

Hoping to start Spring semester with a blast of writing productivity? Consider registering for the Winter Faculty Writing Retreat, held virtually on Microsoft Teams, running January 12th-14th. This two-and-a-half 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 through Friday, December 10, but there's no time like the present.

[Click here for more information](#) (scroll down to "Faculty Writing Retreats"). The online registration is available [here](#).

Please send questions to retreat facilitators at wac@gmu.edu.

Join Us for A Conversation with George Mason University Publishing

November 5, 2021 at 11:00am

Interested in starting your own journal, creating open educational resources, or even publishing your own book? Us too! Join us for an Info Session, followed by Q&A, with the George Mason University Press Team. The session will begin at 11:01 A.M. on Friday, November 5th, immediately following the Faculty Writing Sprint. To join us for this panel, simply connect to our [Faculty Writing Community workspace](#) in MS Teams and look for the meeting in the general channel.

Fall Faculty Writing Sprints

Every Friday of the semester: 9:00 - 11:00 am

Our virtual Friday Writing Sprints are underway, and all faculty with any kind of writing project are invited to participate. Add it to your calendar, tell your friends, and prepare to marvel at just how much you can accomplish in two hours alongside your fellow Mason writers. To participate in the sprints, simply connect to our [Faculty Writing Community workspace](#) in MS Teams and look for the meeting in the General channel.

Registration: [Sign up here](#) and receive reminders about joining sessions and setting goals.

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: email us at wac@gmu.edu

For more information about this and related programming, please [visit our website](#).

Resources for Teaching with Writing

The WAC Program continues to add new resources for teaching with writing to [our website](#). As the semester continues, you might find our brief guides on assignment design, low-stakes writing assignments, and feedback helpful. You might also want to consider joining us for one of our [upcoming workshops](#). Finally, WAC staff are available to talk with individuals, groups, or departments about writing instruction and curriculum design. To arrange a consultation, please email us at wac@gmu.edu.

Join Us To Explore New Learning Outcomes for Writing-intensive Courses

During the 2020-2021 academic year, the WAC Committee developed new learning outcomes for WI courses in an effort to more directly articulate the goals of the WI course and to provide additional clarity for course planning and assessment. Courses seeking to newly acquire the WI designation will be expected to integrate these outcomes when they apply for the WI attribute; courses that already have the WI designation will be expected to integrate the outcomes into their course designs during their next review cycle. More information about the outcomes and the new application process is available on the [WAC Program's website](#) and will be forthcoming. We are currently developing new resources to help faculty meet these outcomes and will keep you updated when they become available.

As part of that effort, we are recruiting faculty members who are interested in becoming early adopters and working with WAC staff to integrate these new outcomes into course designs for the spring and fall 2022 semesters. If you are interested in this opportunity, please email us at wac@gmu.edu.

Stearns Center News

Stearns Center is hiring! | Educational Developer with STEM focus

Review begins November 8

We invite applications for an Educational Developer with a specialization in STEM education and faculty development. This is a full-time, administrative professional position; applicants must have a PhD, formal study in a STEM field, and at least two years' college-level teaching experience. For more information, see the [GMU Jobs Board](#), and please share this information with colleagues who may be interested.

Check out our Quality Assurance resources for online courses!

- [Faculty Self-Checklist](#): Use the Faculty Self-Checklist to review your online course and online teaching.
- [Online Course Quality: Essential Elements](#): Review our infographic on Online Course Quality: Essential Elements to get the most out of your course.
- Want to learn even more? Our Quality Assurance Checklist and Guidelines contains both a faculty self-checklist and essential quality indicators for each domain with examples of how they can be demonstrated in an online course.

This is an extensive document, and we encourage you to schedule an appointment with our QA team if you have any questions regarding it. [Click here](#) to request a copy of the full guidelines. You can indicate whether you would like a brief consultation with our QA team when submitting the form.

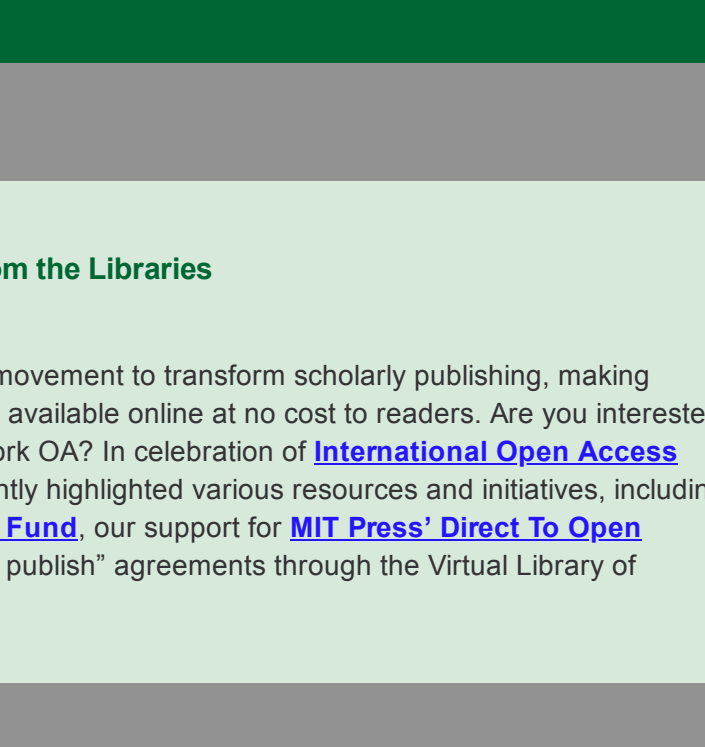
Contact QA TEAM: For any questions regarding Online Quality Assurance, please contact: qateam@gmu.edu

Want Tips and Guidance for Teaching Online?

Subscribe to the Stearns Center Digital Learning's Online Teaching Coaching Newsletter, whether you are new to teaching online or an experienced online instructor wanting additional guidance. The Fall 2021 Biweekly Online Teaching Coaching email newsletter will include topics such as: The Fall 2021 Biweekly Online Teaching Coaching, Time management for online teaching, Online student engagement Inclusive, equitable teaching online, and more.

Subscribe today

Questions? Contact the Stearns Center at stearns@gmu.edu.



Stearns Center Consultations
Stearns Center staff 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.

From Our Partners

University Libraries

Open Access Resources from the Libraries

Open Access (OA) is a global movement to transform scholarly publishing, making research publications and data available online at no cost to readers. Are you interested in how you can publish your work OA? In celebration of [International Open Access Week 2021](#), the Libraries recently highlighted various resources and initiatives, including our [Open Access Publishing Fund](#), our support for [MIT Press' Direct To Open initiative](#), and three "read and publish" agreements through the Virtual Library of Virginia. [Read more here.](#)

OSCAR

Summer Team Impact Projects application open

Proposal Deadline: December 3, 2021

The Office of the Provost is excited to offer grants for [Summer Team Impact Projects \(STIP\)](#) for Summer 2022. The Offices of Undergraduate Education, OSCAR, and CECL will fund multidisciplinary summer projects of undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty members. These projects will explore a central theme, a research question, or a community-identified problem. Proposals focusing on the UN Global Goals or Anti-Racist Community Engagement are encouraged.

Fall Virtual Celebration of Student Scholarship

December 9-10, 2021

Undergraduate students from all over campus, including OSCAR and several of the colleges will have videos available for you to watch, describing their work this fall. Please come to view the presentations and post comments or questions. Joins us as we celebrate the work of our student scholars.

Students who want to present their work at celebration should [visit our website](#) for more information.

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 Summer 2022 Cycle will open in the spring

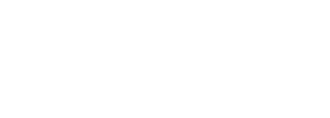
URSP supports undergraduate students collaborating on a research, creative, or scholarly project with a faculty mentor. [Find more information on our website.](#)

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. USTF can support costs associated with presenting at virtual conferences. Students must apply 30 days before the start of the event. [Learn more here.](#)

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Stearns@gmu.edu
Fairfax, VA | 22030 US

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