



George Mason University

Campuses in Fairfax – Arlington – Prince William County – South Korea
gmu.edu

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About: George Mason University is a public research university located in northern Virginia, and is the largest and most diverse institution of higher learning in the Commonwealth. Founded in 1949, Mason became an independent university in 1972 and today is one of 130 universities nationwide to receive the highest research designation from the Carnegie Institute. Currently Mason enrolls over 38,000 students in 82 undergraduate programs of study, 89 master's degree programs, 39 doctoral programs, and the law school. Mason is also home to Virginia's first and only College of Public Health, founded in 2022 to meet the critical growing need for skilled, interdisciplinary health professionals and research across the state.

More than half of Mason's undergraduates are students of color, and Mason exceeds national graduation rates regardless of race, ethnicity or wealth status. Students hail from all 50 states and 130 countries, and currently there are over 200,000 Mason alumni working worldwide. The Center for Mason Legacies, in consultation with local Tribal partners, developed a [Land Acknowledgement Statement](#) for the University in 2022.

Our Goals:

George Mason University strives to be a thoughtful partner with Virginia's Tribal Communities in pursuit of shared goals, including:

- Increasing the enrollment and success of Indigenous students at GMU
- Creating a campus culture that empowers Indigenous students
- Supporting collaborative research on environmental, health, and community dynamics that support tribal decision-making and tribal priorities
- Decolonizing and indigenizing our curriculum in key areas
- Listening to the Tribes to learn how to be a trusted and relevant institution that can contribute to the thriving of Virginia's Indigenous communities.

Resources of interest:

[Native American and Indigenous Alliance](#) (NAIA), a vibrant student group dedicated to assisting Native American and Indigenous students' transition to college, promoting Indigenous culture, raising awareness of Native issues and providing a safe environment for Native and non-Native students.

[GMU College of Public Health](#), which strives to meet the healthcare needs of communities throughout the Commonwealth. CPH offers 5 undergraduate degrees, 13 graduate degrees, and 7 certificates across fields as diverse as Nursing, Global and Community Health, Health Administration and policy, Nutrition and Food Studies, and Social Work.

[Virginia Guaranteed Admission Agreements](#): Qualified students from Virginia’s Community College System (VCCS) can gain guaranteed admission to Mason while also transferring up to 75 credits and qualifying for a Two-Year College Transfer Grant.

[Native American & Indigenous Studies Minor](#): An interdisciplinary, 18-credit program committed to understanding both the unity and the diversity of present and past Native American tribes, cultures, and experiences. This minor is compatible with all undergraduate majors offered at Mason.

Existing partnerships with Tribes:

[Indigenous Environmental Mapping & Resilience Planning Project](#)

Partnership with the Chickahominy and Upper Mattaponi Tribes, from June 2022 onwards
Dr. Jeremy Campbell, Dr. Tom Wood, Dr. Shima Mohebbi

This project aims to collect, organize, and analyze socio-environmental data to support Tribal sovereignty in the realm of environmental decision-making. Our research focuses in two specific areas. First, we follow the principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty to collect, organize, and archive environmental data pertaining to recently reacquired tribal lands (e.g., wildlife assessments, air and water quality data, GIS and remote sensing data modeling applications). Second, we work with Indigenous community members to build capacity for food sovereignty and community health initiatives. Our emphasis on data collection and management directly supports Indigenous-led landscape restoration and conservation goals. An additional goal of this project is to continue perfecting the engaged research methodologies through which sustained, equitable, and justice-affirming partnerships with Indigenous communities can produce mutually-beneficial outcomes for all. *Indigenous students enrolled at Mason, as well as Chickahominy youth, are active participants in this research.*

[IndigenoUs Northern Virginia Project](#)

Dr. Gabrielle Tayac (Piscataway), Dr. Alison Landsberg, Dr. Mills Kelly (June 2023-August 2024)

Northern Virginia has long been the destination of migrants from both Central and South America, which has led to the development of robust Latinx communities in the region, and which is reflected in Mason’s diverse student body. But these identities are complicated, shaped both, but not always equally, by a relationship to national homelands (Bolivia, El Salvador, Peru, etc.) and to an indigenous ancestry. “IndigenoUs Northern Virginia” will bring the Mason community into contact with site-specific and community-based indigenous knowledge and history to activate a too-often submerged Native American presence on our campus and in our region. From the Doeg and Piscataway ancient lands on which we live, to the intertribal American Indian population and the dynamic diasporic Latin American indigenous communities that persist in the present, Northern Virginia is a Native place. *This project will utilize the Hands-on Public History Laboratory Space, an interactive and student-focused resource that also hosts the NAIA Student Group.*

Indigenizing the Curriculum in Science and Conservation:

In Spring 2023, the [Department of Environmental Science & Policy](#) (College of Science) began a thorough review of its classes and programs so as to integrate Indigenous science and traditional perspectives on landscapes, waterways, ecology, and non-human species.

Additional Team members:

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