The recent earthquake was a jarring reminder of what’s important in one’s life. As one colleague said, let’s view it as an opportunity, a metaphorical reset button to reaffirm our view of the world. As we kick off the academic year 2011-12, let’s make a special point of remembering that we all work as part of a team. Always strive to interact with others with dignity and respect. As Mahatma Gandhi famously said, “We must be the change we wish to see in the world”.

We also want to take this opportunity to thank you for all the ways you contribute to the fabric of our university community – the ways you show you care for students, colleagues, family, friends and your community. Mason is a collegial community; so please reach out to our newest colleagues and welcome them to our dynamic, exciting university.

Mason offers a wealth of opportunities to help you manage the many facets of your life. We’ve included some of them here along with some reminders to assist you in preparing for a productive and healthy year.

Please remember that your HR & Payroll colleagues are just a phone call or email away. Contact us at 3.2600 or via email at hr@gmu.edu.

Here’s to new beginnings and new adventures.

(Hold your mouse over any of the headings below and click to link to that section of the newsletter)

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**A Life in Balance at Mason: Opportunities and Events**

Mason has a wealth of resources to help you maintain a life in balance -- everything from A to Z -- the Arts to Zimride. While we can’t go through every letter of the alphabet here, we encourage you to check the HR & Payroll website regularly, read eFiles every Monday and consider taking a spin through Today@Mason, the Mason Gazette, and The Broadside.

Human Resources & Payroll: [http://hr.gmu.edu](http://hr.gmu.edu)
Today@Mason: [http://today.gmu.edu](http://today.gmu.edu)
The Mason Gazette: [http://gazette.gmu.edu](http://gazette.gmu.edu)

**Get in the Spirit! College Colors Day, Friday, September 2**

College Colors Day is nationally organized by Mason’s partner, The Collegiate Licensing Company, and was first celebrated in 2005. It always falls on the Friday before Labor Day. College Colors Day seeks to celebrate and promote the spirit that makes college traditions great such as “back-to-school” by encouraging students, faculty/staff, and alumni to wear apparel of their favorite college throughout the day of Friday, September 2. It will also kick-off Spirit Fridays at Mason where every Friday Mason students, alumni, faculty/staff wear Mason gear to show their Patriot Pride!

Meet up on all three campuses to celebrate! Details are available at [College Colors Day](http://www.collegecolorsday.org). Like us on [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com). Need to buy Mason gear? Visit [Mason Gear Locations](http://www.masongear.com).
Try Transit Week Mini Flex – September 19-23, 2011
Join the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) and transportation partners from across the Commonwealth in celebrating the fourth annual, statewide Try Transit Week from September 19-23, 2011!
Take the pledge to try transit – bus, train, car pool, van pool and telework -- by September 23 and be entered into a random drawing for the grand prize - - a pass to use the transit service of your choice free for one year and two round trip tickets on Amtrak Virginia.

To help promote Try Transit Week, Mason is holding the Try Transit Week Mini Flex, an opportunity to try telework that week with supervisor approval. Supervisors can go to a special website to register eligible employees. For details, please visit the Flexible Work webpage.

Save Some Green: Faculty/Staff Discounts
As a Mason faculty or staff member you are eligible for discounts from many vendors throughout the area. Please visit myMasonHR for a list of participating vendors. Log in using your email user name and password and select “myDiscounts” from the left-hand menu. Check the site regularly for new discount opportunities including Tick Tock Discounts – discounts with a deadline. Now featuring timely discounts on the Capital Home Show, Mason Inn, TireVan and more!

Reduce the “Hassle Factor” of life in Northern Virginia
Mason has some resources – DMV2Go, Sittercity.com and Everyday Valet -- to help you manage some of the challenges of life in Northern Virginia. For details, please visit the work/life webpage.

Wellness by Mason
Wellness by Mason is a united effort by the Mason community to encourage healthy choices in general wellness, exercise, and preventative health screenings across a diverse culture and age spectrum.

This year Wellness by Mason will be celebrating Mason’s Healthy U, a year-long celebration of wellness. For a September calendar of events and opportunities, please visit Wellness by Mason.

Learning & Professional Development
Training on a range of personal and professional development topics is available at Mason. For information on programs and to register, please visit http://hr.gmu.edu/learning and click on “course calendars.”

Reminder: Faculty-Staff Enrichment Day
Faculty-Staff Enrichment Day will be held in late October. Details will be available soon at http://hr.gmu.edu/learning.

Thanks for All Your Great Work!
Mason is committed to a culture of recognition. We hope you’ll take a few minutes and read The Mason Star, Mason’s annual recognition newsletter.
The Reward & Recognition team has many ways to say, “Thanks, for a job well done.” Check out your choices at http://hr.gmu.edu/awards.

Plan Ahead: Life Planning & Eldercare Resources

Aging well is the goal for all of us whether we’re 25 or 75. Part of that process is planning for life’s changes. Life Planning Services can assist with seminars, and resource & referral information tailored to your personal situation. Don’t wait for a crisis with an aging parent or loved one. Set up an appointment today. Contact ecare@gmu.edu

50% Discount on Series Tickets: Center for the Arts and the Hylton Performing Arts Center

Mason faculty, staff, and retirees receive a 50% discount on series tickets (4 performances of your choice equals a series) at either the Center for the Arts (Fairfax) or the Hylton Performing Arts Center (Prince William). And remember, for individual performances, children grade 12 and younger are 1/2 price at all "family friendly" events when accompanied by an adult. Contact either venue for details:

Center for the Arts Contact Information
Hylton Performing Arts Center Contact Information

And check out Arts by George “an evening like no other” with special guests Michael Feinstein and Marvin Hamlisch.

Not to Be Missed: Vision Series

Evenings of thought provoking discussion by members of the Mason faculty and hosted by Dr. Peter Stearns. Details soon on the Vision Series website.

Alumni Weekend: September 29 - October 2!

Mason alumni will be back on campus September 29 - October 2 to celebrate Alumni Weekend. Although this is "Alumni" Weekend, it is open to the community. We hope you’ll consider joining the festivities. Registration is now open. Please visit http://alumniweekend.gmu.edu. There are so many terrific events to choose from, including the Dessert Social with Champagne Toast to Dr. and Mrs. Merten.

Alumni have reported that one of the reasons they come back during Alumni Weekend is to visit with the faculty and staff who were a part of their college lives. If you were teaching or working at Mason in years ending in 6 (1976, 1986, 1996 and 2006), those celebrating their 35th, 25th, 15th and 5th class reunions would especially enjoy seeing you. Come help them celebrate returning home to Mason and share this wonderful opportunity to reminisce and celebrate Mason, past, present, and future. In addition, the Association would like to raise a glass to faculty and staff at the Alumni Weekend Happy Hour.

Follow the Alumni Association via Facebook at http://www.facebook.com/MasonAlumni. If you’re interested in volunteering with the Alumni Association board members, please contact gmualum@gmu.edu.
Spring Break Travel Opportunities
Looking to take a break from campus? Browse Mason's four international spring break programs, each of which are led by Mason faculty and open to all Mason faculty and staff. Learn more about them at the Center for Global Education.

Mason’s Competitive Edge
Indulge your competitive side with some of these challenges and team events.

Commuter Challenge 2011
Go Mason! From September 19 - October 21 Mason will be competing with area universities to see how many faculty, staff, and students will travel to school or work in a more sustainable and environmentally friendly way than driving alone. Walking, biking, motorcycling, Mason shuttles, van pools, car pools -- they all count. So does registering! Even if you're not sure whether you can use alternate transportation, please register for the challenge because every registration counts towards victory. Registration will be available soon at Mason’s car pooling page, http://zimride.gmu.edu/.

Third Annual Happy Heart Walk
On Wednesday, September 28th, there will be a 1-mile Happy Heart Walk held at noon on the Arlington, Fairfax, and Prince William campuses. Walk on your own, with friends or recruit an entire team to join you at this fun event.

Remember the largest team wins the coveted Happy Heart Award. In 2010 Team Arlington won; who will it be in 2011? Gather up your colleagues and take this fuzzy little cutie home to your department, building, or residence hall. Register today at the Wellness by Mason website.

Whole Grains Challenge
Mason Dining is sponsoring a Whole Grains Challenge during the month of October in conjunction with the Whole Grain Council. Where else can you and your colleagues be eligible to win prizes for introducing more whole grains into your diet? For information please visit the whole grains challenge.

To learn more about what a whole grain is, please visit Whole Grains 101.
Policy & Procedural Reminders

**Action Needed: DHRM Policy on Electronic Communications and Social Media**

As more Mason departments use Facebook, Twitter and other social networking sites and as most of us use email and IM, it's important to review the Department of Human Resource Management's (DHRM) policy 1.75 "Use of Electronic Communications and Social Media".

Current faculty and staff must go to myMasonHR, review the online Certificate of Receipt and acknowledge receipt of the policy. New employees will be advised at orientations to visit myMasonHR. Once you acknowledge receipt, the Certificate will be removed from view in future visits to myMasonHR. Because the Certificate is a potential audit point, it is very important that all faculty and staff acknowledge receipt of the policy.

If you have any questions, please contact Jennifer Irvin at 3.2616 or by email at jirvin@gmu.edu

**Timely: TRICARE Special Open Enrollment**

A special open enrollment for those eligible for TRICARE will be held through Tuesday, September 6 for coverage effective October 1, 2011. This open enrollment will allow those in TRICARE (Standard, Extra and Prime) to purchase a TRICARE Supplement Plan. The plans will be administered for the Commonwealth by Association and Society Insurance Corporation (ASI).

Employees wishing to enroll in the TRICARE supplement must be eligible for both TRICARE and the State Health Benefits program.

To elect the TRICARE supplement, eligible employees may:

- Change to the supplement from their current health plan; or
- Enroll in the supplement from waived status

For more information on enrollment please visit the HR & Payroll website. If you are eligible and choose to enroll, please complete the enrollment form and return along with documentation to Benefits at MS 3C3 or via fax 703.993.2601.

If you have any questions please email the Benefits Team at benefits@gmu.edu

**Are You in the Virginia Retirement System (VRS) or VaLORS? Your Member Benefit Profile (MBP) is Waiting**

If you are in the Virginia Retirement System or VaLORS (law enforcement), your annual Member Benefit Profile (MBP) is available online. Your MBP outlines projected retirement benefits, your member contribution account should you leave state employment before retirement, and life insurance benefits. Please Note: The MBPs are for the earning period ending June 30, 2011.

The MBPs are available at the VRS website through its myVRS page. To view your MBP, all
you have to do is register at *myVRS*. And registering is easy! Go to the [VRS website](#) and click on the “myVRS Access” button on the upper left side of the page.

**Accessed your MBP online before?**
If you've accessed your MBP in previous years, simply click on Members log-in from the drop down menu.

**Is this your first time?**
If this is your first time, select Members register from the drop down menu. Be prepared to provide your:

- Social Security number
- Last name
- Date of birth
- Name of first VRS-participating employer (George Mason University)

Follow the screens to set up a personal profile.

To learn more about *myVRS*, please review a handy [fact sheet](#). If you have any questions, please call the HR & Payroll Customer Service Center at 3.2600.

In addition to reviewing MBPs at *myVRS*, you can also view your member information, check on the status of an application for retirement or purchase of prior service, estimate your retirement benefit using current information, and more.

If you do not wish to set up a *myVRS* account and would prefer a paper MBP, please send an email to benefits@gmu.edu. Include your name, G number, and your mailstop. The Benefits Team will print out a copy of your MBP from the VRS site and inter-office mail it to you.

**Inclement Weather/Emergency Closure Reminder**
University closings, late openings, or other weather related changes in the University's schedule will be announced on Mason's switchboard 703.993.1000, Mason Alert, GMU-TV, the university’s homepage, and local media outlets (although media coverage cannot be guaranteed). For more information, please see the university [inclement weather/emergency closure policy](#).

**Injured at work?**
We hope it doesn’t happen, but if it does, please let your supervisor know and receive any medical attention needed right away. Step-by-step flyers on what to do in the case of an accident or injury at work are available on the [Workers’ Comp webpage](#). If you have any questions now, or in the event of an injury or accident, please call the Workers’ Comp Benefits Assistant at 3.7756.

**Plan Ahead**
**Flu Season**
Stay on the alert for flu season information. If you are a COVA Care, COVA HDHP or Kaiser Permanente participant, check the [HR & Payroll homepage](#) for free flu shot information as it’s available. Student Health Services will also be offering low cost flu shots this season for faculty and staff. Details as they’re available will be on the [SHS website](#).
Back Up Care
It’s always a good idea to have a plan B. Please consider having a back up child care or elder care plan in place. Faculty, staff, and graduate students have complimentary access to Sittercity.com. You can search for a sitter or post a job and have sitters contact you. Visit Mason’s program page to register and learn more. New this year! Free background checks on sitters.

Mason’s Program Page at Sittercity.com

Important note: Mason does not own, sponsor, or endorse Sittercity.com. You should always carefully screen and check the references of any caregivers, including those who are listed on Sittercity.com, before you retain their services.

Reminder: Check your beneficiaries
This may be a good time to review beneficiaries on your insurance and other plans. Circumstances change – marriage, the birth of a child, divorce, etc. Please check with your retirement and life insurance vendors on a regular basis to ensure that your beneficiary wishes are current.

Deadline & Update Time
FRAs Expense Deadline is 9/30/11
If you had a dependent care or medical flexible spending account, the last day to file a 2010-11 plan year reimbursement claim for expenses is September 30, 2011. Eligible expenses had to be incurred during the plan year which ran from July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011.

Is your personal information current? 1
It’s important to keep your contact information updated should an emergency arise. Please make sure your personal contact information is current. This is particularly important for new faculty and staff who may have relocated. Please take a minute and check it out by going to https://patriotweb.gmu.edu/

1. Log in using your net ID and password
2. Select Personal Information
3. Select View Address(es) and Phone(s)
4. Verify your PERMANENT address. If it is not correct, Select Update Address(es) and Phone(s)
5. Then Insert a new PERMANENT address

Is your emergency contact information updated?
Please make sure your emergency contact information is also up-to-date in Employee Self Service as well.
2. Log in using your net ID and password
3. Select Personal Information

1 If your health insurance plan is through Mason you also need to update your permanent address in EmployeeDirect. Please also remember to update your new address with your retirement plan vendors, VRS, TIAA-CREF, Fidelity Investments or ING.
4. Select **View Emergency Contacts**
5. Verify your emergency contact information. If it is not correct, select **Update Emergency Contacts**.
6. Insert updated information.

**Is your veteran status, ethnicity, and race information correct?**
Please take a moment to check your veteran status, ethnicity, and race information in Employee Self Service.

1. Go to [https://patriotweb.gmu.edu](https://patriotweb.gmu.edu).
2. Log in using your net ID and password
3. Select **Personal Information**
4. Select **View Ethnicity and Race (or Veteran Status)**
5. Verify your information. If your ethnicity and race information is not correct, select **Update Ethnicity and Race**
6. Insert updated information.

**Opportunities to Share**

**Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign (CVC)**
The Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign (CVC) facilitates charitable giving for all state employees. This year, the campaign theme is “Give From the Heart”, and it runs from October 1st to December 15th. You can access the complete listing of charities at [http://www.cvc.vipnet.org](http://www.cvc.vipnet.org) and make donations on-line. More information will be coming soon.

**American Heart Association Heart Walk**
Earlier this year Mason was designated as a Fit Friendly Company for the third year by the American Heart Association. Through the Wellness by Mason initiative, Mason faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to rediscover the fun in fitness. As part of that ongoing process, we invite you to participate in the American Heart Association's annual [Heart Walk](http://startgreaterwashington.org/) on Saturday, November 5, 2011 from 8:30 - 11:30 am at Nationals Park in Washington, DC (Navy Yard Metro stop on the Green Line). In addition to raising funds for research, the American Heart Association is also encouraging folks to walk for their own health as well.

Mason is going to participate again this year and we hope you'll be a part of the Mason team. To join us, please visit [http://startgreaterwashington.org/](http://startgreaterwashington.org/), select “Find a Company” from the left-hand menu and then go to the Cs for Mason because we’re part of the College Cup. Select “College Cup – George Mason University”. Don’t forget to wear your Mason Gear!