The Smithsonian Institution and George Mason University partnered to establish the Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation (SMSC) to provide innovative education for current and future generations of global conservation professionals, leaders, and practitioners. Already the SMSC has established itself as a benchmark for innovative education, as instruction focuses on analytical and practical skill building to address the changing threats to and opportunities for conserving biodiversity. The SMSC engages undergraduates, graduate students and professionals from around the world in a range of compelling programs in conservation biology focused on developing the knowledge and implementing the practices required to address some of the greatest threats to biodiversity facing society today.

SMSC’s programs, co-developed and co-taught by SCBI researchers and Mason faculty, are delivered at SCBI’s 3200-acre facility along the Blue Ridge in Front Royal, Virginia, one of the premier conservation research facilities in the world, housing innovative research on some of the rarest species on earth. Students live and learn with prominent research scientists, educators, and conservation practitioners. The undergraduate program provides an innovative semester immersion approach to conservation studies in a learning community framework taking advantage of proximity to SCBI’s scientists, laboratories, and charismatic fauna. Graduate programs are based on a one - two week intensive residential course format geared to working professionals with the opportunity to gain a graduate certificate from multiple courses and a path to graduate degrees.

Undergraduate Program

The Smithsonian-Mason Semester offers undergraduate programs in which students can earn a Conservation Studies Minor (CHSS), or apply credits to certain Mason degrees. There are currently three programs: "Conservation, Biodiversity and Society" (16 credits), and "Wildlife Ecology and Conservation" (15 credits), and "Endangered Species Conservation" (15 credits). See the Programs of Study section of this catalog for details on the minor and the Courses section for details on the courses (select the course prefix CONS). Grounded in natural science, this interdisciplinary semester brings public policy, sociology, conflict resolution, and global awareness to the learning environment. Students majoring in the Integrative Studies, BS, Biology, BS, Environmental Science, BS, Environmental and Sustainability Studies, BA (CHSS), Applied Science, BAS, and Global Affairs, BA can fulfill major requirements and/or Mason Core requirements with Smithsonian-Mason Semester (CONS) credits subject to college approval.

Graduate Program

Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation graduate courses offer in-depth explorations of advanced and highly specialized topics in applied conservation studies. Courses cover a diverse selection of topics focusing on biodiversity conservation, ranging from adaptive management to statistics in ecology and conservation, to non-invasive genetic techniques. All current courses take place as intensive one or two-week sessions and participants are in residence on the SMSC grounds in Front Royal, VA.

Although the Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation does not presently offer a graduate degree, coursework may be applied to George Mason University’s Environmental Science and Policy, MS concentration in Conservation Science and Policy. In many cases, graduate students will have the unique opportunity to learn alongside conservation professionals currently working in the field. The unparalleled resources at the facilities draw researchers and practitioners from around the world, and this offers a rare opportunity for students and professionals to interact to mutual benefit in a hands-on situation and to receive informal mentoring from experienced practitioners.

Faculty

Administration
Cody Edwards, Associate Provost, Graduate Education and Executive Director
Anastasia Triplett, Business Manager
Lisa Des Jardins, Academic Program Advisor, Smithsonian-Mason Semester
Carol Hoskins, Program Assistant
Erin Brandt, Accommodations/Community Director

Faculty

Professors
Jones, Lovejoy

Associate Professors
Aguirre, Balint, Birchard, Gabel, Jonas, Parsons, Wingfield, Wood

Term Associate Professors
Sklarew

Term Assistant Professor
DeLuycykr, Freeman, Lessard-Pilon, Luther, McNeil

Affiliate Faculty
Akre, Alonso, Brown, Buff, Christen, Dallmeier, Kolowski, Leimgruber, McShea, Monfort, Pukazhenthi

Programs

• Applied Conservation Science Graduate Certificate