

opinion

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BROADSIDE

George Mason University's Student Newspaper

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CORRECTIONS

The phone number for Sexual Assault Services is incorrectly listed in "Critical Information" jump from the "Afraid of the Dark" article in the October 27 issue. Sexual Assault Services can be reached at (703) 993-4364.

EDITORIAL POLICY

The letters, columns and views expressed on this page are solely those of the writers. They do not reflect the views of *Broadside* or its staff, unless otherwise noted.

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Managing Money

How Mason Can Practically Improve Our Education



No school ever taught me to balance a checkbook. I never went over interest rates in high school. And George Mason University never taught me anything about mortgage rates. But as an English major, I have been forced to learn about rocks. This lack of real-life education in our schools has plagued our education for decades, and it needs to be fixed. As students, we have all been victimized by standardized education. We're forced to learn things in high school and college that we will never apply in our real lives. And that would be O.K., except for the fact that our education is being neglected to do it. Advanced math and

science courses are wasted on most of the student population, and they should not be required for students who are not pursuing a degree where those skills are relevant.

Instead, Mason needs to teach us how to financially compete in a changing and frightening world market. Mason needs to prepare its students how to manage money when it's tight and how to invest when we become successful. We need to know the difference between smart loans and bad loans, and how to tell when credit card or mortgage companies are taking advantage of us.

Nationally, our economic discussion has changed from whether we are in a recession to how long it will last. We blame predatory lending companies for much of this problem, but they are only half of the equation. Big lending companies can only take advantage of us if we are poorly equipped to evaluate their proposals and make deals that benefit both sides. And the only way we can be ready for that battle is if we are educated well in finance and economics.

We need to establish a university-wide introductory finance course. As of right now, all finance courses are 300-level or above. However, those of us who are not finance majors have

a great need to be educated in the basics of financial management. Right now, Mason has no requirement of any kind of finance, economic or business course and it's up to us to fit those into holes we may or may not have in our schedule. This course would teach us the basics of managing credit, knowing our credit limitations, and balancing our expenses with our budget.

In any time, financial management is a primary concern to every single person. It's more important than any other one field of study and for our school to not educate us in it is, ironically, a waste of our money. Mason's entire purpose is to make sure we are the best equipped to go in the world and make money. It's nice for us to have fulfilling careers, serve the world population, and be happy, but the bottom line is that college is meant to make us richer than we would be otherwise.

Second, we need to be required to take Economics 100: Economics as a Citizen. As great as it would be for us to better our understanding of finance as individuals, we need a greater understanding of how these principles affect the rest of the country and world. In the current crisis, we need to know how our individual decisions are relevant in a greater world

sense, and how our broader economic scene relates back to us as individuals. The course is described as a "broad introduction to economic concepts and how they can contribute to a better understanding of the world around us." In this time, there are few things more important to us.

Third, we need to establish a finance course that exists strictly to teach us the fundamentals of saving and investing money. In this course, we'd learn the basics of the stock market and other forms of investment. We would also go over the best ways to practically save money for people and families in various income brackets.

Those nine extra credits of general education requirements would come out of the requirements that we already have. We could cut out three credits of science, fine arts and English that are required for people not in those programs. Instead, we would have a curriculum that more accurately reflects our needs as citizens. As a progressive school, Mason has a duty to make sure that its students are prepared for real-life situations, and required finance courses for students will achieve that goal.

Have an opinion?
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Uniting the Parties

Democrats and Republicans Must Come Together After Election Day

LUCAS NOTTINGHAM
Broadside Correspondent

On November 4, the presidential election will be decided, and this country will have an opportunity to reunite. The past several months have been filled with some polarizing arguments, which have left a lot of people longing for unification of political parties in order to solve some of the problems in this country. Most of us can agree that both of the candidates in the presidential race have the country's best interest in mind, otherwise they would have never made it through the tough scrutiny up to this point.

Hopefully, whoever gets elected as the next president will carry out the promises and commitments he has made. We need to stop aiming at each other, unify, and turn our attention to the problems afflicting this country, such as terrorism, the faltering economy, and needed reforms. Let's come together after the election, no matter who is selected as the next president, put partisan bickering aside, and assume the roles of patriotic Americans.

Whoever is elected, be it Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., or Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., deserves a fair shot at the tough job he will inherit, without prejudice. Let the next president's actions speak for him and it will become apparent whether he is doing a good job or not. The very foundation of this country is the cooperation of individuals from many different backgrounds, all working for the

common good. This is illustrated by the *de facto* motto of the United States of America—*E Pluribus Unum*; from many, one. We can recover from the polarization, and we must realize that political stances are just opinions, not clear cut right or wrong answers.

This is the reason why political discussions incite so much fury and emotion—some see political thought as right versus wrong. There is no right answer, and there is no wrong answer, especially when it comes down to sharing opinions on a particular subject. Let's be reasonable. Can someone else tell you what your opinion is? No. Your opinion is what you think. Certainly, they can make judgments on or evaluations of your opinion, but in a discussion of shared opinions, harsh evaluations on those opinions can become unproductive and provoke unnecessary emotional response.

Some of the rhetoric of this campaign season has contained these types of harsh judgments of opinions, which are, frankly, unproductive. We have seen this in the assertions of some Democrats that McCain is the same as the current president. Some Republicans have also engaged in this rhetoric with their suggestions that Obama's policies are Marxist. The actual policies which triggered the judgmental statements have been put in the background, and the harsh personal attacks are foregrounded. This is not a productive mode of discussion; it is the same as name-calling on a schoolyard playground. Instead of this, we should be focusing on real opinions and policy

suggestions. If we can stick to content over name-calling, we may find that the discussion becomes much more civil, and we can come to a better understanding of how and what those involved think. Isn't this the primary reason to engage in discussions with one another?

There have been many great Americans from both the Republican and Democratic parties. Some examples that readily come to mind are Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and John F. Kennedy. Regardless of who is elected, we should all ask ourselves at this point what is most important. It certainly isn't a personal victory in an election, but rather our country's progress. The next great president in U.S. history could come from either the Democratic or Republican party.

But, of course these parties, these political categories, have pervious boundaries, and we should not limit our thought, or our perceptions of others based upon any political affiliation. We all fall into the category of Americans. Let us act the role as we have done in the past, before polarizing and dubious accusations and complaints about each other. Let's show the world what level of cooperation we are capable of. Let us unite behind our next president and give him the opportunity to make this country the best it can be. First and foremost, we are Americans. United we stand, divided we fall.

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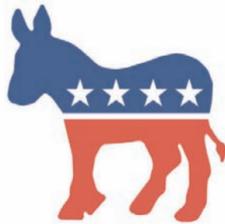
College Democrats and College Republicans Go Head To Head

Vote Obama

Several years ago, at the start of the primary season, a young and vibrant Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., came to George Mason University to talk about the hope for the future. We filled the Johnson Center from top to bottom, eager to hear about his ideas. As Election Day approaches, we know that Obama is the best candidate for president because he can bring the insight and change America needs to get back on the right track.

Barack Obama is the only candidate that can bring us out of the economic crisis that our country is facing. We have been heading towards this recession for a while. Only a few months ago, Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., claimed that the fundamentals of our economy were strong. Unfortunately, this was not the case and now the federal government has had to bailout several companies. Our stock market has been on a roller coaster ride for weeks and many Americans fear what will happen next. McCain was wrong about the economy. We must ask ourselves, what else could he be wrong about?

Obama has a plan for the American economy. He has the best advisers and support of important financial minds around the country. Obama has a plan to jumpstart the economy. The oil companies have had astronomical windfall profits on the gas prices. Each quarter they report more profits than ever before. The American people have been paying more than enough and Obama believes that it is time for them to get some of that back. He will enact a Windfall Profit Tax to get that money back to the people, which will in turn help to jumpstart our economy. He will also give tax cuts to those who really need them right now, the middle class and seniors. This plan allows us to have a fair tax code.



Because of this crisis, we also need to start creating jobs. Obama is going to bring five million new jobs to America in the Green Sector. We are at the edge of innovation and with these jobs we can help our economy and environment simultaneously. Obama has the best plans for our economy.

Since the beginning of the campaign, the Republicans have tried to say Obama is weak on national security because he plans on doing things differently. Democrats know, though, that it is time for a change. With McCain, we will only be getting more of the same. The old way has taken us into a war in Iraq with no end in sight. It has lost our respect on the international stage. We have fewer allies and have billions of dollars in debt. Obama represents a new wave of thinking. We need this if we are to move into the future with the hope of a better world and a better tomorrow.

Obama has said that he will meet with leaders of Iran and other rogue states without preconditions. The Republicans are fear-mongering and want you to think that this is a scary idea because it gives legitimacy to those leaders. It is scarier to think of what they do because we won't meet with them. When we ignore these countries, it only strengthens their hatred toward us. Without open discussion, how is America supposed to know what these countries want? We need to change our international reputation, with allies and

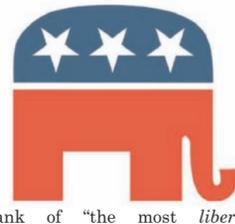
rogue states. Obama is the only one who has the ideas, willingness, and qualities to do this.

There is another important issue that we should all consider when choosing to vote for education. Obama has a plan to help with higher education. He will provide an American Opportunity Tax Credit for most Americans which means that the first \$4,000 of higher education will be free. With many of us or our parents going into debt to get this education, this is very important and can truly impact our lives. Obama will also help with the financial aid process. Many of us have experienced the headache of getting aid for college. As president, he will streamline the process to save time and money for everyone. McCain's higher education plan says nothing specific to help individuals. We need specific plans of action to improve our higher education and make it easier to access by all. Obama has always advocated for change in the education system and we know that this will not end with the White House.

Obama is the best choice for President of the United States. He brings hope for a better future. His plan for America can propel us back to the top. We can improve our economy, regain respect on the world stage, and help our students to succeed. It is an easy choice on November 4. We could choose McCain and the ways of the past, but that has only brought us a declining economy and a war with no end in sight. The best choice is Obama, the only person who can bring the change we need to move forward. Vote Obama-Biden!

Submitted by Katie Bowen,
Vice President of the College Democrats

Vote McCain



Never before has an election been so important. With a plethora of issues facing the American population, the decision that Americans will make on November 4 may be the most important decision of their lives. With issues such as the faltering economy, two wars being fought overseas, an energy crisis, and the sanctity of human life; the decision as to who should lead our country is at the utmost importance. With the President's approval rating at an all-time low, and the national mood changing to the left, I realize that it is an uphill battle for me to try to persuade you to vote for Senator John McCain, R-Ariz. But my friends, I will try my hardest to get you to stand with me. Thus I begin: McCain should be our next President of the United States.

With so many issues facing us, we need a Commander-in-Chief that is ready to lead on day one, that knows the issues, and that has the judgment and the wisdom to lead this country. Sen. Joe Biden, D-Del. has said that Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., "will be tested." We don't need a President that invites testing from the world. McCain has been tested and is ready to lead this country in a new direction. With such an important election ahead of us, why are Americans seriously considering the candidacy of the most inexperienced presidential nominee in U.S. history? Obama has only three legislative accomplishments in his career, with two of them being in the Illinois State Senate. One of Obama's major accomplishments as a state senator was a bill that required teaching sex-education to kindergartners.

Our country is deeply divided. This started in 2000, after the Clinton reign. Obama will do nothing to fix this problem. Time and time again, we have seen McCain go against his party and popular opinion, to do the right thing. Obama has never stood against his party on any issue and has earned the

troops will not come home with the shadow of defeat, but rather, with honor and victory.

On the issue of energy, Obama has done nothing to promote any new alternative forms of energy. McCain is in favor of drilling off the coast, as well as nuclear, solar, coal, wind, and natural gas energies. McCain was also a leader in proposing a tax-relief holiday at the gas station, a move that could have saved taxpayers millions. Obama was opposed it, and brushed it off as a "stunt."

Obama's views on the issue of human life could not be more deplorable. Obama is an extreme pro-choice candidate, so much so that he could not tell us when life begins. At least some Democrats like Pelosi say that babies get human rights at three months, but Obama continues to advocate his extreme pro-choice agenda. As president, Obama has said that he will only nominate judges who agree with him on that matter and that he will immediately sign pro-choice legislation into law once he is elected. McCain believes that life begins at conception and that we have the responsibility to protect it from natural conception to natural death.

As you can see, McCain is the right choice for America. At this trying time in history, we must stand together and vote for a man who has always put his country before his party and polls. We must have a President ready to lead on day one, a President that understands the issues, and a President that can unify our country so that we can work together and fix our problems in a bi-partisan way. That is why the George Mason College Republicans are supporting the candidacy of McCain, and we ask you to stand with us, and vote for McCain-Palin on November 4.

Submitted by Joshua St. Louis,
2nd Vice Chairman of the College Republicans

We Can't Afford Guns on Campus

Concealed Weapons Create a Threat Instead of Solution

SABRA HAYES
Staff Writer

School shootings across the country have brought about many questions about gun control. The idea of allowing students to carry guns on campus would be a direct violation of students' safety rights. Right now, many citizens are pushing for concealed guns to be allowed on campuses across the nation.

Students or anyone else that would wish to use firearms on campus in a criminal manner are going to be able to apply to carry firearms on campus if concealed weapons are allowed. With a law in effect that does not allow for concealed weapons in a place students are calling home and somewhere that is linked with safety, students can be free of that constant paranoia

that everyone has a gun.

Groups like the Students for Concealed Carry on Campus are popping up all across the country and are growing in number. Students are seeking a way to protect themselves on campus and are finding it in student groups like the SCCC to falsely fill that void of insecurity. Groups like SCCC believe that gun-free zones "serve to disarm only those law-abiding citizens" and are a detriment to student safety. However it is these groups that do not account for the crimes that have been committed against students already by these "law-abiding citizens."

The debate over the second amendment's right to bear arms continuously comes to light over the tragedies that plague our nation's universities—the closest to home being the tragic

Virginia Tech shooting last April, which left the entire nation in shock. There are many who argue that the entire situation could have been avoided if students had guns to defend themselves. Guns are not the answer to any problem and would have caused more death.

The concerns about safety on university campuses needs to be discussed with the individual university's police and security forces, just as when someone is killed out on the streets, the murderers are left to the police. Having access to guns in such a stressful environment will only lead to more insecurity among those students who do not have a gun.

Irresponsibility of college students is something that is stereotyped worldwide. It is because of these living stereotypes that guns should not

be allowed on campuses. When adding drugs, alcohol, and the typical college fight to the mix of having a concealed gun on a person will only add to the death toll. The possibility for guns being used to settle the students' problems will only increase with this newfound power of having a gun.

University students desire restrictions on handguns simply because they are enrolled in school, which should be considered a sign of their desire to be educated in a safe environment rather than an environment with immature or potentially dangerous concealed handguns that will cause these students constant paranoia.

By being forced to live in this state of fear, universities would be alienating the freedom of a safe education for all students and not just the ones

who carry the guns. The desire to be safe is a universal need and has to be met before any other.

Students have the right to learn in an environment free of persecution and free of fear. The students that have died due to reckless gun violence should be remembered and should be the key underlying proof of why guns need to stay off our campuses. "We don't believe that guns have any place in the classroom," said Mr. Larry Hincker, spokesperson for Virginia Tech. "We've experienced far more of guns in the classroom than any university should have to endure."

College is meant to be a place where people go to get an education and to learn how to live their lives.

However, should guns ever

be allowed on campus, except in the hands of professionals this way of life will come to an abrupt end. Concealing guns and carrying them on campuses will instill nothing but fear and create a world of accidental deaths.

The world of firearms should never cross over to become a predominant part of being in college.

If firearms are ever allowed to be carried on university grounds than the fate our nation's future will suffer not only in the educational realm, but the quality of life will greatly be decreased due to fear. Being able to carry a gun and the fear of being shot is not what people go to college for.

We go for the education and guns should never have any part in that.

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LETTER FROM OUR STUDENT BODY PRESIDENT

How We Can Improve Our



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George Mason University, like all other universities in the country, has to go through re-accreditation every several years. This re-accreditation acknowledges that Mason is meeting the academic standards laid out by our re-accrediting agency. Mason is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and we are currently starting the process for our 2011 reaccreditation. A new component of the reaccreditation process is the Quality Enhancement Plan.

The QEP is a focused plan that will be implemented over five years. The development of

this plan is supposed to engage the Mason community, and achieve a specific goal that improves student learning. The QEP must be associated with enhancing scholarship at Mason, additionally it must have a clear and measurable outcome that is achievable for our university. Mason has set aside the resources to implement the QEP and set up a committee to draft, review, and finalize our QEP proposal.

So far, four proposals have been drafted. They all address different areas of enhancing student learning at Mason. The first proposal promotes student success through critical thinking. Another enhances the undergraduate experience through research and creativity. The third proposal examines what it takes to live in a global community and seeks to build an understanding diversity. The final proposal tries to engage Mason students in the global community. Each of these four proposals is extremely detailed in their goals and methods implementation. Each of them can be viewed at qep.gmu.edu.

The QEP committee is looking for feedback from the Mason community on the

proposals. All members of the Mason community are encouraged to submit proposals, or send thoughts and opinions about the proposals that have been submitted. The proposals can be seen on the QEP Web site, and feedback should be sent to qep@gmu.edu. Student Government is currently working on a QEP proposal of its own to submit to the committee. The due date for submissions is this Friday, Nov. 7.

The QEP is a unique opportunity for students to influence Mason's academic policies. As the beneficiaries of whichever QEP proposal is selected we, as students, should make sure to voice our opinions on the various proposals. If you think there is an area that needs improvement, submit a proposal to fix it, or email the committee and try to address it with one of the existing proposals. As students, we have a first-hand perspective on how to enhance our educational experience. Taking advantage of this opportunity will be beneficial to all members of the Mason community.

Zack Golden
Student Body President

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Between September 21 and 27, George Mason University's Fairfax campus hosted the Fall for the Book Festival. Students, faculty, staff, and members of the local community attended the wide-ranging readings and presentations of fiction and non-fiction authors. The Festival attracts authors with notable reputations to the Mason campus each September for this annual event.

I attended quite a few of last month's events, and I was very happy to see so many students in the audience. This speaks to the intellectual interest of the Mason community. Unfortunately, there was a problem. In the sessions I attended, an extraordinary number of students left before the session concluded. I understand that some may have had to leave

because of other obligations or to get to the next class on time. But in some cases, students stayed for only five or 10 minutes. As the Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, I was disappointed to see this sort of behavior.

Civility requires that we do better. If you were giving a public presentation, how would you feel if your audience began to peel away? To put it simply, when one attends a lecture, one attends a lecture. I understand that many students were there as a part of a classroom assignment. However, surely that classroom assignment required one to attend the majority, if not the entire event. Simple politeness and courtesy sometimes require patience. When students attend public lectures in the future, and I hope there will be many opportunities for them to do so, I

hope they will consider basic manners, university etiquette, and finally the speaker's feelings.

Overall, I am incredibly proud of our students who ask challenging questions in the classroom and find interesting ways to engage in the community. Mason's students are interesting and highly capable. I do sincerely hope, however, that they will treat visitors to our campus with the respect and courtesy that they deserve. In addition, I encourage students to sit tight—to listen, observe, and learn from scholarly visitors. There is a reason professors assign lectures and readings as part of a course's requirements.

Sincerely,
Jack R. Censer
Dean of Humanities and
Social Sciences

Defending Religilous

In the October 20, 2008 edition of *Broadside*, Michael Grybowski slams Bill Maher's documentary, *Religilous*, for showing only religious extremists. He also criticizes other atheist works like the books of Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins. He contends that the purpose of the film (and books) is to claim that religion is fundamentally harmful or dangerous. His conclusion was that atheist films and books "prove nothing about which is better, religion or irreligion."

But Maher didn't interview religious extremists or crazy people. Although at the end of the film, Maher lectured about the danger of extremists, the people who appeared in the film were both ordinary people, such as truckers, and government leaders, such as former Arkansas Senator David Pryor. He also spoke people with several denominations: Catholics, Mormons, Muslims and Protestants. He spoke both

with those who performed in a Christian-themed amusement park and museum as well as people who attended the park and museum. He asked them all very basic questions about religion, the scripture-based stories in which they believed, evolution, the afterlife, and other issues.

Hitchens, Dawkins, and Maher—who Grybowski labels "religion-haters"—are not against the belief in supernatural beings or phenomena because of any emotional or otherwise inexplicable bias, but rather because there is no verifiable evidence to convince them that claims of supernatural beings or phenomena are based on reality. In fact, all the scientific evidence about how the universe works supports the premise that nothing supernatural exists.

This is what most atheists are trying to draw people's attention to and this is the cause of much of their frustration: despite that we in

the industrialized west have the most educated population ever in the history of the world, and despite the scientific knowledge that provides verifiable evidence against supernatural claims, belief in the supernatural still holds sway not only over the masses, but also those in positions of power.

It is anger coupled with a refusal of reality that makes people dangerous, whether we are talking about Joseph Stalin, Osama bin Laden, disgruntled teenagers, or a ranting street corner preacher. The extreme religionists, however, believe that a (non-existent) omnipotent supernatural being is on their side. This belief fuels their tenacity and their agenda, making them even more dangerous.

Thank you,
Mary E. Thompson
Non-Degree Grad Student

Not Voting?

I was appalled by Claire Forman's comments in *Broadside* of October 27. What kind of Student Body Vice President, who had to be elected herself to get to where she is, would advocate not voting in an election? This is the biggest general election of our lifetimes. I'm shocked at her imprudence and irresponsibility. People organized and sacrificed, marched, and were ridiculed, were assaulted and even died, so that both genders and all races could have citizenship rights,

chief of which is the right to speak, through your only audible tool in a democracy—your vote.

By the way, how many international students, some of whom I imagine voted for Claire, cannot vote in this American election? How many international students would love to? Why? Because they like many Americans, understand that we are one of the few countries in the world that enjoys the privilege of free and fair elections, one of the few

countries in the world where a person's vote generally counts. A Student Body Vice President should know this. If for no other reason than fear of the hypocrisy charge, she should not be advocating sitting an election out, particularly not this one.

Rudo Meda, senior
Govt. and International
Politics

The Team to Beat
Mason Is this Year's Top CAA Team

JOHN KOBLAN
Staff Writer

The George Mason University Men's Basketball Team is fresh off a great season in 2007-08. Last year we had great wins over Dayton, Miami Heat's Michael Beasley and his then nationally ranked Kansas State team, both topped by a heart stopping and gritty one-point win over the 2005 and 2006 NIT Champions, the South Carolina Gamecocks. We watched Dre Smith put on a performance on the level of Kobe Bryant or Lebron James in front of stunned and depressed James Madison fans down in Harrisonburg as he went 10 of 10 from 3-point range on his way to 34 points. The team won the CAA Championship and lost to Notre Dame.

Let's look at the facts. Eight players return from last year. They include senior John Vaughn, who was named preseason second team all CAA. Mason's three-point gunner Dre Smith returns to light up the CAA during his senior year. Forward Darryl Monroe returns after a medical redshirt for 07-08. Darryl blocked 19 shots in 06-07. He can be an imposing force in the post and will work in combo with Louis Birdsong. Birdsong is another skilled post player. The junior led the team with an outstanding 33 blocks for 07-08. He ripped down 134 rebounds and chipped in with 6 points per game. It's impossible to replace 2006 Final Four player and Mason legend Will Thomas, but Birdsong and Monroe will make for a formidable duo in the CAA. We also have some big time newcomers. Coach Jim Larranaga's 2008 class was featured in a March 26 article on RivalsHoops.com under "future bracket busters."

GoMason.com recently did a season preview on the team. "Andre Cornelius is a high-octane performer," Larranaga said. "I believe he will become an instant favorite of all George Mason fans. His speed and quickness and jumping ability

will make him very, very hard for defenses to contain. He has the ability to create offense off the dribble for both himself and others." Kevin Foster and Michael Morrison were first team all Florida. If you went to Mason Madness, then you saw Morrison's amazing 360 dunk. Ryan Pearson was named first team all New York City and was the MVP of the Michael Jordan Classic Regional All-Star Game at Madison Square Garden. If this highly acclaimed freshmen class can contribute like Cam Long did last year then we'll be in the mix.

The 2008-09 CAA Coaches Poll came out. The top four are VCU, Northeastern, Old Dominion and Mason. I'm not sold on VCU. Sure, they have a great shooter in Eric Maynor, but they lost key members of their team. Jamal Shuler averaged 15.5 points per game. Michael Andersen and Will Fameni are also gone. Both averaged four to seven points per game. The team has seven sophomores and three freshmen. Eric Maynor can't carry the VCU Rams to the Promised Land all by himself. They have to survive their out of conference schedule that includes games against Oklahoma, Rhode Island and New Mexico. Then there are two months of conference play. I think they're in deep trouble if they're counting on Eric Maynor to carry the team for five months without getting fatigued and breaking down. We might have a chance to get a top 25 win at VCU on ESPN2. This could be a big time game.

Northeastern has upper classmen experience. Six of 13 players are juniors. They bring their entire starting five back. This includes junior Matt Janning, who averaged 16 points per game. Northeastern plays a tough schedule with games at Providence, South Florida, Indiana and Memphis. These are chances to improve their RPI and bolster their chances at an at large bid if necessary. I think the Mason vs. Northeastern game on February

14 will be the game of the year. If Mason can beat Northeastern in Fairfax then we will have shown that the road to March goes through Fairfax, Va.

Old Dominion only brings back two juniors and one senior. They have a lot of question marks. They lost the CAA defensive player of the year in Brian Johnson and Brian Henderson. They bring back a solid player in Gerald Lee. But again, it's a similar situation to VCU. One man can't carry a team. I think ODU was overrated in Coaches Poll. They are relying too heavily on fresh faces. They also have a brutal start to the season with games at Charlotte, UAB, Bucknell and Marquette. They're overrated, have too many questions and are in over their heads with that schedule.

Mason is the real number one. We have balanced depth, with three seniors, one junior, three sophomores and six freshmen. We also have post-season experience—seven players have gone to the postseason. Our out-of-conference schedule will be difficult, but we are the top team in our conference. The top four teams get a bye in the 2009 CAA Championship, so they don't have to play three out of four games. It's critical because in 2007, we did win three games to get to Monday night but fell in a heartbreaker to VCU. It's tough to do and that's why doing great in CAA conference play is essential.

I encourage all Mason students to join the Patriot Platoon for a \$20 fee. You get a free t-shirt and free tickets to the games. Going to games earns you Patriot Rewards points which get you prizes. There's free pizza. We get to watch a practice session. Basketball season is finally here, so let's support our Patriots as they make a run to go for a second CAA Championship. Go Mason!

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AN ESTIMATED 8 OUT OF 10 WOMEN WILL GET INFECTED WITH IT IN THEIR LIFETIME

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