



George Mason University and EARTHDAY.ORG Release Earth Challenge Higher Education Toolkit

*Toolkit includes resources to incorporate citizen science into
a classroom, club, or campus community*

Fairfax, Virginia -- Today, George Mason University's Office of Sustainability, in conjunction with EARTHDAY.ORG, released the first ever Earth Challenge Higher Education Toolkit. This resource was developed to seamlessly embed the Earth Challenge citizen science app into higher education curriculum and campus activities.

Earth Challenge is an international citizen scientist initiative designed to collect data on air quality, plastic pollution, food supply, and insects using the respective widgets. Data from the app is sent to The Citizen Science Cloud, an openly-accessible database that focuses on the six Earth Challenge research questions.

Due to the global coronavirus pandemic, many typical university activities have been drastically different. This toolkit supplies high-quality, reliable education materials including lesson plans, tips and tricks, as well as opportunities for integration to keep students engaged, safe and learning.

Through suggested calls to action, sample habits, and opportunities to engage with policy, participants not only learn about local environmental issues, but become inspired to take action to address those problems. Once users submit their data, they are shown actions they can take to help alleviate the problem. Users can also choose to sign EARTHDAY.ORG petitions specific to the issue and their location.

"Just like the core of Earth Day, the Earth Challenge Higher Education Toolkit sits at the perfect intersection of education and action. This resource provides faculty and students with the ability to get involved in citizen science and help contribute to meaningful research around the world. While the world continues to connect virtually, the Earth Challenge app presents a unique opportunity to not only actively learn about local environmental issues, but also take action," said Kathleen Rogers, President, EARTHDAY.ORG.

"The Earth Challenge app provides students with opportunities for active learning and engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic. It teaches students that science can, and should, be an open enterprise: anyone with the app can contribute data, and anyone can use the data to answer questions at local, regional, and global scales. The Earth Challenge Higher Education Toolkit showcases numerous ways in which higher education institutions can use the Earth

Challenge app inside and outside the classroom to advance sustainable change,” said Greg Farley, Director of University Sustainability, George Mason University.

Participants can download the Earth Challenge application from [Apple's App Store](#) or from [Google's Play Store](#).

To view the new Earth Challenge Higher Education toolkit, please visit:
<https://www.earthday.org/ec2020-highered/>

ABOUT GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY:

George Mason University is Virginia's largest public research university. Located near Washington, D.C., Mason enrolls nearly 39,000 students from 130 countries and all 50 states. Mason has grown rapidly over the past half-century and is recognized for its innovation and entrepreneurship, remarkable diversity, and commitment to accessibility. <https://www2.gmu.edu>

ABOUT EARTHDAY.ORG:

EARTHDAY.ORG's mission is to diversify, educate, and activate the environmental movement worldwide. Growing out of the first Earth Day (1970), EARTHDAY.ORG is the world's largest recruiter to the environmental movement, working with more than 150,000 partners in nearly 192 countries to build environmental democracy. More than 1 billion people now participate in Earth Day activities each year, making it the largest civic observance in the world. Learn more at <https://www.earthday.org/>.

ABOUT EARTH CHALLENGE:

Coordinated in partnership with the Wilson Center and the U.S. Department of State, Earth Challenge connects, builds and enables global communities to leverage the power of scientific research to drive meaningful change. The campaign uses a mobile app to collect billions of observations in air quality, water quality, insect populations, climate change, plastic pollution and food sustainability, providing valuable environmental insight and a platform for policy change in these areas.

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