



GET INSPIRED PRICING SIGN IN **SIGN UP**



## EXPLORING ZIKA

FACULTY SENATE PRESIDENT SHARES EXPERTISE WITH STUDENTS, FACULTY AND THE MEDIA

**H**ow does a psychology professor become a highly-sought after media expert on infectious diseases?

For Dr. Rossi Hassad, the newly elected president of Mercy's Faculty Senate, the leap is not difficult to fathom. In fact, his CV sums it up neatly: epidemiology, research design, statistics and mental health. The broad scope of his experience brings him back to his days as an AIDS/HIV researcher, working with population

His expertise in Zika grew out of his training and experience in infectious disease epidemiology, together with his recent analysis and articles regarding a causal link between microcephaly in newborns and mothers who had contracted Zika during pregnancy. The link was supported, both by Hassad's work and by others, and now warnings and best practices are widely known and disseminated by federal, state and local public health agencies.

Hassad's dream is to get more students excited about research. He does this by engaging them in what he calls "authentic activity"—projects that resemble what they would encounter in the working world. The students download data sets provided at no cost by agencies like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for the purpose of public health and behavioral research. After exploring the data, they formulate a hypothesis, analyze and interpret the data, and write a brief report. The exercise opens students' eyes to what Hassad calls "the value and

beauty of statistics and research." These skills can be applied in numerous ways—not just for bench or population-based research, but also in grant or proposal writing, or making evidence-based arguments.

Hassad also mentors fellow faculty researchers, assisting with data collection methods or advising them to ensure a sound study design. That collegial spirit may have contributed to his serving on the Faculty Senate for four years before being elected president this year.

"I am honored and humbled by the confidence that my colleagues have placed in me," said Hassad of his new role. "To maintain a healthy teaching and learning environment at any college, collaboration between the faculty and the administration is crucial. Here at Mercy College, we have an engaged administration, willing to work with an equally responsive faculty. With that kind of healthy mutual support, there is so much we can do to make the Mercy experience truly outstanding for all."

“...if you want to promote real change, you need psychology to understand how people make decisions.”

data to help develop and promote safe sex practices. "I learned quickly that knowledge does not guarantee action," he said. "You can learn a lot from statistics, but if you want to promote real change, you need psychology to understand how people make decisions."

Hassad's expertise, both as an epidemiologist and a behavioral scientist, has been tapped by news outlets from CBS to the New York Post to Al Jazeera. First with the deadly Ebola crisis of a few years ago, and more recently with concerns over the rapid spread of the Zika virus, Hassad is routinely sought out by reporters. His expertise enables him to quickly summarize and analyze complex information in ways the general public could readily grasp.

"Being a media expert is not like being a teacher. In the classroom you are in charge, and you direct the discussion," said Hassad. "Talking to a reporter is the complete reverse. You never know what question you might be asked, so you'd better be prepared."

**1.6 MILLION**  
IN THE WORLD INFECTED

ABOUT 1 IN 5 PEOPLE INFECTED WITH ZIKA VIRUS DEVELOP ILL

### ZIKA VIRUS SYMPTOMS

### ZIKA VIRUS PREVENTION

- Use insect repellents
- Sleep under a mosquito bed net if you are overseas or outside
- Use screens or mosquito nets in window
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants
- Empty containers that hold water

Source: iStock



Ericson Penate '18 in action against Dominican College

**T**he 2016 fall season was a strong one for the Mercy College Athletics Department with all four teams having battled for a spot in their respective conference tournaments until the last week of the season. The Mavericks had two teams qualify for their conference tournaments, which is the most in recent history as women's soccer and field hockey both earned berths this season. The women's soccer team went 12-4-1 in the regular season, earning the No. 3 seed in the ECC Tournament against No. 2 seed Long Island University-Post where they fell 2-0. Women's soccer made their fourth straight appearance in the conference tournament and almost qualified for their third NCAA Tournament in four years Mercy was led by sophomore Haley Noble who had a team-high 10 goals and 25 points on the year. "The 2016 season proved to be a good season as we nearly qualified for the NCAA Tournament and we look to build upon it next year," stated Head Coach Jonathan Feinstein.

Volleyball, under first-year Head Coach Georgia Eftalitsides, showed improvement throughout the 2016 season as they matched their conference win total from 2015 after just seven conference matches. The Mavericks were led on the season by sophomore Peyton Olson who guided the team with 262 kills.



Haley Noble '19 takes on American International College

Field Hockey set a school-record in a season with seven wins and qualified for the ECAC Division II Field Hockey League Tournament after defeating Newberry College on the final day of the regular season to earn the final berth into the tournament. Mercy was led by senior Jackie Ballin who had a team-high eight goals, five assists and 21 points.

Men's soccer had a strong season as well as they finished over .500 for the first time since 2013 with a 9-4-3 record, just missing out on their first ECC Tournament appearance since 2013. The Mavericks began the season 6-0-1 earning regional rankings honors for the first time since 2013. Men's soccer later battled fourth ranked LIU Post to a 3-3 tie at home that proved to be the only game that the Pioneers did not win this season. The Mavericks were led by junior Ericson Penate who had a team-high eight goals and 18 points.



Jackie Ballin '17 competing against St. Thomas Aquinas College

To stay updated on Mercy Athletics visit: [www.mercy.edu/athletics](http://www.mercy.edu/athletics)