

**2019 VAST PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE
“STEM Starts with Science”**

**THURSDAY EVENING GENERAL SESSION SPEAKER
(Sponsored by National Geographic Learning/Cengage Learning)**



Dr. Mike Gil, Ph.D.

Research Fellow, University of California, Santa Cruz & The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

“HOW SCIENCE CAN SAVE THE WORLD”

Science can save the world, as we know it – for us, for our children, for our grandchildren, for our species. However, science is powerless to protect and enhance the human experience if it is not embraced by the public. In fact, everyday people are the engine that drives science, through public support and through tax dollars. And a critical entry point to captivate the public with a personal appreciation for science occurs during the formative years of K-12 education. I am a marine biologist who went from hating what I thought science was as a kid to dedicating my life to science, which, I learned firsthand, is an exhilarating, creative process of discovery. In this talk, I will draw from my experiences on an unlikely path to a career in science and in my dual role as a scientist and science advocate to explore ways that we can make the often misunderstood and unjustly-politicized process of science accessible to all.

Bio:

Dr. Mike Gil is a marine biologist, a TED Fellow, and a National Geographic Explorer. He has led research around the world: from coral reefs in the Caribbean, French Polynesia and Southeast Asia, to ‘microislands’ of plastic garbage, teeming with life, in the middle of the Pacific. Mike’s discoveries, covered by various national and international media outlets, are unified by a common goal: better understand how environmental change shapes natural ecosystems, which provide essential services to humankind. In addition to his scientific research, Mike is an award-winning science communicator with broad interests in connecting diverse swaths of the public with the process of scientific discovery and all that it offers to individuals and to humankind. These interests are fueled by Mike’s own unlikely path from humble roots to a career in science. Thus, he founded and runs the 501(c)3 nonprofit, SciAll.org, which uses unconventional videos to diversify interest in science and STEM careers. By bringing mass online audiences along for the adventures of his career, including encounters with sharks, whales and other underwater wonders, Mike aims to deliver a timely message: science is an exhilarating process of discovery, accessible to all and in the service of all.

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