Madison College Proposal

The new college\(^1\) will be composed of all current CAL units minus fine arts and art history, and will be constituted as a centerpiece of James Madison University. The college will be at the forefront of James Madison University’s commitment to become the new American university, a hybrid embodying the best qualities of research and liberal arts institutions. The college will be committed to serving students, promoting academic excellence and integrity, fostering mutual respect, and serving the James Madison University community and the world beyond by educating students broadly in the liberal arts tradition.

Mission

Madison College is James Madison University’s core liberal arts college. The College endeavors to create the makers and guardians of the future, endowing all students with that measure of creativity, breadth of perspective, and capacity for understanding that will ensure that they might thrive and transform their world according to the highest aspirations of the human spirit.

The general mission of the College is to provide all James Madison University students with a fundamental awareness of their historical, geographical, and cultural situation, to open our culture to ourselves and to the world, and in so doing open our minds to the world in its manifest diversity, creating a rich respect for difference and a profound sense of shared challenges.

The particular mission of the College is to foster an awareness of the integrity of human knowledge, to sponsor an atmosphere of productive risk and interdisciplinary exploration, to sustain the freedom that will enable new articulations of human action, and to allow students to attain advanced proficiency in the traditional disciplines of the human, social, and communicative sciences.

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\(^1\) We are not committed to the Madison College name. Madison College has the advantage and disadvantage of having a local history. Madison College, however, does reflect a pattern at some fine institutions, like Yale for example, where Yale College is the liberal arts undergraduate core of the larger university. Montpelier College is another possibility, but it indexes the paradoxes materialized in Madison’s utopian plantation. Other symbolic names appropriate to the mission of the college are many, and we welcome any and all input regarding possibilities. The College of Humanities and Social Sciences is another option, but this discipline-focused label does not adequately describe the units contained. Economics, Geography, and Psychology are missing. Neither does it signify a social mission like “Madison” does, for example. This discipline-based description is one that also happens to be most common at tech-focused or natural science-focused schools, such as Carnegie Mellon and Cal Tech. James Madison University, at least in its current form, does not seem to share a mission with these institutions.
College Operation

The College will operate to support the Centennial Strategic Plan, with special emphasis on the six strategic characteristics outlined for the years 2004-2008.

Diversity

As the liberal core of James Madison University, the programs of Madison College will attract students of diverse backgrounds by offering them a unifying identity rooted in intellectual inquiry and integrity. The College will also promote the development and maintenance of programs that challenge students with diverse and sometimes competing intellectual positions and cultural practices.

Financial Resources

The faculty will support the vision to provide the best learning experience for our students, and the college will work to achieve the financial resources goals of James Madison University. Madison College, as a centerpiece of James Madison University, will generate a common culture and identity around which both the college and the university can attract new resources.

Private Support

Through its commitment to the liberal arts, the college will be best positioned to appeal to alumni, parents, friends and philanthropic bodies who share our vision for the enduring value and broad relevance of liberal learning.

Graduate Programs of Distinction

The college will contribute to James Madison University’s graduate programs of distinction by working to maintain and upgrade current programs, encouraging the development of new disciplinary and interdisciplinary programs as appropriate, and making certain our graduates achieve success in their continuing graduate education. The college will be committed to working collaboratively with other liberal arts colleges within the Commonwealth to combine resources to develop focused graduate programs.

Professional Development

Madison College will put into place the structural conditions necessary for the university to realize its worthwhile and lofty vision to become the new American university, becoming the best of liberal arts and research universities. The College will help faculty develop the best of liberal arts practices by reducing class size and teaching loads to reasonable levels, creating more teaching-learning centers, increasing opportunities for student-faculty intellectual interaction, expanding student research opportunities, and fostering increased communication and collegiality. The College will
lead the university’s effort to achieve Phi Beta Kappa status in the coming decade. The College will help faculty develop rewarding research lives by working collaboratively to develop sufficient resources to support faculty research and travel, and nurturing disciplinary and interdisciplinary scholarship and teaching. These steps will increase faculty’s capacity to create a rewarding and productive professional environment and to provide students with the research, writing, computing, and communication challenges necessary for students to develop lifelong skills necessary to live meaningful and productive lives.

_Institutional Planning_

The college will promote an environment in which meaningful long-term planning is central to its collegial administration.

_College Organization_

The college will be administered through a confederated effort with department heads and a faculty advisory committee working to achieve common goals with a dean. Its governing philosophy will be communitarian and cooperative to encourage an ethos of common ownership and reciprocal responsibility that will benefit students, faculty, and the university as a whole.

_Startup Costs_

The new college must have the resources to meet existing and future needs. Current levels of support for the units involved are inadequate and will only worsen as the university grows. Some resources necessary to the proper functioning of this new college include increased faculty lines to meet current and future teaching needs, increased faculty development funds and research time, increased office and teaching space, increased support staff, and a person dedicated to securing private support for the college.

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2 A recent NSSE survey indicates that students viewed courses offered in CAL as less challenging than those offered in several other colleges at JMU. The efforts mentioned above will help address these findings.