

A Program Sponsored by the Faculty Senate of James Madison University to Enable the Opportunities for Attending University of Underrepresented and Underserved Virginia Students.

Endorsed by the Faculty Senate of James Madison University on October 2, 2003.

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Program Description

The Faculty Senate of James Madison University proposes to continue its efforts to promote the academic achievement of young people who traditionally lack good opportunities for attending and succeeding at University. The program outlined here proposes a partnering program for providing *JMU* faculty to the high schools in our region which have large numbers of underrepresented and underserved students. These faculty will engage in frequent and continued contact with the schools' administrators, counselors, and teachers, to establish a variety of services that will foster the academic achievement and college eligibility of their students.

Program Justification

JMU's outstanding faculty routinely seek opportunities to disseminate their knowledge, experience, and skills, and to find new areas for their research and scholarly endeavors. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that a faculty-high school partnering program is well-linked to the institution's *29 Defining Characteristics*. For example:

6. *The university will be a diverse community whose members share a common JMU experience.*

Considerably more progress is in order to achieve satisfactory increases in the diversity of our student body. While the design, implementation and subsequent evaluation of this program should focus on preparing students for admission to any college or university, the relationships established by the partnering faculty will inevitably increase for *JMU* the applications of underrepresented students. Committing *JMU* resources to these schools, working with the school's personnel, and assisting students in their preparation for college will certainly convey the

message that JMU is interested in the academic success of these students, as well as their subsequent career successes.

7. The university will serve our state and the region, but through its people, programs and accomplishments be recognized on a national basis.

Furthering the academic opportunities of underrepresented and underserved students in our region well serves the needs of all Virginians. It is not necessary to elaborate how increased opportunities for higher education benefits these students as individuals, and as valuable future members of the Commonwealth's economic, social, and political enterprises.

It may be less apparent to see how the program being described here will contribute to the institution's national reputation, especially as JMU is "coming to the game" late. Universities and colleges throughout the nation already have begun high school partnering programs, and some, such as California's UC system, have established very extensive programs.

That which will invite national recognition for JMU is the distinctiveness of the proposed program. From a somewhat more than cursory examination of programs at other institutions, it appears that most partnering programs provide only occasional and incidental contact with an institution's faculty. They instead rely upon specially designated administrative offices to facilitate the hosting of a few special events for potential students, and to serve as an information clearing house. In the program being proposed here, faculty are at the center of the effort, functioning as the primary liaison between the high school and the resources of JMU. The liaisons maintain frequent contact, work closely with the school's administration and teachers, and perhaps even establish close relationships with the school's students. The ensuing outcomes permit JMU to demonstrate that its faculty take very seriously the claim "educated people have a responsibility to civic engagement." Committing the University's most valuable resources

enhances our credibility as an institution actively involved in making differences in the lives of underrepresented and underserved students. Or to put the point simply: Positive recognition follows positive deeds.

8. Admission to the university will remain selective with the ratio between applications and enrolled students reaching 6:1.

Continuing to increase the caliber of students applying to JMU is important to the institution. Increasing diversity of the student body through lowering standards is ineffectual for a variety reasons, including negative impacts on the general instructional mission of the university and negative impacts on those students who are admitted without the skills to matriculate successfully.

The proposal outlined here provides a more viable alternative to increasing campus diversity than what would come from lowering our selective admission standards. There are at least two reasons for this claim. First, there are always some well qualified students in high schools with large numbers of underrepresented students. These students will be selecting some colleges to which to apply. Ensuring that they apply to JMU requires that they are confident in our institution's commitment to their academic successes and preparation for their career aspirations. Occasionally saying to these students that "JMU should be their choice" is not likely to have much impact on their decisions. Nor would it be any more successful if these students hear the message from the faculty liaisons being proposed here. But these students would see and appreciate the reasons to apply to JMU as they benefit from our efforts to help them prepare for admission to any good university or college. And just as important, the teachers and counselors that these students go to for advice are likely to recommend us over other choices as they too see that we are committed to the success of their students.

The second reason is the more important factor relevant to achieving diversity in our student body while providing for the defining characteristic of high selection standards. This reason, however, requires the realization that there are no “quick fixes.” The only certain way for Virginian universities to have student bodies that reflect the composition of the Commonwealth’s population is for there to be broad changes to the academic culture and level of scholastic achievement in the K-12 schools of underrepresented students. Otherwise, the Commonwealth’s better universities will continue to compete for a small pool of well-qualified students that is not large enough for each campus to be truly representative of Virginia’s population. Therefore, to accomplish our institution’s ambitions we are compelled to devote resources to sustained enhancement of these schools so they are better able to prepare students capable of competing with applicants from schools that are not currently underserved. Providing faculty liaisons will not -- indeed cannot -- radically alter these schools. These liaisons can, however, make an important contribution through establishing relationships with these schools and JMU.

9. The university will enhance and diversify funding sources to achieve initiatives campus-wide.

Demonstrating our commitment to enhancing underserved schools in our region will result in additional federal funding. Particularly relevant is the Department of Education’s “Project Upward Bound,” and other elements of the “Trio” program. According to a conversation with Ms Buennemeyer, the type of program proposed here is likely to invite the attention of a number of federal programs and private agencies. Although the specifics of Governor Warner’s education initiative are not yet known, it is also very likely that this project would fit nicely with the Governor’s plans for developing K-12 schools.

It is worth noting that the funding opportunities this program would make available would benefit JMU as well as the partnered high schools. For example,

if one of the support elements arranged by the faculty liaisons involves provision of on-line advance placement courses taught by JMU faculty, the process of making the course available to these schools would provide experience valuable for preparing and delivering on-line courses to other audiences. A second example of campus-wide benefits can easily be seen in the opportunities this program would provide for involving our students in instructional activities within the partnered high schools. The funding opportunities made available by implementing this program would certainly provide similar collateral benefits.

10. The university will develop broad-based financial support and involvement among alumni, parents, and friends.

Engaging our faculty and resources in a program to assist schools in need is the sort of “do-right” endeavor that is very important to university development activities. Not only does it invite contributions for the program itself, it furthers the perception that JMU is a valuable contributor to meeting the needs of all the citizens of the Commonwealth.

11. The university, to enhance and support its programs, will expand its strategic alliances with external partners.

By now it must be evident that implementing this program significantly increases opportunities for establishing and enhancing existing alliances with external partners. As the program matures, valuable relationships develop with the partnering schools, the schools’ district administrations, the communities in which these schools reside, relevant state and federal agencies, and perhaps most importantly, long lasting relationships with the students benefited by the program.

Beyond its correspondence with the defining characteristics that we, as an institution, wish to achieve, establishing a high school partnering program is warranted on the basis of what we are now: A nationally recognized university with resources already in place

to implement changes in Virginia's K-12 education. Our faculty are outstanding, dedicated educators, and are expressing an interest in being part of this program. Our students are anxious for "real-life" opportunities to apply their skills. We are well ahead of the "curve" in pedagogical applications of technology. Throughout our university is the expertise to provide for the many needs of underserved schools. Simply put, we are positioned to provide for a successful high school partnering program.

Program Goals:

1. To facilitate the provision of James Madison University's instructional, research, technological, and personnel resources to Virginian high schools with large proportions of underserved and/or underrepresented students.
2. To promote the academic achievement of underserved/underrepresented students that traditionally do not have good opportunities for attending and succeeding at institutions of higher education.
3. To provide opportunities for senior JMU faculty to disseminate their experience, knowledge, and skills, and find new areas for their research and scholarly endeavors.
4. To provide opportunities for JMU students to be an integral part of improving the academic culture of high schools with large proportions of underserved and/or underrepresented students.

Program Structure

1. The Faculty Senate organizes a committee, known as the High School Partnering Committee (HSP), to be comprised of a senator appointed by the Senate, one representative faculty member of each of the five colleges, the Director of Admissions, and the Dean of the College of Education. The committee is charged with the implementation of the program.

2. The Director of Admissions recommends to the HSP three to six high schools for partnership programs based on the following criteria:

- A. The schools are within an approximate 2 hour drive from campus.
- B. The schools are comprised of a very high proportion of underserved/underrepresented students.

3. The Senate issues a call to the faculty for self-nominations to the position of liaison with a partnered school.

- A. From the nominations, the HSP will select three to six senior faculty to be assigned to one of the partnered high schools for a period of two years.
- B. Liaisons will spend one day of each week of each academic semester at their assigned school.
- C. Liaisons will receive a one course reduction during their tenure as a liaison, provided by the Office of Academic Affairs.
- D. All liaison travel expenses will be provided for through a budget within the Office of Academic Affairs.

4. Liaisons will meet with their school's administration, counselors, teachers, and students, to assess needs for collaboration for furthering their students' college preparation, and then identify and, with the assistance of the HSP, secure JMU resources to provide for the collaboration. Liaisons may arrange for:

- A. Assisting students in planning for college, preparing for SATs, composing application essays, and securing financial aid.
- B. Workshops on study skills, note taking, time management and strategies for success at college.
- C. Classroom presentations by liaisons or other JMU faculty in their own subject matter.

- D. Campus visits.
- E. Participation in JMU on-campus classes.
- F. Opportunities to earn advance placement credit in courses taught by JMU faculty and delivered to the schools via the internet.
- G. Collaborations between high school teachers and JMU faculty in their subject areas to develop and refine curriculum and instructional methods.

Program Evaluation

Marks of the program's success include:

1. Number of students applying to Universities and Colleges.
2. Number of students accepted and choosing to attend JMU.
3. Number of students participating in JMU sponsored programs, such as on-line AP courses or campus visits.
4. Number of high school teachers and counselors enrolling in JMU graduate classes.
5. Number of new JMU courses developed to focus on the academic achievement of high need students.