

## President's Council

### September 2012

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Upcoming PC events:

- Sept. 13 - Reston
- Sept. 19 - Portola Valley, CA
- Sept. 20 - San Francisco
- Oct. 29 - D.C.

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Introducing Jonathan R. Alger, sixth president of James Madison University.



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## Dear President's Council Members: Why Madison?

There is much for me to learn about James Madison University. **And as you are a valued member of the President's Council, I am looking to you for help.**

Of course, already I know a great deal about this wonderful university. **The value of the President's Council is immediately clear.** President's Council gifts make a difference. JMU relies on your contributions to sustain excellence and fuel bold new initiatives for the future. As we find ourselves in an environment of declining resources, the value of philanthropy to the life of the institution will be more critical than ever.



I can say with the objectivity of an outsider that **the world has taken notice of James Madison University.** The quality of the academic programs, the great minds and personal commitment of the faculty, the student-centered culture, the commitment to societal engagement, the problem-solving approach to education, how JMU has synthesized these elements into one Madison Experience – these are all evident to outsiders and among the many reasons I sought the [“best presidency in America.”](#) as Dr. Rose called it. **And with continued support from donors like you, the world will continue to pay attention.**

I spoke in my [acceptance address](#) last November of the importance I place on the “engaged university” in today's world. Indeed, I believe that James Madison University can become recognized nationally as the model for what it means to be the engaged university in the 21st century. But if we are to become this national model, we as a university community must go there together. **That is why my first step in working toward this vision will be to fully engage with**

together. **That is why my first step in working toward this vision will be to fully engage with you.** I must acquire a complete 360-degree understanding of the university's strengths as well as its challenges and an understanding of what makes Madison unique.

So, I am embarking on a listening tour to meet as many President's Council members as I can. Just as I have been asked why I came to Madison, I plan to ask you "Why Madison?" Why did you choose to attend, teach or work at JMU? Why is Madison important to you? Why are you committed to JMU? As a President's Council member, why do you invest your resources in the university? Why is Madison uniquely suited to address the most pressing challenges of our society and our world? **Why Madison?**

**I want our conversation to be one of mutual discovery.** It will be intellectually invigorating, open and frank. I also expect that it will be enjoyable and rewarding. Over time, the themes that emerge from your answers to "Why Madison?" will inform the university's next strategic planning process. So please reflect deeply on my question, "Why Madison?" I hope to hear your answer soon when the listening tour makes a stop near you.

For now, I want to thank the Board of Visitors and the search committee for expressing its faith in me and my leadership. **I want to thank you for giving annually at the President's Council level.** I am honored to join the Madison community as its president. You achieved great things under Dr. Rose's strong, strategic leadership, and I say with deep humility that I plan on building upon this legacy and meeting your high expectations.

I look forward to my first semester at Madison. Please come to campus for Homecoming and Family Weekend, football games and other sporting events, and shows at the Forbes Center. Or just visit when you happen to be driving down Interstate 81. And please look for dates when I will be visiting your part of campus or the country. I look forward to meeting you, the faculty, students, staff, alumni, donors and friends of JMU, and getting to know the Madison community intimately. **Together we will define Why Madison, etch a bold vision for the university's future and then show the world Why Madison.**

-Jon Alger, President

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