What are Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)?

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are organizationally supported employee groups drawn together by common interests, shared characteristic or life experiences that are focused on encouraging an exchange of ideas, promoting a greater sense of belonging and enhancing career and personal development of employees in the workplace.

Why establish ERGs at JMU?

In support of the university’s mission, vision, values and core qualities, Human Resources has been working on a number of initiatives to create a more enriching, inclusive and engaging workplace for all JMU employees.

Through ERGs, we hope to:

- Engage colleagues at all levels in advancing the goals and mission
- Enhance JMU’s commitment to the personal and professional development of our employees
- Encourage collaboration and appreciation for our interconnectedness
- Foster an inclusive community that values the richness of all individuals and perspectives
- Support the university’s desire to be a national model for the engaged university and a leader and innovator among its peers

Creation of ERGs at JMU will engage different generations, backgrounds, ethnicities, and perspectives across all disciplines. No one group of employees can propel JMU to fulfill its mission, achieve its vision or live its values. ERGs can be the catalyst to engage our entire community.

What are the goals of each ERG?

Each ERG will be focused on the following goals:

- Recruitment: Support and assist in recruitment efforts to attract diverse candidates and top professionals to join JMU
- Talent Development and Retention: Offer learning, mentoring and networking opportunities that empowers all employees to broaden their professional skills and personal growth
- Engagement: Foster a sense of belonging and involvement in advancing the university’s mission and cultivate an increased awareness and sensitivity to differences
- Outreach: Identify and participate in positive, impactful ways that will make a difference in the local community
Who will benefit from ERGs?

ERGs will create a mutually beneficial platform for staff, faculty and the university by:

- Enriching the workplace experience of all employees regardless of level or background
- Enhancing recruiting efforts and retention of a diverse workforce
- Providing opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing among current employees and assimilation of new employees
- Increasing awareness and sensitivity to differences throughout the organization
- Improving workplace culture and shedding light on specific issues or barriers that may negatively impact certain groups of employees
- Creating new paths for leadership development and mentoring that cultivates fresh ideas and innovations
- Adding an additional avenue for outreach to the outside community
- Offering an open forum and safe setting for employees who share common interests to meet and support one another

What are some examples of the types of activities ERGs could provide?

ERG members may be asked to assist Human Resources at job fairs. They may hold a common interest with that group, i.e. a job fair that specifically targets veterans. An ERG may invite an off-campus community leader to engage with the group, i.e. community disability advocate speaking at one of their meetings. An ERG may have a brown bag lunch meeting session to talk about support strategies, i.e. caregiving tips for employees with children.

Who can be a member of an ERG?

Membership in each ERG will be open to all JMU employees. Diverse representation can and will be encouraged.

How will ERGs be administered?

The implementation, establishment and oversight of ERGs will rest with the Office of Human Resources to ensure alignment with the definition and purpose of the program. Each ERG will have at least two appointed or elected officers from among its membership. Planning, support and technical advice will be continually provided by the Employment Outreach Specialist in the Office of Human Resources. Specific activities and plans for each ERG that supports the program goals shall be created by the ERGs.

Will there be other types of ERGs offered?

The three initial ERGs (Tapestry, Veterans, WeCare) were recommended by a campus-wide steering committee. Once they are firmly established, Human Resources will look at creating additional ERGs for employees based on need, availability of funding and alignment with the definition and purpose of the program.