



# RESEARCH NOTES

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### **James Madison University Freshmen and Transfers: Fall 1993 to Fall 2002**

Ten-years of information were examined to identify trends in new undergraduate students at James Madison University. Data from several sources were compiled into historical views designed to increase confidence in a common understanding of entering students at JMU. The two primary sources of information were: 1) the official admissions data files, as prepared for the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia; and 2) JMU's *Freshman Student Survey*, an annual collection of information and opinion from the entering freshman class.

From fall 1993 to fall 2002, the University grew significantly while maintaining its selective reputation. Freshman class applications increased 39%, from 11,223 to 15,639. Enrolled freshmen increased 58%, from 2,082 to 3,283. However, acceptance rates increased from 47% to 58%.

The most significant change in the past ten years is probably the decline in entering class men. Interest in attending JMU, as measured by the number of applicants, increased in roughly equal measure for both men and women. However, the acceptance rate for women in the entering class climbed and surpassed the rates for men. Acceptance rates by fall 2002 were 63% female and 50% male. Only 36% (1,167) of the fall 2002 freshman class was male and, by headcount, the lowest number enrolled since fall 1995. This trend has implications for many facets of campus life; from diversity of classroom discussion to resource management.

By ethnicity in the freshman class, gains in Asian or Pacific Islanders and Hispanics were offset by decline of African-Americans. Overall, non-white students (non-resident aliens included) declined from 14% to 11% of the entering freshman class. Applications for Asians or Pacific Islanders increased from 643 to 957, Hispanics increased 247 to 427 and African-Americans from 725 to 762. Respectively, the percent increases were 49%, 73% and 5%.

Out-of-state freshman enrollment varied between 30% and 38% with a ten-year average of 34%. Out-of-state acceptance rates increased over the period, surpassing in-state rates. The out-of-state acceptance rate increased from seven points below the in-state rate in fall 1993 (43% out, 50% in) to five points above in fall 2002 (61% out, 56% in).

SAT combined scores continued to be "selective" compared to JMU peers. However, they declined from 1,186 to 1,165 from fall 1995 to fall 2002. The decline was associated with the increase in women with lower math scores than men. The decline was also associated with decline in the SAT for out-of-state students. Although out-of-state students had higher SAT's they declined more than the scores of in-state students over the time period.

Results from the annual *Freshman Survey* revealed some trends consistent with the female increase in the freshman class. These included an increased emphasis on family and social interests and a decreased interest in a vocational philosophy of education. Trends like this also infer a decrease in the student experience of gender diversity in the classroom.

Ten-year trends in undergraduate transfers revealed different dynamics than those for entering freshmen. Total applications were basically flat from fall 1993 to fall 1999 and then climbed 36% from fall 1999 to fall 2002. Acceptance rates climbed through the middle of this ten-year period and then fell to near the fall 1993 level. The increase in transfer applications that began in fall 2000 provided a larger pool from which JMU was more selective. Enrolled transfers increased 38%, from 467 to 646 across the ten-year period.

Transfer admission trends by sex were generally in parity. In fact, parity improved in the number of transfers applied, accepted and enrolled from fall 1998 to fall 2002, the same period during which gender diversity declined for entering freshmen. Each year, about eight percent more women than men were accepted. However, lower yield rates for women resulted in gender parity in enrollment beginning in fall 1998.

Transfers by minority ethnic groups were small, making trends difficult to discern. Applications increased in proportion with whites. However, non-white acceptance rates were lower resulting in lower enrollments from fall 1999 to fall 2002. African-Americans and Asian or Pacific Islanders were the two largest minority groups with roughly equal admissions statistics. Their average ten-year enrollments were 19 and 16 respectively.

Students from in-state institutions benefited the most from increased transfer enrollment. By fall 2002, the majority of transfers (40%) came from two-year in-state schools, 30% from four-year in-state schools, and 30% from out-of-state schools.

Trends about the percent of transfers with an Associate degree from the Virginia Community College System are difficult to discern. However, they appear to be on the increase. From fall 1996 to fall 2002, the portion of transfers with the Associate degree increased from 40% to 47% with a high of 52% in fall 2000.

The full report of this study, "JMU Freshmen and Transfers: Fall 1993 to Fall 2002," is available in .pdf format on the web site of the Office of Institutional Research. See the link to this study and others at the following URL: <http://www.jmu.edu/institresrch/StudiesNotesNews.shtml>.