



# RESEARCH NOTES

## Office of Institutional Research

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### STUDENTS AT JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY: 1992 TO 2003

The Office of Institutional Research has collected data about JMU for more than 30 years. Since the office opened in 1973, the university has grown by more than 150 percent. Since the early 1990s, the university has grown more than 40 percent.

In spring 2003, OIR embarked upon a series of reports highlighting changes at JMU since the early 1990's. The first study - "James Madison University Freshmen and Transfers: Fall 1993 to Fall 2002" - was published in July 2003. It focused on changes in the kinds of students who entered JMU. The study explored issues such as high school preparation, diversity and selectivity.

This is the second study in the series. It focuses on changes in students while they are enrolled at JMU (changes in enrollment, majors, characteristics, attitudes, etc.). The final study, to be published in 2005, will examine changes in students after they graduate (employment, attitudes toward JMU, continuing education, etc.).

For this study, 12 years of information was examined to identify major changes and trends in JMU student enrollment, success and values. Data from several sources were compiled into historical views that increase the common understanding about JMU students from 1992 to 2003.

Between fall 1992 and fall 2003, these primary changes in enrollment were found:

- Total enrollment grew 43 percent, from 11,343 to 16,203.
- Undergraduate degree-seeking enrollment grew 50 percent, from 9,787 to 14,685.
- The undergraduate portion of total enrollment grew from 86 percent to 91 percent.
- Graduate degree-seeking enrollment dipped from 866 in fall 1992 to 733 in fall 2000. Then, enrollment increased to 809 in fall 2003. The overall decline was 7 percent.
- The graduate portion of total enrollment declined from 8 to 5 percent.
- Nondegree-seeking student enrollment varied without trend from 690 to 709.
- The nondegree-seeking portion of total enrollment varied between 4 and 6 percent.

For undergraduate students, the following major changes and trends were found:

- JMU maintained both a highly selective reputation and high graduation rate. By sex and race/ethnicity, graduation rates were better than national figures for selective institutions.
- Gender diversity decreased. Female enrollment increased almost twice as much male. The female portion of undergraduates grew from 55 percent to 60 percent.
- Racial/ethnic diversity decreased. White/Unreported enrollment grew from 86 percent to 89 percent. Asian/Pacific Islanders, Hispanics and Nonresident Aliens grew. African-Americans declined and American Indian/Alaska Natives continued in small numbers.
- Out-of-state undergraduate enrollment grew from 25 percent to 30 percent.
- Full-time undergraduate enrollment grew from 96 percent to 97 percent.
- Average credit hours taken per semester by full-time undergraduates declined from 15.75 to 15.09 (two-thirds of one credit hour).
- Baccalaureate degrees conferred grew 45 percent, from 2,187 to 3,162 per year.
- One-year retention and six-year graduation rates dipped slightly over the period, then returned to 92 percent and 80 percent, respectively. African-American graduation rates increased from 55 percent for the fall 1992 cohort to 69 percent for the fall 1997 cohort, reducing the dropout rate by more than one-third.

For graduate students, the following major changes and trends were found:

- Out-of-state graduate enrollment grew from 18 percent to 30 percent.
- Gender diversity was stable with 62 percent female in fall 1992 and fall 2003.
- Racial/ethnic diversity increased. Although the number of minorities was small, they increased from 8 percent to 12 percent of graduate student enrollment. African-Americans were the largest minority group with 36 students in fall 2003.
- Full-time graduate enrollment grew from 49 percent to 54 percent.
- Average credit hours taken per semester by full-time graduate students declined slightly from 10.51 to 10.38.
- Graduate degrees conferred (Master's, Educational Specialist and Doctoral) grew 6 percent, from 295 to 312.

Changes and trends in student attitudes from the *Continuing Student Survey* were:

- JMU student characteristics and attitudes toward the university remain remarkably positive, and in many instances, have improved. For example, the percentage of students that express high levels of satisfaction with JMU in general has remained at 94 percent since 1990.
- JMU students have maintained similar values, perceptions and characteristics since 1990 as evidenced by only 15 percent of responses to more than 240 questions had changed +/- 10 percent.
- Only seven of the 37 questions or statements that student responses changed +/- 10 percent were negative.

The complete report for this study includes many graphic views of the data and can be found with other studies at: <http://www.jmu.edu/instresrch/StudiesNotesNews.shtml>.

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