



# RESEARCH NOTES

## Office of Institutional Research

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### **The Changing Face of JMU**

In 2003-04 the Office of Institutional Research began a series of studies to learn how JMU's students and faculty have changed since the early 1990's. The first study explored changes in JMU students prior to their enrollment. The second study examined the changes in students after they enrolled and before they graduated. The third study reviewed what we know about alumni from alumni surveys. The final study examined changes in JMU's instructional faculty since 1986. The purpose of this Research Notes is to summarize the findings of these four studies and explore possible implications for JMU.

OIR undertook these historical studies to shed light on changes that usually occur over a period of years. Annual changes are normally small, but when viewed from 10 to 15 years, can be significant. A variety of information sources were used. Data from official reports (enrollment census files, graduation files, faculty data files, etc.) were used as well as annual surveys (New Student Survey, Continuing Student Survey, Alumni Survey). Together, these data provide a rich source of historical information about our institution. In the text to follow we highlight what we have learned in each study. Readers are encouraged to review the entire reports on OIR's Web site.

### ***Changes in Students Prior to Enrollment***

This study examined changes in student demographics and expectations prior to their enrollment. The major sources for this study were the admissions data files sent to the State Council for Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) and the annual New Student Survey taken by students prior to their enrollment. Below are the major findings, with updates through fall 2005.

- The number of applied, accepted and enrolled first-time freshmen increased significantly from fall 1993 to fall 2005. Applications increased 46%, accepted freshmen increased 110% and enrolled freshmen increased 82%. Overall, the freshman class grew from 2,082 to 3,798.
- JMU's acceptance rate increased from 47% in fall 1993 to 68% in fall 2005. The highest rate (least selective year) was 68% in fall 2005.
- Between fall 1995 and fall 2005, JMU's average SAT combined decreased from 1,186 to 1,160.
- The percentage who reported in the *New Student Survey* that their average grade in high school was in the 'A' range increased from 43% to 51%. This positive indicator was associated with the increase of freshman women in annual analyses of the *New Student Survey*. Within specific skills, students reported increased preparation in study habits, computer skills and vocational skills. There was also a decline in the percentage that was very well prepared in Mathematics and a slight decline in Foreign Languages preparedness.
- The most important freshman trend was the increase in acceptance rates of women over men. Application trends indicate that male interest in JMU has increased on the same par as female interest. However, acceptance rates for women increased 30 points over the past 13 years while the rates for men increased slightly after six years of decline that began in fall 1996.
- The growth of women in the freshman class was associated with trends in the *New Student Survey* questions that also vary by gender. For example, analysis of the annual survey has found that men are more likely to adopt a vocational philosophy of education and this historical study found that the percentage of students that selected this philosophy declined over the past ten years. On the other hand, women tend to hold a social philosophy of education and the percentage that selected this philosophy increased over time.
- Similar diversity issues also existed in the decline of non-white students over the past 13 years. African-American freshman enrollment dropped from 167 in fall 1993 to 61 in fall 2004 and then increased to 152 in fall 2005. Overall, non-white enrollment decreased, from 14% in fall 1993 to 12% in fall 2005. The

increases in Asian or Pacific Islanders and in Hispanic freshmen helped to buffer the overall decline of minority students.

- The geographic representation of freshmen was basically steady from fall 1993 to fall 2005. The 13-year average enrollment for out-of-state freshmen was 34%. This percentage varied from 30% to 38% without trend over the 13-year period. Within Virginia, 45% of the in-state freshmen came from the Northern Virginia region.

### **Changes in Students After Enrollment**

This study examines the changes in student demographics (majors, enrollment, etc.) and attitudes over this period. This study does not examine individual changes, but changes over the years. The major sources for this study were the headcount data files sent to SCHEV and the annual *Continuing Student Survey* taken by students in classes during the Fall term. Below are the major findings with updates through fall 2005.

- Total enrollment grew 49 percent, from 11,343 to 16,938.
  - Undergraduate degree-seeking enrollment grew 56 percent, from 9,787 to 15,287.
  - The undergraduate portion of total enrollment grew from 86 percent to 90 percent.
  - Graduate degree-seeking enrollment dipped from 866 in fall 1992 to 733 in fall 2000. Then, enrollment increased to 1,067 in fall 2005. The overall increase was 23 percent.
  - The graduate degree-seeking and non-degree-seeking portion of total enrollment declined from 10 to 8 percent.
  - Non-degree-seeking student enrollment varied without trend from 690 to 584, with a high of 888 in fall 1998.
  - The non-degree-seeking portion of total enrollment varied between 43 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 gender 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 61 percent.
  - Racial/ethnic diversity decreased. White/Unreported enrollment grew from 87 percent to 89 percent. Asian/Pacific Islanders, Hispanics and Nonresident Aliens grew. African-Americans declined through fall 2004, 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 15.08 (two-thirds of one credit hour).
  - Baccalaureate degrees conferred grew 52 percent, from 2,187 to 3,329 per year.
  - One-year retention and six-year graduation rates dipped slightly over the period, then returned to 91 percent and 80 percent, respectively. African-American graduation rates increased from 55 percent for the fall 1992 cohort to 73 percent for the fall 1999 cohort, reducing the dropout rate by more than one-third.
- For graduate students, degree-seeking and not, the following major changes and trends were found:
  - Out-of-state graduate enrollment grew from 15 percent to 21 percent.
  - Gender diversity varied without trend between 61 and 69 percent female.
  - Racial/ethnic diversity increased. Although the number of minorities was small, they increased from 8 percent to 10 percent of graduate student enrollment. African-Americans were the largest minority group with 48 students in fall 2005.
  - Full-time graduate enrollment grew from 40 percent to 52 percent.
  - Average credit hours taken per semester by full-time graduate students increased slightly from 10.49 to 10.92.
  - Graduate degrees conferred (Master's, Educational Specialist and Doctoral) grew 52 percent, from 295 to 449.
- 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.

### **Changes After Graduation**

This study examined what we have learned about alumni within two years of their graduation. The major data sources for this study were the alumni studies conducted by the Center for Assessment and Research Studies (CARS), Academic Advising and Career Development (AACD) and the Office of Institutional Research. Below are the major findings.

- Almost 100% of JMU alumni are satisfied with their JMU experience. This trend has been consistently high from 1996 to 2005.
- Almost 100% of alumni are likely to recommend JMU to a colleague, friend or relative.
- The majority of alumni are satisfied with the cost of their JMU undergraduate education.
- Alumni have been consistently satisfied with campus life, intellectual and cultural environment/ extra-curricular activities.
- New graduates are successful in finding employment, and the longer they are out of school the better the picture looks for employment.
  - On average, 70% of alumni who are up to one year out of JMU are employed.
  - In comparison, on average, 90% of alumni who are two to five years out are employed.
  - By two-years out, we see a slight decrease in the percentage of alumni who are employed in-state and an increase in those who are employed out-of-stat
  - On average, 61% of new graduates are employed in-state. 54% of alumni who are two to five years out are employed in-state.
- In general, the longer the timeframe since alumni completed their undergraduate degree, the more likely they are to have taken graduate coursework.
  - 44% of alumni who are up to five years out are taking or have taken graduate-level courses; whereas about 28% who are two-years out and 18% who are up to one-year out have done so.
  - There is an increase of 7% of alumni from 2004 to 2005, who are up to 60 days out, who have taken graduate coursework.
- We see a consistent high rating for JMU undergraduate major helping performance in the workplace.
  - We see consistent ratings, albeit lower, for alumni reporting that their current employment is related to General Education (GenEd) coursework and that GenEd coursework helped performance in the workplace.
- JMU alumni feel that JMU prepared them academically to attend graduate school.
  - We see consistently high ratings from 2002 to 2003 for alumni perceptions for the following: JMU undergraduate major related to graduate study, JMU major prepared them academically of their graduate study, and GenEd course work helped their performance in graduate school.
- There has been in an increase in the ways that alumni plan to keep (or have kept) in touch with JMU.
  - In 2002, at least 50% of alumni favored the JMU website and visits to campus.
  - For 2003 alumni at least 50% favored the JMU website, homecoming, visits to campus, alumni association website, and the alumni association at JMU.
  - The 2004 alumni favored the JMU website, homecoming, visits to campus, alumni association website, and, in addition, email or phone contact with JMU faculty and staff.
  - The 2005 alumni favored the JMU website, homecoming, visits to campus, alumni association website, email or phone to former faculty or staff, the alumni association at JMU, and the college website as ways to keep in touch with JMU. This may indicate changes going on internally to JMU to increase outreach.
  - Overall JMU alumni, regardless of how long they have been away from JMU, report that networking and internet resources helped them find professional employment.
- GenEd at JMU has had a positive influence on JMU alumni in many ways.
  - We see consistently high to moderate ratings (both 2002 and 2003 respectively) for the influence of GenEd on alumni in the following areas: communication skills, information literacy, critical thinking skills, development of awareness of both physical and emotional wellness, problem-

solving skills in science and mathematics, and understand the development of western civilization and its interaction with other traditions within the global community.

### ***Changes in Faculty***

This study examined what we learned about changes in JMU's faculty since 1986. The major data source for this study was the official historical data files compiled by OIR between 1986 and 2004. Below are the major findings.

- The number of full-time faculty has grown in proportion to increases in students, but the percentage of faculty with tenure has decreased significantly in the last five years to 48 percent. Since 1997-98 the number of FTE students per full-time faculty has decreased by more than 2.8.
- The percentage of faculty holding the terminal degree increased from 70 percent in 1986 to 81 percent in 2004, but down from 84 percent in 2002.
- The JMU faculty is more diverse than in 1986. Non-Caucasian faculty increased from four percent in 1986 to eight percent in 2004, but was down from the high of 10 percent in 2002. Women now constitute 41 percent of faculty, up from 26 percent in 1986.
- The JMU faculty is more likely to have come to JMU in the last five years. Almost half (43 percent) of the faculty has five years or less experience at JMU. This compares with 32 percent in 1990. The average number of years of experience declined from an average of 11.6 in 1990 to 9.9 in 2004.
- Fifty-seven percent of new tenure-track assistant professors are still employed by JMU after seven years.
- Annual changes in the average JMU faculty salary since 1987-88 have ranged from 10.1 percent in 1989-90 to -1.8 percent in 1992-93. Annual changes in total compensation (salary + fringe benefits) ranged from 10.8 percent in 1989-90 to -4.0 percent in 1991-92. In 2003-04 and 2004-05 compensation increased 1.7% and 4.8%, respectively. In 2004-05 benefits accounted for 31.6 percent of total compensation, up from 27.2 percent in 2002-03. This reflects increasing medical costs borne by the Commonwealth.
- JMU's average faculty salary has increased by 24 percent since 1995-96, compared with 27 percent for its peers. The average salary still is \$6,000 below the stated 60<sup>th</sup> percentile goal.
- The typical JMU faculty member spends a higher percentage of his or her time in instructional activities than 25 years ago. The average faculty member works 55 hours per week, which has changed little since 1974. However, the typical faculty member devotes nearly 70 percent of his or her total hours to instruction, up from 60 percent in 1986 and 56 percent in 1974.
- The most recent student-to-faculty ratio, 16.8:1 is the lowest in the last ten years, down from 19.2:1 in 1997.