Oh How We’ve Changed: JMU Graduation Outcomes Since 1970-71

Change at institutions similar to JMU in size and complexity is typically incremental and takes years to be recognized and understood. From year to year, the number of graduates by program changes; periodically new majors are added or retired due to demand and need. When one reviews data covering more than 40 years at JMU, the magnitude of change due to increased diversity, size, and the need to prepare individuals for the quickly changing world are apparent. The purpose of this Research Note is to highlight these dramatic transformations by examining the changes in degrees conferred by major area since 1970-71. These changes in disciplines offered mirror the changes in America and the world, including a more diverse population and the needs of the modern workplace.

Former JMU President Ronald Carrier is writing a book on changes in higher education. He requested assistance from OIR to research our historical files to find data that show the magnitude of change since he assumed the JMU presidency in 1971. The tables and graphs contained herein are designed to display some of these changes that occurred while he and his successors, Dr. Linwood Rose, and current President Jonathan Alger, have served JMU.

Degrees Conferred by Discipline Since 1970-71

The graduation data were gathered from official historical documents (Catalogs, Statistical Summaries, etc.) and databases maintained by OIR. These data were organized by major discipline areas displayed below. The two pie charts represent the relative number of degrees conferred and the distribution of degrees conferred between 1970-71 and 2014-15.

In 1970-71, the education discipline had the largest number of graduates (324 / 47.2%). This number reflected Madison's historical roots as the State Normal and Industrial School for Women at Harrisonburg and the mission of what was then named Madison College. This author's mother graduated from Madison in 1933 with a two-year teaching certificate and was a teacher for more than 40 years in Albemarle County.
In 2014-15 JMU enrollment is seven times larger and is far more diverse both ethnically and by gender. The discipline category that now has the greatest number and percentage of graduates is health professions (706 / 15.4%) and business (679 / 14.8%). JMU still prepares many students to become teachers (546 teacher education endorsements in 2013-14). However, at the undergraduate level these students can no longer major in education, but rather are required to earn a degree in a program like Interdisciplinary Liberal Studies (IDLS), which provides a very broad education in many disciplines.

The table below displays the number of degrees conferred (including second majors) in five-year increments since 1970-71 at the undergraduate, graduate (master’s and educational specialist), and doctoral levels. In 1970-71 Madison College did not offer educational specialist or doctoral degrees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career</th>
<th>CIP 2-Digit Disciplines</th>
<th>Undergrad</th>
<th>Grad</th>
<th>DR</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7071 7576 8081 8586 9091 9596 0001 0506 1011 1415</td>
<td>666 1,363 1,663 2,114 2,450 2,498 3,234 3,767 3,896 4,576</td>
<td>74 161 323 256 252 364 339 542 737 748</td>
<td>5 9 10 9 10 8 15 17 24 26</td>
<td>764 1,514 1,976 2,372 2,702 2,862 3,581 4,319 4,711 5,302</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The graphic below depicts the relative size and distribution of graduate degrees awarded since 1970-71. In 1970-71 education was the largest graduate major in size and proportion (64 / 82.1%). By 2014-15 education was still the largest graduate major in size and proportion (401 / 53.6%), but there is a much broader range of disciplines now, especially in health and business.

**Graduate Degrees Conferred 1970-71**
- 09 Communication and Journalism
- 11 Computer and Information Sciences
- 13 Education
- 29 English Language and Literature
- 26 Biological Sciences
- 27 Mathematics and Statistics
- 30 Interdisciplinary Studies (Including ISAT)

**Graduate Degrees Conferred 2014-15**
- 51 Recreation and Leisure
- 42 Psychology
- 44 Public Administration
- 45 Social Sciences
- 50 Visual and Performing Arts
- 51 Health Professions
- 52 Business, Marketing, Management, and Related Fields

**In Summary:**
If one were to visit Madison College in 1970-71, he/she would find a very different campus from 2014-15 in many dimensions, not to mention the Harrisonburg/Rockingham County community. In 1966 Madison College became coeducational. The number and type of disciplines offered began to change to reflect the diversity of the student body as well as the needs of the workplace.

- JMU grew from 4,041 students in 1970-71 to 20,855 in 2014-15 (+516%).
- 3,807 students applied in 1970-71 to be freshmen compared to 22,550 in 2014-15 (+592%).
- Degrees conferred increased from 764 in 1970-71 to 5,362 in 2014-15 (+702%).
- Bachelor's degrees awarded in the health and business disciplines grew from 57 (8.3%) in 1970-71 to 1,358 (30.2%) in 2014-15 (+2,384%). STEM graduates increased from 59 to 835 (+1,515%). Health graduates increased from 20 to 734 (+3,670%).
- While education was by far the most sought after degree in 1970-71, teacher education is still pursued by many students and remains one of the strong undergraduate and graduate offerings.
- In the last 40+ years, Madison College/James Madison University has evolved to meet the needs of students and the Commonwealth. It is truly remarkable that JMU has grown so quickly and comprehensively while maintaining a very high reputation in the Commonwealth, in other states and in more than 60 foreign countries.

Thoughts about the data provided in this Research Note are welcome and can be sent to OIR.