

ISSUES



1.0 ISSUES

- The impact of the national recession and ensuing state revenue declines seems to have hit Virginia's public higher education institutions harder than our counterparts in the other southern states. At an average of 16 percent, Virginia had by far the largest operating budget cuts in 2002-03 among the eleven states in the region. No other southern state had average cuts above 10 percent and at least three states had no cuts.
- JMU continues to lag behind the average of other Virginia comprehensive institutions in appropriations per student. Our general fund appropriation is \$529 per in-state student per year less than the state average for comprehensive colleges and universities — a worsening from being \$438 less than the average last year. In order for JMU to be funded at the average, our general fund appropriation would need to be increased by \$5.6 million.
- JMU now ranks fifth among Virginia comprehensive colleges and universities in total per student E&G appropriation — general fund, tuition and E&G fees. The university's 2001-02 E&G appropriation is \$775 per FTES below the state average for comprehensive institutions. JMU would require an additional \$11.8 million in total E&G funds to reach the average.
- Compared to its national peer group (public institutions only), JMU ranks last in total E&G funding per FTE student. JMU would need an additional \$2,110 per student — or \$30.3 million for the institution — to reach the peer group median.
- The university continues to be a financially effective institution. On the most commonly used indicator of financial effectiveness (percent of operating expenditures devoted to instruction and academic support), JMU ranks number four among its peer group and the highest among the state's comprehensive institutions. JMU also spends less on administration per student than any other Virginia public college or university and is the fourth lowest of 20 institutions reporting comparable data in its national peer group on percent of E&G budget expended on institutional support. These data indicate that JMU focuses its financial resources on its primary mission of instruction.
- Virginia remains — in spite of its absolute dollar increase in general fund support to higher education for 1995-96 to 2001-02 — a high tuition and fee state. The Commonwealth ranks twelfth highest out of 50 states and the fourth highest in the southern region for in-state undergraduates. Virginia also remains low in general fund support for higher education. Regionally, the Commonwealth ranks 11th out of 15 southern states on this important indicator.
- An education at a state public college or university became slightly less affordable for the average Virginian. The average cost of a year's higher education at a public college or university rose from 33.2 percent of per capita disposable income in 2001-02 to 34.3 percent in 2002-03. Prior to this increase, the percentage had declined in every year since its high in 1994-95 of 39.8%.