

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

**Factors Associated With Non-Returning JMU
Undergraduate Students
August 2006**



Factors Associated With Non-Returning JMU Undergraduate Students

Introduction

Why do some students remain at JMU and others decide to leave? Although JMU has exceptional retention and graduation rates (among the highest in the country for a comprehensive institution), 20 percent of first-time students do not graduate within six years. The factors associated with non-returning students have intrigued the staff in the Office of Institutional Research in the last few years, but until recently sufficient quantitative and qualitative data have not existed to investigate these factors. Now that additional data to explore more thoroughly these factors exist, a study has been undertaken to determine what can be learned about students who leave JMU prior to graduation. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to learn more about students who leave JMU so as to identify variables within the control of JMU that could be changed to facilitate these students remaining at JMU.

Primary Research Questions

1. How do all non-returning students differ from those who return?
2. How do in-state non-returning students who transfer to another Virginia university or college differ from in-state students who do not return?

Methodology

In this study, the term “non-returning” refers to all students who entered JMU as first-year students in fall 03, but left JMU before fall 05. Within the term “non-returning” are those students who truly did drop out of college as well as those who transferred to other institutions. The Office of Institutional Research (OIR) is now able to track students, through the assistance of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), that transferred to other Virginia institutions, but not to out-of-state schools. Beginning with fall 2003 new students OIR has been able to link student responses on the First-Year Student Survey to student demographic, academic performance, retention, and transfer data. These data provide a rich source of information for addressing complex issues such as student retention.

There are four categories of students in this study: returning; all non-returning (including in-state and out-of-state residence); non-returning, but transferred to another Virginia higher education institution; and non-returning Virginia resident, but current enrollment status unknown. The all non-returning group includes students from in- and out-of-state who transferred to a Virginia university or college and out-of-state students whose current location is unknown. We derived data from several sources: JMU PeopleSoft System, Institutional Research databases, and University Planning and Analysis first-year survey results.

Data Analyses: Testing For Differences Between Groups

OIR conducted two types of statistical analyses to determine significant differences between groups. For data on an interval-level scale, we compared group means using t-

test procedures. When we encountered non-interval level data we conducted chi-square analyses. As there were multiple group comparisons, we adjusted the p (probability) value of .05 for a family-wise error rate. A p value of .05 means that the differences found are likely to occur only 5 times out of 100. Essentially this means that the p level (.05) was divided by the number of comparisons. For example, if there were two (2) comparisons, the new critical p value would be .025. To find statistical significance the p value must be $\leq .025$, instead of .05. When there were more comparisons, we adjusted the p value accordingly.

More importantly, we examined the effect size differences for statistically significant findings. Effect size indicates the “practical significance” of the differences between groups. Whenever you have a large sample, the odds of finding statistical significance are greatly increased just by virtue of the sample size. Practical significance, on the other hand, tells us the meaningfulness of statistical significance, regardless of sample size.

Cohen’s d is the difference between the means of two groups divided by the pooled standard deviation of the two groups. We converted both chi-square values and means to d effect sizes. In general, Cohen considers an effect size d of .2 as small, .5 as moderate, and .8 as large. For example, a d of .25 indicates that one-quarter standard deviation separates the two means. Cohen has noted that many effect sizes in personality, social, and clinical-psychological research are likely to be small, so in the context of the First-Year Student Survey, effect sizes of .2 would be more meaningful given that this is an attitudinal scale. We also converted all d -effect sizes to r -effect sizes to report the degree of association between variables.

Interpretation of findings

In this report we provided only statistically significant findings. The reader is encouraged to interpret the meaningfulness of significant findings by looking at the effect size, as the reported effect size is a better indicator of “true” significance when there is statistical significance. We have also provided the chart below to determine what constitutes a meaningful effect size; that is, what difference between groups are worth noting.

	Small	Medium	Large
Effect size d	0.2	0.5	0.8
Effect size correlation r	0.1	0.2	0.4

Results

The results are separated into analyses of differences between the demographics (gender, ethnicity, etc.) of returning and non-returning students and responses to questions on the First-Year Student Survey.

Demographics

In this study there were 3,388 total students, 2,186 (65 percent) with in-state residency and 1,202 (35 percent) with out-of state residency status. Only students who entered JMU as first-time freshmen were considered in this study. In the following table are the distributions of enrollment status by residency status. The distribution of non-returning

students by residency is the same as returning students. In other words, neither in-state nor out-of-state students left at a higher rate.

Enrollment Status	Residency Status	Frequency	Percent
Non-returning	In-state	316	65
	Out-of-state	173	35
	Total	489	100
Non-returning, transferred to a Virginia four-year institution	In-state	98	68
	Out-of-state	2	1
	Total	145	100
Returned to JMU	In-state	1,870	65
	Out-of-state	1,029	35
	Total	2,899	100
Total		3,388	100

Between fall 03 and fall 05 there were 489 students (14 percent) who were first-year students in fall 03, but did not return to JMU. Historical studies by OIR have shown that 80 percent of new students typically graduate within six years. One hundred forty-five students (30 percent) transferred to another Virginia institution and 143 of these students were of in-state residency status. A higher percentage of non-white students are leaving JMU than white students.

Enrollment Status	Head-count	Percent of total	Gender (Percent)		Race* (Percent)	
			Male	Female	White	Non-White
VA non-returning transfers	145	4%	31%	69%	83%	17%
VA non-returning	173	5%	40%	60%	84%	16%
Non-VA non-returning	171	5%	36%	64%	93%	7%
All non-returning	489	14%	36%	64%	87%	13%
Returning	2,899	86%	36%	64%	91%	9%
Total	3,388	100%	36%	64%	90%	10%
*Not all students provided race information.						

Cumulative GPA

Overall, all non-returning students tend to have a significantly lower GPA than returning students. Twenty-six percent of non-returning students had a GPA ≤ 2.000 or no GPA as compared with six percent of returning students. On the other hand, 38 percent of non-returning students had a GPA between 4.00 and 3.000. The effect size $d = -.49$ between non-returning and returning students, a medium effect, is equivalent to a $\frac{1}{2}$ standard deviation difference between groups. Fifteen (15) students did not have a GPA because they left the university before the end of their first semester.

There is no significant difference in GPA between in-state non-returning and transfer students. However, in-state students who transferred to a four-year Virginia institution have higher GPAs than in-state students who transferred to a two-year Virginia institution ($d = 1.20$, large effect). This differential between the transfer institution type (four-year vs. two-year) may imply two types of reasons for leaving JMU. Students who transferred to another Virginia four-year institution may have wanted a different four-year experience or used JMU as a “safety school” and then were able to get into their first-choice. Thirty-six of the transfers enrolled at the University of Virginia or the College of William and Mary, both institutions amongst the most-highly selective institutions in the country. This transfer activity is not surprising because JMU enrolls a reasonably large number of transfers annually who attended another Virginia institution in hopes of eventually enrolling at JMU.

Enrollment Status	Headcount	Mean	SD	T-test Value	d	r
All Non-Returning	477	2.595	0.86	-7.165*	-.4984	.2419
Returning	2,896	2.885	0.52			
Virginia Resident, Transferred to a Virginia Four-Year Institution	101	2.885	0.87	6.618*	1.1954	.5131
Virginia Resident, Transferred to a Virginia Two-Year Institution	44	1.801	1.00			

*Denotes significant difference at $p \leq .025$.

To which higher education institutions, if any, do non-returning students transfer after they leave JMU?

There were 318 Virginia first-year students in Fall 03 that left JMU before Fall 05. Of these 318 students, 145 (45 percent) transferred to another two- or four-year institution in Virginia. Two out-of-state students transferred to another Virginia institution. The status of the remaining 169 out-of-state students is unknown because transfer data from other states are unavailable.

Institution	Frequency	Percent
University of Virginia-Main Campus	27	18.62
Virginia Commonwealth University	24	16.55
George Mason University	11	7.59

Institution	Frequency	Percent
Northern Virginia Community College	9*	6.21
Old Dominion University	7	4.83
Blue Ridge Community College	5	3.45
J Sargeant Reynolds Community College	5	3.45
Tidewater Community College	5	3.45
University of Mary Washington	5	3.45
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University	5*	3.45
College of William and Mary	4	2.76
Longwood University	4	2.76
Christopher Newport University	3	2.07
Piedmont Virginia Community College	3	2.07
Thomas Nelson Community College	3	2.07
Virginia Western Community College	3	2.07
Bridgewater College	2	1.38
Danville Community College	2	1.38
Germanna Community College	2	1.38
Patrick Henry Community College	2	1.38
Roanoke College	2	1.38
Shenandoah University	2	1.38
Bluefield College	1	0.69
Central Virginia Community College	1	0.69
Eastern Mennonite University	1	0.69
Eastern Shore Community College	1	0.69
Hollins University	1	0.69
John Tyler Community College	1	0.69
Lord Fairfax Community College	1	0.69
Paul D Camp Community College	1	0.69
Randolph-Macon College	1	0.69
Virginia Wesleyan College (private)	1	0.69
Total	145	100.00
*One student not of in-state residency status.		

Gender

Do men or women leave JMU at different rates? The table below shows that there were no significant differences between retention based on gender either for in-state or our-of-state students.

	All Students		In-state only		Total
	All Non-returning	Returning	Non-returning	Non-returning, but transferred	
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Male	36	36	40	31	36
Female	64	64	60	69	64
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Ethnicity

Are there retention patterns associated with student ethnicity? There was a significant difference between retention status and ethnicity. Non-white students are leaving JMU at a greater rate than they are returning although the effect sizes are small ($d = .09$). There were no significant differences in ethnicity return rates for in-state students.

	All Non-returning		All Returning		Total	
	Headcount	Percent	Headcount	Percent	Headcount	Percent
Non-white	61	12%	262	9%	323	10%
White	428	88%	2,529	91%	2,957	90%
	489		2,791		3,280	
Race unknown					107	
All students					3,387	
Chi-square = 6.209, $d = .0874$, $r = .0437$, significant difference at $p \leq .025$						

New institutions for non-white transfers from JMU

Non-white students who transferred ended up at either four-year (16) or two-year institutions (7). It is interesting to note that seven transferred to the University of Virginia.

Institution	Frequency	Percent
University of Virginia-Main Campus	7	30.4
George Mason University	6	26.1
Blue Ridge Community College	3	13.0
Northern Virginia Community College	2	8.7
Bridgewater College	1	4.3
Danville Community College	1	4.3
Eastern Mennonite University	1	4.3
J Sargeant Reynolds Community College	1	4.3
Virginia Commonwealth University	1	4.3
Total	23	100

In-state vs. out-of-state

The percentage of out-of-state students that did not return was the same as the percentage that continued at JMU.

	All Students	
	All Non-returning	Returning
	Percent	Percent
Out-of-state	35	35
In-state	65	65
Total	100	100
Chi-square = .002, NS		

First-Year Survey Questions

All first-year students are asked to participate in the First-Year Survey. Traditionally, more than 95 percent complete the survey. There are four forms of the survey, and given the large number of questions across forms, students are randomly assigned to a form to ensure there are adequate numbers of responses per form. For students entering JMU in fall 2003, the numbers of students that completed each form are as follows: Form A (767), Form B (740), Form C (776), and Form D (751). The four forms have a set of common questions, the results of which are presented first.

Common Questions

Was JMU their first choice?

Students were asked if JMU was their first or second choice. Clearly, JMU was less likely the first choice for all non-returnees, but the effect size is small ($d = .11$).

	All Students		In-state only		
	All Non- returning	Returning	Non- Returning	Non-returning, but transferred	Total
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
First choice	65	72	60	64	71
Second choice or lower	35	28	40	36	29
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Comparisons	<i>Chi-square</i>	<i>Headcount</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>	
All non-returning	7.871	2,833	.1056	.0527	
- Returning					

College Cost Paid

Students were asked, "Of the total cost to attend JMU what percentage will you and your family pay directly? Exclude from your estimate funds obtained from loans, scholarships, or grants?" There were no significant differences between returning and non-returning students in the percentage paid of the total cost to attend JMU. For in-state students there were no significant differences between groups in the percentage paid of the total cost to attend JMU.

	All Students		In-state only		
	All Non- returning	Returning	Non- Returning	Non-returning, but transferred	Total
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
80-100%	66	68	63	60	67
79% and lower	34	32	37	40	33
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Average HS Grades

There were no significant differences between returning and non-returning students in terms of self-reported average high school grades.

	All Students			In-state only	
	All Non-returning	Returning	Non-Returning	Non-returning, but transferred	Total
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
A	49	53	44	54	52
B or C	51	47	56	46	48
Total	100	100	100	100	100

HS Rank in Graduating Class

There were no significant differences between returning and non-returning students in self-reported high school rank of their graduating class.

	All Students			In-state only	
	All Non-returning	Returning	Non-Returning	Non-returning, transferred	Total
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Top 10%	34	31	37	41	31
Top 25% to bottom 50%	66	69	63	59	69
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Combined SAT (Verbal and Quantitative)

There were no significant differences between returning and non-returning students in terms of self-reported total SAT scores.

	All Students			In-state only	
	All Non-returning	Returning	Non-Returning	Non-returning, transferred	Total
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
1200 or more	42	39	47	40	39
1199 and below	58	61	53	60	61
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Highest Academic Degree Plan to Attain

There were no significant differences between returning and non-returning students in their plan to attain an academic degree.

	All Students			In-state only	
	All Non-returning	Returning	Non-Returning	Non-returning, transferred	Total
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Bachelor's degree	22	23	22	22	23
Beyond bachelor's degree	78	77	78	78	77
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Parents' Education Level

Students were asked what is the “highest level of formal education obtained by your **Father/Mother?**” There were no significant differences between returning and non-returning students in terms of father’s or mother’s educational level. This finding was for in- and out-of-state students.

Father	All Students			In-state only	
	All Non-returning	Returning	Non-Returning	Non-returning, transferred	Total
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
No college degree	32	26	29	43	27
College degree	68	74	71	58	73
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Mother	All Students			In-state only	
	All Non-returning	Returning	Non-Returning	Non-returning, transferred	Total
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
No college degree	18	18	17	21	18
College degree	82	82	83	79	82
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Separate Survey Forms

There are four separate survey forms (A, B, C, D) of the First Year Survey. The analyses below focus on statistically significant differences between returning and non-returning students.

First-Year Survey Form A

Returning students more than all non-returning students expect to join a fraternity or sorority ($d=.18$, small effect).

	All Students			In-state only
	All Non-returning	Returning	Non-Returning	Non-returning, transferred
	Pct Agree	Pct Agree	Pct Agree	Pct Agree
Expect to join a fraternity or sorority	25	31	22	19
Comparisons	Chi-square	Headcount	d	r
All non-returning - Returning	5.998	755*	.179	.0891

First-Year Survey Form B

There were no significant differences between groups for any of the Form B survey questions.

First-Year Survey Form C

All non-returning students, more than returning students, reported greater levels of importance for the following:

- Developing a global perspective ($d=.18$, small effect).
- Developing a meaningful philosophy of life ($d=.19$, small effect).
- Promoting racial understanding ($d=.08$, small effect).
- Receiving a quality and diversified liberal arts education ($d=.19$, small effect).

Returning students, more than all non-returning students, reported greater levels of importance for:

- Being admitted as a graduate student at a prestigious university ($d=.18$, small effect).
- Attending intercollegiate athletic events ($d=.19$, small effect).

	All Students		In-state only	
	All Non- returning	Returning	Non- Returning	Non- returning, transferred
	Pct Agree	Pct Agree	Pct Agree	Pct Agree
Importance of developing a global perspective	35	25	35	25
Comparisons	Chi-Square	Headcount	d	r
All non-returning - Returning	5.791	716	.181	.090
Importance of developing a meaningful philosophy of life	43	30	42	38
Comparisons	Chi-Square	Headcount	d	r
All non-returning - Returning	6.853	696	.194	.099
Importance of being admitted as a graduate student at a prestigious university	35	65	35	24
Comparisons	Chi-Square	Headcount	d	r
All non-returning - Returning	5.218	675	.176	.088
Importance of promoting racial understanding	29	24	30	43
Comparisons	Chi-Square	Headcount	d	r
All non-returning - Returning	1.317	704	.087	.043
Importance of receiving a quality and diversified liberal arts education	48	36	44	26
Comparisons	Chi-Square	Headcount	d	r
All non-returning - Returning	5.813	678	.186	.092
Importance of attending intercollegiate athletic events	15	27	15	27
Comparisons	Chi-Square	Headcount	d	r
All non-returning - Returning	6.397	691	.193	.096
Importance of becoming an authority in my field	27	22	43	15
Comparisons	Chi-Square	Headcount	d	r
VA non-returning – VA non-returning, but transferred	7.521	76	.663	.315

First-Year Survey Form D

Returning students, more than all non-returning students, chose JMU for the following reasons:

- JMU has good extracurricular activities ($d = .23$, small effect).
- Range and availability of student services ($d = .18$, small effect).
- They are able to identify with fellow students ($d = .18$, small effect).

All non-returning students, more than returning students, plan to attend/participate in a JMU Studies Abroad program ($d = .25$, small effect).

The importance of work is greater for Virginia non-returning students than it is for Virginia non-returning transfer students ($d = .68$, medium to large effect).

	All Students		In-state only	
	All Non-returning Pct Agree	Returning Pct Agree	Non-Returning Pct Agree	Non-returning, transferred Pct Agree
Why chose JMU: JMU has good extracurricular activities	51	68	40	42
Comparisons	Chi-Square	Headcount	d	r
All non-returning - Returning	9.987*	738	.234	.116
Why chose JMU: Range and availability of student services	25	38	28	13
Comparisons	Chi-Square	Headcount	d	r
All non-returning - Returning	6.064*	733	.183	.091
Why chose JMU: I am able to identify with fellow students	36	49	40	17
Comparisons	Chi-Square	Headcount	d	r
All non-returning - Returning	5.885*	734	.180	.089
Plan to attend/participate in JMU Studies Abroad program	66	48	62	67
Comparisons	Chi-Square	Headcount	d	r
All non-returning - Returning	11.089*	735	.248	.123
Importance of work	40	47	52	21
Comparisons	Chi-Square	Headcount	d	r
VA non-returning – VA non-returning, but transferred	5.118*	49	.683	.323
*Denotes significant differences at $p \leq .025$.				

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to learn more about students who left JMU between fall 03 and fall 05 and to identify potential variables within the control of JMU that could be changed to encourage students who might leave JMU to remain. What we have learned from this study is that there are some differences between students who leave JMU and those who stay. While many of the largest effect sizes are associated with variables JMU is unlikely to have much influence over, there were statistically significant findings, although smaller effect sizes, for variables JMU could influence. A main finding of this study is that minority students are leaving at faster rates than non-minority students are leaving; the main reasons for this are currently unknown. The Office of Institutional Research will replicate this study again in Fall 06 looking at students who left JMU between Fall 04 and Fall 06.

Leaving JMU

In and out-of-state students.

A higher percentage of non-white students are leaving JMU than white students. For returning students, 91 percent are non-white and 9 percent are white. This picture changes quite a bit for non-white students who transfer; and in this case, 83 percent are non-white and 17 percent are white.

Enrollment Status	Head-count	Percent of total	Race* (Percent)	
			White	Non-White
VA non-returning transfers	145	4%	83%	17%
VA non-returning	173	5%	84%	16%
Non-VA non-returning	171	5%	93%	7%
All non-returning	489	14%	87%	13%
Returning	2899	86%	91%	9%
Total	3388	100%	90%	10%

To which higher education institutions do non-returning students transfer after they leave JMU?

There were 479 first-year students in Fall 03 that left JMU before Fall 05. Of these 479 students, 145 (30%) transferred to another school or college: 70% to a four-year institution and 30% to a two-year college. These students were almost all of in-state status (99%).

First-Year Student Survey

In the following table are all of the significant findings from this study, with effect sizes ranked in descending order.

Variables	Outcome: Enrollment status	Conclusions	Rank ordered effect sizes (<i>d</i>)
Cumulative GPA	Virginia non-returning transfers to 4-year > to 2-year institution	Non-returning transfers who went to a four-year Virginia institution have higher GPAs than non-returning transfers who went to a two-year Virginia institution.	1.20
Importance of work	Virginia non-returning > Virginia non-returning transfers	The importance of work is greater for non-returning Virginia students than it is for non-returning Virginia students who transferred.	.68
Becoming an authority in my field is greater	Virginia non-returning > Virginia non-returning transfers	Virginia non-returning students, more than Virginia non-returning transfer, reported greater levels of importance for becoming an authority in their field.	.66
Cumulative GPA	All non-returning students < Returning	All non-returning students tend to have significantly lower GPAs than returning students.	-.49
Plan to attend/participate in JMU Studies Abroad program	All non-returning > Returning	All non-returning students, more than returning students, plan to attend/participate in JMU Studies Abroad program	.25
JMU has good extracurricular activities	Returning > All non-returning	Returning students, more than all non-returning students, chose JMU because it has good extracurricular activities.	.23
Developing a global perspective	All non-returning > Returning	All non-returning students, more than returning students, reported greater levels of importance for developing a global perspective.	.19
Developing a meaningful philosophy of life	All non-returning > Returning	All non-returning students, more than returning students, reported greater levels of importance for developing a meaningful philosophy of life.	.19

Variables	Outcome: Enrollment status	Conclusions	Rank ordered effect sizes (<i>d</i>)
Receiving a quality and diversified liberal arts education	All non-returning > Returning	All non-returning students, more than returning students, reported greater levels of importance for receiving a quality and diversified liberal arts education.	.19
Attending intercollegiate athletic events	Returning students > All non-returning	Returning students, more than all non-returning students, reported greater levels of importance for attending intercollegiate athletic events.	.19
Joining fraternity or sorority	Returning students > All non-returning	Returning students, more than all non-returning students, expect to join a fraternity or sorority	.18
Being admitted as a graduate student at a prestigious university	Returning students > All non-returning	Returning students, more than all non-returning students, reported greater levels of importance for being admitted as a graduate student at a prestigious university.	.18
Range and availability of student services	Returning students > All non-returning	Returning students, more than all non-returning students, chose JMU because of the range and availability of student services.	.18
Able to identify with fellow students	Returning students > All non-returning	Returning students, more than all non-returning students, chose JMU because they are able to identify with fellow students.	.18
Was JMU their first choice?	All non-returning students < Returning	JMU was less likely the first choice for all non-returning students, as compared to returning students.	.11
Race	All non-returning students > Returning	Non-white students are leaving JMU at a greater rate than returning students.	.09
Promoting racial understanding	All non-returning students > Returning	All non-returning students, more than returning students, reported greater levels of importance for promoting racial understanding.	.08

Discussion

What do the results of this study imply? It is clear that some students leave JMU at different rates and for different reasons. In general, the decision to leave JMU is not correlated with gender, academic preparation, parents' educational background, or residence. The following thoughts are based on the data analyzed and are offered to the JMU community for their comment and consideration.

1. Non-white students leave JMU at higher rates than white students. This has been a pattern for many years. However, in recent years the graduation rates of non-white students have improved. Non-white students leave for various reasons. Some, it is clear through their transferring to the University of Virginia, either never wanted to remain at JMU or for some reason thought UVA would be a better institution for them. The number of non-white students who transferred to UVA is small, so the reasons for their leaving JMU are speculative. Other non-white students, like many other non-returning white students, leave due to academic difficulties.

Efforts to diversify the student body may lessen the desire of some non-white students to leave JMU for other four-year institutions. A companion study by OIR has demonstrated that non-white students are less likely to recommend JMU due to concerns about the lack of diversity in the student body.

2. A large proportion of students who leave JMU are having academic difficulties. Non-returning students in general have lower GPAs than returning students. The University has many support mechanisms for students who are having academic difficulties, but despite these support mechanisms, some students may simply not be ready for the academic challenges of JMU.
3. Forty-five percent of the Virginia non-returning students transferred to another Virginia institution. Forty percent of the Virginia non-returning students had GPAs between 3.000 and 4.000. Students who transfer to other Virginia four-year institutions, in general, have average GPAs equivalent to students who remained at JMU. Sixty-eight percent of the Virginia students who transferred enrolled at another four-year institution. Thirty-one of the transfers enrolled at either the University of Virginia or the College of William and Mary, two of the most-selective public institutions in the country. Most of these transfers did not list JMU as their first-choice institution. It is unlikely that JMU will be able to retain students whose desire, from the beginning of the JMU experience, was to transfer to another institution.
4. It may be that some non-returning students did not desire to connect with other JMU students from the very beginning of their first year. This lessened desire for connections may be associated with their leaving JMU because they were more likely to indicate that: joining a fraternity or sorority; the range and availability of student services; and being able to identify with fellow students were less important to them than for students who remained.

Questions about this report can be directed to the JMU Office of Institutional Research at 568-6830 or via email.

