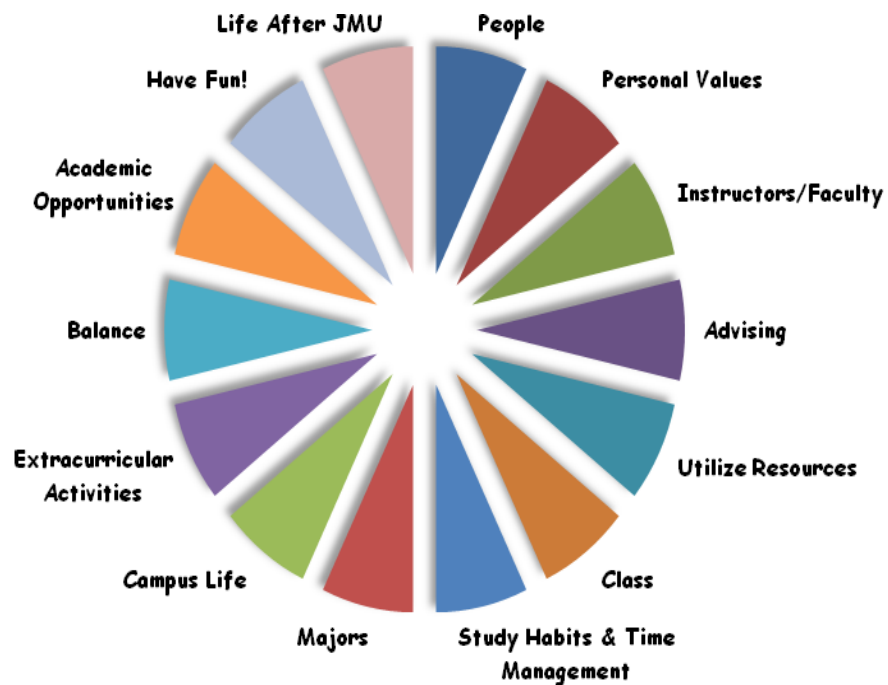


# THIS IS NOT YOUR MOTHER TALKING!

## ADVICE TO NEW JMU FRESHMEN FROM THE GRADUATING CLASS OF 2010



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## INTRODUCTION

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to James Madison University! You are about to embark on an exciting and challenging new phase in your life.

You have lots of questions about JMU and how you can make the most of your years at the University. You probably have been asking your friends about college life and JMU. More than likely, your parents have provided lots of advice for you also.

We'd like to have the May 2010 JMU graduating class provide you their advice! We recently asked these graduates to provide their responses to the following question:

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"Looking back on your academic career at JMU, what is one piece of advice you would give to incoming freshmen that you wished you had received?"

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We received literally hundreds of comments from these graduates and would like to share them with you (with punctuation errors and all). We could not share all of them, but have provided the best in this document.

Take a few minutes to read their advice. We're sure you'll find something useful.

Again, best wishes in your JMU career!

JMU Office of Institutional Research

<http://www.jmu.edu/instresrch>

## PEOPLE

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**JMU has a variety of students with diverse backgrounds, interests, and goals. The friendships and contacts you make during your college years can last you a lifetime. Having the right group of friends and mentors can make your transition from high school to college less stressful and more enjoyable.**

“Make as many friends as you possibly can your first year! Your second year is much harder to branch out because everyone has their friends from the year before.”

“Find your niche and dive in.”

“Try to connect to fellow classmates as soon as possible. Peers can be a great way to develop friendships, study partners and people you can learn from.”

“To get involved and network as much as possible, whether that may be in relations with your peers or even faculty members on campus.”

“Make friends in your classes. Its easy when you're a freshmen to cling to your dorm and get comfortable with the friends you make there. But at JMU there are tons of interesting people everywhere you turn. MEeting people in classes is the next step. It becomes helpful when you have to miss class, question assignments etc. They also share something in common with you: you're both in the same class and probably have similar interests. aking friends in all different places gives your more eclectic friends and becomes a gateway to get involved in other things.”

“There are people like you, with similar interests at JMU...sometimes you just had to look harder than others to find them.”

“room with someone you do not know and do not only hang out with your roommate. i found my best friends on my hall and they led me to some other good friends.”

“Do not be afraid to try new things and meet new people.”

“Make the most of your time at school. It is so precious and such a wonderful time of your life. Make new friends, meet as many people as you can, join clubs, and do things. Experience the surrounding area, too. The Shenandoah Valley is beautiful.”

“Don't worry about a thing while you're at JMU. These are the best years of your life. Meet as many people as you can, and make connections, because the friends here will last a lifetime. Treasure every day, and listen to your professors, they give advice ike no others. They are truly role models to all of us.”

## PERSONAL VALUES

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**It's easy to become influenced by friends, parents, and instructors, but the life decisions you make should reflect your own personal values. There is nothing wrong with seeking advice or approval from others, but remember it is YOUR life and YOUR future.**

“This is when you will discover who you really are and what you want out of life. Don't follow the crowd - do what's best for you.”

“Your education starts the moment you arrive at JMU for the very first time, and not solely in the classroom on the first day of classes. Make the most of each and every experience. Surround yourself with individuals who mean something to you, and pursue the opportunities you desire... make your own path.”

“Do not be afraid to try new experiences--even if they are outside your area of comfort or experience.”

“Never do anything half-heartedly. If you don't like the career path you've decided to take, don't suffer for the sake of money or the pride of your parents. It's your life to live. Don't live it for anyone else.”

“You have to follow your heart. Dare to be different, and dare to get involved with things that you enjoy. Never think you aren't good enough to join a particular organization, and don't be afraid to take leadership. I wish I had believed in myself and taken more leadership positions, as well as challenge myself to join more organizations that were meaningful to ME, and not to my resume.”

“It's hard to be away from your friends and your family - all of the familiarities of home - but if you give JMU a chance, and you give yourself a chance, you will do great things. Take each lecture, homework assignment, and test as a chance to learn something about life - and allow those around you to change how you see things, not through pressure, but through experiences that you now have.”

“I would advise incoming freshmen to take charge of their educations and create their own paths.”

“Don't compare yourself to anyone else. You cannot concern yourself with the person next to you, and their study habits, their relationships, and their issues. Put your heart into everything you do.”

“Choose an area of study that you LOVE, not just one that ‘makes sense’.”

“Don't get overwhelmed by what seems like impossible exams, projects, schedules, etc. Take it a day at a time. You may have four years ahead of you and thousands of tests and papers but today you only have one exam focus on that. Then tomorrow think about what you have to do then. Take it one thing at a time, one step at a time. You will make it even when it seems impossible to. Try to remember from the beginning that college is so much more than classes and grades and academics. Don't let these things take over your life so that you miss out on the incredible relationships, experiences, and lessons that are there as well. Life is so much more than school and if you lose sight of that you will miss out on so many blessings and challenges and people that are so much more important than any grade or class or exam.”

## INSTRUCTORS/FACULTY

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**Instructors and faculty members are there to help you succeed, so it is important to utilize your time with them. Whether it be help with an assignment, planning your academic schedule, and/or planning for your future after JMU, there is always someone willing to help.**

“What you learn outside the classroom is abundantly more important than what you learn in it -- pursuing mentorship with a qualified and willing faculty member will get you much further than classroom attendance, course work, or grades.”

“Take the time to visit professors in their office hours-they will remember your name, you will create a relationship, and they will be more eager to help when you need it.”

“Utilize your professors to the fullest degree. They are absolutely full of real-life knowledge outside of the world of academics.”

“The faculty truly are there to help and for the most part are very understanding”

“Take the time to get to know each of your professors. Getting to know the professors on a personal basis makes it easier to ask questions if you need clarification, but it also can provide you with additional sources of academic information (in addition to your advisor that is) as well as provide you with people who can write academic references that you will need if you decide to continue with graduate school.”

“GO TO OFFICE HOURS! It helps soooooo much. Most JMU professors are helpful when you go to them and I'm sure it boosts your grade in the end. And it's just nice to have a relationship with your professor. I didn't do this freshman year and I wish I had.”

“Take advantage of all that JMU has to offer. Go after the resources that are available and meet with professors. Some of the best equipment and grants are at JMU if you go after it. I made those contacts and am very glad I did.”

“GET TO KNOW YOUR PROFESSORS!!! JMU is special in that professors don't spend all their time out in the field doing research, leaving their class to a Graduate Assistant. The vast majority of JMU professors love TEACHING just as much as they love researching their own interests! They are WILLING and HOPEFUL that you will come to them with questions, opinions...anything! Professors have so much to teach us--much of it is unrelated to academics, too!--so get to know them as much as possible. You will learn more than you think!”

“Don't be scared to talk to your professors, they're not that scary!”

“Do not pay attention to websites like ‘ratemyprofessor.com’ because some of the ones voted the worst were actually some of my best, most enlightened teachers.”

## ADVISING

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**It is important to find an adviser who understands and supports your academic and career goals in order to establish an adequate course schedule. You may have to take extra time to find an adviser who is suitable for you, but having a dedicated mentor will go a long way. However, it is also important to remember that while your adviser is there to guide you along the way, it is ultimately your responsibility to keep track of your academic obligations.**

“Talk to your adviser! They can be an invaluable tool and save you unnecessary classes and frustration. If you are a familiar face to them, they are a lot more willing to help you out when it comes time for registration or when you have questions about graduation, exit tests, etc.”

“Talk to your adviser and plan out classes you want to take for all four years.”

“If your initial adviser isn't giving you what you need, go to the head of the department and find another one.”

“Plan ahead, make sure to get good advising and make a road map of the classes you are going to take so that you can graduate on time.”

“Take advantage of your advisors. They are very helpful and I would not have graduated if it weren't for the help and advice of my advisor. Also, get involved in campus activities.”

“Don't be afraid to develop close relationships with your professors and advisors, because I don't know where I would be without them.”

“Make sure your advisor knows what they're doing.”

“Go to the Career and Academic Planning center and make sure you get all of the information you need about registering and taking classes; making sure you have all of the requirements you need to graduate and understanding how prerequisites work will be incredibly helpful in making the most of your time at JMU and making sure you're taking the courses you want and need to take.”

“Find somebody who can act as your mentor, either a professor or advisor or faculty member, that can help you out when you are having problems with classes or school in general.”

“Don't expect your advisor to tell you everything--make the initiative to inform yourself about deadlines and graduation requirements.”

## UTILIZE RESOURCES

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**It is easy to get lost in the crowd of students at a large university like JMU. Being a college student comes with more personal responsibility, so it is important to ask questions and be informed of your academic expectations. JMU alumnae offer their words of encouragement:**

“Never be afraid to ask questions/use ALL of your resources.”

“You have to seek out help. You may not want to, or try to figure things out on your own, but that's what I did and (academically) it would have helped a bit more to take advantage of office hours/career help.”

“Take advantage of all of the resources the university offers; from the periodical section of the library to the resume counseling in Wilson. These things don't exist for free in the world outside of academia.”

“Its advice I did receive but that I should have listened to more....NEVER be afraid of asking questions. Once I started doing that, things went much smoother.”

“Students should utilize our academic & career planning services. the people there help you out a lot in terms of finding a job (i.e. resume, interview, career goals).”

“not that I didn't hear it, but I wish I had appreciated more -- take full advantage of everything given to you and take every opportunity.”

“Go to the Career and Academic Planning center and make sure you get all of the information you need about registering and taking classes; making sure you have all of the requirements you need to graduate and understanding how prerequisites work will be incredibly helpful in making the most of your time at JMU and making sure you're taking the courses you want and need to take.”

“College is nothing like high school. If you are struggling with a class...ASK FOR HELP. Go to the help center in Wilson Hall if need be.”

“Ask for help immediately when you are confused, don't understand the assignment, or think you might be failing a class (you might not be!). Just about all the professors I had were willing to work with me or guide me to a resource which could help.”

“Be sure to truly utilize all the resources JMU has to offer... whether its the Career Center, tutoring, semesters abroad, or extra curricular activities, they all enhance the experience.”

## CAMPUS LIFE

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**With so many activities at JMU to choose from, where do you begin? Alumnae offer advice when it comes to getting involved with campus activities and exploring the surrounding area:**

“Though classes are tough and grades are important, know that experiencing new things and enjoying life while in college are just as important. Take advantage of all of the wonderful activities and programs offered throughout campus and never take for granted the JMU family and atmosphere!”

“go to every dining hall once, they are all amazing!”

“Live on campus for two years. Traffic is terrible and it is worth staying on campus for one more year in order to walk to class and be closer to campus activities.”

“Get involved with the JMU campus organizations and the local community. Do not be afraid to immerse yourself, it changed my whole perspective on my college career's purpose afterwards.”

“I would encourage them to get involved in some of the great organizations JMU has to offer. I think getting involved early is the best way for people to find their niche.”

“Take advantage of every single opportunity. Do not leave JMU without being part of organizations, clubs, intramural teams, etc. It truly helps develop a well-rounded individual who will not only feel accomplished at the end of the JMU journey, but will have developed more knowledge of where to begin their career, a larger network, and have great success in finding their ideal job!”

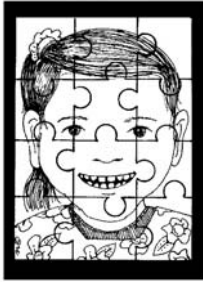
“join clubs, get involved, LEARN HARRISONBURG, go explore, don't stay in the JMU bubble. take academics seriously, but it's not the ONLY part of JMU. Make friends....and go to DHALL on Thursdays!”

“I would encourage incoming freshman to be open to change. College is an incredible opportunity to learn and grow and I would encourage them to take advantage of their JMU experiences.”

“GET INVOLVED. You are surrounded by brilliant people who want to do things in your field of interest outside of just what is done in class. Reach out and find a professor with a cool opportunity for research or even suggest something to a professor that you would like to work on.”

## EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

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**College isn't just about going to class and studying hard. Extracurricular activities are there to help you build new friendships, become involved in the JMU community, and become a well-rounded student. Alumnae share their advice on how to become a part of a club and/or organization.**

“Try to get more involved, join clubs, do intramural sports, just embrace all that JMU has to offer.”

“JOIN SOMETHING! Getting involved at JMU was the best decision I ever made, and both working on campus and being involved in an organization allowed me to meet a huge circle of people I otherwise would have missed.”

“If you do not get involved in your first year than you are less likely to ever get involved.”

“Take advantage of every single opportunity. Do not leave JMU without being part of organizations, clubs, intramural teams, etc. It truly helps develop a well-rounded individual who will not only feel accomplished at the end of the JMU journey, but will have developed more knowledge of where to begin their career, a larger network, and have great success in finding their ideal job!”

“GET INVOLVED!!! Get the most out of being in college. Of course focus on your studies, but really take the opportunity to get to know people and get involved in a club or group on campus.”

“Take advantage of every minute you have at this wonderful institute of higher learning. Get involved by joining clubs, striving your hardest in academics and enjoying all of the scholarly activities JMU has to offer.”

“Get involved with at least one extracurricular activity, you meet many different people that way.”

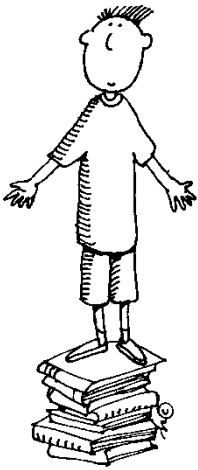
“Enjoy all your classes, friends, and time at JMU because these will be some of the best years of your life.”

“don't ever hole yourself up in your room, get out there and live.”

“I would encourage them to get involved in some of the great organizations JMU has to offer. I think getting involved early is the best way for people to find their niche.”

## BALANCE

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**Between classes, work, and planning for your future, life can appear to be a balancing act. However, it's okay to put aside time for activities that are enjoyable and relaxing. How do you juggle everything in such a tight schedule? It's all about prioritizing and keeping a good balance.**

"You can still have a great social life while still keeping your grades up. Don't spend all your free time studying."

"The work is hard, but if you budget your time right you can get everything done and succeed, even when you are thrown several curve balls!"

"Use the resources on campus and work hard. Balance your school work with your social life, but remember that the reason you go to college is to get an education, so that should always be your first goal."

"Remember to have some type of balance among all the things that can you do/can happen during the Freshman year. Remember to have those people in your corner that are supporting you in all that you do, whether it be family or close friends. It is important to find the balance between school work, a social life, and personal health and a spiritual/religious connection."

"Don't over commit yourself. JMU has so many options and things to do that it's easy to get involved in too many things. Don't spread yourself too thin."

"Though classes are tough and grades are important, know that experiencing new things and enjoying life while in college are just as important. Take advantage of all of the wonderful activities and programs offered throughout campus and never take for granted the JMU family and atmosphere!"

"I'm glad I did well in school I just wish someone would have told me to relax. have fun, work hard, be responsible but don't forget to take plenty of pictures of the adventures and experiences you will encounter."

"Find a balance between studying and having fun. Make memories, because you're going to forget the tests and projects a week after they're due."

"Make sure you prioritize and have a good balance between friends, work, academics, and extracurricular activities. Don't let yourself fall behind because you will spend the rest of your time at college making up for it."

"I advise that students take their studies seriously and make it their top priority while enrolled. Iso, keeping a good balance of exercise, social interaction, and community involvement are also very important to having a fulfilling college experience."

## ACADEMIC OPPORTUNITIES

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**In addition to getting good grades and becoming involved in extracurricular activities, a great way to build your resume` is to take advantage of academic opportunities. Internships, research projects, and even studying abroad will provide invaluable experience that can be used beyond your years at JMU.**

“Do the alternative spring break program! And study abroad if you can.”

“Look into the study abroad and internship programs freshmen year so that you will have a plan or at least be informed about your options before you begin your career at JMU and find that such programs would best benefit your degree.”

“Get involved early with the many activities that are available. There are a lot of research and extra project work that is available.”

“Study abroad no matter what. During the school year, during the summer, just make it happen!”

“Definitely get an internship. I realize everyone talks about it but very few actually get one. GET ONE!”

“Investigate possible career opportunities BEFORE your senior year. Figure out what skills are required to obtain a job in the field you are interested in, then seek out opportunities that will provide you with relevant experience and ways to develop the skills necessary for a position in that field. Internships and other service opportunities that provide relevant experience are vital to your marketability as a potential employee.”

“Treat your internship job search as you would your entry level job search. It is just as, if not more, competitive.”

“Internships... do as many as you can as early as you can. Grades are important, but not as important as work experience. If you can have an internship while taking classes and keep your GPA above a 3.0 that looks better than coming out of school with a 4.0 and no real work experience.”

“Grades are not everything, it's experiences you have and connections you make that solidify your overall education.”

“Graduate with as many skills and academic credentials as possible. You're paying a lot for your education, get a lot out of it.”

## HAVE FUN!

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**Time management also includes setting aside the time to have fun. It is essential to have the ability to do well academically, while maintaining a healthy social life. Taking the time to relax is part of being a successful college student.**

“I made the mistake of focusing too much on my academics and I paid the price of too little friends and sparse memories. I'm glad I did well in school I just wish someone would have told me to relax. have fun, work hard, be responsible but don't forget to take plenty of pictures of the adventures and experiences you will encounter.”

“Take advantage of your surroundings. Take time to relax and have fun in college. Don't stress out about academics 24/7!”

“Sure, do your homework and do well in your classes. But don't forget to go out and have fun. In 20 years you won't remember the classes you took and the grades you received in them.. you will remember the experiences, parties, and fun, and the friends you enjoyed them with.”

“College is tough and lots of work, but you have to make sure you have fun too. These are some of the best days you will ever have, so take advantage of being with your friends and doing fun things together! Studying is important and doing your best is even more important, but don't spend all your time in your dorm doing homework. Take little trips, like going snow tubing, and explore JMU because there are so many things going on around you!”

“Breathe, relax, and understand the amazing opportunity that has been placed in front of you.”

“As much as good grades are important, you need to put just as much time in developing a solid group of friends around you. Making meaningful relationships work in college is definitely something that will outlast your grade point average. Invest in yourself and the people around you in a constructive way.”

“Have fun at JMU, but take your education seriously. Know that you are given a unique opportunity to study at a great school and try to fully utilize it.”

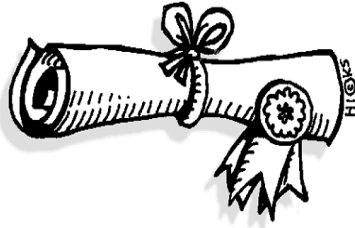
“Take advantage of every moment. It goes by faster than you can imagine.”

“Time Management. But also, it's not possible to do everything. Social experiences and learning outside of your major can be just as important to your college education- so get involved with groups or seminars that interest you.”

“Treat your homework like a job: Do it, then you can play/relax.”

## LIFE AFTER JMU

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**Life after JMU may appear to be far into the future when you're beginning your college career. However, those years are going to go faster than you think, so consider some of the comments below to help you prepare for graduation and the many years that follow.**

"Your future has already begun...better start planning now."

"Your major should always contain some level of practicality. You can always pursue what you love, but expect to face the facts when you graduate that you are an adult and your decisions greatly affect the direction of your life."

"Success in group work projects in college is a must to your support your future success with co workers/employers."

"Pick a major that is very easily accessible to employers. If an employer sees a major they don't recognize, rather than be interested and ask what it is, they will often just discard it and find what they do know. Don't listen solely to faculty of a certain department when they boast about their major and the success of graduates finding employment."

"Keep in touch with professors and class members."

"Never take one moment for granted. Take advantage of EVERY opportunity that comes your way. The days turn into weeks and weeks quickly into semesters, and before you know it graduation day is before you. So soak it all up because one day you must spread your wings and fly beyond the quad!"

"When the economy sucks, so does employment. Grades matter in times of bad economy, but skills and determination matter when the economy is good."

"make sure you heavily weight what it is you want to do for a living oppose to putting the weight on what you think will make you more money."

"Investigate possible career opportunities BEFORE your senior year. Figure out what skills are required to obtain a job in the field you are interested in, then seek out opportunities that will provide you with relevant experience and ways to develop the skills necessary for a position in that field. Internships and other service opportunities that provide relevant experience are vital to your marketability as a potential employee."

"Enjoy the time that you have because four years will never go by faster."