

THE MADISON COMMISSION

Report to the President

Submitted

April 19, 2006

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THE MADISON COMMISSION

Report to the President

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Madison Commission was to provide input to the President to be considered in university planning endeavors for the years 2006-2012. The Commission charge was, within the context of societal and higher education trends and issues:

- Review the mission, vision and values to determine whether or not these are still appropriate as our guides, or if there are modifications that should be considered.
- Examine the Higher Education Restructuring Act Six-Year Plan and provide input regarding gaps and/or other issues that should be considered.
- Review the University Defining Characteristics to ensure their relevancy for the next six years. Either validate or provide modification suggestions that should be considered.

Sixty-five individuals, representing the four divisions of the university, served on the Commission. The Commission was organized into four subcommittees: Academic Life, Infrastructure/Resources, Staff Life and Student Life. The chair of each subcommittee also served as a member of the Commission Steering Committee which had the responsibility of producing this Report to the President.

Steering Committee

Reid Linn, Chair (College of Graduate and Outreach Programs)
Philip DuBose, Infrastructure/Resources (College of Business)
Ronald Kander, Academic Life (College of Integrated Science & Technology)
Jeanne Martino-McAllister, Student Life (College of Integrated Science & Technology)
Julie Wallace Carr, Staff Life (University Recreation Center)
Wesli Spenser, SGA Student Body President
Kent Zimmerman, Faculty Senate Speaker (College of Business)
Al Menard, Planning Liaison (University Planning & Analysis)

Organization of the Report

The Report to the President is a synthesis of the four separate subcommittee reports. Each subcommittee was given a template with a series of four probes:

- Please list any additional information, if any, that the committee reviewed to complete the environmental scan.
- Did the committee identify from the environmental scan any issues that JMU should take into consideration in planning through 2012? Please be specific regarding issues and their relevance to JMU.
- After examining the Higher Education Restructuring Act Six-Year Plan, please list any additional areas within the charge of your subcommittee that should be considered in planning through 2012. Please be specific regarding issues and their relevance to JMU.
- After reviewing the University Defining Characteristics, their visions and goals and the University Strategic Plan, please list additional areas that should be considered. Please be specific regarding issues and their relevance to JMU.

Additionally, each subcommittee was charged with further narrowing their analysis of the Defining Characteristics to a pre-selected list of characteristics and addressing specific areas/issues regarding the function of the university taken from the following list.

Academic Offerings	Financial Module
Articulation Agreements	Infrastructure
Access and Enrollment	K-12
Assessment and Quality	Recruitment and Retention
Defining Characteristics	Staff Development
Economic Development	Student Life
Faculty Development	Student Success

The Steering Committee also worked from a template which included the following probes:

- Are the current university mission, vision, and values appropriate as our guides through 2012? If not, what modifications do you believe should be considered?
- After reviewing the responses of the subcommittees regarding their environmental scans, please list your recommendations for additional areas that the university should address for planning through 2012.

- After reviewing the responses of the subcommittees regarding the Higher Education Six–Year Plan, please list your recommendations for additional areas that the university should address for planning through 2012.
- After reviewing the responses of the subcommittees regarding the university Defining Characteristics, please list your recommendations for additional areas that the university should address for planning through 2012.

The Report is therefore written, generally corresponding to the probes as noted above synthesizing the issues and recommendations gleaned from the work of the subcommittees. Each subcommittee report is included as an appendix so as to chronicle the specific issues and recommendations which surfaced among the different groups of Commission members charged with scanning the future from different perspectives. It should be noted that each subcommittee report is produced using line numbering to facilitate quick referencing among multiple reviewers of the total report. For the subcommittee reports, see Appendix A *Academic Life*, Appendix B *Student Life*, Appendix C *Staff Life* and Appendix D *Infrastructure/Resources*.

THE REPORT

1. **Are the current university mission, vision, and values appropriate as our guides through 2012? If not, what modifications do you believe should be considered?**

The Madison Commission Steering Committee undertook a review of the current Mission Statement, Vision Statement and list of institutional Values. After significant discussion, the committee determined that a major revision was needed for the university vision statement; the Steering Committee affirmed the current mission statement and list of values as appropriate and therefore engaged in minor modifications of these statements. An initial report was submitted to the President regarding the analysis of mission, vision and values on January 6, 2006. What follows in this section is the essence of that report with the addition of a note regarding feedback from members of the various subcommittees given subsequent to the submission of the initial report.

CURRENT STATEMENTS

Values

Student-centered, Excellence, Integrity, Mutual Respect, Service to Others

Mission Statement

We are committed to preparing students to become educated and enlightened citizens who will lead productive and meaningful lives.

Vision

To be the new American university, a hybrid of the best qualities of research and liberal arts institutions.

RECOMMENDED REVISED STATEMENTS

Following much discussion about the mission and vision statements and the list of values, the Steering Committee revised each of the statements and the list of values so as to create three concise statements that had a natural flow and logical sequence beginning with, and proceeding from the:

- statement of [university] community **Values**, which are deemed essential to those who are part of the JMU community and indeed, define the greater community itself; to the
- the **Mission Statement**, which sets forth our purpose as an institution of higher education; to the
- **Vision Statement**, which articulates our aspiration as a university.

Values

Our student-centered community values excellence, integrity and mutual respect.

Mission

We are a community committed to preparing students to become educated and enlightened citizens who lead productive and meaningful lives.

Vision

To be the model comprehensive university of the 21st century by providing a unique campus environment that redefines the relationship between teaching, scholarship and experiential activities through partnerships among students, faculty and staff.

JUSTIFICATION FOR REVISIONS

Values

Our student-centered community values excellence, integrity and mutual respect.

Justification: In the current list of values, both “student-centered” and “service to others” represent actions related to an institutional orientation to service. If those words were removed from the list, the remaining three words (Excellence, Integrity, and Mutual-Respect) represent three of the most frequently identified desirable character traits of an individual – the kind of traits on which a great society is built and maintained. In fact, liberal arts colleges typically emphasize the development of the person with a focus on core values which most often are noted as excellence, integrity, and mutual respect. Other prestigious institutions such as the U.S. Service Academies (at West Point, Annapolis, and Colorado Springs), seek to educate, train, and inspire the corps of cadets and officers so that each graduate is a commissioned leader of character. Moral and ethical

development, therefore, is a fundamental element of all aspects of the liberal arts or academy experience and the fiber which underpins the academic honor codes of the nation's colleges and universities. **Excellence** challenges us to develop a sustained passion for continuous growth and improvement which ultimately results in individuals leading productive and meaningful lives. Likewise, in the larger context of the community or the university, excellence translates to innovation that enables the community and university to grow and flourish in meeting the needs of the world. We should always be in continual pursuit of excellence. **Integrity** is the quality of possessing, and steadfastly adhering to, high moral principles or professional standards. A campus must communicate to its students, faculty and staff that integrity (academic and personal) is a major institutional priority. Students cheat. But they cheat less often at schools with an honor code and a peer culture that condemns dishonesty. Institutions of higher education must commit themselves to integrity and honor (McCabe & Trevino, 2002, *Academe*, 88(1), 37-41). And finally, the quality of any community or the effectiveness of any organization is dependent upon the climate in which people live, work or play. Respect means we value our diverse membership. **Mutual respect**, as a personal trait reflects how we treat each other with fairness, dignity, and compassion – or how we work as a team. We retained the term student-centered to reflect the nature of our university community.

Mission

We are a community committed to preparing students to become educated and enlightened citizens who lead productive and meaningful lives.

Justification: It is, perhaps, the unique sense of community that makes JMU such a different-feeling university – the campus atmosphere, the quality of both the student body and the faculty, the pride and customer service orientation of the staff and a commitment to working together to prepare students to become educated and enlightened citizens who lead productive and meaningful lives. Therefore, in the revised statement, the “We are...” from the current mission statement was definitively defined as “a community” and “who will lead...” was shortened to “who lead...” to reflect that our students currently do and will continue to lead productive and meaningful lives.

Vision

To be the model comprehensive university of the 21st century by providing a unique campus environment that defines the relationship between teaching, scholarship and experiential activities through partnerships among students, faculty and staff.

Justification: The Steering Committee understands the concept of a new American university, perhaps taken from the late Ernest Boyer's suggestion of building the new American college. But the vision statement is something that anyone can read and most, we believe, would have no concept of what is meant by aspiring to the be “the new American university.” Further, it was the widely

held view that given the extensive negative press/attention garnered by American University itself in recent years, the university would be best served by eliminating such a phrase from its vision statement. Additionally, the use of the word “hybrid” offers no positive distinction given the connotation of the word (e.g., cross, mix) and the fact that research universities and liberal arts colleges seem to be too far toward opposite ends of the continuum. Therefore, a completely revised vision statement was developed.

The opening part of the statement, “To be the model comprehensive university of the 21st century” clearly sets JMU apart as being distinctive and the model – in essence, a new type of university. The term “comprehensive” (with no reference to the former Carnegie classification) was used as an apt description of the university that can offer an extensive array of programs as well as classroom, lab and experiential learning opportunities to the aspiring student. The remainder of the statement, “by providing a unique campus environment that redefines the relationship between teaching, scholarship and experiential activities through partnerships among students, faculty and staff” articulates what JMU uniquely brings to the campaign to reach the lofty goal the vision targets - that is to **BE the model comprehensive university of the 21st century**.

Note. It is the understanding of the Steering Committee and the members of the various subcommittees that the President has approved the suggested revisions of the Values and Mission Statements. However, the President has indicated that he will seek the assistance of an outside consultant/public relations agency to craft a Vision Statement that generates more excitement and enthusiasm while capturing the essence of the proposed statement.

The Steering Committee does wish to note that the members of the various subcommittees generally liked the proposed vision statement and believed, in general, it begins to define what we aspire to be as an institution. There is concern that the pursuit of a “catchy” vision statement may result in simply another tag line. Perhaps, the two are not mutually exclusive – a vision statement for internal use as a plumb line for strategic planning, and a university tag line that sparkles with distinction. In any case, members of the JMU community need an operationally defined vision statement “from the top” that sets our bearings for where we are going as an institution. The university administration must effectively communicate that definition to the entire faculty and staff in a way that allows people to develop both a common, and yet personalized, understanding of what has been formerly referred to as the “hybrid university” vision.

2. After reviewing the responses of the subcommittees regarding their environmental scans, please list your recommendations for additional areas that the university should address for planning through 2012.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND UNIVERSITY SIZE

Two of the key areas for the university to address between 2006 and 2012 are the size of the university and demographics of the university community. In considering these areas, the Steering Committee is referring to the actual size of the main campus and the possibility that over the next six years, programs could be developed and offered at a distance with little to no impact on the current campus infrastructure. Additionally, multiple issues will increasingly impact the demographics of the university community (e.g., age of students enrolled at JMU, access by a students from multiple age groups and backgrounds as continuing professional development and lifelong learning is necessitated by post-graduates entering multiple careers over a lifespan, feasible financial access to the university – especially for the economically disadvantaged, intellectual preparedness of students graduating from high school, age of faculty as the time-to-retirement lengthens over the next decade, and recruitment and retention of quality classified and wage employees).

Several issues were identified from the environmental scan that JMU should take into consideration in developing its strategic plan. Identified issues include the following:

(Students)

- *National shifts in age demographics* – will mean more non-traditional students in degree programs and the opportunity to offer more non-degree opportunities (continuing education, certificate programs, etc.).
- *National increases in traditionally underrepresented populations* – will mean an increasing need to diversify the student body.
- *National decrease in male/female ratio of entering college students* – will mean increasing difficulty in recruiting and retaining male students.
- *Increasing numbers of college-age students in Virginia* – will mean increasing pressure to accept more students and increase enrollment.
- *Decreasing numbers of students pursuing degrees in science, technology engineering and mathematics (STEM)* – will mean finding new ways to attract students to STEM majors while maintaining internationally competitive standards.

- *Decreased scientific literacy of the general public* – will mean a need to enhance the scientific literacy of non-science students so that they can make more informed decisions in a technologically advanced world.
- *Decreased information literacy of the general public* – will mean a need to enhance the information literacy of all students so that they can find and critically analyze key facts in a world with ever-increasing access to large volumes of information of varying quality.
- *Globalization of education and shifts in international student demographics* – will mean increasing difficulty in recruiting and retaining a diverse international student population.
- *K-12 student preparedness* – will mean limited intellectual access to higher education for some segments of the population and the need for more transitional, student-success programs, and more cooperation with the K-12 and community college systems.
- *Increased focus on university involvement in economic and workforce development* – will mean pressure to adapt our programs to further enhance students' analytical skills, adaptability, problem solving and leadership capabilities so that their jobs cannot be exported in the new economy. Any focus on technical and professional programs will need to be balanced with strong curricular offerings in liberal arts.
- *Integration of academics and student life* – will mean striving to take full advantage of all learning opportunities available to students. A more intentional, seamless integration of academics and student life will require the full integration of resources to support student success.
- *Recruiting the best students for graduate programs* – will mean increasing not only the number of graduate assistantships but the stipends in order to compete in recruiting top students to graduate programs at JMU. Graduate education is an investment in Virginia and the work done by graduate students contributes to the economic, social and civic development of the Commonwealth. The bar has risen in many fields in terms of the education needed to gain entry level positions (e.g., education, health sciences, accounting) and the next generation of leaders – teachers, scientists, professionals, will come from graduate programs. Approximately 70% of those who attend graduate school at JMU remain in Virginia after graduation.

(Programs)

- *Demographics of programs* – will mean a consistent and ongoing need to assess program trends both nationally and in the Commonwealth, comparing the high demand areas with JMU's menu of academic programs.

- *Balance between undergraduate and graduate programs* – will mean the need for ongoing academic strategic planning that intentionally targets and fosters the development of graduate programs of distinction within the growth targets articulated for Division of Academic Affairs through 2012. This issue is raised in light of the Strategic Initiatives and the ongoing debate regarding the emphasis placed on undergraduate vs. graduate programs. Most likely, this ongoing process must include concurrent analyses of programs (at both levels) with limited productivity or quality so as to move resources where they can provide needed support for the most viable programs of study.

(Faculty and Staff)

- *National shifts in faculty age demographics* – will mean later faculty retirements and longer post-retirement career opportunities (adjunct or emeritus status, part-time teaching opportunities, etc.).
- *A decreasing regional pool of select applicants* – will mean increased difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff for classified and wage skill positions at JMU. Not only, in many cases, are the skill sets not there as in the past, but the significantly low unemployment rate creates a very competitive environment for recruiting classified staff in specific areas. This trend is expected to worsen as more businesses move into the Harrisonburg/Rockingham County area offering higher levels of remuneration than what JMU is able to offer.
- *Life balance issues for faculty and staff* – will necessitate a serious evaluation of such factors as: enrollment increases, position vacancies, increased expectations for more research and involvement with grants and contracts, expectations for greater involvement with the local community, increased professional development expectations, and increased contact time with students - and the impact they have regarding staff and faculty life balance issues. Being known for “doing more with less” may garner favorable attention but it raises the expectations to continue year after year in that manner. There is a critical point where the operation and the personnel that drive it can no longer keep pace. A fundamental change must occur related to strategic planning before “lean and mean” translates to “haggard and burned-out.”

(Campus – Extended Campus)

- *Maintaining the current process/procedures for academic major declaration* – will mean we must consider the disconnect between the emphasis on quickly choosing a major while affirming the values expressed by a liberal arts education which tends to offer greater freedom to explore multiple disciplines and sources of content knowledge.
- *Economics of higher education* – will mean limited financial access to higher education for some segments of the population and the need for more diverse external (private) funding sources for scholarships and financial aid packages.

- *Influence of distance education and for-profit institutions* – will mean increasing pressure to offer on-line and mixed format learning opportunities and provide course/degree offerings at “satellite” locations (i.e., Northern Virginia/DC area).
- *Commercialization of research/scholarship* – will mean pressure to focus more on scholarship, more effectively capture intellectual property value, develop stronger external collaborations (corporate, government, academic, etc.), and provide university infrastructure (space, people, money) to support these efforts.
- *Increased focus on academic accountability* – will mean pressure to more fully measure and disclose student performance (e.g., student placement and success, performance on national norm-referenced professional exams), as well as university productivity metrics (such as student retention and graduation rates) and quality standards (e.g., peer-reviewed scholarship, external funding, national visibility, production of licensed/certified professionals).
- *Preparedness to function in a diverse campus community* – will mean increasing problems as the JMU community (i.e., students, staff and faculty) and the surrounding community of Harrisonburg/Rockingham County strive to work and communicate effectively in an increasingly diverse community. A remarkably fast community transformation has occurred over the last decade in Harrisonburg transforming the region from a fairly homogeneous community to a very diverse one. Critical analysis of the JMU community brings to question the preparedness of those at JMU to function in a diverse campus community.
- *Increased competition for financial resources* – will mean the need to diversify external funding sources for higher education in order to remain financially viable.
- *Increased need to realize base adequacy for shared resources* – will mean a comprehensive assessment must be completed to review the shared resources at JMU. For example, there seems to be a serious need for flexible classroom space. Many classrooms in the newest facilities, although mediated for instruction, have been designed with fixed furniture, forcing instruction to be delivered primarily in lecture format. A systematic approach to planning such spaces, for example, should include wide representation of faculty and staff as classrooms are also used for staff development workshops and classes. Many universities have seen fit to construct centralized general classroom buildings.
- *Stabilizing residential growth* – will mean determining an acceptable or appropriate “mix” of residential and non-residential students for the campus. In this case, non-residential does not refer to commuters. Residential refers to both those who live on campus and those within the region who commute to JMU for classes. A concerted effort to export certificate and degree programs

off-campus via university outreach, using a partial self-support financial model, holds many benefits. Currently, JMU is one of the few state institutions of higher education that does not operate a continuing education or outreach satellite center. Programs offered through outreach could address state access issues for underrepresented populations, immediately have a favorable impact on diversity data related to students enrolled at JMU, and dramatically meet the state need to increase enrollment while having little or no impact on the main campus infrastructure.

- *Lack of knowledge and skill in recruiting candidates from underrepresented populations* – will mean, with pressure to recruit underrepresented populations for positions at all levels, employees of JMU will need to be properly trained in what to look for in resumes, how to sell the local area, etc. It is possible that, as recruiters, the employees of JMU do not yet have the skill set necessary to produce the desired results when recruiting for diversity.

3. After reviewing the responses of the subcommittees regarding the Higher Education Six-Year Plan, please list your recommendations for additional areas that the university should address for planning through 2012.

Several aspects of the Six-Year Plan were identified that the administration at JMU should take into consideration in developing future plans. While the Six-Year Plan as written for SCHEV focuses primarily on faculty and student issues, many of the concerns discussed here also apply to staff. The Commission recommends that staff be included in future drafts of the Plan. Identified issues include the following.

- The Commission expresses concern about the operational definition of the vision expressed in the Six-Year Plan “to be a new type of American university,” and the desire “to be described as possessing the best aspects of larger doctoral research universities as well as the best features of smaller liberal arts colleges.” Specifically, the definition components pertaining to “best aspects” and “best features” are unclear. The Commission was also unclear as to the details of implementing this vision and its impact on a wide range of academic life issues such as:
 - marketing of JMU to prospective students and faculty/staff
 - faculty/staff recruiting and retention
 - faculty/staff workload and duty assignments
 - faculty/staff evaluation, reward, and recognition
 - resource allocation (people, space, and money)
 - incoming student interest demographics
 - formation of new programs

- evaluation of existing programs
- the role/mix of graduate program offerings
- The retention of excellent faculty should be a primary consideration in the development of the Six-Year Plan. Current teaching and scholarship expectations cannot be easily reconciled with one another and often lead talented young faculty to explore other opportunities in order to obtain a better work balance. In order to meet the growing demands of the university to support excellent teaching, outstanding scholarship and innovative entrepreneurship, the university must develop a deliberate plan to attract and retain faculty with diverse interests and expertise. This diversity must be recognized not only in recruitment and retention, but also across all academic units in their reward, recognition, and review processes.
- Maintain a “proactive” university six-year strategic planning process that can be used to inform the State’s requirement for a Six-Year Plan, instead of simply reacting to the State’s needs. The university plan would be updated and communicated on an annual basis, incorporating changes that are occurring or foreseen, thereby insuring that the university plan remains well-informed and that it continues to reflect the priorities of the institution as delineated in the mission, vision, values and Defining Characteristics.
- Strategic budget initiatives to support the Six-Year Plan must be incorporated into the planning process. For example, campus growth and technological advances will require significant and strategic investments in information technology software and hardware. Similarly, investment in the university’s transportation infrastructure should be reviewed for its adequacy relative to our present size and in planning for future growth.

With respect to SCHEV GOAL 1: “Provide access to higher education”

- Expanding the diversity of the JMU student population should continue to be a priority. One way to facilitate this change is to expand the diversity of the faculty and staff. If students fail to see diversity exhibited in the faculty and staff, they will question the institution’s commitment to this concept.
- Increasing the number of community college transfer students at JMU will help improve access to higher education and will help accommodate the increasing number of college-age students in Virginia. Furthermore, targeting community colleges with large populations of traditionally under-represented groups for recruitment will help address student diversity on campus.
- The Commission recommends that the University partner with the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) to clearly communicate shared needs for dual enrollment courses for secondary students in the Commonwealth of Virginia and continue developing program specific articulation agreements for

transfer programs. It must be ensured that dual enrollment courses are truly taught at the college level and that appropriate transfer credit agreements are maintained.

- The Commission recommends that the university consider the needs of part-time, working students when scheduling classes and determining academic requirements. Traditional class scheduling may need to be made more flexible, with non-traditional class lengths, times of day, and days of the week. This may also partially address more efficient utilization of university classroom resources as the physical size of the campus expands.
- JMU must increase its enrollment of international students. International student enrollment at JMU is well below that of our peer institutions of similar size.
- Realistic and pragmatic enrollment projections should be developed based on current and anticipated space, financial, and human resources. Strict enrollment management processes should be developed and implemented to limit enrollment to these projections.
- The largest resource issue at JMU seems to be inadequate numbers of faculty (and staff) compared with current (and anticipated) enrollment. Without appropriate increases in the size of the faculty (and staff) and sufficient resources to support faculty/staff professional development, JMU will continue to struggle with faculty/staff recruitment and retention.

With respect to SCHEV GOAL 2: “Provide affordable higher education”

- JMU intends to offer an educational package to its students at a comparable price to other state or regional universities of the same size. However, the Commission believes that less emphasis on JMU’s now historic tradition as one of the country’s “best educational buys” is viewed as a necessary step towards changing the perception that JMU can continue to “do more with less.” The Commission believes that the time is right to address this issue given the large number of applicants JMU currently receives (>20,000) as compared with the number of available freshman seats (<4,000). Tuition and fees should be increased to more appropriately align with an appropriate list of peer institutions and more adequately support the base adequacy needs of the university.
- The Commission recommends the university assess the impact of tuition and fees on applications, enrollment and student indebtedness – to encompass an assessment of the effect of tuition and fees on the targeted sub-populations of our current applicant pool, and on currently underrepresented populations.

With respect to SCHEV GOAL 3: “Offer broad range of mission-relevant academic programs”

- The Commission strongly believes that the university must design future strategic plans in a way that addresses the need to balance growth of new programs with the pressing need to more adequately support existing programs. All programs that have a professional accreditation body should be evaluated using the professional standards of their field; national accreditation should be the goal of all university programs, when available. This, in addition to the development of well-defined metrics and assessment tools to continuously evaluate the quality and contributions of new and existing programs, are central to the strategic planning process.
- The Commission recommends that clearly defined metrics and assessment tools also be developed to further define and measure the university goal of developing “graduate programs of distinction.” These standards should be discipline-specific and recognized by an appropriate national professional organization, when available. Metrics should include national ranking, publications and citations, ability to attract external funding, and the production of graduates filling critical societal needs. Existing and proposed graduate programs must be measured against these standards to insure that any growth in graduate programs demonstrably supports the stated goals and mission of the institution. The unique resource requirements of graduate programs must also be acknowledged in order to allow new and existing program to gain the status of “programs of distinction” (e.g., graduate assistantships, increased costs of scholarship, and professional development). This support, however, must not come at the expense of existing undergraduate programs of distinction.
- Growth and increased diversity (programs and people) are also opportunities for the institution. However, increased efforts will be necessary to meet the academic support needs of this changing population. In addition to the need to recruit and retain faculty with the appropriate education and experience to match the anticipated future program mix, other services critical for academic life will also have to be increased. For example, the Student Success program (freshman advising and career decisions, orientation, learning resource support programs, disability services, etc.) must keep pace with these changes. Also, there will be increased needs for faculty and staff with expertise in learning support and advising to work with a growing, changing student body.

With respect to SCHEV GOAL 4: “Initiate continuous, rigorous assessment of academic programs”

- JMU has a strong and internationally recognized program assessment effort, led by the Center for Assessment and Research Studies (CARS). The Commission recognizes the strength of this program assessment effort and strongly encourages that program assessment activities be more closely aligned with

stated university, college, and departmental goals and objectives. Such a rigorous, aligned assessment process will help to provide a better operational definition of the vision to become a “new type of American university” for the faculty, staff, and students alike. The consensus of the Commission is that there is a lack of understanding among the faculty and staff as to how the current strategic planning process ensures that program assessment results are used to influence curriculum design and resource allocation. Articulation of the explicit linkage between the planning process, resource allocation decisions, and a program’s efforts to employ rigorous assessment methods would improve understanding and engagement among the faculty and staff.

- This JMU goal calls for examining course availability and program mix, and developing strategies to increase instructional capacity. The gap between the number and mix of available faculty and the actual and anticipated student enrollment often limits our options for developing strategies, and simply “migrating” students from one major to another is not the answer. The institution must develop and administer a strategic enrollment plan (SEP) from a systematic university-wide (not departmental or college) perspective.
- The Commission applauds the fact that Goal 4.6 explicitly addresses the need to “recruit and retain high caliber faculty” and that this goal is assigned “Priority Status 1.” However, Goal 8.2, which strives to “enhance faculty development resources and funds,” is assigned “Priority Status 2.” Since these two goals are mutually supportive of each other, and acknowledge faculty as a critical university resource, the Commission recommends that they both be given “Priority Status 1” in future plans.
- Also related to Goal 4.6 is Goal 4.2 which strives to “develop strategies to increase instruction capacity.” Specifically, it is of great concern that JMU is losing faculty across the university because of unrealistic teaching loads combined with insufficient resources to complete meaningful scholarship and service that contributes to student education, faculty development, and furthering one’s discipline. Hence, strategies to increase instruction capacity should involve hiring additional faculty as opposed to increasing student credit hour production per faculty member.
- The Commission strongly believes that the quality of all JMU programs is of the utmost importance if we are to continue to have an outstanding reputation for both undergraduate and graduate education. Programs need to be supported at a level that will maintain employer satisfaction with our graduates. Furthermore, programs should be encouraged to better differentiate the quality of their students; JMU should be a leader in the fight against grade inflation that is endemic in our country.

With respect to SCHEV GOAL 5: “Improve student retention”

- Maintaining the high retention rates currently exhibited at JMU will require a concerted effort across the entire campus as the size and diversity of the campus continues to grow. The academic and student support programs currently in place must be continued, modernized, and expanded just to maintain existing retention levels. Course availability will continue to be the greatest potential threat to retention until adequate (diversified) resources are targeted toward our base adequacy deficit. Student retention may also be improved by offering more innovative programs combining novel classroom and distance technologies with nontraditional course offerings (times, locations, etc.).
- Academic advising is a critical, albeit often undervalued, component of the academic mission at JMU. Beyond the freshman advising experience (faculty with specialized training in advising plus full-time advising staff), academic advising is often “ad-hoc,” varying from department to department and college to college (even from faculty member to faculty member). JMU should continue to work toward a more faculty-wide “advising culture” in which advising is valued, developed, evaluated, and rewarded in a more standardized way in order to insure some level of “quality control” on the advising process. The role that advising plays in tenure, promotion, and faculty/staff recognition should be reviewed and should become a priority focus.
- Learning communities have nationally been recognized for their contributions to student retention; students in a residential setting are grouped with faculty members in content areas, generally over an entire academic year. There will be an increasing need for dedicated faculty/staff to work with these learning communities as more develop at JMU.
- Increasing the quality of all JMU programs will increase student satisfaction with their opportunities after JMU. Success in employment and post-baccalaureate graduate and professional schools will also enhance the reputation of the university with alumni, prospective students, and potential donors.

With respect to SCHEV GOAL 6: “Develop articulation agreements”

- As JMU increases the number and type of articulation agreements with the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), there will be a need for JMU faculty to interact more closely with VCCS faculty, staff, and students to determine which courses and program appropriately transfer to JMU and which might need further development. JMU will also need to partner with VCCS faculty and administrators to help initiate targeted program, course, and faculty/staff development at both institutions to give transfer students the highest probability of success. It is reasonable to expect there will be a

growing demand from the state to accept community college transfers. JMU faculty and staff must work to make this process reasonable, equitable, and beneficial for the entire academic community.

With respect to SCHEV GOAL 7: “Stimulate economic development”

- Employers need to recognize that our students are well-prepared to contribute to the workforce of this country. To that end, we must ensure that our students are well-prepared, can think analytically, and can solve problems creatively so that they can be consistently productive contributors in new situations that they will encounter throughout their careers. They need to adapt to an ever-changing economic situation by developing life-long learning skills.

With respect to SCHEV GOAL 8: “Engage in research”

- SCHEV Goal 8 has been extensively addressed in the JMU Research Advisory Committee report entitled “A Report on the Context for Academic Scholarship-Research at James Madison University”. This report was submitted to the Provost in May 2005, and is reproduced here (Academic Life Appendix page 31). The Commission supports the conclusions and recommendations of this report.
- In order to meet the growing demands for the university to support excellent teachers, outstanding scholars, and innovative entrepreneurs, the university must develop a deliberate plan to attract and retain faculty with diverse interests and expertise. This diversity must be recognized not only in recruitment and retention efforts but also in the academic unit reward, recognition, and review process.
- Participation in scholarship, such as research, is a critical component of a student’s undergraduate and graduate education. The university can build upon its existing strengths in many undergraduate and graduate degree programs that have effectively involved students in authentic research experiences that have resulted in publications, presentations, patents and external collaborations. This success is evidenced by the accomplishments of these students upon leaving JMU.
- Increasing the percentage of undergraduate and graduate students involved in substantive scholarship activities will increase student retention and student placement after graduation. This will, in turn, enhance the reputation of the university.
- Faculty scholarship can be enhanced by decreasing the perceived dichotomy between research and teaching through the incorporation of active scholarship into the classroom, and the inclusion of undergraduate and graduate collaborators in faculty scholarship. These activities are much more rewarding

(for both faculty and students) than an educational model that relies mostly on the traditional classroom lecture.

- Resources should be used to reward and publicly recognize faculty who make scholarly contributions and who integrate scholarship into their role as a teacher. A shift in resource allocation to support these activities will stimulate cultural changes across the university and will enhance both research and teaching excellence among the faculty.

With respect to SCHEV GOAL 9: “Develop K-12 partnerships”

- JMU should build upon our strengths in K-12 education by strengthening the on-campus partnerships between those who are successfully working with K-12 teachers and those who would like to develop this expertise. We need to better use our own faculty as a resource for one another and to support peer-to-peer faculty development in this area.
- JMU should support the development of partnerships between statewide K-12 personnel and JMU teacher education faculty to ensure high quality teacher preparation experiences for those students desiring to become teachers, and to promote unique K-12 and university level initiatives that further the university’s overall commitment to innovative post-secondary level instruction. JMU is uniquely qualified to address the specific state and national need for qualified K-12 STEM teachers. JMU should target and enhance its support for this already strong program area within the university in future strategic plans.

4. After reviewing the responses of the subcommittees regarding the University Defining Characteristics, please list your recommendations for additional areas that the university should address for planning through 2012.

The consensus across all of the Commission subcommittees was that the number of University Defining Characteristics should be reduced. This can be accomplished by either combining several of the Characteristics or, in some cases, elimination of a Characteristic. Encouraging individuals to “personalize” the list by identifying a few characteristics that apply specifically to their role on campus, and publishing the “Centennial Strategic Plan,” have helped to provide some focus. However, faculty and staff often still find it difficult to align the 29 Defining Characteristics with their personal or divisional unit goals, objectives, and student learning endeavors. This “alignment gap,” between the 29 Characteristics and how administrators, faculty and staff actually work on a day-to-day basis, significantly diminishes JMU’s efforts to change and evolve. Finding ways to close this gap should be a high priority in any future planning efforts.

The following specific recommendations are examples of ways to reduce the total number of characteristics by combining similar items and eliminating items that may no longer be relevant or desirable. These recommendations effectively can effectively reduce the number of Characteristics by nine or more. Even with reducing the list by nearly one-third, there is a sense there are still too many Characteristics which in effect limits engagement on a personal level. The Characteristics, as they currently stand, represent broad visions in some cases while others represent goals or objectives. The Characteristics should be edited/revised for consistency. Finally, the analysis of the Characteristics was undertaken differently among the subcommittees. A closer analysis of the subcommittee reports will yield multiple perspectives on the recommended treatment of a few of the Characteristics.

- Characteristics 1, 3, and 16 should be combined to address curriculum, in general: *The university will offer a wide variety of quality liberal arts programs, professional programs, strategically selected innovative undergraduate programs, and graduate programs of distinction.*
- Characteristics 2 and 18 should be combined to address “non-traditional” programs: *The university will complement its residentially-based academic programs with non-degree and competency certification programs as well as distance education offerings for select audiences.*
- Characteristics 4 and 26 should be combined to address student learning: *The university’s faculty will integrate scholarship, service, and teaching to enhance student learning and provide a challenging and supportive environment with a heightened sense of intellectual stimulation.*
- Considering the wording of Characteristic 6 regarding diversity. The phrase “common JMU experience” seems to suggest that diverse cultures will be assimilated into an existing culture. This is tantamount to a one-way street perspective where there is no sharing across cultures. The statement should be revised to state: *The university will be a diverse community whose members share in, and contribute to, a common JMU experience.*
- Characteristic 8 concerning admissions selectivity should be eliminated. This is more of an “objective” than a “characteristic,” and may not be a true measure of quality.
- Characteristic 8, if retained, could be revised to address admission to the university: *Admission to the university will respond to the needs of the university and continue to mold and enroll a quality applicant pool that reflects the needs of the institution.*

- Characteristics 9, 10, and 11 should be combined to address financial support: *The university will enhance and diversify funding sources, expand its strategic alliances with external partners, and develop broad-based financial support among a variety of constituents to achieve institutional objectives.*
- Characteristics 12, 13, and 14 should be combined to address institutional planning: *The university will involve the entire campus community in a well-defined, consistently used and commonly-understood process for planning and decision-making that emphasizes accountability and ties resource allocation to institutional effectiveness.*
- Characteristic 15 concerning the information on student transcripts should be eliminated as such information may change at any time. A thorough transcript is a customer service goal of any institution of higher education and not necessarily distinctive to this university.
- Characteristics 22, 27 and 28 should be combined to address student learning and development: *The university will focus on student learning and development through collaboration across all divisions to create conditions that motivate and inspire students to devote time and energy to educationally-purposeful activities, both in and outside the classroom.*