

1/17/25 Academic Affairs Highlights

Dear Colleagues,

Happy New Year and welcome back! I hope you each got some well-deserved rest and relaxation over the winter break. I'm trying to contain my delight at some proper winter weather, although that early January snow was heavy to shovel – I think we might be out of practice after the last couple of winters!?!

I know you're excited to start the new term, and we've got a great slate of accomplishments by your colleagues to start us off.

- If your new year's resolution included reading more, check out the [Next Big Idea Club's January 2025 Must Read](#) pick, [Our New Social Life: Science-Backed Strategies for Creating Meaningful Connection](#), by [Dr. Natalie Kerr](#) and [Dr. Jaime Kurtz](#), professors in the Department of Psychology. According to Oxford University Press, “key barriers to social connection are introduced, and evidence-based strategies for overcoming them are presented” within the text.
- Congratulations to [Lori Patton](#), executive assistant to the dean in the College of Arts and Letters, who was recently awarded the [Certified Administrative Professional designation](#) from the [International Association of Administrative Professionals](#). The recognition is awarded bi-annually to those who apply, sit for and pass the three-hour, 225 question exam.
- I'm also pleased to recognize two College of Education faculty members who received a prestigious award from the [Association of Mathematics Teacher Educators](#). Associate Professor [Dr. Amanda Sawyer](#) and Assistant Professor [Dr. Marcus Wolfe](#) received the [2025 National Technology Leadership Initiative Fellowship](#), which “recognizes exemplary presentations related to integration of technology in core content areas” within mathematics, science, English language arts and social studies education, for their manuscript *Exploring Preserve Teachers' Adaptations of ChatGPT Created Mathematics Curricula: Discovering Overconfidence*.
- The College of Science and Mathematics continues to produce joint faculty/student research. Department of Biology associate professor [Dr. Rocky Parker](#)'s collaboration with two 2021 biology graduates resulted in the article “[Field-Based Observations of Strike-Induced Chemosensory Searching \(SICS\) in Timber Rattlesnakes \(Crotalus horridus\) Reveal a Potential Role for Olfaction via Ventilation Patterns](#),” which was published in [Ichthyology & Herpetology](#).
- College of Education professor [Dr. Melanie Shoffner](#) and a recent JMU College of Education graduate recently co-authored “[You Write What You Want and What You Need: Incorporating Reflective Practice in the ELA Classroom Through Caring Pedagogy](#)” in [Reflective Practices: International and Multidisciplinary Perspectives](#).

- In addition to students, our colleagues are collaborating with peers in other JMU divisions. A JMU team, including [Dr. Sara Finney](#) (CARS) and Ph.D. students in Assessment and Measurement, alongside [Dr. Jonathan Stewart](#) from Student Affairs, received the national [Excellence in Equity-Centered Assessment award](#) from [ACPA–College Student Educators International](#). They developed the [Meta-Assessment Rubric](#)—a tool designed over two years to embed equity into assessment processes, enhance campus policies, and better support minoritized and underserved student populations, setting a new standard for equity-focused assessment in higher education. Learn more directly from the [students involved online](#).

I look forward to hearing more about teaching and scholarship highlights and other accomplishments for you and your colleagues this year. Please email provost@jmu.edu so we can continue to showcase your work.

Sincerely,
Bob