

## 11/14/25 Academic Affairs Highlights

Dear Colleagues,

Congratulations on making it to the end of a wind-swept week. I was able to be in the audience for three really interesting events this week, and I'd like to give a tip of the Provost's cap to each one. I got to hear two Madison Scholar talks – one from Dr. [John Guo](#) in the College of Business and the other from Dr. [Emily York](#) in the College of Integrated Science and Engineering. These faculty members shared their work in a really engaging way for non-specialists, making their talks really enjoyable. I hope I'll see you at future Madison Scholar talks in other colleges.

I also had the opportunity to hear the JMU Symphony perform this week in a program developed in collaboration with Communication Sciences and Disorders. Symphony conductor Dr. [Kira Omelchenko](#) teamed with audiologist Dr. [Melissa Garber](#) to share a program with pieces from composers that were deaf or hard of hearing coupled with Audiology students providing commentary on the composer and hearing challenges faced by musicians. The concert was great, and the interdisciplinary focus was really compelling.

On to this week's highlights!

- JMU Graduate Psychology faculty are influencers! The [Research & Practice in Assessment](#) (RPA) journal won raves at the [2025 Assessment Institute](#) in Indianapolis. Graduate faculty member Dr. [Robin Anderson](#), founding editor, and Dr. [Keston Fulcher](#), former editor, as well as alums Katie Busby, former editor, and Nick Curtis, current editor, were recognized. The journal, and each editor, was awarded the 2025 [Improvement Influencer Award](#). This recognition honors RPA's outstanding contributions to the higher education sector through their contributions to advancing meaningful, evidence-based improvement in higher education assessment.
- Dr. [Duke Biber](#), associate professor in Health Sciences; Dr. [Bob Harmison](#), professor in Graduate Psychology and Director of the [Challace J. McMillin Center for Sport Psychology](#); and Dr. [Sarah Sackett](#), Professor of Kinesiology, recently co-authored a paper published in the [Journal of Sport Psychology In Action](#). Their work, "[Invisible mental toughness for coaches and athletes: A self-compassion coaching approach](#)," provides a rationale for adopting strategies to promote self-compassion for cultivating mental toughness and general well-being in athletes and coaches
- Dr. Harmison has been busy as he also presented at the [Association for Applied Sport Psychology conference](#) in Montreal. "When the Going Gets Tough, the (Mentally) Tough Get Going: Dimensionality, Reliability, and Validity of the ToughPerson Index" along with alums Kyle Green (Psychological Sciences) and Matthew Best (Psychology and Spanish), and Chris Hulleman (UVA).
- Three faculty from the JMU School of Art and Art History Architecture program were recently named finalists in the international architecture competition [The Field Station](#). The JMU Architectural Design team, comprised of [Jori Erdman](#), professor;

[Lemara Miftakhova Morrell](#), visiting assistant professor; and [Andrew Morrell](#), instructor, developed a scheme for an adaptive R&D field station that fosters innovation, research, and collaboration across disciplines on the Severn River in Gloucester, VA.

- School of Communication Studies Emeritus Faculty Dr. Bill Kimsey is keeping up with his scholarship! His article “[Brain Training for Adults: A Spa for the Mind](#)” was just released in *LearningRx*. He reflects on his remarkable recovery from a brain hemorrhage and how cognitive training helped restore focus, memory, and mental agility. That explains how he just completed the [2025 Army Ten-Miler](#), charting his own 10-mile course around the VMI Parade Deck and celebrating with a photo at the Pentagon!

If you find any of these updates interesting, consider submitting your own! you can send awards, recognitions, publications – almost any highlight – for yourself or a colleague. Email me at [provost@jmu.edu](mailto:provost@jmu.edu).

Sincerely,

Bob

PS – The Weekly Update will be working all the way to Thanksgiving Break, so look for us next Friday