

2/20/26 Highlights

Dear Colleagues,

February is flying by, and it has been a busy couple of weeks. Last Thursday and Friday, the Board of Visitors held their annual February meeting. This year, we've focused on helping our committee better understand what scholarship/research/creative activity mean at JMU. We've done this by featuring students and their collaborating faculty members, with the students giving lightning talks to share their work. It has been a great pleasure to see the students give compelling presentations and make the case for the impact of this work on their education (and yeah, the faculty members have been really good too!). Thanks to all! We'll continue to help our board members better understand the work we do every day in Academic Affairs.

Earlier this week, I had the pleasure of hosting the IIE/JMU Thai Delegation Reception at our Washington, D.C. center. There were 11 Thai institutions and about 25 U.S. institutions in attendance, and it was exciting to welcome our Thai partners here following two successful U.S. study visits to Thailand. Today, a delegation of five representatives from Thai higher education institutions and the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok are visiting the Harrisonburg campus. Please say hello if you see them on campus.

You've clearly been busy this academic year, and it is rewarding to see the variety of accomplishments you've achieved. Take a look at a few of the things I've heard about lately.

- Assistant professor in the Department of Social Work Dr. [John Gyourko](#) recently co-authored the book [Understanding Child Welfare](#) as part of the [Understanding](#) series offered by [Edward Elgar Publishing](#). The series is designed to share “fundamental knowledge and foundational research on significant topics and themes across the social sciences.” John’s book surveys the processes and outcomes of child welfare services in the United States, drawing global parallels. Chapters cover crucial debates and initiatives in the field, mapping the evolution of child welfare services and highlighting promising policies and practices in the United States and elsewhere. You can find the [open access version](#) online.
- Professor of French, Dr. [Peter Eubanks](#), carried out another successful iteration of the [Famous Americans in Paris](#) study abroad program during Winter 2026. Professor Eubanks was also awarded a \$3000 grant from the Church History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, to pursue archival research as part of his ongoing “Paris Art Mission” project.
- Congratulations to Dr. [Erin Kamarunas](#), an associate professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders, who has been appointed as a reviewer of the [Motor Function, Speech, and Rehabilitation \(MFSR\) Study Section](#) for the [NIH Center for Scientific Review](#). Selection as a reviewer for the MFSR is competitive, with most reviewers recruited by the Scientific Review Officer based on their research focus and ability to provide fair, high-quality and collegial evaluations. Erin is nationally recognized for her research in the area

of Swallowing Disorders and also oversees the [JMU Eating and Swallowing Analysis and Treatment \(EAT\) Lab](#).

- If you're not already listening to "[With Good Reason](#)," the show and podcast that connect institutions of higher education with Virginia Humanities to broadly share scholarly research, this is an excellent opportunity to start! Dr. [Mollie Godfrey](#) and Dr. [Brooks Hefner](#), both professors of English, discussed their project "[A Miserable Revenge](#)" on a recent episode. The project had both internal and external grant support and is an example of community engaged research here in Harrisonburg.
- Assistant professor of Biology Dr. [Andrea Berardi](#) has been actively involved with the [American Journal of Botany](#) lately. After co-editing the special issue [Paradigm Shifts in Flower Color](#), she and coauthors published "[Pollinator, Herbivore, and Climatic Selective Pressures Differ Across a Floral Color Transition Zone](#)" in the journal's next issue.

Messages about your achievements that pop up in my email are always a welcome addition to my inbox. Please continue to send them to provost@jmu.edu.

Sincerely,

Bob