

2/28/25 Academic Affairs Highlights

Dear Colleagues,

February will soon be a memory – where did the month go?!? As we work through the middle third of the semester, there are lots of exciting things happening on campus - classes in full swing, faculty and staff welcoming speakers to campus, and research and creative activity happening all across campus.

As you know, JMU is a university that doesn't just appear busy: We are doing important work—engaging with students, advancing scholarly and creative agendas, connecting with the community—that underscores the importance and value of higher education. JMU faculty and staff remain true to our mission and committed to preparing students to be educated and enlightened citizens, even in the midst of uncertainty. I want to thank you for the support you provide our students every day and appreciate the encouragement and support you provide for each other.

But I bet you'd much rather hear about the good work of your colleagues, so let's jump in.

- Associate Professor of German Dr. Holly [Yanacek](#)'s literary translation of Emma Braslavsky's *Ich bin dein Mensch: Ein Liebeslied*, titled *I'm Your Man: A Love Song*, was recently released by [bale tower press](#). Braslavsky's work inspired Maria Schrader's 2021 award-winning film of the same title, and both the novella and film explore love, care, autonomy and responsibility in the age of artificial intelligence.
- Associate Professor in the Department of Biology Dr. [George Vidal](#), in collaboration with director Dr. [Kerry Cresawn](#) and the [JMU STEM Outreach Center](#), recently hosted the [7th annual JMU Brain Bee](#). The event brought high school students from Virginia, DC and Maryland to experience the JMU campus, many for the first time. Participants met JMU undergraduates [studying neuroscience](#), explored hands-on neurophysiology demos with Biology Professor [Corey Cleland](#) and even held human brains. Also in attendance were special guests Department of Finance and Business Law Instructor Jeff Hulett, who [merges personal finance and neuroscience](#), and a past JMU Brain Bee participant who [founded her own neuroscience outreach program](#) in the Amazonas region of Peru.
- How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Ask College of Visual and Performing Arts Dean [Rubén Graciani](#), Director of Choral Activities Dr. [Jo-Anne van der Vat-Chromy](#) and Associate Professor of percussion [Casey Cangelosi](#). As the CVPA Carnegie Hall Tour Faculty Directors, they are guiding the college's historic [debut performance at Carnegie Hall](#) next month. The cross-disciplinary collaboration featuring the JMU dance and percussion areas includes current students and alums. Keep an eye out for updates on Facebook and Instagram.

- Congratulations to Dr. [Gwyn Mellinger](#), Professor in the School of Media Arts and Design, for the publication of her latest book, "[Racializing Objectivity](#)." Published by the University of Massachusetts Press, the text meticulously shows how White southern newspaper editors in the mid-20th century hid behind the journalistic standard of objectivity—and in many cases perverted that concept— to defend their segregationist approaches to covering civil rights (or, in many cases, not covering it).
- Computer Science professors Dr. [Brett Tjaden](#) and Dr. [Hossain Heydari](#) mentored students from the Cyber Defense Club who took home the Virginia Cyber Cup at the [8th annual Cyber Fusion Competition](#). The team earned the highest score in the four-year college division at the invitation-only event open exclusively to colleges designated as National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense by the NSA and DHS.

I look forward to receiving more of your teaching and scholarship highlights, awards and other accomplishments for you and your colleagues. Please email submissions to provost@jmu.edu. I look forward to sharing more good news next week.

Sincerely,

Bob