

05/01/26 Highlights

Dear Colleagues,

We have found our way to May. I don't know about you, but I'm torn between "already?" and "finally!". We're in the end game of the semester, and I hope things are wrapping up well for you and your students.

It is a time of conclusion and celebration, and I'm getting to go to a lot of events that acknowledge your great work. Yesterday, I got to host the Academic Affairs Awards and Recognition luncheon where we were able to celebrate students, faculty and staff achievements. Earlier in the week, I was able to go to VMRC to celebrate our reclassification as a Carnegie Engaged University with our many community partners. At each event, the energy and excitement in what's happening at JMU was palpable.

I also got to spend some time on Wednesday with Dr. Cathy McKay and her students in their Paralympics Skills lab. Cathy brought U.S. Paralympian (and multiple gold medalist) Trey Jenifer to teach us how to play wheelchair basketball. Trey's interaction with the students was great fun to witness and after some time spent learning wheelchair basketball, I think I'll stick to hockey! A tip of the Provost's cap to Cathy, Trey and all of the Kinesiology students.

And now, on to some other recent highlights.

- Another set of winners was announced this week: Last year, General Education launched multiple new awards to recognize excellence within the program. Congratulations to:
 - Dr. [Geary Albright](#), professor emeritus in the Department of Physics and Astronomy, awardee of the Dr. Margaret Mulrooney Lifetime Achievement Award.
 - Professor Karan Deengar, faculty member in the School of Communication Studies, awardee of the General Education Innovation Award
 - Dr. [Natalie Kerr](#), professor of Psychology, awardee of the General Education Innovation Award
 - Dr. [Leonard Richards](#), assistant professor in the College of Education, awardee of the General Education Award for Early Career Excellence
 - Dr. [Jonathan Walker](#), assistant professor of Interdisciplinary Liberal Studies, awardee of the Provost Award for Excellence in General Education Teaching
- Congratulations to Dr. [Lindsey Harvell-Bowman](#), professor of Communication Studies who has named President-Elect of the [Virginia Association for Psychological Sciences](#)

(VAPS). VAPS is dedicated to advancing psychology as a science, enhancing the teaching of psychology, and fostering high standards of ethics and training by providing the opportunity for the exchange of experience and research among psychologists through discussions, presentations, and publications as well as by educating the public about the purposes and goals of the science of psychology.

- Dr. [Robyn Kondrad](#), assistant professor in the Department of Psychology, and a colleague from UVA were awarded a [4VA grant](#) to investigate children’s developing expectations for epistemic and moral accountability across human and AI agents, addressing theoretical questions about children’s social-cognitive development and practical questions about designing appropriately accountable AI systems for young users. Dr. Kondrad and several collaborators were also awarded a [VIVA Open Creation Grant](#) to create an open educational textbook and ancillary materials for Lifespan Human Development, a General Education course that serves over 2,000 JMU students each year.
- A recent episode of the [RCPS Community Partner Café](#) podcast featured World Languages and Cultures American Sign Language (ASL) instructor [Melissa Nguyn](#). She discussed the project she is conducting with Lacey Spring Elementary School to bring ASL to elementary-school students. This community outreach project features JMU ASL students teaching elementary students sign language so they can learn early on to learn how to communicate with members of the Deaf community.
- Dr. Anne van Leeuwen, associate professor of Philosophy, received a grant from the [Philosophy Learning and Teaching Organization](#) (PLATO) for the second consecutive year to support her WBLE course, Practicing Philosophy with Kids. This [course](#) currently meets weekly as an after-school club with twenty elementary students and will continue in the upcoming academic year. Dr. van Leeuwen discusses her project in a [recent interview](#) on WMRA's [“With Good Reason.”](#)

This wraps up a busy week, but I hope you aren’t too busy to send your accomplishments to provost@jmu.edu.

Sincerely,

Bob

Bob Kolvoord, Ph.D.
Professor and Interim Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs
James Madison University
(540) 568-3429
He/Him/His

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