

9/16/24 Academic Affairs Highlights

Dear Colleagues,

I'm happy to start this week by sharing some updates from my office and news of your peers' successes.

An Academic Affairs priority for the year is creating a coherent vision and path forward for us in the R2 space. You began this work last year with conversations in your academic units and colleges, and over the summer, Academic Council devoted time to working through the input you provided. Our goal was to develop a concise description of our approach and operationalization of research activities while maintaining our long-standing commitment to teaching. Below is the collaborative statement I shared with Academic Council this week.

As an R2 institution, JMU is committed to creating and sustaining an environment where faculty can invest deeply in their identities as teachers, scholars and creatives. As teacher-scholars, we embrace discovery and exploration across disciplines and borders in support of real-world impact.

JMU offers our faculty and staff the flexibility to grow and evolve across a career, and we understand that student-centered teaching, research and service are core to our educational mission. They can be integrated and should be celebrated. As we grow into the R2 space, our mission and vision remain the same, but opportunities expand as we reimagine the ways our work supports teaching, scholarship, creative activity and service.

Teaching: We value many forms of teaching that intersect with—and are enhanced by—our research, scholarship and creative activity. Inclusive high-impact pedagogies bolster student learning and critical thinking with respect to disciplinary content, as well as supplement skills development and workforce readiness.

Scholarship/Creative Activity: We involve students at all levels in scholarship and creative activity in collaboration with JMU faculty and staff. We value all forms of research and creative activity, including community-driven and interdisciplinary scholarship that responds to the needs of our community, commonwealth and beyond.

Service: Our service contributes to the operation of our institution and the well-being of its people. We also share academic expertise with organizations and community partners beyond the university and contribute to the betterment of our disciplines and fields.

This statement is intended to help every faculty member understand how their teaching and scholarship contribute to the greater university as we grow into the R2/national university designation. Thank you for your contributions to this effort. Moving forward, I encourage continued conversations within your individual colleges and units as you integrate this approach.

Here are some recent accomplishments from your peers.

- Congratulations to [Dr. Yonathan Admassu](#), Associate Professor of Engineering Geology, who won the [AEG Publication Award](#). This award is presented to the author(s) of the

most outstanding paper published in any Association of Environmental & Engineering Geologists publication during the fiscal year. You can view his winning article, "Possible Role of Internal Erosion for the Development of Ground Fissures Around Lake Ziway, Ethiopia," online at [GeoScienceWorld](#).

- New SMAD Assistant Professor [Michelle Herman](#) has been named a finalist in the [Lumen Prize](#), which is an international award for innovations in art and technology. There are [65 finalists published](#) on the website out of more than 2,000 applicants. Her [visual art](#) is algorithmically generated!

I look forward to celebrating more of your successes throughout the year and encourage you to submit items for yourself or your colleagues by emailing provost@jmu.edu.

Sincerely,

Bob

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