

JMU Research AIC Plan Updates

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Colleagues,

In support of James Madison University's R2 status, I am excited to join the Office of Research & Scholarship to announce two academic institutes and centers (AICs) that were competitively selected as the inaugural recipients of the JMU Research AIC Plan. The African, African American, and Diaspora (AAAD) Studies Center, an existing AIC led by Dr. Delores Phillips, will be elevated to a research center. The Center for Innovation in Early Childhood Development (CIECD), led by Dr. Maryam Sharifian, who currently serves as Director of Early Childhood Initiatives in the College of Education, will launch as a research center.

As it develops its research capacity, AAAD will complement their existing platforms, programming and wealth of expertise through research clusters and cohorts, individual and organizational grants, increased faculty-student research collaboration, direct support for publications and deliverables and graduate assistantships. These support mechanisms will further AAAD's internationally recognized leadership in "providing interdisciplinary knowledges, programming and initiatives related to the peoples of Africa and its diasporas."

As a new center, the CIECD will build from the educational foundation set forth 115 years ago with the creation of the State Normal and Industrial School for Women at Harrisonburg to establish "a platform for interdisciplinary research and practices to increase equity, quality, capacity and stability in Early Childhood Development through lifespan at the local, national and international levels." CIECD will achieve research center status through the integration of experimental and observational infrastructure, knowledge infrastructure and research cyberinfrastructure to grow the global knowledge base in early childhood development and education.

The big challenges and difficult problems of today benefit from innovative collaboration across disciplinary boundaries, which is a recognized strength of JMU faculty and students. Innovation and change-making responsiveness to local and global challenges and opportunities from inter- and multi-disciplinary perspectives are essential components of effective higher education and research impact. To realize this responsibility of the academy and of research, scholarship and innovation offices, JMU research centers should convene scholars, researchers and communities in collectives to examine and address 21st century challenges. Research centers should leverage the breadth and complementariness of intellectual capacity, experience and expertise; research instrumentation and infrastructure; and the diversity of human and physical communities and environments at a university. Achieving this status is the motivation and goal of the JMU Research AIC Plan.

I look forward to learning more about and participating in the activities of these research centers!

Sincerely,
Heather

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