

Institutional Peers Task Force Midyear Report

Fall 2023

Membership

Chair: Anthony Tongen, Vice Provost, Research, Economic Development & Innovation

Members: Brad Barnett, Access and Enrollment Management; Harold Butner, Faculty Senate; Art Dean, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Steve LaPorta, Athletics; Rick Larson, Human Resources; Jason McClain, Academic Resources; Bethany Nowviskie, Libraries; Martin O'Donoghue, University Advancement; Chris Orem, Planning, Analytics, and Institutional Research; Sam Prins, College of Science and Mathematics; Margaret Sloan, College of Business; Jeff Souder, Budget Office; Myles Surrect, Student Affairs; Linda Thomas, The Graduate School

Charge: The work of this committee is to advance the university's ability to make data-informed institutional improvements across campus by identifying National University/R-2 peer groups across a variety of areas including but not limited to research, academics, compensation and athletics. The work of this task force will provide JMU with tools to support university efforts to adapt to the changing needs of the Commonwealth and our students and will contribute to the establishment of our distinctive identity within the National University/R-2 community.

Summary of Current Semester Activity:

- During the first part of the fall semester, a subgroup of the IPTF convened to determine a process for identifying peer groups. Charged with developing an outline for a toolkit that would allow different entities on campus to develop different peer groups to serve specific purposes, the subgroup reviewed various types of peer groups that might need to be formed. The subgroup developed a document that outlined the various steps needed to form a peer group and reviewed a variety of approaches to forming peer groups, eventually recommending that the larger taskforce investigate the use of an analysis called Nearest Neighbors. To test the process, a team from PAIR applied Nearest Neighbors to a dataset that used the same weights and variables from the university's last peer group formation in 2015. The results of this analysis were shared at a full meeting of the taskforce.
- We held a meeting with the whole committee on 10/31/23 to hear a report from the subgroup (mentioned above). It was decided that the PAIR team would develop a set of common variables that are often used for peer group or rankings comparisons. To help move the task force forward, the next step is to have this group review these variables and individually identify variables that they think should comprise the data used to establish a comparative peer group.

Future Work Planned:

- We have scheduled three meetings for the spring semester to review variables, gather feedback from university leaders, and apply the Nearest Neighbors analysis to form a comparative peer group. We expect to have this peer group ready for review by the end of the spring semester.
- We plan to present an update to President's Cabinet during the spring semester.