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# Civic Engagement at James Madison University

SCHEV Report

Summer 2022

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James Madison Center  
for Civic Engagement



The Center for Assessment  
and Research Studies

## CONTENTS

Introduction .....	4
Civic Engagement at JMU .....	4
James Madison Center for Civic Engagement (JMU Civic) .....	4
About this Report .....	4
Programs & Assessment .....	5
What does JMU expect students to learn or to do? .....	5
What courses, experiences, or activities allow students to develop their knowledge and/or abilities in these areas? How do faculty and staff know whether—and how well—students have learned? .....	5
Programs & Program-Level Assessment .....	5
University-Level Assessment .....	5
Are the institution's expectations in these areas being met? .....	6
Reactions to program-level assessment results .....	6
Reactions to university-level assessment results .....	6
How does/will the institution use this information to improve students' educational experience and enhance future achievement? .....	7
Appendices .....	8
Appendix A: Voter Engagement Plan .....	9
The Program .....	9
Assessment & Results .....	10
Moving Forward .....	11
Appendix B: General Education's American Experience domain coursework .....	13
The Program .....	13
Learning Outcomes .....	13
The Assessment .....	13
The Results .....	13
Moving Forward .....	14
Appendix C: 2020 Census Programming .....	15
The Program .....	15
The Assessment .....	15
The Procedures .....	15
The Results .....	16
Moving forward .....	17
Appendix D: Traveling Town Halls .....	18
The Program .....	18
The Participants .....	18

The Assessment.....	18
The Results .....	19
Moving forward.....	20
Appendix E: Health Policy Summit .....	21
The Program.....	21
The Participants .....	22
The Assessment.....	22
The Results .....	22
Moving forward.....	26
Appendix F: Campus Climate Study Summary.....	27
Appendix G: Highlights of Findings from JMU’s University-Level Civic Engagement Assessments .....	30
Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement: Results from the Longitudinal Assessment of Three Student Cohorts at James Madison University .....	30
Civic Engagement Items administered on the Continuing Student Survey: Fall 2018 & Fall 2019.....	32
National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE): 2020 Civic Engagement Module Results.....	32
Civics Quiz Results – Spring 2018 .....	33
News Quiz Results – Spring 2018 .....	33
National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE): 2014 and 2017 Results of Core Survey Items related to JMU’s Civic Engagement Initiative.....	33

## INTRODUCTION

### CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AT JMU

Civic engagement is integral to the mission of James Madison University: “We are a community committed to preparing students to be educated and enlightened citizens who lead productive and meaningful lives.” JMU’s 2020-2026 strategic plan continues to emphasize civic engagement as a defining feature of the academic experience. The goals related to civic engagement include building capacity to institutionalize voter education and engagement as a year-round endeavor, supporting integration of civic learning in courses and academic programs, and advancing civic learning and democratic engagement opportunities across Virginia and the nation.

### JAMES MADISON CENTER FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT (JMU CIVIC)

The James Madison Center for Civic Engagement (JMU Civic) was established in 2017 to facilitate, coordinate and lead JMU’s civic engagement initiative. The mission of JMU Civic is to educate and inspire people to address public issues and cultivate a just and inclusive democracy. As a nonpartisan entity within the College of Arts and Letters, JMU Civic emphasizes the acquisition of knowledge to make one a more informed participant in our democracy, skills to make one a more effective participant, and values that embrace pluralism, open-mindedness, empathy, respect, diversity and inclusion. Specifically, JMU Civic builds year-round voter education and engagement initiatives with students, faculty and staff, integrates civic learning opportunities in courses and academic programs with faculty and departments across campus, provides resources for students to learn about and discuss public issues in an academic environment, collaborates with JMU’s Center for Assessment & Research Studies to assess campus-wide civic learning, and works alongside community, state and national partners on civic learning initiatives and events.

### ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report was authored by JMU Civic and the Center for Assessment and Research Studies at JMU. This report focuses on a mix of assessment endeavors at the university-level and program-level to provide a comprehensive view of civic engagement at JMU. Pages 4-6 consist of the main body of the report, with the remainder of the document consisting of Appendices with more detailed information. A brief video providing information overlapping with this report is available [here](#). Questions about this report can be directed to [civic@jmu.edu](mailto:civic@jmu.edu) or [assessment@jmu.edu](mailto:assessment@jmu.edu).



## PROGRAMS & ASSESSMENT

### WHAT DOES JMU EXPECT STUDENTS TO LEARN OR TO DO?

JMU Civic and other units and individuals across campus develop and support programming to help students achieve the learning and developmental [outcomes](#) of JMU's civic engagement initiative, which were created in Spring 2018. Our approach acknowledges the need for a foundational grasp of democratic principles, awareness of pressing public issues, and an understanding of how to engage political decision making across levels of government while also recognizing that meaningful engagement requires critical analytical and communication skills. Given the divisive and abrasive state of our democracy, we also emphasize dispositions such as empathy and open-mindedness and developing confidence in the ability to address public issues. Finally, we embrace the notion that students learn by doing and therefore incorporate civic behaviors into our learning objectives.

### WHAT COURSES, EXPERIENCES, OR ACTIVITIES ALLOW STUDENTS TO DEVELOP THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND/OR ABILITIES IN THESE AREAS? HOW DO FACULTY AND STAFF KNOW WHETHER—AND HOW WELL—STUDENTS HAVE LEARNED?

#### PROGRAMS & PROGRAM-LEVEL ASSESSMENT

JMU offers a wide variety of opportunities and a selection of programs is highlighted below. Click on the program to be directed to a description of the program, its specific learning and developmental outcomes, assessment methods and assessment results.

- [Voter Engagement Action Plan](#)
- [General Education's American Experience domain coursework](#)
- [2020 Census Programming](#)
- [Debate Across the Curriculum](#)
- [Traveling Town Halls](#)
- [Health Policy Summit](#)

Other programs are noted below. Click on the link for each program for further information.

- [Democracy Matters podcast](#)
- [Constitution Day events](#)
- [Madison Vision Speaker Series/ Democracy in Peril Speaker Series](#)
- [Tent Talks](#)



#### UNIVERSITY-LEVEL ASSESSMENT

In addition to the program-specific assessment highlighted above, in 2018 JMU participated in a multi-institutional study in partnership with AASCU's American Democracy Project and the Institute of Democracy in Higher Education at Tuft's University to understand our campus climate for political learning and democratic engagement. The eleven focus groups conducted with students, faculty and administrators provided a better understanding of JMU's opportunities and challenges. A summary of the results can be found [here](#).



Since 2017 we have also administered various assessments (e.g., Political Engagement Project Survey, NSSE-Civic Engagement modules, Civics Quiz, News Quiz) using institution-wide data collection procedures (e.g., Assessment Day, Continuing Student Survey). Assessments were administered to assess civic engagement programs and also to better understand JMU students' civic knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. Data have been collected on thousands of students and for some instruments, we've measured the same students repeatedly allowing us to explore change over time and across cohorts. Findings have been disseminated through numerous reports, presentations, and publications. A selection of findings is available [here](#).



## ARE THE INSTITUTION'S EXPECTATIONS IN THESE AREAS BEING MET?

### REACTIONS TO PROGRAM-LEVEL ASSESSMENT RESULTS

As noted in the program-specific summaries, most programs are encouraged by their results. All programs share the same goal, which is to prepare students to be active and responsible participants in a representative democracy dedicated to the common good. We are pleased with the extensive opportunities for political learning and democratic engagement on campus. Participation, however, is uneven across programs. All JMU undergraduates are required to complete the American Experience domain coursework in the general education program. Other programs are only experienced by a subset of students because participation is voluntary or because of the program's association with a particular academic unit. An ongoing challenge is how to reach more students.

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### REACTIONS TO UNIVERSITY-LEVEL ASSESSMENT RESULTS

The climate study results and results from large-scale administrations of assessments are both encouraging and concerning. The climate study indicates extensive opportunities exist, but uneven involvement, particularly if participation is not required. The climate study also revealed features of the campus climate and national political climate that are both challenges and opportunities. The large-scale assessment results are encouraging in that they indicate favorable changes over time, particularly for more recent cohorts and those who participated in civic engagement programming. The results, however, also suggest the typical JMU student is not as engaged, interested, or knowledgeable as they could be. Voting rates and voter registration rates are strong, but participation rates for other political activities are low.

## HOW DOES/WILL THE INSTITUTION USE THIS INFORMATION TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND ENHANCE FUTURE ACHIEVEMENT?

Program-level results are used by many individual programs to inform improvements. Collectively, the information we have gathered through program-level and university-level assessments has motivated us. It reveals there is much work to be done and reminds us the work is not easy. Importantly, it reminds us that students can develop their civic competencies and that many are hungry to do so.

In addition to using what we've learned to inspire us, we also want our results to inform. It is our hope that by sharing information through internal and external presentations, dialogues, reports and publications, that we can raise awareness, demonstrate our transparency, and serve as a resource both within and outside of JMU for civic engagement learning outcomes, programming, and assessment.

As higher education contemplates its role in strengthening democracy as part of its long-standing public mission, robust institutionalized approaches to curricular and co-curricular programming focused on educating and equipping students with political knowledge, skills, capacity, and agency to address pressing public problems have the potential to benefit students' civic learning and democratic engagement. Our work shows that campuses can effectively build and implement programs to strengthen political learning and engagement as a means to strengthen our democracy, even as it is being overtly threatened across several critical fronts.

## APPENDICES



## APPENDIX A: VOTER ENGAGEMENT PLAN

### THE PROGRAM

Although JMU has had a Voter Engagement Plan for several years only the 2020-2021 plan is highlighted here. JMU's [2020-2021 Voter Engagement Plan](#) emphasizes opportunities for students to acquire knowledge to make them informed participants and skills to make them more effective participants in democracy. Many of the plan's activities are facilitated by: 1) [JMU Civic](#), a nonpartisan entity housed in Academic Affairs that works in partnership with faculty, staff, and students, and with community, state, and national organizations to leverage the power of higher education to create a more just and inclusive democracy and 2) [Dukes Vote](#), a student-led initiative supported by JMU Civic that provides opportunities and programming to build capacity, knowledge, skills, and values that prepare students to be informed participants in democracy.

A selection of activities of the 2020-2021 Voter Engagement Plan are highlighted below:

- **DUKES VOTE WEBSITE** ([www.jmu.edu/vote](http://www.jmu.edu/vote)): Provided voter information and tools for the public's use. It included links to events, the online voter registration portal, a calendar of important dates, and other information regarding voting laws, polling locations and Voter ID requirements.
- **TENT TALKS**: This initiative entailed setting up tents weekly at key on-campus locations. The tents provided an opportunity for students to engage in facilitated student-led discussions about public issues. During election periods, including National Voter Registration Day, registration and vote-by-mail options were provided.
- **NEW STUDENT ORIENTATION**: Virtual Summer 2020 orientation programming included information to promote civic learning and voter registration. JMU Civic also trained Orientation Student leaders so they could assist incoming and transfer students with voter registration.
- **STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS**: JMU Civic & Dukes Vote reached out to every student organization on campus to ask them to ask their members to register to vote or check their voter registration. Dukes Vote volunteers offered to attend organizational meeting to register voters and attended Student Org Night.
- **OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES (ODS)**: Every student who used ODS was provided with the opportunity to register to vote. JMU Civic delivered the registration forms to the local registrar and followed-up with reminders to vote for all those who registered through ODS.
- **CLASS VISITS AND SYLLABUS STATEMENTS**: Through a campus-wide email, JMU Civic & Dukes Vote offered class visits to all JMU faculty. Class visits incorporated discussion of why voting matters, educated about voting processes and laws, provided time to answer questions, and registered voters in each class. JMU Civic provided important information regarding registration and elections for faculty to choose to include on course syllabi.
- **CANVAS MODULE AND GLOBAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**: JMU Civic & Dukes Vote created a Canvas (course instructional tool) site with a module available to all faculty and students with information and links to register to vote and update voter registration. Resources included videos and powerpoints, as well as social media graphics. JMU Civic also partnered with JMU Libraries and with the Registration system for a global announcement reminding students to check where they are registered and vote on Election Day.
- **NONPARTISAN CANDIDATE VOTER GUIDE**: In partnerships with an undergraduate Political Science course, students produced a nonpartisan guide of the candidates that was circulated on campus, in the community and posted online.
- **TRAVELING TOWN HALL**: In partnership with the Office of Residence Life, candidates or representatives of the candidates were invited to participate in a traveling town hall to residence halls and off-campus housing sites.

- **ELECTORAL BOARD AND HARRISONBURG REGISTRAR PARTNERSHIP:** JMU Civic continued its valued partnership with the local voter registrar and electoral board to ensure the voter registration efforts aligned with the registrar's needs. The local registrar and electoral board provided valuable guidance on registration processes and presentations to our students.
- **OTHER:** Other initiatives surrounding the election included a day-long party at the on-campus polling location, an election night watch party, a van to provide rides to polls, social media campaigns, and post-election discussion panels.

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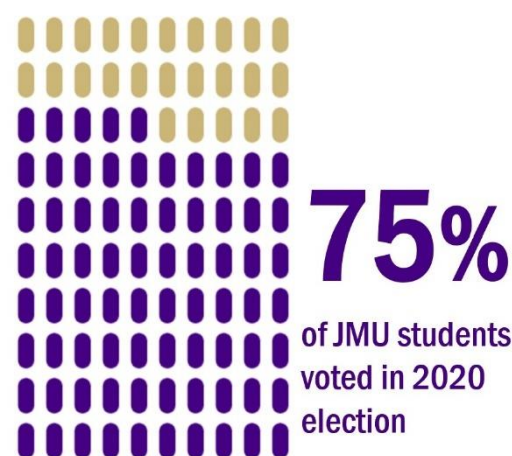
## ASSESSMENT & RESULTS

The Voter Engagement Plan is primarily assessed using the: 1) National Study of Voting, Learning and Engagement (NSLVE) and 2) Political Engagement Project Survey (PEPS). Each is described in more detail below.

### National Study of Voting, Learning and Engagement (NSLVE).

For several years JMU has participated in the National Study of Voting, Learning and Engagement overseen by the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education (IDHE) at Tufts University. JMU has participated for several years and the results publicly available [here](#). Universities participating in NSLVE receive reports after each national election (including midterms) that include their student registration and voting rates and how such rates compare to participating institutions.

Through NSLVE we learned that **75% of JMU students voted in the 2020 Election**, a **21 percentage point increase** in turnout from the 2016 general election and **9 percentage points higher** than the national average for higher education institutions. We also learned a record **92% of our students registered to vote in 2020**.



The NSLVE report also breaks down voting rates in various ways. For instance, the report provides rates by whether students are full-time or part-time and by field of study. These results be used to inform adjustments to voter engagement strategies and we have used them in such a way at JMU. For instance, when earlier reports indicated lower voting rates for students in the College of Business, JMU Civic responded by creating discipline-specific voter education materials in partnership with students.

**Political Engagement Project Survey (PEPS).** PEPS was created for the Political Engagement Project, which was a 2007 multi-institutional study of the effectiveness of 21 higher education programs focused on promoting political understanding and involvement<sup>1</sup>. It is a self-report instrument assessing a wide variety of behaviors, attitudes, and dispositions. Since Fall 2017, the PEPS has been administered to a random sample of students twice during their academic career: once as incoming first-year students during an institution-wide Assessment Day in August (Pre) and again as students with 45-70 credit hours during Assessment Day in February (Post). Because the same students took the PES twice during their undergraduate career, we've been able to investigate how civic knowledge, skills, dispositions, and actions change across time (within a cohort) and whether changes differ across cohorts.

An important use of the PEPS is to assess change over time for students with different levels of participation in many of the Voter Engagement Plan activities. To that end, during February (Post)

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<sup>1</sup> For further information about the measure, refer to: Beaumont, E., Colby, A., Ehrlich, T., & Torney-Purta, J. (2006). Promoting Political Competence and Engagement in College Students: An Empirical Study. *Journal of Political Science Education*, 2, 249-270.

administrations students also complete the Civic Engagement Index, which captures the kind of activities students participated in during the previous semester. Responses collected from 897 students in February 2021 suggest that the efforts of JMU Civic to promote political participation were effective. The majority of students reported engaging in discussion on and off campus about political and social issues or the election; 65% reported receiving communications; and slightly less than half self-reported registering to vote, updating their voter registration, or asking JMU Civic questions about voting.

To understand how engagement in JMU Civic activities may have affected change over time in student political learning and civic engagement, we analyzed student engagement in activities. We categorized activities in two ways: (1) those that involved discussing political or social issues or being aware of political information; and (2) more participatory acts (e.g., attending town halls). Although most of the programming was offered only virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we found discuss/aware activities more common than participation activities: 55% of students participated in four or five discuss/aware activities compared to 68% who took part in none or one of the participation activities.

We found that student engagement in activities was associated with positive change over time in many aspects of political learning and civic engagement<sup>2</sup>. Specifically, statistically significant results were obtained for 15 of the 29 subscales<sup>3</sup>. Analysis of survey results support that student engagement in either type of activity may positively affect the following indicators on our subscale: politically engaged identity, internal political efficacy, political interest, expectations for future political activities, perceptions of their competence with respect to the skills of political influence/action, and perceptions of their own foundational political-knowledge levels. We also found that involvement in discuss/aware activities but not participation activities may affect the following indicators on our subscales: students' moral identity, civic knowledge, and perception of how effective they perceive the political strategy of informing and collaborating with others to be. In addition, we found that student involvement in participation activities but not discuss/aware activities may increase both the extent to which students stay informed about political issues at the local level and how effective they perceive the political strategy of bringing public or institutional attention to issues to be.

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## MOVING FORWARD

The voting and voter registration rates from NSLVE are incredibly encouraging and support the continuation of the Voter Engagement Plan.

The PEPS results support the continuation of efforts at JMU that heighten student awareness about political issues through JMU-sponsored outlets (e.g., Canvas, email, social media) and encourage student discussion of political and social issues in person or through social media. These are Voter Engagement Plan activities promoting discussion and awareness. Although promoting awareness and discussion might not seem like “enough”, PEPS results indicated that many students are open to receiving political information and discussing it with others. Results also indicate that these activities to promote awareness and discussion might foster positive gains in political knowledge, skills, attitudes, perceptions, and dispositions.

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<sup>2</sup> Students twice completed 29 different subscales of political learning and civic engagement: as incoming first-year students in August 2019 and after they had completed 45 to 70 credit hours in February 2021. Two mixed-effects ANOVAs, one using discuss/aware activities as a factor and the other using participation activities as a factor, were conducted for each subscale. For all ANOVAs, the subscale served as the dependent variable and time, activity type, and their interaction served as factors. The majority of effect sizes were medium to large in size according to rules of thumb.

<sup>3</sup> The subscales examined included those on the Political Engagement Project Survey (Beaumont et al. 2006) and others created specifically to address our campus-wide Civic Engagement Learning Outcomes. Sample sizes for these analyses ranged from 314 to 641.

Other Voter Engagement Plan activities (e.g., viewing a movie/documentary, attending a Town Hall, reading a Voter Guide) required relatively more effort by students than the discuss/aware activities. Rather than passively receiving information or staring a conversation, most of these required student to do something. Our results suggest that even though fewer students engaged in these kind of activities (which might be partly attributable to COVID disruptions), engagement is worthwhile. We will continue to provide such opportunities and explore ways to increase participation.

## APPENDIX B: GENERAL EDUCATION'S AMERICAN EXPERIENCE DOMAIN COURSEWORK

### THE PROGRAM

JMU is one of three public universities in Virginia with required general education coursework in the American Experience domain. All students are required to complete a 4-credit hour American Experience course (HIST225, POSC225, or JUST225), which provides students with an understanding of the major themes and concepts that structure American life today.

- HIST 225 does so through a contextual and document-based study of the American historical experience that emphasizes the interaction of people, ideas and social movements.
- POSC 225 focuses on the evolution and contemporary operation of the American political system by examining its fundamental principles and current dynamics.
- JUST 225 frames questions regarding historic and contemporary events in terms of issues of justice, highlighting how societal structures interact with individual lives and vice versa.

The American Experience domain requirement is part of [Cluster 4](#) in JMU's general education program.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students completing an American Experience course of Cluster Four will be able to identify, conceptualize and evaluate:

- Social and political processes and structures using quantitative and qualitative data.
- Primary sources from diverse perspectives relating to American history, political institutions and society.
- The evolution of intellectual concepts shaping American democratic institutions, including issues involving power, inequity, and justice.
- The complexity and diversity of American politics, society and culture.
- Intentions and consequences of America's engagement in global affairs.
- How the historical exclusion of various social identities influences political, social, cultural and economic development.

### THE ASSESSMENT

The American Experience test (Version 4) is a 40-item multiple-choice assessment created by Cluster 4 faculty to assess the learning outcomes. The American Experience test is administered to a random sample of students twice during their academic career: once as incoming first-year students during an institution-wide Assessment Day in August (Pre) and again as students with 45-70 credit hours during Assessment Day in February (Post). Because the same students took the test twice during their undergraduate career, we're able to explore changes in scores across time for students who have and have not completed their American Experience requirement.

### THE RESULTS

Responses collected from students<sup>4</sup> tested in August 2019 (Pre) and February 2021 (Post) were used to answer two specific questions.

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<sup>4</sup> Only results from the FA19/SP21 cohort are provided in this summary. Students who completed more than 5 items per minute were excluded.

*Do students learn or develop more if they have taken more cluster-related courses?*

Students who had taken one of the American Experience courses scored higher than students who had not taken an American Experience course. Considering just the February 2021 (Post) data, 241 students had yet to complete the requirement and 350 students had already completed the requirement. Those who had completed the requirement had a higher average scale score<sup>5</sup> ( $M = 506$ ) relative to those who had yet to complete the requirement ( $M = 484$ ).

*Do students change over time in school?*

We expect that students who have completed a course in the cluster will perform better on the assessment in their sophomore/junior year (or whenever they have 45-70 credit hours) than they did as first-year students. Students who completed an American Experience course at JMU scored 24 scale-score-points higher than they did as first-year students, compared to a loss of 4 scale-score-points for those who had not enrolled in the American Experience requirement (students who had completed just under half the course gained about 26 points).

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## MOVING FORWARD

Faculty are pleased that students who have completed American Experience coursework show greater gains than students who have no coursework in American Experience. However, they have not discussed in depth whether the gains meet their expectations.

During the 2021-2022 academic year, the Cluster Four Committee revised the Learning Outcomes to incorporate more DEIJA<sup>6</sup> language which reflects the diverse topics and issues that Cluster Four courses address. These revisions demonstrate considerable reflection and thoughtful discussions. In the next year, Cluster Four faculty will be reviewing the assessment to check alignment with the revised Learning Outcomes. Additionally, these outcomes will provide guidance as faculty endeavor to incorporate aspects of DEIJA into their existing courses.

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<sup>5</sup> The scale for scale scores was chosen to have a mean of 500 and a standard deviation of 100 for incoming first-year students tested in the fall of 1999 and 2000 combined for the American Experience test. The newer tests (American Experience Version 4) has been equated back to this scale.

<sup>6</sup> DEIJA stands for diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and access.



## APPENDIX C: 2020 CENSUS PROGRAMMING<sup>7</sup>

### THE PROGRAM

In Spring 2020, JMU Civic and students in a political science course co-created and co-implemented the campus-wide 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program. Four learning objectives<sup>8</sup> were created to capture how individuals should change as a result of participating in the program. Specifically, participation in the program was intended to facilitate students' ability to:

- Identify important purposes of the census.
- Recall the logistics for participating in the 2020 Census.
- Identify what kind of information is being obtained from individuals on the 2020 Census and laws pertaining to the use of personal information.
- Participate in and understand the value of the 2020 Census.

Implemented during an exceptionally chaotic and uncertain time, the program centered efforts on understanding and addressing motivational and informational barriers students face to completing the census. A range of tactics were deployed as part of the program including:

- in-person and virtual classroom visits by trained student-leaders equipped with educational materials on the census
- in-person and virtual town halls with experts
- bus advertisements
- door hangers used for canvassing high density off-campus housing complexes
- a strategically designed social media campaign
- tabling at key events and highly trafficked public spaces on campus
- campus-wide emails and text messages with critical information and direct links to the census online portal
- a global alert for one week in April 2020 in the university's course instructional tool system
- a global reminder from the Registrar to complete the 2020 Census when students were registering for Fall 2020 courses or checking in for May 2020 graduation

### THE ASSESSMENT

Two measures were created for the program. The 15-item 2020 Census Assessment was created to assess the student learning objectives. The 2020 Census Program Participation Survey was developed to ascertain the extent to which students experienced and participated in activities developed for or promoted by the program.

### THE PROCEDURES

The 2020 Census Assessment was administered twice: once in early February 2020 during Assessment Day (pretest) and again in late April 2020 (posttest). A total of 1,947 students with 45-70 credit hours going into the Spring 2020 semester completed the pretest during Assessment Day in February 2020. In April 2020 all students at JMU (about 20,000) were sent an email inviting them to take the 2020 Census Assessment and 2020 Census Program Participation Survey. Participation was voluntary. The number of

<sup>7</sup> A manuscript with more details about the program and its assessment is under review.

<sup>8</sup>The program had more than four learning objectives; this summary only addresses the four listed here.

students choosing to participate in the posttest administration was low, which might partly be attributable to the mass disruptions caused by COVID19. Only 162 students participated and of those, only 122 had pretest data.

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## THE RESULTS

### ***What do students know and not know about the 2020 Census at pretest?***

Findings from the 1,947 students at pretest indicate many students are aware of the purpose of the census, but also reveal a troubling number of students who don't know what information is being collected and how that information is used. The results also indicated most students are unclear about the logistics for participation. Students fared much better on questions about the purpose of the census.

### ***To what extent does students' knowledge about the 2020 Census change over time?***

Change over time in 2020 Census knowledge was explored using the pretest/posttest data. More students obtained the correct answer at posttest on almost all items, with statistically significant gains on the majority of items.

### ***To what extent are students participating in activities developed for and promoted by the program?***

Although operating during a chaotic information environment, many students reported receiving communications that were part of program. For instance, 79% reported receiving a university-wide email about the 2020 Census, 69% saw a social media post (which may or may not have been from JMU), 64% saw an alert on the primary learning management platform (Canvas) at JMU, and 56% noticed an alert on the administrative platform for students (MyMadison), where they can register for classes, manage financial aid, apply for graduation, etc. A little less than half (46%) received information from their professors, and about one-third or less received a university text message (35%). Students also reported discussing the 2020 Census with others. More students reported discussing the census with their families (68%) or roommates/friends (44%) than discussing with students in their classes (20%) (note, however, that class meetings moved to virtual-only format during this time).

### ***Is change in knowledge about the 2020 Census related to participation in program activities?***

Changes in knowledge were not associated with participation in program activities. Many program activities (e.g., emails, social media alerts) were designed to raise awareness and share resources, but did not require students to carefully digest or study the information provided in the resources. Although it is possible program activities designed to facilitate more meaningful engagement with informational materials increased knowledge, the study design did not permit quality assessment of such activities.

### ***Did students complete the 2020 Census and is completion related to participation in program activities?***

The ultimate goal of the program was to promote completion of the 2020 Census. In April of 2020, 57% of students in the pretest/posttest sample reported completion. This rate is encouraging given that it was based on data collected soon after the 2020 Census participation window opened and as students were inundated with messages about the global pandemic and needing to make alternative living arrangements.

Unlike knowledge, participation in particular activities was associated with 2020 Census completion. Some activities associated with census completion were part of the program (e.g., alerts on the university's administrative platform). Other activities associated with completion may or may not have been part of the program (e.g., social media alerts). Still other activities were heavily promoted by the program, but may or may not have occurred as a result of program participation (e.g., discussing census with others).

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## MOVING FORWARD

Many of the program elements that were easy to implement and able to reach a large number of students (e.g., emails, social media posts) were designed to increase awareness about the census, but may have limited utility in fostering meaningful changes in knowledge about the 2020 Census and logistics for participation. Program elements with the potential to alter such outcomes (e.g., participating in virtual classroom discussion, watching a video about the 2020 Census) were not as widespread and often relied on voluntary participation. We suspect these program elements affected knowledge and 2020 Census completion and regret not collecting data immediately before and after such activities to capture their effectiveness. Showcasing the effectiveness of such activities would provide a solid argument for their future implementation, ideally required of all students.

On the whole, results from the pretest administration strongly suggest the need for census education and engagement programming targeted to college students. Results also suggest that knowledge is malleable, providing further support for program development and implementation. In addition, our findings suggest that higher education can impact census completion and take a range of actions to support the census. We hope other colleges and universities consider implementing programming to increase knowledge about and participation in the next decennial census.

## APPENDIX D: TRAVELING TOWN HALLS<sup>9</sup>

### THE PROGRAM

On Monday, October 7, 2019, JMU's Traveling Town Hall featured candidates for Virginia's 25th House of Delegates District **Delegate Tony Wilt** and **Brent Finnegan**. Candidates traveled to three different residence halls at James Madison University to engage directly with students about the issues that matter ahead of the state elections on November 5. The candidates stopped at Apartments on Grace St. at 6 pm, Wayland Hall at 7 pm and Shenandoah Hall at 8 pm.

#### Student Learning & Developmental Outcomes

As a result of participating in JMU's Traveling Town Hall, **students will be:**

- more knowledgeable about elections, state government/issues in Virginia, political issues in general, and the candidates who participated in the event.
- more interested in political issues, more likely to discuss political issues with others, and more likely to take political action.
- more understanding of people with differing political perspectives.



### THE PARTICIPANTS

About 50 students participated in the Traveling Town Hall at each of the three locations.

### THE ASSESSMENT

A short 14-item survey was created to obtain students' perceptions of how they were affected by the town hall experience, whether they would recommend it to other students, and what they liked (or did not like) about the experience. A paper copy of the survey was available with a QR code, allowing respondents to complete their survey using the paper copy or online.

The plan was to disseminate the surveys after the candidates were finished answering questions, with an announcement informing the students to complete the survey before they left. Unfortunately, the students left immediately after questions concluded. Surveys were passed out as students were leaving, but not all participants received a survey and no announcements were made encouraging students to complete the survey. This resulted in a very low response rate, with only 6 students completing the survey (3 using the paper copy and 3 using the online form).

The results below should be considered with extreme caution given the incredibly low number of respondents. Suggestions for improving assessment procedures are provided in the **Moving Forward** section of this report.

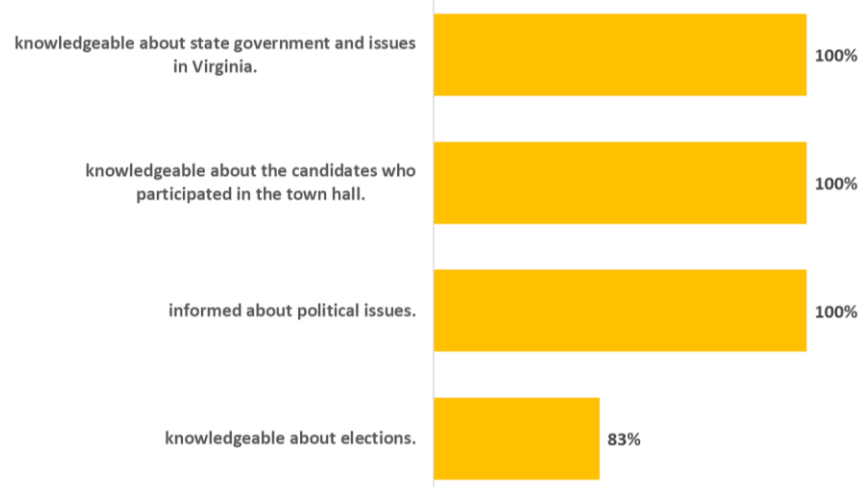
<sup>9</sup> Traveling Town Halls have been offered since Fall 2019; only Fall 2019 is provided here as an example.

## THE RESULTS

Overall, the results are very positive. Results for each item set are provided below. The values in each graph represent the percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed with the item.

### Students are more knowledgeable as a result of participating in JMU's Traveling Town Hall.

As a result of participating in this town hall, I am more:

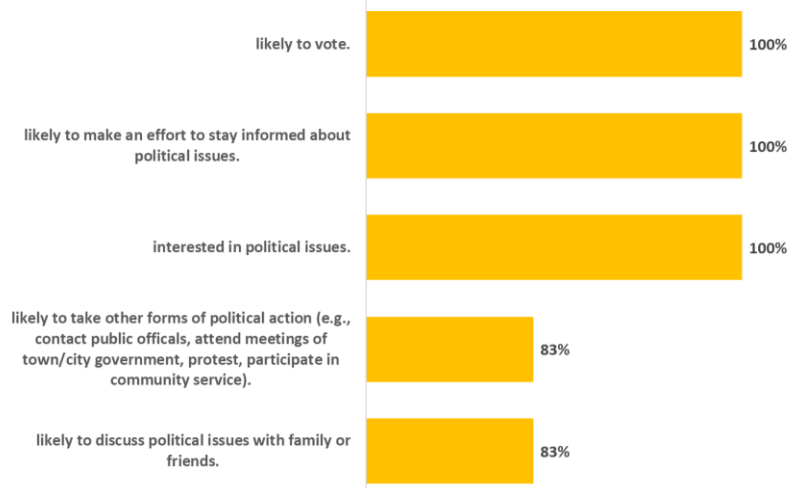


All respondents reported that participation in the event increased in their knowledge about state government/issues in Virginia, political issues in general, and the candidates who participated in the event.

83% reported increased knowledge in elections.

### Students are more interested and likely to take political action as a result of participating in JMU's Traveling Town Hall.

As a result of participating in this town hall, I am more:



All respondents reported that the Town Hall experience increased their interest in political issues and increased their likelihood of staying informed and voting.

A slightly smaller percentage (83%) indicated that participation increased their likelihood of discussing issues with others and taking political action (outside of voting).



In addition, **100%** of students report they are more understanding of people with different political perspectives as a result of participating in JMU's Town Hall.

Left: JMU students participating in October 2018's Traveling Town Hall. Photo credit: whsv.com

Other results:

- Students were also asked if participating in the event affected who they planned on voting for. 2/3 of students said participation did affect who they would vote for in November.
- We also asked students whether participating in the Town Hall changed their perceptions of how attentive they believe governmental officials are to the concerns of college students. 1 in 3 students changed in their beliefs as a result of the event, viewing governmental officials as more attentive to the concerns of college students.
- 100% of respondents indicated they would recommend the experience to other students

### MOVING FORWARD

An obvious flaw with the FA19 assessment of the traveling town hall is the approach used to disseminate surveys and encourage responses. In future years, the survey should be disseminated *before* the town hall, as students are arriving, with an announcement made at the beginning encouraging students to complete the survey before they leave. Because both paper and pencil and online modes responding were used in FA19, paper copies with the QR code should also be provided in future years.

**Traveling Town Hall**

**Candidates are coming October 10! Join us for FREE PIZZA & make informed Election choices!**

**Candidate Stops:**

- 6-7 pm Grace Street Apartments (Enter through main entrance in the courtyard, accessible from the front of the building)
- 7-8 pm Eagle Hall (Enter through main entrance on construction side of building)
- 8-9 pm Shenandoah Hall (Enter on the E-Hall side of the building, walk down through courtyard to the Multipurpose Room.)

**Senate Candidates**

- Tim Kaine Democrat
- Corey Stewart Republican
- Matt Waters Libertarian

**Congressional Candidates**

- Jennifer Lewis Democrat
- Ben Cline Republican

**Harrisonburg City Council Candidates**

- Carolyn Frank Independent
- Sal Romero Jr. Democrat
- Frank McMillan Independent
- Paloma Saucedo de la Pena Independent
- Christopher Jones Democrat

Brought to you by:  
JAMES MADISON CENTER  
FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT,  
DUKES VOTE and

**ORL**  
OFFICE OF RESIDENCE LIFE  
JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

Flyer for October 2018's Traveling Town Hall



## APPENDIX E: HEALTH POLICY SUMMIT

### THE PROGRAM

**Note: Health Policy Summits have been offered since Fall 2019; only Fall 2019 is provided here as an example.** The Health Policy Summit (HPS), in its 7th consecutive year, takes place in October and March for approximately 370 students each year in business, health sciences, nursing, occupational therapy, public policy and social work. Students draw on their varied expertise and come together for one interprofessional (IPE) and interdisciplinary 3-hour event to develop creative proposals to address the Opioid crisis in Virginia. Proposals are put into poster format, displayed around the room and shared with legislators in attendance.

As a result of participating in the Health Policy Summit, students will:

- develop an appreciation for the variety of knowledge and skills in their own and other professions by working in interprofessional teams
- increase their skill in building relationships by working with their teammates prior to, and during, the bi-annual Health Policy Summit
- develop an understanding of the role of a citizen in addressing public concerns and taking action on social problems.
- develop a foundational understanding of the opioid epidemic and the prevention, emergency and interventional approaches.
- be more motivated to stay informed and more confident, motivated, and comfortable to take political action to address community health problems

Students with the best proposals, as determined by their peers utilizing the [8 Key Questions](#) as a framework for decision making, present their proposals to legislators in attendance.

### PROPOSALS FROM OCTOBER 2019 PARTICIPANTS

**23 International and Border Shipment Task Force**  
A task force consisting of USPS, DHS, CBP as well as private sectors for international shipments of synthetic opioids, funded by fees on international shipments by the end of 2019.  
Target group: international drug traffickers  
Screening of: the bill was passed in a previous form, making this bill politically feasible (authority)  
Cost: Screening tools, employees, mail delays, liberty, loss of international trust  
Funding: Fee on all international shipment increased (fairness)  
Outcomes: ↓ in illegal opioid shipments into the U.S., ↓ of availability of opioids in the ↓ opioid related deaths, ↑ employment opportunities  
Responsibility: Joint effort between all agencies to protect shipment

**Group #15**  
To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to incentivize the use of non-opioids to treat long term pain through the use of Medicare subsidies. One way to account for these subsidies is by placing a cap on outpatient departments for the number of opioid prescriptions to treat long term pain. A mandate should be put in place that if an opioid is prescribed, a non-opioid option must also be given to improve patient education and choice.  
8 Key Questions:  
- Fairness - everyone in our target groups given the same options  
- Outcomes - shape medical practices towards the use of non-opioids to treat long term pain  
- Responsibility - of the doctors to provide better patient education  
- Liberty - providing more choices for the patients  
- Empathy - make an option that considers all socioeconomic statuses  
- Authority - rely on expertise of doctors to provide education to all patients  
- Rights - everyone deserves a choice  
COST: From 2019-2028 CBO estimate is 180,000,000 allocated to Medicare subsidies. This can be offset by our proposed tax on opioid prescriptions.  
Feasibility: We do believe that our mandate to provide higher quality patient education is more than possible.

**GROUP #25 THE MAT ACT**  
Proposal: amending HRS46 to allocate the 20 million dollars from the DoD towards opioid addiction treatment in the U.S. as opposed to the original plan to address trafficking.  
Problem: lack of treatment options for opioid addiction.  
Target Groups: addicts, families of addicts, physicians  
Plan of Action:  
- More "Medication-Assisted Treatment" (MAT) facilities  
- more education towards certifications regarding prescription treatment drugs for healthcare providers  
- increase in # of inpatient rehab/treatment programs  
Expected Outcomes:  
- short term: increase in certified providers, better access for those in need of treatment, loss of military funds  
- long term: reduced # of Americans addicted to opioids, reduced crime rate, reduced # of drug overdoses & death

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## THE PARTICIPANTS

180 undergraduate students participated in the event in Fall 2019. 90 of the students were from nursing, 30 from social work, 30 from public policy and the remaining students were from business, health sciences and occupational therapy programs. These programs represent three colleges within James Madison University – the College of Business, College of Arts and Letters and the College of Health and Behavioral Studies. The students were all currently enrolled in a policy related course such as Health Policy, Social Policy, Community Health Nursing or Health Economics and participated in the Health Policy Summit as part of their coursework.

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## THE ASSESSMENT<sup>10</sup>

After the conclusion of HPS in Fall 2019, participants were asked to complete a short survey. Of the 180 participants, 140 completed the survey, yielding a 78% response rate. Three different sets of items were administered. In the first set, students were asked if the HPS experience increased their knowledge and understanding. In the second set, students were asked if the HPS experience affected their civic self-efficacy, motivation, and sense of social responsibility. The third set of items inquired more about the logistics and structural features of the summit.

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## THE RESULTS

Overall, the results are very positive. Results for each item set are provided below. The values in each graph represent the percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed with the item.



Participants in the March 2019 Health Policy Summit.

Photo credit: <https://www.jmu.edu/news/chbs/2019/04-16-health-policy-summit.shtml>

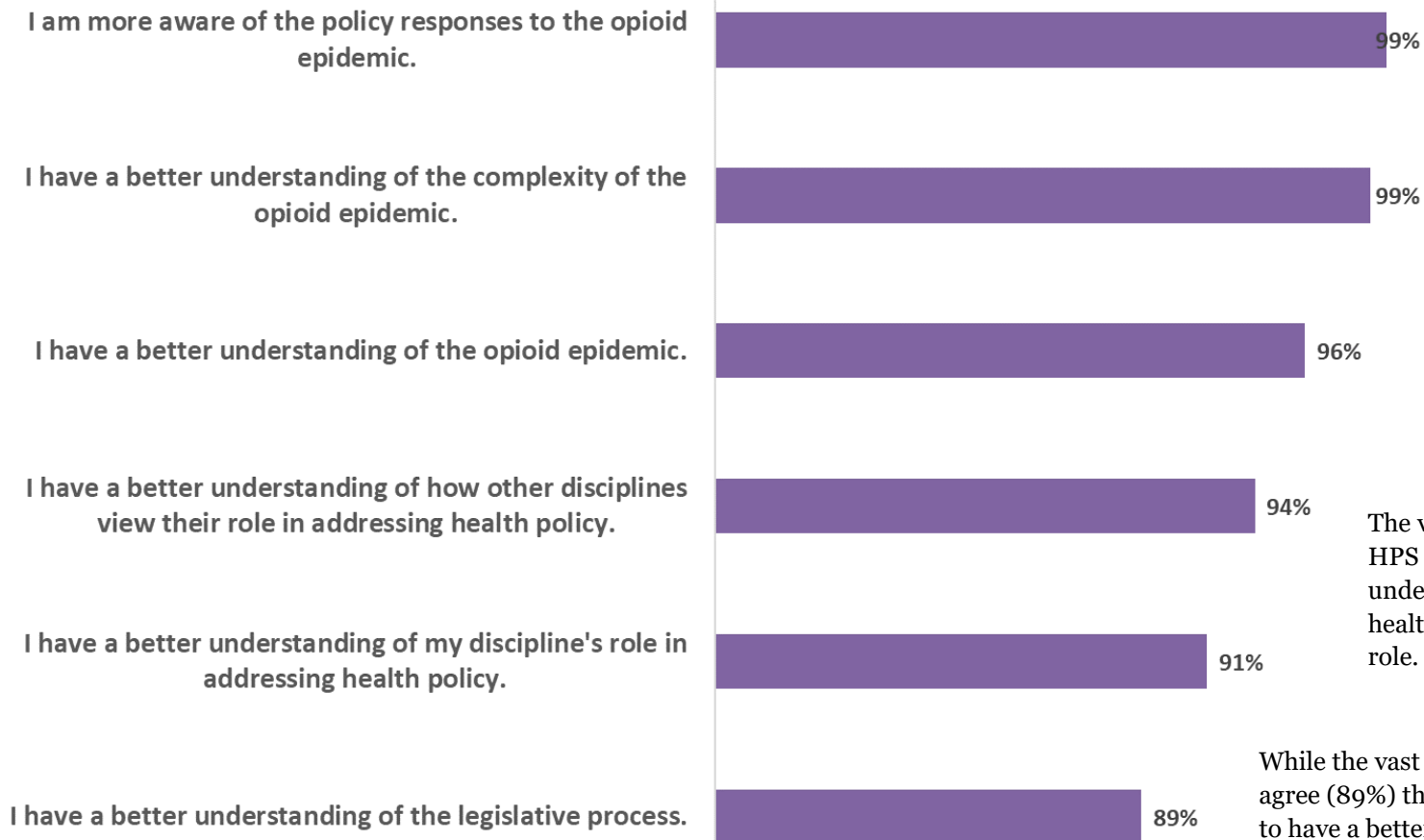



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<sup>10</sup> This report describes only the assessment approach utilized in Fall 2019. Other assessment approaches were used in previous years.

## The Health Policy Summit increases students' knowledge and understanding.

As a result of my experience in the HPS:



Almost all students report that HPS allowed them to have a better understanding of the opioid epidemic, its complexity, and policy responses to the epidemic.

The vast majority of students also agreed that the HPS experience allowed them to have a better understanding of their discipline's role in address health policy and how other disciplines view their role.

While the vast majority of students agree or strongly agree (89%) that participating in HPS allowed them to have a better understanding of the legislative process, 11% disagreed with this statement. It might be worthwhile to consider increasing the emphasis on this topic in future summits.

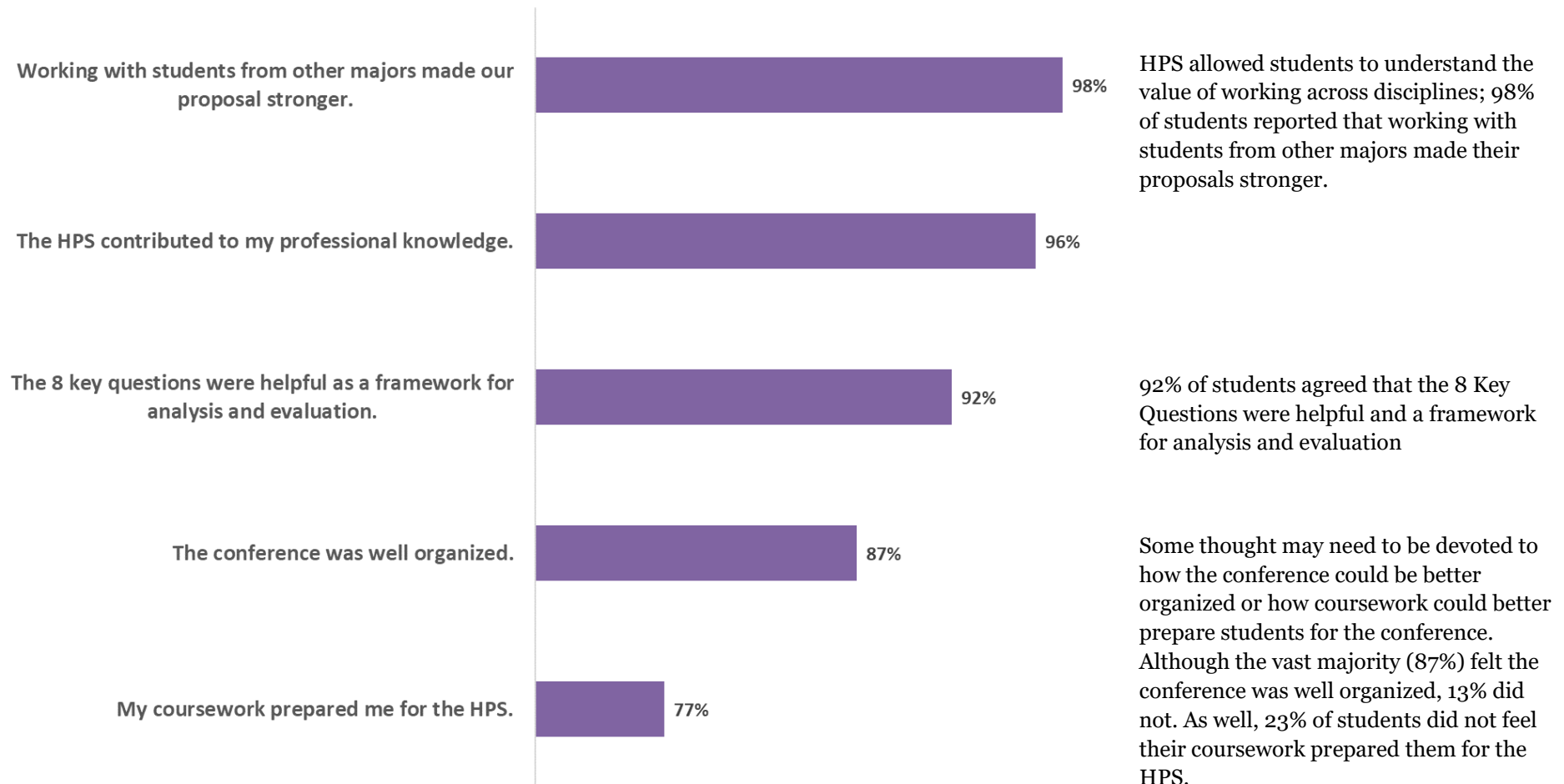
## The Health Policy Summit increases students' civic self-efficacy, motivation, and sense of social responsibility.

As a result of my experience in the HPS:



Almost all students agree that the HPS made them feel more comfortable, confident and motivated to stay informed about community health issues and take political action. 95% also agreed that the HPS experience made them more aware of the value of making a difference in the lives of others.

**The Health Policy Summit helped students see the value of working across disciplines to address public health issues and the utility of Ethical Reasoning in Action's 8 Key Questions in evaluating policy.**







Participants in the March 2019 Health Policy Summit.

Photo credit: <https://www.jmu.edu/news/chbs/2019/04-16-health-policy-summit.shtml>

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## MOVING FORWARD

Faculty are encouraged with the results of the evaluation from the Health Policy Summit. Trends in the data show that students are more informed and more confident to address these important health related needs. The results are very high, though this could be due to the fact that most of the students are enrolled in health or policy related course and therefore have a predetermined interest in the topic. These results will be integrated into future plans for the Health Policy Summit – specifically around incorporating more coursework to prepare students for participation in the summit and to ensure that activities are organized to maximize the short amount of time available for the summit. Some classes will be hosting a guest speaker on basic health care or including a more thorough understanding of the opioid crisis prior to the event. In the past, students have also struggled with the organization of the event. It has become much more efficient in response to prior years feedback in assigning students tables ahead of time, extending the time for developing their proposal and moving to group voting on posters rather than individual voting. This may contribute to the relatively high score of 87% of students saying the conference was well organized.



**APPENDIX F: CAMPUS CLIMATE STUDY SUMMARY**

# CHALLENGES TO POLITICAL LEARNING & DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT AT JMU

Results are based on focus groups with administrators, faculty, staff and students to understand whether the climate at JMU is conducive to student political learning and participation in democracy



## OUR PARTNERS



**11** 2-hour  
focus  
groups

- Students (4 groups) & Student Leaders
- Student Affairs Personnel
- Vice Provosts & Deans
- Department Heads & Center Directors
- Madison Center Advisory Board
- Faculty-tenured
- Faculty-untentured



### KEEP IN MIND

- The findings are based on consistent themes that emerged across focus groups, but the results might not generalize to the entire JMU population.
- The themes are the perceptions of the focus group participants as interpreted by the analysts.
- The findings indicate that some aspects of JMU's campus climate do not support – or may even inhibit – the potential for student political learning and engagement.

## FINDINGS



Many opportunities exist at JMU for political learning and engagement, but participation is not pervasive



Student interest in political learning and democratic engagement is mixed



In-class discussions about political/societal issues are challenging



Varying perceptions exist regarding JMU's policies on free speech and activism



JMU's political climate is affected by the national political climate



Many features of JMU's climate likely affect political learning and democratic engagement on campus

## Student interest in political learning and democratic engagement is mixed



Results suggest students are engaged, as evidenced by their involvement in community service and volunteer work. Their engagement, however, is usually not political.

Students indicated their interest in political and societal issues is not higher because they:

- don't see how issues affect them,
- don't know how to address issues, or
- don't believe their actions would make a difference.

Some students want to avoid politics altogether.

Other students were focused on the private benefits of a college degree and commented that they will worry about “being the change” after graduation when they have a job and money.

*“We are citizenship without politics: we are citizens – we get engaged, but we don’t take the next step of getting our hands dirty, going to town meetings, writing letters, protesting and making ourselves a nuisance to make change.”*

*-Focus group participant*

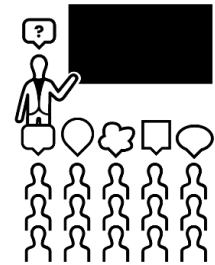
## JMU's political climate is affected by the national political climate



Results suggest growing interest in politics and increased civic engagement on campus since the 2016 presidential election. At the same time, results indicated that hyperpartisanship and the national political environment have made it difficult to engage in discussions about political and societal issues.

### In-class discussions about political/societal issues are challenging

Many students perceive in-class discussions about political/societal issues as uncomfortable and risky. Students provided various reasons for why they are hesitant voicing their opinions in class:



- not wanting to express that they hold a minority view or what is perceived as being a minority view,
- not wanting to express views they perceive as counter to the professor's opinion,
- fearing being attacked for their views,
- not wanting to offend other students at a time when they are forming a community of friends, and
- fearing that discussions will get out of hand.

Faculty voiced concerns about:

- having the skills to successfully facilitate in-class discussions about political/societal issues, and
- a fear of reprisals from students and the university.

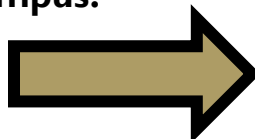
### Many features of JMU's climate likely affect political learning and democratic engagement on campus.



Participants reported that the JMU culture is generally one of respect, kindness, and caring. This culture may help attract faculty and students to JMU.

Some described JMU as being overly concerned with its image — both with the physical appearance and the university's reputation.

Others characterized JMU as being risk-averse and rule-bound.



Some participants described the flip side of this genteel JMU culture in more negative terms — including its role in inhibiting political discussion.

Maintaining the public image of JMU as a beautiful place where everyone is happy may negatively impact attempts to discuss difficult political/societal issues.

This risk aversion may be discouraging active participation in political discussions and other efforts related to democratic engagement.

## APPENDIX G: HIGHLIGHTS OF FINDINGS FROM JMU'S UNIVERSITY-LEVEL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENTS<sup>11</sup>

Since 2017 James Madison University has administered various assessments (e.g., Political Engagement Project Survey, NSSE-Civic Engagement modules, Civics Quiz, News Quiz) using institution-wide data collection procedures (e.g., Assessment Day, Continuing Student Survey). Assessments were administered to assess civic engagement programs and also to better understand JMU students' civic knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. Data have been collected on thousands of students and for some instruments, we've measured the same students repeatedly allowing us to explore change over time and across cohorts. Findings have been created and disseminated through reports, presentations, and publications.

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### CIVIC LEARNING AND DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT: RESULTS FROM THE LONGITUDINAL ASSESSMENT OF THREE STUDENT COHORTS AT JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

As part of a collection of assessments used to inform the civic engagement initiative at JMU, the Political Engagement Project Survey<sup>12</sup> (PEPS) was administered to a random sample of students twice across multiple cohorts: once as incoming first-year students during Assessment Day in August (Pre) and again as students with 45-70 credit hours during Assessment Day in February (Post). Because the same students in different cohorts took the PES twice during their undergraduate career, we were able to investigate how civic knowledge, skills, dispositions, and actions change across time (within a cohort) and whether changes differed across three cohorts<sup>13</sup> (FA17/SP19, FA18/SP20, FA19/SP21).

When considering cohort differences in change over time, we were particularly interested in the FA19/SP21 cohort. While every cohort has its unique challenges, the FA19/SP21 cohorts' initial years at JMU were marked by several noteworthy events likely to have impacted their civic learning and democratic engagement. In addition, more recent cohorts are more likely to have benefited from the programs and changes in campus culture provided by the [James Madison Center for Civic Engagement \(i.e., JMU Civic\)](#), founded in 2017.

The main findings below suggest more favorable changes in civic learning and democratic engagement during students' initial years at JMU for the FA19/SP21 cohort.

- Across cohorts and time, students more frequently discuss and pay attention to political issues at the national level than at the international, state, or local levels. Only the FA19/SP21 cohort increased over time in how often they discussed and paid attention to political issues.
- Across cohorts and time, students reporting feeling more knowledgeable about political issues at the national level than at the international, state, or local levels. The percentage of students who reported feeling knowledgeable about local, state, and national issues increased over time only for the FA19/SP21 cohort. No cohort reported a sizeable increase in knowledge about international issues.

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<sup>11</sup> Questions? Contact Dena Pastor, Associate Director of Assessment Operations in the Center for Assessment & Research Studies at James Madison University at [pastorda@jmu.edu](mailto:pastorda@jmu.edu).

<sup>12</sup> The PEPS was created by Beaumont, Colby, Ehrlich, and Torney-Purta (2006)<sup>12</sup> for use in the Political Engagement Project, a 2007 multi-institutional study of the effectiveness of 21 higher education programs and courses focused on promoting political understanding and involvement. The original and modified versions of the PEPS have been administered during several Assessment Days at JMU.. The reference for the citation above is: Beaumont, E., Colby, A., Ehrlich, T., & Torney-Purta, J. (2006). Promoting Political Competence and Engagement in College Students: An Empirical Study. *Journal of Political Science Education*, 2, 249-270.

<sup>13</sup> Because not all cohorts completed all items, some cohort comparisons were not possible.

- Students are somewhat more inclined to believe they will engage in electoral activities (e.g., voting) in the future than political voice activities (e.g., protesting). Only the FA19/SP21 cohort increased over time in their expectations to engage in political activities in the future.
- Across cohorts and time, political participation is rare. Students were asked how often during the past 12 months they had participated in 21 political activities. The average scores for 18 activities across cohorts and time indicated that students, on average, had either not participated in these activities or had participated, but not within the past 12 months. On average, students participated in these four activities the most often in the past year (but still only 0 to 1 times): community service/volunteer activities for generally non-political organizations or programs, political consumerism (buycotting/boycotting products because of the company's political or social values) and promoting a cause on social media. For both cohorts, engagement in political consumerism and social media promotion increased over time, while community service/volunteer activities decreased.
- Students were asked to rate their competence with respect to the following general political skills: collaboration/teambwork, communciation/leadership, political analysis/judgment, and political influence/action (e.g., knowing whom to contact, developing strategies, and organizing people for political action). Across cohorts and time, students felt the least confident in their political influence /action skills. Cohort differences in change over time were observed for three of the four skills, with only the FA19/SP21 cohort increasing in these skills over time.
- Students were also asked to rate how well they could do each skill from [JMU's Civic Engagement learning outcomes](#). Across time and cohorts, over 50% of students claimed they could do 10 of the 12 skills well or very well. Skills in which the fewest students feel competent are those having to do with speaking and writing effectively in forums appropriate to civic life and public affairs. Change over time was similar across cohorts, with the exception of skills pertaining to ethical reasoning. The percentage of students confident in their ability to apply ethical reasoning skills to political life increased over time, but only for the FA19/SP21 cohort.
- Across cohorts and time, students reported moderate levels of current events knowledge and foundational knowledge (e.g., political organizations, theories, institutions). Only the FA19/SP21 cohort reported significantly higher levels of knowledge at posttest.
- Students were also asked to rate their level of knowledge for each knowledge outcome from [JMU's Civic Engagement learning outcomes](#). For all outcomes, at least 44% of students across time and cohorts claimed moderate or in-depth knowledge. Across cohorts, a slighter larger percentage of students claimed they were knowledgeable at posttest for 7 of the 12 outcomes. On the remaining 5 outcomes, larger percentages were found at posttest, but only for the FA19/SP20 cohort.
- Although all cohorts begin JMU considering political involvement as somewhat central to their sense of self, only the FA19/SP21 cohort considers political involvement to be *more* central to their sense of self over time.
- Although both the FA17/SP19 and the FA19/SP21 cohort began their career at JMU feeling moderately confident in their ability to comprehend and influence politics, only the FA19/SP21 cohort feels *more* confident over time.
- Strategies to influence political outcomes include those used to inform others, collaborate with other people, or bring public or institutional attention to issues. Although all cohorts perceive these strategies to be fairly effective when they begin JMU, only the FA19/SP21 cohort perceives these strategies to be *more* effective over time.
- While the FA17/SP19 cohort decreased over time in how important they felt various influences (e.g., passion, perceived impact, personal satisfaction) were in motivating their political or social action, the FA19/SP21 cohort either did not change or felt the influences were *more* important over time.
- Across time and cohorts, students feel the JMU faculty, staff, or administration would pay a fairly considerable amount of attention to their concerns, the local government would pay a moderate amount of attention, and that the national government would pay almost no attention. With respect to cohort differences and change over time, perceptions regarding JMU faculty, staff, or administration did not differ across cohorts, but did decrease over time. Perceptions regarding the local government decreased over time for all cohorts, except the FA19/SP21 cohort who remained stable. Perceptions regarding the national government decreased over time for the FA18/SP20 cohort, but remained stable for the FA17/SP19 and FA19/SP21 cohorts.

Although we do not know for sure why the FA19/SP21 cohort changed in more favorable ways relative to the other cohorts, we anticipate it is a function of noteworthy events, on campus and beyond, that occurred during this cohort's initial years at JMU. The full report includes results of additional analyses that suggest changes over time

for the FA19/SP21 cohort are more favorable for those who engaged in activities promoted and provided by the [James Madison Center for Civic Engagement \(i.e., JMU Civic\)](#). Thus, a contributor to the more favorable changes for the FA19/SP21 cohort might be the presence of a center whose mission is to educate and inspire people to address public issues and cultivate a just and inclusive democracy. Although the center existed at JMU for all cohorts, time was needed to fully establish the center and for its influence on the campus culture to take hold. For these reasons, the FA19/SP21 cohort may have reaped more benefits from the center's existence than earlier cohorts.

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#### CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ITEMS ADMINISTERED ON THE CONTINUING STUDENT SURVEY: FALL 2018 & FALL 2019

- Items inquiring about JMU students' civic and political participation were administered on the Continuing Student Survey to Freshman, Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors in Fall 2018 and Fall 2019 to 1246 students.
- Results indicate infrequent attention to and discussion about government and public affairs by the typical JMU student. The majority (or near majority) of students make attempts to stay informed and discuss issues with others only once a month or less.
- Responses to items about staying informed and discussing issues did not differ by class level (e.g., freshman, sophomore, junior, senior), admission type (transfer vs. non transfer), race (white vs. non-white), or sample (Fall 2018 vs. Fall 2019). Some gender differences were found; males stay informed more often than females, but males and females do not differ in how frequently they discuss issues. Political party affiliation only distinguishes how often students stay informed about *local* issues, with Independents engaging more often in this activity than Republicans or Democrats.
- Students were also asked how frequently they engaged in 22 other civic and political activities (beyond voting, staying informed, and discussing issues). We found the majority of students (>50%) have *never* participated in most (20 out of 22) behaviors.
- Although very few students have taken civic or political action, for those who have, participation differs depending on political party affiliation (with Independents participating more frequently in most activities) and to a lesser extent on gender (with males participating in different ways than females). Participation is less dependent on race, when the data were collected (i.e. sample), class level (e.g., freshman, sophomore, junior, senior), and transfer student status (i.e., admission type).

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#### NATIONAL SURVEY FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT (NSSE): 2020 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT MODULE RESULTS

- ~1037 Freshmen and ~985 Seniors volunteered to complete the survey in Spring 2020; when possible, results were compared to those obtained in 2014
- *How do students rate themselves with respect to their civic skills?*
  - On average, students rate themselves as above mediocre with respect to their civic skills, which include resolution skills, leadership skills, constructive dialogue skills, and ability to help their community. Seniors rate themselves slightly higher than Freshmen. (Results are similar to those in 2014.)
- *What are students' perceptions of JMU's emphasis on engagement?*
  - About 50% or more of students perceive JMU as emphasizing civic engagement. Freshmen perceive greater institutional emphasis than Seniors. (Results cannot be compared to 2014.)
- *What are students' perceptions of encouragement to address social, economic, or political issues?*
  - Over half of students report that they are encouraged to address social, economic, or political issues in course assignments, in course discussions, and outside of class. (Results cannot be compared to 2014.)
- *What is the nature of students' civic engagement?*
  - The vast majority of students report informing themselves about campus/local/state/national/global issues and discussing issues with others. They engage far less frequently in the more effortful activities that involve raising awareness, asking others to address issues, or organizing others to work on issues. (Results are similar to those in 2014.)
- *Do Seniors differ from Freshmen with respect to the frequency with which they engage?*
  - Seniors and Freshmen do not differ in the frequency with which they engage with local or campus issues. This differs from 2014, where Freshmen engaged less often than Seniors with



local or campus issues. The departure between the 2014 and 2020 results are driven by differences between the 2014 and 2020 Freshmen, with 2020 Freshmen engaging more often with local or campus issues.

- Seniors more frequently stay informed and discuss state, national, or global issues relative to Freshmen. Freshmen and Seniors engage equally in the extent to which they take action to address state, national, or global issues. Relative to 2014, 2020 Freshmen and Seniors are engaging in all of the activities more frequently. Freshmen in 2020 are also more likely than Freshmen in 2014 to take action to address state, national, or global issues.
- *Do students care equally about campus/local issues and state/national/global issues?*
  - Both Freshmen and Seniors report more frequently discussing, informing themselves, and raising awareness about state, national, or global issues than about campus or local issues.
  - Both Seniors and Freshmen ask or organize others to address campus or local issues as frequently as they ask or organize others to address state, national, or global issues.
  - These results differ from those in 2014 in that 2020 students, particularly Freshmen, are placing a greater emphasis on state, national, and global issues than campus or local issues.

#### CIVICS QUIZ RESULTS – SPRING 2018

- Results are provided for 371 students with 45-70 credit hours who completed the [Civics Quiz](#) during Assessment Day in Spring 2018.
- On average, students are correctly responding to 7 of the 10 items. Because the items are easy, the average 70% correct score is underwhelming.
- Readers can take the Civics Quiz, obtain feedback on their performance, and see the results of JMU students by accessing this [link](#).

#### NEWS QUIZ RESULTS – SPRING 2018

- Results are provided for 371 students with 45-70 credit hours who completed the News Quiz during Assessment Day in Spring 2018. The News Quiz is a modified version of the [New York Times' 2017 in Review Special News Quiz](#)
- On average, students are correctly responding to 5.82 of the 10 national news items and 2.72 of the 10 international news items. Such results suggest less than ideal levels of staying informed, particularly to international news events.
- Readers can take the News Quiz, obtain feedback on their performance, and see the results of JMU students by accessing these links: [national news quiz](#) and [international news quiz](#).

#### NATIONAL SURVEY FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT (NSSE): 2014 AND 2017 RESULTS OF CORE SURVEY ITEMS RELATED TO JMU'S CIVIC ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE

- Results are provided on NSSE core survey items identified by Kinzie and Thomas (2017)<sup>14</sup> as being related to civic learning and democratic engagement. analyses considered whether item responses differed by class level (First-Year student vs. Senior) and/or cohort (2014 vs. 2017).
- In both 2014 and 2017, over half (54-70%) of First-Year students reported frequently trying to understand someone else's views, connecting their learning to societal problems/issues, or including diverse perspectives in their course materials/lectures. A significantly larger percentage of Seniors (62-81%) reported the same.
- Over 70% of both First-Year students and Seniors in 2014 and 2017 reported having discussions often or very often with people who differ from themselves in political views, religious beliefs, race/ethnicity, or economic background.
- In both 2014 and 2017, about 70% of First-Year students perceived JMU as frequently encouraging contact among students from diverse backgrounds. Fewer seniors (54-60%) felt the same way.

<sup>14</sup> Kinzie, J., & Thomas, N. (2017, June). *Educational practices that relate to civic gains and voting rates: Lessons from NSSE & NSLVE*. Presentation at the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement conference, Baltimore, MD.

- 10% more students in 2014 (63%) than in 2017 (53%) felt JMU frequently emphasized attending events that address important social, economic, and political issues. Within both cohorts, 10% more First-Year students than Seniors felt encouraged to attend such events.
- In both 2014 and 2017, about 55% of First-Year students and about 73% of Seniors felt their experience at JMU contributed to their ability solve real-world problems.
- In both 2014 and 2017, slightly more seniors (71%) than First-Year students (65%) felt JMU contributed to their development as an informed and active citizen.
- Across cohorts and classes, 65% of students felt JMU contributed to their understanding of people of other backgrounds.

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