Employee
Advisory Committee

2024-2025 Annual Year-End Report

Mission of the EAC

The JMU Employee Advisory Committee (EAC) reports to the President of the university in order to foster open, honest and productive communication between employees and the university administration with an emphasis on matters of concern to all employees. The EAC fulfills its mission by assuming additional responsibility for the following activities: providing feedback and advice to the Senior Leadership Team regarding issues that impact JMU employees and facilitating two-way communication with the campus community through electronic and verbal methods; facilitating staff employee participation on University Committees and Commissions.

2024-2025 Key Activities

- The Employee Advisory Committee (EAC) met on the first Wednesday of the month throughout the academic year.
- Re-wrote the mission and guidelines of the EAC to better reflect the current work of the committee.
- Organized sub-committees to research potential recommendations to senior leadership (see addendum).
- Updated the EAC website to reflect the changes we had implemented as a committee.
- Met with David Kirkpatrick, Chief of Staff, during the December meeting to discuss the role of the EAC. Added Brandi Duncan, Director of Engagement, as an ex-officio member of the EAC.
- The EAC received updates on the Compensation Advisory Council (CAC) from Rick Larson, AVP of HR, Training, and Performance during the December meeting.
- Chris Orem, Executive Director of PAIR, presented to the EAC at the February meeting to discuss the University's Strategic Plan. The EAC was invited to provide feedback for the SWOT Analysis.
- Co-chairs Kerri Wilson and Chris Ouren served on the CAC throughout the year, providing input from the EAC members.
- Kerri Wilson and Chris Ouren participated in the planning and implementation of the inaugural Dukes Remembrance Day.
- Kerri Wilson and Chris Ouren served on the University Planning Team to help implement the SWOT Analysis and Strategic Plan for the incoming president.

Needs

- The EAC continues to seek out opportunities and resources to better connect with the employees of JMU. It will be important to hear from the President's office moving forward to see how they think the EAC can support the work of Senior Leadership.
- The EAC has space for 5 members that will need to be filled:
  - Due to restructuring of the term limits, no staff is falling off the EAC
  - New members should be a mix of different classifications, divisions, colleges, and tenure of employment.
  - Under-represented divisions include Advancement and Athletics. Instructional Faculty and Wage are the classifications of biggest need.

Tentative Plans for 2025-2026

- Monthly meetings to continue the first Wednesday of each month:
  - Sept. 3, Oct. 1, Nov. 5, Dec. 3, Feb. 4, Mar. 4, Apr. 1, May 6.
- Request an update from the Office of the President on the status of the prior year's recommendations as well as direction on how the EAC can support Senior Leadership.
  - Recommendations that are accepted by Senior Leadership should be communicated to the EAC so that there is not overlap in responsibilities.
- Invite presentations from campus leaders on a range of topics such as Advancement, campus planning, strategic plan, etc.
- Have at least one update from the Compensation Advisory Council.
- Continue to advise senior leadership and make recommendations as needed.

2024-2025 EAC Members

Last Name	First Name	Employee Type	Department
Dirks	Jim	Staff	Human Resources
Duncan	Brandi	AP Faculty	Office of the President
Harper	Steve	Instructional Faculty	Engineering (Faculty Senate)
Koon	Mindy	Staff	University Studies
McAvoy	Colleen	AP Faculty	Financial Aid & Scholarships
Morgan	Rob	Staff	Computing Support
Ouren	Chris	AP Faculty (co-chair)	University Health Center
Phillippi	Matt	Staff (co-chair)	Financial Reporting
Purington	Sandra	Staff	WRTC
Roberts	Laresa	Staff	Engineering
Snyder	Kelsey	AP Faculty	Residence Life
Wilson	Kerri	AP Faculty (co-chair)	Admissions
Yang	Henry	Instructional Faculty	Libraries

Division	No.
Academic Affairs	5
Access and Enrollment Management	2
Administration and Finance	3
Advancement	0
Intercollegiate Athletics	0
Office of the President	1
Student Affairs	2
Total	13

Classification	No.
Administrative & Professional Faculty	5
Instructional Faculty	2
Staff	6
Wage	0
Total	13

- EAC members who left the committee in 2024-25:
    - Matt Phillippi (left the University)
- EAC members who have indicated they will not be returning for 2025-26:
    - N/A
- The EAC has five openings to fill for the 2025-26 academic year.

EAC Employee Engagement Subcommittee

Recommendations for FY 2024-2025

We would like to respectfully submit these recommendations to the Office of the President for James Madison University EAC:

1. We recommend that the funding of IBA's be prioritized by creating a permanent line item in the university budget. We realize this has been a recommendation in the past from the EAC and would like to keep it at the forefront.
2. We recommend that the President and his leadership team be available for pop-up appreciation events throughout the year, events that are geared to both specific audiences and all JMU faculty and staff. This may include something like an ice cream day on the quad in the Summer or handing out free coffees prior to departmental meetings (finance forums for FM meetings?), and/or visiting various departments/offices to say thanks to folks working and to help make personal connections. An extension of this is for leadership to also hold off on their lunch after the Presidential Welcome Address and take time to talk to JMU faculty and staff in line waiting for lunch – we believe this small effort would go a long way to building good will.
3. We believe the Duke2Duke program needs some revision as the current emails that are sent out seem impersonal. We recommend that the university continue to fund the project, but alter its implementation by providing divisional leaders with blank Duke2Duke cards and envelopes that JMU faculty and staff can pick-up to send to a colleague on campus through campus mail or hand delivery. We believe handwritten notes from the individual that wants to acknowledge a colleague would be most meaningful. Each division can keep track of who is picking up cards and whom they are acknowledging so that the president can select one or two Duke2Duke recipients to recognize quarterly (or bi-annually – each semester).
4. We recommend continuing/re-implementing the Pack the Park events and promoting them more to create an exciting game day experience for the student athletes and a community-building experience for Faculty/Staff.
5. We recommend that thought be given to how staff are contacted about their perks for JMU Service Anniversary dates and Birthdays. Right now, information is emailed from the auto_notification@jmu.edu email via HR and we believe many folks may miss this email. Perhaps time could be taken to print out the perks for folks and send it to them at their MSC? It could be as simple as folding the piece of paper in half, stapling the bottom, and writing the name and MSC on the outside of the paper. We believe this would increase the use of the perks and also help folks feel more acknowledged/appreciated.
6. We recommend that the EAC consider a once a semester newsletter that is shared with JMU faculty and staff and also posted to the website. This newsletter would be sharing important campus updates, how to connect with the EAC, and also tidbits on campus programs that are available to staff and faculty (such as meal plans, the Rose Library Makery, Bookstore discounts, etc.).

EAC Subcommittee: Attendance Incentives for Dependents of Employees

This is a truncated version of the recommendation made through the CAC.

For years, there has been an ongoing discussion among various university populations and committees regarding Tuition Assistance for Dependents of Employees. Unfortunately, the possibilities always stop at the budget level because as a state institution we cannot discount tuition. Then conversation shifts to scholarships and as an institution the number of available scholarships is a work in progress, and there is never an abundance of funds to distribute. The current state code (Code of Virginia: 23.1-612 Unfunded Scholarships) permits the creation of unfunded scholarships for purposes of tuition and fees remission; however, such scholarships cannot be designated or earmarked for specific populations (i.e. dependents of employees).

Recognizing the difficulties associated with the aforementioned tuition remission, we'd like to reframe the conversation to focus on something that could be within the university's control in order to provide a benefit to employees that incentivises their college bound dependents to choose to attend JMU. Providing enhanced employee benefits packages often aids efforts to recruit and retain high-quality employees and boosts employee morale. A JMU Attendance Incentive Program for dependents provides an additional benefit for employees that encourages their college bound dependents to stay in the area and experience the premier institution that sits in their own backyard.

What is happening around the Commonwealth:

There are a couple institutions in the commonwealth that have scholarship funds earmarked for dependents of their employees, funding sources may vary. George Mason's is a need-based scholarship to close any gap that remains after all other funding resources have been secured. Virginia Tech's is a partial scholarship based on funds available. A couple other institutions have been a little more creative. Longwood waives the comprehensive fees for spouses and dependents of full-time employees. Old Dominion extends the credit hour benefit (similar to what JMU offers for employees) to dependents and spouses of full-time employees. JMU has an opportunity to follow one of the examples set by ODU or LU or it can set its own path with more innovative options. If we look beyond our Virginia Peers, we can find many additional examples of potential options. One being West Virginia University, which offers a designated amount of money per dependent of an employee to be used each year/semester with a maximum, lifetime amount. Others extend their employee benefit to spouses and children.

The following are ideas to be considered:

Option 1: Match Contribution
JMU currently provides an option for full-time employees to take advantage of a match contribution into the 403B or 457 Deferred Compensation up to $20. Full and Part-time employees also have an option to contribute into a 529 Education Savings Plan, as a benefit. Would it be possible for the employee to elect the “Match” contribution to go towards one or the other?

Option 2: Housing Allowance

JMU actively promotes the benefits of living on campus for first year students. Studies and statistics demonstrate higher success rates academically, socially and emotionally among students who live on campus. Students that live on campus meet more people, develop deep, meaningful, long lasting relationships, they get involved with more activities, have greater awareness and access to resources, and utilize those resources with more regularity than students living off-campus. At JMU, it is a requirement for all first-year students to live on campus, with the exception of those who live within a 60-mile radius of campus. If an employee’s dependent decided to attend JMU and there was a need or desire to reduce costs, a viable option would be to live at home and enroll as a commuter student, thus missing out on fundamental aspects of the Madison Experience. If JMU were to offer a one year room award to dependents of employees for their first-year, it would incentivise those students to choose JMU and ensure they had the same experience as every other first-year student. The student would be required to have a meal plan while living on campus (see option 3). This benefit would only apply to employees with dependents under a specified age.

Option 3: Housing and Food Allowance

A student living on campus is required to have a full meal plan. Awarding an employee’s dependent with one year of housing and the meal plan would be an increased benefit, and a greater incentive for that dependent to attend.

Option 4: Comprehensive Fees Waiver

Included in the cost of attendance is the University’s Comprehensive Fees, which is a set amount of money separate from tuition. Another incentive option for dependents of employees would be to waive the Comprehensive fee, for one, two, three, or all four years. (This is what Longwood University does for any dependent that is a full or part-time student).

Option 5: Set Amount Award

Offering a set amount of money per dependent would provide an incentive to attend yet would not be attached to any specific cost of attendance. It would be easier to manage and establish funds within the budget. The amounts could be set to be a one-time award per dependent or a set amount to be distributed by a set number of years for each dependent.

Option 6: Expansion of the Employee Tuition Waiver Benefit

This would be an expansion of a benefit that already exists for employees. Extending the ability for dependents and spouses of eligible employees to use The Tuition Waiver & Reimbursement program.

Additional Data:

The following information came from the Office of Admissions. It relies on applicants that self-report a parent that is employed by JMU, in addition to a meta search for jmu.edu email addresses among the applicants/admits/matrics. This is also missing high school graduating class of 2024.

The number of dependents of employees that are or are approaching college age can vary year to year. The chart below shows the number of dependents that applied to JMU, how many were accepted, and how many matriculated from 2013 to 2023. This does not show the total number of eligible dependents of employees by year.

HS Graduation Yr	Applied	Admitted	Matriculated
Class of 2013	48	40	27
Class of 2014	55	47	28
Class of 2015	48	32	21
Class of 2016	58	54	37
Class of 2017	43	35	26
Class of 2018	50	40	22
Class of 2019	49	43	27
Class of 2020	70	62	38
Class of 2021	49	45	24
Class of 2022	35	27	17
Class of 2023	16	10	10
11 year total:	521	435	277
Average:	47	40	25