GENERAL EDUCATION Engage, Educate, Enlighten

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GenEd Night at the Forbes Center

The Program's teaching faculty will once again be treated to an evening of food, fun, and festivity. This year's performances will be *The Wild Party* (a musical) or JMU's own brass band. Look for your email invitation soon!

The View from Maury Hall



Now that December has arrived, I'm seeing more students outside my window wearing long pants, boots, hoodies, hats, and coats. They lose some of their individuality all bundled up like that. I can't see their hair color or their faces or their limbs. When they come into the GenEd office for help, they remove a layer or two in the course of presenting their specific situation. Some seek overrides into closed Spring semester courses, some need permission for transfer courses they plan to take next summer, while others have just frantically realized ---thanks to the graduation application process - that they have an incomplete requirement or two (or in one case, nine). Although the same pattern of requests occurs at this time every year, almost every student now asks for an override, approval, waiver, permission, or exemption

on the basis of financial need. "But I already paid for this class at [fill in the blank] and I don't see why JMU won't accept it." "But it costs a lot less to take classes at a community college over the summer." "But I can't afford to stay another semester and take more classes." I am troubled by how identical their pleas are, despite their unique, individual circumstances.

According to the National Scorecard referenced on the university homepage, JMU looks pretty good as far as expense goes. Average cost here is \$17,924 (that's about, ahem, average for a public institution like us), our graduation rate is high, our student debt rate is low, and starting salary after attending JMU is \$53,400. Yet a recent report by JMU's Office of Institutional Research offers a more complicated picture. "Between 2006-07 and 2012-13 ... the average financial aid package, regardless of need, increased by 28 percent. The average aid package for students with need increased by 26 percent. Total aid and loans used by students and parents increased by more than 50 percent." "Research Notes", Vol. 28, No 1 (Aug. 2014) Many of these students are probably working more, too, to keep debts down. A new study by the Center for an Educated Workforce at Georgetown University,

"Learning while Earning: The New Normal" (2015), shows that about half of all undergraduates in the US now work full time while taking classes full time. No wonder JMU students want to maximize their tuition dollars.

The General Education program can't alleviate these economic concerns, but we are beginning to make changes that reflect the current climate. For example, inside you'll read about a new 300-level critical thinking course that we're piloting just for transfer students, who typically enter JMU with a lot of community college credit. You'll also read about curricular revisions by faculty seeking to make existing courses more culturally diverse and more topically relevant while maintaining our customary academic rigor. There's also a piece on recent debates over the value of a college degree, and one on the Student Conference, which showcases the wide range of marketable competencies that accrue to our graduates, from oral presentation skills to knowledge of Latin American cultures and global population problems. As always, you can find out more from our website where you'll find additional updates plus resources for students, faculty, and staff.

Wishing you a warm and peaceful winter,

Our People

Meg Mulrooney History Associate Vice Provost University Programs

Gretchen Hazard **Communication Studies** Cluster One Coordinator

Dennis Beck Theater and Dance **Cluster Two Coordinator**

Scott Paulson Physics **Cluster Three Coordinator**

Skip Hyser History **Cluster Four Coordinator**

Georgia Polacek Health Sciences **Cluster Five Coordinator**

Tanya Fitzpatrick Administrative Assistant

Bigger than Ever: The Student Conference

The 11th annual General Education Student Conference was a great success. Despite a dreary, rainy October day, over 150 students participated - the most in the history of the conference - and there were 38 sessions of presenters representing courses from all 5 clusters of General Education. Over 40 faculty nominated students for the conference, with many moderating the session with their students. Both student and faculty participation was nearly double from last year.

As usual, the conference had a wide range of presentations. For example, some session titles were: "Connecting Ideas: Astronomy Concepts beyond Science", "The American Experience: Capitalism, Media, and Pharmaceuticals", "Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Latin America", "Using Reliable Sources to Answer Beautiful Biological Questions", "Digital Literacy", "American History, Ibooks and a Pinch of Creativity: Students Building Content in History Class". There were also presentations on diverse issues like analyzing the historical

accuracy of some Hollywood films, the critical issue of population in the 21st century, examinations of artwork, analysis of ancient Greek and Roman culture, and an interpretative dance about philosophy, a global citizenship project, evaluating primary sources in history, the intersection of pop culture and the media as well as a discussion about the General Education program in Scotland from the perspective of student participants.

A special feature of the 2015 conference was a plenary session on "The Value of a Liberal Education." President Jon Alger opened the session with a video and brief remarks about the skills. knowledge and experiences that a liberal education provides after college. With Associate Vice Provost Meg Mulrooney moderating, a panel of faculty who were either recent finalists or recipients of the General Education Distinguished Teacher Award, discussed the importance of General Education courses. These faculty included: Tim Ball (Communication Studies), Joy

- Skip Hyser, Cluster Four Coordinator

Ferenbaugh (Integrated Science and Technology), Kristen St. John (Geology), Kathleen Ferraiolo (Political Science), David Daniel (Psychology). For a detailed summary of their remarks, see http://www.jmu.edu/stories/ academic-affairs/2015/10-19-unst. shtml. The General Education Program wishes to thank all of these individuals for participating in the conference.

The General Education Student Conference helps JMU communicate the continued importance of a liberal education and highlight the exceptional work accomplished by undergraduates in General Education courses. We are proud of the academic work in these courses, as these endeavors create an intellectual foundation for life. The conference concluded Friday evening with a fine banquet that honored the accomplishments of the student presenters, their parents and the faculty nominators. Dr. Deborah Warnaar, recipient of the General Education Distinguished Faculty Award and lecturer in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, offered the keynote address.



Students in Dr. Michael Moghtader's WRTC 103: Critical Reading and Writing class created digital projects instead of traditional essays. Their conference session included multiple computer stations where audience members could navigate the students' websites.



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Please join us in congratulating the student presenters:

Jasur Abdullin Anthony Addeo Myranda Allen Juan Carlos Alonso-Caraveo Kayla Amico Ashley Anderson Hannah Angel Alex Astarita Florence Babatunde Sharon Bae Caitlyn Barras Jade Belcher Elizabeth Bevington Natalie Birkelien Grace Blackburn Emma Bleznak Julia Brodley Aryn Brondolo Carrie Brooks Luke Brower Jonah Butler Matthew Callahan Chloe Campbell Sarah Canning John Carr Anna Cassidy Alyssa Centanni Kayla Chonoles Kayla Cosner Katherine Crusco Devin Curco Nicholas Dalv Julia Danis Ariana Dellinger Harit Dhingra Adam Diehl

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Sara Kraeutler Sarah Lake Victoria Lamb Xavier Lambert Jaimee Lantzy Annie Le Milos Lesevic Julia Lewis **Riley Lopez** Blake Mabe Kristin Mack Lauren Makely **Claire Martin** Maddie Massari Dansen Mavhav Alexandra McCoy Kailey McCullen **Rebecca Meadows** Kia Miles Erinn Miller Gabby Molite Amelia Morrison Esrael Muche Kimberly Murphy Harrison Naftel Carly Neville Melanie Odenkirk Sarah Orthwein Philipa Owusu-Antwi **Emily Olivier** Hunter Pickrel **Charlie Phillips** Macv Pniewski Meredith Popernack Becky Reid Marisa Righi Kaitlyn Riley

Faith Ripa KayIn Robertshaw Maddy Robbins Kateland Rojanavongse James Rollin Jake Roman Morgan Rose Shannon Sacco Dorothea Sayre Sarah Scribano Abilene Schiefer Steven Schmitt Melany Schwarz Lindsey Schwenger Simonia Sharma Ashley Shiels Daniel Showeman Robyn Smith Patricia Soriano Rachel Stukenborg Erin Sullivan Kenny Temsupasiri Ashley Thompson Lexie Thrash Andrew Tomassone Emma Vance Yasmine Vaughan Ryan Wardak Sari Wexler Lauren Wheeler Faith Whittemore Emma Whitten **Claire Williams** Victoria Wimmer Erin Winans **Brandon Withers** Isabella Young

The presentation itself was the most rewarding part of the experience, as it really solidified for me that the GenEd program has a tangible impact in shaping the skills and knowledge that I get out of attending JMU.

- Adam Deihl

Economics major Adam Diehl made two presentations at the 2015 conference

Presenting in front of fellow colleagues and parents was the most rewarding aspect as it was an opportunity to take pride in some of my own projects." "General **Education courses** provided critical thinking skills outside of my major and the projects from these courses were very thought provoking in terms of outside-thebox ideas. These courses should not be looked down upon.

> - Jae ho Kim Biology major Jae ho Kim ('15) made two presentations at the 2015 conference

Thank You! Let us extend a special thanks to faculty members who nominated students from their General Education courses and gave them the opportunity to share their academic achievements beyond the classroom.

Danielle Abraham Michael Allain Tim Ball Terry Beitzel Kevin Borg Rebecca Brannon Daisy Breneman Anca Constantin Brooke Covington Chris Davis Jennifer Diggs Terry Dobransky Sheila Fielding T.J. Fitzgerald Dolores Flamiano Evan Friss Michael Galgano Mollie Godfrey Robert Goebel Shah Mahmoud Hanifi Kevin Hardwick Gretchen Hazard

- Yongguang Hu Carol Hurney Skip Hyser Rebecca Lustig Jim McGinnis Kristen McCleary Michael Moghtader Debali Mookerjea-Leonard Shaun Mooney Uchenna Onuzulike John Ott
- Aaron PeeksMease Heidi Pennington Jessica Stewart Mary Thompson Michael Trocchia Jay Varner Emily Westkaemper Kristin Wylie

Cross-Cultural Perspectives Courses in Transition

How is it possible to unify a course taught under multiple section topic headings by faculty from three different units? Such was the challenge engaged through a GenEd summer grant awarded to Cluster Two directed toward the course HUM 252, Cross-Cultural Perspectives. Taking an interdisciplinary approach to the study of cultures or regions commonly referred to as non-Western, each section of the course centers on a different culture or set of cultures (e.g., Turkey, Global South Asia, Modern China, Latin America, Islamic Civilizations). With instructors from Foreign Languages, Literatures and Cultures; History; and Philosophy and Religion, as well as a decade since the course outline designed to unify the sections had been revised or widely distributed, sections had begun to drift from the objectives and intended emphases of the course.

To examine the problems and devise solutions, faculty who teach HUM 252 sections met with Cluster Two Coordinator Dennis Beck in two separate groups during May and June of 2015. Outcomes exceeded the grant's stated purposes to revise the course outline to make it current, create means of effectively informing faculty about the purposes and expected components of the course, increase faculty investment, draft recommendations for instructors, make instructors aware of the General Education endorsement requirement for new sections, and finally consider new regions/topics beneficial to the global reach of future section offerings. Additionally, the course title (now Global Cultures) and description were revised, more specific course objectives devised, and suggestions to the Cluster Coordinator made

of methods for maintaining alignment of course sections.

The June session, conducted within the context of the Center for Faculty Innovation's course redesign institute called jmUDESIGN, was especially beneficial, not only to the general course revisions but the individual instructors and their sections. Most importantly, the intensive session helped focus attention on two key questions: how to increase students' investment in the course, and how to ensure that faculty will find the new material compelling enough to integrate it into their current courses.

The first area, student investment, was addressed through the application of specific pedagogical principles. Learning objectives were reformulated using active verbs and used to

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produce assessments that reinforced the value of the course through active learning. A sample assessable activity ----"Finding Your Other" showcased this approach by using a semester-long pen pal exercise to develop skills such as critical analysis and self-reflection through active learning. The pen pal exercise also reinforced another pedagogical principle, that of demonstrating the material's relevance to the real world. Instead of remaining abstract, the course material becomes practical through its application in cross-cultural

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- Dennis Beck, Cluster Two Coordinator, and Alan Levinovitz, Religious Studies

The pen pal exercise was a part of diverse learning materials created to inspire faculty buy-in, the second of the two key questions. By providing choices to faculty, the new course materials allow for flexibility and freedom, which is tempered by thematic unity and coherence of purpose. Similarly, through emphasis on the importance of course-specific learning objectives, it is clear to faculty that they will have significant control over the implementation of general pedagogical goals shared across HUM 252.



Adding the Very Recent Past into History and Justice Studies Courses

With support from a GenEd Summer Grant, 17 faculty members from History and Justice Studies gathered last May to discuss how to incorporate the very recent past into existing courses (HIST 225, HIST 150, HIST 102, and JUST 225). The very recent past has brought significant new topics to the fore and the scholarship has evolved rapidly. The faculty who assembled hoped to benefit from exploring this scholarship together and sharing potential readings, lecture topics, and approaches.

At the first session, small groups discussed logistical and theoretical matters: the challenges and pitfalls of very recent history topics; how faculty handle the very recent past and topics or themes they would like to incorporate but currently do not; what to cut from existing course content in order to include new topics; and how to assess material on the very recent past that comes, by necessity, at the very end of the course. After each small group session, faculty reconvened in a large group and reported out their conclusions. They later created a space on Digital Dropbox with topical folders. Over the following week, faculty participants populated those folders with resources to share with others. One folder contained critical background reading to assist faculty in developing expertise on a variety of topics. The other folder included relevant primary sources that could be assigned and taught to students. At the second session, faculty made presentations to the other participants about the materials that they put into the Dropbox folders. By the end of the two sessions, participants had compiled a considerable body of reading and teaching resources on the following topics: Climate Change, Food History, Geography of the American

Dream, Economic Inequality, the Future of Higher Education, the Emergence of ISIS and Religion-Based Politics, LGBT Civil rights, Police Violence, September 11th, the Surveillance State, the History of the Internet, the New Migration Crisis, Third Wave Feminism, and Water Rights.

Early in the fall semester, participants gathered again to share with other colleagues key outcomes from the grant and to make available to a broader group the Digital Dropbox resources they created. They did that by migrating the resources from Dropbox to a dedicated Canvas site on Resources for Teaching the very recent past. As the semester progressed, faculty continued to incorporate these materials into their current courses. Faculty now have a robust resource - one that will keep growing - that will enable them to invigorate and strengthen their courses.

An Experimental 300-Level Critical Thinking Course

During the Spring 2016 semester, the program will pilot a 300-level course that will satisfy the Critical Thinking requirement of Cluster One. This exciting project is the result of a General Education Summer Grant proposal that sought to address several Cluster One enrollment concerns, especially the rising number of transfer students who enter JMU with 60 or more credits but lack a critical thinking course. As the grant application explained, "Older students change classroom dynamics to the detriment of student learning;" they often dominate discussion, for example, and have very different needs, expectations, and skill sets. Beyond Cluster One, however, the 300-level course also addresses the desire to integrate learning outcomes from across the program. To this end, the pilot course meets certain objectives from clusters two, three, four, and five, and has an experiential component, as well. Due to these unique elements, the course has been capped at 25 and enrollment was by invitation only. Dr. Ron Cereola, from the College of Business, will serve as the instructor of record. He has been actively involved in the General Education Program as the Cluster One, BUS 160 critical thinking representative, and has been teaching in Cluster One since the late 1990s. Ron says: "I am excited about the opportunity for our students to become meaningfully engaged with local community programs, and look forward to their partnering with community leaders to help address issues of concern to their organizations".



Program faculty share a laugh while discussing "The Value of a Liberal Education" at the student conference's plenary panel. Pictured, left to right: Tim Ball (Communication Studies), Kathleen Ferraiolo (Political Science), Kristin St. John (Geology), Joy Ferenbaugh (Integrated Science and Technology), David Daniel (Psychology).

Researching the Value of Liberal Education in 2015

With increasing college costs, there has been robust media coverage regarding the "return on investment" of a college degree. Often, a degree's value is measured through job placement rates and average starting salaries for recent graduates. These statistics are certainly a reasonable starting point, but they are incomplete in an era when a typical graduate will change jobs ten times by age forty (according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics) and approximately half of all bachelor's degree holders will be employed in an area unrelated to their major just five years after graduation. Two recent reports go beyond these simple numbers and explore what college skills and experiences lead to successful careers and fulfilling lives. Significantly, these are the same skills and experiences that are found in JMU's general education program.

A 2015 report by Hart Research Associates, commissioned by the Association of American Colleges and

Universities, surveyed 400 employers to learn what they believed were the most important skills recent college graduates need to succeed in today's economy. Their results show that most employers believe that "field-specific knowledge and a broad range of knowledge and skills is important for recent college graduates to achieve longterm career success." That is, when evaluating the traits needed for long-term success, such as suitability for promotion, employers value the skills that are emphasized in general education as much as the discipline specific knowledge that a major provides. The specific skills that most (>80%) employers rate as very important are:

- The ability to effectively communicate orally
- The ability to work effectively with others in teams
- The ability to effectively communicate in writing
- Ethical judgment and decisionmaking
- Critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills

• The ability to apply knowledge and skills to real-world settings It's striking that these abilities match the core learning

objectives that have undergirded JMU's general education program for nearly 20 years! (Cluster objectives are posted on the General Education website.)

While workplace success is the most tangible benefit associated with a college degree, the Gallup-Purdue Index takes a more holistic approach to defining the value of a college education. This report, a joint study by Gallup, Inc. and Purdue University, assessed what types of college experiences led not only to on-the-job success but what they call "well-being" in multiple facets of life. Gallup-Purdue identifies five areas of well-being, including financial well-being, but also areas outside of work such as social and physical wellbeing. Among the many interesting findings of the Gallup-Purdue Index:

 If a graduate had a professor who cared about them as a person, one who made them Scott Paulson, Cluster Three Coordinator

- excited about learning, and had a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their dreams, the graduate's odds of being engaged at work more than doubled.
- If college graduates are engaged at work, the odds are nearly five times higher that they will be thriving in all five elements of well-being.
- There is no distinction between graduates of public versus private colleges on well-being.
- Higher well-being is related to graduates' experiences. (Graduates who felt that professors cared are more likely to thrive).

Here again we find a hallmark of a JMU education (close facultystudent relationships) leads to success overall. We will continue to watch with great interest as this national conversation on the longterm value of a college degree evolves. For now, it seems that with the combination of specific knowledge provided by the major and the broad skills emphasized in our general education program, that JMU graduates are well prepared to lead productive and meaningful lives.

For more information:

Hart Research Associates- College Learning and Career Success, https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/EAP/2015employerstudentsurvey.pdf Gallup-Purdue Index- Great Jobs, Great Lives, http://www.gallup.com/services/178496/gallup-purdue-index-inaugural-national-report.aspx

General Education Council

Since the late 1990s, the GEC has served as a college-level C&I committee charged with curricular oversight of the general education program and as advisory body to the program staff. Because of these two functions, it is made up of faculty representatives who are either elected or appointed by their respective units, as well as persons from key stakeholder offices. The GEC also has four subcommittees that manage some of the program's particular initiatives: the Gen Ed Student Conference, Grants, Distinguished Teacher Award, and General Education as Liberal Education. Thank you to the GEC's current members for their service:

Mary Gayne

History (Cluster 1) Mark Rankin English (Cluster 2) Amanda Biesecker ISAT (Cluster 3) Bernie Kaussler Political Science (Cluster 4) David Daniel/Kethera Fogler Psychology (Cluster 5, co-reps) Laura Katzman Art History (CVPA rep) Michael Moghtader WRTC (CAL rep) Susan Barnes (COE rep) Eric Pappas ISAT (CISE rep)

Deb Sutton

Health Sciences (CHBS rep) Cathy Snyder (COB rep) Anca Constantin Physics (CSM rep) **Keston Fulcher** (CARS) Mary Morsch (CAP) Kathy Clarke (L<)Johnathan Walker IDLS (Faculty Senate) Drew Barrar (SGA) Emilia Otero (SGA)

GenEd Adventures in Scotland

Bernie Kaussler, Scotland Program Director

Unsurprisingly, Scotland has become a popular destination for students completing General Education requirements. Now in its third year, this unique program hosted 26 students who took four courses at the University of



Edinburgh and University of St Andrews. With a new MoU signed between the University of Edinburgh and JMU, students took Scottish Literature (Cluster 2) and Micro-sociology (Cluster 5) on that campus. The Edinburgh Summer School office also organized a variety of social and cultural activities as part of the Scotland Semester's commitment to experiential learning. To that end, enjoying traditional afternoon tea with Scottish shortbread, dancing a cèilidh, visiting Edinburgh Castle, the Scottish Parliament and braving Edinburgh's most haunted underground vaults was as important as in classroom instruction. You can hear from several JMu students in this University of Edinburgh-made video: https:// vimeo.com/144858197

In St Andrews, students took Geology (Cluster 3) and US History (Cluster 4). Having spent 4th of July abroad for the first time, students appreciated the special relationship between Scotland and the United States. The University of St Andrews prides itself that three of the Founding Fathers attended, or received degrees, from Scotland's oldest university. Studying the environment and rock formations in the Highlands required demanding coursework as well as waterproof clothing and hiking boots. To JMU students, their time in the Scottish capital as well as at St Andrews, one of the UK's most prestigious universities, proved a life changing experience.



Provost Dr. A. Jerry Benson congratulates Scott Arbogast, George Johnson and Linda Hulton. Photos courtesy of University Marketing Photography.

Provost's Award for Excellence in Academic Advising

This award is given each year to individuals who have made extraordinary contributions to the University through advising. The 2015 recipients are: Scott Arbogast, Athletics Academic Advisor, recognized for Freshman Advising; George Johnson, Professor, Media Arts and Design, for Departmental advising; and Linda Hulton, Professor and DNP Coordinator, Nursing, for Graduate Advising.



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