

# Enrollment Projections for JMU

Each year, the Office of Institutional Research's (OIR) enrollment projections web page receives more than 6,000 hits from individuals and groups outside the university who have questions about its current size and plans for growth. The Commonwealth of Virginia requires enrollment information to make decisions about JMU's funding and space needs. Groups in and outside of the university use the projections for many purposes. For example, Harrisonburg and Rockingham County officials need enrollment projections to plan services (roads, schools, utilities, etc.) for the community. Realtors want to make informed decisions about whether additional student housing is needed.

The purpose of this Research Note is to address these many information needs by answering the following questions: why does JMU create enrollment projections; how are the projections created; how are the projections reviewed and approved by senior leadership and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV); how accurate are the projections; and what are the most recently approved projections?

## Why JMU Creates Projections

The primary reason for creating enrollment projections is to inform enrollment planning and decisions of the various internal and external audiences.

For more than 30 years, SCHEV has required biennial projections of headcount and degrees conferred. JMU is required to project headcount and degrees conferred on many dimensions, including academic programs (undergraduate, graduate and certificates), location of degree-related courses taken, residency (in-state and out-of-state) and Science, Technology, Engineering and Math-Health (STEM-H). The amount of funds provided to JMU by the Virginia General Assembly and internal funding decisions are predicated on the accuracy of the projections.

Annual expenditures by JMU for educational and general programs and auxiliary enterprises exceed \$400 million. More than \$170 million in tuition and fees are collected. The enrollment projections help JMU's Office of Budget Management calculate tuition and fees that should generate sufficient revenues to support university programs. The accuracy of the projections is critical for ensuring sufficient revenues for programs without overcharging or undercharging students and their parents.

JMU has grown from 10,128 on-campus students in fall 1987 to 19,488 (+92.4 percent) in fall 2013. Academic and non-academic space on campus has more than doubled since 1987. JMU is required to have a [Comprehensive Campus Master Plan](#) to provide a context for facilities requests. The enrollment projections are a primary source of information related to estimating capacity and facility need, when the university requests additional academic space, including classrooms and class labs from the General Assembly.

Annually, OIR carefully monitors and seeks to identify important trends, such as enrollment of non-Virginia students, which may impact the diversity of the university community and the estimated revenue. These trends and resulting changes are used to estimate growth for up to six years into the future.

## How We Create Projections

OIR has been responsible for creating enrollment projections for the university for more than 30 years. We do not project enrollment for individual academic programs or colleges. Historical enrollment data by major and college are available on OIR's web site.

In 1995, OIR began to adapt and greatly modify an enrollment projection model developed by SCHEV to ensure consistency of projection methods by each institution. By comparing official enrollment databases from the current year to previous years the model enables the year-to-year tracking of:

- Residency changes (in-state and out-of-state students).
- Retention and progression of students within and between academic levels.
- Average credits taken by students.
- Changes in enrollment for on-campus and off-campus locations.

Historical enrollment trends are used to project future enrollment and full-time equivalent students (FTES) by academic level, full-time or part-time status, campus location, and session (fall, spring, summer).

### Approval Process

The overall responsibility for deciding how much and how quickly JMU grows (or doesn't grow) resides with President Alger and his Senior Leadership with final approval by JMU's Board of Visitors (BOV). Annually, after OIR has completed reviewing the accuracy of the projections for the current year, explored any emerging meaningful trends, discussed the projections with the Dean of Admissions, Dean of the Graduate School, and the Office of Budget Management, the revised projections for the next year are finalized and presented to President Alger and his Senior Leadership Team for their review and approval.

SCHEV requires all Virginia institutions to submit biennial projections as part of their Six-Year Plan. JMU's projections and Six-Year Plan are discussed with SCHEV staff, representatives from the Department of Planning and Budget, the House of Delegates and the State Senate at a meeting during the summer of odd-numbered years. The most recent meeting occurred in August 2013, and the projections were approved by SCHEV in September. Each year the accuracy of the projections is reviewed by JMU officials and SCHEV. The projections of headcount and degrees conferred for undergraduate and graduate students must be within five percent of the actual enrollment and graduates.

### How Accurate Have the Projections Been?

OIR compares the actual headcount and degrees conferred with the official projections. Historically, total accuracy has been within one percent for headcount and three percent for degrees conferred. Below are the most recent projections and actual enrollment.

Type	Projected	Actual	Difference	Percent of Projected
Undergraduates (Fall 2013)				
- Freshmen	4,620	4,616	(4)	99.9
- Sophomores	4,641	4,719	78	101.7
- Juniors	4,243	4,321	78	101.8
- Seniors	4,396	4,342	(54)	98.8
Total Undergraduates	17,900	17,998	98	100.5
Graduate Students (Fall 2013)				
- Masters Level	1,154	1,164	10	100.9
- EDS and Doctoral	186	178	(8)	95.7
Total Graduate	1,340	1,342	2	100.1

Type	Projected	Actual	Difference	Percent of Projected
Non-Degree Seeking Students (Fall 2013)	169	148	(21)	87.6
Total On-Campus Fall Headcount	19,409	19,488	79	100.4
Degrees Conferred (2012-13)				
- Bachelors	3,756	4,047	291	107.7
- Masters	722	741	19	102.6
- EDS and Doctoral	31	12	(19)	38.8
Total Degrees Conferred	4,509	4,800	291	106.5
Residency (Fall 2013)				
- Undergraduate In-State	13,005	13,072	67	100.5
- Undergraduate Out-of-State	4,885	4,926	41	100.8
- Graduate In-State	976	974	(2)	99.8
- Graduate Out-of-State	364	368	4	101.1

### Most Recently Approved Projections

Included [here](#) are the SCHEV-approved enrollment projections through 2019-20. Questions about these projections should be directed to the JMU Office of Institutional Research at [ask-oir@jmu.edu](mailto:ask-oir@jmu.edu).