



The First-Year Student Survey report was developed to share information with the university community about the incoming James Madison University (JMU) freshmen students' attitudes, values, perceptions and experiences. It is hoped that through the sharing of this information a better understanding will develop about the JMU student.

JMU requested incoming students to complete the First-Year Student Survey online. The survey collects responses to questions about respondents' decision to attend college and, more specifically, James Madison University; their experiences in high school; and their attitudes, values and beliefs. Demographic data were also requested.

This report displays data obtained via the 4,506 usable surveys from the incoming freshmen during March, April, May, June, and July.

DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF INCOMING FRESHMAN CLASS

Similar to previous years, the incoming freshman class is predominately Caucasian-American/White (80%), female (57%), and 18 years old or younger (Tables 1-3). First-year students were also asked to indicate their political preferences (Table 3). Forty-one percent of the respondents indicated a liberal political preference and thirty-five percent reported a middle of the road preference, while twenty-four percent indicated a conservative preference (Table 4).

ACTIVITIES AND EDUCATION IN HIGH SCHOOL

Over half of incoming students reported graduating in the top twenty-five percent of their high school class (54%) and obtaining average grades of A- and higher (63%) (Tables 5 & 6). Like in previous years, more than one-half of this year's respondents report that they feel very well prepared from high school in the areas of reading and social studies (Table 7). Female students said more often than male students that they were very well prepared in reading, composition, foreign languages, artistic skills, study skills, musical skills, and time management. Males more often said they were very well prepared in social studies, computer skills, and mathematical skills. Both males and females responded almost equally that they feel very well prepared from high school in the areas of science and vocational skills.

First-year students were also asked to indicate the areas in which they felt they would need special tutoring or remedial work while in college (Table 8). Forty-six percent indicated a need for special tutoring or remedial work in mathematics, twenty-three percent in foreign languages, and twenty-two percent in science.

Similar to results in previous years, more than one-half of this year's students said they were very active in organized athletics, and part-time work (Table 9). Female students stated more often than male students that they were very active in extra-curricular activities including academic clubs, foreign language/international

clubs, fine arts groups, part-time work, school spirit clubs, religious groups, publications, and school and community service, while male students were more active in the areas of recreational sports and organized athletics.

ATTENDING COLLEGE AND JMU

The majority of first-year students applied to two or more colleges (Table 11). Thirty-seven percent applied to and thirty-two percent of respondents were accepted to six or more other colleges (Table 12). Similar to prior years, the majority of students reported that campus visits were the most important means for learning about JMU (Table 17). Seventy-eight percent of students reported that JMU was their first choice of colleges (Table 13). Ninety percent or more of the respondents view JMU as friendly, good, supportive and open and accessible (Table 21). Relatedly, over ninety percent of students were enthusiastic about and happy to be at JMU. Racial minorities were more likely to view JMU as not diverse.

ACADEMIC GOALS/EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHIES

Sixty percent of this year's respondents plan to pursue a degree beyond the baccalaureate (Table 14). Eleven percent of respondents reported that they were first-generation students (Table 15). Incoming freshmen were asked to indicate their own philosophies concerning the emphasis of higher education. Forty-nine percent of this year's respondents said they hold a vocational philosophy of education, which is viewed as preparation for an occupation. Thirty-one percent of respondents hold a social philosophy of higher education, where social life and loyalty to college is emphasized. Following at thirteen percent was intellectual philosophy, where emphasis is placed on scholarly pursuit of knowledge. Seven percent of the respondents have an artistic philosophy viewed as having an emphasis on ideas, art forms, and individuality (Table 16). Female students more often reported a vocational philosophy and artistic philosophy while male students more often reported a social philosophy.

Listed in the following tables are summaries of data collected in 2021 (2020, 2019 and 2018 figures, when available, are in parentheses).

For more information about this survey, please contact the Office of Institutional Research via phone: 540.568.7208, or email: ask-oir@jmu.edu.

Table 1	Gender of the Respondents			
	2021	(2020/ 2019/ 2018)		
Females	57%	(58% 59% 60%)		
Males	42%	(41% 40% 40%)		
Transgender	0%	(0% 0% --)		
Non-binary/Non-conforming	1%	(0% 0% --)		
Other	0%	(0% 0% --)		

Table 2	Race of the Respondents			
	2021	(2020/ 2019/ 2018)		
Caucasian-American/White	80%	(77% 80% 80%)		
Asian/Pacific Islander	5%	(4% 6% 6%)		
African-American/Black	5%	(5% 5% 5%)		
Hispanic	5%	(8% 5% 5%)		
Multiracial	4%	(5% 4% 4%)		
Unreported	1%	(1% 1% 1%)		
Native American	0%	(0%/ 0%/ 0%)		
Non-Resident Alien	0%	(0%/ -- --)		

Table 3	Age of the Respondents			
	2021	(2020/ 2019/ 2018)		
18 years or younger	94%	(94% 93% 94%)		
19 years or older	7%	(6% 7% 6%)		

Table 4	Political Preference			
	2021	(2020/ 2019/ 2018)		
Liberal	41%	(36% 35% 36%)		
Middle-of-the-Road	35%	(34% 38% 35%)		
Conservative	24%	(30% 28% 29%)		

Table 5	Average Grade in High School			
	2021	(2020/ 2019/ 2018)		
A or A+	25%	(22% 22% 22%)		
A-	38%	(39% 37% 39%)		
B+	27%	(29% 29% 29%)		
B	9%	(9% 11% 9%)		
B-	1%	(1% 1% 1%)		
C+	0%	(0% 0% 0%)		
C	0%	(0% 0% 0%)		

Table 6	Approximate High School Rank in Graduating Class			
	2021	(2020/ 2019/ 2018)		
Top ten percent	17%	(19% 18% 19%)		
Top twenty-five percent	37%	(43% 44% 49%)		
Top fifty percent	44%	(36% 35% 31%)		
Bottom fifty percent	3%	(3% 3% 2%)		

Table 7	Areas Very Well Prepared from High School			
	2021	(2020/ 2019/ 2018)		
Reading	54%	(56% 54% 61%)		
Social Studies	52%	(56% 51% 55%)		
Composition	47%	(50% 47% 53%)		
Science	42%	(45% 39% 43%)		
Time management	34%	(35% 34% 41%)		
Vocational skills	30%	(29% 27% 29%)		
Computer skills	29%	(27% 27% 28%)		
Mathematical skills	29%	(31% 32% 37%)		
Study habits	29%	(31% 30% 36%)		
Foreign languages	20%	(23% 21% 21%)		
Musical skills	21%	(23% 19% 21%)		
Artistic skills	21%	(23% 18% 21%)		

Table 8	Need for Special Tutoring or Remedial Work			
	2021	(2020/ 2019/ 2018)		
Mathematics	46%	(53% 54% 53%)		
Science	22%	(29% 31% 28%)		
Foreign language	23%	(30% 25% 28%)		
Writing	16%	(22% 19% 19%)		
English	9%	(13% 12% 12%)		
Social studies	6%	(8% 8% 8%)		
Reading	6%	(7% 7% 6%)		

Table 9	Areas Very Active During High School			
	2021	(2020/ 2019/ 2018)		
Organized athletics	61%	(61% 60% 62%)		
Part-time work	53%	(49% 50% 50%)		
School and community service	45%	(53% 49% 57%)		
Recreational sports	44%	(42% 39% 41%)		
School spirit clubs cheer- leaders, pep, drill, etc.	26%	(32% 31% 31%)		
Academic clubs	22%	(28% 28% 28%)		
Fine arts groups	20%	(22% 20% 22%)		
Religious clubs	14%	(17% 16% 18%)		
Foreign Language/International Clubs	10%	(12% 11% 11%)		
Publications	5%	(6% 6% 6%)		

Table 10	Reasons Considered Very Important in Deciding to Attend JMU			
	2021	(2020/ 2019/ 2018)		
Supportive atmosphere of JMU	---	(89% 89% 87%)		
JMU has good extracurricular opportunities and social life	---	(89% 87% 86%)		
JMU has a good academic reputation	---	(88% 88% 87%)		
Appearance and setting of JMU	---	(86% 87% 88%)		
JMU offers a major of interest to me	---	(86% 90% 89%)		

Reputation of JMU's graduates obtaining desirable jobs	---(86% 84% 83%)
Reputation of JMU's graduates attending top graduate schools	---(68%/ 67%/ 67%)
Live on the campus	---(68%/ 67%/ 67%)
Range and availability of student services	---(68%/ 61%/ 58%)
Size of JMU	---(65%/ 65%/ 64%)
Identify with fellow students	---(65%/ 61%/ 61%)
Change in scenery or location	---(57%/ 51%/ 50%)
Someone who had been here before advised me to attend	---(42%/ 44%/ 40%)
JMU has low tuition	---(36%/ 36%/ 33%)
Friend suggested attending	---(28%/ 29%/ 27%)
Offered financial aid	---(20%/ 20%/ 17%)
Employers' suggestion	---(15%/ 8%/ 8%)
Relatives wanted me to come here	---(15%/ 15%/ 15%)
Guidance counselor advised me	---(12%/ 13%/ 11%)
My teacher advised me	---(9%/ 9%/ 8%)
To help retain my current employment	---(7%/ 5%/ 5%)
JMU representative recruited me	---(4%/ 5%/ 4%)
I wanted to live at home	---(3%/ 3%/ 3%)
Not accepted anywhere else	---(3%/ 4%/ 3%)

Table 11 Number of Other Colleges – Applied

	2021(2020/ 2019/ 2018)
None	4%(6% 4% 4%)
One	6%(8% 7% 7%)
Two	10%(11% 12% 11%)
Three	13%(13% 15% 16%)
Four	15%(15% 16% 17%)
Five	14%(14% 15% 15%)
Six or more	37%(34% 32% 31%)

Table 12 Number of Other Colleges – Accepted

	2021(2020/ 2019/ 2018)
None	0%(0% 0% 0%)
One	7%(20% 20% 19%)
Two	13%(16% 18% 18%)
Three	17%(16% 18% 20%)
Four	17%(15% 15% 14%)
Five	14%(11% 12% 12%)
Six or more	33%(22% 18% 16%)

Table 13 JMU as Choice Among Other Colleges

	2021(2020/ 2019/ 2018)
First Choice	78%(80%/ 80%/ 78%)
Second Choice	18%(17%/ 16%/ 18%)
Third Choice	3%(3%/ 4%/ 4%)

Table 14 Highest Academic Degree Respondents Intend to Obtain

	2021(2020/ 2019/ 2018)
Baccalaureate degree	40%(35%/31%/34%)
Master's degree	41%(44%/46%/44%)
Specialist degree e.g., Ed.S.	1%(1%/ 1%/ 1%)
Doctoral degree e.g., Ph.D., Ed.D., D.B.A.	9%(10%/12%/11%)
Professional degree e.g., medicine, law, theology	10%(10%/11%/11%)
Not a degree seeking student	0%(0%/ 0%/ 0%)

Table 15 First Generation Status

	2021(2020/ 2019/ 2018)
No	88%(87%/ --- ---)
Yes	11%(12%/ --- ---)
Unknown/Unreported	1%(1%/ --- ---)

Table 16 Philosophy of Education

	2021(2020/ 2019/ 2018)
Vocational philosophy education viewed as preparation for an occupation	49%(49%/ 49%/ 50%)
Social philosophy social life and loyalty to college emphasized	31%(29%/ 28%/ 25%)
Intellectual philosophy emphasis on scholarly pursuit of knowledge	13%(14%/ 17%/ 18%)
Artistic philosophy emphasis on ideas, art forms, individuality	7%(8%/ 7%/ 7%)

Table 17 Means of Learning About JMU

	2021(2020/ 2019/ 2018)
Campus visits	45%(58%/ 66%/ 68%)
Relatives	15%(11%/ 28%/ 30%)
Friends	14%(11%/ 19%/ 17%)
Alumni	11%(9%/ 21%/ 21%)
JMU web-site	6%(5%/ 13%/ 12%)
People at my high school	4%(5%/ 14%/ 12%)
JMU representative	3%(3%/ 11%/ 10%)
Material I received in the mail	2%(2%/ 9%/ 6%)

Table 18 Reasons Considered Very Important in Deciding to Attend College

	2021(2020/ 2019/ 2018)
Learn more about the things that interest me	---(90% 90% 90%)
Be able to get a better job	---(87% 87% 87%)
Meet new and interesting people	---(86% 84% 85%)
Gain a general education and appreciation of ideas	---(82% 84% 82%)

Be on my own and make my own decisions	---	81%	80%	80%
Be able to make more money	---	62%	65%	67%
Make me a more cultured person	---	62%	60%	61%
Prepare myself for graduate or professional school	---	59%	62%	64%
Improve reading and study skills	---	59%	62%	60%
Developing a global awareness	---	55%	54%	54%
Enhance my social life	---	42%	40%	41%
Please my parents	---	22%	23%	22%
Meet my future spouse	---	8%	9%	9%
Do what my friends are doing	---	4%	4%	4%

Table 19 Sense of Belonging to JMU (Percentage of Respondents Who Agree to Some Extent on the Following)

	2021 (2020/ 2019/2018)
Enthusiastic about JMU	94%(95%/ 95%/ 93%)
Happy to be at JMU	93%(94%/ 93%/ 91%)
Feel a part of the JMU community	84%(80%/ 85%/ 83%)
Sense of belonging	81%(83%/ 85%/ 85%)
See myself as a member of the JMU community	79%(86%/ 89%/ 89%)
Believe JMU is one of the best schools in the nation	76%(80%/ 82%/ 80%)

Table 20 Emphases of JMU (Percentage of Respondents Who Believe that JMU Places a Significant Emphasis on the Following)

	2021 (2020/ 2019/2018)
Relationships with other students, student groups and activities	62%(62%/ 57%/ 55%)
Personal growth self-awareness	61%(60%/ 58%/ 56%)
Development of academic scholarly/intellectual qualities	59%(60%/ 59%/ 58%)
Personal development as citizen	55%(55%/ 53%/ 52%)
Personal relevance and practical value of your courses	52%(52%/ 49%/ 48%)
Development of vocational and occupational competencies	50%(50%/ 45%/ 44%)
Development of aesthetic, expressive, and creative qualities	48%(47%/ 43%/ 42%)
Being critical, evaluative and analytical	46%(46%/ 48%/ 46%)

Table 21 Student Perceptions of JMU

	2021(2020/2019)	
Good	Neutral	Bad
96%(97%/96%)	3%(3%/ 3%)	1%(0%/ 0%)
Friendly	Neutral	Cold
96%(96%/97%)	4%(4%/ 3%)	1%(0%/ 0%)
Supportive	Neutral	Non-Supportive

93%(95%/95%)	7%(5%/ 4%)	1%(0%/ 0%)
Open and Accessible	Neutral	Closed and Inaccessible
91%(91%/92%)	9%(8%/ 8%)	1%(1%/ 1%)
Progressive	Neutral	Regressive
86%(89%/89%)	13%(11%/11%)	1%(0%/ 0%)
Intellectual	Neutral	Nonintellectual
85%(88%/88%)	14%(11%/11%)	2%(1%/ 1%)
Flexible	Neutral	Rigid
84%(86%/87%)	15%(13%/12%)	1%(1%/ 1%)
Emotionally Healthy	Neutral	Causing Anxiety & Frustration
81%(83%/84%)	18%(16%/15%)	2%(2%/ 2%)
Right Size	Neutral	Too Large
85%(83%/83%)	12%(13%/13%)	3%(4%/ 3%)
Integrated	Neutral	Fragmented
77%(79%/80%)	21%(20%/19%)	2%(2%/ 2%)
Challenging	Neutral	Not Challenging
65%(68%/76%)	31%(29%/22%)	4%(3%/ 3%)
Sensitive	Neutral	Indifferent
61%(62%/67%)	35%(35%/31%)	4%(3%/ 3%)
Diverse	Neutral	Not Diverse
63%(62%/61%)	24%(25%/24%)	13%(13%/15%)
Traditional	Neutral	Experimental
49%(43%/44%)	39%(44%/42%)	12%(12%/14%)

Table 22 Studies Abroad Intentions

	2021 (2020/ 2019/2018)
I do not plan to study abroad	58%(47%/ 42%/ 39%)
I plan to attend a JMU Studies Abroad Program	39%(49%/ 54%/ 58%)
I plan to pursue an international internship	3%(3%/ 3%/ 3%)
I plan to attend a foreign university with an international exchange program	1%(1%/ 1%/ 1%)

Table 23 Costs of Attending JMU Paid Directly by the Student and His/Her Family

	2021 (2020/ 2019/ 2018)
80-100% of the total costs	57%(57%/ 56%/ 61%)
60-79% of the total costs	13%(12%/ 15%/ 12%)
40-59% of the total costs	12%(12%/ 11%/ 11%)
20-39% of the total costs	8%(7%/ 8%/ 7%)
0-19% of the total costs	10%(11%/ 10%/ 10%)

Table 24 Type of Internet Access Utilized from Parents' Home

	2021 (2020/ 2019/2018)
Cable Modem	75%(75%/ 72%/ 71%)
Satellite	13%(11%/ 13%/ 13%)
DSL-ADSL	8%(8%/ 9%/ 10%)
ISDN	3%(3%/ 4%/ 4%)
Do not use internet access from parents' home	2%(2%/ 2%/ 2%)
Dial-Up	0%(0%/ 0%/ 1%)

Table 25	Computer Usage on Campus
	2021 (2020/ 2019/2018)
I will bring a laptop computer or tablet computer	79%(85%/ 86%/ 87%)
I will bring a computer but do not know what type	10%(8%/ 7%/ 6%)
I will bring a desktop and laptop computer or tablet computer	7%(5%/ 5%/ 5%)
I will bring a desktop computer	3%(2%/ 2%/ 2%)
I do not plan to bring a computer	1%(1%/ 1%/ 1%)

Table 26	Printer Needs on Campus
	2021 (2020/ 2019/2018)
I will use a printer supplied in a lab	67%(62%/ 60%/ 55%)
I will bring a printer to campus	25%(31%/ 34%/ 38%)
I will use a friend's printer	5%(5%/ 5%/ 6%)
I do not need a printer	3%(2%/ 2%/ 1%)

Table 27	College Credit Hours Earned in High School
	2021 (2020/ 2019/2018)
1-3 hours	5%(8%/ 38%/ 38%)
4-10 hours	13%(33%/ 33%/ 33%)
11-20 hours	11%(32%/ 18%/ 17%)
21-30 hours	6%(12%/ 6%/ 7%)
31 or more hours	4%(15%/ 6%/ 5%)

Table 28	Positive Work Ethics Most Like Me
	2021 (2020/ 2019/2018)
I am a hard worker	56%(53%/ 54%/ 54%)
I am diligent	41%(42%/ 43%/ 42%)
I have achieved a goal that took years of work	39%(39%/ 38%/ 38%)
I have overcome setbacks to conquer an important challenge	35%(34%/ 35%/ 35%)
I finish whatever I begin	29%(29%/ 31%/ 31%)
Setbacks don't discourage me	14%(16%/ 16%/ 17%)

Table 29	Negative Work Ethics Most Like Me
	2021 (2020/ 2019/2018)
I become interested in new pursuits every few months	14%(13%/ 12%/ 12%)
New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones	13%(12%/ 10%/ 10%)
I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more	10%(9%/ 8%/ 8%)
My interests change from year to year	9%(7%/ 7%/ 7%)
I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short	9%(8%/ 7%/ 7%)
I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one	5%(4%/ 4%/ 3%)

