

## Vision Team 5: Graduate Research

### Team Members:

Doug Hochstetler (co-chair), Linda Thomas (co-chair), Ver (Lorver) Ikeseh, V Kagey, Caitlin MacKenzie Mannion, Martin Mayiani, Lauren Pearce, Ayasakanta Rout, Debbie Sturm, Monica Smith-Woofter, Erica Lewis (JMU X-Labs facilitator).

The Graduate Research Vision Team imagines a future in which graduate research becomes **a defining institutional priority** at James Madison University, essential to achieving the university's 2030 and 2040 aspirations. The team found broad enthusiasm for expanding graduate research, balanced by recognition of significant structural barriers including workload pressures, uneven research infrastructure, and limited administrative capacity that currently limit both faculty and graduate student research. **Our recommendations call for ambitious, coordinated investment in people, systems, and facilities** so that graduate research can flourish as a central driver of JMU's academic distinction, workforce impact, and public mission.

**Recommendation #1** urges JMU to move from treating graduate education as an afterthought to embedding it as a **core part of institutional architecture**. Goals include integrating graduate education explicitly into the 2040 framework, aligning institutional metrics with doctoral productivity, and publicly positioning graduate education as research infrastructure. Achieving this requires strengthening human capacity through workload policies that **formally recognize doctoral supervision, structured mentorship systems, and strategic faculty hiring in graduate intensive programs**. The team also emphasizes the need for integrated research dashboards, improved administrative workflows, and clearer tracking of graduate outcomes. **A cultural shift is essential:** graduate education must become a shared responsibility across Academic Affairs, REDI, Student Affairs, and Enrollment,

guided by a cross-unit working group that monitors trends and recommends action.

**Recommendation #2** advances an “abundance strategy,” asserting that JMU must decisively invest in the people and systems that enable research excellence. Goals include **centralized research support** for IRB consultation, grant writing, survey expertise, publication preparation, and fellowship advising, ensuring consistent access across programs. **In tandem, the report calls for college-based research administrators dedicated to pre- and post award support**, reducing the administrative burden currently carried by faculty. Additional goals include **strengthening library collections**, expanding high performance **computing and secure data environments**, and increasing staffing in IT and the Libraries to support advanced scholarship. Equitable investment in graduate students is also essential, including competitive funding packages, expanded assistantships, and improved access to housing and essential support. These investments aim to create conditions that **allow faculty and graduate researchers to contribute at levels aligned with JMU’s research ambitions.**

**Recommendation #3** outlines **strategic doctoral expansion** aligned with JMU’s research strengths and Virginia workforce needs. Goals include **growth in civic education, rural health, and artificial intelligence, with emerging opportunities in biomedical and agricultural research.** The report calls for expanding current programs, **developing undergraduate to PhD pipelines** and industry-partnered doctoral pathways, and **strengthening terminal master’s programs.** To support expansion, JMU must recruit senior research faculty, additional assistantships and increased doctoral stipends, and shared research spaces, including a **Northern Virginia research hub.** Longterm goals include offering 20+ doctoral programs, producing 100 research doctorates annually, adding 100 tenure track faculty lines, and establishing new research centers and advanced research facilities. These investments are central to achieving JMU’s 2040 goals of doubling doctoral output, surpassing \$50 million in research expenditures, and elevating national standing.