

TFRE Recommendation Form Worksheet

Working Group: Co-curricular; new student experience

TITLE

Local students (Harrisonburg and Rockingham County) deserve more outreach events and communications to encourage them to apply and enroll in JMU.

Current JMU students from Harrisonburg High School participated in a JMU panel in Fall 2020 and disclosed that for many local students JMU is not seen as an accessible choice for college. One of these reasons is that there haven't been enough enrolled to create a peer group for future students. HHS is a minority majority high school now so the population of underrepresented students is the highest percentage of student groups. The Admissions office has also noted that the trend is going down in the yield for enrollment of first generation low income students, locally. In order to address this issue we need to create better outreach efforts to local high school students to help them feel connected to JMU, paying special attention to underrepresented and first generation students. Encouraging and empowering local students to come to JMU helps diversify our student body and shows that our university is committed to educating our community, which will also garner support and praise from donors and local and state leadership.

RATIONALE & RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Admissions at JMU needs to hire more counselors that represent communities of color: a relationship that is crucial to establishing trust between our two communities. Additionally, when students apply and are accepted, welcoming events, orientation, or outreach communications for local students need to be programmed to encourage them to enroll. The following are suggested recommendations for JMU Admissions:

- Hire more admissions counselors that represent the Latino/x and African American communities and/or establish a student/faculty admissions council to reach out and visit local high schools regularly for programming and to survey students' feelings on their relationship with JMU. From the listed [counselors](#) it does not appear that there are any that represent these local communities.
- Standardize that campus tours to include support agencies like CMSS (The Center for Multicultural Student Services) and mention the majors and minors that reflect our commitment to racial equity: AAAD (African, African American & Diaspora Studies); LAXC (Latin American, Caribbean, & Latinx Studies); Latinx Community Engagement, Arab Studies, etc..)

- Update the Admissions Office Website to be more user friendly, especially for first generation students. This is the first point of contact for many of these students yet an applicant can scroll down the 14 Admission's page categories and not see one face.
 - consider making the webpage more personalized with images of counselors and students
 - under "enrollment" and "unique students" publish the number of local students that make up the student body
- Program a drive-thru celebratory outreach event for early action and regular action admitted students
 - This successful first-time event was received favorably in January 2021 and was facilitated by the College of Arts & Letters Diversity Equity & Inclusion Liaison and the Honors College with collaborations from the Office of Admissions
- Partner with student orgs like the Latinx Student Alliance and the Black Student Alliance to host a postcard writing campaign to welcome students that may not be ready to commit without a more personal connection. This event was also facilitated in January to coordinate with the drive-thru event.
- Create an open house event yearly for local students on our campus that includes parents and students or invite some of them to athletic events and highlight that they are in attendance the day of the event.
- Award a modest perk for all local students (i.e., 20% off textbooks from the bookstore)

SUCCESS

Success can be measured in a variety of ways such as:

- seeing an increase in the percentage of accepted students that go on to enroll
- polling students at high schools by their teachers 1-2 times a year to see if their perceptions of JMU as an accessible college option are changing
- inviting Local leaders and K12 educators to speak with JMU representatives 1-2 times a year on how the efforts are being met by the community