**THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA**

**THE VISITORS OF JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY**

#### Minutes of the Academic and Student Life Committee

The Academic and Student Life Committee met on Thursday, April 15, 2021, at 1:30 p.m. in Ballroom A of the Festival Conference and Student Center at James Madison University. As Lucy Hutchinson was unable to attend the meeting, Deborah Tompkins Johnson served as chair and called the meeting to order.

# Present

Falcon, Chris

Gray-Keeling, Matthew

Herod, Maribeth

Tompkins Johnson, Deborah

Welburn, Craig

**Others:**

Adedze, Dela, President, Student Government Association

Aguirre, Robert, Dean, College of Arts and Letters

Almarode, John, Associate Professor, Executive Director of Teaching and Learning

Chipchase, Tori, Junior, Communications Major

Collier, Jessani, President-Elect, Student Government Association

Coltman, Heather, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Griffith, Kaitlin, Interim Director, Student Life

Griffin, Oris, Professor, College of Education

Jones III, Norman, Student Representative to the Board of Visitors

Larsen, Val, Speaker, Faculty Senate

L’Esperance, Mark, Dean, College of Education

Major, Lara, Rector, Board of Visitors

McNaught, John, Co-Director, TTAC, College of Education

Miller, Tim, Vice President for Student Affairs

Randall, Amanda, Co-Director, TTAC, College of Education

Smith-Woofter, Monica, Assistant Professor, College of Education

Swinimer, Lexi, Assistant Director, Fraternity and Sorority Life

Williams, Xaiver, Representative-Elect to the Board of Visitors

**Approval of Minutes**

On motion of Craig Welburn and seconded by Maribeth Herod the minutes of February 18, 2021 were approved.

**Divisional Update: Academic Affairs**

Dr. Heather Coltman provided an update on the increasing diversity efforts being made within Academic Affairs. She reported that five faculty had been hired in the College of Arts and Letters first cohort hire and described a new fellowship program being launched in the College of Education that will support Black scholars. The committee was told about the completion of the Academic Affairs Strategic Plan and how it would be implemented in the upcoming year. Provost Coltman referenced pending changes to the Faculty Handbook, which faculty are in the process of reviewing. This handbook incorporates revisions submitted for the 2019-20 academic year, which were put on hold due to COVID, and a request to change the production cycle of the handbook to be reviewed at a spring meeting, allowing the handbook to be effective for new faculty contracts on July 1. The handbook will be voted on at the June meeting.

**Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies Major Proposal**

College of Arts and Letters Dean, Dr. Robert Aguirre, provided a proposal for the creation of a new major in Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies. This 33-credit hour interdisciplinary major provides skills in cultural competency and fluency, awareness and sensitivity to diversity, and critical thinking about gender and sexuality to prepare future majors for the Virginia labor market. In addition to reviewing the curriculum, the committee heard information on the Labor Market Projections and duplication of the major, as required by the State Council of Education for Virginia (SCHEV).

On motion of Matthew Gray-Keeling and seconded by Maribeth Herod, the committee unanimously approved the Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies major.

**Lab@JMU Proposal**

Dr. Mark L’Esperance, Dean and Dr. John Almarode, Executive Director for Teaching and Learning from the College of Education shared an update on the proposed Lab School at JMU. Dr. L’Esperance introduced faculty who have been key in preparations in establishing the school.

On motion of Craig Welburn and seconded by Maribeth Herod, the committee unanimously approved the Lab@JMU proposal.

**Faculty Senate Speaker Report**

Dr. Val Larsen, Speaker of the Faculty Senate, spoke about critical race theory as well as the importance of the open exchange of ideas in academia. Dr. Larsen provided a written report that expressed appreciation for the support of the JMU Board of Visitors, Administration, local legislators, and legislative leaders in approving a salary increase for state employees, especially the recognition of our adjunct colleagues and also reviewed several resolutions recently passed by Senate, two of which dealt with COVID-related matters.

**Student Representative to the Board of Visitors Report & Introduction of New Representative**

Norman Jones III, Student Representative to the Board of Visitors, thanked the committee for the insight, support, and space for advocacy over the last two years. He then shared his End-of-Year Report, with overall takeaways about COVID and Racial Equity, as well as highlights and key takeaways from his two terms of service. Norman introduced Xaiver Williams, who will be succeeding him in this role. Xaiver is excited to get back to basics, as he will prioritize relationship building to facilitate trust between the student body and administration, as well as positive structural change.

**Student Government Association Report & Introduction of New President**

Dela Adedze, Student Government Association President, in conjunction with his leadership team, has worked tirelessly to accommodate students during this unique year. These past few months his work has included promoting student opinion through a variety of programs emphasizing three important pillars: Communication, Social Justice, and Health and Safety. The student body election was held in late March and a new Executive Council was elected for the 2021-22 school year. Dela introduced Jessani Collier, President-Elect for the SGA.

**Student Life**

Kaitlyn Griffith and Lexi Swinimer shared an update on Student Life. As a newly formed department in Student Affairs, the Student Life team's mission is to provide all students with experiences for self-discovery, belonging, and authentic engagement with each other, their communities, and beyond. Student Life is comprised of Fraternity and Sorority Life, Off Campus Life, Student Activities and Involvement, and the Student Leadership Center. The past year has involved many challenges in finding the most impactful ways to continue engaging students when the foundation of our work has been bringing students together in person. Through a mix of virtual, hybrid and small in-person events, the Student Life team has created opportunities for JMU students to connect to campus and their peers. Tori Chipchase, the President of the Panhellenic Council talked about her experiences at JMU. The fraternity and sorority life community represent the largest identity-based group of students on campus; many prospective students name fraternity and sorority membership as a motivating factor to attend JMU and the majority of students who join a fraternity or sorority come to JMU planning to join. Even while enrollment and overall student engagement has declined over the past year, there has been no decrease in membership among fraternities and sororities at JMU.

**Divisional Update: Student Affairs**

Dr. Tim Miller provided an overview of the Spring semester and highlighted the work of several offices.   
Dr. Miller also shared updates on a number of important searches that are occurring to fill key roles in Student Affairs.  He and the committee members expressed their gratitude to Dela Adedze and Norman Jones for their service.

There being no further business, on the motion of Maribeth Herod and seconded by Chris Falcon, the Academic and Student Life Committee meeting adjourned at 3:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Deborah Tompkins Johnson, Acting Chair

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Donna Harper, Secretary to the Board