**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, September 23, 2021, in the Highlands Room of the Festival Conference and Student Center at James Madison University. Lucy Hutchinson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:15 p.m.

# Present:

Gray-Keeling, Matthew

Hutchinson, Lucy, Chair

Tompkins Johnson, Deborah

Welburn, Craig

**Others:**

Bauerle, Cynthia, Interim Vice Provost of Faculty and Curriculum

Collier, Jessani, President, Student Government Association

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

Ghant, Valarie, Director, Center for Multicultural Student Services

Larsen, Val, Speaker, Faculty Senate

Lewis, Brent, Associate Vice President, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Miller, Tim, Vice President for Student Affairs

Schoolcraft, Valerie, Director, Office of Disability Services

Williams, Xaiver, Student Representative to the Board of Visitors

**Approval of Minutes**

On motion of Craig Welburn and seconded by Matthew Gray-Keeling, the minutes of April 15, 2021 were approved.

**Divisional Update: Student Affairs**

Dr. Tim Miller introduced the newest members of the Student Affairs Leadership Team to the committee and provided a brief update on COVID-19 efforts.  He also shared several insights from the first month of the semester including increasing needs for mental health support, student illness (non-COVID) on campus, and the positive energy surrounding student engagement in activities and opportunities on campus. The committee members discussed recent diversity training initiatives and ways to move forward, and they acknowledged that this work is hard and important.

**Student Affairs Presentation: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

As a newly formed unit in Student Affairs, the SA DEI unit works to provide programs, services, resources and advocacy that empowers and celebrates diversity, equity and inclusion.  The area includes three departments with missions that align with the overall unit. DEI is comprised of the Center for Multicultural Student Services (CMSS), the Office of Disability Services (ODS) and Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, & Expression (SOGIE).  Dr. Brent Lewis shared that the past year and a half has involved many challenges in finding the most impactful ways to engage our students since the foundation of our work has been bringing students together in person. Through a mix of virtual, hybrid and in-person events, the DEI staff has created opportunities for students to connect to campus and their peers.  They continue to evaluate the effectiveness of their work, build relationships across Student Affairs and the JMU campus community, and strive to create inclusive, accessible and welcoming spaces at JMU.

**Divisional Update: Academic Affairs**

Dr. Heather Coltman reported on personnel updates in the division, including upcoming leadership searches. She shared that Professional and Continuing Education received SCHEV approval to transition to school status and is now called the School of Professional and Continuing Education. Preparations for our move to R2 status are continuing and advancing according to schedule. Dr. Coltman apprised the committee that there have been significant advancements in DEI activities based on the *Academic Affairs Anti-Racist Anti-Discrimination Agenda* and showcased some of the over 200 deliverables associated with the efforts. She also gave a preview of upcoming faculty cohort hires.

**Faculty Hiring Update**

Dr. Cynthia Bauerle provided an update on faculty hiring since her report to the committee last fall. In order to fulfill our educational mission and meet the educational and workforce needs of the commonwealth, we must build a diverse professoriate at JMU. The current status of faculty diversity was reported in Fall 2020 and described the division’s objective to reach an aspirational rate of growth to achieve the goal of a faculty that is representative of the diversity of our student body and that keeps pace with demographics in the state.  In AY20-21, multiple recruiting and hiring practices were established across Academic Affairs to diversify the applicant pools and enhance hiring success. A powerful strategy developed by multiple departments in the College of Arts and Letters was to advertise a hiring “cohort,” resulting in the successful recruitment of seven early career scholars of color who bring cutting edge interdisciplinary scholarship and teaching to JMU. Overall, BIPOC faculty represent 41% of all faculty hiring in AY20-21, contributing 25 new scholars and educators to our faculty.

**Proposal to Change Art Majors to Art Degrees**

Dr. Heather Coltman outlined the proposal to move three programs – Architectural Design, Industrial Design, and Graphic Design in the College of Visual and Performing Arts from their current status as majors to stand alone degree programs, which requires SCHEV approval. This distinction doesn’t affect the curriculum or the way the program is offered, but it is important for their program accreditation. None of these changes involve any resources; all funding is accounted for. Other institutions in Virginia offer the same or similar degrees, though as JMU currently offers these three majors with high enrollment, no issues related to duplication are anticipated. Academic Affairs continues to focus on career outcomes for all academic programs and thinks there are good employment prospects for these graduates.

On motion by Matthew Gray-Keeling and seconded by Craig Welburn, the committee unanimously approved this slate of program proposals.

**Faculty Senate Speaker Report**

Dr. Val Larsen shared information about two resolutions that were passed in the April 2021. The first resolution expressed support of our Asian colleagues in the wake of violence that occurred in the Atlanta area in March of 2021. The second resolution is to create a Faculty Senate Diversity Initiative that will provide promising undergraduate students from underrepresented groups with the opportunity to be nominated for a program that would offer a gradate assistantship and faculty mentoring. In addition, information was shared about the senate’s censure of the Faculty Senate Speaker for giving an oral report at the April 2021 BOV meeting that was not representative of the broadly held views of the faculty.

**Student Representative to the Board of Visitors Report**

Xaiver Williams, Student Representative to the Board of Visitors, provided the committee with an update on the three areas that he will be focusing on this year: community, connection, commitment. He shared with the committee updates regarding welcoming students back to campus; ways he hopes to build meaningful connections with students, faculty/staff and the president’s cabinet; and the priorities he has shared with students during the first week of classes. He hopes to find unique ways to engage the student body in conversations that will help continue to direct us toward change on campus. Xaiver is looking forward to expanding upon the great work that was accomplished by the student representatives before him and using that leadership to accomplish the work that is ahead.

**Student Government Association Report**

Jessani Collier, Student Government Association President, has made it her goal to support the voice of the student body as we continue to endure the pandemic. In order to address these efforts, the SGA has centered its focus on social justice, environmental sustainability and strengthening the JMU community. Jessani hopes to foster a resilient community on campus with the intent of uplifting the entirety of the student body.

There being no further business, on the motion of Matthew Gray-Keeling and seconded by Craig Welburn, the Academic and Student Life Committee meeting adjourned at 4:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Lucy Hutchinson, Chair

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Donna Harper, Secretary to the Board