**THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA**

**THE VISITORS OF JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY**

#### Minutes of the Academic Excellence Committee

The Academic Excellence Committee met on Thursday, April 21, 2022, in the Highlands Room of the Festival Conference and Student Center at James Madison University. As Lucy Hutchinson was unable to join the meeting Matthew Gray-Keeling served as chair and called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.

# Present:

Jankowski, Maria

Gray-Keeling, Matthew

Herod, Maribeth

Lynch, John

**Others:**

Alger, Jonathan R., President, James Madison University

Allemeier, John, Director, School of Music

Bryson, BJ, Professor, Social Work

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

Larsen, Val, Speaker, Faculty Senate

L’Esperance, Mark, Dean, College of Education

Linder, Fletcher, Dean of University Studies and Associate Provost for Online Strategy

Liu, Juhong Christie, Director of Instructional Design, Libraries

O’Fallon, Michael, Policy Specialist, Faculty, Curriculum and Policy

Smith-Woofter, Monica, Program Director, Learning Technology and Leadership Education

Zugelder, Bryan, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Partnerships, College of Education  
  
**Absent:**Hutchinson, Lucy

**Approval of Minutes**

On motion by Maribeth Herod and seconded by Maria Jankowski, the Academic and Student Life Committee minutes of February 17, 2022 were approved.

**Academic Affairs Divisional Update**

Dr. Heather Coltman provided the committee with a description of the Faculty, Curriculum and Policy area of Academic Affairs, the administrative area that works most closely with faculty through their shared governance responsibilities. She also provided an update on hiring within the division, as well as a description of various activities, including the Sparks Celebration and faculty awards. She detailed the growing use of open educational resources and the status of the Climate Study project. The committee also heard an update on student performance and faculty consideration during COVID from Dr. Fletcher Linder.

**Learning Access through Universal Design**

The committee heard a presentation on the Learning Access through Universal Design (LAUD) initiative from Dr. Juhong Christie Liu, Associate Professor, Libraries, and Dr. B.J. Bryson, Professor, Department of Social Work. The LAUD program is an intensive yearlong collaboration between the College of Health and Behavioral Studies, JMU Libraries, and the College of Education which began in May 2021. This initiative teaches JMU faculty about principles and practices of universal design for learning (UDL). Using UDL can enable faculty to create learning experiences that are accessible and broadly applicable, meeting the diverse needs of more students, regardless of ability status, learning preferences, situational challenges, or diverse identity. The LAUD initiative offers Canvas-based self-paced training, a faculty learning community, and customized consultations. By participating in LAUD, faculty learn about essential UDL practices and explore how to apply them in their teaching to build inclusive learning opportunities for students. Dozens of faculty and staff from multiple JMU units, colleges, and divisions collaborated to design, develop, present, evaluate, and implement the LAUD initiative. Through interdisciplinary collaboration, flexible and hybrid options, and ongoing content creation, LAUD is helping JMU faculty members create and sustain inclusive learning environments for JMU students.

**Curriculum Update**

Dr. John Allemeier, Director of the School of Music, presented a proposal for a new degree program, the Bachelor of Arts in Music, with two concentrations: Music Studies and Music Industry

This degree complements the School of Music’s existing Bachelor of Music and will allow opportunities for music students to take advantage of JMU as a comprehensive university by allowing electives and double majors. It also increases access to a music degree for students who may have been unable to afford private music lessons. Seven institutions in Virginia offer a B.A. in music, and JMU is one of only six schools of the 636 National Association of Schools of Music accredited programs (1%) offering bachelor’s, master’s, and D.M.A.s in Music without a B.A. in Music.

Employment projections for careers related to this degree program, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Virginia Employment Commission, are strong and anticipated to increase. No funding is requested from the state.

On motion by ­­­­­Maria Jankowski and seconded by Maribeth Herod the committee unanimously approved the Bachelor of Arts in Music degree program.

Dr. Mark L’Esperance, Dean of the College of Education, presented a proposal for a new degree program, the Doctor of Education in Education, with two concentrations: Curriculum, Instruction and Educational Equity and Leadership, Equity, Innovation and Learning. This will be JMU’s first Ed.D. and a natural extension of the college’s current master’s programs, with a current enrollment of over 300 students.

This degree addresses professional education employment needs in the commonwealth by providing a pathway to a terminal degree for master’s-level graduates and practicing administrators. Several institutions in Virginia offer an Ed.D., but none offer this degree in the same curriculum category, giving JMU a unique niche in the field.

Employment opportunities for education administrators are currently high and increasing, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Virginia Employment Commission. No funding is requested from the state.

On motion by ­­­­­John Lynch and seconded by Maria Jankowski the committee unanimously approved Doctor of Education in Education degree program degree program.

**Faculty Handbook Update**

Suggested revisions to the 2022-23 Faculty Handbook were presented by Dr. Michael O’Fallon, Policy Specialist, Faculty, Curriculum, and Policy. The changes were the result of a year-long, multi-phase faculty review and suggestion process. The edits apply to two sections of the faculty handbook: III. Faculty Employment Policies and Procedures and IV. Faculty Role in Governance. The Faculty Handbook Committee’s list of proposed edits was shared with the Faculty Senate Speaker, the Provost and the President. Twenty-three changes were advanced for review by the Academic Excellence committee.

A significant number of the changes were related to the establishment of two new ranks: Senior and Principal Lecturer. Other changes included revising all text to use inclusive language and correcting references to university policies that have changed/been removed.

On motion by ­­­­­Maria Jankowski and seconded by Maribeth Herod the committee unanimously approved the changes to the Faculty Handbook.

**Faculty Senate Speaker Report**

Dr. Val Larsen, Faculty Senate Speaker, shared information from Faculty Senate’s February and March meetings. During these meetings, the Faculty Senate passed resolutions that endorsed JMU’s statement on the war in Ukraine; urged that faculty have options to protect themselves and their family as mask mandates for COVID are lifted; called upon the administration to rescind the 2021 hiring guidelines and affirm that it will not make consequential policy changes when faculty are not consulted; rescinded an attribution of a DEI motive for creating the 2021 hiring policy; and added as a required syllabus element a statement inviting students to share with faculty anything that may help create an inclusive and welcoming learning environment.

The Faculty Senate Speaker acknowledged the Provost’s good faith effort to address the faculty’s concerns with the hiring guidelines, and he expressed the expectation of a good working relationship between the Provost and the next Faculty Senate Speaker. The speaker went on to note that he looks forward to more joint collaborations and co-branded initiatives between administration and Faculty Senate. Dr. Larsen also expressed his gratitude to the Board of Visitors for the support that he, the Faculty Senate, and the faculty have received during the past two years.

There being no further business, on the motion of Maribeth Herod and seconded by Maria Jankowski, the Academic Excellence Committee meeting adjourned at 2:41p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Matthew Gray-Keeling, Acting Chair

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Donna Harper, Secretary to the Board