
**THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
THE VISITORS OF JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY**

Minutes of the Academic Excellence Committee

The Academic Excellence Committee met on Thursday, November 9, 2023, in the Highlands Room of the Festival Conference and Student Center at James Madison University. Lara Major, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Lara opened the meeting by recognizing the four Impact Program members in attendance.

Present:

Bell, Dickie
Major, Lara
White, Jack

Falcon, Chris
Wood, Nicole Payla

Others:

Alger, Jonathan, President
Chamberlin, Matt, Director, Independent Scholars Program
Coltman, Heather, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
Elassal, Mariam, Class of 2024, Independent Scholar
Evans, Perry, Class of 2024, Integrated Science and Technology
Frana, Phil, Professor of Interdisciplinary Liberal Studies and Independent Scholars
Herod, Maribeth, Rector
Maxwell, Paula, Associate Provost for Curriculum
Nowviskie, Bethany, Dean, Libraries
Ott Walter, Kathy, Speaker, Faculty Senate
Schubert, Carolyn, Interim Associate Dean for Academic Engagement, Libraries
Shorish, Yasmeen, Professor and Director of Scholarly Communications Strategies, Libraries
Shukrullah, Shukrana, Class of 2024, Independent Scholars
Tongen, Anthony, Vice Provost for Research, Economic Development and Innovation
Zhang, Hao, Associate Professor of Integrated Science and Engineering

Approval of Minutes

On motion by Chris Falcon and seconded by Nicole Payla Wood, the Academic Excellence Committee minutes of September 14, 2023, were approved.

Academic Affairs Divisional Update

Provost Heather Coltman delivered the divisional update. She began by observing a moment of silence to remember Edwin O'Shea, Associate Professor in the College of Science and Mathematics, who passed away in late September and student Bernard Stapelfeld, who passed away on November 9, 2023. The provost then

discussed elements of student success, with an emphasis on advising, the integral part that advisors play in student success and the role of Reengineering Madison.

Area Spotlight: Libraries

Dean Bethany Nowviskie and Carolyn Schubert and Yasmeen Shorish from Libraries presented on the many ways our exceptional library system serves as research infrastructure for JMU: providing faculty and students with the resources, spaces, academic technologies, and expertise they need to conduct 21st century research; enhancing the impact of JMU publications by helping them reach a global audience; and connecting the research activities of our R2 institution with JMU's core teaching-and-learning mission.

Dean Nowviskie highlighted the Carrier Library expansion and shared the link to the award-winning interactive website where updates and information about the project can be viewed.

Research Advances – Faculty/Student Panel

Research, Economic Development and Innovation (REDI) coordinated a presentation highlighting JMU's growth in research expenditures and expanded resources for faculty and students in support of R2 status; university-wide activities, which include leading economic development efforts with local, regional, and state-level partners; and exciting examples of faculty-student research projects.

The committee heard from three students regarding how their research has enhanced and impacted their educational experience at JMU. Independent Scholars major Shukrana Shukrullah, with faculty advisor Phil Frana, presented her success story (including securing \$20,000 in scholarships to study abroad) with support from the JMU Office of Student Awards, Initiatives, and Research (STAIR). Mariam Ellassal, who is also an Independent Scholars major, with faculty advisor Matt Chamberlin, presented barriers to reforming the criminal and youth justice systems, highlighting the practicality of interdisciplinary approaches and the value of engaged and work-based learning. Perry Evans, majoring in Integrated Science and Technology, and faculty advisor Hao Zhang presented their integrated science and technology research exploring innovative algorithms and models tailored for enhancing smart machine and production control within manufacturing systems.

Curriculum Updates

The committee heard from Paula Maxwell, Associate Vice Provost for Curriculum, who gave updates on a pending curriculum change and proposed three items needing board and SCHEV approval.

After updating the committee on the status of three pending proposals approved by the board previously, the committee heard a proposal to discontinue two degree programs, Speech Pathology and Community Health Education. The discontinuances are contingent on SCHEV approval of proposals to create degree programs from existing majors: Speech Pathology will be replaced with Communication Sciences and Disorders and Health Sciences.

On a motion by Chris Falcon and seconded by Jack White, the committee unanimously approved the discontinuation of the Community Health Education, BS, and Speech Pathology, BA/BS, contingent on the approval of pending SCHEV proposals for new degree programs.



The second request was to elevate an existing major in Environmental Earth Science to a stand-alone degree program. The new program would increase visibility for student recruitment and provide a greater ability to offer environmental earth science-specific courses. No additional resources are requested, and the employment outlook for this degree program is higher than average.

On a motion by Dickie Bell and seconded by Chris Falcon, the committee unanimously approved this new Environmental Earth Science, BA/BS, stand-alone degree program.

The third proposal was to change the current name of the Department of Foreign Languages, Literatures, and Cultures to the Department of World Languages and Cultures, effective Fall 2024. The requested name is more commonly used in the discipline. The limited costs associated with the name change will come from funds in the existing departmental budget and no additional resources are needed.

On a motion by Chris Falcon and seconded by Jack White, the committee unanimously approved the proposed name change of the Department of Foreign Languages, Literatures, and Cultures to the Department of World Languages and Cultures.

Faculty Senate Speaker Report

Kathy Ott Walter provided the speaker's report and shared a synopsis of the October and November senate meetings. She expressed thanks to President Alger for attending the October in-person Faculty Senate meeting and weaving answers to faculty questions about workload, campus safety, and salaries into his remarks. She also thanked Dean Bob Kolvoord for attending the virtual November Faculty Senate meeting and providing a thorough overview of the Reengineering Madison. The senate continues to explore what makes faculty successful at JMU.

The speaker concluded her report highlighting the study abroad activities and student achievements in the Adult Degree Program and the recent Health Policy Summit, which brought together four departments from two colleges along with the Center for Civic Engagement to provide an inter-professional event for students to work together to address a health policy concern.

Topics of Interest for Future Meetings

Due to time constraints, the chair asked committee members to reach out to her and Provost Coltman with any topics of interest for future meetings.

There being no further business, on the motion of Chris Falcon and seconded by Nicole Payla Wood, the Academic Excellence Committee meeting adjourned at 2:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lara Major, Chair

Donna Harper, Secretary to the Board