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# THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA THE VISITORS OF JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

## Minutes of the Athletics Committee

The Athletics Committee met on September 14, 2023, in Ballroom B of the Festival and Student Center. The meeting was called to order at 2:49 p.m. by John Lynch, Chair. Mr. Lynch welcomed new Committee Member, Steve Smith, and complimented Jeff Bourne, Director of Athletics on the recent Bourne Dialogue and statement of solidarity released prior to the Football game versus the University of Virginia. Mr. Lynch expressed that the correspondence to fans, the pregame ceremony and game were all extremely well done. Mr. Bourne thanked Mr. Lynch for his comments and recognized Kevin Warner, Assistant Athletics Director for Communications, for his work in helping to craft the message and other Bourne Dialogue communications.

### **Present:**

Lynch, John, Chair  
Bell, Dickie  
Major, Lara  
Smith, Steve  
White, Jack

### **Others:**

Alger, Jonathan, President  
Allen, Dirron, Associate Vice President for Student Life and Involvement  
Bridges, Kaiden, JMU Breeze  
Bourne, Jeffrey, Director of Athletics  
Cannella, Abigail, Student Representative to the Board of Visitors  
Coltman, Heather, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Hazen, Nathan, Student Body President (SGA)  
Johnson, Kurt, Associate Registrar  
Kirkpatrick David, Interim Chief of Staff  
Knight, Jack, University Counsel  
LaPorta, Stephen, Assistant A.D. for Compliance  
Lough, Denise, Assistant A.D., Administration and Operations  
Phillips, Ty, Assistant A.D. for Facilities & Events  
Polglase, Geoffrey, Deputy Director of Athletics  
Renkin, Scooter, Assistant A.D. for Development  
Soenksen, Roger, Faculty Athletics Representative  
Turner, Demitri, SAAC President  
Warner, Kevin, Assistant A.D. for Communications  
Vass, Mary-Hope, Associate Vice President for Communications & Marketing

Mr. Lynch then called for a motion to approve the minutes. It was moved by Dickie Bell and seconded by Lara Major to approve the minutes of the April 20, 2023, meeting of the Athletics' Committee.

### **Sports Update**

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Jeff Bourne, Director of Athletics, welcomed new board member, Steve Smith, to the Athletics Committee and expressed excitement in working with him and the other Committee members in the coming year. Mr. Bourne then provided the Committee with an overall Sports Update. Last year was a tremendous year for JMU Athletics: 655 winning % across all sports, three conference regular season titles, six NCAA appearances, a 3.184 Department GPA with 91 President's List and 195 Dean's List Student-Athletes; 6,352 department hours of community service, seven All-Americans, eight Conference Players of the Year and three Conference Coaches of the Year. For the current academic year, JMU teams have compiled a 18-8-5 cumulative record, for a .661 winning percentage; Dukes men's teams have not lost yet (6-0-2). After competing for one year in the CCSA, swimming and diving picked up sponsorship as a Sun Belt sport in August of 2023, giving JMU 16 of its 18 programs competing in the Sun Belt. Lacrosse competes in the AAC and field hockey as an independent for 2023 before moving into the MAC in 2024. Three JMU teams have appeared in national polls thus far in 2023-24. Men's soccer hit as high as No. 8 after a 3-0 start to the season. Football has been receiving votes through each of the first polls of the season. After concluding 2022 receiving votes unofficially for the first time in program history, JMU volleyball has gradually increased its vote total each week at the start of the 2023 season. Football sits at 2-0. The Dukes were picked first in the East Division in Sun Belt preseason polls and received a vote in the preseason USA Today Coaches Poll. JMU defeated Virginia 36-35 in week two in the first matchup between the state programs in 40 years. Offensive lineman Nick Kidwell and defensive lineman James Carpenter were each named to the watch list for the Outland Trophy for college football's best interior lineman. Carpenter also earned selection to the Bronko Nagurski Trophy watch list for the nation's top defensive player. Ryan Hanson was selected to the Ray Guy watch list for the nation's top punter. Camden Wise was named to the Wuerffel Trophy watch list recognizing community service and off-the-field commitment. Men's soccer is off to a 4-0-2 start after being picked eighth in the Sun Belt preseason poll. The Dukes got off to a 3-0 start and vaulted up to No. 8 in the national rankings. Women's soccer sits at 3-2-3 in 2023 against one of the nation's toughest strengths of schedule in the early going. JMU was picked first in the Sun Belt preseason poll. Alexandra Blom was named to the Herman Trophy preseason watch list recognizing the best player in the country. JMU Faculty Athletics Representative, Roger Soenksen, was honored as a nominee for the Sun Belt FAR of the Year Award. The department launched the JMU Athletics mobile app in August, enhancing access to digital ticketing and overall mobile presence for athletics news and updates. JMU completed a renovation to the Convocation Center in August of 2023, a project that included the competition venue for volleyball, training space for track & field as well as offices, locker rooms, meeting rooms, sports medicine and strength and conditioning for men's soccer, women's soccer, field hockey, lacrosse, cross country, track & field and volleyball. Additionally, in early fall of 2023, JMU completed a replacement of the softball turf and infield dirt. Volleyball sits at 7-2 to start the season and was picked first in the East Division in the Sun Belt preseason poll. JMU is receiving votes in the AVCA national poll and earned the programs first ranked win in its history with a sweep of No. 22 Western Kentucky. The Dukes are competing their first season in the newly-renovated Convocation Center. Field hockey sits at 2-4 in 2023.

JMU inducted its 35th Hall of Fame Class on September 1 with a group featuring: women's soccer forward Kim Argy Estes, lacrosse attacker Casey Ancarrow, longtime integrated health and sport performance administrator Tom Kuster, baseball infielder/pitcher Brent Metheny, football quarterback Justin Rascati and archer Jacob Wukie. At the Sun Belt Conference, there has been a lot of conversation concerning conference stability, especially given the movement in other conferences. Mr. Bourne shared that the Sun Belt is content with its current membership of 14 institutions and understands the challenges that comes with scheduling and the financial implications of adding additional schools. At the NCAA level, NIL continues to be a challenge for all Division I sports. Mr. Bourne shared that JMU is working with a collective, but acknowledged that there are limited resources and that JMU must be realistic in

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what it can offer. Dartmouth College recently had a group of student-athletes look to unionize, the first of this type, prompting the notion of “pay for play” and changing the landscape for amateur sports. Mr. Bourne shared that he would be traveling to Washington D.C. next week for the LEAD 1 Athletics Directors Conference and that a portion of the conference includes meeting with and educating congressional legislators on the NIL landscape. Following questions and comments from Committee members, Mr. Bourne concluded his update.

### **Sun Belt Conference Assembly of Provosts Meeting**

Dr. Heather Coltman, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, provided an academic update from the recent Sun Belt Conference Assembly of Provosts meeting held in San Marcos, Texas. Dr. Coltman discussed the challenges of the transfer portal and the time that it takes to determine transfer credit equivalency. Kurt Johnson, Associate Registrar, shared that campus is working to streamline the process of reviewing transcripts and leveraging technology to help review transfer documents in a quicker timeframe. Mr. Johnson acknowledged that building templates to read transcripts will take time, but shared that Academics, Admissions and Athletics are working collaboratively to strategize ways to lessen the time it takes to review and determine equivalency. Dr. Coltman shared that Provosts of the Sun Belt Conference are working to establish cohorts and other Conference initiatives that involve Athletics and Academics. She also acknowledged that JMU’s excused absence policy has become a model for the Sun Belt and that many SBC schools are asking to review our policy to help guide the development of a similar policy at their respective institution. Following a brief discussion regarding in-bound and outbound transferability, Dr. Coltman concluded her update.

### **2022-2023 Strategic Plan Accountability Measures**

Geoff Polglase, Deputy Athletics Director, asked if there were questions from Committee Members relating to the 2022-2023 Strategic Plan Accountability Measures; the report was shared with Committee Members prior to the meeting. He mentioned that it is a requirement to annually share the accountability metrics with the Board of Visitors. Further, he noted that JMU Athletics continues to meet and exceed the majority of the measures outlined in the University Strategic Plan. The measures are included annually in the STAR Planning submission, which is aggregated into the University’s data report for accreditation and published on [jmusports.com](http://jmusports.com). Committee Member, Lara Major, applauded the report and the level of detail provided, noting that the metrics were both impressive and well presented.

### **Compliance Update**

Stephen LaPorta, Assistant Athletics Director for Compliance, provided a Compliance update, which highlighted the NCAA transformation committee’s recent recommendations which embrace providing a Holistic Student-Athlete model which includes scholarship protections and medical care requirements two years post-grad or completion of eligibility for athletics-related injuries, among other things. Mr. LaPorta noted that JMU is already implementing a majority of these items, but that these new requirements will be a big change for many D-I institutions. Further, the Committee has recommended that the Student-Athlete voice be involved in decision making, including representation at coaches meetings and on institutional committees; this is also a requirement at the Conference level as it relates to sports-specific engagement and advocacy groups. Mandated areas of education must now be covered with Student-Athletes—many of which are already covered under our Duke LEAD Program—and new rules will establish membership credibility and show accountability for members of Division I, in regards to medical care and compliance. Mr. LaPorta shared future changes and recommendations from the transformation committee could include guidance relating to FBS membership requirements,

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Championship access and travel and Amateurism. Following questions from Board Members and a brief discussion, Mr. LaPorta concluded his update.

### **Student-Athlete Focus: Sun Belt Meeting & SAAC Engagement Update**

Dr. Roger Soenksen, Faculty Athletics Representative, provided an update on the Dukes LEAD Program. He highlighted the current Dukes LEAD staff, which includes Cassidy Clements, Assistant A.D. for the Student-Athlete Leadership Program. Ms. Clements ('18, '20) took the helm to lead the Dukes LEAD Program this past March. Other Dukes LEAD staff includes Marcus Bell, Coordinator for Student-Athlete Leadership Development, who is a 2022 graduate from UNC-Pembroke, former wrestling student-athlete, and most recently completed a year-long internship at Michigan State University as a 2023 McLendon Foundation Future Leader and Elizabeth Helmich, a current volleyball student-athlete at JMU, who is beginning her second year as the program's Graphic Design Intern. In addition to creating graphics, marketing materials, and monthly newsletters, Helmich will oversee all @JMU DukesLead social media accounts across platforms. The Dukes LEAD Program continues to place emphasis on the following pillars of development during the student-athlete experience: Career Readiness; Civic and Community Engagement; Human Development and Leadership Development. Dr. Soenksen then shared that several JMU Student-Athletes have recently participated in experiential learning opportunities including representation at the NCAA Student-Athlete Leadership Forum (Rodrigo Robles, Men's Soccer) and participation in the Michael & Cecelia Battle Summer Leadership Scholarship Program (Kali Findlow, Cheerleading and Paige Miller, Track & Field). Dr. Soenksen then introduced Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) President Demetri Turner (Men's Soccer). The Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) is dedicated to promoting the student-athlete voice to university and athletics administration in addition to partnering with the conference and national offices to develop succinct programming across campuses nationwide. Mr. Turner offered an update on JMU's SAAC priorities for the academic year, which includes Campus and Community involvement, Peer Support and Education, and Student-Athlete Voice Driving Experiences. Mr. Turner spoke about elevating SAAC and the importance of donating time and being physically present when serving others. His personal experiences and background in community service have helped guide his vision for SAAC and his expectations for the group and his peers. Mr. Turner offered a glimpse of how the Executive Board is already organizing ideas and setting goals for both SAAC and general student-athlete body. After discussion with Committee Members, Mr. Turner concluded his update.

### **Development Update**

Scooter Renkin, Associate Athletics Director for Development, provided a fundraising update and offered an overview of the various types of giving available to donors. He then offered a review of last fiscal year's fundraising numbers, as well as fiscal year-to-date figures. Mr. Renkin shared that Fiscal Year 23 was a record-breaking year for the Duke Club, which was highlighted by a record \$4,669,413 raised by the Annual Fund and established a new Donor Record 5,633 (up almost 1,000 donors from Fiscal Year 22). A new overall Fundraising Record was set in Fiscal Year 23, raising \$6,270,691. Mr. Renkin thanked his Duke Club staff, Associate Athletics Director for Ticketing and Strategic Revenues, Brad Burgess, and the Ticket Office Staff for their tireless work and partnership in reaching these record-breaking numbers. He also thanked the donors for showing up and supporting JMU Athletics. Mr. Renkin then shared the current year-to-date numbers, which includes 1,937 donors, up 450+ donors from last year. For Fiscal Year 24, the Annual Fund is currently at \$402,808 (as of September 8, 2023). Sport Specific Giving is expected to increase as we prepare for our "Diggin' Dukes" Campaign on November 28, which will highlight our restricted giving funds. Mr. Renkin concluded his update by sharing the Duke Club's FY24 goals, which include raising \$4.8M for the Annual Fund and reaching 6,000 donors. Following discussions among Committee Members relating to educating students and specifically, student-athletes

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on the importance of philanthropy and fundraising benchmarks within the Sun Belt Conference, Mr. Renkin concluded his update.

Mr. Bourne concluded the Athletics Committee meeting by asking Committee members for feedback concerning future agenda items they would like to be considered. Committee Member, Jack White, expressed how impressive and valuable it was to hear of Demetri Turner's leadership off the court and encouraged having student-athlete representation at future meetings.

There being no further business, John Lynch, Chair, then called for a motion to adjourn. It was moved by Steve Smith and seconded Dickie Bell. The meeting was adjourned at 4:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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John Lynch, Chair

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Donna L. Harper, Secretary to the Board