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

Minutes of the Academic Excellence Committee

The Academic Excellence Committee met on Thursday, April 18, 2024, 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.

Present:

Bell, Dickie
Major, Lara
White, Jack

Falcon, Chris
Payla Wood, Nicole

Others:

Coltman, Heather, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
Herod, Maribeth, Rector
Lee, John W., Strategic Leadership Studies, Ph.D. candidate
Maxwell, Paula, Associate Provost for Curriculum
O'Fallon, Michael, Associate Vice Provost, Academic Affairs Policy
Oldmixon, Elizabeth, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and Curriculum
Ott Walter, Kathy, Speaker, Faculty Senate
Ross, Cam, Cyber Intelligence Graduate Certificate candidate
Thomas, Linda, Dean, The Graduate School
Wilson-Nealy, Tahlia, Clinical and School Psychology, Psy.D. candidate

Approval of Minutes

On motion by Dickie Bell and seconded by Nicole Payla Wood, the Academic Excellence Committee minutes of February 15, 2024 were approved.

Academic Affairs Divisional Update

Provost Heather Coltman delivered the divisional update. After thanking committee members for their service over the past year, she acknowledged Administrative Professionals month and ways that the division thanked the over 200 administrative professionals that support the work of Academic Affairs every day.

The provost provided responses to questions raised by committee members since the last meeting. Her comments included positive updates on the College of Educations Grow Your Own program, the five-year funding of the lab school, and the newly approved Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree.

Dr. Coltman reported on the status of work-based learning opportunities, which continue to be a priority for the state and the university, highlighting three innovative internship opportunities, two of which span multiple colleges.

She also detailed some of the ways JMU is keeping its finger on the pulse of current work environments and preparing students for the modern-day workplace. Examples include professionalization in the classroom – such as COB 202 students formalizing their resumes, learning how to clean up their social media, and creating effective LinkedIn pages – and through extracurriculars. For example, colleges and departments, in partnership with the University Career Center, host career fairs, career conferences, employer panels, networking events, and career field trips.

Area Spotlight: The Graduate School

Linda Thomas, Dean for The Graduate School, provided a brief overview of the past, present and future of the school including the current three-year strategic goals. Dr. Thomas then spoke about how the strategic expansion of James Madison University's graduate enterprise has enhanced the university's national standing through increased research expenditures and the production of doctoral graduates from globally recognized programs. She also shared about the hybrid administrative model of The Graduate School which benefits graduate students by providing them with both support from the faculty within the colleges that house their programs and support from The Graduate School such as a specialized orientation to JMU, enhanced professional development and advocacy for the unique needs of graduate students.

The committee heard from three current students in the graduate program. Each of them shared about the value of their experiences in The Graduate School as well as the value they have been able to add to the JMU community.

Curriculum Updates

The committee heard from Paula Maxwell, Associate Vice Provost for Curriculum, who provided an overview of the request for the discontinuance of the Bachelor of Science in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). The program has had historically low enrollment that does not meet SCHEV productivity requirements. There are other options for students to receive their TESOL certification, including as part of a new TESOL concentration in the M.Ed. Program starting in Fall 2024. No new students will be enrolled after Summer 2024, and a teach out is planned for all remaining students.

On a motion by Nicole Payla Wood and seconded by Chris Falcon, the committee unanimously approved the discontinuation of the Bachelor of Science in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

Faculty Handbook 2024-2025 Updates

The multi-phase review and suggestion process used by the faculty, the Faculty Senate speaker, the provost and the president for revisions to the 2024-25 Faculty Handbook was shared by Michael O'Fallon, Associate Vice Provost for Academic Affairs Policy. Twelve final recommended changes were proposed to the committee; all were part of the "Applicability of the Faculty Handbook and Procedures for Change" and "Faculty Employment Policies and Procedures" sections.

On a motion by Chris Falcon and seconded by Dickie Bell, the committee unanimously approved these changes to the 2024-2025 Faculty Handbook.

Faculty Handbook Revision Process

Elizabeth Oldmixon, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and Curriculum, shared that pending a vote of the Faculty Senate, the division is embarking on a major revision of the Faculty Handbook in response to a recommendation from last year's shared governance report. The revision will include substantive and organizational changes and will be conducted with openness and transparency, ensuring all stakeholders have the opportunity to participate.

Faculty Senate Speaker Report

Kathy Ott Walter provided the speaker's report and shared a synopsis of the February and March senate meetings, resolutions presented, and committee work. She highlighted continuing conversations and work around faculty workload, student accommodations, the faculty handbook revision process, campus safety, presidential search process and policy development. She concluded her report highlighting recent faculty achievements. Adjunct faculty senator Leslie Harlacker was elected to serve another term as Vice President of the Faculty Senate of Virginia. From the second round of grant proposals, the Faculty Senate Research and Scholarship Committee awarded 5 mini grants of \$16,285.

Topics of Interest for Future Meetings

The chair suggested that going forward the board consider having one joint meeting a year between the Academic Excellence and Student Affairs Committees to allow discussion of convergent topics.

The chair closed the meeting by thanking the provost and committee members, as this was her last meeting as a member of the Academic Excellence Committee.

There being no further business, on the motion of Nicole Payla Wood and seconded by Dickie Bell, the Academic Excellence Committee meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lara Major, Chair

Donna Harper, Secretary to the Board