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

Minutes of the Academic Excellence Committee

The Academic Excellence Committee met on Thursday, February 15, 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 1:04 p.m.

Present:

Bell, Dickie
Major, Lara
White, Jack

Falcon, Chris
Wood, Nicole Payla

Others:

Coltman, Heather, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
Garber, Donna, Bachelor of Individualized Study, 2014, Educational Specialist, 2020
Lewis, Mark, Professor of Literacy Education, College of Education
Linder, Fletcher, Associate Provost for Online Strategy and Dean, University Studies
Maxwell, Paula, Associate Provost for Curriculum
Oldmixon, Elizabeth, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and Curriculum
Ott Walter, Kathy, Speaker, Faculty Senate
Robinson, Daniel, Director, Adult Degree Program
Sloan, Pam, Bachelor of Individualized Study, 2024
Swartz, Nick, Interim Dean, School of Professional and Continuing Educations

Approval of Minutes

On motion by Nicole Payla Wood and seconded by Chris Falcon, the Academic Excellence Committee minutes of November 9, 2023, were approved.

Academic Affairs Divisional Update

Provost Heather Coltman delivered the divisional update. She provided background on the Board of Visitors member class observations. She gave an update on the Shared Governance Task Force and shared data related to instructional faculty service on divisional committees. She also provided an update on funding related to Faculty Senate mini-grants, which are funded by Academic Affairs and the President's Office, as well as the status of faculty hiring. The chair recognized the work of Renee Reed, Executive Assistant to the Provost, and Kristi Shackelford, Academic Affairs Chief Communications Officer, for their efforts in organizing the class visits for board members.

Area Spotlight: Adult Degree Program

Nick Swartz, Interim Dean for the School of Professional & Continuing Education, provided a brief overview of the school's portfolio including the Life Long Learning Institute, Non-credit Professional Development, the Adult Degree Program, K-12 Youth Programs, and credit-bearing programs in partnership with colleges across Academic Affairs.

The program director for the Adult Degree Program, Daniel Robinson, shared the current program structure and focus on working with adult learners completing their bachelor's degrees online. He also described plans for enrollment

growth and an expanded emphasis on multiple kinds of experiential learning including research and study abroad. The committee heard from a current student, Pam Sloan, and an alumna of the program, Donna Garber, who shared the value of their experiences in the Adult Degree Program. They noted what brought them to this program at JMU and the quality of the advisement they have received as students.

Curriculum Updates

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

Paula provided an overview of the request for the discontinuance of the eLearning certificate. Courses currently part of the eLearning certificate have been integrated into the existing Educational Technology certificate, rendering eLearning duplicative. No new students will be enrolled after Summer 2024.

On a motion by Chris Falcon and seconded by Dickie Bell, the committee unanimously approved the discontinuation of the eLearning certificate.

The committee heard a proposal to create a new online graduate certificate in Literacy Education from Mark Lewis, Professor of Literacy Education in the College of Education and director of the program. This certificate will allow teachers to earn a reading specialist endorsement and serve in reading specialist roles in their schools and districts across the state. The Virginia Literacy Act expanded school districts' need to hire endorsed reading specialists, and this program will target practicing teachers who already hold a master's degree and are interested in earning a reading specialist endorsement in Virginia. The program would commence in Fall 2024 with an estimated 20 new members per cohort. No new resources are needed, and the certificate will provide opportunities for additional enrollment sustained by existing faculty.

On a motion by Nicole Payla Wood and seconded by Jack White, the committee unanimously approved the new graduate certificate in Literacy Education.

The third proposal was a credit hour change for the Counseling and Supervision doctoral program. The existing program prepares already licensed and experienced mental health counselors and school counselors to provide education training, supervision, and research to support new professionals and mental health efforts in our communities. Effective Summer 2025, to remain in good standing with the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), the credit hours must increase from 48 to 60, as accreditation standards now require that all doctoral programs have a minimum of 60 credits. One existing class and three new courses will be added to the curriculum. One tenure-track faculty member will be needed to deliver the program, and the cost will be offset by tuition generated by increased credit hours and capacity for new enrollment.

On a motion by Jack White and seconded by Nicole Payla Wood, the committee unanimously approved the credit change to the Counseling and Supervision program.

Fletcher Linder presented information on a new major in General Studies that would be added to the Individualized Study degree program. This new major will provide flexible options for students who have completed five or more semesters at JMU without finding a suitable major program. Students will complete a set of core courses that synthesize information and skills from the student's course work into a scholarly product. The program will allow a degree completion option for students who would normally discontinue; currently, about 120 students a year who have earned more than 90 credits and are in good standing leave JMU without completing a degree. The major will make students marketable for jobs which require a bachelor's degree in non-specific fields. No additional resources or action are required. The major will be part of an existing degree program, so no action from the board is required; the proposal was shared as an informational item.



Integration of Academic Programs and Faculty Workload

Elizabeth Oldmixon, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and Curriculum, and Provost Coltman provided an overview of the curriculum process and instructional faculty workload at JMU. Aligned with the principles of academic freedom, curriculum is vested with the faculty. This is also an area where shared governance is evident. Administrators work with faculty on the backend processes to instantiate curriculum. Administrators and board members ensure that curriculum aligns with JMU's strategic priorities. Faculty work is comprised of teaching, research, and service. While ensuring curricular needs are met, faculty assignments over time ideally allow for flexibility and variability in meeting strategic priorities and enhancing faculty's career growth.

Faculty Senate Speaker Report

Kathy Ott Walter provided the speaker's report and shared a synopsis of the December and January senate meetings, faculty senate committee work, continuing conversations around inclement weather communication, and the continued collaboration between faculty and administration to improve/streamline procedures and processes. She received positive feedback from faculty participating in the class visits today.

The speaker reported that 17 faculty mini-grants were awarded by the Faculty Senate for a total of \$56,000. The research ranged from multimodal professional development for early childhood teachers in Uzbekistan to student research where students connect with members from the local poultry industry to study respiratory diseases.

She concluded her report by highlighting recent faculty achievements and the event kicking off the Innovation Center for Youth Justice (ICYJ), which is supported by the Commonwealth of Virginia and is a collaboration among the Justice Studies and Social Work departments and the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice.

Topics of Interest for Future Meetings

The chair noted that topics presented today were based on feedback from committee members and asked committee members to continue to reach out to her with any topics of interest for future meetings.

There being no further business, on the motion of Nicole Payla Wood and seconded by Jack White, the Academic Excellence Committee meeting adjourned at 2:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lara Major, Chair

Donna Harper, Secretary to the Board