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

Minutes of the Academic Excellence Committee

The Academic Excellence Committee met on Thursday, April 10, 2025, in the Highlands Room of the Festival Conference and Student Center at James Madison University. Nicole Palya Wood, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Present:

Bell, Dickie
Bolander, Jeff
Galati, Tom

White, Jack
Wood, Nicole Palya

Others:

Blackstone, Bethany, Dean, Honors College
Brooks, Sarah, Professor, School of Art, Design and Art History
Busing, Michael, Dean, College of Business
Kolvoord, Bob, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Linder, Fletcher, Associate Provost and Dean, University Studies
Maxwell, Paula, Associate Vice Provost for Curriculum
Nowviskie, Bethany, Dean, Libraries
Prins, Sam, Dean, College of Science and Mathematics
Tang, Jeff, Interim Dean, College of Integrated Science and Engineering
Zimmerman, Traci, Dean, College of Arts and Letters

Approval of Minutes

On motion by Jeff Bolander and seconded by Tom Galati, the Academic Excellence Committee minutes of February 13, 2025, were approved.

Academic Affairs Divisional Update

Provost Bob Kolvoord began his remarks by recognizing faculty and students from College of Visual and Performing Arts (CVPA) who recently performed at Carnegie Hall, a first for JMU. He also recognized kinesiology professor Dr. Cathy McKay for the success of the Paralympic Skill Lab showcase on Monday, which featured some of our adapted physical education options. The provost reported the transition to Okta for identify and access management had gone well, thanks to proactive communications from IT and engagement from faculty and staff in AA. He also provided an update on hiring in the division.

Core Curriculum – General Education



**Board of Visitors
April 10, 2025**

Dr. Fletcher Linder, Associate Provost and Dean of University Studies, and Dr. Bethany Blackstone, Dean of the Honors College, updated the committee on the status of the core curriculum renewal. They reported high faculty engagement in the early pieces of the process, with 115 recommendations received initially and 267 survey responses received from sharing those themed suggestions with faculty. Those recommendations will be reviewed, revised, and further developed through the next academic year, with an anticipated implementation in academic year 2027-28.

Deans Roundtable

Dr. Michael Busing, Dean of the College of Business; Dr. Bethany Nowviskie, Dean of Libraries; Dr. Jeff Tang, Interim Dean of the College of Integrated Science and Engineering; and Dr. Traci Zimmerman, Dean of the College of Arts and Letters, joined the committee for a high-level roundtable discussion focused on challenges in higher education. Deans weighed in on current concerns and opportunities in the higher ed landscape as a whole as well as how these issues affected their individual colleges/areas. The deans also asked committee members for their feedback on several topics and answered the members' questions.

Curriculum Updates

Dr. Paula Maxwell, Associate Vice Provost for Curriculum, presented two curriculum proposals for board approval. The first request was for the discontinuance of the Master of Arts Degree in Art. The Master of Fine Arts remains. The MA has had historically low enrollment, and the last enrolled student is scheduled to graduate in August 2025. No new students will be enrolled for Fall 2025 or beyond.

On motion by Jeff Bolander and seconded by Dickie Bell, the committee unanimously approved the discontinuance of the Master of Arts (MA) Degree designation in Art.

The second proposal was to establish a new graduate certificate program in Entrepreneurship and Leadership in the Arts and Design. It will enhance knowledge of the intersection between arts and entrepreneurship and provide a bridge to career and professional opportunities. Board members were told that the 12 credit hour curriculum will be delivered online to an anticipated enrollment of 18 students per cohort, with multiple cohorts per year possible. There are no other similar online graduate programs offered in Virginia. CVPA has designated one-time funding to support the development of the program. The self-sustaining program will be administered through the School of Professional and Continuing Education. Pending SCHEV approval, the certificate will be effective Fall 2025.

On a motion by Dickie Bell and seconded by Tom Galati, the committee unanimously approved the new Graduate Certificate Program in Entrepreneurship and Leadership in the Arts and Design.

Faculty Handbook

Co-chairs of the Faculty Handbook Revision Committee, Dr. Sam Prins, Dean of the College of Science and Mathematics and Dr. Sarah Brooks, Professor of Art History, provided an update on the process and progress of this committee. The Faculty Handbook Revision Committee is operating in parallel with the existing Faculty Handbook Committee with a specific charge to propose substantive and organizational changes to the Faculty Handbook over a two-year period. The guiding principles for the handbook revision committee

focus on content, clarity, and transparency, delegating style to the technical writer; removal of redundancy with JMU policies; and provision of multiple feedback touchpoints for stakeholders. Opportunities for faculty to provide feedback will continue through September 2025 with the approval process beginning late in the fall semester.

There being no further business, on the motion of Tom Galati and seconded by Dickie Bell, the Academic Excellence Committee meeting adjourned at 2:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole Palya Wood, Chair

David Kirkpatrick, Secretary to the Board