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

Minutes of the Student Affairs Committee

The Student Affairs Committee met on Thursday, April 10, 2025, in Ballroom B of the Festival Conference and Student Center at James Madison University. Dave Rexrode, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.

Present:

Edwards, Terrie (virtually)
Obenshain, Suzanne, Rector
Rexrode, Dave, Chair
Thacker, Nikki

Absent:

Eiland, Joanie
James, Kay Coles

Also Present:

Allen, Dirron, Associate Vice President, Student Life and Involvement
Brenneman, Anne, Director, University Health Center
Blyer, Kristina, Associate Vice President, Health and Well-being
Bronaugh, Charlotte, Student Body President-Elect
Campbell, Kathleen, Director, Residence Life
Cronin, Hilary, Director, Emergency Management
Delp, Ben, Director, Federal Relations and Communications
Gabriele, Mark, Professor, Biology
King, Charles, President
Kite, Tracey, Director, Family Engagement
Lacroix, Brielle, Student Body President
Langridge, Nick, Vice President, Advancement
Lonett, Carson, Executive Advisor to the Vice President for Student Affairs
Mabrey, Paul, Director, Student Success and Enrollment Analytics
Miller, Tim, Vice President for Student Affairs
Molina, Rudy, Vice Provost
Nickel, Eric, Director, University of Recreation Center
Onestak, David, Director, Counseling Center
Orem, Chris, Executive Director, Office of Planning, Analytics, and Institutional Research
Ouren, Casey, Director, Orientation and Transition
Read, Caitlyn, Assistant Vice President, Government Relations
Stafford, Sydney, Student Representative to the Board of Visitors

Surrett, Myles, Associate Vice President, Career, Experiential Learning, and Transitions
Walther, Annie, Associate University Counsel, Assistant Attorney General
Wood, Melinda, Vice President, Enrollment Management
Vass, Mary-Hope, Assistant Vice President, Communications and University Spokesperson

Approval of Minutes

On the motion of Nikki Thacker and seconded by Suzanne Obenshain the minutes of February 13, 2025, were approved.

Dave Rexrode recognized five staff members, Rebeca Barge, Carson Lonett, Tim Miller, Jonathan Stewart, and Myles Surrett, for presenting at the Student Affairs National Conference. This is a competitive process and JMU was well represented on the national stage. He also acknowledged two All Together One winners from Student Affairs, Kristina Blyer and Sasha Griffith. Lastly, he honored Bob Golson's retirement from JMU and UREC, and his 26 years of service at JMU.

Student Affairs Update

Dr. Miller discussed the Student Affairs Committee Charter and linked back each meeting's presentation to each charter expectation. He thanked Terrie Edwards, Chair, for her commitment to the charter throughout the year.

He provided a state of the students which included an overview of two events: Women's History Month Crafternoon and the Pantry's 5th Birthday Celebration. Each of these events contributed to students' engagement with campus and supported their needs. He shared that seniors have 19 class days left and that the end of semester is near.

He continued with an overview of the recent opening of the Student Affairs Time Capsule. His leadership team invited back Dr. Warner, previous Vice President for Student Affairs, to open a time capsule that has been sealed for 25 years. The team was able to reflect together on the changes in Student Affairs over the last few decades. The team sealed another time capsule to be opened in 15 years.

He provided a copy of the Student Affairs Strategic Plan and reviewed the six dimensions of well-being. These dimensions are guiding Student Affairs work for the future. He thanked Dr. Kristina Blyer for her work with the President's Council on Health and Well-being and the work that went into developing the dimensions.

Student Government Association Report

Brielle Lacroix provided a year in review and summarized her efforts around sustainability, community engagement, and student awareness of support services. She provided an update on mental health, which was her most recent goal, and thanked Terrie Edwards for her encouragement in this topic.

She reflected on her personal goals for the year. She shared about how she grew as a leader, learned more about JMU, being a positive example in the community, and how she held herself accountable throughout the year. She provided a brief state of the Student Government Association, and she talked about their accomplishments this year. She shared her gratitude of the support of many in the room, including President King, Board of Visitors members, and Student Affairs. She said that this was a very rewarding position and year for her. She concluded with the introduction of Charlotte Bronaugh, the incoming Student Body President. Charlotte shared an overview of her involvements on campus and her goals for the upcoming year. She is focusing on school-wide support and spirit, accessibility and well-being, and clear communication and information.

Student Representative to the Board of Visitors

Sydney Stafford provided a report on what has happened since the last board meeting. This included updates on her engagement with the Presidential Search, CHOICES, Tuition Hearing, and the Student Body Elections. She shared that she was excited to serve another year in this role and was looking forward to further engagement with the group. She thanked Brielle for her service and shared that the transition would be bittersweet.

She provided an overview which included student success and career workshops, student organization fair, University Program Board's JM Zoo and upcoming events. She highlighted Student led Alternative Breaks. These groups were led by students over spring break where students focused on community need and served locally and nationally. She highlighted the Panhellenic Council and talked about their partnerships, recent informational sessions with the Peace Corps Career Panel, and recent speakers.

She closed with her gratitude to those who supported her throughout the year.

Student Affairs Partnerships

Dr. Miller introduced the presentation with the connection to charter elements 1, 2, and 5. He shared that the partnerships in the presentation would connect back to the six dimensions of well-being in the Student Affairs Strategic Plan, which are environment, health, relationships, security, purpose, and learning.

While this is not an exhaustive list of Student Affairs' partnerships, the goal was to show where partnerships across campus have reduced silos and that it is incredibly rare that Student Affairs will do something without a partner on or off campus.

Myles Surrett shared about the partnership with Enrollment Management, where we work together to yield the incoming class. During CHOICES, Student Affairs hosts a panel to illustrate our students' experience transitioning into the JMU community. UREC is also popular during these admitted student days and hosts the Resource Fair for families and students.

He highlighted the Ghost Student Process, which is a collaboration between Admissions, Residence Life, and Orientation and Transition. Across the nation, it has become a growing trend that students deposit at multiple universities but may not show up in the fall. This causes issues when beds and academic seats are held for these students. This collaboration began in 2022 where the departments created a shared database to track students to confirm their attendance in the fall. The partnership allowed these departments to proactively communicate and track engagement with students throughout the transition process. This allowed JMU to have a better sense of who would join us in the fall and reduced no-show students and allocate resources to students who are here.

Carson Lonett shared about connecting students with alumni and providing opportunities through partnership with Advancement. She shared about the establishment of a new position in Strategic Gifts. Andrew Wingard is the inaugural Development Officer and Liaison for Student Affairs whose position was created through the use of a vacant position within the Division. Together, the areas worked to hire, onboard, and have begun to develop the funding priorities for Student Affairs. Andrew reports to both Student Affairs and Strategic Gifts.

She shared about their engagement with Annual Giving and two funds they have highlighted during Giving Day. They highlighted the Jones Miller Emergency Fund and Student Financial Emergency Fund. These funds are a critical safety net to help students navigate unexpected financial hardships, allowing them to stay enrolled and focused on academic success and graduation.

Finally, she shared that together with the Family Engagement Office, JMU is becoming a national model for how institutions can partner with parents and families. Tracey Kite, Director for Family Engagement, shared this sentiment and thanked Sherry King for laying the foundation for this work with families. She shared her appreciation to the Student Affairs Team and how essential this partnership is to enrich the student and family experience.

Dr. Miller shared about the partnership with Administration and Finance. He shared that Student Affairs staff have supported Talent Development institutes and certification programs. He talked about how the areas work together to work on the Master Campus Plan and he highlighted the work between the areas for crisis management. They work together day-to-day on crisis management through the Threat Assessment Team, presentations with both police and



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Student Affairs, and sharing best practices across the state. Most recently, the Garber Hall Fire was an example of this partnership coming to life. He thanked Hilary Cronin for her leadership throughout the fire and response.

Myles Surrett shared about the partnership with Academic Affairs starting with the residential experience and the learning communities offered to students. He shared that the holistic student experience is enhanced by integrating academic support into the halls. This is illustrated and elevated by Faculty in Residence (FIRs) in six of the residence halls. He shared that students don't distinguish between divisions and that it is our job to work together so they can be their best selves as they step into the classroom. Some examples of this are collaborative efforts to respond to student needs in real time. This includes the accommodation process, Madison Cares response, and service-learning in the classroom. At JMU, this year the Community Engagement and Volunteer Center coordinated with over 100 faculty members to get 2,500 students involved in service and community-engaged coursework.

He shared about the First Year Experience and how crucial partnerships are to welcoming and transitioning our students to the university. He talked about academic advising during summer orientation, study abroad opportunities before classes begin, and the recent pilot of a first-year seminar course. Early data in the first-year seminar shows a relationship between both pre-weeks of welcome and the first-year seminar and increased GPA and higher retention of students from first to second semester. They are hoping to grow to 14 sections of 20 students each this Fall.

Kristina Blyer shared about the Quality Enhancement Plan. The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is part of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) accreditation requirements every 10 years. The goals of the QEP are to improve student retention and close the equity gaps by implementing an Early Student Success System. Paul Mabrey, Director, shared that the partnership with Student Affairs helped to elevate the retention rate from 89% to 92%.

She shared about the proactive approach to mental health with Mark Gabriele and the Serenity Center. Mark, a professor in Biology, is a neuroscientist and gifted mindfulness practitioner. He has worked with departments across campus to provide programs that help de-stress and calm students. She shared that they are working on a MindWell Hub that takes the work out of a single space and broadens it across campus. She shared that this would provide tools to our JMU community to restore balance and cultivate a state of inner flourishing.

Dirron Allen shared about external partnerships with the community. He said that this would only be a snapshot and the group intends to provide a longer presentation in the fall. He shared about their support to local business through the Block Party during orientation where students are taken downtown to explore and see how easy and accessible it is. He shared about partnerships with a local alumnus, Kevin Gibson, with VA Momentum and their collaboration with the JMU VALOR 5K. Finally, he talked about strides to bring together town and gown relations. Last year, JMU sent a delegation to the International Town and Gown Conference. This delegation included Dirron and representation from the President's Office, City of Harrisonburg, and other Student Affairs staff. They are excited to continue engagement opportunities, resolve concerns, and share information together.

Dr. Miller shared about the recent partnership with Research, Economic Development, and Innovation (REDI). This is a great example of an emerging partnership that will continue to expand our reach. This year, with the assistance of REDI, Student Affairs received three grants totaling over \$350,000 for the Community Engagement and Volunteer Center, Counseling Center, and University Career Center. With this success, and their support, Student Affairs is gearing up for more work with grants and research opportunities to allow more innovation and support of student needs.

He closed with gratitude to the partners they are highlighted and partners in the room. He stated that Student Affairs prioritizes these partnerships for their work and hopes to continue to be the connector throughout campus.



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Partner Panel

Mark Gabriele shared about his work in the Serenity Center and how we can contribute to the well-being of all students. He shared his perspective on well-being and how some individuals have lost their ability to connect with themselves in meaningful ways. He shared how he wants to teach skills to provide means for reconnecting. His work with Kristina Blyer has allowed for more opportunities for basic mindfulness. Together, he's looking forward to expanding this through their recent Madison Trust proposal.

Paul Mabrey, QEP Director, shared about how the partnership with Student Affairs and others across campus has increased retention rates by 3% (from 89% to 92%). He shared that the work across divisions has been vital and is the envy of other institutions. He shared about their student-centered, intentional, and proactive approach and is thankful for Student Affairs collaboration in this work. He discussed micro-surveys through text messages to residents on campus. This has allowed him to gain an understanding of current student needs and how to support students individually by identifying trends with specific populations. He's excited to continue this work into the next year and learn more from the data they're able to collect.

Hilary Cronin, Emergency Manager, shared about her recent involvement in the Garber Hall Fire. She thanked the Student Affairs Team who helped as subject matter experts to engage students and how they worked together to problem solve that night. She said that her goal is to continue this work through an external review, debriefs and training. She is thankful for their recent participation in an after-action conversation that will allow campus to respond to future crises.

Melinda Wood, Vice President for Enrollment Management, shared about how Admissions could not do their work without Student Affairs. She often calls Dr. Miller and Student Affairs her "secret weapon" for recruitment of the class. She thanked Student Affairs for their willingness to come in and train their tour guides and update their tour manual. She emphasized Myles Surrett's comments around admitted student days and shared her appreciation for Student Affairs help on panel, facilities, and engagement. She is thankful that Dr. Miller is able to attend so many sessions for recruitment and that families see Dr. Miller as a leader in the community and is a trusted source for families and students.

Tracey Kite, Director of Family Engagement, said that Student Affairs and Family Engagement is a natural-fit partnership. Parents are engaged in the student experience and are essential to supporting student success. She thanked Sherry King for laying the groundwork for the office and the beginning of this partnership. She shared about the Madison Family Newsletter that comes each month starts with a message from Dr. Miller. She said that they will continue to partner and work together on communication, first year send offs and receptions, and finding new ways to engage families and students.

The meeting closed with Dr. Miller thanking Dave Rexrode for stepping into chair. He shared a thank you to President King on behalf of Student Affairs. Dr. Miller thanked President King for his dedication from New Student Convocation to Commencement. He has become part of history here at JMU.

There being no further business, on the motion of Nikki Thacker and seconded by Suzanne Obenshain, the Student Affairs Committee meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Rexrode, Chair

David Kirkpatrick, Secretary to the Board