THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

THE VISITORS OF JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

Volume LXII No. 1

**Minutes of the Meeting of September 19, 2025**

The Visitors of James Madison University met on Friday, September 19, 2025 in the Festival Conference   
and Student Center Board Room on the campus of James Madison University. Suzanne Obenshain, Rector, called the meeting to order at 8:30 am.

**PRESENT:**

Bolander, Jeff

Caudle, Larry  
Edwards, Terrie

Fiorina, Carly  
Galati, Tom

Hedrick, Heather

James, Kay Coles

Mauck, Joely

Obenshain, Suzanne, Rector  
Rexrode, David  
Smith, Steve  
Thacker, Nikki  
White, Jack  
Wood, Nicole Palya

Stafford, Sydney, Student Representative to the Board, 2025-26

Kirkpatrick, David, Secretary  
  
**ABSENT:**Stoltzfus, Michael

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Schmidt, James, President  
Kolvoord, Bob, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Langridge, Nick, Vice President for University Advancement

Miller, Tim, Vice President for Student Affairs

Moore, Towana, Vice President for Administration and Finance  
Roan, Matt, Director of Athletics

Tongen, Anthony, Vice President for Research, Economic Development, and Innovation  
Wood, Melinda, Vice President, Access and Enrollment Management

Vass, Mary-Hope, Assistant Vice President, Communications and University Spokesperson

Ott-Walter, Kathy, Speaker, Faculty Senate

Knight, Jack, University Counsel

The Rector welcomed and recognized James Schmidt, President, to first board meeting as new university president. Also welcomed new board members Heather Hedrick and Joely Mauck. The Rector shared a special recognition for Machelle Rader, highlighting over 20 years of service, dedication and professionalism in support of the Visitors of James Madison University. A resolution on behalf of Ms. Rader was read aloud.

**WHEREAS**, Machelle Rader served as administrative assistant for the Board of Visitors and Access and Enrollment Management for over 20 years, capably assisting with all Board meetings, events and correspondence; and

**WHEREAS**, Rader coordinated materials and documents for the Board, assisted with Board meeting notebook preparation, and led the effort to move from paper to electronic notebooks, assured their accuracy, coordinated updates and distribution to the Board; and

**WHEREAS**, she coordinated all contracts for Board accommodations, off-site events and meals; and

**WHEREAS**, Rader coordinated with Facilities and IT staff to prepare the Board room and committee-meeting conference rooms for meetings; and

**WHEREAS,** Rader facilitated a seamless transition between board secretaries, ensuring continuity and professionalism at every step; and

**WHEREAS**, she coordinated with University Communications to assure all appropriate postings for public meetings, agendas and draft minutes, according to the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia; and

**WHEREAS**, Rader did all of these complicated, time-sensitive, university mission-critical tasks with a smile on her face, kindly good cheer, and grace.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Visitors of James Madison University, collectively and individually, express its deepest thanks to Machelle Rader for being a one-in-a-million behind-the-scenes-person, making sure everything ran smoothly, and for her loyal service to James Madison University. The Visitors further extend their best wishes to Ms. Rader and hope for her happiness in all she undertakes in the future.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

On motion of Ms. Fiorina, seconded by Mr. Bolander, the Consent Agenda was approved which included the minutes of April 11, 2025; June 5, 2025; June 6, 2025.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Academic Excellence Committee**

Nicole Palya Wood, Chair, presented the report of the Academic Excellence Committee. The minutes of the April 10, 2025 meeting were approved. (Attachment A)

Ms. Wood reported on the following topics from the committee meeting:

1. Divisional Update;
2. Academic Affairs Priorities and Six-Year Plan Academic Initiatives
3. Curriculum Updates; and
   1. On motion of the committee, the full board approved the new MEd in Transition Services in Special Education.
   2. On motion of the committee, the full board approved the new Graduate Certificate Program in Data Science.
4. Research Roundtable with the Deans; and
5. Faculty and Student Research Vignettes

On motion of Ms. Wood, seconded by Mr. Jeff Bolander, the report of the Academic Excellence Committee was accepted.

**Athletics Committee**

Dave Rexrode, Chair, presented the report of the Athletics Committee. The minutes of the April 10, 2025 meeting were approved. (Attachment B)

Mr. Rexrode reported on the following topics from the committee meeting:

1. NCAA, Sun Belt Conference, JMU Sports Update;
2. 2024-25 Strategic Plan Accountability Measures;
3. House Settlement Implementation;
4. Student-Athlete Advisory Committee;
5. Development Report; and
6. Future Agenda Items.

On motion of Mr. Rexrode, seconded by Ms. Carly Fiorina, the Athletics report was accepted.

**Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee**

Jeff Bolander, Chair, presented the report of the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee. The minutes of the April 10, 2025 meeting were approved. (Attachment C)

Mr. Bolander reported on the following topics from the committee meeting:

1. Annual Report;
2. Audit and Compliance Budget
   1. On a motion of the committee, the full board approved the Audit and Compliance Budget
3. 2025-2026 Internal Audit Plan (revised)
   1. On a motion of the committee, the full board approved the 2025-2026 Internal Audit Plan (revised)
4. The committee then went into a closed session discussion.

On motion of Mr. Bolander, seconded by Mr. Larry Caudle. the Audit, Risk and Compliance report was accepted.

#### Finance and Physical Development Committee

Steve Smith, Chair, presented the report of the Finance and Physical Development Committee. The minutes from the April 10, 2025 meeting were approved. (Attachment D)

Mr. Smith reported on the following from the committee meeting:

1. Financial Review;
2. Bond Rating Update;
3. 2024-2025 Receivables Write Off;
4. 2025-2028 Budget Requests;
5. Six-Year Plan Update;
   1. On motion of the committee, the full board approved the update.
6. Workforce Planning

On motion of Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Carly Fiorina, the Finance and Physical Development report was accepted.

**Governance Committee**

Jack White, Chair, presented the report of the Governance Committee. The minutes of the April 10, 2025 meeting were approved. (Attachment E)

Mr. White reported on the following from the committee meeting:

1. Board Retreat Review;
2. SWOT Recap and Discussion; and
3. Best Practices for Board Members with AGB consultant, Alvin Schexnider

On motion of Mr. White, seconded by Ms. Carly Fiorina, the Governance report was accepted.

**Philanthropy and Engagement Committee**

Carly Fiorina, Acting Chair, presented the report of the Advancement and Engagement Committee. The minutes of the April 10, 2025 meeting were approved. (Attachment F)

Ms. Fiorina reported on the following topics from the committee meeting:

1. Funds Raised to Date;
2. VP Updates;
3. University Brand; and
4. Presidential Tour and Update

On motion of Ms. Fiorina seconded by Mr. Steve Smith, the Philanthrory and Engagement report was accepted.

**Strategic Planning Committee**

Terrie Edwards, Chair, presented the report of the Strategic Planning Committee. The minutes of the August 21, 2025 meeting were approved. (Attachment G)

Ms. Edwards reported on the following topics from the committee meeting:

1. Review and Discussion;
2. Update from the President;
3. Open Discussion of Building a Culture of Change; and
4. Open Discussion on Divisional Contributions to the Strategic Plan

On motion of Ms. Edwards seconded by Mr. Dave Rexrode, the Strategic Planning Committee report was accepted.

**Student Affairs Committee**

Terrie Edwards, Chair, presented the report of the Student Affairs Committee. The minutes from the April 10, 2025 meeting were approved. (Attachment H)

Ms. Edwards reported on the following topics from the committee meeting:

1. Student Affairs Update;
2. Student Government Association Report;
3. Student Representative to the Board Update;
4. The Journey to JMU: From Recruitment to First Day of Classes; and
5. Panel.

On motion of Ms. Edwards, seconded by Mr. Dave Rexrode, the Student Affairs report was accepted.

**FACULTY SENATE UPDATE** (Attachment I)

Kathy Ott Walter, Faculty Senate Speaker provided an update from the Faculty Senate.

* Shared the Election of Officers;
* Shared the Election of Committee Chairs;
* The Faculty Senate has asked Deans to share goals and objectives of AUHs and AAUHs and Associate/Assistant Deans so faculty can evaluate appropriately;
* The Faculty Appeals Committee sent one appeal to a Hearing Committee;
* The Faculty Senate passed, with 93% support, a Resolution of Appreciation of Interim President Charlie King. The Steering Committee presented Charlie with the framed resolution on May 8, 2025;
* The Faculty Senate passed a Resolution on External Challenges to Faculty Roles and Responsibilities, which was adapted from a resolution by UVA’s faculty senate.

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE BOARD UPDATE** (Attachment J)  
Sydney Stafford, student representative to the board, provided the following updates:

* Provided updates on Weeks of Welcome, First Year Move-in, Greek Life Recruitment, Student Org Night and the Career Fair;
* Provided updates on work and collaboration with First yeaR Orientation Guides, Meetings with Students/Orgs, Meetings with Admin/key campus partners, Attending/hosting student-focused events, It Only Takes One initiatives;
* New goals: Support presidential transition with students in any way possible;
* Educate students on board functions/structures and inform them on ways they can get involved in decision-making process;
* Support students through collaboration, advocacy and engagement in alignment with the Student Affairs Strategic Plan;
* Shared progress on Presidential Transition with students

**PRESIDENTS REPORT**President James Schmidt presented information on the following (Attachment K):

* An Exciting Start: President Schmidt shared that the first few months have been an exciting whirlwind; August 12, first University Welcome; Hosted First Lady Suzanne Younking at the “It Just Takes One” Fentanyl Awareness Event; Constitution Day – hosted Dr. Peter Levine;
* Growing Our Capacity: Committed 25% of his time to philanthropy efforts; Since June, traveled nearly 4000 miles across Commonwealth; Met with benefactors and supporters; Common theme he’s encounteredacross all meetings is shared passion and pride for students and graduates;
* The Commonwealth’s Preferred Partner: Great meetings are happening; Actively discussing how to meet goal of JMU being Virginia’s preferred business and organizational partner; Laying a solid foundation of innovative work to come;
* Partnership with Local and State Leaders: Met with 19 legislators across Virginia; Governor Glenn Younkin and his cabinet members; CEO of Virginia Economic Development Partnership; Scott Fleming, Executive Director of SCHEV; and Rockingham County and City of Harrisonburg leadership;
* Strengthening Federal Partnerships: Traveled to Capital Hill with Anthony Tongen; Met with Congressman Ben Cline, Senator Tim Kaine and Senator Mark Warner; Visited several offices including that of a proud JMU alumnus;
* JMU’s Future: Strategic Plan: Currently underway; Swift moving eight-month process; solidly in the Listening stage of the four-stage process; Website recently launched outlining the plan process and timeline; Have held four college meetings, also called Town Halls, and one Idea Forum; Campus tour includes meetings specific to each college and Idea Forums open to all faculty, staff and students; Alumni and benefactor focused tour will capture ideas from constituents throughout Commonwealth and select parts of U.S.;
* Listening Tour Details: Both the Campus Tour and the Presidential Listening tour will invite ideas from the public to help inform the creation of final strategic plan; Nine college meetings and five idea forums are scheduled between September 1-October 8; Ten regional and national locations scheduled for the alumni and benefactor listening tour (includes the September 24 Zoom kickoff);
* Local Media and Communications Updates: Creation of a new Marketing and Communications division led by a Vice President for Strategic Communications and Marketing; Shared that a search for an executive search firm is underway; President Schmidt met with members of the local media;
* Athletics: President Schmidt shared that he’s been deeply impressed by JMU’s successful athletics program. attended the Coaches Caravan at its final stop in Staunton and visited with the MRDs during a recent practice; The President and First Lady, Kim Schmidt enjoyed watching the first home football game and celebrating a great win to start off the season; On the federal landscape, there continues to be a push for federal intervention with respect to the challenges facing college athletics; President Schmidt expressed appreciation for the regulatory and congressional action to help ensure a sustainable college athletics environment;
* Applications: Applications continue to skyrocket; healthy makeup of in-state, out-of-state and international applications; JMU has an impressice 24% of first-genreration applications; We are a clear first choice for many students and families;
* Student Access and Support:  JMU continues providing access to financially challenged students and their families; Thank you to SCHEV for their significant grant funding for in-state Pell students;
* President Jim on Social: Great to connect with the community on socal media; President Schmidt shared a special thank you to JMU’s Marketing and Communications leads for helping him launch his new accounts;
* Looking Ahead: As we continue to prioritize what’s best for students:
  + Increase housing on campus
  + Explore our role as a research university
  + Navigate new realities in Athletics
    - To include stadium expansion and experience district
  + Chart own path to distinction

**JMU FOUNDATION UPDATE**   
Warren Coleman, President and Chief Executive Officer, JMU Foundation, provided a Foundation Update: (Attachment L)

* Foundation Overview;
  + Shared Vision and Mission Statements
  + Sources of Revenue
  + Use of Resources
* JMU Foundation FY25 Highlights;
* JMU Foundation History;
* JMU Foundation FY25 Results (unaudited) along with an Endowment Update;
* JMU Foundation Investment Results and Endowment FAQ’s; and
* JMU Foundation FY26 Goals

**CAREER OUTCOMES REPORT**Myles Surett, Associate Vice President, Career, Experiential Learning & Transitions and Libby Westley, Director, University Career Center presented information on the following: (Attachment M):

* Career Outcomes Overview;
* Class of 2024 Data;
* JMU Graduates’ Local Impact;
* Work Based Learning Experiences at JMU; and
* Work Based Learning Think Tank

1. Rector Obenshain then called for the board to move into Closed Session. Vice Rector Edwards made the following motion.  
     
   “I move the Board go into closed session to discuss the following matters:   
     
   Pursuant to Section 2.2-3711.A.1 of the Code of Virginia to discuss personnel matters involving promotions, performance, retirements, hiring, resignations, salary adjustments and status changes of faculty members, university administrators and appointees;
2. Pursuant to Section 2.2-3711.A.3, to discuss the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and the disposition of publicly held real property;
3. Pursuant to Section 2.2-3711.A.7., to consult with legal counsel pertaining to actual or probable litigation;
4. Pursuant to Section 2.2-3711.A.8, to consult with legal counsel for the provision of legal advice by such counsel; and
5. Pursuant to Section 2.2-3711.A.29, to discuss the award of public contracts involving the expenditure of public funds and discussion of the terms and scope of such contracts where discussion in open session would adversely affect the university’s bargaining position or negotiating strategy.

The motion was seconded by Dave Rexrode and the Board moved into closed session.

Following the closed session, Ms. Obenshain then stated the following:

**During the closed session, the board discussed only matters lawfully**

**exempted from open meeting requirements and only those types of matters**

**identified in the motion for the closed session.**

**RECORDED VOTE: the following is an affirmative recorded, member by**

**member vote:**

Bolander, Jeff  
Caudle, Larry

Edwards. Terrie   
Galati, Tom

Hedrick, Heather

James, Kay Coles

Mauck, Joely

Obenshain, Suzanne, Rector  
Rexrode, David  
Smith, Steve

Thacker, Nikki

White, Jack

Wood, Nicole Palya

Ms. Obenshain then asked if there were any motions to come forward.   
  
On motion from Ms. James, seconded by Mr. Rexrode, approved the Personnel Action Report.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, on motion of Ms. Fiorina, seconded by Mr. Bolander, the Board voted to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned 1:20 pm.

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Suzanne Obenshain, Rector

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David C. Kirkpatrick, Secretary