Board of Visitors Summary of Actions and Discussions

Sept. 19, 2025

The James Madison University Board of Visitors met Friday, Sept. 19, 2025, in the Festival Conference and Student Center.

The following is a summary of actions taken by the Board and key areas of discussion at the Board meeting:

The consent agenda was approved, which included the minutes of April 11, 2025; June 5, 2025; and June 6, 2025.

Rector Suzanne Obenshain presented Machelle Rader with a Resolution of The Visitors of James Madison University for over 20 years serving as administrative assistant for the Board of Visitors and Access and Enrollment Management.

Accepted committee reports from Academic Excellence; Athletics; Audit/Risk and Compliance; Governance; Finance and Physical Development; Philanthropy and Engagement; Strategic Planning and Student Affairs.

**Presentations to the Board of Visitors**

Faculty Senate Speaker Kathy Ott Walter provided an update from the Faculty Senate:

* Final definition of shared governance approved
* The shared governance team has a landing page to keep track of the progress toward the recommendations made by the task force
* Academic Affairs Policy #2 is in its final stages, ready for summer/fall 2025
* The faculty handbook revision committee will have its first draft in May for comments
* The Faculty Senate will be discussing and voting on two resolutions during the April meeting: resolution in appreciation of President King and a resolution on external challenges to faculty roles and responsibilities
* Faculty highlights were shared with the Board

Sydney Stafford, Student Representative to the Board, provided the following updates:

* Discussed student activities such as Weeks of Welcome, Student Org Night and Career Fair
* Working on first year orientation guide, meetings with students/organizations/admin/key campus partners
* Attended/hosted student-focused events
* Goals with the Board of Visitors: supporting presidential transition with students, educate/inform students on Board functions and how they can get involved
* Presidential transition with students: meeting with President Jim and student body president, encouraging students to engage with the office of the president
* Looking forward: Halftime on the Quad, Virginia student representative to the Board of Visitors Conference, student body elections, study abroad fair, alternative fall breaks

President James Schmidt presented during his report:

* An exciting start: some major university events were recognized to include the University Welcome, new student convocation, Potomac Hall grand opening and Constitution Day
* Growing capacity: presidential commitment to 25% of time dedicated to philanthropy, traveled nearly 4,000 miles across the Commonwealth, met with 70 individual benefactors, and is excited for the future of JMU
* The Commonwealth’s preferred partner: JMU as a go-to partner for industry, meeting with corporate leaders and benefactors, building important talent pipelines, research opportunities, and customized educational opportunities for employees, and more
* Partnership with local and state leaders: met with 19 legislators across Virginia, Gov. Youngkin and cabinet, as well as other corporate partners and city and county leadership
* Strengthening federal partnerships: met with legislators in Virginia to strengthen ties with Virginia’s Federal Delegation and visited congressional offices and a notable meeting with JMU alum Parker Boggs
* JMU’s future: four-stage process for strategic plan, web site launched, four town halls and one idea forum; five town halls and four idea forums scheduled through mid-October
* Listening tour: campus tour with faculty and staff focus and idea forums; presidential listening tour with JMU alumni and benefactor focus, Sept. 24 Zoom kick off, additional dates this fall in NC, VA, D.C., NYC and CA
* Local media and communications updates: creation of a new division with heightened focus and new vice president for strategic communications and marketing; local relationships with WHSV, Daily News-Record, Rocktown Now/WSVA and The Breeze
* Athletics: attended Coaches Caravan, visited Marching Royal Dukes, great start to football season, Neal Shipley (’22) earned a spot to compete on the PGA golf tour next year, Field Hockey head coach Christy Morgan inducted into Philadelphia Sports Hall of Fame in November, “Battle of the Blue Ridge” established rivalry with Liberty, partnering with Matt Roan as Athletics navigates the executive order and SCORE Act, congressional settlement
* Applications: total applications for fall 2025: 46,410 (44,156 first-year), 11% increase from 2024, doubled since 2021; 24% are first-gen students; acceptance rate is 66%; 2,163 transfer applications
* Class of 2029: first-year class is 4,949; 809 transfer students
* Student access and support: Financial Aid & Scholarships received $3.2 million in grant funding SCHEV to support in-state Pell students; Financial Aid awarded $1.8 million in JMU funds to support 300 in-state Pell grant students. Centennial Scholars and Valley Scholars: these students enrolled at JMU have a combined GPA of 3.27 at the end of the spring 2025 semester
* Presidential student engagement (social media): connecting with students via Instagram, X and LinkedIn platforms; marked increase in social media engagement and followers
* Looking ahead: increasing student housing, exploring role as a research university, navigating new realities in Athletics and exploring stadium expansion/experience district, chartering our own path to distinction.

Warren Coleman, President and Chief Executive Officer of the JMU Foundation, provided the following updates:

* JMU Foundation overview: sources of revenue, use of resources; FY25 highlights, which included record year statistics; foundation history; FY26 goals, to include new investments in real estate; strategic plan update; Board engagement in president’s tours; College Colors Day recap

Myles Surrett, Associate Vice President for Career, Experiential Learning and Transitions, and Libby Westley, Director of the University Career Center, provided the Career Outcomes Report:

* Career Outcomes overview
* Class of 2024 data
* JMU graduates’ local impact
* Work based learning experiences at JMU
* Work based learning think tank discussion

The Board of Visitors voted and approved:

*Motion re: Six-Year Plan.*

*Two curriculum updates:*

MEd in Transition Services in Special Education

Data Science Certificate