

# Annual Report, May 2024

## JMU Campus History Committee

### Membership

Member	Role/Representing
Meg Mulrooney	Chair, History
Ruthie Bosch	CoE & Hispanic Caucus
Tiffany Cole ('10M)	Spec. Colls
Leonard Richards ('13, '14M)	CoE
Monyette Martin ('93, '96M)	Admissions
DeAndre Powell	CMSS
Carole Nash ('83)	CISE/DEI leaders
Cassidy Angelo ('21M)	SOGIE
Karen Risch Mott ('20M)	Advancement
Christina Wulf ('10M)	ODS
Craig Short	Finance
Debra Sutton	Faculty Senate
Gavin Wilkerson ('22) Marina Curry (HIST)	Student reps

- **Charge:**
  - Develop the Campus Commemorative Landscape mapping project to inform and make recommendations with regard to naming plans and commemorative opportunities moving forward.
  - Examine the JMU story that is told by or in various publications, offices and groups (e.g., the Student Ambassadors) about the history of campus and develop ways the story being told to our various constituents (including current and prospective students, parents, alumni, the community, etc.) can be more inclusive and complete.

### Summary of the year's activities by semester:

Fall 2023

- Committee members Mulrooney, Bosch, and Cole provided a campus history tour in August for ~25 new freshmen in partnership with CVEC for Dukes Making a Difference. <https://www.jmu.edu/csl/serve/dmad.shtml>
- Mulrooney provided a guided tour for 7 post-doctoral students invited to visit JMU for the new Be a Part of the Change program led by Dr. Sparkman-Key.
- Mulrooney provided a guided tour to multiple groups of JMU administrators, faculty, and students.
- For the October meeting, Craig Short arranged for members to tour the famed “tunnels” with Gary Shears. No ghosts were sighted.
- In Nov., the committee heard about an exciting card game created by Kelly Giles in Libraries; she joined the meeting to share a digital version of this trivia/timeline game and we brainstormed ideas to share it more widely in spring.
- Mulrooney, Angelo, and SOGIE staff prepared a session for the Queer Teach-In to provide some general information about historic LGBTQ+ experiences on this campus and the origins of LGBTQ+ support services ca. 1975 to 1990.
- Planning got underway for Wilkerson and an intern to begin a SOGIE oral interview project to gather more information about early support services
- Led by Martin, planning began for spring panel featuring alumni from various decades (70s-90s) who participated in the Contemporary Gospel Singers. The CGS was established during the Carrier administration as part of an intentional recruitment and retention strategy for Black students. The CGS provided a space where Black students felt welcomed and many members were involved in other early Black student organizations, including early sororities and fraternities as well as the BSA.
- Mulrooney informally interviewed D. Tompkins Johnson about her experiences as a student leader at Madison 1974-78 and as a BoV member; Cole, Risch Mott, and Mulrooney met with DTJ again to view some of her scrapbooks. Other conversations with alumni are also planned.
- Mulrooney met with graphic design professor Carissa Henriques (SADAH) to consider next steps for the exhibit in Wilson Hall, A Sense of Place. They inspected the space, noting some minor damage and the need for edits to label copy; they sent forward a request and budget for updates.

## Spring 2024

- Committee offered a successful webinar on the history and role of the Contemporary Gospel Singers for February’s African American History Month. This was an important collaborative event led by CHC member Monyette Martin, a CGS alumna, and fellow CGS alumna Lisa Winn-Bryan, in association with CMSS, especially DeAndre Powell, and Alumni Relations, especially Paula Polglase and Lex Park. Panelists included:
  - (Welcome) Meg Mulrooney, CHC Chair & Professor of History
  - (Panel 1) Stanley Stewart, CGS President, 1977-78; Byron Bullock, inaugural director CMSS, 1985-99; Troy Strong, CGS President, 1985-86.

- (Panel 2) Lisa Winn Bryan ('90, '93), CGS soloist and director, 1988-90, advisor 1991-93; Rev. Daron Thomas ('94), CGS director, 1992-94; Anthony Lindsay Baker ('91), CGS director, 1989-91; Dr. Carolyn Gordon, CGS faculty advisor, 1989-92.
- (Part 3: Today & Tomorrow) Monyette Martin ('93, '96), CGS member, Asst. Dean of Admissions, and DeAndrae Powell, Asst. Director, CMSS
- (Part 4) Q&A and conclusion featuring a 2009 CGS performance from JMU's annual Martin Luther King, Jr., Day ceremony.

The CGS formally organized in 1974, so this year marked its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The zoom webinar drew about 60 participants and was recorded and posted later on the CHC webpage. An accompanying slide deck on the CGS, featuring historic photos, went on display inside A Sense of Place for February.

- Students with classes in Wilson Hall, visitors for campus tours, and audience members at events are frequently seen inside A Sense of Place, so the CHC continues to add new, supplemental content. This year, Cole and Mulrooney developed supplemental content (aka "Evergreen PPTs") for two new topics, Unconventional Women of Madison for Women's History Month and Wilson Hall for April. The Unconventional Women slidedeck was also shared with the JMU community via Korbyt, the university-wide monitor software system. Future slide decks on other campus history topics are anticipated.
- Nash referred to the CHC an important documentary, *Knocking Down Walls: The Deliberate Speed of Harrisonburg's Federal Court*, which was created by local students at Spotswood High School in Rockingham County under direction of their teacher, Beau Dickinson. Compiled from oral interviews the teenagers conducted with Black men and women who integrated Virginia high schools in the 1960s, the documentary reclaims Harrisonburg's role, as the site of federal rulings by Judge John Paul, that led to the state policy of massive resistance. Called a powerful "story about high school students, told by high students," it won a prize from the Virginia Council for Social Studies. CHC members Bosch and Richards conferred with colleagues in CoE's Diversity Council, who agreed to co-host with the CHC a screening of the film. The event will take place in the fall at Memorial Hall and include a panel discussion with local residents who desegregated Harrisonburg High School in 1964.  
<https://www.rocktownhistory.org/past-events/knocking-down-walls-the-deliberate-speed-of-harrisonburgs-federal-court/>
- Nash also referred to the CHC a historical timeline to be installed at Memorial Hall as part of a planned renovation of the Bistro food court. Anna Hudick from Facilities shared the architect's preliminary draft for review. The CHC added crucial dates and accurate information related to both the building's history as the segregated Harrisonburg High School and to the university's, such as the year 1964, when HHS finally admitted Black city residents; Sheary Darcus, one of those Black teenagers, matriculated at the segregated Madison College in fall 1966, becoming this institution's first Black graduate in 1970. The CHC also tied the timeline to a related exhibit in the building that recognizes the impact on Harrisonburg of Black educator Lucy Simms. This type of local, public history content in a university building acknowledges the complex relationship between 'town' and 'gown,' and provides an alternative way for contemporary teacher candidates, faculty, staff, and building visitors to learn and reflect.

- In April, Mulrooney collaborated with Alumni Relations to augment spring Bluestone Reunion (class of '74) programming with a presentation on the transformation of Madison College into JMU in the 1970s and another on the surprising role of tea parties on this campus from 1910-1970.
- Mulrooney gave several tours this spring, including to the President's Task Force on Health and Wellness and the Alumni Board (with Karen Risch-Mott).
- The CHC partnered with Libraries and two student groups (Phi Alpha Theta and Madison Historians) to host a study break event during finals week. This activity involved playing Kelly Giles's JMU History card game, "Find the Time," at Rose Library and on the Commons on Wednesday afternoon. Students who played the game had to put cards in chronological order. Winners received a courtesy deck to take home!
- Mulrooney and Cole met with colleagues from Special Collections and Madison Art Collection to consider adding display cases to A Sense of Place; these would enable the creation of small mini-exhibits using historic objects and ephemera from JMU collections. Additional meetings between Mulrooney and Carissa Henriques, the exhibit designer, with members of the History Department, and with Vienna Romesburg in Facilities and Jason McClain in Academic Resources resulted in a budget and plans to repair some minor damage to the exhibit and to build cases. The cases will benefit students in the History and Museum Studies programs and add important rotating content to the space, which is a popular Admissions tour stop.

#### **Looking ahead to 24-25:**

So far, plans include the aforementioned screening in the early fall and potential collaboration with JMU's Native American and Indigenous working group on an event.