

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY®

# International Student Guidebook

for Undergraduate  
and Graduate Students



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## Welcome to James Madison University!

We are thrilled that you will be attending our highly acclaimed university for your academic studies. The International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) Office is here to support you. Our goal is to assist with your transition to JMU so your student experience is successful! The International Student Guidebook provides an outline of the campus culture at JMU and the many services that our community has to offer. The Guidebook was created in collaboration with offices around campus in preparation for your successful transition to the JMU community.

We look forward to your arrival at JMU. If you have any questions, please email our office at [iss@jmu.edu](mailto:iss@jmu.edu). You are welcome here!

Sincerely,



Jonathan Kratz, Director of International Student and Scholar Services



MSC 5731, 100 E. Grace St.  
Madison Hall, 2nd Floor  
Harrisonburg, VA 22807  
+1-540-568-5209 Phone  
[iss@jmu.edu](mailto:iss@jmu.edu)

**What We Do** The JMU Center for Global Engagement has specific staff for international students, scholars and visitors to JMU known as International Student and Scholar Services. ISSS staff (listed below) assist international students, scholars and visitors by: creating proper documentation to obtain visas and legally enter into the United States; providing orientation and cross-cultural programming for community engagement; serving as a resource for inquiries and cultural adjustment; and helping to obtain immigration-related benefits and maintain legal status in the U.S.

ISSS will contact you through your JMU Dukes email address to communicate important information, events and programming, and immigration requirements. It is important that you check your Dukes email account frequently.



Marlena Meikrantz Sharp, associate director



Thomas Lavenir, assistant director



Edward Muldoon, assistant director

**What is Terra Dotta?** Terra Dotta is an online system that ISSS uses to collect required immigration information and for you to request certain benefits of your immigration status. Additionally, Terra Dotta hosts registration for various events, including the international student orientation *Transitions*. You can gain direct access to Terra Dotta at [jmu-iss.terradotta.com](http://jmu-iss.terradotta.com).

**Get connected!** ISSS has a Facebook page so you can stay up-to-date on all what's new at CGE; follow us on Facebook by searching for @jmuintlconnection or International Student and Scholar Services—ISSS—CGE at JMU.

The International Duke Dog is the ISSS mascot and is very active on social media, keeping students updated on events and reminders and sharing pictures and videos from various events. You can find him at *Intl Dukedog* on Facebook and Instagram!

## Orientation

The Center for Global Engagement's International Student and Scholar Services is looking forward to welcoming you in person. You and your family members may have many questions related to where you will be living, what the weather will be like, where the nearest airport is located and more. Knowing exactly what you need to do can be overwhelming. We are familiar with the obstacles and challenges that you are facing and are here to help.

**Transitions** is the international orientation program that every F-1 and J-1 student attends. It takes place a few days prior to the general new student orientation, 1787. U.S. students who live abroad and Third Culture Kids are more than welcome to attend. We ensure your arrival to campus with an airport pick-up and an early move-in to your living units. We also provide transportation to the nearest large discount store to ensure that you have necessary items, such as towels and bedding, as well as to the local bank if you need to open a bank account. We also offer different sessions such as what to expect in an American classroom, available modes of transportation and opportunities to connect with other students from around the world.

**LINKers** are returning international and American students who serve as role models and friends for the globally-minded community at JMU. They will help you smoothly transition to JMU and the surrounding area when you first arrive by picking you up from the airport; helping you with early move-in; guiding you through unique paperwork processes regarding immigration, housing and health-related documentation; as well as with language and cultural adjustments. They will also help you connect with the student body throughout your academic journey.

**Family Members** are an important part of the JMU community. Family plays an active role in the success of every student. They may wonder how to be involved with a student's life while ensuring that they learn how to balance newfound freedoms and an immense degree of responsibility.

While *Transitions* is designed to assist students in their adjustment to JMU, family members are welcome to attend the first portion but will be expected to leave afterwards.

Specific resources, programs, information and assistance to family members are provided

by the Office of Parent Relations to help their understanding of the student experience and better support their student's academic and social growth.

**Graduate Students** Before you begin classes, you should:

- Ensure that you are registered for classes. Course registration is department specific. Depending on the department, you may need to register for classes soon after you receive your e-ID and password or you may be able to wait until the start of your first semester.
- Meet with your supervisor prior to the start of your employment period, if you will be working on-campus as a Graduate Assistant or Teaching Assistant as you will need

to provide information and paperwork to ensure your eligibility and proper payment.

**Helpful Phone Applications** You may find that downloading different apps on your mobile phone will make life a lot easier. During *Transitions* we will make additional recommendations, but for now, we want to ensure that you download these two phone apps:

- **CISI app** – This app for our international student insurance policy ensures that you will always have access to the CISI policy, your insurance card and other important information.
- **Duo Mobile** – All new students, faculty and staff users are required to enroll in Duo and will need to access Duo Mobile on a daily basis.

**New Student Checklist** To put things into perspective for you, here are the different steps you are to take care of prior to the first day of classes:

- Step #1 Accept JMU's admission offer.
- Step #2 Begin working on the Pre-Arrival steps found on the *Transitions* website.
- Step #3 Pay the SEVIS Fee once you have received your I-20.
- Step #4 Schedule an appointment at the U.S. Embassy in your country.
- Step #5 Complete the *Transitions* Registration Form and sign up for airport pick-up!
- Step #6 Prepare for and attend your visa interview at the U.S. Embassy.
- Step #7 Book your ticket to the United States.
- Step #8 Start packing!
- Step #9 Begin your travel to the U.S.
- Step #10 Attend *Transitions*.





## Immigration

Your immigration status in the United States comes with rules and regulations that you will need to follow during your time in the U.S.

Every student's situation and immigration status is unique and can have implications different from other students. Friends, family, students and community members may offer you advice about your immigration status and visa rules. However, before making a decision to change your course of study, travel outside the U.S. or accept employment, you should always seek advice from an ISSS advisor. It is your responsibility to know and abide by the regulations—and *ISSS is here to help!*

You should always keep your immigration documents **valid** and in a **safe place**. Likewise, you will need to read and respond to emails from ISSS to help you maintain your immigration status.

U.S. immigration laws are very complex and their interpretations are constantly changing. Even though we will attempt to keep digital source up-to-date, we cannot guarantee the completeness or accuracy. Please contact an ISSS advisor for the most up-to-date and accurate information and before making applications or seeking benefits.

The information contained herein is not intended to create an attorney/client relationship nor can it be construed as legal advice.

**Applying for a Student Visa** To obtain an F-1 or J-1 visa, you must visit the U.S. Embassy for your area in your country

of residence (with the exception of Canadian citizens). You can find a list of all consulates in your country [online](#). Each location has different requirements for visa applications.

It is important that you contact the embassy as soon as possible to make arrangements to obtain your visa. You should take at least the following documents with you to apply:

- A valid passport
- A SEVIS-generated I-20 or DS-2019 form issued by JMU
- A receipt showing you have paid the SEVIS Fee
- Proof of your financial ability to pay for expenses (e.g. tuition, living costs, etc.). This can be a statement of personal or family funds, or documentation from a sponsor. The consulate will want to see proof that you will be financially supported throughout your stay in the U.S.
- Proof of your ties to your home country. This could be information about your family that is staying behind, the job opportunities available to you when you return, property that you own, etc.
- Additional visa fees may be required

### SEVIS, I-20 and DS-2019 Forms

The I-20 and DS-2019 forms are the physical record of your immigration status in the United States. The information on your I-20 or DS-2019 form reflects your personal information as well as your program information at JMU. This is a *“living document”* meaning that it is important that you make sure that

the information on the form is always accurate and up-to-date. The I-20 and DS-2019 forms are also required for your initial entry and re-entry into the U.S.

Your immigration record lives in a database called SEVIS. SEVIS is the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System maintained by the SEVP to admit and track students and exchange visitors while they are in the U.S. SEVIS is used for initial and updated I-20 and DS-2019 forms, as well as for reporting changes to the status. When you first arrive at JMU, you are required to submit copies of your visa, passport and I-20 or DS-2019 form and complete a short check-in process through the Terra Dotta system so that you can be registered in SEVIS.

**Maintaining Student Status** During orientation, you will receive information on the requirements to remain in legal status. You must follow these instructions explicitly. ISSS staff members are available to answer any of your questions.

Two frequently asked questions involve **full-time status** and **work off campus**.

With few exceptions, F-1 and J-1 students must maintain full-time academic status every semester. Full-time status at JMU is a minimum of 12 credit hours for undergraduate students and at least nine credit hours of graduate study. Students in F-1 and J-1 status may not work off campus except in very limited circumstances and only with

prior approval. Do not plan to earn money to pay for your education while you are in the U.S. You will be unable to do so legally.

**Off-Campus Employment** There are strict rules defining when employment is permitted for a student in F-1 or J-1 visa status. Off-campus employment must be approved by either USCIS or ISSS before you are legally allowed to work. There are only a limited number of reasons for authorizing off-campus employment. F-1 employment options are called Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT); J-1 employment option is called Academic Training.

CPT is temporary authorization for off-campus employment directly related to an F-1 student's major field of study *and* the student *must* either receive credit from a course (such as an internship course or an independent study) or the work *must* be a requirement for the student's major field of study. Certain graduate programs require immediate use of CPT for off-campus employment; otherwise, you must complete a full year of study before you are eligible to use CPT.

OPT is authorization that provides F-1 students up to 12 months of off-campus employment experience that is directly related to their major area of study, but *not* required by the program of study. Certain STEM majors also qualify for an additional 24-month extension. OPT can be used all at once or in increments, before or after graduation.

Academic Training is temporary authorization for J-1 visa holders to employment with a specific company that is related to their major field of study. Employment can be either before or after graduation. *Note: some program sponsors may have restrictions on students accepting employment, thereby making you ineligible for any academic training regardless of the U.S. laws.*

## Campus Resources

**Card Services** is one of the very first places you will go as a new student! At Card Services, you will have your photograph taken and receive your JMU Access Card, which we call the JACard or JAC. It is very important to keep your JACard with you at all times. It not only identifies you as a JMU student, but is your access card to the JMU Campus. You can use it to purchase food and drinks at dining locations, to print at



the library and to access your residence hall and other buildings on campus.

**University Career Center** in the Student Success Center, you can research majors, learn how to write resumes and cover letters, or conduct internship, job or graduate school research. UCC frequently hosts workshops to help students prepare for internships, professional interviews and even salary negotiations. UCC advisors can even help students prepare for graduate school. These career and academic resources are free of charge for students.

**Community Service-Learning** provides opportunities for the JMU community to meaningfully engage with the larger Harrisonburg community through acts of service. CS-L works with over 100 community partners located both locally and nationwide. One of CS-L's most popular programs is the Alternative Break Program, where students can choose to spend their school breaks on community service trips with fellow students. Community Service-Learning is a great way to learn more about the Harrisonburg community and develop professional skills at the same time.

**Counseling Center** Taking care of your mental health is critical to your success as an international student. The Counseling Center is staffed by experienced mental health professionals who are dedicated to the personal, social and academic development of all JMU students. The primary focus of the Counseling Center is to provide individual and group counseling to students struggling with problems common to a college population. In addition to individual

and group counseling, the Counseling Center offers workshops and even a counseling group specifically created for international students.

The Counseling Center also has two self-care spaces where you can relax and de-stress called The Oasis and The Studio. The Oasis has yoga supplies, iPads with mindfulness apps, massage chairs and more to help you relax between classes. The Studio has a wide variety of art supplies to help you get creative and process your feelings through art. All these services are completely free of cost to JMU students.

**JMU Dining Services** knows that dining is an integral part of campus life, and has over 25 locations around campus. Because nutritious food is essential to an active lifestyle and academic success, they build menus with health in mind. Vegetarian, American, Latin, Korean, Italian, world-class coffee and “fast food” are just some of the many options available. Many allergies, dietary needs and religious requirements can be met by JMU's Dining staff. JMU employs a Registered Dietician that is available for consultation and to discuss ingredients and nutrition information.

There are meal plans that vary in scope and cost, from “Meal Punches” to “Dining Dollars” to “FLEX.” You can learn more about them [online](#). While you live on campus, you will need to purchase a meal plan; however, even once you move off-campus, you can still have a meal plan to accommodate your preferences.

Personal eating habits, class schedule and leisure activities should all be considered when choosing a meal plan. If you are accustomed to eating three full meals







a day, choose the Weekly 19. If you tend to skip breakfast, eating only two meals a day, the Weekly 14 will be a better choice. If you want maximum Dining Dollars to spend at national brands, coffee shops and convenience stores, a meal plan with less Meal Punches and more Dining Dollars is for you.

**Edith J. Carrier Arboretum** The arboretum is a great way to experience some of the Shenandoah Valley's beautiful nature on JMU's campus. The arboretum is a free, public garden and woodland on East Campus. It has three miles of walking trails, a beautiful pond with ducks and turtles and flower gardens to admire, which makes it the ideal place to spend some quality time with friends or get some reading done on the lawn.

**English Language Learner Services (ELLS)** is a team of faculty and student tutors dedicated to helping JMU students master the English language through tutoring, thesis assistance, a multilingual writers' community and other services.

## Academics

At JMU, we know that success requires equal parts intellect and action. From day one to graduation, we are here to help you work harder than you have imagined, learn new things about the world around you and, perhaps most importantly, learn new things about yourself. With more than 130 degree programs, there is plenty more to explore, and everyone at the university, both inside and outside the classroom, is here to help you succeed.

### Course Selection and Registration

Students will select courses for the semester based on requirements for their major, minors, general education and graduate requirements. Students can also choose elective classes, as time and space permit. Students complete course registration through MyMadison, JMU's online student center. Through JMU's MyMadison, students can add and drop classes, view final grades and an unofficial transcript, plus so much more.

**Academic Advisor** Students are assigned an academic advisor, who works closely with the student to select appropriate courses and ensure that they are meeting all the require-

ments to graduate. Academic Advisors are specific to majors and colleges. Your academic advisor is here to guide you through the academics and ensure your success. You can find your academic advisor listed in MyMadison.

**Academic Year** The academic year is **The common thread that weaves itself through every facet of the Madison Experience is this—you will be pushed, helped and groomed for success.**

divided into two 15-week semesters. The Fall semester begins in late August and finishes in mid-December, and the Spring semester begins in early January and finishes in early May. Full-time students register for 12-19 credits per semester. A class is generally 3 credits and meets for about 2 ½ hours per week. JMU offers a number of summer courses, for those interested.

**FERPA** The Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 assigns certain privacy rights regarding their educational records to students who are 18 years of age or

older or enrolled in post-secondary institutions. This means that students need to give their permission for the release of information about their educational record. Student information will only be released with written consent from the student. This can be done through the Registrar's Office.

At JMU, some information is considered "directory," or public, information (e.g. student's name, major/minor fields of study, enrollment status, dates of attendance, degrees awards and honors conferred). Directory information can be released to anyone, including parents, without the student's permission.

For more information on FERPA, please refer to the [FERPA for Students](#) and [FERPA for Parents](#) webpages.

**MyMadison** is the self-service web portal for all members of the JMU community. MyMadison includes ways to access advising information, register for classes, view your academic requirements for graduation, search the campus directory and more. Your eID account management is also available at this site, along with your Student Center where you may view classes, view grades and update contact information.

**Learning Centers** In addition to English Language Learner Services, there are several other Learning Centers at JMU dedicated to help students excel in all classes and subject matters. You can visit these Learning Centers at no cost to improve your communication and digital communication skills, participate in peer-assisted study sessions, or get help with science, math or writing.

**Libraries** JMU has three libraries that serve as an academic resource for students, faculty and staff: the Carrier Library, the Music Library, and the Rose Library (often referred to by students as ECL, for East Campus Library). You can reserve a group study room to study with your friends, borrow equipment like cameras and microphones for projects and ask the librarians for help with academic research.

**Off-Campus Life** This office assists students living off-campus by helping them navigate the many apartment complexes and housing opportunities that Harrisonburg has to offer. If you have any ques-

While navigating MyMadison, you may notice that you have positive and negative service indicators on your student account. Positive service indicators do not impact you in any way. They are a way for departments on campus to communicate information about you, such as your international student status or your participation in the International Study Center. Negative service indicators, also known as holds, may be placed on student accounts when students have failed to complete a task or provide information to the university. For example, if you do not provide your SEVIS immigration data to ISSS at the beginning of the semester, or you do not pay your tuition and fees, a negative service indicator may be placed on your student account so that you cannot register for a new class or request your transcript without resolving the issue. If you do have a negative service indicator placed on your account, there will be information on the indicator that tells you who to contact to resolve the issue.

**University Advising** The University Advising office's goal is to provide accurate and accessible advising to all students



tions about living off-campus or how a lease might work, OCL is available to assist at no charge. They organize events such as Housing Fairs and Roommate Mixers to meet your needs, and if you are having conflicts with a roommate or landlord, they will help you navigate the problem.

**Office of Residence Life** Living on campus in one of JMU's many residence halls is a requirement for first year students at JMU. The Office of Residence Life (ORL) helps students living on-campus enjoy their experience and navigate any potential issues. ORL will assign you a residence hall during your

to help you plan well to meet all graduation requirements and begin to prepare for your career and life after graduation. The office oversees Madison Advising Peers, JMU students who work with faculty advisors by providing academic advising information and assist students who may have general advising questions. MAP can be a supportive and friendly resource for students who feel overwhelmed and confused.

**Learning Strategies Instruction** provides individualized, student-centered, academic coaching designed to increase student success. The program promotes individual goals of becoming self-regulated learners and building academic and personal self-efficacy.

Strategies include: what is expected of you in each class, note taking, time management, balancing school and other areas of your life, reading, test-taking and test anxiety, studying, and stress management. Individual appointments can be scheduled online.

**Cultural Differences in the Classroom** While there may be many differences in American classroom culture, here are a few

main elements of a university classroom in the U.S.:

- Discussion based
- Group work
- Syllabus
- Faculty member guidance
- Attendance and participation

**Academic Conduct and the Honor Code** JMU Faculty, staff and students have a strong commitment to academic integrity in all areas of campus. The JMU Honor code establishes common guidelines on appropriate academic behaviors for the campus community. Please review the full list of the JMU Honor code on the web site.

**The International Study Center: JMU's Pathway Program** JMU partners with Study Group to provide a pathway program known as the International Study Center (ISC). The ISC is for students who are academically eligible to study at JMU, but have not yet achieved the necessary English proficiency to be successful at JMU. It includes specialized courses in American culture, an Intensive English Program, and study skills to help students adjust to American teaching methods and resources. Students will also take courses from the first year of their chosen degree program.





time living on campus, and they will also assign you a roommate who is similar to you using a matching questionnaire.

One important thing to consider when you live on campus is where you will live during class breaks. During class breaks such as Thanksgiving Break, Winter Break and Spring Break, the residence halls close and residents cannot be there during that time. You will need to make arrangements to live elsewhere during the break if you are not traveling to your home country. Many students will stay with friends or will take the opportunity to travel around the United

States and experience major American cities like New York City, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. If you have any concerns about where you will stay during a break, the ISSS staff is happy to help you plan!

**Registrar's Office** This office manages all student records and information. If you need a transcript, an enrollment verification letter, or a change in major, the Registrar will be able to assist you. The Registrar also evaluates any special credits you may transfer to JMU, such as credits from another higher education institution or credits from International Baccalaureate exams.

## Getting Involved

**Global X** This program connects new international students with student mentors who are involved with events and activities on campus and knowledgeable about JMU's many resources. Students are paired together based on similar personal and academic interests. Through Global X, new international students are encouraged to make meaningful connections and engage with the University community, and student mentors are able to develop their leadership and communication skills. Most importantly, student mentors and mentees have fun getting to know each other and attending events together.

**iCareer** is a series of informative discussions and presentations to provide important resources and address the unique needs and

issues faced by international students as they are preparing for their academic and/or career path beyond JMU. At iCareer events, you can expect to develop professional skills, have your questions answered by professionals from different campus areas, network with other like-minded individuals, and learn more about postgraduate academic options.

**International Student Leadership Conference** Every spring semester, JMU hosts the International Student Leadership Conference, which:

- Creates a friendly and supportive environment for globally-minded students.
- Provides a venue to explore and share various leadership concepts in a global context.
- Offers interactive opportunities and sessions for all participants.

**Public Safety** Many students feel very safe on campus because JMU works to ensure the safety of the community. The Public Safety department exists to keep students safe no matter where they are in Harrisonburg. If you see suspicious activity on campus or you think someone might be in trouble, you can call Public Safety to report it. Public Safety also has a Safety Escort that you can call in situations like walking home from the library late at night. There are many large phone boxes on campus with bright blue lights on top. If you are on campus and you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, you can go to one of these boxes and call the police. JMU also has an app called **LiveSafe** that you can use to contact JMU police and receive emergency notifications.

In the United States, you can also contact emergency services at any time by **dialing 911**. The operator will ask you for your location and a few details and send emergency responders such as the police or an ambulance to your location as quickly as possible.

**SafeRides** In the United States, it is illegal to drink alcohol under the age of 21. Please note that if you choose to drink alcohol here under the age of 21, you run risks that may impact your legal status.

JMU's student organization called SafeRides helps students get home so they do not drive under the influence of alcohol if they have been drinking at a party or other

ISLC began in 2001 with just over 100 participants. Recent conferences welcomed more than 250 participants from 65 countries and 23 institutions. The theme and keynote speaker are different with every conference, but the energy, the camaraderie of the participants, the laughter, and the learning remain consistent from year to year.

**International Week** Every September, JMU's Center for Global Engagement hosts this exciting and meaningful week packed with special events, programs, workshops, and projects to celebrate the different cultures represented by both the JMU and Harrisonburg communities. Each year, I-Week features a special theme that is both unique and reflective of current world news and trends. While specific events and

event. Students just call or email SafeRides, and a trustworthy student driver comes to pick them up and bring them home at no cost. SafeRides operates on Friday and Saturday nights from 10 p.m. to 3 a.m.

**Student Employment** Student employment provides valuable work experience that you can advertise to future employers or graduate schools. International students holding F-1 and J-1 visas are eligible for employment on JMU's campus while they remain full-time students in good status, provided their program sponsor approves this employment. On-campus employment means that you can work for JMU on JMU's campus. You are allowed to work 20 hours per week while school is in session. During breaks, you can work full-time.

JMU's dining service provider, *Aramark*, JMU's bookstore company, *Follet*, and JMU's pathway program provider, *Study Group*, are all considered allowable on-campus employers. The Student Employment office will assist you in verifying your employment eligibility for any JMU jobs you are interested in.

**University Business Office** The University Business Office administers student financial accounts and collects payment for student tuition and other fees. Students can access their student financial account online using [the Madison Money Manager \(M3\)](#). Students can also give individuals

details may vary with the yearly theme, here are some of JMU's annual favorites:

- **International Bazaar:** an open-market setting with local and JMU vendors, free food samples, handmade items for sale and cultural performances.
- **Trivia Night:** groups of students, faculty and staff compete to see who are the most knowledgeable about international fun facts as well as JMU and world events.
- **Harrisonburg International Festival:** a city-wide festival that celebrates the awesome diversity of all nationalities and cultures represented by not only JMU students, faculty, and staff but also Harrisonburg community members and families. Similar to the "International Bazaar" on campus but on a much bigger scale, this event takes place in down-

town Harrisonburg with endless options of delicious and authentic food and refreshments, as well as fun activities, unique showcases, and performances for everyone to enjoy!

**University Health Center** The University Health Center is conveniently located in the Student Success Center. Services are free or offered at a highly reduced cost to students, as part of your student tuition and fees. Due to the low cost of services, we highly recommend that the University Health Center is your first stop when you experience an illness or injury that is not life-threatening. The UHC offers services such as the flu shot, crutches and slings, stitches, free contraceptive devices to practice safer sex and STI and STD testing. If you are struggling with adapting to American foods, there is a Nutrition Counselor who can help you achieve your nutrition goals and make choices that feel healthier for you. You can schedule appointments quickly and privately online.

If you do experience a life-threatening injury, **please call 911** or go to the Sentara

Rockingham Memorial Hospital (RMH) Emergency Room immediately.

**University Recreation**, commonly called UREC, is a highlight for many JMU students. UREC is a multi-level fitness and wellness center with 278,515 sq. feet (84,891 sq. meters) of space for physical activity, individual fitness and group fitness. Some facility highlights include a 33-foot climbing wall, eight racquetball courts, three multi-activity gyms, two indoor



zens who are prepared to lead productive and meaningful lives.

MI students will live in Paul Jennings Hall in the heart of JMU's campus. The faculty-in-residence will work closely with MI students, including teaching two courses designed especially for Madison International.

**Event Organizing Team** Every academic year, a special team of student assistants form the EOT with the goal of organizing various cultural events and projects that bring all Dukes together and promote cross-cultural engagement. In the past, these events have included a sweet and spicy food showcase, an international tearoom, a cross-cultural dance workshop, and a Día de Muertos event. You can see photos of all our ISSS events on [our Flickr page!](#)



tracks, fitness and cardio theatre, aquatics center, adventure center, locker rooms, wellness suite, equipment center, two outdoor courtyards and six group exercise studios. Many UREC facilities are free to students, but some programs and trips do require a fee.

## Life in the United States

Even experienced travelers go through a period of cultural adjustment when moving to a new place. Many of you will also go through this period of cultural adjustment as you settle into life in the U.S.

While it is becoming easier to gather information about different cultures, languages, religions and other facets of a country's people, you may find that the information is more or less true for some individuals in a given society. You will experience many differences and many similarities that you may not have initially anticipated. Some of these experiences can be pleasant and funny, and at times irritating and frustrating.

### Prior to Leaving Home Take advantage of where you live

■ Visit some of the places you have not visited yet, or revisit your favorite places... not just your favorite restaurants, but also favorite hangout spots, parks, etc. with your loved ones.

■ Take care of the little things, such as doctor's visits, haircuts, and other personal appointments. You will need to provide a signed Immunization Form to the JMU



Health Center. Virginia law requires that the certificate of immunization be completed and submitted to the University Health Center before the beginning of your first academic semester. If you have not received all of the required vaccinations/immunizations, obtaining them while you are at home may be easier and cheaper.

### On Campus

**Getting involved** is one of the best ways for you to: make new friends/connections outside of the classroom settings, develop new skills, expose yourself to new perspectives and ultimately make your overall college journey even better with unforget-

table memories and long-lasting experiences. The Center for Global Engagement has developed programs and opportunities for all globally-minded JMU Dukes to help your adjustment at JMU and start your success as a student and future alumnus.

Read through the **Getting Involved** section for details on key programs.

### Money and Banking

**U.S. Currency** United States' currency is based on a decimal system, with one dollar (\$1 or \$1.00) equal to one hundred cents. Since U.S. paper currency is the same size and color regardless of denomination be sure to check your currency before paying. Coin currency is used for amounts less than one dollar.

Most banks and some major airports and hotels will exchange foreign paper currency for a service fee; very few, however, exchange foreign coinage. Pay attention to fluctuations in the exchange rates between your home country's currency and U.S. currency.

**Bank Accounts** You will likely want to open a checking account with a bank on or near campus while you're in the U.S. You may directly deposit traveler's checks for free in most cases, or arrange for a wire transfer from your home bank (a fee may apply). Typically, you may make an unlimited number of additional deposits or withdrawals thereafter. Be sure to always have sufficient funds in your account to cover all outstanding checks; if you "overdraw," the bank may impose fees. Also be aware that



there is usually a waiting period of a few days before you may withdraw the money you deposit. Note that some restaurants and taxis may require only cash as payment.

At Transitions orientation, we will help you open an account at a local bank.

You can learn more about money and banking in the U.S. on the [ISSS website](#).

### Driving in the U.S.

International students may be eligible to drive a motor vehicle while residing in the United States. However, those who wish to operate a vehicle must successfully apply for and receive a driver's license. Driving a car without a driver's license is illegal. To acquire a driver's license, you must apply for one at a local Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV).

You can learn more about the driver's license application process on the [ISSS website](#).

**Many students will stay with friends or will take the opportunity to travel around the United States and experience major American cities like New York City, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.**

### U.S. Holidays

Americans celebrate many holidays throughout the year, some of which they share with other countries, and some of which are uniquely American.

**New Year's Day** is January 1. The celebration of this holiday begins the night before, when Americans gather to wish each other a "happy new year" and celebrate as the clock strikes midnight (12:00 am), ringing in the new calendar year.

**Martin Luther King Jr. Day:** The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., an African-American clergyman, is considered a great American because of his efforts to win civil rights for all people. MLK Jr. Day is celebrated on the third Monday of January. The JMU and Harrisonburg communities will frequently host events during this week to commemorate and reflect on Rev. King's legacy.

**Easter**, which falls on the Sunday after the Jewish Passover holiday, celebrates the Christian belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. For Christians, Easter is a day of religious services and the gathering of family. Many Americans follow old traditions of coloring

hard-boiled eggs and giving children baskets of candy.

**The Fourth of July**, or Independence Day, celebrates the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. It is a day of picnics and patriotic parades, and a night of concerts and fireworks. The flying of the American flag (which also occurs on Memorial Day and other holidays) is common.

**Thanksgiving Day** is the fourth Thursday in November, but many Americans take a day of vacation on the following Friday to make a four-day weekend, during which they may travel long distances to visit family and friends. The holiday dates back to 1621, the year after the Puritan colonists arrived in Massachusetts. The Thanksgiving feast became a national tradition. To this day, Thanksgiving dinner almost always includes some of the foods served at the first feast: roast turkey, cranberry sauce, potatoes and pumpkin pie. American football is usually part of this traditional holiday weekend, as well.

**Christmas Day**, December 25, is another Christian holiday; it marks the birth of Jesus Christ. Decorating houses and yards with lights, putting up Christmas trees, giving gifts and sending greeting cards have become traditions even for many non-Christian Americans.

Typically, American offices and offices on the JMU campus are open from 8 am – 5 pm, Monday through Friday. It should be noted that, with the division of local, state and federal governments in America, confusion can arise as to what public and private facilities are open on a given holiday. The Internet may be a good source of general information, but students who are in doubt should call businesses and offices for information ahead of time. JMU publishes an academic calendar every year which lists all breaks, vacations and holidays.

### Understanding Mainstream U.S. Culture

For many international students, adjusting to American culture can be difficult and at times frustrating. American customs and values might be very different from those of your home country, and you might find them confusing. You will probably want to familiarize yourself with American culture before your departure, in order to make the transition as easy as possible.

Generally speaking, Americans strongly believe in the concept of individualism and personal independence. They consider them-



selves to be separate, unique individuals, rather than part of a greater community or other group. Thus, many Americans you meet might be focused on their own personal goals and aspirations, rather than the goals of their family or community.

When engaging with Americans you meet, remember to *maintain eye contact*. In the U.S., this is a sign of openness, honesty and enthusiasm. Americans generally appreciate a little more personal space than you might be used to in your own culture; when in conversation, make sure you are not standing too close.

You can learn more about these cultural values and traits, as well as many more, on the [ISSS website](#).

**Cultural Adjustment** is a process an individual has to go through to be able to work effectively and live comfortably in a place that is new and unfamiliar to them. Living in a new culture requires you to learn a new set of cultural patterns and behaviors. This process can be very challenging and sometimes uncomfortable. At some point during the cultural adjustment process, you may experience "culture shock" and have feelings of tension and anxiety as you adapt to U.S. culture. This is a normal and healthy reaction to have when adjusting to a new place!

You can read more about cultural adjustment and culture shock on the [ISSS website](#). The ISSS team is always happy to meet with students to discuss their adjustment to the U.S.





**Health and Well-Being** University life is very exciting and brings lots of new opportunities, but it can also feel stressful and overwhelming. It's especially important to maintain your emotional and physical wellness during this time, even though it may feel challenging to do so.

JMU has a number of excellent resources to help you feel your best during your time as a Duke. Resources such as the Counseling Center can help you maintain your emotional well-being, and facilities such as UREC and the University Health Center can help you maintain physical wellness. ISSS has compiled a list of wellness resources espe-

cially for international students, and it can be found on the [ISSS website](#).

### Life in the Shenandoah Valley

**Transportation** There are plenty of ways to get around Harrisonburg! Many students use the Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation (HDPT) bus system. HDPT buses will take you all over campus using routes designed for JMU. They will also take you to many major apartment complexes, the mall and Walmart. Using the bus is free, simply show the driver your JACard. To view bus routes, you can download the myStop Mobile app.

If the bus schedule does not suit your needs, you can use Uber or Lyft to get around. These ride-sharing services will take you anywhere you need to go. Just download the app, create an account and add your payment information.

Many students choose to bike around Harrisonburg. If you choose to ride your bicycle, please be aware of [Virginia's Bicycle Rules of the Road](#). The city of Harrisonburg has a [bike map](#) to help you choose where to ride your bicycle.

**Health Care** JMU requires all students on F and J visas to have health insurance coverage. ISSS offers a comprehensive health insurance plan through Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI). This insurance will cover 100% of your medical expenses should you have an accident or illness.

International students are automatically enrolled in our insurance policy at the beginning of every semester. The cost of the insurance will be billed to your student account, and your insurance card will be sent to your JMU Dukes email account.

Students with a pre-existing international health insurance policy are able to apply for a waiver so they can use their own.

As a JMU student, the first place you should visit when dealing with an injury or illness should always be the University Health Center. You should only dial 911 or go to the



hospital's emergency room if it is a life-threatening emergency.

You can find more information about health insurance and the American health-care system on the [ISSS website](#).

### International Shipping Companies

You have several options for international shipping in Harrisonburg. If you would like to ship an international package using DHL, you can purchase shipping from their website and drop off the package at a UPS store, or schedule a courier pick up. You can also use UPS and purchase shipping online, or go to a local UPS store to purchase shipping for your package.

**Ethnic Grocery Stores** Harrisonburg has some great options for buying international foods and drinks in the Shenandoah Valley. **Euro Market** stocks many Russian foods, drinks and bakery items. At **Food Maxx**, you can find foods from all over the world, including Korean Choco Pies, Vietnamese coffees and Indian soan papdi. **Mi Mercadito** has a variety of options for those who enjoy Latino cuisine. **Oriental Food Market** will appeal to lovers of Asian foods.

- Euro Market
- Food Maxx International
- Mi Mercadito
- Oriental Food Market

**International Cuisine** Harrisonburg has many incredible restaurants representing cuisines from all over the world. Some staff and student favorites are:

- BoBoKo Indonesian Café
- Kung Fu Tea
- La Morena
- Oriental Café
- Taj of India
- Taste of Thai

**Downtown** Harrisonburg always has something new and exciting going on! Downtown is home to 40 restaurants, cafes and bakeries with a wide variety of cuisines, from Indian to Italian to Indonesian. You can also find many fun and unique stores to shop in downtown, whether you enjoy hand-crafted art, natural and organic beauty products or musical instruments. There's even a gourmet popcorn store!

There are always seasonal events happening downtown. For example, the Skeleton Fest happens every October to celebrate Halloween and Día de Muertos, and the Winter



WonderFest transforms downtown into a grand celebration for the winter holidays.

One of the best things about living in Harrisonburg is our proximity to local farmers and vendors. From April through November, the Farmers Market is open every Tuesday and Saturday. Farmers come from across the Valley to bring their fresh produce, dairy and meat products to town. You can also find fresh flowers, handcrafted soaps and even some food trucks! The Farmers Market is a great way to shop from local business owners and get to know the surrounding community.

For the most up-to-date news on what is happening in downtown Harrisonburg, as well as a complete directory of all restaurants, shops and other businesses, we encourage you to check out their website, [www.downtownharrisonburg.org](http://www.downtownharrisonburg.org).

**Outdoor Opportunities** JMU is located in the beautiful Shenandoah Valley, which means there are many opportunities to experience the outdoors and spend time in nature. If you would like to stay close to campus, there are outdoor opportunities such as JMU's [Edith J. Carrier Arboretum](#) and the [Harrisonburg City Parks system](#), which manages 10 beautiful parks.

If you are feeling a little more adventurous, there are many outdoor opportu-

nities just a short drive from the city! The Shenandoah National Park includes a 105-mile (169 km) drive through the Blue Ridge Mountains, as well as 500 miles (805 km) of hiking trails. In addition, the George Washington National Forest is also located close by, and has opportunities for hiking, fishing, mountain biking, camping and picnicking. Spending time in one of our parks is not only a great way to explore a new environment, but it is also very relaxing – and is a great activity to do with friends, as well!

### JMU Fun Facts

James Madison University was first created as the State Normal and Industrial School for Women at Harrisonburg on March 14, 1908. It was initially created as a school for women. In 1916, the school began awarding bachelor's degrees, and in 1928, the first male student received a degree. Male students were not approved to live on campus until 1966, when the university became fully coeducational for men and women. After several name changes, the institution finally became known as James Madison University on July 1, 1977!

**School Colors: Purple and Gold** You will see a lot of purple and gold around campus during your time at JMU. The





school's love for these colors actually dates back to its first year in operation—1908! The students had formed two literary societies, the Lee Literary Society and the Lanier Literary Society. The Lee Literary Society chose the colors of gray and gold to represent their organization, and the Lanier Literary Society chose the colors of purple and white. Eventually, the school administration chose to combine the colors of purple and gold and use them as school colors for the whole institution. JMU Dukes proudly wear purple and gold to this day.

**The Quad** The Quadrangle, also known as the Quad, is the beautiful rectangular lawn in front of JMU's iconic Wilson Hall. When the Quad was created in the 1920s, they discovered there was a large bluestone rock that would be too difficult to move. As a result, the rock was left on the quad and not cleared

away. The rock became popular with young couples and was named "the Kissing Rock". There is a JMU myth that if you kiss someone on the Kissing Rock, you will marry them someday.

Besides the Kissing Rock, the Quad is a very popular place for students to lay on the grass and study, eat lunch with their friends, play Frisbee or even bring their pets for exercise between classes. If you study in the College of Arts and Letters, you will even get to have your graduation ceremony on the Quad at the conclusion of your studies.

**Duke Dog** "Why is the JMU mascot called the Duke Dog?" The origin story of the Duke Dog is unique—in 1947, the first men's basketball team was formed and they did not have any towels or equipment to use during practice. The basketball team told the president of the university, Samuel



Duke, that they would name their team after him if he provided the equipment for them. He did, and so the JMU Dukes were created! However, JMU did not have a bulldog, or Duke Dog, mascot until the 1970s. Director of Public Affairs Dr. Ray Sonner thought that British nobility such as a duke might have an English bulldog as their royal pet. Thus, the Duke Dog mascot was born. Duke Dog first appeared as a cartoon in 1972, and a JMU professor allowed the team to dress his own bulldog, Bunker, in purple and gold and bring him to basketball games.

Now, we have a student each year who has the responsibility of wearing the Duke Dog mascot suit and making appearances at football games, graduation and other special events. This student always keeps their identity a secret, and gets to reveal themselves at their own graduation ceremony! If you're lucky, you just might see Duke Dog around campus. He's always happy to pose for a picture!

**Rivalries** JMU has friendly rivalries with several other institutions that our football team plays against. If you attend football games during your time at JMU, you might notice that the Dukes often play against the University of Richmond "Spiders," the William & Mary "Tribe" and the University of Delaware "Fightin' Blue Hens."

However, our most famous rivalry is with the Virginia Tech "Hokies." In 2010, the Hokies were seen as nearly unbeatable, and no one thought our football team would be able to best theirs. However, the impossible happened, and the JMU Dukes made history by beating the Hokies 21-16 in the football game.



**JMU Songs** Every great experience has great music to accompany it, including JMU! During your time at JMU, there are two songs you will be likely to hear at sporting events: the JMU Fight Song and Start Wearing Purple.

**Other Cultural Norms at JMU** **Holding the Door** at JMU, all students, faculty, and staff fully embrace and carry out this simple, yet symbolic, tradition of holding

the door for the next person or group of people as they are entering or exiting a building right behind you. [This video](#) shows you what holding the door means to JMU Dukes!

**The "J! M! U! Dukes!" Cheer** Whenever anyone yells "J! M! U!" people around them always respond loudly with a prolonged and low "Duuukessss!" along with a physical movement combination of a mini lunge plus

swiping your arms horizontally and outwards. You can [hear it here](#) at a football game!

**Driving another student to their parking spot** As you are trying to find a parking spot and you see another student walking to his/her car, JMU Dukes tend to offer to give that student a quick ride to his/her car in order to both save that person some time and to guarantee that you will earn their spot once they leave.

**Clapping on the Quad** If you're standing in the center of the circle in the middle of the Quad and clap loudly, you will hear the clapping sound echoing back to you in all four directions.

**"Freshman 15"** is a phrase commonly used to express the potential of any first-year students (also called freshmen) gaining 15 pounds in his/her first year here at JMU because of all of the delicious and irresistible dining options.

**Wear purple on Fridays** Many JMU students, faculty and staff proudly incorporate a touch of purple into their outfit on Friday to showcase their love for the university. Many students even dress top-to-bottom in JMU apparel!

**Fight Song**  
Madison, James Madison,  
We are the Dukes of JMU  
Madison, James Madison,  
The fighting Dukes of JMU  
Fight for Glory—Honors Won  
Brighten the Lights of Madison  
Madison, James Madison,  
Show your Colors  
Proud and True  
We are the Dukes of JMU

[Listen online](#)

**Start Wearing Purple**  
Start wearing purple,  
Wearing purple  
Start wearing purple for me now  
All your sanity and wits,  
They will all vanish  
I promise,  
It's just a matter of time  
(toward visiting team)  
GO HOME!

[Listen online](#)



Acronym or Nickname	Meaning
<b>The Breeze</b>	JMU's student newspaper
<b>CGE</b>	<b>C</b> enter for <b>G</b> lobal <b>E</b> ngagement The JMU department which houses the International Cooperation, International Student & Scholar Services, and Study Abroad offices
<b>COB</b>	<b>C</b> ollege of <b>B</b> usiness
<b>Convo</b>	The <b>C</b> onvocation Center An event center on East Campus that hosts many sporting events, graduation ceremonies, and other special events
<b>CS-L</b>	<b>C</b> ommunity <b>S</b> ervice- <b>L</b> earning
<b>D-Hall</b>	The West Campus <b>D</b> ining <b>H</b> all, located between Wilson Hall and Madison Union.
<b>ECL</b>	<b>E</b> ast <b>C</b> ampus <b>L</b> ibrary Used as a nickname for Rose Library on East Campus
<b>E-Hall</b>	The <b>E</b> ast Campus Dining <b>H</b> all, located near Festival
<b>ELLS</b>	<b>E</b> nglish <b>L</b> anguage <b>L</b> earner <b>S</b> ervices
<b>Festi or Festival</b>	<b>F</b> estival Conference & Student Center Located on East Campus, Festival has many dining options and large events are often hosted there
<b>FLEX</b>	A declining-balance account you can add money to in order to make purchases with your JACard
<b>FROG</b>	<b>F</b> irst year <b>O</b> rientation <b>G</b> uide Student leaders that assist all JMU students during their first year at JMU
<b>Global X</b>	JMU's cross-cultural mentorship program for new international students. The "X" stands for the global <b>eX</b> change between the international student and the mentor
<b>ICS</b>	<b>I</b> nnner <b>C</b> ampus <b>S</b> huttle The buses that runs throughout campus all day
<b>ISC</b>	<b>I</b> nternational <b>S</b> tudy <b>C</b> enter The pathway program for international students to matriculate into the University
<b>ISSS</b>	<b>I</b> nternational <b>S</b> tudent & <b>S</b> cholar <b>S</b> ervices The JMU department dedicated to the success of all international students and scholars on campus
<b>JACard</b>	<b>J</b> MU <b>A</b> ccess <b>C</b> ard Used as your JMU student ID, to access buildings, to buy food and more

Acronym or Nickname	Meaning
<b>LINKer</b>	<b>L</b> eaders for <b>I</b> nternational <b>N</b> etworking and <b>K</b> nowledge Student leaders who work specifically with international students to assist in their adjustment to JMU
<b>MRDs</b>	The <b>M</b> arching <b>R</b> oyal <b>D</b> ukes JMU's incredible marching band
<b>OCL</b>	<b>O</b> ff- <b>C</b> ampus <b>L</b> ife
<b>ODS</b>	<b>O</b> ffice of <b>D</b> isability <b>S</b> ervices
<b>ORL</b>	<b>O</b> ffice of <b>R</b> esidence <b>L</b> ife
<b>OSARP</b>	<b>O</b> ffice of <b>S</b> tudent <b>A</b> ccountability and <b>R</b> estorative <b>P</b> ractices
<b>Punch</b>	When you purchase a meal using your meal plan, this expense is referred to as a Punch
<b>RA</b>	<b>R</b> esident <b>A</b> dviser Student employees who live in on-campus residence halls and assist the other students living there
<b>SGA</b>	<b>S</b> tudent <b>G</b> overnment <b>A</b> ssociation
<b>SMAD</b>	<b>S</b> chool of <b>M</b> edia <b>A</b> rts & <b>D</b> esign
<b>SOGIE</b>	<b>S</b> exual <b>O</b> rientation, <b>G</b> ender <b>I</b> ntity and <b>E</b> xpression Promotes JMU's commitment to diversity through education, support, advocacy and the fostering of equity for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity and expression
<b>SSC</b>	<b>S</b> tudent <b>S</b> uccess <b>C</b> enter A building on West Campus with many dining options, study spaces and student resources such as the University Health Center, the University Business Office and the Learning Centers
<b>TDU</b>	<b>T</b> aylor <b>D</b> own <b>U</b> nder The lower level of Taylor Hall in Madison Union
<b>UBO</b>	<b>U</b> niversity <b>B</b> usiness <b>O</b> ffice
<b>UCC</b>	<b>U</b> niversity <b>C</b> areer <b>C</b> enter
<b>UHC</b>	<b>U</b> niversity <b>H</b> ealth <b>C</b> enter
<b>UPB</b>	<b>U</b> niversity <b>P</b> rogram <b>B</b> oard A student-led organization that hosts fun events for students such as musical concerts, movie nights, and late night breakfasts
<b>UREC</b>	<b>U</b> niversity <b>R</b> Ecreation <b>C</b> enter



# Overview of International Students at JMU

Based on Fall 2020 data, provided and prepared by International Student and Scholar Services

## Most Represented Countries

- China (102)
- Vietnam (24)
- Azerbaijan (13)
- India (12)
- Spain (9)
- Canada (7)
- South Korea (7)
- United Kingdom (7)

## Countries with 5 or fewer Students Represented

- Angola
- Argentina
- Australia
- Bahamas
- Bangladesh
- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Colombia
- Congo, DRC
- Costa Rica
- Denmark
- Egypt
- Ethiopia
- France
- Germany
- Ghana
- Greece
- Hungary
- Iceland
- Indonesia
- Iran
- Iraq
- Ireland
- Israel
- Jamaica
- Japan
- Jordan
- Kenya
- Kosovo
- Latvia
- Lebanon
- Lithuania
- Mexico
- Mongolia
- Morocco
- Myanmar
- Netherlands
- Nigeria
- Norway
- Pakistan
- Peru
- Philippines
- Portugal
- Russia
- Saudi Arabia
- Senegal
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Taiwan
- Thailand
- Trinidad and Tobago
- Ukraine
- United Arab Emirates
- Uruguay
- Venezuela

**1.32%**

Percentage of international students at JMU (288 out of 21,889 total enrollment)

**63**

Countries are represented by international students at JMU

## Scholarships Awarded:

**\$12,000** from International Study Center (ISC) (12 students)

**\$6,000** from Graybeal Scholarship (3 students)

**\$24,150** from You Are Welcome Here Scholarship (2 students)

**\$15,000** from Madison For Keeps Scholarship (4 students)

*Note: These scholarships were specifically for international students, thus excluding athletic scholarships, departmental scholarships, and graduate assistantships.*

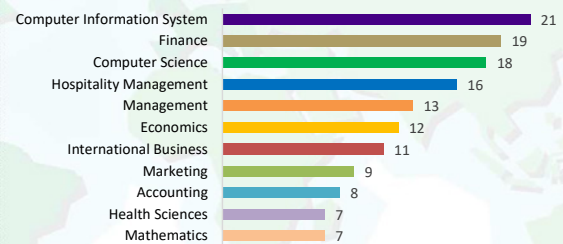
## Gender Distribution



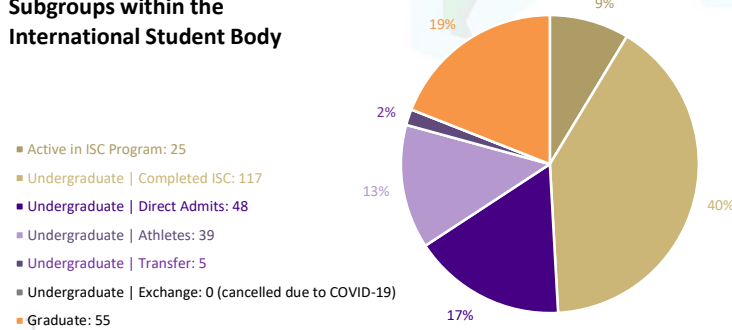
## Most Popular Graduate Programs



## Most Popular Undergraduate Programs



## Subgroups within the International Student Body



Among 234 current international students in the undergraduate program,

**117 students (or 50%)**

are "ISC Completers" who matriculated to JMU from the International Study Center (ISC).



## 6-Year Graduation Rate:

**69%**

ISC Completers



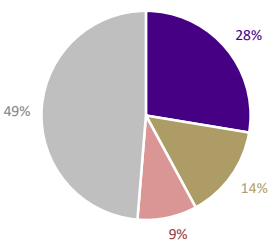
**64%**

Direct Admits

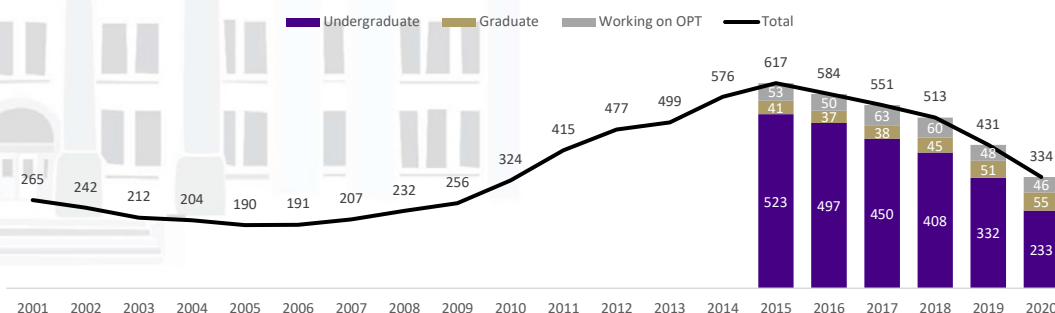


## Class of 2020: Post-Graduation Plan

- Applied for Optional Practical Training (OPT): 21
- Pursuing Graduate Schools: 11
- Returning Home: 7
- Unknown: 37



## JMU International Student Population Since 2001



**JMU** International Student & Scholar Services  
Center for Global Engagement

[jmu.edu/global/iss](http://jmu.edu/global/iss)  
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**JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY**

MSC 5731, 100 E. Grace St.  
Madison Hall, 2nd Floor  
Harrisonburg, VA 22807

**Center for Global Engagement**

+1-540-568-5209 Phone  
iss@jmu.edu

2021



