

2023 FIRST YEAR SURVEY

PRELIMINARY DATA BRIEF

ANALYTICS & DECISION SUPPORT
OFFICE OF PLANNING, ANALYTICS & INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH



First Year Student Survey (FYS)

Student learning in higher education is complex and multidimensional, leading to academic, social, and personal development. To gain a better understanding of the incoming students and their needs, the Office of Planning, Analytics & Institutional Research (PAIR) administers the First Year Student Survey (FYS) to all incoming first-year, first-time students. Survey responses were gathered between March 2023 and August 2023. Students receive a link to complete the First Year Survey as part of the [OneBook](#) process through orientation. There was a total of 4,884 responses (99.1% response rate¹).

This brief provides preliminary data to a sample of questions from the FYS focusing on reasons for coming to JMU, sense of belonging, interest in high impact practices, preparation and student characteristics. Final data will be available in January 2024 after official university demographic data are finalized.

Preliminary Summary of Findings

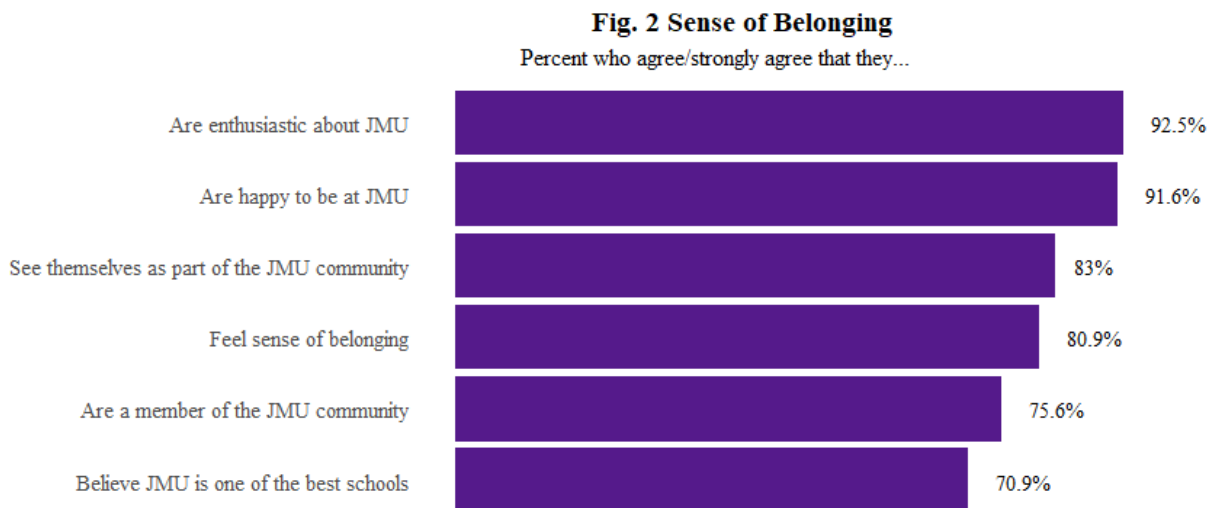
- **74% of respondents indicated JMU was their first choice of college. 95% indicated JMU was their first or second choice. Students are interested in JMU because of the academic reputation, social life and support offered to students.**

Fig. 1 Top Reasons for Students Choosing JMU

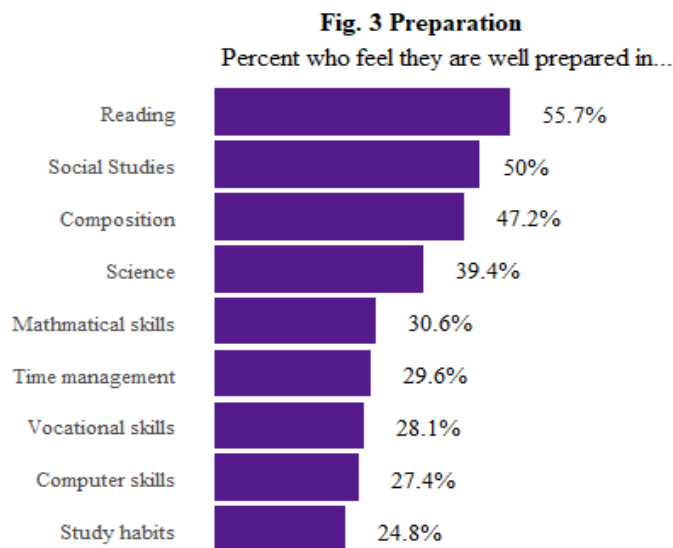


¹ This is calculated based on the number of enrolled students as of on-campus census, September 13, 2023. Enrollment numbers may have subsequently changed.

- Overall, students feel they belong at JMU.

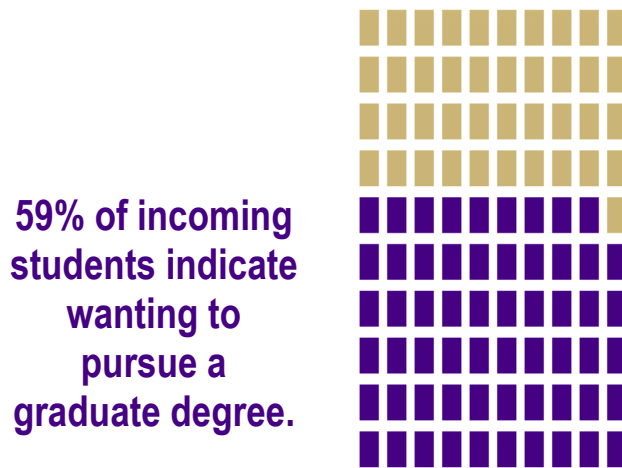


- Incoming students may need additional support in developing positive study habits, improving time management skills and preparing for STEM courses. Less than one third of students feel well prepared regarding vocational skills and computer skills, pointing to additional areas of support students may need.



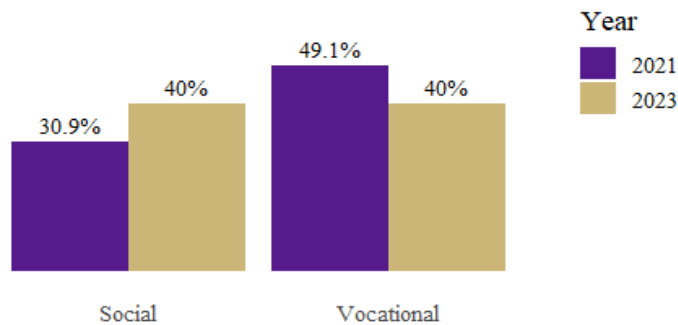
- Many students are interested in pursuing graduate, specialist or professional degrees after their undergraduate education.

Fig. 4 Postgraduate Education Interest



- The two most common philosophies of education are social and vocational. More students are aligned with the social philosophy than previously seen.

Fig. 5 Students' Philosophy of Education

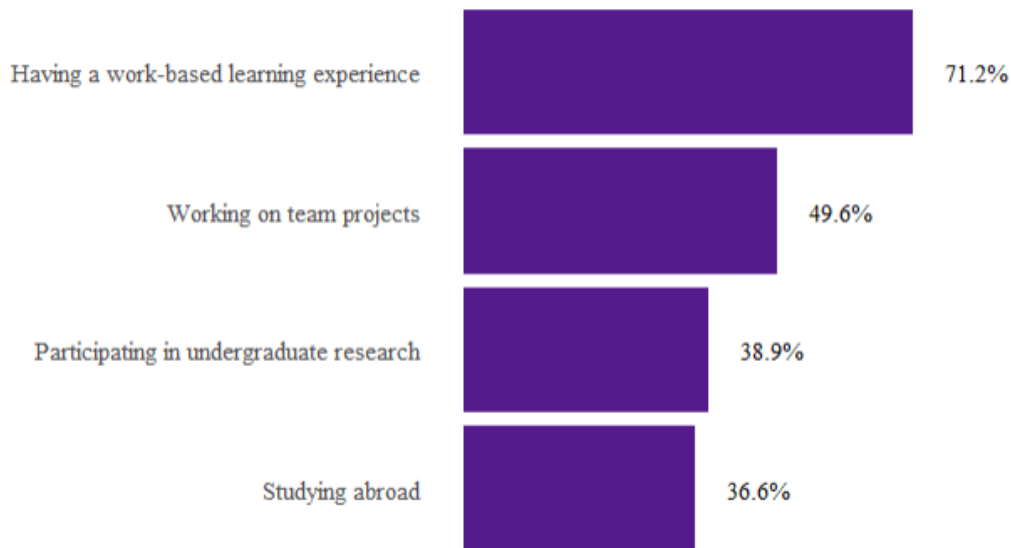


Vocational philosophy: Education is primarily a preparation for an occupational future. Social, intellectual and extracurricular activities are less important.

Social philosophy: Extracurricular activities, group parties, athletics, social life, rewarding friendships and loyalty to college traditions are emphasized and are viewed as important and necessary for the cultivation of the well-rounded person.

- A majority of students indicated it was very important that JMU provide them with opportunities for work-based learning experiences (e.g., internships, student teaching, etc.).

Fig. 6 Top High Impact Practices of Interest
Percent indicating the following are very important



Coming Soon:

This brief provides a preliminary snapshot of responses to a few of the FYS questions. Once final data are available in January, a full dashboard suite will become available on the PAIR website to address additional items on the FYS such as:

- Students' motivation for going to college
- Other universities students applied/were accepted to
- Student needs assessment
- Additional student characteristics

To see historical data from past years, visit: <https://www.jmu.edu/pair/ads/survey-research.shtml>
For additional questions, please contact pair@jmu.edu.