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**THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
THE VISITORS OF JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY**

**Minutes of the Academic Excellence and Student Affairs Joint Committee**

The Academic Excellence and Student Affairs Joint Committee met on Thursday, November 7, 2024, in Ballroom B of the Festival Conference and Student Center at James Madison University. Jack White, Co-Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:27 p.m.

**Present:**

Bell, Dickie  
Bolander, Jeff  
Edwards, Terrie, Co-Chair  
Eiland, Joanie  
Galati, Tom  
Obenshain, Suzanne, Rector  
Rexrode, Dave  
Thacker, Nikki  
White, Jack, Co-Chair

**Absent:**

Wood, Nicole Palya

**Others:**

Allen, Dirron, Associate Vice President for Student Life and Involvement  
Blackstone, Bethany, Dean, Honors College  
Brenneman, Anne, Director, University Health Center  
Campbell, Jennifer, Assistant Vice Provost, Academic Initiatives and Planning  
Carter-Hoyt, Malika, Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion  
Dioszeghy, Brittany, Director, Office of Disability Services  
Hall, Hollie, Dean of Students and Associate Vice President  
King, Charles, President  
Kirkpatrick, David, Secretary to the Board  
Kolvoord, Bob, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Lacroix, Brielle, Student Government President  
L'Esperance Mark, Dean, Education  
Linder, Fletcher, Dean, University Studies  
Lonett, Carson, Executive Advisor to the Vice President for Student Affairs  
Lovell, Sharon, Dean, Health and Behavioral Studies  
Miller, Tim, Vice President for Student Affairs  
Mitchell, Bruce, Associate Vice President for Accessibility and Belonging  
Molina, Rudy, Vice Provost, Student Academic Success

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Moore, Towana, Vice President for Administration and Finance  
Nowviskie, Bethany, Dean, Libraries  
Onestak, David, Director, Counseling Center  
Read, Caitlyn, Assistant Vice President, State Government Relations  
Sander, Meg, Associate University Counsel  
Shackelford, Kristi, Chief Communications Office, Academic Affairs  
Stafford, Sydney, Student Representative to the Board of Visitors  
Surrett, Myles, Associate Vice President for Career, Experiential Learning, and Transition  
Tang, Jeff, Interim Dean, College of Integrated Science and Engineering  
Todd, JT, Director, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression  
Tongen, Anthony, Vice President for Research, Economic Development and Innovation  
Vass, Mary-Hope, Spokesperson and Assistant Vice President, University Communications  
Wood, Melinda, Vice President for Enrollment Management

### **Opening Remarks**

Jack White opened the meeting by thanking the members of the Student Affairs and Academic Excellence committees for attending this joint meeting, as it allowed the committees to hear from both areas about shared responsibilities and jurisdictions shared by the two divisions.

### **Overview of Shared Areas of Responsibility**

Dr. Tim Miller began with an overview of examples in which Academic Affairs (AA) and Student Affairs (SA) have shared responsibilities, such as:

- Alcohol use
- Career engagement
- Clubs and organizations (advisor role)
- College readiness
- Community engagement
- Disability accommodations
- Mental health
- Neurodiverse students
- Orientation
- Student academic success
- Time management
- Work-based learning
- QEP/Early Student Success System

He stated that students experience the university as one experience, not separated by organizational lines. He shared that joint meetings are beneficial and hoped for more opportunities to share their collaborative and shared responsibilities. Dr. Miller emphasized the individualized care that staff and faculty in both areas provide for our students and suggested this meeting could be a model for future joint meetings to discuss areas like campus safety.

### **Disability Accommodations in University Settings**

Dr. Miller introduced Brittany Dioszeghy, Director of the Office of Disability Services (ODS), who gave a presentation on Disability Accommodations. She began with an overview of ODS and the staff members, she shared JMU policies as well as state and federal laws that impact the work of accommodations at JMU. She did a review of JMU Policy 1331: Disabilities and Reasonable Accommodations, and discussed the areas of responsibility for students, staff, and faculty members. She continued with an overview of the registration process for students and the documentation they must provide. She stated the accommodation implementation process is required for new accommodations and new disabilities, including temporary disabilities.



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During the individualized review, all decisions regarding accommodations are based on a legally grounded interactive process that includes:

- verifying the presence of a disability
- identifying barriers that are the result of this disability
- identifying reasonable accommodations that mitigate the impact of these barriers

Ms. Dioszeghy explained that for an accommodation to be reasonable, it must not cause an “undue burden” – typically an administrative or financial issue for the university – and the accommodation must not make a “fundamental alteration” to the class, i.e., it must preserve the original objectives of the class or program.

After a student is registered, ODS sends a letter through the Accommodate system detailing the appropriate accommodations to faculty, who provide the accommodations listed unless a legal exception applies. Students cannot use their accommodation until the letter has been sent, and students choose whether they will use the specified accommodations. This process repeats each semester.

Registering a student with ODS helps them to prepare for the future and take into consideration what their life will be after JMU when they enter the workforce. The number of disabled people of working age has increased by 10% since 2019, and this number continues to increase. ODS partners with the Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) to increase students’ knowledge of workplace accommodations, referring over 100 students – and won the 2023 Champions of Disability Employment Award in recognition of their innovative partnership.

JMU data from AY 2021-22 through 2023-24 shows an increase in the number students requesting accommodations from 1,753 to 2,598, a 15% increase each year. In 2020, roughly 1/5 of high school graduating students reported having a disability. This represents 20% of students nationally that report they have a disability, though not all register for accommodations.

For Fall 2024, 2,304 (10%) students registered with ODS, with the majority (66%) registering prior to their first semester, followed by 23% during the fall of their first semester and 11% by spring of their first year. In Summer 2024, the ODS staff held 400 registration meetings.

Disability representation may include:

- Acquired Brain Injury
- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
- Autism Spectrum
- Blind and Low Vision
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Chronic Illnesses
- Learning Disabilities
- Mobility Impairment
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Psychiatric/Emotional
- Speech Disorders
- Other

The largest category of disability representation is Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (36% of students). The second largest category, psychiatric/emotional issues, has increased the most over the last year to 26% of students. Some students register with more than one disability, and just over half of those registered as ADHD register only with this single disability.



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Accommodations differ based on the disability. Common accommodations include:

- Testing Accommodations
- Accessible Course Materials
- Note-taking Accommodations
- Modification Accommodations
- ASL Interpreter Services
- Housing Accommodations
- Foreign Language Accommodations

Testing accommodations may include being tested in a reduced distraction environment or having extended time on tests. ODS proctors many exams for faculty, resulting in 40% (2,000+) of exams being proctored by the ODS staff of 12 part-time proctors supervised by one full-time exam accommodation coordinator. Testing accommodations become especially difficult to provide at high volume times, like midterms and finals.

Space for proctored exams is also a limiting factor. There are 48 seats in the SSC available for testing accommodations (increased from 18 seats in 2022), and ODS reserves additional classroom space for proctoring final exams with accommodations. The Accommodate Reservation system is used by students to submit an exam reservation. Faculty approve the request and provide the exam/other relevant materials. To provide more options, ODS began offering an evening block of proctoring hours starting this Fall. Occasionally, ODS asks students to move their exam time due to capacity limitations during the time of the requested reservation. This is a challenge for faculty because a student may take their test outside of the typical test time and not with their class. Faculty also spend significant time preparing exams and materials for students, especially for large classes.

ODS is working with several areas across campus to improve testing accommodation options. They are in collaboration with the College of Business and the College of Integrated Science and Engineering to identify additional classroom space for testing. In addition, the School of Communication Studies works directly with the Assessment and Testing Center to provide an option for faculty to reserve blocks of time for testing; discussions of extending that option to other areas online are in process.

ODS is looking to other institutions to identify partnership opportunities that would better support students as the volume of need increases. These could include having accessible design coordinator positions within colleges; providing more institution-wide accommodated and non-accommodated options for testing; and supporting faculty in designing accessible tests and exams.

Before opening the session for questions from committee members, Dr. Miller reiterated the workload on ODS in using a singular approach to assist students individually. Dr. Kolvoord emphasized that point and stated that the 2,000+ students with test accommodations each take an average of five classes, resulting in 20-30K exams being proctored. Finding physical space is a growing challenge.

Tom Galati asked what JMU is doing as a university to prepare students with ADHD for the workforce. Steps being taken including partnering with DARS to help students develop tools for success when they leave the university, such as determining the functions of a job from the job description to consider accommodations. Dr. Miller added that, while in school, students are learning resilience in managing their disability in the world for the first time on their own. Other services such as Learning Success Strategies are also offered.

Jeff Bolander asked for additional data (from years prior to COVID) to see a longer history. Due to a change in database systems, data that aligns directly to the data provided isn't available, but ODS will provide



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additional information. Ms. Dioszeghy noted that when she originally joined ODS in 2013, there were 400 registered students.

Dave Rexrode asked where JMU anticipated this going, and where will we be in the next five years. National data shows that 20% of college aged students nationwide have disabilities, although not all are seeking accommodations from their disability services department. That data will continue to be reviewed, however, there is no plateau in sight.

Dave Rexrode asked if there was a process for students to be reevaluated in high school with the IEP process. Ms. Dioszeghy reported that there was a requirement for a tri-annual update, though the format varies widely between school districts, typically due to differences in available resources. IEPs assigned in K-12 vary significantly and do not always have testing as a component. An IEP can be frozen if the disability is removed, but parents must agree and may not want to due to fear of making a student ineligible for any type of accommodation or a financial reason. This is a difficult space for K-12. A recent bill from the last session – SB 21 – recommends accepting all K-12 IEPs with no additional testing or documentation.

A committee member asked what the cost to the university is: How large of a staff is needed? How much space? What will we need to accomplish it? Administration and Finance has assisted by finding additional testing space, but those spaces were full when they were launched. The issue should be looked at more holistically and incorporate universal design proactively. This will allow a proactive approach as opposed to reactive. Also, we are exploring different ways to design exams that may reduce required in-person testing.

The committee requested additional information:

- What is the trend?
- Do we have a methodology for planning?
- What is an appropriate dollar amount; board wants to look at finances to see how this fits in our budget
- Do we see trends in time for FY?
- What are these services costing now and what can we predict?

### **Next Steps and Future Joint Meeting Discussions**

The chairs stated that this joint session was productive, and they will look for other joint opportunities in the future. The meeting adjourned at 5:26pm.

Respectfully submitted,

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Terrie Edwards, Co-Chair

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Jack White, Co-Chair for Nicole Palya Wood

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David Kirkpatrick, Secretary to the Board