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RIFT IN OPINION

JMU community largely split on decision to return to campus

By BRICE ESTES
The Breeze

The public submitted a stack of 650 comments gauging JMU and the Board of Visitors’ (BOV) COVID-19 response to the university’s input form prior to the BOV meeting Sept. 18. Of the 650 comments, 190 individuals stated that they believed JMU should remain online this fall, and 184 said the university should return to on-campus operations — a near even-rift in opinion.

Proposals for classroom operations
In total, 464 commenters mentioned reforms they’d like to see in classroom procedures — ranging from demands for reduced capacity in classrooms, hybrid classes and no asynchronous classes to their opinions on whether to return to in-person learning.

One commenter said there’s “no viable plan to protect the health and safety of students, faculty or staff,” evidenced by the “massive spike” in cases within a week of students on campus. Instead, they wrote, resources should be focused on supporting faculty in developing “highly effective online courses” and not on “wasteful ideas of a doomed return.”

An out-of-state parent wrote that their freshman daughter started showing symptoms of COVID-19 on Sept. 4. She tested positive at an off-campus care facility. Because freshmen without an exemption were required to move out by Sept. 7, the commenter drove from upstate New York to scoop their daughter and return home. The pair rode with masks on the entire seven-hour drive, and the daughter lived in complete isolation from her family upon return. Still, on Sept. 12, the survey commenter lost their sense of taste and smell and experienced sinus congestion. A positive test result forced the commenter to take time off work.

“All of this could have been avoided if [there was] proper infection control and prevention strategies, prior testing and [allowance for] our students to remain on campus to quarantine if needed,” the respondent said.

On the flip side, a commenter in favor of returning to campus said that the only way the virus will be eradicated is by “mass immunity.”

“Let the kids return,” they wrote. “… To delay this could change their lives.”

Another out-of-state parent said they’d prefer a return to campus because they think JMU’s online learning experience should improve. They said that many of their student’s lectures feature no “live” contact.

“We can go to the University of Phoenix for that,” the parent said. “… It’s time to get back to educating because if it continues down this path we will honestly revisit our choice. We are investing a good amount of money as an OS student for a little reward.”

Changes to life on campus

Outside opinions about the classroom, commenters were most concerned with testing and dining hall procedures.

On the testing front, 200 people verbalized concerns: 64 respondents demanded entry testing, 40 advocated for random or surveillance testing, 18 implored about sewage testing, nine favored contact tracing technology, four mentioned pool testing, three prescribed an increase in testing at the University Health Center (UHC) and 62 recommended general testing reform.

Vice President for Student Affairs Tim Miller said at the BOV meeting that UHC will implement surveillance testing. The health center will randomly sample 300 students per week — or about 5% of the on-campus population — to monitor the state of the pandemic at JMU. Miller did maintain the university’s position not to conduct entry testing, citing CDC recommendations.

The survey also laid clear that the dining halls are overcrowded. Of the 196 individuals who commented on campus dining operations, 85 called on the university to reduce capacity in the restaurants. Grab-and-go meals were the next most popular response, with 77 people requesting the option. Seventeen respondents championed the idea of students phoning in reservations for dining times “like a cruise ship,” 16 called for no-in-person dining and one person proposed hiring student dining monitors to hunt mask and social distancing violators.

At the BOV meeting, Towana Moore, associate vice president of business services, said students are now required to flash their green check from the LiveSafe app to cashiers when paying for their food. Additionally, the dining administration has reconfigured lines of popular dining areas to increase social distancing space in line. Dining services also reduced seating in D-Hall from 1,100 seats to 600.

Forty-four comments advised JMU to fortify its isolation and quarantine capacity. At the BOV meeting, the board discussed JMU’s plan to expand its sick bed volume from 143 to over 430 by “essentially buying out” the Sleep Inn on Evelyn Byrd Avenue. JMU has also bolstered its quarantine-in-place capability to accommodate over 1,430 students whose bedrooms and bathrooms aren’t communal.

Consequences for the JMU community

As of Tuesday, the Office of Student Accountability and Restorative Practices (OSARP) was pursuing 309 sanctions against students who violated the Stop the Spread Agreement. However, 86 commenters urged harsher consequences for students. Off-campus behavior was targeted by 26 respondents as a catalyst for contagion.
Two commenters noted that it’s a “bad business decision” to resume full in-person operations. They wrote that alumni and benefactors will be hesitant to donate, and high schoolers will be wary to choose JMU.

Budget cuts loom in the wake of campus’ closure. Five people who filled out the survey said the first round of cuts should target “full-time administrators who helmed this Fall’s Titanic.” One commenter wrote that administrators making more than $150,000 a year should face a pay cut of 5-10%. Another suggested that since adjunct professors’ salary was cut an average 25%, a “comparable or greater reduction in compensation is more than fair” for administrative and professional faculty earning more than six figures. One participant wrote that an administrative pay cut would demonstrate the administration’s “up-to-now calculated avoidance of admitting fault.”

“I’d like to see the fault of galactically mismanaging reopening fall squarely on the people who so dramatically insulated themselves from the faculty, rather than to let the inevitable budget cuts land on the faculty,” the commenter wrote.

Also laden throughout the public remarks was concern for impacted groups’ safety: 83 commenters said they feared for students’ welfare, and six said they were cognizant of the at-risk populations’ jeopardy.

One commenter said their daughter has spent more time in quarantine because of potential exposures than she’s spent in class.

“The concern about where is and is not safe to go on campus has turned JMU from a center of learning into a gauntlet of mistrust and concern,” they wrote.

Conversely, another survey responder called on the board to reopen for students’ safety, citing that isolation has led to an increase in suicides and mental health declines.

Forty-four members of the public said they worried over the safety of JMU’s faculty and staff. One professor said his contract won’t be renewed because of budget constraints. They said if they’re denied the ability to continue teaching online, they’ll quit or pursue legal options.

“I loved JMU as a student and cannot say the same as a faculty,” they said. “It is not all about the students. It is not about the faculty and taking care of your staff. It is about the money.”

On the other hand, another faculty member said they “feel safe on campus” because students are effectively wearing their masks and infections are linked to off-campus spread.

“I think that we on a philosophical level need to accept that cases will occur here in Harrisonburg,” the commenter wrote.

One community member pleaded that JMU continue virtual learning so that local children can return to in-person learning.

“Please if you care at all about the Harrisonburg or Rockingham County communities and the children and adults who live here, DON’T bring your students back in person,” the participant wrote. “… College students are more than capable of learning virtually. Young children, ELL, and those with special needs are not!!! Please make your decisions based on science and morality and not MONEY!!!!!!”

Another member of the community said they’re pregnant with their fourth child and was exposed to COVID-19 because of a JMU student.

Effect of public comments on BOV

Some commenters wondered how their input would factor into the BOV’s decision making. One faculty member said they weren’t convinced that their input would amount to anything because the form was obscurely located — only accessible at the bottom of the BOV meeting notice. “It doesn’t matter what my feedback is here,” the professor wrote. “This is all for show … This survey was buried.”

“Faculty, staff and students spend quite a bit of time exceptionally concerned and desperate to contribute to the conversations,” the commenter wrote. “… Many of us have faithfully and thoughtfully engaged in every single one of these requests but have never heard a word about how our investment in this process has been honored.”

Ivan Jackson contributed to this report.

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All 650 public comments are available at breezejmu.org/news
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SERVICE FROM A DISTANCE
Local churches change services to accommodate COVID-19

By JAKE CONLEY
The Breeze

This season, Sunday morning looks a bit different. Instead of pews and a pulpit, it’s Facebook Live and lawn chairs.

As COVID-19 swept the globe, religious organizations were caught in the wave of closures that struck schools, businesses and other enterprises. In Harrisonburg, the trend rang true as houses of worship faced the challenge of adapting to the requirements of a pandemic-ridden world, bringing large-scale changes mimicked in the larger religious community.

“Several of the so-called experts, church gurus, visionaries … they’ve really felt that this has been a kind of hinge in history here,” David Burch, lead pastor of Vision of Hope United Methodist Church in Harrisonburg, said. “We’ve entered into a whole new chapter of church life.”

For Jon Heeringa and his leadership team at First Presbyterian Church in Harrisonburg, adapting meant identifying the “essentials” and then working to give their congregation those essentials. Chief among those: worship.

At First Presbyterian, continuity of worship meant pre-recorded services released on Facebook. Now, several months into the pandemic, that approach has shifted to a return to in-person services that have been “streamlined” and pared down for safety.

Among the changes to in-person services: No offering plate is passed around, and communion is taken with “pre-packaged” elements.

However, even with the return to an in-person model, First Presbyterian continues to offer a livestream to its congregants — a new hallmark of religious gatherings that Heeringa said isn’t going away.

“There’s no way my church is ever going back to not offering a livestream option,” Heeringa said.

For many religious organizations, streaming has been a saving grace, as Facebook Live and YouTube have become hubs for electronic delivery of services and other forms of worship amid widespread restrictions on physical gatherings.

At Vision of Hope, Burch said he and his leadership team quickly pivoted to an online model in March, Burch said that though in the beginning, “everybody was scrambling,” Vision of Hope “has some really good people” that were able to make the transition to a digital model — which includes a stream of every service on the church’s Facebook page — run smoothly. And, he said, the digital platform has actually allowed for a positive effect as people connect in new ways that stand in for the interaction on a pre-pandemic Sunday morning.

“The neat thing about doing the service live … is that people are able to be engaged with folks who are actually here, you know, texting back and forth or making comments on the Facebook feed and actually participating,” Burch said. “It’s kind of created a virtual church family in a way where people are connected and are praying for each other and encouraging each other during the week.”

Now into the fall season, like First Presbyterian Church, Vision of Hope has also shifted to what Burch referred to as a “hybrid model.” While Vision of Hope still offers a livestream of its services, it also now hosts outdoor services where congregants can sit in their cars and listen through radios or sit in socially distanced lawn chairs for a closer resemblance to a pre-pandemic Sunday. As Burch said, “We’ve tried to offer the opportunity for people to participate in worship at their own comfort level.”

The Virginia Department of Health has also released guidance for religious communities, and the strategy it advocates largely lines up with what Burch and Heeringa described — a hybrid approach.

The guidance letter states:

“As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, most places of worship lost the ability to gather in-person, but many gained a stronger online presence. Consider nurturing both aspects for at-risk individuals, as well as for the increased capacity to reach and serve those outside of the walls of the faith organization.”

From the City perspective, Michael Parks, director of communications for Harrisonburg City, explained that houses of worship and other such entities fall under state regulations and aren’t monitored by city police departments such as the Harrisonburg Police Department (HPD). As such, the Harrisonburg City ordinance in effect that restricts social gatherings to 50 people or less doesn’t apply to “gatherings for religious exercise.” However, Parks said, if a religious organization chose to host an event outside of a regular worship gathering with over 50 people, the City may “look into it.”

Largely, though, decisions about in-person vs. digital models and reopening strategies largely fall on the shoulders of each religious community’s leaders. Burch and Heeringa expressed similar sentiments about the balancing act of providing religious services to a highly diverse group of people with differing opinions and experiences with the pandemic.

“There’s just all kinds of angles that feed into people’s perceptions and experiences of all this pandemic [sic],” Burch said. “We have both young and old … and they’re scared very much … and then at the other end, we have folks who have worked this entire time … they haven’t missed a beat, and they don’t feel the least bit of fear about any of it.”

For Heeringa, he said First Presbyterian has seen outliers, with some calling for a complete transition to a digital-only model, and others saying that churches should resume operations as before the pandemic — a theme also observed by Burch — the majority of people have dealt with the changes well.

Burch said he believes some of the response is based on the church’s location. As Harrisonburg has become a hot spot for COVID-19 cases — three members at Vision of Hope died in the outbreak at the Accordius Health nursing home — many of the local churches have been cautious with their reopenings, Burch said. But, he said, in other, more rural parts of the state, reopenings have advanced at a much quicker pace.

“It’s funny — people from roughly Rockingham County northward, and into Northern Virginia and Richmond are more tense about this than folks south,” Burch said. “Take central Virginia and southwest [Virginia]: There’s been relatively few cases, and the churches down there … they’re pretty much wide open and a lot more relaxed. But here, locally … some congregations have not met in person at all.”

Looking at the long-term impact COVID-19 may have on religious communities, Burch said he believes that at least the Christian church as a whole may see a large shift toward a digitized model to match changes in cultural norms happening nationally and globally.

“People have found that they are not stuck to the Sunday morning, 11 o’clock time slot, and, you know, it’s possible to do your worship anytime, more individualized, and remain connected through smaller groups … and that’s not a bad thing,” Burch said. “It is interesting to see how this has all evolved, and I would say right now, at least at Vision of Hope, we are reaching more people now than we ever did before when we were just inside a building.”

As fall will turn into winter and COVID-19 continues to run its course, both Burch and Heeringa emphasized the need for continued innovation in the religious community. While a digital model may excite right now, both said that long-term questions of engagement will require continued creativity to answer questions that may impact what organized religion looks like.

“I don’t think Christianity is a spectator sport — it’s something that people need to participate in,” Heeringa said. “The question I keep thinking about is, ‘How do I help people who are connecting with us online actually engage and participate and not just be voyeurs?’ I think that’s the kind of next-level question I keep thinking about — how do we do that?”

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Measure the choices

Students aren’t the only ones having to adapt

By SYDNEY DUDLEY
contributing writer

Just five days into this semester, JMU announced that classes would go online until at least Oct. 5 following an increase in COVID-19 cases and a sharp decline in the number of available quarantine beds. All professors adapted online class formats and have made decisions about whether to resume in-person instruction, hybrid or stick with virtual learning.

After making adjustments to dining programs and obtaining additional space for students needing to quarantine, the university announced that select in-person classes may resume for a month and on-campus students can return Friday Oct. 2.

According to an email sent to students Sept. 25, all classrooms will have a maximum capacity of 50 people, giving some professors the option to continue in-person instruction. In an email from Caitlyn Read, university spokesperson and director of communications, she said that 1,470 of classes will go back to a fully in-person format, 1,920 will remain fully online, 917 will adapt a hybrid option and 46 will be “mostly in person.”

Hugo Moreira, a Spanish professor at JMU, said that he started the fall semester with in-person classes since language learning involves interactive group work and practice. However, he said the in-person experience was challenging at times with social distancing guidelines.

“I began teaching in person, and it was OK,” Moreira said. “I give students tasks to develop conversational skills, but that was hard to do because of masks and physical separation of six feet.”

When classes were temporarily moved online on Sept. 1, Moreira said he was initially concerned about the potential decrease in student engagement levels. However, he said he was pleasantly surprised by his experiences with the online format.

“I was really concerned about participation, which is key when you are taking a language, but it seems that the students are motivated,” Moreira said. “I was surprised to see how willing my students are to use breakout rooms and practice conversations. I visit every room as they work and they are doing fantastically well.”

Moreira has secured permission to continue teaching his classes online for the remainder of the semester. He said that when he asked his students about how they felt, the majority were worried about having the class in person and wished to stay online.

Other professors are also shifting from an in-person to online format for the rest of the semester, citing student health concerns. Mike Brislen, a religious studies professor, teaches larger REL101 sections of between 40 and 80 students as well as a smaller REL250 section with only 12 students. At the beginning of the fall semester, the larger courses were hybrid per JMU’s social distancing guidelines, while the smaller section was entirely in-person.

Brislen said the hybrid format of the general education sections proved challenging at times. For class he had to, like many other professors, simultaneously address students on a computer and in the classroom.

“The hybrid was awkward — you forget about the ones at home sometimes,” Brislen said. “I would forget and walk out of camera or mic range. [The online students] would say ‘We can’t see you or hear you’ in the chat.”

After hearing concerns from both students and his own family members, Brislen decided to keep all of his classes online for the rest of the semester.

“I was surprised at how many students requested to stay online if we went back in person,” Brislen said. “I also have older kids, roughly 30 years old, and they keep begging me to do it online because I am in the at-risk category.”

While some professors, such as Brislen, have made the same decision for all of their classes, others, including health sciences professor Margaret Stickney, have made different choices depending on the nature of their courses.

Stickney teaches a few general education health courses along with a smaller, more specialized course on chronic illness. Since the general education courses were rather large with between 140 and 160 students each, Stickney said they’ll stay online for the rest of the semester.

However, for HTH255, the smaller course of 37 students will resume in-person instruction in October as Stickney said she believes the class will be better in person.

“They do group presentations that they can do with masks, and we can get more out of that than recorded Zoom presentations,” Stickney said. “I feel good and safe about precautions and said if anyone had reservations about returning in person, they could talk to me about it.”

COVID-19 has created a variety of challenges for both students and educators trying to engage in learning experiences in the safest and high quality ways possible.

“We are all learning,” Stickney said. “Although it’s frustrating and stressful, we can’t change COVID-19 right now, so we will do the best we can. Think of it as an adventure instead of a challenge.”

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COVID credit

JMU professors collaborate on class centered around COVID-19

With COVID-19 taking over many aspects of the JMU community, a group of professors came together to educate students about the underlying effects COVID-19 may have.

The topics, which were decided based on the professors who joined the class, include chemistry, health, history, philosophy and writing, rhetoric and technical communication.

Rebecca Brannon, a professor in the history department, created the course at the beginning of the summer and teaches the section on historical thinking about pandemics.

“I had seen flyers for a similar concept at another institution,” Brannon said. “I approached some other faculty and said, ‘What if we put together this course and used so many different perspectives?’ ”

The first professor Brannon reached out for help was Audrey Burnett, who’s responsible for the portion on the public health effects of COVID-19.

“[Dr. Brannon] said, ‘Gosh, it would be nice if we could create a course for students that focuses on COVID-19 but from various perspectives,’ ” Burnett said. “Then I said, ‘Gosh, it would be even better if we could rein in other faculty who might share expertise from their disciplines but still focusing all on COVID-19.’ ”

The class was first taught over the summer over a six-week slot with five professors. With the two extra weeks in the fall semester, the class added two additional professors and topics.

Taking the class fulfills the health sciences major and minor elective, Honors elective, medical humanities minor elective, STS minor elective, WRTC TSC concentration elective and WRTC crossover elective.

Michael Klein, who teaches the section on rhetoric of COVID-19, said he believes a class that focuses on many different topics is important for students because he’s always “been a firm believer in cross-disciplinary education.”

“It’s something that helps students acclimate to their future careers,” Klein said. “We don’t work in isolation, we work across different disciplines and different expertise in our jobs and careers.”

The portion on reliability of scientific studies is taught by Christopher Berndsen.

Berndsen said that he’s never collaborated with professors from different majors in the same class but finds it “certainly interesting.”

“I don’t often teach non-science majors on any level, so I’ve really enjoyed breaking out of the students I would normally see and learning some different perspectives from across campus,” Berndsen said.

Klein said having a course that jumps from topic to topic quickly can be difficult and disconcerting for the students.

“Although we try to make everything uniform as much as possible, there’s going to be slight differences in what our expectations are for an assignment,” Klein said.

Berndsen teaches the second week of the course, so he said he often wonders if the students are still doing OK by the end.

“For me, it’s a struggle to make personal connections with the students and to have a sense of who they are really,” Berndsen said.

Despite this, Klein said that because the class is cross-disciplinary, he believes “the strengths far outweigh the weaknesses.”

With COVID-19 continuing to impact life at JMU, Klein said this class aims to offer a better understanding about COVID-19 as an infectious disease.

“[We] taught a lot about the social aspects of it,” Burnett said. “I’m hoping that we can continue teaching it.”

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The electoral college needs to go

Voting in the U.S. needs to be fair in order to have honest results

JENNA HORRALL | contributing writer

The Electoral College system is a vital component of the general election. Though it’s not technically in the Constitution, the Electoral College ultimately decides who the new president will be every four years. Five presidents in U.S. history lost the popular vote but won in the Electoral College, including our current president, Donald Trump, according to History.com.

The rise of racial inequalities and the pandemic are increasing political tensions in the U.S., making this upcoming election crucial to the future of this country. Though this year has been nothing like anyone expected, this is the perfect moment in history to truly take the time and question whether the Electoral College system accounts for everyone’s vote.

Voting is a right and, some may argue, a duty in this country. Voting’s important because those who’re voted into office will have an immense amount of legislative power for years to come. The policies they pass won’t only affect many people throughout the U.S. but change the political trajectory following their time in office.

Under the Electoral College system, each state is granted a certain amount of electors equivalent to the number of senators plus the number of representatives allotted for each state. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, Virginia has two senators and 11 representatives, so that makes a total of 13 electors. States have different amounts of electors because the amount of representatives is based on population size, including the population of that state’s inmates, who aren’t allowed to vote. For some perspective, California has 53 representatives, while Alaska has only one.

Most electors cast their vote based on the popular vote outcome in that state. According to Represent Us, all states but Maine and Nebraska use a “winner-take-all” system when the Electoral College votes. The winner-take-all system means that if Candidate X receives the majority vote in a state, even if it’s by a very small percentage, then Candidate X would receive all of the Electoral College votes for that state.

If the candidate someone votes for doesn’t end up being the candidate with the majority of votes in that state, their vote essentially ends at the state level due to the winner-take-all method. This isn’t fair because it creates an unequal system that rules out a large percentage of votes in each state simply because the candidate didn’t receive the majority vote.

The National Conference of State Legislatures suggests an alternative voting method: ranked-choice voting. In this method, voters rank the selection of candidates based on their first choice, second choice, etc. The first-choice candidates are tallied up, and the candidate with the lowest amount of votes for the first choice is eliminated. This process continues until there’s a majority candidate. Rather than the traditional winner-take-all system, this process would ensure that candidates opposed by the majority of people wouldn’t have a chance at winning. It’d also encourage more third-party candidates to run because they’d be on more equal ground.

President Trump lost the popular vote in 2016 but won because he got more votes in the Electoral College. According to the Pew Research Center, he won states with a large number of electors by a narrow margin, therefore securing all of the electoral votes in those states and winning the election. Why should a candidate win even if a majority of the general public favors a different candidate?

This results in an election that allows candidates to win even if the public disagrees with it. States ultimately decide what voting methods to use, and most of them have just adopted the winner-take-all system over the years, though the winner-take-all method isn’t actually in the Constitution. If states began to implement voting methods that better reflect the popular vote, then everyone’s vote would carry equal weight compared to the winner-take-all system.

Regardless of the inequalities of the Electoral College system, each vote still counts and is crucial, especially in this upcoming election. But it’s important to remember that ultimately, the candidate with the majority of votes in one’s state will end up winning for that state in the Electoral College. This system is outdated and doesn’t count everyone’s voice equally in general elections because of the winner-take-all mechanism that 48 states now use. It’s time to reform the Electoral College system and adopt one that counts the votes of everyone equally.

Jenna Horrall is a senior computer science major. Contact Jenna at horraljk@dukes.jmu.edu.
Opinion writers decide which candidate is worse off after the debate

The first presidential debate was an absolute disaster. Now, many are left arguing whether the fault belongs to Chris Wallace, who struggled to uphold order during the debate at all, President Donald Trump, who constantly interrupted and spent the night on an unrelenting offensive push that was often personal, or Joe Biden. At Biden’s best moments, he used four tactics rather than talking about his plans and at his worst, he was lowering the standard of what a candidate can say to his opponent during a presidential debate.

Trump has a reputation for using tactics that can be described as bullying, and the audience didn’t see anything entirely new from him. He pushes his opponents to psychological exhaustion by letting loose a barrage of attacks, stopping his opponent in the middle of his response and speaking in a subpar or bluntly disrespectful manner.

This kind of behavior builds psychological pressure and anger in anyone subjected to it. Biden broke under that pressure. In a single, chilling moment, Trump turned the discussion from Biden’s late son to his other son, Hunter, who’s recovering from substance abuse. Trump politicized that struggle while adding without evidence that Hunter had been dishonorably discharged from the military and had “made a fortune” in Ukraine and Russia, according to CBS News.

Worse than the unprofessionalism were Trump’s nonanswers, though. Throughout the debate, with Biden turned toward the camera and Trump turned toward Biden, it seemed clear that Biden was speaking to American citizens while Trump was doing everything in his power to silence, disjoint and disrupt. When actually asked a question, Trump was more likely to walk around the answer than actually give one.

And yet, it was hard to miss the fact that Trump refused to denounce white supremacy. Worse, he said to the Proud Boys, a far-right hate group, “Stand back and stand by.” More than anything, this makes it seem to viewers like Trump is admitting to being the leader of this hate group. Even if Trump’s incessant interrupting and unsettling nonanswers actually manage to convince enough Republicans not to vote for him, if Trump is voted out of office, he isn’t leaving willingly. With countless claims about the election being rigged, it’s clear that Trump won’t accept a peaceful transition of power, according to CNN.

If this debate is to be any indication for the next two, viewers can likely expect them to be wild, full of false claims and vote early so they can be done with this nonsense already.

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More than a flag
True southern heritage isn’t racism and bigotry but love and togetherness

I was six years old when I learned how to make gravy. Mixing equal parts lard and flour until cooked to a toasty brown is a technique used by French chefs to make sauces thicker and fuller. My mamaw uses it to make gravy. The subtle nuances of southern cooking make it so distinguishable that entire restaurants are dedicated to the practice.

This is what heritage looks like.

The Confederate flag isn’t heritage. Celebrating the colors of a state long defeated is ignorant and outdated. The Confederate flag that’s admired today only emerged in response to the civil rights movement of the 1950s and ’60s, according to PBS.org. This symbol was born out of racist resolve to hinder progress and equality. It displays hatred and division in a country that’s struggling to resolve both.

Southern heritage can’t be summed up in a single, racist flag.

The division that the flag represents contradicts every other aspect of southern culture. My grandfather grew up in Appalachia, where community means life. Togetherness is survival. When I visit my grandparents, I’m comforted by the never-ending symphony of gossip and chatter. If I run errands with my dad, we’ll inevitably run into passing friends or twice-removed cousins. Even in a pandemic, I get a phone call every week to check in and gossip. This sense of community, looking after your fellow people, is southern culture.

My family grows the most beautiful gardens. Every spring, without fail, the seeds are planted that’ll be slowly nurtured through the summer and harvested in the fall. My 84-year-old grandfather still tends to vegetables and weeds every year like clockwork. Self-sufficiency is a staple. Snapping green beans with my family, sweating in the canning kitchen and listening to stories of generations I’ve never known is heritage.

This means showing up on Sunday morning after church lets out to a too-small house packed with aunts, uncles, cousins and in-laws ready for dinner. My grandmother opens her canned vegetables and heats up the oil for fried chicken. Nobody can make Sunday dinner better than a southern woman. The dining room seats six, but my family of nearly 15 all find a chair. Holidays and birthdays fill the house once more, and the cramped space is elevated in loud voices and laughter. Family is the center of our world, and that’s how it goes in Appalachia.

I’ve watched my grandmother make homemade pies and sweet tea for as long as I’ve been alive. Food, family and community are the trifecta of Appalachia. The American ideal of “pulling yourself up by your bootstraps” is epitomized by southern sustainability and community support. Waking up to biscuits and gravy made with southern pride is the only heritage I’ll celebrate.

My mamaw told me, “Some folks think that men make all the rules. They’re crazy fools.” Appalachia isn’t inherently intolerant. Rednecks with their red bandanas orchestrated the largest labor uprising in U.S. history at the Battle of Blair Mountain. Appalachian grassroots movements have fought for higher wages, full access to healthcare, federal responsibility, environmental justice and progressive representation on a national scale. Politicians like Paula Jean Swearengin, the 2020 Democratic nominee for U.S. Senate in West Virginia, represent “a battle cry from Appalachia.” This isn’t the southern heritage of the Confederate flag.

As an Appalachian woman, it’s reprehensible that my entire culture has been appropriated by a group that refuses to acknowledge the bigotry and hurt that the Confederate flag conveys. Pop culture has manipulated the public thought into believing that the South is intolerant. As a white woman, I understand that my perspectives are privileged. This doesn’t change the fact that Appalachia is diverse, and the loud voices that preach hatred drown out the progressive voices that are striving for change. It’s time to reclaim southern pride.

The Confederate flag can camouflage racism and hatred, but it’ll never be able to change the real meaning of southern heritage.

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Bring it back

Fall break is just what students needed, and now it’s gone

KYLEE TOLAND | mindful insights

With JMU resuming in-person classes Oct. 5, there are possible changes to the fall calendar. One of these changes is the elimination of fall break, which was implemented for the first time this past year. Instead, students will return home during Thanksgiving break and remain online for the rest of the semester.

Although the extension of Thanksgiving break should make up for the loss of a fall break, it almost seems like a loss for the student body. The fall break was supposed to be a way for students to catch up on their school work, visit their families or just enjoy a relaxing break from school. Without this, students won’t receive their well-deserved time off during this hectic semester.

In past years, JMU has been one of the few universities to not implement a fall break and has caused many students to question why the school doesn’t have one. It wasn’t until last year that JMU decided to provide a fall break to the student body for the 2020-21 school year due to high demand. With this break, students would’ve been able to go back home to visit family and friends as well as catch up on their work.

However, as the pandemic has continued to rise in the U.S., going home has become risky, with people fearing that they may spread the virus to their family members and friends. With this in mind, it makes sense that JMU would take away the break, but there should still be some sort of period that allows students to get a few days off school and enjoy time off while on campus.

Fall break was supposed to be Oct. 22-25, which would give students a second to breathe after nine weeks of classes. It’s unfortunate if students have already paid for a way to return home or had predetermined plans for that weekend that they can no longer get a refund for. However, it’s understandable why JMU decided to remove it due to the still prominent pandemic in the U.S.

With this in mind, JMU should still give students a two-day break from their classes that can be practiced while on campus. Though students wouldn’t be able to see their families, they’d still be able to catch up on work and enjoy a break from their courses. They could interact with their peers on campus while practicing social distancing as well as get to enjoy what the JMU community has to offer during the fall, such as pumpkin picking, puppy farms and farmers markets.

For people living on campus, it’s a way to make up for lost time after being sent home because of the initial rise in cases at the university. They’d be able to hang out with their hallmates and form friendships they may not have been able to beforehand because of the sudden shutdown. It’d also be a good way to catch up on their homework and reach out to professors if they’re in need of help with their assignments since they have free time to schedule meetings through Zoom or Webex.

A fall break would also be beneficial for professors, who could use the time to advance on grading and spend time with their families. After the elimination of the break, professors have to scramble to alter their schedules to fit the new one, which can be stressful. This way, professors can help their students from the comfort of their homes if it’s needed as well as grade assignments without feeling rushed.

Although it makes sense to get rid of the fall break with COVID-19, there are ways that it can still be implemented without students returning home and possibly contracting the coronavirus.

Students and faculty both deserve some sort of break after nine weeks of working hard during this difficult semester, and the least JMU could do is mandate that students can have a break as long as they practice social distancing and don’t return home.

Kylee Toland is a junior media arts and design major. Contact Kylee at tolandkm@dukes.jmu.edu

Having a few days to relax would be perfect for stressed students. Breeze File Photo

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Students share COVID-19 isolation experiences

By ALEXANDRA DAUCHESS
The Breeze

For many students, the biggest fear about coming back to campus this semester was the possibility of contracting COVID-19 and being forced to endure a 14-day quarantine. Most students were lucky and able to return to the safety of their homes or off-campus apartments when the university announced its temporary closure because of the rise in coronavirus cases. But for the almost 1,500 students and teachers who were unfortunate enough to catch the virus, the four-week break has been far from relaxing. It’s been particularly challenging for on-campus students who’ve been forced to move to other dorms, follow a restricted meal plan and balance classes with their coronavirus symptoms and oppressive cabin fever.

Bethany Walsh, a sophomore media arts and design major, said she’d just moved into her Zeta Tau Alpha sorority house on Greek row when she caught the virus from her roommate.

“Going to school I was expecting to get it,” Walsh said. “Because I knew that living in a house with 28 other girls … it would spread like a wildfire. Once I found out that my roommate had it … it was just a waiting game.”

Walsh, who spent the first few days of her quarantine in her sorority house and the rest in an off-campus apartment, said that the process of moving and keeping up with schoolwork was the worst part of having COVID-19.

“Me and my friends [feel] like we aged like 10 years over literally a week. All of a sudden, we had to act really fast and move and [go] to Zoom classes. It was really difficult.”

Bethany Walsh
Sophomore media arts and design major

“It’s [really] distracting that I’m stuck in my room,” Jordan said. “Before, when everything was just online, I would go to a study space and do my work. But I’ve got an XBox and a TV in my room — now I want to just be lazy and do nothing.”

Jordan said that academics weren’t the hardest part of his quarantine, however.

“The food sucks,” Jordan said. “It’s mainly refrigerated sandwiches and a few microwavable things … then a bunch of junk food. Last night I had my first hot meal in a week.”

Jordan said isolating in his dorm made him unmotivated for school.

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Allemieier started listening tours within the school that gave his faculty members the chance to express their concerns and hopes for the program. They were also able to determine what was in progress and what wasn’t.

“The thing I’ve been most impressed with is that he started doing these fireside chats,” Stevens said. “Every week there for a while he would videotape himself about the things going on.”

During these fireside chats, Allemeier addressed things going on within the school, how he wanted to move forward and what his thoughts were.

“He really wanted to make certain that people got a chance to know him,” Stevens said. “Even before he really started, he had reached out to some faculty members in the School of Music, and they were very receptive to hosting virtual meet and greets.”

The School of Music was among the largest of university departments to request hybrid and continued in-person classes at JMU, Allemeier said. He said some of the classes offered would be difficult to do over Zoom, such as ensembles.

“We’ve had to totally turn what the School of Music normally is upside down,” Allemeier said.

“What I’m seeing as a new director is that there is an opportunity here for us to come back and rebuild something that was better than it was before.”

**John Allemeier**

Director of the School of Music

“We’ve had to totally turn what the School of Music normally is upside down. What I’m seeing as a new director is that there is an opportunity here for us to come back and rebuild something that was better than it was before.”

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By **JEAN LUTHER**

The Breeze

When he accepted the position as the School of Music’s new director, John Allemeier transitioned into his role during a pandemic.

The official start date for the job was July 1, but Allemeier was already a part of the conversations and planning earlier, knowing this semester would come with challenges.

“When I came to interview, first of all, I loved the program,” Allemeier said. “It’s a really great, comprehensive school of music. It has a really strong curriculum, strong faculty, so I was really interested in that.”

Wren Stevens, interim associate dean for the College of Visual and Performing Arts, was part of the hiring process for Allemeier’s position and said he stood out from other candidates in the interview because he was calm, wasn’t ruffled by questions and seemed like a stable rock.

“I will say that he is like that professionally as well,” Stevens said. “Since I’ve been working with him, he’s always calm, he’s always cool, he’s always friendly, and his attitude is can-do.”

Allemeier previously spent 14 years at the University of North Carolina Charlotte as the associate chair of the music program.

“I’d always known the reputation of JMU and the School of Music,” Allemeier said. “I loved the job description, and the school and faculty were amazing — still are amazing.”

Because of COVID-19, Allemeier wasn’t able to see the school as it normally runs when he joined the staff. He said that the planning of this fall was intense because the majority of what students do in music, like singing, can be considered conducive for viral spread.

“I spent the summer learning what’s safe and what isn’t and how we can put those protocols in place in order for us to be safe in our classrooms, rehearsal spaces and even practice rooms,” Allemeier said.

Currently, Allemeier’s working through the problems faced by the School of Music on virtual platforms. Because of the coronavirus, he’s unable to meet face to face with his faculty, and the meetings he attends are mostly through platforms like Zoom and Webex.

“It has been a really strange experience getting to meet and learn what my faculty want to do and what issues I need to address through a video meeting,” Allemeier said.

Before JMU went completely online, Allemeier made sure to be present at events like the 1787 Weeks of Welcome. He said he wanted to get in front of students and introduce himself while he could.

“I’m sure he would’ve had some sort of meet and greet with him if it hadn’t been for all the [COVID-19] stuff because it would be nice to actually know who our new director is,” Sophia Shedd, a senior music performance major, said.
Eve Watters was 13 years old when she taught herself to play guitar. Now, having leveled up to a variety of traditional instruments, she delights audiences around Virginia and residents of Harrisonburg with musical performances and visual art.

“That’s when I figured out that I can learn anything, if I just structure the teaching in my own way,” Watters said of her musical training as a teenager.

Since those self-taught guitar lessons, she’s pursued musical and artistic exhibits with the same independence and originality. Although Watters said she’s loved music since she was young, her career in visual art preceded that of musical storytelling. While raising her daughter as a single mom and awaiting the opportunity to pursue music, she began to consider the prospect of continuing her education.

“The community college was calling me,” Watters said.

She left her position doing community organizing as a VISTA volunteer in Charlottesville to enroll at Piedmont Virginia Community College, where she studied design. Although she’d never before contemplated working in art, she found herself enjoying graphic design and calligraphy. Consequently, upon transferring to the Mary Baldwin Adult Degree Program, she focused her study on arts management.

Her studies led her into production work for radio programs and for storytelling festivals, which ultimately directed her toward a career of performing traditional music and folktales. For nearly two decades, she traveled in the U.S. and abroad with the Virginia Commission for the Arts. With a goal of visiting all 50 states and every county in Virginia, Watters gave musical performances in about half the states and all but approximately 10 of her home state’s counties.

“Stories have so much wisdom in them, and it’s hidden in this entertainment form,” Watters said.

Watters said she likes her audience to feel entertained, but she also said she doesn’t feel like an entertainer.

“I like for them to have a beautiful inner experience, a joyful experience,” Watters said. Because of this, she enjoys the smaller venues and the out-of-the-way places “where the magic can really happen.”
Julie Jackson, who’s worked with Watters as the outreach director at the Arts Center in Orange, Virginia, expressed a love for Watters’ performances.

“It is just such a calming, restorative experience to listen to her play,” Jackson said. “After listening to her perform at an event for us, I personally purchased a CD for myself and bought multiples to share with my family and friends that could use a reflective, beautiful pause in their days. I have personally seen how her music touches others deeply as well.”

She compared working with Watters to attending a performance.

“She is the consummate professional in every endeavor,” Jackson said. “I always look forward to talking to her and learning more about her art.”

Watters utilizes traditional instruments in her performances, including several varieties of harps, the Native American flute, the pennywhistle, the five-string banjo, the concertina and the mountain dulcimer. She accompanies her playing with vocals, singing sometimes in different languages such as French, Scotch-Gaelic, Irish, Welsh, Hebrew or Yiddish.

Her performances combine song and story, drawing from timeless tales and reviving traditional styles. But she’ll also play more recent music in order to suit wedding clients’ desires or to delight elderly patients with their favorite tunes from the 1830s and ‘40s. Once, Watters said, her knowledge of Yiddish music calmed an elderly woman.

As a certified music practitioner, Watters has performed regularly for patients at the Hospice of the Piedmont in Charlottesville and in her inaugural role as a musician in residence at the UVA Medical Center. Five or six musicians have since joined Watters in the position of utilizing music as a method of therapy.

Currently, the pandemic has put that work on hold, passing nearly 20 years of therapeutic music at the medical center, but Watters’ impact on the program is unmistakable. Kate Tamarkin, who also serves as a musician in residence at the UVA Medical Center, credits Watters with guiding her toward therapeutic music and said that local therapeutic musicians are indebted to Watters for her contributions to music in Charlottesville, Virginia.

“She’s got boundless creativity, and she’s completely connected to her heart,” Tamarkin said. “I think it informs everything she’s done.”

As another consequence of the pandemic, Watters has seen her concerts canceled through next spring. However, she’s starting to book small weddings and elopements, and she’ll soon record a performance that can be distributed digitally, thanks in part to funding from the Virginia Commission for the Arts.

For now, she’s enjoyed the chance to take a break from her busy schedule and return to art. About 10 years ago, as she described it, the desire to make visual art “came burbling up and wouldn’t let [her] go.” Some of her work was published in art magazines, and she now displays and sells her artwork at OASIS Fine Art and Craft, a cooperative art gallery in downtown Harrisonburg. She works in mixed media and enjoys using paper and doing calligraphy. Her artwork experiments with words, colors and textures, all with the aim of bringing brightness into the world.

“I have this belief that our eye catches a morsel of a message, and if it’s a positive message, it goes into our system,” Watters said. For her, music isn’t the only discipline with therapeutic qualities. She said she believes that the therapeutic effects of music hold true for visual art as well.

“There’s great value in going inside and bringing out eternal truths,” Watters said. “That’s really therapeutic for us, in any art or any profession.”

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Men's Soccer Tom Judge proves numbers don't matter

By JOSHUA GINGRICH
The Breeze

Soccer defenders often aren’t responsible for goals and assists. They aren’t often around the opponent’s goal, and they don’t have many opportunities to contribute to goals. JMU men’s soccer senior defender Tom Judge is no exception; in 56 career matches over his first three years at JMU, the Freehold, New Jersey, native has scored only twice and assisted on three other goals. However, he said that he contributes in ways that the box score doesn’t track.

“I try not to let whoever’s on my side do much with the ball, whether that’s them getting the ball or intercepting passes,” Judge said. “And then I try to bring the ball up from one-third of the field to the next, even if it doesn’t lead directly to a goal.”

Despite the lack of statistical production, Judge has established himself as one of the premier defenders in the CAA and the country. Every year as a Duke, he’s finished on the All-CAA team, including a first-team selection in 2019. In September, he was named to the College Soccer News Preseason All-America Team, the only player from the CAA to do so.

“I recall the very first exhibition we had, and I remember thinking to myself and talking to the other coaches on the staff, ‘Man, we really got a good player here,’” Zazenski said. “And after he took the starting role, he never let it go.”

During Judge’s sophomore season, he was a key part of the JMU team that went 15-5-3 and reached the quarterfinals of the NCAA Tournament. The Dukes allowed only 13 goals and shut out 13 teams that year. In 2019, the Dukes had a good defense as well, allowing 22 goals in 21 games and again making it to the NCAA Tournament.

“It feels like you have to go out there and do your job every single game,” Judge said. “We have our job, and we know we’re not going to lose if we don’t give up any goals.”

One of Zazenski’s favorite memories of Judge came from the Dukes’ season-ending loss against Michigan State, 2-1, in the 2018 NCAA Tournament. Zazenski said Judge went up against one of the most highly rated and talented attacking players in the country, but he held his own.

“When Thomas Judge went into that game and ran with him and was just as athletic as that player, that memory stands out because I think that solidified just how athletic he can be,” Zazenski said. “He can stand one-on-one with anybody in the entire country.”

Paul Zazenski
Men’s soccer head coach

Conference A-North First Team in 2015 and 2016. Judge said he feels that his time playing at the Christian Brothers Academy was well spent.

“Getting into a routine, doing it every day, gave me an insight into how managing a routine with school and doing stuff on weekends would be at college,” Judge said. Judge made an impression the moment he began playing for the Dukes. He started the last 11 games of his freshman season and was named to the CAA All-Rookie team and the All-CAA second team.

“Senior Tom Judge defends the ball. Photo by Anelise Johnson / The Breeze
Opinion | A CAA basketball bubble in Harrisonburg is ideal for JMU

By NOAH ZIEGLER
The Breeze

With the uncertainties COVID-19 has brought to sports, one thing is certain: This upcoming college basketball season will be different.

With the COVID-19 pandemic still playing a major role in life, college sports have had to make major adjustments. While football — mainly at the FBS level — is competing this fall, many fall sports at the mid-major level were pushed to the spring in hopes that coronavirus cases would be lower across the board.

How will college basketball work?

An idea floated around is conferences using the “bubble” environment that’s used in professional leagues like the NBA, NHL and WNBA. It means that one or more schools would host a group of conference members and they’d play a certain amount of games and then potentially rotate so every team can play one another.

On Sept. 15, Shane Mettlen of the Daily News-Record wrote a story unveiling that there had been early talks of a “CAA bubble” being hosted at JMU. While the non-conference slate will likely be altered for all Division-I teams for men’s and women’s basketball, the idea of a conference bubble is one that requires intricate details when planning, while also taking into account the outlook of how the pandemic is affecting the school’s area.

In the article, CAA Commissioner Joe D’Antonio lists a few key areas that will be used to evaluate potential sites. It includes testing capabilities, lodging availability, amount of basketball courts and the statistics of COVID-19 in the university’s surrounding city or county. D’Antonio also mentions the potential use of outside arenas if needed.

JMU is the ideal location for the CAA bubble, and it’s not close

The brand new Atlantic Union Bank Center was set to host fans this year, but it won’t begin the new era of JMU basketball with the passion of the Dukes faithful. However, that shouldn’t stop the arena from being showcased as one of the premier facilities in the CAA. It holds the main court and an auxiliary gym, on top of the still-standing Rec Center that has the ability to host games as well. Godwin Hall and the University Recreation Center have multiple courts, meaning teams will have the ability to practice safely.

With two gyms ready to host games and more than enough practice courts, JMU is more than capable of hosting what will be the dramatically different conference games. Another aspect JMU and Harrisonburg succeeds in is lodging. With numerous hotels scattered across the city as well as Hotel Madison being readily available — and usually the choice for visiting teams in recent years — players, coaches, staff and CAA officials will be able to be hosted for however long the conference decides.

Questions remain in the Shenandoah Valley

There are still questions surrounding the safety of having the bubble in the Shenandoah Valley, with the main concern being the amount of cases in the Harrisonburg and Rockingham County area. According to the CDC, as of Tuesday, Harrisonburg has +16.9% in 14-day new cases. For Rockingham County, the two-week new case rate is +11.7%.

According to The Breeze’s Coronavirus Dashboard, the University Health Center has had a 28.64% positivity rate since Aug. 17. With classes set to resume in hybrid form Oct. 5, conference officials will analyze how cases will fluctuate. If cases continue to increase, the CAA will have to look elsewhere to make sure the bubble will be held in a safe environment.

While factors like how strict the quarantine rules would be are still to be determined, the opportunity to be the host of CAA basketball — whether it be men’s or women’s — is ideal for JMU.

If fans aren’t able to attend the new $86.7 million arena, having some or all of the teams competing and breaking in the new court will give the Dukes exposure. It’ll also magnify the facilities JMU has to offer that make it the premier school in the CAA.

With a new head coach, a dramatically different team and a fan base eager to start a new chapter in JMU men’s basketball, the CAA bubble would have many positive aspects. If the women’s conference season is played in Harrisonburg, it’ll give head coach Sean O’Regan the chance to garner another CAA regular season title and his first conference tournament title.

Whatever the CAA decides to do regarding basketball, it’ll be complex. It’ll require intense planning and strict guidelines, but it’ll also depend on the environment in each respective area that the conference is looking at. JMU would benefit from hosting a bubble, and it’s more than capable of doing so.

CONTACT Noah Ziegler at breezesports@gmail.com. For more coverage, follow the sports desk on Twitter @TheBreezeSports.
INTERNATIONAL FLAIR

Athletes from around the world come to JMU to compete and study

By COURTNEY RYDER
The Breeze

Every year, thousands of students begin a new chapter of their lives at JMU, with some traveling hundreds or thousands of miles. The chance to represent the Dukes on a field or court is a main reason that students come from all over the world to JMU.

The decision to come to the U.S. for college can vary for every student; however, a common theme is the opportunity to focus on academics and sports simultaneously. Alvaro Arce, a redshirt junior on the tennis team, left Spain because he didn’t want to give up his education or his tennis career for the other.

“In Spain and Europe, it is really difficult to play at a high level and study at the same time,” Arce said. “So you either have to decide to stop playing and go for your career or stop studying and try to get professional.”

The desire to pursue sports and academics is a reason many players come to the U.S. for college. Iris Rabot, a junior on the women’s soccer team, came to the U.S. from France so she could juggle both. She played one season at the University of Northwestern Ohio before transferring to JMU.

“When we finish high school we can’t play soccer and study, so I wanted to keep studying in case something happened with soccer,” Rabot said. “So I chose to come here because I can study and play.”

Culture shock can be a harsh adjustment, especially when one has to manage school and sports at the same time.

Women’s tennis head coach Shelley Jaudon said the first few weeks after arriving in Harrisonburg is probably the hardest time for international athletes because they have to adjust to an entirely different culture while starting classes and team activities.

“Everything’s new,” Jaudon said. “As a freshman, everything’s new in general, so then add on the language difference, the culture difference, being in another country so far from home, that first semester and first year is the biggest transition.”

Arce said his hometown is similar to Harrisonburg, which made him feel more comfortable and made his transition a little easier. Arce said understanding the culture was a more difficult adjustment.

“The culture is completely different. In my hometown we have dinner around 10 p.m., and here, when I was with the FROGs at my orientation they would go to have dinner at 5 [p.m.],” Arce said. “So that was really strange for me.”

Going to college in a country that speaks a different language can be a difficult adjustment. Steve Secord, head coach of the men’s tennis team, said that a language barrier can make it hard for international athletes to communicate with teammates and coaches and complete homework in a timely manner.

“It’s not easy if English isn’t your first language,” Secord said. “Alvaro works very hard on his studies. You really have to work hard, especially in the business school. Where an American kid might spend three hours a day outside of class reading and studying, Al’s spending five hours.”

International athletes rely on many things to help them adjust to living in a new country. Teammates and coaches provide emotional support, but getting to play the sport they love is especially helpful during the transition.

“Soccer helped me to not be [homesick] because I was focused on playing games and training,” Rabot said. “But in the spring when we don’t have as much soccer, it’s harder.”

The university’s announcement in March to cancel the remainder of spring sports and temporarily move classes online left international athletes confused about what to do. Jaudon said that all of her international athletes were able to stay thanks to domestic teammates sharing their homes, but Arce went back to Spain almost immediately despite not knowing how the rest of the semester would play out.

“When our season got canceled, Spain’s situation was way worse than the U.S., so I had trouble going back home because there were no flights,” Arce said. “I finally found a way to go back home and I stayed there for five months. We had to be on actual lockdown, we couldn’t leave our house for anything so I was in my house for three months. I couldn’t practice, I couldn’t do anything.”

When athletes returned home, communication was more difficult. Secord said one of the toughest things was trying to find a time that everyone could get on Zoom together because of all the different time zones. Another obstacle some athletes faced was traveling back to Harrisonburg for the fall semester because of some borders being closed and a lack of flights.

“There was definitely a period of time through July and August where it was like, ‘How are we gonna get these girls back here?’” Jaudon said. “Things were changing day to day.”

JMU has become a second home for international athletes. They worked hard and overcame many obstacles to get here. The pandemic is simply another obstacle they conquered to achieve their goals.

“It’s very frustrating,” Rabot said. “It’s hard being far from your family and not being able to play.”

“Soccer helped me to not be [homesick] because I was focused on playing games and training. But in the spring when we don’t have as much soccer, it’s harder.”

Iris Rabot
JMU women’s soccer midfielder and defender

CONTACT Courtney Ryder at ryderce@dukes.jmu.edu. For more coverage, follow the sports desk on Twitter @TheBreezeSports.
Judge dribbles the ball out of JMU’s zone. Photo by Anelise Johnson / The Breeze

UNDERRATED

The stat sheet doesn’t matter

From page 18

Judge’s competitiveness and determination spreads throughout the rest of the team. Junior defender Melker Anshelm said that Judge is always running and that it helps the team stay motivated.

“It’s his attitude and mentality; he’s always locked in during games,” Anshelm said. “That definitely influences the rest of the guys. They get into it mentally and are more locked in.” Judge’s seniority makes him someone that underclassmen look up to. Anshelm stated that since he’s been so impactful as a three-year starter, other players want to learn from him and hear his advice.

“Especially the outside backs coming up now, freshman and sophomores, they are definitely looking up to him,” Anshelm said. “Because they’re in the same position as him, they’re trying to learn from him and take his spot once he’s gone.”

Despite all the praise he gets, Judge maintains a team-oriented mindset. He said that he and the rest of the Dukes are excited to get back out on the field for a potential spring season.

“I know we’re all super bummed that we’re not able to play this fall, but we’re all gearing up to focus on the first game of the spring, whenever it is,” Judge said. “We always want to have a goal in mind, something we’re working towards. That first game in the spring, and how many games we may be able to play in the spring, that’s just all that’s going through our head.”

CONTACT Joshua Gingrich at gingrihj@dukes.jmu.edu For more soccer coverage, follow the sports desk on Twitter @TheBreezeSports.
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What’s around town?

By CONNOR MURPHY
The Breeze

As JMU students complete their time living in on-campus housing, the search for a new home outside the bounds of campus can be an overwhelming one, especially considering the variety of options Harrisonburg has to offer.

Here’s what students looking for their first or a new off-campus apartment or townhome can expect from neighborhoods and complexes around Harrisonburg.

**Aspen Heights**

Aspen Heights is located just under two miles from campus. This complex has floor plans that range from two to five bedrooms, priced at $679, $644, $619 and $614, respectively, according to Aspen’s website. Aspen Heights also has townhome options that are available in two and three bedroom models, priced at $679 and $644, respectively.

This complex is equipped with a 24-hour fitness center, full-court volleyball and a study lounge among other amenities. Additionally, Aspen Heights is pet friendly. Townhouse complexes also have a guest bathroom.

**Charleston Townes**

This complex, located 1.7 miles from campus, offers residents three-story townhomes for prices ranging between $499 and $565. Units have four bedrooms and four bathrooms, according to Charleston’s website.

Charleston Townes also has two laundry rooms per unit. Additionally, it has a saltwater pool, fitness center and volleyball and basketball courts. Charleston Townes is also a pet-friendly community, so long as residents pay the monthly fee of $25 for a cat and $35 for a dog.

**The Mill**

Located on South Avenue, The Mill lies 0.7 miles from campus and offers 1,265-square-foot units with four bedrooms and two bathrooms. Rent starts at $419 for bedrooms on the first floor, $429 for bedrooms on the second floor and $439 for third floor bedrooms.

Residents of The Mill can enjoy free parking for themselves and their guests, an on-site basketball court and two public bus stops nearby. Additionally, The Mill is pet friendly, and utilities are included in rent, according to The Mill’s website.

**The Retreat**

The Retreat is located 2.3 miles from campus and includes units that have between two and five bedrooms. There are a total of 12 house models in The Retreat, and each unit has at least one bathroom per bedroom.

Those living in The Retreat have access to a fitness center, disc golf course, 24-hour computer lab and pool area among other amenities, according to The Retreat’s website.

**Copper Beech**

Copper Beech sits 2.4 miles from campus and offers units that have between one and four bedrooms and have between one and four and a half bathrooms. Units can have between 650 and 2,000 square feet.

Amenities in this neighborhood include two large pools, a fitness center, a sand volleyball court and a computer lab among other amenities, according to Copper’s website.

**The Hills of Harrisonburg at Northview, Southview and Stonegate**

The Hills of Harrisonburg at Northview, located off Port Republic Road 1.2 miles from campus, offers both four bedroom and two bedroom units. Rent for a four bedroom unit is approximately $425 and roughly $670 for a two bedroom unit, according to The Harrison’s website.

Amenities at The Harrison include a 24-hour TV and video game lounge, a 24-hour fitness center and a “resort-style pool.” This complex is also pet friendly.

**The Mill**

Located on South Avenue, The Mill lies 0.7 miles from campus and offers 1,265-square-foot units with four bedrooms and two bathrooms. Rent starts at $419 for bedrooms on the first floor, $429 for bedrooms on the second floor and $439 for third floor bedrooms.

Residents of The Mill can enjoy free parking for themselves and their guests, an on-site basketball court and two public bus stops nearby. Additionally, The Mill is pet friendly, and utilities are included in rent, according to The Mill’s website.

**The Hills of Harrisonburg at Northview, Southview and Stonegate**

The Hills of Harrisonburg at Northview, also located off Port Republic Road, offers residents four bedrooms and two bathrooms. The Hills of Harrisonburg at Southview has four beds and four bathrooms per unit, while the Hills of Harrisonburg at Stonegate has four bedrooms and four and a half bathrooms, according to The Hills of Harrisonburg’s website.

Northview is located closest to campus at one mile away. Southview sits 1.6 miles from campus, while Stonegate is 1.8 away.

Amenities for these complexes include basketball and volleyball courts, fitness centers and bus service to campus. Additionally, select buildings in these neighborhoods are pet friendly.

**Camden Townes**

This complex is located 0.9 miles from campus on Bradley Drive. Camden offers units with between two and five beds and between one and four bathrooms. Rent at Camden Townes ranges from between $359 and $575, according to Camden’s website.

Amenities at the Camden Townes include a basketball court, a dog park and a picnic and grill area.

**Foxhill Townhomes**

Located 1.4 miles from campus, Foxhill offers residents 1,175-square-foot, two-story townhomes for approximately $495 rent. This complex includes pet-friendly units.

Additionally, it’s equipped with a fitness center, a clubhouse with a coffee bar, cable and internet. Two types of units are available with four bedrooms and two bathrooms each. Foxhill also includes a picnic area with grills and 24-hour emergency maintenance, according to its website.
Additionally, a cable package is included. A gated pool, a hammock lounge with hammocks and lounge furniture, the complex also has a rooftop terrace with TVs and lounge furniture. The complex offers residents access to an apex room for study groups or small meetings, an onsite gym and secured parking, according to Urban Exchange's website.

**Squire Hill**

Squire Hill offers a range of models between one and four bedrooms and one and four and a half bathrooms. Rent ranges from $499 to $929. There are six different models for residents that are between 737 and 1,352 square feet in size, according to Squire's website.

Those living in Squire, located 1.2 miles from campus at 1443 Devon Lane, have access to 24-hour study and game rooms, a community pool, fitness room and a pet play area.

**The Pointe**

The Pointe, located off Chestnut Ridge Road, sits 2.5 miles from campus. The complex offers townhomes consisting of two and three stories, all with four bedrooms. Each bedroom has its own bathroom, and a guest bathroom is included on the main level. Rent for this neighborhood is approximately $595.

Those living in The Pointe have access to included internet and cable, stainless steel appliances and walk-in closets, according to The Pointe's website.

**Forest Hills Manor**

According to Forest Hills Manor's website, the complex offers two different floor plans. Units have either two or three floors, and all units have four bedrooms and four bathrooms. Forest Hills is located one mile from campus. Forest Hills residents can enjoy basketball and volleyball courts and an extra half bath for guests among other amenities.

**CONTACT**

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Off-campus housing complexes make changes to ensure residents’ safety during pandemic

By CARLEY WELCH
The Breeze

Contrary to the back-and-forth between home and campus that on-campus students have faced this semester, off-campus students were able to stay in their residences if they wanted. These off-campus residences have adopted new safety regulations and policies to ensure the well-being of their tenants.

Below are four off-campus locations that have added COVID-19 precautions to their policies.

The Harrison Apartments

"While many things have changed around us, one thing has and will remain consistent: our commitment to keeping our residents and prospective residents safe and healthy as our top priority," the Harrison Apartments website reads.

The apartment complex has added many safety precautions to ensure the health and safety of its residents. These precautions include:

- Enhanced sanitation efforts
- Social distancing adherence between staff and residents
- Team members wearing personal protective equipment
- No contact tours and interactions
- Emphasizing the importance of communication

The Retreat

The Retrace's COVID-19 response, like The Harrison's, has added policies and regulations to ensure the safety of its residents. These policies are as followed:

- Limiting use of amenity spaces in line with recommendations from the CDC and both state and local health authorities
- Investing in new sanitation equipment for common areas, including electrostatic sprayers for fogging high-touch areas of the community
- Adding hand-sanitizer stations
- Adding social distancing signage to common congregation points in the community
- All team members wearing and continuing to wear masks while working

Furthermore, The Retreat also emphasized the importance for residents to comply with safety precautions. The policies are as followed:

- Guests are encouraged to wear masks just as residents are encouraged to do so
- Amenity access is limited to scheduled time slots

The website also states that if a resident is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, they should contact their healthcare provider and follow their suggestions. Residents can email info@retreatharrisonburg.com to notify the complex. Additionally, The Retreat said it can also coordinate mail delivery for when residents or roommates of a resident are self-quarantined in their unit.

Sunchase Apartments

Sunchase Apartments, like The Harrison Apartments, has virtual tours in addition to contactless self-guided tours and in-person socially distanced tours. It also asks its residents that they schedule maintenance calls for a time when no one will be home to prevent the spread of the virus. If there’s someone home while a maintenance technician is present, Sunchase asks that the resident practices social distancing, and the technician will also wear a facemask and sanitize before they leave.

The Sunchase website says that amenities are open. However, there are restrictions and limited capacity "per the governor’s guidelines."

The Hills of Harrisonburg

"We are committed to providing you with a community environment that aligns with CDC protocols and local health guidance in an effort to help stop the spread of COVID 19," The Hills of Harrisonburg website says.

The precautions the complexes, which include Northview, Southview and Stonegate, are taking are listed below:

- Cleanings are occurring several times a day in common areas with recommended cleaning agents
- All residents have been provided with recommended cleaning protocols for their apartments
- Staff members are “taking steps to sanitize living spaces” and will have additional cleaning supplies for residents upon request
- Face coverings are “strongly recommended” to be worn on the property, especially during move-in
- Face coverings will also be required at some locations at the direction of “local municipalities”
- Team members are required to wear masks at all times when on the job
- Signs have been put in place in common areas to remind residents to maintain social distancing
- Revised occupancy limits
- All large gatherings have been postponed until further notice

CONTACT Carley Welch at breezenews@gmail.com. For more coverage of JMU and Harrisonburg news, follow the news desk on Twitter @BreezeNewsJMU.
JMU has rented blocks of rooms in local hotels in an effort to expand quarantine and isolation beds after a shortage of housing for sick students in early September.

Prior to sending on-campus residents home Sept. 7 and forcing classes online, Caitlyn Read, the university spokesperson and director of communications, said that JMU had 140 quarantine and isolation beds. However, there were limitations on using that isolation space, she said.

"Now that doesn’t necessarily mean we could isolate or quarantine 140 individuals at a time," Read said. "Some of that space was dedicated for isolation, some of it was dedicated for quarantine, some of it you had to consider where you were housing males and where you were housing females ... so it was constantly a puzzle figuring out how to get people into those spaces and maximize those spaces."

Read said that isolation space was reserved for those that’ve been diagnosed with COVID-19 and can be around others who’ve tested positive, while quarantine spaces are for possible cases that haven’t yet been diagnosed.

At its last Board of Visitors meeting, JMU announced that it began renting out blocks of rooms in local hotels for student quarantine space, including the Sleep Inn on Evelyn Byrd Avenue. Read said that JMU has since expanded its quarantine and isolation space to 595 beds as of Sept. 23.

“We have been using spaces on campus, we have been using spaces in the community and local hotels. It does include at least four, at this point, local hotels who have given the university space for isolation or quarantine.”

Caitlyn Read
JMU spokesperson and director of communications

Read said that the hotels will only be used for quarantined students.

Photo by Connor Murphy | The Breeze

Despite living in a hall-style dorm with a shared bathroom, Moulden said that since they weren’t experiencing severe symptoms, the university recommended quarantining in place to save those spaces for students with more significant exposure to COVID-19.
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Students explain how off-campus living has been impacted by COVID-19

By CHRISTINA BUTCHKO
contributing writer

An important aspect of student life impacting nearly 15,000 undergraduates lies in the hands of off-campus living and how they’re adapting to COVID-19.

For off-campus housing, students have the option to remain in their leased property, limiting contact with other students besides their roommates. With online classes becoming the temporary norm, off-campus amenities allow students access to classes when in-person instruction has come to a standstill. Adjusting off campus during COVID-19 for some students is a challenge. The need to travel to campus is reduced, unless students need food, to go to the health center or other resources. The Retreat, Aspen Heights and Fox Hill companies have declined interviews to comment on their COVID-19 precautions. Natalie Migliore, a nursing major and resident at The Retreat said that as a sophomore living at The Retreat last year, she didn’t want to move out.

“I would rather not be living on campus during the pandemic,” Migliore said. “I’m not forced to be around people like the way we were in the dorms.”

Although the living situations in these off-campus locations are different from living in dorms on campus, ensuring student safety must be considered in these off-campus residence areas and apartment buildings, and adjustments because of the coronavirus have impacted how students live off campus. Migliore said the gym and most amenities in the clubhouse are now reservation-based and have limited hours.

Taylor Zampiello, a junior nursing major and resident at Aspen Heights, upsetly said, “Any time you enter the clubhouse, you have to wear a mask. But I feel like since I’m living off campus, I can really keep my space clean.”

When picking a place to live, how off-campus locations handle the coronavirus can be a deciding factor, along with the ability of the resident to control the cleanliness of their own space.

“The ability to Lysol and wipe down everything and stay in my own room and have my own bathroom made containing myself easier,” Zampiello said.

However, the possibility of living off campus and a roommate in the house contracting COVID-19 is concerning. Living with a positive-testing roommate may leave some students in a predicament of what to do next: quarantining, getting tested or going home.

When one of Zampiello’s roommates tested positive, she and her three other roommates socially distanced for the period of their roommate’s quarantine, and luckily, no one else got it.

Unlike a dorm, most roommates don’t need to share basic amenities like bathrooms. For The Retreat and Aspen Heights, each resident may have their own bathroom, and depending on whether they leased their unit furnished, a desk and chair may be provided. Residents essentially could quarantine themselves in their rooms for as long as they needed.

Safe and healthy off campus?

Off-campus housing communities have enforced mask-wearing at bus stops and capacity restrictions at other amenities like clubhouses to keep residents safe. Photo illustration by Hannah Wolff / The Breeze
Migliore said that although off-campus living eases the strain of contracting the virus, she said she still believes it’d be helpful to keep track of how many of those with COVID-19 cases are self-quarantining within The Retreat.

“It is inconvenient that certain amenities aren’t as easy to access, but I wouldn’t want to put other people at risk,” Migliore said.

Foxhill Townhomes and Pheasant Run offer a slightly different off-campus living situation in which residents in each townhome don’t have their own off-suite bathroom; four residents share two bathrooms. Jack Cameron, a sophomore computer information systems major and resident at Foxhill Townhomes, said that although he doesn’t have his own bathroom, sharing has caused no issues.

Similarly to The Retreat and Aspen Heights, Foxhills amenities include a clubhouse with a fitness center and copier and fax machines for residents to access. The same precautions for social distancing standards and wearing a mask are required in the office and clubhouse as well as for maintenance workers and property managers who enter the townhomes.

“My property manager has been cautious about social distancing when he visits the house,” Cameron said. “I think Foxhill has made good decisions.”

Even with the pandemic halting in-person classes, some students in Foxhill have found their own way to adjust to online classes with the pandemic.

“*I’ve seen a lot of people outside doing class work since the switch to online,*” Cameron said. Even with adjustments, residents of some of these off-campus housing locations voice concerns on what they believe was overdone in terms of restrictions to amenities.

“Closing the pool at Aspen was unnecessary,” Zampiello said. “They had a 35 people max [rule], which was never met any time I went. People only were around who they came with and would use towels on chairs and weren’t really touching anything.”

COVID-19 has created a time of uncertainty for JMU students living off campus. Regardless of the numerous changes that had to be made because of COVID-19, off-campus life is still a viable option for some students looking to live elsewhere than on campus.

“I think that [off-campus housing is] doing the best that they can do, being that they cannot force residents to social distance outside of their facility,” Migliore said.

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The pressure of signing leases can make any freshman wary of committing to off-campus housing, but life in an apartment, house or townhome is a necessary experience for any student. There are numerous options, but most are cheaper than living in an on-campus dorm or Grace Street Apartments.

For a full-time, in-state undergraduate, room and board for 2020-2021 totaled to around $10,884 — meal plans may alter this number. Meanwhile, many off-campus properties in Harrisonburg cost around $500-700 a month, including Pheasant Run Townhomes ($425 a month), The Harrison (four-bedroom for $425 and $670 for a two-bedroom) and The Mill (starts at $419). These options, if paying rent for 12 months, will ultimately be cheaper than living on campus.

Despite the appeal of Grace Street Apartments, they don’t offer the same experience as living off campus. One might have a kitchen and living space, but the resident still must share a room and bathroom with a roommate. Living in Grace Street also includes the cost of one’s standard room and board with an additional $500 per semester and also a $40 annual housing contract fee and semestery internet fee of $90.

The additional $500 is already as much as the standard monthly rate of off-campus rent. At this point, one might as well choose to live off-campus, as one would save the costs of room and board and obtain several added benefits. Also, privacy makes a difference. Living off campus presents tenants with the privilege of having their own bedroom, while on-campus housing has residents sharing a room.

Another benefit of living in an off-campus apartment is the fact that residents can adopt pets. College is a time for many people when they realize that they’re ready to add a furry friend to their lives. Pets can be beneficial to one’s mental health, and having the option to adopt one is a benefit that comes with living off campus. Let’s be real — a goldfish in the dorm simply doesn’t do enough for emotional support. There’s nothing quite like coming home to an animal that greets you at the door, but on campus, this isn’t an option.

Meal plans can also break the bank. One isn’t required to purchase a meal plan if they reside off campus, which can help save them money. This also teaches students to become more independent. Without a meal plan, students can learn how to best spend their money when buying groceries as well as how to cook for themselves.

The only downside to living off campus is the need for transportation. Without a car, living off campus may be harder for students, as they’ll have to depend on either the bus or roommates to get to campus and back. But savings-wise, this shouldn’t be the deciding factor.

Off-campus life is the epitome of the college experience. Students can still experience hanging out on the Quad or going to dining halls with their friends, but at the end of the day, they have all the more freedom. They can go home to a room that’s theirs alone. They can light a candle without fear of reprimandation and use a microwave without having to leave their own home.

CONTACT Kailey Cheng at thebreezeculture@gmail.com.

Students should live off campus after their first year.

Having animals and meal prepping are perks of living off campus.
“Most of our floor was in some sort of quarantine because they were in contact with someone,” Moulden said. “When we did have to use the bathroom, we would wear our mask and leave our dorm and go check in the bathroom to see how many people were in there. We would only use the bathroom if there was one or two in there and then shower at really weird times of the day when no one was in the bathroom.”

Chris Simpson, the regional director of operations for the Sleep Inn, said that the hotel is working alongside JMU to coordinate how it would operate when students would be quarantined.

“It’s something that we’re working through, but JMU will be here on property, they will be deep cleaning and sanitizing the rooms that are being occupied by the students,” Simpson said.

He said that JMU working on the property wouldn’t impact the hotel staff’s employment and that they weren’t planning on conducting any layoffs. Simpson said no staff members voiced concerns about coming into contact with possible cases of COVID-19 as of Sept. 24.

“We have a few properties in town, so we have options for staff members to work at other properties,” Simpson said.

Read said JMU was looking at substantial budget cuts after operating budget reductions, in part because of expenditures related to COVID-19. She said those were costs JMU was happy to incur if it meant keeping people on campus safe.

Read said that JMU has frozen hiring, raises, bonuses, prohibited travel and stopped discretionary expenses since March. JMU has continued to look at other options other than what they have in place, she said.

“The general assembly is currently in special session... so we don’t know if possibly in the next couple of weeks we may get additional funding,” Read said. “We also don’t know enrollment, so enrollment is a huge piece of our budget, and until Oct. 10, we’re not going to know what enrollment looks like clearly.”

Simpson said that when JMU approached the Sleep Inn, he was more than willing to help.

“We value the relationship we’ve had with JMU over the years,” Simpson said. “When they called and told us their need and desire to get students back in the class where they belong, we wanted to support them in any way we could.”

**CONTACT**
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Autumn days arrive to the ’Burg

Fall social distancing activities in Harrisonburg

By AMY NEEDHAM
The Breeze

As students continue to adjust to pandemic life and practice social distancing, it may be difficult to stay social and still abide by this new normal. However, along with the changing seasons come five fall activities that can still be enjoyed six feet apart with family and friends.

Visit Carter Mountain Orchard
Located on a mountain in Charlottesville, Virginia, overlooking seemingly endless rows of apple trees, Carter Mountain Orchard is open to the public in person through Nov. 8. With the purchase of a $8 ticket on weekends, visitors can pick their own apples in a variety of different types or buy pre-picked produce. Guests can also visit the country store and bakery, dine at the Mountain Grill or watch the sunset with some warm apple cider from its outdoor picnic area. For visitors 21 and older, ticketed entry also includes access to the Bold Rock hard cider Tap Room. Before stopping in, guests should review the orchard’s COVID-19 safety precautions on its website.

Go pumpkin picking at Back Home on the Farm
Open through Halloween, Back Home on the Farm is located on 60 acres in Harrisonburg and offers a wide range of attractions like pumpkin picking, a corn maze and farm animals. The price of admission is $10 per person and includes all attractions and activities. After a wagon ride to its pumpkin patch, visitors will find over 60 varieties of pumpkins to pick in person or purchase pre-picked from the country store. The farm also provides several dining options like homegrown hamburgers, apple cider slushies and pies. Guests are required to wear face masks in areas where social distancing isn’t possible as well as while purchasing tickets, riding the wagon and entering the country store.

Go hiking in the mountains
There are hundreds of hiking trails in the mountains outside of Harrisonburg that hikers of all skill levels can enjoy. Just east of Harrisonburg, Shenandoah National Park is home to easier trails like Fox Hollow Loop or more strenuous hikes like Dark Hollow Falls, which features a waterfall and steeper areas. Old Rag Mountain is another difficult and time-consuming trail that includes an exposed summit with broad mountain top views. If hiking isn’t one’s strong suit, adventurers should consider Reddish Knob west of Harrisonburg in George Washington National Forest. The summit is accessible by car and features 360 degree views directly on the border of Virginia and West Virginia.

Bake some fall treats
For the less adventurous types, baking is another enjoyable fall pastime. For cooler days when outdoor activities aren’t ideal, bakers can try incorporating fall flavors like pumpkin, cinnamon and apple into their favorite treats. A simple search online yields dozens of easy recipes for sweets like sparkling cider pound cake, dutch oven apple cobbler or cinnamon crackle cookies. Recipes range from higher difficulty to beginner bakers. These delicacies are bound to win over roommates and pair perfectly with a good movie and a cozy night in.

Take a walk around campus
Though the idea may seem obvious, JMU has many hidden gems that only improve as the seasons change. Students can sit on the Quad and work on homework as the leaves change colors or interact with wildlife around the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum. The Arboretum is home to plenty of walking paths, picnic and basketball areas, and different kinds of ducks that make this hidden gem an oasis for students looking to relax. Students can also visit the different dining halls on campus, which often offer specialty items as fall comes around. Before returning to campus, Dukes should check for updated COVID-19 regulations and new dining hours of operation.

Whether it’s on campus or off, students should get outside and enjoy the entertaining activities that come as the weather gets colder and the leaves begin to fall. Even with social distancing requirements, students can still have fun and find things to do that acknowledge the pandemic’s presence.

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Back Home on the Farm offers pick-your-own pumpkins and a corn maze. Megan Bradshaw / The Breeze
For some, the decision to either stay in Harrisonburg or return home for online classes was made for them. The majority of students living on campus were sent home after just the first week of school, and some students living off campus wouldn’t dream of returning home, knowing they’d pay rent for an apartment they’re not using.

But knowing that school is going to be back online after Thanksgiving break might have some off-campus residents seriously considering where they should spend their time. Is it better to sit through online schooling at home, surrounded by family, or in an apartment near the school that they’re paying for but can’t even visit?

While returning home could have its benefits, such as meals one doesn’t have to pay for and groceries one doesn’t have to buy, the downsides outweigh them. For one thing, despite the free food, one would still have to dish out several hundred dollars each month to pay for an apartment they’re not living in.

And although being surrounded by family can have its charms, students only need to think back to March and the following months and consider whether returning home for school is really worth the move. For many, problems such as parents barging in during a Zoom lecture or achieving quiet time for studying arise. Sure, it’s nice when one’s parent might offer to do a load of laundry or even to wake up to the smell of eggs and bacon cooking on the stove, but it’s not really worth the questions regarding one’s irregular sleep schedule or the chores that suddenly fall on one’s plate again now that they’re home.

Besides the inconvenience of unplanned family encounters at all hours of the day, there’s also the fact that it’s harder to remain in a school mindset when one’s not at school. In an apartment just a few minutes from campus, surrounded by roommates who are also sloughing through schoolwork and pre-recorded lectures, it’s easy to convince oneself to just sit down and do the work that’s required for the day.

But at home, where school feels far both physically and mentally, it’s simple to slack off and convince oneself that missing one Zoom lecture isn’t a big deal. This mindset can expand more and more until it’s a struggle to even do the simple-but-graded discussion posts that are required of them.

Coming back to school after Thanksgiving break might feel like a struggle, especially after experiencing some quality food and family time, but it’s worth it. Despite wherever one chooses to spend their time for online classes, rent’s still going to be required. One might as well stay in their apartment and maintain the mindset they need to pass their classes and get through this pandemic.

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Make it al fresco

Where to dine outside: restaurants with patio seating in downtown Harrisonburg

BY KAILEY CHENG & RYANN SHEEHY
The Breeze

With many off-campus residents remaining in the Harrisonburg area and the support of local townies, downtown has continued to be a buzz of activity even with COVID-19 restrictions. As some studies have shown a decreased risk in contracting the coronavirus outdoors, many of the ‘Burg’s best restaurants have expanded their seating to accommodate more patrons outside. Here are just a few of the restaurants making the most of the pandemic by offering a premium dining experience in the great outdoors.

Magpie Diner

A newer addition to the downtown restaurant scene, Magpie Diner has a spacious outdoor patio with heaters for each table on colder days. It specializes in weekend brunch, plus breakfast and lunch every day. One should bear in mind the shade that the tall building throws over the patio in the morning in case one’s sensitive to cold. However, as the afternoon rolls around, the patio is warmed by the sun in time for lunch.

Beyond Restaurant & Lounge

This hip and artsy downtown restaurant brings Asian fusion flavors to the ‘Burg, offering 17 sushi options, fragrant bowls of Vietnamese pho, classic American Chinese like orange chicken and more. Don’t forget to try the Asian-inspired cocktails. One can dine on its balcony seating that overlooks the water underneath strings of fairy lights and flowers.

Clementine

This classic downtown restaurant has always had a beautiful patio in the back, but it’s now been extended to offer more opportunities for diners to enjoy their meal al fresco. The patio is secluded behind the building, sheltered from the noise of the street and surrounded by lush greenery. One can still enjoy a drink with friends or dinner with loved ones while basking in the crisp fall air at Clementine’s patio.

Magpie offers its specialty brunch on weekends and daily breakfast and lunch. Christine Brady / The Breeze

see PATIO SEATING, page 18

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**Patio Seating**
Outdoor food options to visit in downtown Harrisonburg

From page 17

**Billy Jack’s and Jack Brown’s**

Yes, one can still get their iconic sticky nuggets and Greg Brady burger. Billy Jack’s and Jack Brown’s are downtown staples and transformed their parking lot into a space for outdoor patio seating. There are hosts and hostesses waiting outside if one doesn’t feel comfortable going indoors. When it starts to get chilly, these restaurants will bring out heat lamps and blankets.

**Taj of India**

On the other side of Billy Jack’s is the Taj of India, a fine dining restaurant that offers Nepalese food as well as Northern and Southern Indian cuisine. Here, one can get their fix of samosas, authentic curries and buttery naan. The Taj of India brings its elegant touch outdoors by using its ornate silverware, plates and glasses.

**Jimmy Madison’s**

If one’s looking for a great southern meal with a side of whiskey, Jimmy Madison’s rooftop is the place to visit. Right in the heart of downtown, this restaurant provides a special view of Harrisonburg and the surrounding area from its rooftop dining area located three stories above Main Street.

**Magnolia’s Tacos & Tequila Bar**

Well known for its wide selection of tacos and delicious variations of tequila drinks, Magnolia’s offers both patio seating at the street level and, like Jimmy Madison’s, a rooftop experience. Whether one’s sipping on a watermelon margarita or chowing down on an al pastor taco, they can marvel in the sights of downtown and enjoy a view of the stars above at night.

**Mashita**

This Korean-inspired cuisine is built on its buns — specifically, made-from-scratch steamed buns topped with a protein of the customer’s choice. It offers seasonal specials as well as Korean favorites like bibimbap, kimchi stew and kimbap. There’s something for everybody, and three signature sauces that vary in spice level. There’s limited porch seating, but if it’s filled, customers can take their meals out to the park just a few steps away.

If one’s looking to continue supporting local businesses but is tired of ordering the same old takeout, consider venturing downtown to experience all that Harrisonburg’s outdoor dining has to offer.

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