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JMU introduces position to ensure marginalized students are understood

Since 2018, Tim Miller, vice president for student affairs, has wanted to create a position for diversity, equity and inclusion at JMU. After reviewing applications from across the country, he decided that Brent Lewis was the perfect fit.

Lewis officially became the associate vice president of diversity, equity and inclusion on Sept. 1. In this position he oversees the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Center for Multicultural Services (CMS) and Sexual Orientation Gender Identity and Expression programming (SOGIE).

When Lewis found the position at JMU, he said his extensive experience in the field of diversity and inclusion at Randolph College and Fayetteville State University, along with his lifelong interest in education, urged him to apply for the position.

"I was always passionate about education and providing a voice to individuals whose voices were sometimes marginalized or solicited," Lewis said, "I've come from spaces where I've been marginalized and my voice has been silenced, so I can reach into spaces where I've been marginalized and my voice has been silenced.

Miller said that it was a unanimous decision from the search committee that Lewis was the top candidate for the position.

"Lewis' authenticity during the interview process and the transformative ability he could bring to this campus really made him the right person to bring here," Miller said.

Lewis said that transitioning to his new position has been difficult, especially in the midst of COVID-19, because he's unable to engage with the campus as he traditionally would since many classes are still being conducted online. He said that in the midst of what's happening in the U.S., he hopes the social unrest and political climate can drive the need for improvement.

"We all have our own way of viewing the world," Lewis said. "But we must figure out, how do we come together beyond what makes us different and look at the things we need to do to create that synergy that our campus needs, so that all of our students are able to thrive and be successful here?"

Lewis is working with ODS, the CMS, and SOGIE to find new ways to raise inclusion at JMU. He said he's working on establishing more resources through these existing organizations to make all students feel welcome on campus, particularly those that are marginalized.

Miller said that it was a unanimous decision from the search committee that Lewis was the top candidate for the position.

"Lewis’ authenticity during the interview process and the transformative ability he could bring to this campus really made him the right person to bring here," Miller said.

Miller said he'd been looking to create a position since 2018 when he realized there needed to be more emphasis on diversity and inclusions and said he had many mentors that helped him throughout the process and she said that she wants to be a mentor for the classes behind her.

"I know how hard it can be to be a part of any marginalized community," Smith said. "I'm a Black woman in America and I know how hard it can be to just exist. I just hope we can help make students who belong to different identities all feel comfortable and all get the JMU experience that we all want."

Smith said that being part of the community as a student has given her more inspiration for being involved in organizations, such as ODS and SOGIE, on campus and she said she hopes to create positive change with Lewis.

"I just hope that every student can feel comfortable and know that there are people in place that are speaking for them and advocating for them," Smith said.

Smith said that he hopes his passion and care for people and the work that he's doing will engage the entire campus and that it'll motivate those that are already doing this sort of work in the community.

"Navigating life in your early twenties in college is hard and there are a lot of students who have been marginalized their entire lives," Smith said. "Many are still feeling marginalized on a college campus which, to me, is even worse because you're supposed to find a home in your college or university."

Lewis said that he hopes his passion and care for people and the work that he's doing will engage the entire campus and that it'll motivate those that are already doing this sort of work in the community.

"I really do have high hopes and dreams and visions for my role," Lewis said. "I hope that I can work with the students and the administration to create what we want our campus to be."
JMU transitions back to in-person tours

By ISABELA GLADSTON
The Breeze

Among the many changes JMU has made because of COVID-19 is the transition back to in-person campus tours. JMU hasn’t been able to return to campus tours “as usual” since the start of the pandemic, but it has created a new normal with smaller, masked tours instead.

Tours were put on pause throughout the whole month of March and began again in April, but this time they were virtual. Paul Campbell, senior assistant director of admissions, is in charge of the visitation program. He said these tours included a 15 to 20 minute presentation over Zoom by an admissions staff member followed by a 35 to 40 minute question and answer panel with students and the admission council.

“We’ve had just about 150 of these sessions from April until now [October 2020],” Campbell said. “We’ve always had self-guided tour maps available for visitors for years and some people did that over the summer as well.”

Starting in August, JMU made the move back to in-person campus tours.

Izzy Rudinoff, vice president of admission in student ambassadors, said there have been several changes to these tours to maintain JMU’s safety regulations and guidelines. The tours have been shortened since the visitors can’t go inside resident or dining halls, Rudinoff said.

Tours have been limited to one family, which can consist of no more than four related people or four individuals living in the same house, per tour guide. He said the tour guides are asking the families on tour to wear their masks inside and outside of buildings. He also said no one has had any issues complying with any of these guidelines.

“People can sign up for each session,” Rudinoff said. “There are five families per each session, then they split up with the student ambassadors for one-on-one tours. If ambassadors feel uncomfortable at any point during the tour they are allowed to cancel it.”

Bailey Rapaport, a senior in high school from Baltimore, Maryland, attended an in-person tour at JMU late September and said she had a great experience.

“We watched a couple short films and then the tour guides came in,” Rapaport said. “It was even better with one family to a tour guide because you were able to ask as many questions as you wanted!”

She said that even though things were different from normal, she could still feel the friendliness on campus and she said the professors at JMU “seemed really helpful.”

She said that even though she's visited JMU before and has been inside some dining halls, she wished there was a way for other prospective students to see the inside of the dining halls.

“We crossed paths with the other groups at times,” Rapaport said. “But even still, under coronavirus guidelines I felt very safe at the school.”

Campbell said that admission is also asking visitors to perform a symptom self-assessment before arriving to campus and to maintain all proper hand hygiene during their visit.

“We’re learning and we’re trying and we’re adjusting methods as we go,” Campbell said. “What we’re doing now may not be in place in two to four weeks, just depending on the safety levels at the time.”

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JMU transitions back to in-person tours

By MAGGIE RICKERBY
The Breeze

According to r/JMU subreddit, an email asking JMU employees to fill the role of a dining hall monitor was sent out Sep. 28. The email was then leaked to the public on the subreddit comment section of the posted email screenshot.

The email was sent by JMU’s associate vice president, Tawana Moore, who explained the plans for implementing this role. She said in two hours later.

The email sent by JMU’s associate vice president, Tawana Moore, who explained the plans for implementing this role. She said in the email that dining hall monitors will supervise students to make sure they’re following COVID-19 protocols, such as wearing masks and social distancing guidelines.

“We wanted to be available to help students remember the importance of wearing masks when they are not eating,” Moore said.

According to the email, employees that are interested in this position have the option to sign up via Google Docs to monitor dining areas around campus such as E-Hall, D-Hall and Dukes Dining. Those selected will be able to work two hours at a time Monday through Sunday. Hours as a dining hall monitor will count as work time but can’t exceed 40 hours a week. Any employee is eligible including those who are eligible for overtime and ones that aren’t.

Employees in the administration and finance team have volunteered to become dining hall monitors for the first four weeks of school after returning to in-person classes Oct. 5.

“We asked for volunteers within our Division and people were nice enough to help,” Moore said.

Reddit users have expressed their opinions about this decision in the comment section of the posted email screenshot.

“We’re going back to 1st grade,” one user said. “Why haven’t they sent this out to parents? I mean our parents were lunch moms/monitors in elementary school. Why not now?” the user said.

Another user, who claims to work elsewhere as a dining hall manager, held a different approach.

“I work at a different Aramark account as a dining hall manager and we’re doing the same thing. It’s actually helped a lot,” the user said.

Soraya Melendez, a freshman social work major, spoke on JMU’s decision to implement dining hall monitors. She said she agreed that this could be a good thing, although she feels it is a bit “strange” and “weird” to feel watched while she’s eating.

“I think that this could be a real good reminder just for everybody just to stay safe and stop the spread,” Melendez said. “Whether they are intentionally or unintentionally not wearing their mask or social distancing.”

Despite student skepticism, the university believes this will have a positive impact on the community.

“We sincerely believe this effort will help keep our students, staff, and faculty safe,” the email said.

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NEWS

CHANGES IN ACTION

JMU adjusts operations to combat the spread of COVID-19 as students return

By SYDNEY DUDLEY contributing writer

After JMU temporarily pivoted online in early September following a rise in COVID-19 cases, the university decided to return to in-person instruction Oct. 5 with new safety guidelines in place.

On Oct. 5, JMU Libraries tweeted that it updated its COVID-19 safety requirements. The updates are just a part of the many adjustments the university has made in its COVID-19 response plan since temporarily going online.

JMU’s COVID-19 policy updates

Caitlyn Read, director of communications and university spokesperson, explained the changes that the university has made to better protect students and enforce COVID-19 protocols.

“In the four weeks we were online, there were a number of changes made to our plans based on things we had observed on our first few days of in-person instruction as well as things we had observed at universities and colleges across the country in terms of best practices,” Read said.

Read said that JMU is now testing 700 non-symptomatic students per week, has limited all classrooms to a maximum capacity of 50 people, stepped up enforcement in the dining halls, quadrupled available quarantine space and is moving students who don’t comply with safety guidelines through the OSARP disciplinary process. Read said the university’s expectations for students haven’t changed since the start of the semester.

“Students are still being held to the same COVID-19 agreement that they signed prior to beginning classes back in August,” Read said. “All of the things that are expected of them are outlined in that letter; nothing has changed in terms of wearing their masks and physical distancing, not hosting or attending gatherings of more than 10 people.”

Read said that the only additional expectation of students that wasn’t initially included in the COVID-19 agreement was that if students are selected for random surveillance testing, they should make sure to show up for the test.

The consequences for violating COVID-19 guidelines vary based on the severity of the infraction, ranging from disciplinary probation to suspension or expulsion.

“On-campus residents found hosting parties could have their housing contract broken,” Read said. “If off-campus students are hosting an off-campus gathering of more than 50 people, they could be cited by the city, and it’s punishable with a misdemeanor under the city’s new ordinance on social gatherings. If they are found hosting over 10, they could face the judicial process through the university.”

Michael Staley and Noah Barias both transferred from Northern Virginia Community College to JMU this fall and are living off campus.

Student skepticism

Staley, a junior media arts and design and political science double major, expressed concern about the accuracy of the LiveSafe app, which is used to determine whether a student can enter buildings on campus. On the app, students take a brief survey about their temperature and whether they have any symptoms or have been advised to quarantine or isolate.

“I am glad they are using the LiveSafe app, but it doesn’t really stop anything because anybody can just click no even if they feel symptoms and still come to campus,” Staley said. “It’s too easy to click ‘no’ just so you can come on campus.”

Meanwhile, Barias, a junior history major, has noticed that students continue to violate social distancing guidelines even after the university adjusted its protocols.

“They definitely are still [partying],” Barias said. “One day I came out and heard music and there were at least 20-30 people [at a party]. I called HPD and said there were people partying and they reminded me that 50 people or more is the threshold for when they get involved. I understand they don’t want to get swamped just dealing with partying, but I feel like partying would go down if they did get swamped initially.”

Barias said he finds the continued violations of guidelines upsetting as he would expect individuals over the age of 18 to act differently, but he said he is not surprised as it seems students are not afraid of getting in trouble.

Staley said he hopes that the university’s new measures will help improve student safety and prevent the spread of COVID-19 by more strictly enforcing distancing rules.

“I think this is critical timing for JMU to get a good, safe program in place because there are a lot of people making their decisions on coming to this school next year,” Staley said.

Isaac Chenoweth, a freshman physics major

“I believe that the new COVID-19 guidelines are beneficial, but I would say they may not be enough.”

Isaac Chenoweth Freshman physics major

“I feel like within the residence halls there has been a return of partying,” Chenoweth said. “A lot of people get here and act like COVID-19 doesn’t really count if [they] are partying or in a TV lounge.”

Chenoweth’s concerns about the continued violations of COVID-19 guidelines are shared by many current and former students including JMU alumnus Frances Wilson (’14).

Alumnus warns students about COVID-19

In an effort to encourage students to take the pandemic more seriously and abide by social distancing guidelines, Wilson stepped forward to share his harrowing experience with COVID-19 last spring.

“I was diagnosed [with COVID-19] on March 19,” Wilson said. “I was the 16th confirmed positive case in Virginia. My first symptom popped up on March 19, just a little bit of a cough, it kind of felt like I needed to clear my throat. It developed into migraines, major fatigue, body aches, chills, pretty much the whole slew of things. Eventually the respiratory distress began developing. I think it was on March 16.”

Wilson said he was tested at an urgent medical center and was sent home to quarantine, having been diagnosed with pneumonia and told he was at a low risk of having COVID-19. He was tested for COVID-19 and informed that the results would take a few days to come in. By March 19, his condition worsened.

“By [March] 19, my condition [had] completely deteriorated,” Wilson said. “To give you a glimpse of this, I lived in an apartment at the time. The bathroom was 10 feet down the hallway from my bedroom. It took me an hour to get up, walk down the hallway, go to the bathroom, and get back to my bed. As a healthy, able-bodied person, I wound up calling an ambulance and going to the hospital. I then got the call that my COVID-19 test came back positive.”

Over the next 10 days, Wilson was intubated and put into a medically induced coma. The doctors said he’d probably die. His family was allowed to call to say their goodbyes, and a priest administered Wilson’s last rites. Luckily, his condition began to improve. He woke up March 28, was extubated March 29, and discharged April 2.

Wilson said that COVID-19 has had lasting impacts on his health.

“Before this, I was playing soccer on a few teams up here, basically the equivalent of intramural sports,” Wilson said. “I could run three miles or so. Now I can make it about half a mile before I have to stop. I have lost a lot of lung capacity. I run out of breath at the end of sentences pretty commonly now. My voice is a lot raspier than it was before. I have never smoked in my life, COVID-19 got me. I had pretty bad PTSD as well.”

Wilson said he hopes that sharing his story will encourage JMU students to take this pandemic more seriously by shedding light on how the virus can impact young, healthy individuals with no preexisting conditions.

“My message is that this can happen to you if you are not careful,” Wilson said. “And even if you don’t care about yourself, this can affect other students, their families, professors, and the staff at JMU.”

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Gayne received backlash on social media for her tweet from members of the JMU community. Screen grab from Twitter

Mary K. Gayne
@marykgayne

I'm not linked to a party but, this year, I'm just straight up voting the Democratic ticket. Not even going to think about other variations. The Republican Party can die for all I care. They've demonstrated lack of loyalty to democracy & the US Constitution. Fuck 'em all.

By CONNOR MURPHY
The Breeze

I n a since-deleted tweet written by history associate professor Mary Gayne, she expressed her displeasure with the Republican Party. After publicly accusing Republicans of displaying a “lack of loyalty” to the U.S. Constitution, she went on to say “The Republican Party can die for all I care.” She then ended the tweet with “Fuck ‘em all.”

Gayne explained her reasoning for deleting the tweet over email. She said she was unable to find the logic in leaving a tweet on her account that was the cause of “angst” and “disruption.”

“My goal was to not make me die. I did choose to delete yesterday’s tweet. It became clear that the sensibilities of twitertite & robots, that publicly identify themselves as MAGA adherents, were upset by my dropping of the ‘F-bomb’ in a political tweet on my personal twitter feed,” Gayne wrote. “Rather than a hill to die on, the tweet was a spontaneous social media reaction to the morning news, while I was finishing my morning coffee and preparing yesterday’s ‘to do’ list.”

Caitlyn Read, director of communications and university spokesperson, said that the university has “limited ability” to regulate the speech or expression of its employees, citing the First Amendment.

Gayne’s criticism of the right has received backlash on social media from members of the JMU community, including JMU alumni and Republican member of the Virginia House of Delegates Kirk Cox. He took to Instagram to express his disappointment with his alma mater for not condemning the tweet.

“Conservative students CANNOT feel welcome inside a class with a professor who so clearly views them as a danger to our republic,” the board wrote. The board members wrote that they’re not calling for Gayne’s firing or resignation, but hopes that this instance can serve as an opportunity to foster civil debate between parties. “Political diversity is what makes this country and campus great,” the board wrote. “It is critical that professors at any university go into their work with the understanding that all students should feel welcome, not only those students that share similar political viewpoints to the professor.”

Despite Read’s reference to the First Amendment, JMU’s Policy 1121 outlines the university’s guidelines regarding civil discourse. The policy explains that its support of individual expression isn’t an endorsement to disturb “safe and orderly” campus operations. If it’s unclear as to whether the university considers Gayne’s tweet to be in violation of this policy.
JMU history professor publicly claims Republican Party can ‘die for all I care’

“The university’s encouragement of civil discourse is not an invitation to disrupt the safe and orderly operation of the campus, threaten members of the university community, or incite violence, and the university reserves the right to sanction those who fail or refuse to abide by the institution’s reasonable and content-neutral time and manner regulations,” the policy says.

Read said over email that the tweet put out by Gayne is “in no way” supported by the university.

“While the University encourages individuals to exercise their rights, the manner of this individual’s expression in this instance is in no way condoned by the university and does not reflect the university’s values,” Read said. “JMU strives to be an inclusive community that values the richness of all individuals and perspectives, and that fosters civil discourse.”

Read said that the university won’t comment on the situation further and didn’t acknowledge The Breeze’s inquiry for an over-the-phone interview.

Despite the backlash from members of the community, Gayne said she’s not too concerned about what her conservative students and other members of the community would think upon discovering the tweet.

“I am no more worried about my students seeing my personal twitter feed and discovering that I am a person who has dogs and political opinions, than I am about stumbling across their social media posts and discovering that they are people who play sports and have political opinions,” Gayne said. “Not everyone/every robot has had the privilege of discovering this, but the university is one of the existing spaces in US society that strives to maintain traditions of civil debate and disagreement.”

Additionally, Gayne further explained the context in which she claims the word “die” was used.

“U.S. political parties do die. For examples, we can look to Ross Perot’s Reform Party, to the Whigs, or further back to the Federalist Party,” Gayne said. “I suppose there would be some unknowns, but if today’s Republican Party withered away, this is not something I would mourn.”

The tweet comes at a time when political tensions seem to be on the rise. According to the Pew Research Center, 91% of U.S. adults surveyed between the dates of Jan. 8-13 believe there’s either “strong” or “very strong” conflict between Democrats and Republicans. This number comfortably overshadowed tensions between “rich & poor people,” “Black & white people,” “Young & older people” and “People in cities & people in rural areas,” which clocked in at 59%, 53%, 41% and 40% respectively.

“Public statements like the one made by Dr. Gayne do not encourage the free flow of ideas and diminish JMU’s standing among her sister institutions in the Commonwealth,” Cox wrote on Instagram. “Our colleges and universities need to eliminate biases like this in all aspects of university life and encourage an open and honest debate.”

Carley Welch contributed to this report.

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Want to praise someone or get something off your chest? Darts & Pats is the place to do it. Submit your own at breezejmu.org.

A “dear-God-please” dart to my roommate who keeps eating my food.

From someone who can’t prove that it’s happening... but I know.

An “I’m-sad” dart to the fact that the best holiday is about to be ruined by the coronavirus.

From someone who’s already mourning Halloweekend and the costumes I had planned.

A “God-bless-you” pat to the Virginia Voter Registration for extending the deadline to register to vote until Thursday, Oct. 15.

From a passionate voter who noticed that the website went down.

A “you-rock” pat to the guy at Taco Bell who upgraded my soda to a large for free.

From someone who appreciates small kindnesses like that.

What is success?

There is no timeline to the accomplishments a person has.

SUMMER CONLEY contributing writer

There’s a specific timeline young adults are supposed to adhere to. It’s strict and unforgiving, and it rarely emphasizes individual happiness. The recipe for success in the U.S. is simple and deeply ingrained.

Children are supposed to do well in school, apply to college and enter the workforce. Three small steps that many are forced to make. This linear timeline is an outline for a supposed well-educated, well-rounded workforce that’s begun to alienate recent generations.

Teenagers are pressured into higher education for the promise of financial security post-graduation. According to a study conducted at Georgetown University, “35 percent of the job openings will require at least a bachelor’s degree and 30 percent of the job openings will require some college or an associate’s degree.”

Even though a growing number of jobs are requiring some degree of higher education, many college graduates are finding themselves more financially vulnerable. Saddled with student debt, a changing job market and multiple economic crises, young adults feel pressured and hopeless.

College may be the right path for some, but other avenues of success should be celebrated and encouraged.

Attending a trade school or an apprenticeship are both viable options for students graduating high school. Taking a year off to travel and explore the world is just as valid. Immediately entering the workforce isn’t something to look down upon. Success isn’t linear, and it’s not singularly defined.

There’s a preconception of what success means: a house or an apartment; a well-paying job; a fulfilling and dynamic social life. These are the comforts and joys of what’s defined as success, but the pressure to be “successful” is a thief to present joy. It’s destroying the ability to celebrate small things.

It’s OK not to be traditionally successful. There’s no recipe for success. There are infinite indicators of achievement, even if they don’t all align with societal expectations or pressures. Turning 23 without a plan doesn’t mean that life is over. It’s really just the start.

Staying alive during a pandemic is winning. Baking a really good batch of cookies is a victory. Showing up to an awful job every day is a triumph. There are so many small things that get lost in the clammer and struggle for fulfillment. The small joys add up, and then big obstacles just aren’t so big.

Everyone has a unique concept of personal success. The tradition of trading these timelines has created a culture of comparison and contradiction. Each story is valid. There is no “right” way to enjoy life. There are too many idiosyncrasies of living and interacting with the world for there to be a universal guide to joy.

It’s okay to feel lost and alone. That’s part of the human experience too. It’s not a shame to just survive the day.

Success doesn’t have a timeline. Twenty years on this planet is nothing in the grand scheme of things. According to the CDC, the average U.S. lifespan is 78.6 years. Somewhere in that timeframe, success does happen. It just doesn’t always seem that way.

Summer Conley is a junior public policy and administration major. Contact Summer at conleysr@dukes.jmu.edu.
Time to disconnect
Deleting social media is freeing and beneficial to mental health

RACHEL GORDON | contributing writer

Despite the constant barrage of warnings against the negative effects of social media, most users couldn’t imagine deleting favorite apps such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. Netflix’s documentary, “The Social Dilemma,” urges users to learn what’s going on behind the scenes at big media companies.

One particularly chilling statistic touched upon in “The Social Dilemma” states that since 2009, the U.S. suicide rates have raised 70% for girls aged 15 to 19 and 151% for girls aged 10 to 14. The introduction of social media has hurt society in ways no one could’ve ever intended.

Many are aware of social media’s ability to trigger anxiety and depression but still find themselves unable to get away. The fear of being left out keeps many users glued to media platforms. Others are convinced that the positive aspects media provides, like free entertainment and the ability to stay connected with distant friends, outweigh the negatives.

“I have thought about deleting all my social media,” Camille Garrett, a freshman Communications major, said. “What has stopped me is that I just would feel very out of the loop and a little lost. Especially since a lot of our generation relies on social media in our references and how we speak and connect.”

“The Social Dilemma” explains that this gripping effect is caused by big media companies making their platforms as captivating as possible because user engagement becomes their income. The longer a user stays on a platform, the more ads can be placed into their feed. Social media companies have become focused on the competition between them for user attention and have lost sight of caring about their platform’s effects on the user.

Privacy is a huge concern for media regulation advocates. Twitter’s former executive, Jeff Seibert, stressed that on social media sites, “every single action you take is carefully monitored and recorded.” Each interaction a user makes is saved and put toward building a more accurate prediction of their actions. With each bit of new information, an algorithm becomes just a bit better at catching a user’s interest and keeping them hooked.

Additionally, the more data a site collects, the more profitable their platforms are for advertisers who want to show their ads to a specific population with the highest potential of becoming a customer. To become more marketable to advertisers, media companies have collected an unprecedented amount of data about each of its users. This data is used to create a highly personalized feed for every user, complete with ads catered to their interests.

According to Jaron Lanier in “The Social Dilemma,” “the gradual, slight, imperceptible change in your own behavior and perception” can be detected through comparing a user’s past data to their current online actions. The ability to plant thoughts in a user’s head is the “product” that a media company sells to an advertiser. Lanier goes on to explain that social media makes it’s income by gradually “changing what you do, how you think, who you are.”

Another prominent worry is the fact that it’s gotten increasingly difficult for users to discern between real and fake news. According to a study conducted by MIT, fake news is six times faster to spread than true news on Twitter.

Media companies know what kind of articles a user tends to read, which sources they prefer and how they lean politically. The algorithm will feed users everything it figures they want to see in order to keep their attention. The danger here is that every user is receiving news specific to their own biases. This fuels the polarization between political parties as each believes they’re consuming trustworthy, rounded news, when in reality, it’s been specifically tailored toward their interests.

Social media’s inability to acknowledge opposing views is reflected in America’s political climate today. Simply put by media ethicist Tristan Harris, “When you look around you, it feels like the world is going crazy.”

In a time where people are forced to move work and school online, the temptation of social media is especially prevalent. Many students find it impossible to sit through a lecture without picking up their phone or simply opening up a new tab. Such easily accessible distractions make it difficult to focus and learn.

Luckily, life without social media can be just as fulfilling.

“I don’t feel left out at all, actually,” Aparna Gupta, a freshman Biology major, said.

Gupta has never felt pressured to join social media because she is comfortable enough knowing that if there’s something funny on the internet, a friend will be sure to share it.

Getting rid of social media might seem like a big change, but one might be surprised by how freeing it can truly be.

Media companies need to take responsibility and put policies in place to protect their users’ privacy and health. Users need to be aware of media tactics and the dangers of engaging in social media platforms. Consider turning off notifications or deleting the apps all together. Watch “The Social Dilemma” to learn more and continue the conversation with family and friends. Advocate for change by holding social media companies accountable.

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College is a time for exploration and self-expression. This can be shown in many ways, but for some people, body modifications are the way to go. This can look like hair dye, piercings or tattoos. People who choose this route of self-expression are often more in touch with their creativity and therefore a greater asset to society.

It’s typical for people with tattoos, piercings and colored hair to be reminded of the opportunities they may miss because of their appearance. If these modifications sound familiar, this next question might also hit close to home: “Are you going to be able to cover that?” Creativity and self-expression should not be something that should be hidden or modified to meet society’s standards.

Society has created major stigmas around tattoos, dyed hair and piercings. These stigmas and negative connotations are things that can also be observed in different cultures around the world. It’s estimated that a quarter of Americans have at least one tattoo, and 34% of those 18 and older have 2-3 piercings.

People with these body modifications are often viewed as unapproachable, problematic and/or violent. These assumptions and stereotypes can also result in rejection from employers. People with body modifications are not only more creative than others, but they’re committed to their creative desires and aren’t afraid of expressing themselves.

Most employers don’t prefer people with body modifications because it’s deemed unprofessional and is often associated with people who are violent, unapproachable and problematic. However, Forbes listed open-mindedness as the third most important skill that employers look for in their candidates. If anything, those with body modifications exemplify open-mindedness to a greater extent and use their creativity to enhance their work habits.

Creativity plays a large role in body modifications, from deciding on a tattoo design to figuring out its placement. Piercings and hair dye also determine personal aesthetics and allow people to change their look more frequently than a permanent tattoo would.

Creativity is also important in regard to problem solving and adapting to new situations. People who are creative are able to see things from multiple perspectives and are open to trying new things. This can be especially helpful in the workplace, as employers seek candidates who are exceptionally well equipped to solve new and unexpected problems.

It’s not right to judge a person’s character and work ethic based on their appearance. There may have been a time where people with body modifications were in the minority, but now it seems that more and more people are expressing themselves through their appearance. Tattoos, piercings and hair dye are more popular than ever, and body modifications don’t seem to be going anywhere anytime soon.

People need to let go of their outdated beliefs and perceptions about body modifications. Society needs to pivot from the idea that body modifications create outcasts and shift to the belief that people with body modifications are creative unafraid to show the world who they truly are.

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FREE-FOR-ALL

JMU could stand to get rid of parking passes for good

JENNA HORRALL | contributing writer

Many students run into parking services at some point during their time at JMU. Whether it’s a parking ticket or an expensive parking pass, dealing with parking services is a pain.

There are a certain number of student, faculty, visitor and paid meter parking in most of the parking lots. If the student spaces are full, students have to either drive around until they find a nearby lot with more student spots, wait for someone to leave or park in a non-student spot and take a fine.

According to the JMU website, full-time parking passes are $300. Over three years, the non-student spot and take a fine. spots, wait for someone to leave or park in a non-student lot. If the student spaces are full, students have to either drive around until they find a nearby lot with more student parking, wait for someone to leave or park in a non-student spot and take a fine.

In the event that a student is running late and can’t find any nearby student parking, they’re forced to park in a non-student spot and face the fine. According to the JMU website, the fine is $25, and it goes up to $30 after ten days. Students sometimes don’t have extra cash to spare to pay this fine.

While it’s necessary for parking services employees to walk around and make sure people aren’t parking in fire lanes and on sidewalks, other instances aren’t necessary. If spaces were free-for-all except for a few paid visitors spots, there’d be less regulation, and therefore students would have to pay little to no money for a parking pass.

Others have similar criticisms of parking services. It has a 1.2 star review on Google, and many people have expressed their anger toward these excessive regulations. One review reads:

“JMU logic goes something like, ‘let’s regularly take away a ton of parking spaces and then ticket all the kids who can’t find parking, hah!’ God forbid I find space to park my car in a gravel commuter lot. I was slapped with a ticket and a denied appeal to said ticket.”

Students shouldn’t be penalized for having to park in a non-student parking space when there are no other student spaces available. If spaces were available to everyone, students could park anywhere without fear of getting ticketed.

Students have other transportation options besides driving. The bus is a solid option, but it isn’t as flexible as driving to campus because students become dependent on the strict bus schedule that has limited hours. Walking or biking is another option, but it may get difficult during colder weather.

If a student has a car, driving to campus is the most flexible option. Parking services capitalizes on the desire to drive to campus and takes advantage of students by charging unnecessary ticketing fees and high parking pass prices. Creating free-for-all spaces, lifting unnecessary parking restrictions and reducing the price of annual passes would decrease the financial burden on students when driving to campus.

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Opera on film

Opera Theater adapts onstage performance for the screen

By MARIA COPELAND
contribution writer

The pandemic has threatened curtains for the performing arts industry, but JMU's Opera Theater is ready with a strategy: lights, camera and action.

Ordinarily, the Opera Theater’s performances would take place onstage, accompanied by an orchestra, in the Forbes Center for the Performing Arts. This semester, singers are forging ahead with a fall production that’ll instead take place on screen. Led by Opera Theater director Don Rierson, opera assistant Maggie Hallauer and a team of talented JMU alumni, an assembled cast of singers is working to bring the Mozart opera, “The Magic Flute,” to life in the form of an indie film.

To put together the production, singers are recording their parts of the opera individually with the aid of piano backing tracks. Lexington Bowler, the sound engineer and a JMU alumnus who now works for Harrisonburg recording studio Blue Sprocket Sound, compiles their recordings into a single track.

Leah Finn, one of the cast members and a senior music major, said recording has been a learning curve.

“We’ve been trained to project our voices into a big hall and be able to sing over an orchestra,” Finn said.

She said singing by herself instead of with her castmates has also proved challenging, especially when it comes to recording her role in a three-part harmony. But she said she’s optimistic that these difficulties will prepare her for future performances and enable her to know the role better.

“It was just interesting to watch the whole thing come together,” Rierson said.

Hallauer, who generally assists with and manages the schedule for the production, said she’s enjoyed the filming process.

“I think that was my favorite part, seeing the different departments working together to create a super cool artistic piece … working with other people and other artists that I normally don’t get the chance to work with,” Hallauer said.

This part of the process has also posed challenges, Rierson said. Performers wear masks right up until the moment of filming, when, to keep each other safe, they maintain a distance of several feet from each other. The video crew is experimenting with different angles to create the impression that the singers are standing much closer to each other in the final product.

Hallauer said safety is one of the team’s primary concerns; everyone involved has taken strict precautions to ensure their health throughout their work on the production. She said it’s been stressful and rewarding.

“I think it’s going to go really well,” Hallauer said. “Everyone’s been doing all of their work outside of rehearsals, and then in rehearsals, everyone is putting their best foot forward, working really hard, and they all want it to be really good.”

The team has demonstrated admirable persistence and adaptability during the pandemic, a time when the industry is in limbo, as Finn described it, with Broadway closed and opera houses canceling their seasons. At JMU, music studies remain digital — Finn said choir takes place on Zoom — so she said she’s grateful for this opportunity to participate in the performing arts.

“We’re creative people,” Rierson said. “We want to create these moments for the public.”

Michael Richardson and Miracle Ogbor are two students performing for the camera in this fall’s opera. Courtesy of Maggie Hallauer

Thursday, October 15, 2020
**By ALEXANDRA DAUCHESS**  
The Breeze

In a small studio apartment in Brooklyn, New York, there's an aspiring musical artist. He works a customer service job 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., answering emails and doing administrative tasks in his Brooklyn apartment. But after he's signed-off for the day, Benson works on the career he's really passionate about: music.

"I produce [music] for artists and myself," Benson said. "I mix and master a lot in my little apartment studio, which is really just my laptop speakers and a microphone."

Now, not even a year since his graduation from JMU, Benson is gearing up to release his first full-length pop album, "hopeless, romantic" on Oct. 16.

Although Benson admits that writing and releasing an album are new experiences for him, mixing and writing music aren't. Benson said that he's been experimenting with recording, writing and performing music since his sophomore year at JMU.

"The first few EPs and [songs] ... I made when I was still at JMU," Benson said. "My sophomore year, I didn't have a car, and I was living in an apartment [alone] ... and I was just like, 'I need something to do so that I don't go crazy by myself.' So I started teaching myself production and started writing songs."

During his time at JMU, Benson wrote numerous singles, released four EPs and performed in the Harrisonburg area. Benson said part of his musical journey was learning how to express himself and his sexuality through music. He said listening to artists such as Troye Sivan and Muna helped him to learn the importance of being honest and authentic about his experiences and feelings.

"When I started making music, I was nervous to ... put my own identity in the lyrics or talk about my sexuality," Benson said. "[Artists like Troye Sivan] really inspired me to sort of be myself and put myself into my music a lot more."

Hattie Saunders, a senior music education and music industry double major who became friends with Benson through the JMU coed a cappella group Low Key, said that Benson's music taught her to convey emotion and create a safe space for self-expression through song.

"Listening to the lyrics of his song ... give me apathy, as his friend, was actually really difficult," Saunders said. "Hearing him talk about all these things that I had no idea he was going through, it's sad. But the fact that he was able to share that, like, the music with the world instead of with the people that he's close with is, like, really eye-opening as well."

Although music may be a difficult industry to break into, Benson said he's found some success with some of his early music. He has over 7,000 monthly listeners on Spotify, and his 2017 single, "Kissing as the Cars Pass By," was picked up by Apple Music and featured on Spotify's "Discover Weekly" playlist this year.

"[The song] went from like, zero to five streams a day to ... around 1000 a day," Benson said. "It was literally my first attempt at music production and songwriting so to see that people are listening to it is really, really cool.

Benson said he always hoped an album would be in the cards for him; he just never found the right time to put it all together. With a growing audience and plenty of free time due to continued COVID-19 lockdowns, Benson said that he thought now was the perfect time to work on crafting an album.

"I feel like [now] I'm really, really confident in who I am as a musician," Benson said. "I have a really great support group of other musicians, friends and fans and people who have ... really taken to [my] music. I think now it's like a really, really good time to be doing something big — much bigger than I've ever done."

To help him take on the task of mixing and mastering the album, Benson enlisted the help of local JMU alumnus Lexington Bowler (’17), a well-known music producer and engineer in the area.

Bowler, who mastered, engineered and produced part of the album, said that his goal was to make the album capture the energy and passion Benson has when performing.

"[I’ve seen] Zach play live ... and even with something that I would consider a more, like, chill pop song he just goes nuts on the stage," Bowler said. "When we were working on the record ... that was my goal ... to bring Zach's radical stage energy to the record."

Beyond capturing Benson's physical energy, Bowler said he also wanted to highlight the messages and themes that are central to Benson's music.

"What Zach is doing is ... it's pop, but I think of all as its own kind of genre," Bowler said. "He's got a lot of great stuff to talk about in his music, and it's just fun ... I feel like he's so authentic, and that really sticks out."

Saunders said she thinks the fact that Benson is so involved in the recording and producing process is what sets him apart from the rest of the pop artists in mainstream music.

"[Not only does he write everything, he, like, records and produces and mixes everything, so every single thing you hear, Zach wanted it to be there]," Saunders said. "[It's unique] and we don't get [artists like that anymore]."

Although Benson and Bowler were able to turn "hopeful, romantic" into something they're both proud of, they said that the new music making process that's emerged in the wake of COVID-19 can be difficult to navigate.

"[COVID-19] has definitely affected the ways that we're creating music," Benson said. "My primary way of writing songs with people was ... getting in the same room with them and bouncing ideas off of each other. I've started doing that over Zoom [now] and it's very different."

Bowler said that the technical mixing and mastering of music has changed drastically as artists and engineers are changing their roles in order to accommodate safety regulations and COVID-19 precautions.

"One of the big ways recording [has changed] is a lot of people are embracing home recording," Bowler said. "Recording has adjusted from more of a, 'Let me just do everything for you' to 'how do I get into people's creative zones when I'm not there.'"

Although it's been difficult to put together a record solely through Zoom calls and email chains, Benson said there are positive changes emerging in the music industry.

"When [COVID-19] hit, it was so refreshing to see that everyone was sort of in the same bubble of having to be creative and create things out of what you have in your house," Benson said. "And I think that [people are looking] at what an album could be, or what a music video could be, or what a collaboration could be in a whole new way. I'm seeing a lot of really, really cool stuff coming out ... that's a little silver lining."

Benson said that although he misses performing live and had to cancel a possible promotional tour because of the pandemic, the coronavirus has given him a chance to go in several new directions with his music. He had the opportunity to film his first music video for one of the new tracks on "hopeless, romantic," and he's gotten the chance to co-write and create remixes with other exciting emerging artists such as Gregory Dillon.

Benson said he’s hopeful and excited about experimenting with music in the future, regardless of what the post-COVID-19 music scene will look like.

"I'm just really excited about putting out the album and then hopefully ... continuing to write with different people," Benson said. "Like, it doesn't even have to be my name on the [song], if it's, like, something that I had a hand in making, I'm super over the moon about it. Hopefully, in the future, it's just a lot more songwriting producing, whether that's for myself or for other people ... and then also just playing shows again.

Saunders said that regardless of how well the album release goes, she knows Zach has a bright future ahead of him.

"Oh, I know he's going to be famous," Saunders said. "I'm planning for it. I've already made him promise me floor seats to his first stadium show."

Hattie Saunders  
Senior music education and music industry major

"Oh, I know he's going to be famous. I'm planning for it. I've already made him promise me floor seats to his first stadium show."

Even if Benson isn’t a huge titan of music yet, Saunders said that there’s no denying the impact he’s made in the Harrisonburg community. "[Zach] is really inspiring to me ... and the Harrisonburg music community," Saunders said. "Just to see what it's possible [to achieve]. It's refreshing to see that he still has [a] fan base here even though he's not physically here anymore."

Despite all the difficulties the pandemic may pose to young people, and college students especially, Benson said aspiring musicians should keep finding ways to explore music, whether it be talking to other musicians or messing around on GarageBand.

"My advice is just literally start doing things," Benson said. "I don't think anyone is gonna come out the gate and you know, be this legendary ... incredible musician or producer or whatever you just have to start somewhere.

I think that first step is the most important."

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The documentary got its subject all through the power of chance. The pivotal conversation took place about 15 years ago when Dinç was studying documentary filmmaking at the University of North Texas. Her French professor at the time was translating the memoirs of an Austro-Hungarian soldier in World War I who lived through the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and she said it piqued her interest. When Dinç saw the material, she said she couldn’t believe her eyes. “It was a treasure chest,” Dinç said. “It wasn’t just memoirs, but photographs, letters, postcards, army documents, sound recordings, and they were talking about maybe 100 hours of sound recordings, hours of home videos collected by Antoine. Everything in the memoirs are safe in the hands of a close grandson in pristine condition, and they are never before seen or published before anywhere in the world.” Köpe’s life was defined by transition. He lived through both World Wars, the collapse of two empires and eventually immigrated to the U.S. later in his life. Dinç said she thought this story could connect to many people and needed to be shared. She drafted her first script with her French professor and tried to get interest from TV channels and producers but came up empty. “Nobody cared at all about the memoirs of, you know, an Austro-Hungarian soldier who fought in World War I,” Dinç said. “Nobody could care less.” Throughout the process, Dinç estimated that she received close to 250 rejection letters from different companies. All she needed was one “Yes,” which she got from a Greek film company, Anemon Productions. Rea Apostolides, a producer at Anemon Productions, previously worked with Dinç on another documentary and has been working with her on “Antoine the Fortunate.” Apostolides assists in helping secure funding from other channels in Europe for the documentary. She said that this documentary is unique because almost anyone can connect to Köpe’s story, especially in Europe, and that he tells the story in an approachable tone, using drawings and humor. “It’s not really often that we have access to this daily life of people, and especially to somebody who was also writing a diary and photographing, filming, writing letters and keeping really everything that he did,” Apostolides said.
After partnering with Anemon, Dinç continued to work on the film and acquire more funding. Over the years, the project has also garnered an exhibition in Istanbul on Köpe’s life, and the team hopes to produce a textbook contextualizing WWI history and Köpe’s story.

One of the greatest landmarks for the project took place in May of last year when Dinç received a grant from the College of Arts and Letters. With this grant, Dinç brought three scholars to Harrisonburg to continue development on the project. One of these scholars was Yigit Akin.

Now, Akin is an associate professor and the Carter V. Findley Professor of Ottoman and Turkish History at Ohio State University. He specializes in the study of WWI and the fall of the Ottoman Empire and was able to contextualize Köpe’s life in a larger historical context.

“Köpe basically tells his entire life story to his children,” Akin said. “And then in that life story, it basically overlaps with many, many important turning points of the late Ottoman and early Republic of Turkey histories. So, for me, what was interesting about Köpe’s memoirs is to see how they intersect, or, you know, sometimes overlap and how those crucial turning points affected the families or a person’s life.”

All of this development had its first physical result last month in Istanbul. The exhibition on Köpe’s life opened and has received the attention of journalists and the public throughout Europe.

“After these 15 years, I was able to see something tangible with the exhibition,” Dinç said. “We can hold it in our hands. We can see the reaction of the audience, visitors who visit the exhibition in summer, so it’s an amazing feeling that this is real, this is happening [and] we are opening up the memoirs to a larger audience.”

Dinç said she’s excited to see this project come to its completion and hopes that this story will continue to resonate with people in Europe and around the world. While Köpe’s life may seem extraordinary, there are many things that anyone can connect to, and Dinç said she hopes to highlight that in her film.

“It’s a universal story,” Dinç said. “He goes through some tribulations in his life, and he just tries to make it all through his life.”

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New graduate assistants Jordan Talley (left) and Patrick Bittle (right). Courtesy of JMU Athletics

JMU men's basketball welcomes new graduate assistants

By ANDREW OLIVEROS
The Breeze

Two men's basketball graduate assistants are both coming from different parts of the country and bring different experiences. Now, they can bring that experience as Dukes. Before Jordan Talley joined the Dukes, he was an assistant basketball coach for Tallahassee Community College, where he helped lead the team to the No. 1 seed at 27-6 in the Division I Panhandle Conference last season.

“I believe the Panhandle Conference that I was in was the best conference in basketball, and we won the conference championship,” Talley said. “I feel like I kinda completed everything I wanted to complete at [the] JUCO level.”

Talley noted he wants to be a service to people and be around a group of teammates that want to get better.

“I can bring my energy, my effort, my will to just help guys get better and making our assistant coaches’ lives easier and our director of basketball operations’ lives easier,” Talley said. “Doing the little things so they don’t have to worry about it, and they can just focus on the larger picture and us winning games.”

Byington said to JMU Athletics that Talley’s an extremely experienced graduate assistant and will help the team in many areas.

“Talley] has great energy and is a tremendous communicator,” Byington said. “He’s going to be a full-time coach at the Division I level very soon.”

Before joining the Dukes, Patrick Bittle was the head manager of Illinois’ men’s basketball program during his senior year. He said he definitely wants to explore coaching and start it as a career path. He also said with the pandemic going on, it’s not a great time to start a job in athletics.

“It’s kind of a weird situation,” Bittle said. “Our old video coordinator at Illinois knew Coach Cremins and kind of connected me there because they were looking for [graduate assistants]. It was a pretty fast-moving process. I talked to Coach Cremins and Keith Chesley, the director of basketball operations, one Friday and then had an interview with Coach Byington on Monday, and then Coach Byington called me the next day and said I got the job.”

Bittle said that the JMU men’s basketball team has many new members and key returners. He also mentioned that the staff has been incredible.

“They had some struggles last year, but they’re putting those behind them and just working to get a little better every single day,” Bittle said. “[The staff are] all really good people. [They] work hard, work well together [and are] really excited to get going.”

Bittle said he’s seen how a high major level basketball program runs at Illinois under former head coach John Groce and current head coach Brad Underwood. He also worked with video operations at Illinois.

“I’m going to bring new ideas to the table, and I’m also in charge of video operations, so being able to help with that and scouting reports,” Bittle said. “With being a manager, you’re going to have a lot of different tasks and hit a lot of different things. So being able to be well-rounded and just be able to help out with any different situation you might see on a daily basis.”

Byington said to JMU Athletics that Bittle is starting out his coaching profession but that he gained great experience at Illinois.

“[Bittle] is very talented as a video coordinator and will help us in that area while gaining on-the-court experience with our players,” Byington said. “He has a great work ethic and wisdom to pick things up very quickly.”

The NCAA Division I Council says, as of now, that basketball will be played starting Nov. 25. As that date approaches, Talley and Bittle’s debut as graduate assistants for the Dukes is coming soon.

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A Full Cycle
Alumnus finds his way back to hockey through JMU

By ALEXA GRAU
contributing writer

JMU has had its fair share of notable alumni working in sports over the years. However, Andy Gibson ('10) has a story like no other. Gibson worked his way through the hockey industry, from working small roles at a rink to get by to where he is today as the general manager for a Dallas Stars facility.

Hockey was his passion from the start. Gibson spent his high school career playing hockey at Cranbrook Kingswood boarding school and didn’t plan on going to college. After high school, he had his sights set on joining the Peace Corps, but graduating at 17 put that goal on pause, and Andy ended up at JMU on a whim.

“I had a kind of a one-in-a-million experience,” Gibson said.

Gibson quickly became incredibly involved. He participated in student government and was a First Year Orientation Guide as well as an Orientation Peer Advisor. Gibson was also a team leader for Saferides and said it was one of his favorite experiences.

“He seemed to really find purpose and energy around serving other people,” Nick Langridge, current vice president for University Advancement said.

Although hockey was a huge part of his life, Gibson said he was burned out after high school, so he didn’t plan on going into hockey after college. Gibson graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in English and nonprofit studies.

In 2011, Gibson went into the Peace Corps and served in West Africa. In 2012, he returned to the states, and hockey fell back into his life as he took an entry level job at the Washington Capitals’ training facility in Arlington, Virginia.

Andy worked through different roles at the Washington Capitals’ training facility as well as became a youth coach, which ultimately led him to become a hockey director at a rink in Charlotte, North Carolina. He returned to JMU in 2015 and entered the Sport Leadership Masters Program.

“Andy is one of the most passionate people,” JMU Sport Leadership Professional Neil Martin said in reflection of Andy Gibson as a student in JMU’s Sport Leadership Masters Program. “He’s passionate about hockey, and he’s passionate about helping people.”

In 2016, Gibson began working for USA Hockey as a program services manager.

“It was a dream job, I always wanted to work for USA Hockey,” Gibson said.

Gibson traveled often and worked to find new and better ways to grow youth hockey across the country. Gibson worked for USA Hockey for three years, and thanks to the connections he made throughout his career, the Dallas Stars reached out to him in 2020 and offered him a position as a general manager.

Gibson’s currently the general manager for one of the eight Stars’ ice rink facilities located in Farmers Branch, Texas. He works to not only promote the Dallas Stars but also to build up the hockey community within the area by putting on public events, running competitive figure skating and youth hockey programs as well as overseeing the facility, as it’s the host rink for visiting NHL teams.

Hockey has always been a huge part of his life from the start, and despite taking a break from the sport to go to the Peace Corps, he found his way back to it. Gibson’s passionate and dedicated to everything he does, and he lives to help others. He’s a model Duke and notable alumnus that worked his way through the sports world.

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JMU field hockey has been in a rebuilding phase through the past few seasons. With many young players filling up the roster, leaders on the team have been putting themselves out there to build connections and prepare for a potential season in the spring. These connections will be vital against the CAA, and will have an immediate impact on how well the Dukes play this season.

JMU has the ability to be a top contender in the CAA. Fans saw a small look into the team’s potential during a few games last season including beating No. 22 Old Dominion. The offensive agility and speed was rampant and productive, and there was a strong defense that melted together for the Dukes’ strongest win of the season. That game was a clicking moment for the Dukes, and the team will need to revisit that level to continue the pressure in the conference.

The team will also need to fill the shoes of big names. Former midfielder Miranda Rigg, forward Ongeziwe Mali and defender Megan Guzzardi all are no longer JMU players. Those three were leaders both statistically and physically on the team, and now the team has to adapt to an unknown season without its strongest players. Players such as redshirt junior goalies Kylie LeBlanc and Caitlyn Nelson began their journey as team leaders last season and are expected to continue through the course of this season.

In regard to the CAA opponents, JMU placed fourth last season. The team’s looking to take a higher place this season, and the entire conference is vying to take down the dominant Delaware field hockey team. The Blue Hens won the CAA championship last season, taking back the title after a double overtime loss to William & Mary in 2018. JMU lost to Delaware in the CAA semifinals 5-3 last season, and lost 8-1 in 2018. However, this season Delaware is a young team, compared to its previous status as an older team the past two years. This leaves an opportunity for opponents to take advantage and reach for the championship. Another major contender in the CAA is William & Mary. Currently, the Tribe is the likely CAA front runner for the 2021 season. With a balanced age range across the roster, the team has depth and experience that’s needed to handle a challenging season and a championship, as well. JMU and William & Mary have played each other 82 times in history, with JMU winning 43 times and tying an additional 10.

Both teams have shown strong promise in what they can do throughout the course of last season. The long history the teams have endured has created a rivalry that makes matches intense and interesting to watch. There have been high scoring games, total shutouts and some physicality throughout the years. The Dukes have been able to beat William & Mary before and have the ability to this season.

JMU’s aggression on the field is something that makes it stand out. The focus on consistent, smooth passes allows for the team to move the ball quickly up the field from defense to offense. The defense is also an edge that the Dukes have, particularly with goalkeeping. Both starting goalies have good experience rotating throughout the season, and have faced all types of teams.

Outside of Delaware and William & Mary, the CAA is all fairly even across the board. The teams vary in experience each season, however they are all well matched with each other. Towson finished last in the CAA and ranked at No. 70, with Hofstra not much further ahead at No. 60. The rest of the CAA follows in similar order, with the standout being Delaware.

For the Dukes to have a successful CAA run, the need to win on the road is key. Last season JMU had a 1-2 record away in conference.
However, the Dukes went 2-1 at home. For JMU to regain some strength in conference play, winning away games will be crucial. If the Dukes can win more away games, not only does it give the team confidence to win games on the road, but it makes the team more intimidating.

Head coach Christy Morgan has been creating schedules for the Dukes that challenge their skills and their mentality. JMU took on No. 1 UNC last season, as well as No. 14 Ohio State, No. 4 Maryland and No. 5 UVA. When the team took on UNC, it was in the midst of the Tar Heels’ record-breaking winning streak. Although the team didn’t have success against them, Morgan used the match as a way to push the team to keep fighting.

The biggest elements that JMU will need to have a strong conference showing are young leadership, winning away games and fighting harder when losing. There’s potential for the team to win the conference championship, but to do so those elements need to be in place. The CAA is a conference where potential can be everything for a team as long as it knows how to expand potential into action.

CONTACT Madison Hricik at hricikmn@dukes.jmu.edu. For more coverage, follow the sports desk on Twitter @TheBreezeSports.
O Say, Can You Sing?

VIRTUAL NATIONAL ANTHEM AUDITIONS

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ACROSS
1 Whale newborn
5 Maltese timepiece
10 "Jazz Samba" guitarist Charlie
14 Stench
15 Neptune's realm
16 Show the way
17 "Spied marine predator"
19 Tucson school, for short
20 Adorning, in hotel lingo
21 Portal
22 Pups' reward
23 Words after boy
24 "Rooted in real"
25 Prepares to
26 Scout group
27 Artist Matisse
28 Put in the cargo
29 Fried side
31 Bother greatly
32 Devices with
33 Thick
34 Simpson with a
35 *Pollux, for one
37 Con
38 Wide open
39 Like some bonds
40 Disorderly state
42 Grand National Park
43 Bat mi'ztvah
44 Barely open
45 Ridged chips
46 Chaps
47 Kind of column or cord
49 Flightless Ausies
50 Call at home
51 Maa ...lung
52 Avocado __
53 Mao __-tung
54 Fleeting trend
55 Try to stop
59 Players with possession
60 Missing fish in a
61 Voiced
62 Overthrow
63 Sporty truck,
64 Pass coverage
65 Sporty truck,
66 Feel yesterday's
67 Have, with a
68 Under the
69 King with three
70 Bay Area-based coffee company
71 Towel holders
72 Parting words?
73 Grassy ground
74 Day of psychoanalytic
75 It may be at the
76 Modern Library
78 Singer short
80 Truck bed,
81 Like some bonds

DOWN
1 Republique de
2 Deuce follower
3 Enters in a
4 Anna who was
5 Coven of
6 Feel yesterday's
7 Grasses ground
8 Simpson with a
9 Turkmen
10 "Navy stunt pilot"
11 "That amoral"
12 Tennis nickname
13 WWI turning point
14 Koa
15 Gift certificate
16 "Diving" into a
17 Data about
18 Kia
19 "Boeing 737, for one"
20 "Pup's reward"
21 "Eating" the
22 "Scout group"
23 "Artist Maltese"
24 "Fried side"
25 "Bitterly greatly"
26 Prepares to
27 "Scout group"
28 "Artist Maltese"
29 Fried side
30 "Put in the cargo"
31 Bother greatly
32 Devices with
33 Thick
34 Simpson with a
35 *Pollux, for one
37 Con
38 Wide open
39 Like some bonds
40 Disorderly state
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72 Parting words?
73 Grassy ground
74 Day of psychoanalytic
75 It may be at the
76 Modern Library
78 Singer short
80 Truck bed,
81 Like some bonds

SUDOKU

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3 4 1 6
2 7 6 1

1 5 4 9
7 2 4 9
3 1 8 2

6 9 7 2
5 3 9 5

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