



## Q & A with Mitch Moore

In the February 2000 issue of Montpelier, Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations Mitch Moore talks about his charge to create a culture of giving that will preserve for tomorrow's students what alumni found so special about Madison when they were here. Maintaining that "private school feeling" and continuing to transform lives will require JMU to become more reliant on private giving, Moore says. Montpelier's conversation with the vice president continues here.

**Q:** The nation is in the middle of its longest-running economic expansion in history. Why do we find resources stretched incredibly thin at JMU?

**A:** JMU has benefited greatly from state support, and I don't want to give the impression that it hasn't - but the state isn't going to do it all. What we have here and what we have the opportunity to maintain and enhance is a private school education at a public school price. You don't find that very often. And we do that especially well at the comprehensive university level. For the type of undergraduate experience that we offer, I'd say that we're close to being No. 1 in the country. But we want to make sure we can maintain that level and enhance it. The rapid growth of the university has made it more difficult to maintain the type of education that we want to offer. We've ratcheted up expectations and output from faculty and staff to the point where, unless we get some additional resources, we run the risk of losing what has made this place great. Instead of comparing ourselves with other public universities, we have to begin to think of ourselves as offering the same type of education as private schools like Richmond and Villanova. And that means we have to consider how private schools are funded - and that's privately.

**Q:** How do you create a culture of giving?

**A:** The institution as a whole has to embrace the need for fund raising the same way that fund raising is embraced at private colleges and universities - like the University of Richmond and Washington & Lee - where people know the importance of fund raising. We have to make certain that all of our advisory boards understand that one of their roles is to become a vehicle through which the university can obtain additional resources. We also have to create awareness of the importance of giving among students while they're still on campus. And finally, we have to have patience because it will be a slow process.

**Q:** When alumni were students, they had the perception that if the university needed anything, Uncle Ron (then president, Carrier) would go to Richmond and get it from the General Assembly. The important message of giving back to the university was not part of the student experience back then. How will you convince alumni to give?

**A:** I think that alumni, when they were students, were beneficiaries of a different kind of giving and a different kind of growth. But we simply cannot continue to expand enrollment as a way to grow resources. If we get much bigger, I think that JMU could lose its specialness. So for alumni, the case for giving is that we need to preserve the JMU that alumni loved when they attended. I believe that when most alumni hear that the character of their beloved JMU is at risk, they will step up to the plate. Even if it's just to preserve the value of their diploma.

**Q:** Alumni are deluged by requests for donations from the Red Cross, March of Dimes, Amnesty International, Greenpeace. How does a request from JMU break through?

A: We need to have a crisp, clear message. Setting the university's priorities in a clear way is important. Getting out to see people face to face is important. We have to market our programs creatively. Our direct-mail might have to shift to a combination of traditional mail and electronic mail. I think that we need to spell out the way that we use annual funds better, and we need to make strong cases for endowments.

Q: You've done a lot of reorganizing and building since you arrived. What have you created in this office?

A: We've tried to carve out a new division for development and alumni relations. We will be the principal architects for a campaign once a concrete plan is set. And that's meant that we've had to bring in some new people and replace others who have left JMU. There's newness to our division and it's exciting.

*by Andy Perrine ('85)*