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JMU'S AWARD-WINNING NEWSPAPER SINCE 1922

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EDITORIAL STAFF

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
CHARLOTTE MATHERLY
breezeditor@gmail.com

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
SHIRIN ZIA FAQIRI
breezypress@gmail.com

ONLINE MANAGING EDITOR
SAVANNAH REGER
thebreezewebsite@gmail.com

PRINT MANAGING EDITOR
ASHLYN CAMPBELL
breezeinvestigations@gmail.com

NEWS EDITOR
KASEY TRAPUZZANO
breezenews@gmail.com

SPORTS EDITORS
MADISON HRICIK & GRANT JOHNSON
breezesports@gmail.com

COPY EDITORS
EMMA JOHNSON & MADISON MILLS
breezecopy@gmail.com

COVER BY:
SHIRIN ZIA FAQIRI / THE BREEZE
PHOTOS BY:
EMMA CONNELLY / THE BREEZE

CULTURE EDITORS
MICHAEL RUSSO & AVERY GOODSTINE
thebreezeculture@gmail.com

OPINION EDITOR
EVAN WEAVER
breezeopinion@gmail.com

PHOTO EDITORS
EMMA CONNELLY & ABI MIDDLETON
breezephoto@gmail.com

VIDEO EDITOR
CHRISTABELL DEMICHELE
breezevideo1@gmail.com

AUDIENCE EDITOR
ANNA LEONE
thebreezewebsite@gmail.com

ADVERTISING STAFF

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
CATHERINE CONNOLLY

AD DESIGNER
ALEX CANDELIER

The Breeze

JMU'S AWARD-WINNING NEWSPAPER SINCE 1922

1598 S. Main St.
Harrisonburg, VA 22801
PHONE: (540) 568-6127
FAX: (540) 568-7889

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‘No one has the answer’

After tragic spring semester, JMU revamps mental health support

By **GRANT JOHNSON, CHARLOTTE MATHERLY & ASHLYN CAMPBELL**
The Breeze

Chelsea Latorre, a former doctoral intern in JMU’s Counseling Center, didn’t partake in break room conversations at the Center too often. If she didn’t work through lunch with her office door closed most days, she felt she wouldn’t stay up to speed in the roughly 500 hours working directly with students — a number she estimated to span her 2019-20 doctoral internship.

So, for Latorre, the 9-5 became a 8-6:30, except for Wednesdays. Then, Latorre said her friend group at the Center would leave at 5 p.m., no matter what, to maintain some semblance of work-life boundaries. Her days typically approached 11 hours of appointments, administrative work, writing referrals and papers that come with being a graduate student.

As the Center’s staff stretches thin and student demand continues to rise three years later and on the other side of a pandemic, JMU is introducing new mental health initiatives ahead of the fall 2022 semester — although university leadership and counselors doubt whether the increased demand can be outrun, out-staffed or out-funded.

‘There just weren’t enough’

After two on-campus suicides and a shooting at nearby Bridgewater College all in one week during the early spring semester, JMU students bellowed for change mostly centered around the Counseling Center: more therapists, more long-term individual therapy and on-going conversations about mental health, not just after tragedies.

Then, after a third suicide in late April, this time a JMU student-athlete, Tim Miller, vice president for student affairs, said in a press conference May 2 that “the ability to ask for help is actually strength” and that being vulnerable is the key to everyone’s health and wellbeing.

However, not all students asking for help from the Counseling Center have received their requested service since October 2019, when the Center began using its own professional judgment over a students’ requested therapy. In a July 6 interview with *The Breeze*, Miller said JMU’s mental health services are changing in lieu of the high student demand, which persisted beyond last year but came to a head last spring.

“When you’re facing exponential growth of a challenge,” Miller said, “you can’t keep doing, No. 1, the same thing over and over again and hope it’s gonna work, but No. 2, you can’t keep asking [the Counseling Center, the Dean of Students and the Health Center] to keep trying to solve this in the same way — because it’s not working.”

So now, to meet the students in the middle — those who previously may have been referred off campus — for a non-crisis situation, Miller said the Counseling Center will work with students to help them access their 12 free sessions on TimelyCare — a telehealth service available to all JMU students starting this year — and a Counseling Center staff member will show the walk-in student how to set it up.

Before TimelyCare’s installation, Miller said in February, following the suicides, the Counseling Center’s structured as more of a “mental health emergency room.” In July, Miller said this isn’t the ideal role of a counseling center — a mix of crisis and longer term, non-crisis consultations would be best, he said — but that crisis dealings are the reality of college counseling center visits nowadays. As such, counselors are forced to prioritize a student considering suicide over someone with relationship troubles or homesickness.

Heightened student distress was already infiltrating university counseling centers prior to the pandemic, but it made college students take sacrifices that further increased counseling demand, David Onestak, director of the JMU Counseling Center, said. As a result, he said, “I would estimate it to be almost like a decade of expected increases in complexity and risks occurred in two or three years.”

Latorre said across the board, university counseling centers can “really only offer short-term counseling” nowadays — a sentiment Miller echoed — in large part because many university counseling centers are choosing to open up more appointment slots for crisis patients they can see right away over non-crisis, recurrent patients to pace the student demand. Latorre’s friend who works at the University of Pennsylvania’s counseling center is among a 52-clinician staff — almost double the size of JMU’s — and one Latorre said is still struggling to meet the needs of just north of 28,000 undergraduate and graduate students.

There are currently 27 clinicians and six graduate assistants in JMU’s Counseling Center, according to its website. According to the International Accreditation of Counseling Services, campuses should aim toward having one full-time equivalent professional staff member to every 1,000-1,500 students.

“We can’t meet the needs of long-term counseling for 30,000 students when we’re only a staff of 20,” Latorre said. “I feel like even with increased staff ... I think that just gives more access to students and students might be using that service more, but I don’t know if that opens up long-term counseling needs.”

On the other hand, JMU students interviewed by *The Breeze* overwhelmingly said they think the Center needs more funding in order to provide more therapists who can see patients long term — one saying “it’s the least [JMU] can do,” considering the tuition students pay and coming off the heels of a pandemic and the spring semester suicides.

Beyond JMU, similar sentiments exist among student bodies — especially exacerbated by the pandemic — that materialized months before the suicides JMU’s campus experienced in February. Saint Louis University students kickstarted an online petition in fall 2021 demanding more mental health resources, which has over 9,000 signatures. According to a December 2021 article from *The New York Times*, West Virginia University’s student government asked for more state aid for mental health on the heels of a student suicide early in the pandemic.



Miller said he previously thought the answer to the counseling conundrum was to add more therapists. He said that despite adding a “significant number” of counselors over a four-year span, since assuming the role of VP for student affairs at JMU in 2018, and an additional \$1.2 million to the Counseling Center budget, it wasn’t enough to keep up with both the raw demand and severity of student cases.

“The Counseling Center and the Dean of Students and the Health Center and all these folks that are on the front lines of this were doing everything they could to try and address the concern [of high demand],” Miller said. “There just weren’t enough of them and we could not get enough of them.”

Stats amid crisis

The Breeze obtained the number of first-time walk-in student appointments at the JMU Counseling Center over the last three fiscal years — July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2022 — via a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, which shows an 18.3% increase in first time walk-ins over that three-year period.

Taking into account the size of JMU’s student body — 20,080 undergraduate and 2,096 graduate students in fall 2021, according to State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) — around 8% sought first time walk-ins from JMU in the 2021-22 fiscal year, versus approximately 6% in 2019-20, based off of fall numbers. Fall enrollment has increased by only 2.65% from 2020 to 2021.

In 2019-20, 1,522 students went to the Center for the first time and 32%, or 524 students, received care beyond 3-5 counseling sessions — the range that most students are seen in JMU’s short-term care model, but if surpassed, students are either kept in the Center for long-term care or referred to an off-campus therapist if further counseling is requested by the student. The FOIA noted that “some clients meet their initial goals w/in 3-5 sessions, and/or the semester ends prior to the client attending 5 sessions.” [sic] The following year, the Counseling Center saw 1,059 first-time walk-ins — a dip from the previous year — and 44% of students, 497, were seen past 3-5 sessions.

This past year, the Center saw a three-year high of 1,801 first-time walk-ins and a three-year low of 28% seen beyond 3-5 sessions. Furthermore, 128 students — some of whom may be counted more than once, Katrina Simpson-McCleary, associate director for clinical services at the JMU Counseling Center, said — weren’t assessed or serviced at their first walk-in from November to March 2022 while all first-time walk-ins were assessed in April and May. Simpson-McCleary said generally, the Center experiences fewer walk-ins as the semester winds down, so it serviced each student.

Matthew Martin, a therapist who worked on and off at the Center in multiple roles from 2014-20, said meeting the growing student mental health demand is “sort of an impossible task” considering the budget and manpower constraints many counseling centers are experiencing. Martin acknowledged Miller has opened up more positions and funding that supports therapists at JMU to better maneuver within the short-term care model that, Martin said, isn’t always conducive to deep, long-lasting changes with a client.

“I have always viewed the Counseling Center at JMU as a group of people that really do care and want to help but are so limited — I wouldn’t say ‘so limited’ — but definitely limited by the structure of the university setting,” Martin said. “It’s just hard to find ways to help in the ways that they want to help.”

Outside of walk-in hours — 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. during the school year — the Counseling Center’s crisis response system

fields phone calls. There were 460 crisis calls from Aug. 25, 2020, to Jan. 28, 2022, according to an email sent to The Breeze on April 25 by Mary-Hope Vass, JMU executive director of communications and university spokesperson.

From Feb. 1-21, 2022, the weeks surrounding two on-campus suicides at JMU, there were 18 crisis calls. Per the same FOIA with the first-time walk-in data: “Following traumatic events on campus, we do not limit the number of students accessing our services.”

Simpson-McCleary said the Center doesn’t usually limit care through the week following a traumatic event. Going longer, she said, puts further strain on therapists who are hearing the same stories over and over again.

Treatment in this timeframe, Simpson-McCleary said, is twofold: First, the Center asks, “Are you here in response to the event that happened?” Then, Simpson-McCleary said, the student is assessed for crisis criteria — serious harm or threat to self or others or recent sexual assault — and the student would be asked to return to the Center if they don’t fulfill either criteria.

The FOIA also noted that in November 2021, the Center began limiting the number of students receiving initial appointments during walk-in hours. Outside of walk-in hours, students are screened for crisis criteria.

Before students are asked to return, they’re screened for crisis criteria, which, if present, the student is seen.

The Breeze also asked for crisis call data from before the pandemic — Aug. 25, 2019, to March 10, 2020 — but Vass said in the April 25 email that “no easily available records can be produced” because the center “didn’t have the current after-hour service at the time.”

A new direction

JMU sent an email to the student body June 30 revealing changes to students’ access to mental health care and initiatives designed to improve the school’s response to crises, some by easing the burden on therapists:

- TimelyCare — 24/7 crisis support, psychiatry and telehealth for all students with 12 scheduled free counseling visits for each student throughout the year.
- Kognito — a program providing interactive simulations that support student mental health, wellness and sexual misconduct prevention.
- JED CAMPUS — JMU will receive input from outside mental health contractors who’ll jointly develop a plan with JMU surrounding on-campus health and well-being over at least the next four years. The contractors will survey students this spring to get a baseline of JMU’s state of mental health, then collect more data through interviews for semesters following.
- Physical barriers at the top of parking decks along with “signs of support.”
- Fall Break is three consecutive weekdays, from Oct. 12-14, instead of sporadic one-day breaks like years past. The email includes Oct. 15 and 16 in the break, which are a Saturday and Sunday.
- All staff within the Office of Residence Life will be trained in safeTALK, an in-person suicide prevention course that, Miller said, teaches RAs how to reach out to someone thinking about suicide, overcome attitudes that act as barriers and how to talk openly about it.
- Additional staff hired in the Counseling Center and the Dean of Students’ office. Onestak said the Center added a third intake crisis counselor and two “generalist” positions who can do both individual and group therapy work. Miller said the Dean of Students office added a new coordinator position for Matthew Hunsberger, who will oversee a student services branch in the EnGeo building on East Campus.

Also referenced in JMU’s June 30 email was a “philanthropic gift” used partly to fund TimelyCare and Kognito. Vass told The Breeze the gift was \$200,000 but couldn’t disclose the donor.

The Breeze also obtained the 2021-22 and 2022-23 Counseling Center budgets through an email sent by Vass. The total Counseling Center budget for 2021-22 was \$2,780,046 compared to \$3,750,871 for 2022-23 — a 34.92% increase. The largest portion of the budget is in personnel funding, like salaries and benefits. It increased 22.8% from \$2,592,115 in 2019-22 to \$3,183,381 in 2022-23.

The largest budget increase was in non-personnel funding,

2019-20

1522 first time walk-ins

2021-22

1801 first time walk-ins

18.3%
increase

with other contractual services increasing from \$40,973 to \$420,532 — an increase of 926.36%. This would account for — at least in part — contracts with telehealth services like TimelyMD and Kognito.

For Giving Day 2022, which occurred Feb. 22, the Counseling Center received \$15,353.66 from 183 donors, according to JMU’s Giving Day website. Although the Center had the fifth largest number of donors, it ranked ninth out of the total dollars raised. The Proud and True Fund — a fund that “directly supports JMU student-athlete scholarships and general operating budget” — was first in both number of donors, 518, and total dollars raised, \$159,518.41.

According to the Giving Day website, donations to the Counseling Center provide more clinical services to students — with each \$100 providing 2-5 individual or group counseling hours to students.

But the caveat with mental health, Miller said, is there’s no universal, one-size-fits-all solution to every students’ troubles, even if a counseling center has adequate finances. Rather, it’s a trial-and-error system to find what works the best for the largest number of students.

“I assumed someone else out there has the answer, and one of the problems is no one has the answer,” Miller said. “We have to try as many things as we can to figure out what will work in our community because just because it works somewhere else, doesn’t mean it’s going to work here.”

JMU’s solution, at least for now, is to turn to telehealth.

Outsourcing everyone the Counseling Center can’t service to community therapy like JMU has done in the past isn’t sustainable anymore, Miller said — those locations are filling up, too — and since adding therapists to the Center also isn’t lowering student demand, he said ramping up telehealth is the next best option, one that’s subject to change going forward depending on its success.

“I don’t know how to, say, put out an ad in The Washington Post and say, ‘Move to Harrisonburg and be a counselor’ — I don’t know how you do that successfully,” Miller said. “So you have to find a different way to increase your capacity, and telehealth is the way that we have all really decided [is] the thing that we need to try, and we’re hoping that will work.”

This year, JMU is partnering with TimelyMD, a nationwide telehealth provider that specializes in higher education healthcare, based in Fort Worth, Texas, to give students access to TimelyCare .

As a result of JMU’s \$435,600 contract with TimelyMD, all students will have access to the following services through TimelyCare:

- 12 free scheduled counseling appointments over phone or video with a licensed mental health provider per academic year.
- TalkNow, a 24/7 on-demand support and crisis management service provided by masters-level mental health professionals.
- Psychiatric services that provide medical treatment for mental health disorders.
- Health coaching, which focuses on lifestyle changes and habits like sleep, exercise and nutrition.
- Self-help resources including follow-along yoga and meditation practices and pre-recorded videos on topics like goal setting and navigating conflict.

timelycare
Telehealth
for Students



12 free counseling appointments



TalkNow



Psychiatric services

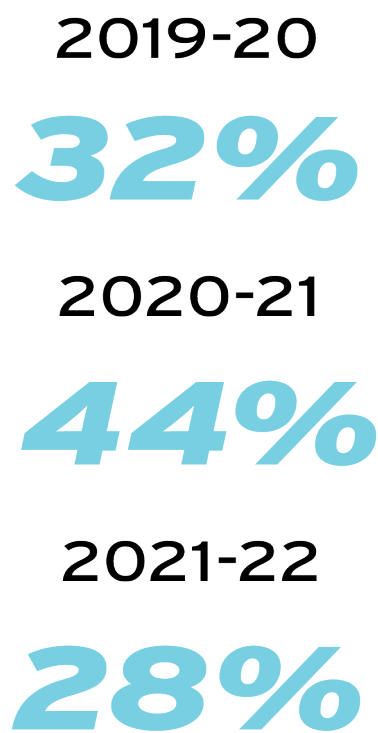


Health coaching



Self-help resources

% of students seen beyond 3-5 sessions



TimelyMD boasts on its website that over 200 colleges and universities and one million students have access to its services. Mallory Olson, media relations manager at TimelyMD, said usually, about 20% of students engage with TimelyCare during their university's first year partnering with the telehealth provider.

With TimelyMD's new partnership between JMU, Virginia Tech and Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), a combined — albeit approximate — more than 85,000 students have new access to TimelyCare this fall, increasing its customer base by roughly 8.5%. Taking into account the 20% use rate, over 17,000 students just from JMU, Virginia Tech and VCU will begin to use TimelyCare this year.

Olson said that's a number TimelyMD is prepared to serve. TimelyMD has more providers in Virginia than in any other state, she said, and has recently hired more.

If a student still needs counseling after completing their allotted 12 free scheduled counseling sessions — TalkNow, psychiatry and other services don't count toward those 12, Abby Waldron, TimelyMD's client success manager working with JMU, said — TimelyMD works with the university counseling center to craft next steps. Whether that means a referral to in-person counseling, an extension of free TimelyCare services or otherwise, students won't get left out in the cold.

"We would not, you know, kind of abandon a student at that point," Waldron said. "We want to make sure that you still have that coverage."

As with any medical provider, students are required to share private information with TimelyMD. Users are asked to fill out medical and family history before scheduling an appointment with a counselor, although most of it can be bypassed and filled out later. JMU students must also log in to TimelyCare using their Dukes email and verify with their JMU eID and Duo Mobile for two-factor authentication. Waldron said visit reports — summaries of scheduled counseling and TalkNow appointments — are created and shared with JMU's Counseling Center.

However, Olson and Waldron emphasized that TimelyCare is HIPAA-compliant. Visit reports are only to be accessed by mental health professionals in the JMU Counseling Center, and usually, Olson said, counselors only review visit reports if there's a safety concern. Professors, administrators and other school employees won't have access to student mental health information.

TalkNow, another service through TimelyMD that provides 24/7 support and crisis care, can serve as a crisis line, Waldron said, but TimelyMD wants students to be proactive when reaching out. "There is no problem too small or too big to bring to TalkNow," Waldron said.

When students reach out to TalkNow, they describe the topic they want to discuss and then initiate a voice or video visit. On average, Waldron said, wait times are under five minutes. The typical call will last 25 to 30 minutes — but can last longer — and provides students with tools to "improve levels of mental health distress."

Waldron said TimelyMD's counselors and health coaches have a variety of interests and specialties listed through the counselors information on the app or website. From that list, students can pick from counselors they're interested in and engage with the therapist's specialties, like faith-based care, other languages and LGBTQ issues, among other topics.

Struggles and adaptations beyond Harrisonburg

Counseling centers both regionally and nationally are dealing with a similar predicament. Peter LeViness, director of counseling and psychological services (CAPS) at the University of Richmond, said CAPS has seen a 162.5% increase of students since 2002-03 — from 333 unique students serviced to 874 in 2021-22 — but the student body remained relatively similar.

LeViness doesn't credit Richmond's near-tripling of counseling demand to students being more depressed or anxious than in the '80s. Nowadays, he said, there's less stigma around getting help — a byproduct of Gen Z buying into the idea that it's OK to express vulnerability, LeViness said, after his generation of counselors encouraged as such.

When LeViness was in college, he said national surveys showed about 20% of people with a mental health disorder sought help from a counseling center, while now, "I would guess" it's closer to 50%-60%.

"More people with disorders are now willing to get help and that should be celebrated, not complained about," LeViness said, who didn't know where the Counseling Center was located while at Brown University for six years as an undergrad and in graduate school prep training almost four decades ago. "Interacting with all kinds of people on campus, having friends, I was on a varsity team, etc., zero people said, 'I'm going to the counseling center' — never was talked about in my presence."

In 2018, Gregg Henriques, a JMU graduate psychology professor, said to *The Breeze* that protected self-esteem may be another catalyst of rising demands in counseling centers nationwide. As college students navigate life away from parents who might've coddled them during their childhoods — a ramification of a movement dubbed "self-esteem nation" that took off in the '80s when parents bubble-wrapped their children's self-esteem — Henriques said, students might be more likely to visit a university counseling center for guidance in their new, unsheltered normal.

Eventually, Richmond CAPS, like many other university counseling centers, had to make a choice: Do they open up more appointment slots for therapists to see more new students, or do they fill up the majority of their appointments with recurrent students? CAPS chose more open slots, and in turn to service more students — 30-minute consultation appointments launched in fall 2020, which students need to schedule in advance but are serviced the same day or day after registering, LeViness said — at the cost of extensive long-term care after having counseling weightlists hit 100 students.

As a result, LeViness said, Richmond CAPS hasn't had a waitlist in two years but is seeing more students than ever before. Even so, CAPS is in the process of educating Richmond's faculty to not just send every student in need of help to them so that it can maintain appointment flexibility, he said.

"My first couple years at UR, we were literally telling faculty and staff, 'No problem is too big or too small. Just send them to the counseling center, and we'll sort out what they need.' Now we're kind of saying, 'Don't think that way anymore,'" LeViness said. "If they're saying study strategies, send them to academic skills first, don't just send everybody to the counseling center. So we need to have help connecting students to the right place from the get go."

The demand is also pressing at small, private liberal arts schools, like at Occidental College in Los Angeles. Home to just over 1,800 students as of fall 2020 and four full-time therapists, Occidental has seen a 15% increase in usage of counseling services among students over the last decade.

However, unlike many universities, Occidental hasn't denied a student a meeting with one of its therapists, Rob Flot, Occidental vice president for student affairs and dean of students, said in the fall 2021 issue of its magazine, "Navigating Well-Being." The article says, still, "some students lament that it can take weeks to land an appointment."

Radford University, Christopher Newport University (CNU), Old Dominion University (ODU) and other Virginia schools have seen increases in demand for mental health services. Brian Lusk, the director of Radford University's counseling center, said that despite a 24% decrease in enrollment, Radford saw a total of 500 students in the past year — almost as much as they saw three years prior with 3,000 more students.

Although universities are facing similar increases in mental health needs, each has a unique approach to navigate the demand. Like JMU, Coastal Carolina and ODU turned — at least in part — to telehealth resources for universities. Coastal Carolina partnered with TimelyMD about one year ago, with positive feedback from students, Lee Carter, assistant vice president for student wellness and health equity at Coastal Carolina, said.

"[Students] really liked the ease of using it — that they can use that kind of wherever, whenever," Carter said. "We have a very large out-of-state population, so another thing that's really

helpful for us is students can use those services wherever they are in the United States."

ODU recently partnered with a different telehealth group, Mantra Health, to expand its clinical hours. Liam Costello, a professional counselor at ODU, said the center has been in "triage mode" following a significant number of staffing changes. Costello said while they've hired more staff, and are hoping to hire more soon, much of their focus has been on the most immediate and significant mental health concerns, taking them away from the rest of campus.

Campuses with smaller student populations, like Radford and CNU, have staffed their centers and utilized unique approaches to address demand. With 8,998 students, Lusk said Radford has four full-time counselors, with five and eight clinical interns last fall and spring, respectively. Radford practices "concise sessions," Lusk said, with the counseling center offering 12, 30-minute sessions or six, one-hour sessions a semester. Lusk said in the last two academic years at Radford, if a student calls into the center they are seen within 24 hours unless they choose otherwise.

"I'm really proud of that because, again, we are small, as I say, but we're mighty in what we have and we do a really great job," Lusk said. "No waiting list here ... I don't believe in that, that's absurd. We can't have waiting lists in mental health because mental health does not wait."

CNU met demand by hiring more staff and trainees, and incorporating wellness into the university community by doing outreach events. Bill Ritchey, executive director of counseling and health services at CNU, said its counseling center has seen increases in the last five years. Ritchey said for about 5,000 students, the CNU counseling center has nine full-time staff — which is about 600 students per one clinician. Ritchey said for universities with larger populations like JMU, it's hard to match accrediting standards of one clinician per 1,500 students.

Support above all

Regardless of campus size, small increases in depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation have contributed to college counseling centers' heightened demand, but decreased stigma is the biggest driver, LeViness said.

In the most recent Healthy Minds Study — winter-spring 2021 — from the University of Michigan, which polls over 100,000 college students nationwide on their mental health behaviors, it estimated 41% of college students experience moderate or severe depression and 34% anxiety. This is up from 25% and 21%, respectively, in 2015-16. Additionally, in the 2021 study, 30% of students said they sought mental health counseling or therapy in the last year versus 23% in 2015-16.

The disorder increases, combined with the decreased stigmatization around seeking help, have left counseling centers nationwide and the therapists inside taking the brunt of the storm — often without the funding or resources to combat it, on top of student bodies demanding more.

Although the therapists on the front lines face a difficult job, Latorre, Onestak and Simspon-McCleary said the community within the Counseling Center is supportive.

When asked about her perspective of the job, Simpson-McCleary said she began to tear up. Her job is hard, she said, but it's worth it. "To be with someone and sit with them in their pain and really see them and then help them move toward something else," she said, "that's a gift."

Latorre encouraged students to keep speaking up — change begins with feedback, and that change might take time, she said, but university counseling centers will remain in the dark about complaints if they're not revealed.

"Keep voicing your concerns because people are listening and we know what you're feeling," Latorre said. "We're trying."

Stay tuned for the second part of this series at breezejmu.org.

CONTACT Grant Johnson at breezesports@gmail.com, Charlotte Matherly at breezeditor@gmail.com and Ashlyn Campbell at breezeinvestigations@gmail.com. For more coverage of JMU and Harrisonburg news, follow the news desk on Twitter @BreezeNewsJMU.

If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health, here are some resources.

JMU Counseling Center: 540-568-6552

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

JMU Office of Public Safety – Emergency: 540-568-6911

Sentara RMH Emergency Department: 540-689-1414

24-Hour Crisis Text Line: Text "HOME" to 741741

New year, new positions

JMU names new senior administration, additions to president's cabinet



Kristina Blyer began her new position July 1.
Emma Connelly / The Breeze

By **KASEY TRAPUZZANO**
The Breeze

As the 2022-23 academic year begins, JMU has announced new senior administration hires — Kristina Blyer, the new associate vice president for health and well-being, and Malika Carter, JMU's inaugural vice president for diversity, equity and inclusion and chief diversity officer — as well as new additions to the president's cabinet.

The Breeze spoke with Blyer and Carter about their backgrounds and what they hope to bring to the university.

Kristina Blyer Associate Vice

President for Health and Well-Being

Blyer, previously the director of the University Health Center (UHC), was announced as the university's new associate vice president (AVP) for health and well-being on June 3, per a press release sent to students, faculty and staff from the Office of Student Affairs. She began her new role July 1.

As part of her new position, Blyer will develop and manage a holistic approach to health and well-being at JMU. Blyer said she wants to investigate how JMU can make its environment healthier and what

it can do to support students as they're learning how to incorporate health and well-being into their lives.

Additionally, Blyer will directly supervise the Counseling Center, UHC and the University Recreation Center (UREC). Blyer said she hopes to "tie the areas together" between the three departments with programs, events and services that are in combination with each other.

"So often we work in individual departments," Blyer said. "I'm interested in seeing what we can do for students that might combine expertise in all three of those areas."

Blyer said her first task in the new position is to learn more about UREC and the Counseling Center — including the staff and students that work in and use those areas — so she can begin to create a strategic plan that helps move forward with health and well-being.

Blyer received her Bachelor of Science in nursing from Eastern Mennonite University. After college, Blyer said she began her career as a registered nurse, where she worked as a pediatric nurse before transitioning into college health at JMU in 2004. During her time at JMU, Blyer has served in multiple different positions at the UHC, including associate director of clinical operations, director of nursing and clinical operations,

director of the UHC and adjunct instructor for the JMU School of Nursing. Blyer also received her master's degree in nursing administration in 2012 and a doctorate in nursing practice in 2016 from JMU, she said.

"I didn't realize when I came [to JMU] how much I would enjoy it," Blyer said. "I have just really enjoyed working with college students."

Tim Miller, vice president for student affairs, was a part of the hiring process for the AVP for health and well-being alongside the search committee, campus partners, the departments of UREC, the Counseling Center and UHC, and students.

For this position, Miller said, JMU was looking for someone who could bring a holistic public health approach and perspective to the role, while also working with partners and offices on and off campus to create the best environment and community for students.


"When you think about college students, they come to this environment usually after someone else has helped take care of all their health and well-being their whole life," Miller said. "We needed someone who could help guide us through guiding [students] as they learn how to take care of and manage their own health and well-being."




Malika Carter will begin her inaugural position at JMU August 25. Photo courtesy of JMU

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8 Miller said while Blyer has already had years of experience at JMU, including teaching nursing and healthcare in the classroom, she's prepared to make the necessary changes going forward.

"Even though she was internal, she's willing to see what could be different and where we can go from here," Miller said. "After a national search, it became very obvious in talking to the selection committee that Dr. Blyer was the right person [for the job]."

Blyer reports directly to Miller and works alongside three other AVPs in student affairs and the dean of students to "create the future direction" of the department, Miller said.

"Everything we do is about the students and their experience at JMU, and all those pieces intersect," Miller said. "If a student's struggling with their health and well-being, they're not going to be able to be as successful with some other aspects of their life and vice versa, so that's how [we'll] work together on a regular daily basis."

Malika Carter

Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion & Chief Diversity Officer

JMU announced Carter as its inaugural vice president for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and chief diversity officer (CDO) on June 6, per a press release sent to students, faculty and staff from the Office of the President. She will begin her new role on Aug. 25.

In her new role, Carter will contribute to university leadership; lead and facilitate efforts to support DEI for students, faculty and staff; build community with students, faculty and staff on and off campus; contribute to recruitment and retention; and supervise the Office of Equal Opportunity, according to the position description. Additionally, Carter will serve on the president's cabinet.

"There are so many different aspects to this job," Carter said. "[One example is] providing a formal way to make sure that individuals feel as

if the institution is responsive to their needs."

Carter said she believes it's important for JMU and other universities to have the position of vice president for DEI and a CDO. Carter said in this position, she'll help improve feedback mechanisms and conflict resolution, communicate culturally and linguistically with diverse individuals, partner with community organizations, collaborate with stakeholders and community members and interpret data — all in ways that are "non-traditional."

"A person in this role is not necessarily beholden to the traditional way that higher education has operated," Carter said. "Institutions historically are built to keep certain people in and certain people out, and it's not just higher education ... We need to do differently in order to welcome in the non-traditional identities and historically marginalized folks that have not been there. That's why you need a role like this one, in order to do what has not been done and to operate in ways that institutions have not been operating."

Carter isn't a JMU alum: She received her doctorate in philosophy with a concentration in institutional analysis from North Dakota State University; a master's degree in higher education and student affairs administration from the University of Vermont; a Bachelor of Science degree in middle childhood education from Cleveland State University; and an Associate of Art with a concentration in stenography from Cuyahoga Community College.

Before coming to JMU, Carter said she served as the first CDO for the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF), beginning in 2017. Prior to SUNY ESF, Carter was the inaugural CDO for the city of Worcester, Massachusetts, and is also the chief executive officer (CEO) of Passion4Pivot LLC, a social justice consulting firm.

Carter said her life experiences — growing up in the states of Arkansas, Mississippi and Ohio while being "historically marginalized,

"historically underrepresented" and having to work while putting herself through school — and her interests in education and the environment are what led her to the DEI field.

"I knew that I wanted to change the world, but I did not know how," Carter said. "Think about all the people in the last 10 years, for instance, who could not gain access or agency in an institution because of their identity. Look at 50 years before that — who's missing? Who could have solved world peace? Who could have given us a cure for HIV? Who could've done that, but because they didn't get access and because they didn't belong, they end up leaving? We as a human family are in a worse spot because we excluded or because we didn't allow people to enter."

Towana Moore, vice president of administration and finance, served as the chairperson for the search committee. In an email to The Breeze, Moore said there were 67 applicants for the position and that the interview process consisted of all-day interviews, which included time with the current vice presidents from various departments, the search committee, the direct reports of the position, current DEI leaders on campus and the campus community. The final four candidates, including Carter, presented to the JMU community in late April and early May. According to the position description sent to The Breeze, JMU was looking for someone who could demonstrate leadership in advancing DEI, along with experience in managing policy development and change, for this position.

Additionally, Carter said she wants to connect with different departments and student organizations across campus so she can understand their agendas and help them in any way that she can.

"I'm not good at sitting in one place," Carter said. "I escape [my office] to go to various different places and learn about people, and that helps me build initiatives internal to the walls of the institution and also to create partnerships — external and

internal ... I think it's important to make sure that I have the ear of [people] and they have the ear of me."

Carter said her main goal in this position is to expand access and "champion" DEI efforts. Carter said both the most exciting and most challenging part of her new position will be to show individuals that DEI is a global issue.

"There is so much at stake globally," Carter said. "It's way more than just our backyard. [I'll be] helping people understand that the work I'll be doing will not only be with a regional and national lens, but also an international lens."

Additional staffing updates and new members on president's cabinet

Art Dean, the executive director for access and inclusion at JMU since 2007, was announced as the university's new associate vice president for diversity, equity and inclusion on July 1, per a press release sent to students, faculty and staff from the Office of the President. Dean began his new role July 1 and will report directly to Carter.

"Art has been a trusted and valued leader at JMU for many years and has developed strong relationships both on and off campus," the press release said. "He has a passionate commitment to, and heart for, the crucial work of diversity and inclusion."

In addition, JMU announced four other positions who will serve on the president's cabinet effective July 1, including Chris Orem, director of institutional research; Elizabeth Oldmixon, vice provost for faculty, curriculum and policy; Narketta Sparkman-Key, associate provost for DEI within Academic Affairs; and Hollie Hall, dean of students.

CONTACT Kasey Trapuzzano at breezenews@gmail.com. For more coverage of JMU and Harrisonburg news, follow the news desk on Twitter @BreezeNewsJMU.



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An **"in-mourning"** dart to Dunkin' for getting rid of the brown sugar cream cold brew.

From someone who craves consistency.

A **"you-have-to-be-kidding"** dart to myself for locking my keys in my car.

From someone who didn't realize locksmiths charge so much.

Tuition troubles

Students feel the effects of inflation through increased cost of education



EMMA SELI | compromising controversy

Inflation is a concept many Americans are familiar with — after all, it affects multiple aspects of people's daily lives — and with the current annual rate standing at 9.1%, citizens are increasingly concerned over the state of the U.S. economy. The annual inflation rate is published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) every month using the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The last measurement taken by the BLS was in June 2022, proving an increase of 1.3% compared to the previous month. For perspective, the average annual inflation rate floats around 3.8% per year in the U.S.

However, on Wednesday, July 27, the Federal Reserve hiked up interest rates by 0.75% and announced the change in target interest rate range to 2.25%-2.5%. This acceleration of the inflation rate has reached a shocking high and is the most significant increase since November 1981.

This increase in inflation will affect the price of a wide range of goods and services, from bread, milk and toilet paper to gas prices and college tuition. With virtually everyone in the country experiencing inflation's adverse side effects, college students and universities are no exception. Low-income individuals are disproportionately affected by the increase in inflation rates, which includes many college students.

Students are beginning to learn some hard truths in terms of the current state of inflation and the overarching economy. While gas prices are decreasing, prices on tuition, food, housing and utilities remain high — this causes serious problems for students, especially those on a tight budget. They will also face an increase in student loan interest rates that will put a strain on students ability to borrow loans to pay their tuition.

There are often multiple causes of inflation, beginning with an increase in demand and a simultaneous decrease in supply and in the value of U.S. currency. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the economy hit a historically rough patch due to numerous factors, including an increase in government spending (i.e. the CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan during the pandemic) and in consumer demand along with continued labor shortages. These, coupled with the infamous global supply chain disruption that brought multiple economies to their knees and the persisting war in Ukraine and its ensuing consequences — specifically, the record number of sanctions on Russia — have led to high inflation and the economic downturn citizens are currently facing.

The Fed continues to tackle inflation through the raising of interest rates, which are then reflected on all types of loans, including

student loans. Rates on new student loans — granted after July 1 — have shot up and federal undergraduate student loan borrowers are expected to pay 4.99% in interest, higher than the previous year's rate of 3.73%. However, those already borrowing federal student loans that have been put on pause repeatedly throughout the pandemic will not be affected by the current increase in rates, because their rates are already fixed. This is good news for old student loan borrowers, but bad news for new ones.

Interest rates are also reflected in tuition prices, which have soared at universities across the country over the past few years. Schools throughout the U.S. are forced to raise the price of tuition and other college expenses because they are facing increasing prices on necessities such as labor, food, energy and

covering the additional tuition charge of \$224. Out-of-state students face an increase of 1.5% for both undergraduate and graduate tuition. For the most part, colleges are at the mercy of the state of the economy, specifically when it comes to inflation; as prices around the country rise, there is no doubt that the cost to function and support an academic institution will significantly increase as well.

Similarly to UVA., JMU's tuition prices have been steadily increasing over the past few years; this includes costs that are included in overall tuition prices, such as the costs of room, board, books, travel and personal costs — however, loan fees have consistently remained at \$76. The 2020-21 annual cost for books was \$1,082, \$5,376 for the board and \$2,004 for personal costs.

In part due to inflation and the economy's



In part due to inflation, students have experienced an increase in the cost of textbooks among other college essentials. Emma Connelly / *The Breeze*

utilities. Colleges around the country have laid off hundreds of thousands of faculty members due to these increasing expenses and the drop in undergraduate enrollment.

College tuition rates often increase twice the amount of the present general interest rates, and tuition typically rises approximately 8% each year — meaning tuition doubles every nine years.

The University of Virginia's Board of Visitors recently approved tuition rates for the 2022-23 academic year, raising the interest rate on tuition and fees by 4.7%. They also approved a 3.7% increase for the following 2023-24 school year. These rates are relatively high when compared to the past six years' rates that averaged below 2%.

JMU's tuition is expected to go up as well, though not significantly. JMU's Executive Committee of the Board of Visitors voted to set a 3% tuition cap for in-state undergraduate students, due to an additional \$4.6 million from the state in order to lower tuition prices. A one-time scholarship will be awarded to all in-state undergraduate and graduate students,

downturn, these prices have risen: The annual cost for books is now \$1,176, \$6,268 for board and \$2,156 for personal costs. These increases in prices have led to an overall increase in annual tuition costs, which in 2020-21 stood at \$28,426 for in-state undergraduate students and \$45,454 for out-of-state students. For the 2022-23 annual cost of tuition, prices rose to \$30,792 for in-state students and \$47,882 for out-of-state students — an astounding increase.

Inflation is seeping into all aspects of everyday life. Whether you're standing in line at the grocery store, placing an online order, paying for dinner or applying for student loans, many are bound by high inflation and the extremely daunting thought of a possible recession — along with the unfathomable truth that students and low-income individuals are expected to be hit the hardest.

CONTACT Emma Seli at seliek@dukes.jmu.edu. For more editorials regarding the JMU and Harrisonburg communities, follow the opinion desk on Instagram and Twitter @Breeze_Opinion.

EDITORIAL BOARD

The editorial board represents the official stance of The Breeze on major issues.

Students gather on the Quad in front lit up Wilson Hall to honor recent tragedies in the local community. Cambria Lee / The Breeze



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Break the cycle

The Breeze shines a light on mental health in the JMU community

Let's not beat around the bush — JMU is struggling.

Our community has been through a lot in recent history. After two years in the throes of COVID-19 — meaning online classes, isolation and a lack of social and mental well-being for many of us — the pressures of mental health and a lack of support felt by students came to a head last semester.

In the aftermath of two on-campus suicides and a shooting at Bridgewater College, all taking place in the first week of February, students showed up. Over 1,000 JMU community members attended a candlelight vigil on the Quad the night of the second suicide, not just to demand greater mental health support from JMU as an institution, but to share their own personal journeys with mental health and to offer support for those struggling. In the following weeks, students gathered on the Quad, occupied Alumnae Hall, met with JMU administrators and advocate for support.

When a third suicide occurred in April — that of JMU softball player Lauren Bernett — we felt that weight, too. We were joined by an entire nation as universities, athletes and others grieved with us.

The loss of life at JMU last semester brought the issue of mental health to a head, leaving administrators racing to dedicate more

attention and resources to mental health efforts on campus.

Mental health awareness has been increasingly emphasized in numerous domains in recent years including higher education. This revealed a higher prevalence of depression and anxiety among other mental health issues on college campuses in the United States than what was previously conceived.

In 2020, 18.4% of students were found to be struggling with depression while 26.2% were struggling with anxiety in an article published in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. Compared to a National Epidemiological Study conducted in 2002 where research indicated that 9% of students had depression and 11.9% had anxiety, it's evident that mental health issues were possibly misunderstood and underreported in the past as well as experiencing exponential growth in recent years.

This sudden spike in mental health issues in college students has caught many universities off guard with underfunded counseling offices and limited mental health resources. According to the Education Advisory Board, utilization of mental health resources on college campuses has grown five times as much as enrollment growth during 2009-15.

Although mental health is a global issue, it

felt as though our community was hit especially hard.

JMU went through a lot last year. But though we were knocked down, we didn't stay down. We've found joy in the darkest moments, community in the loneliest nights.

And in the wake of all of this, JMU is trying. But growing mental health demand is a problem faced by universities across the country, and there isn't one certain answer. There's no easy fix, no one-size-fits-all solution.

That said, JMU is introducing new mental health resources and initiatives. This fall, new telehealth options are available to students free of charge. More staff is being hired in the Counseling Center, and some university employees — like instructors and resident advisors — will receive new mental health training.

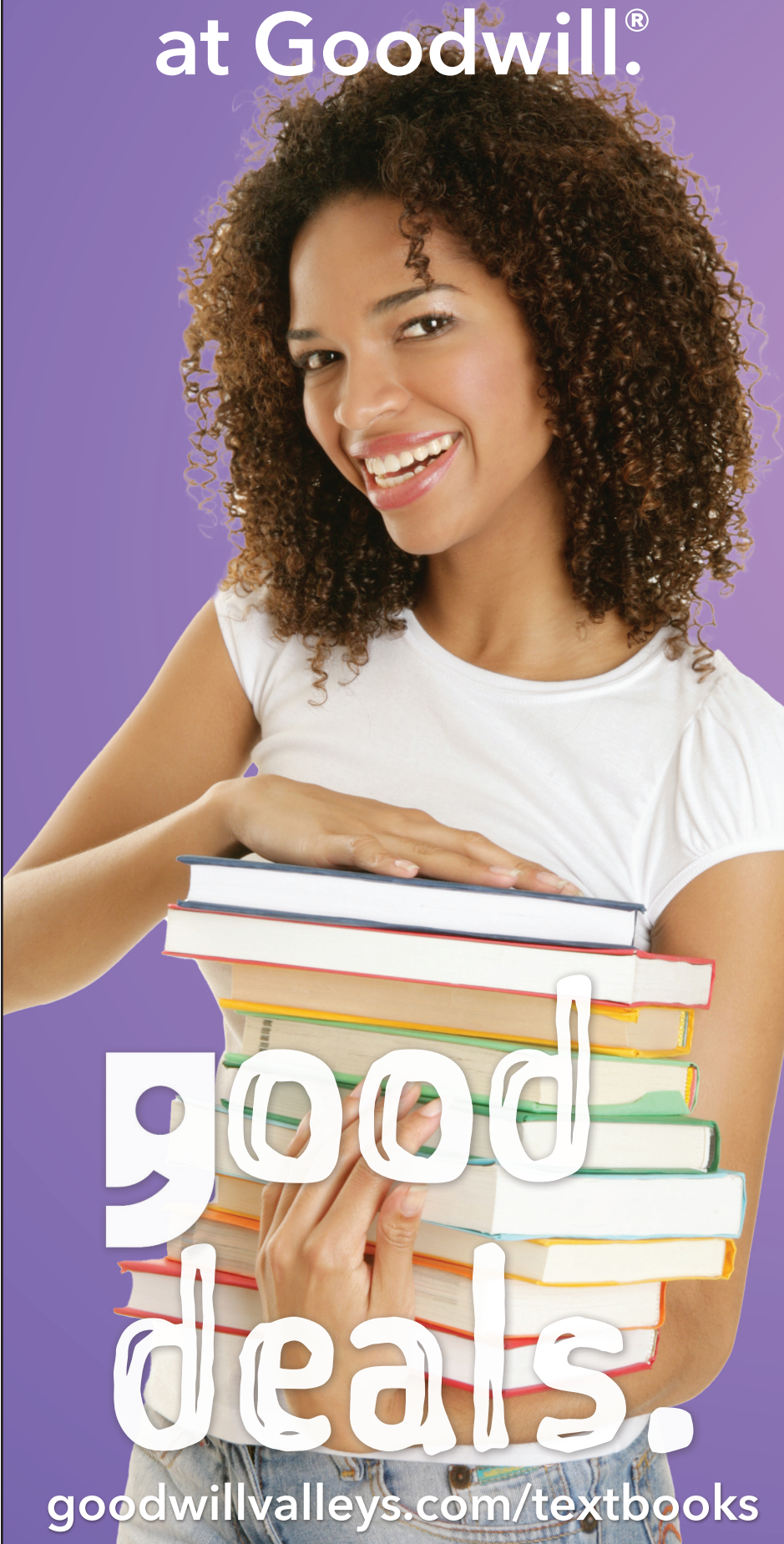
The Breeze is working to publish a series on mental health, with today's installment focusing on the coming changes because these conversations matter. Mental health is something that impacts us all, and it's important that we cover it. The JMU community deserves to understand the state of mental health at JMU and have their voices heard. We will continue to cover mental health, to fight for information and perspectives that the community deserves to hear, and we encourage everyone to continue

to share their stories. This organization is more than just a newspaper, a TV station or a website — we're students as well. We laugh and cry together, feel and care for each other, and most importantly we are here to tell your stories. We work together each week to show the good, the bad and the ugly of this university. We struggle. We succeed. But most importantly, we work to make each other better.

With the growth of technology, especially in this generation, came an immense amount of news and information constantly being consumed on a daily basis. This in turn leads to knowing about almost every tragedy that is happening in our world at any given time. Continuously consuming media can be draining and contribute greatly to mental health issues, especially when you take in tragedy after tragedy that's all happening at the same time and is much bigger than yourself. It's hard to not develop a doomed mind set, to feel like you're carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders.

SEE EDITORIAL, page 13

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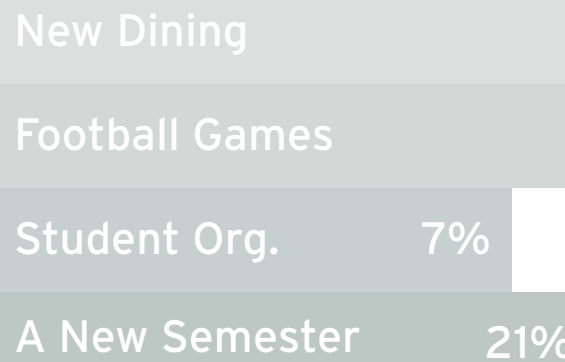
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SCHOOL'S BACK!

From The Breeze Instagram account poll

WHAT ARE YOU MOST EXCITED FOR?

From a poll of 72 respondents



WHAT FROG WEEK ACTIVITY ARE YOU MOST EXCITED FOR?

From a poll of 64 respondents



WHAT COLOR FOLDER IS MATH?

From a poll of 64 respondents



from **EDITORIAL**, page 11

It's hard to not develop a doomed mind set, to feel like you're carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders. Especially for a generation that grew up with technology as a constant. It can make you feel alone. It can make you feel scared.

Mental health is a prominent issue on campus and it's our duty to show that struggle, even as we struggle ourselves. We have an amazing organization and student body to support us as we highlight these issues.

Our job as journalists is to give you the facts. We aim to report these facts in an unbiased manner, but that doesn't mean we don't feel. Mental health affects everyone around you, even those who report on it. You are not alone in your journey to happiness.

We're aware that mental illness has been used as a weapon by the media in the past and caused a lot of the stigma surrounding the issue. But *The Breeze* is here to break that. We as an organization are in the same generation as a majority of who we write and report about. We deal with the same issues you do. We struggle just the same. We cry just the same. We laugh just the same. Most importantly, we feel just the same.

To students, faculty, staff and anyone in the JMU community, know that you're not alone. You may not know us, but we are as deeply ingrained in the community as you are, and are equally impacted by these issues. Continue to connect and share with friends, family, colleagues, even strangers. And know that we're here to help amplify your voice and experiences, if you wish to do so. We shouldn't shy away from discussing mental health, and there is absolutely no shame in needing help.

The Breeze's Editorial Board represents the official stance of the paper on important issues such as this one. For more information, contact Editor-in-Chief Charlotte Matherly at breezeditor@gmail.com.



Following the death of a JMU student-athlete, the community gathered to support the JMU softball team. Savannah Reger / *The Breeze*



Wilson Hall lit up with Bridgewater College, following the shooting on its campus. Breeze file photo



Cat's Cradle is a nonprofit cat rescue based in Harrisonburg, established in 1998, that works to find homes for its cats through a foster program as opposed to a traditional shelter-based facility. Emma Connelly / The Breeze

Lend a helping paw

Nonprofit cat rescue, Cat's Cradle, looking for fosters as cat intake grows

By **MORGAN BLAIR**
contributing writer

For many Harrisonburg businesses, the summer is their slow period. With the majority of JMU students back home or wherever else they may be, some find themselves with fewer customers than they see during the school year. In this regard, Cat's Cradle, a nonprofit cat rescue organization based in Harrisonburg, is no different than any other local business.

Since 1998, Cat's Cradle has been serving the Harrisonburg community by rescuing shelter cats, caring for them, working to find them new and loving homes and being a foster-based alternative to shelter-based organizations. According to Kristin Rhodenizer, the organization's adoption coordinator and a senior public policy major at JMU, now, more than ever, the organization is in need of fosters and adopters to take in cats.

"There definitely is an increase in demand for fosters," Rhodenizer said. "Shelters in this area are completely overcrowded, so if you found a stray cat and were to bring it to a shelter they

would tell you upfront that the cat would most likely get euthanized because they're just so overcrowded."

Adding to the overcrowding problem in shelters, Cat's Cradle has had a lot of cats returned this summer from homes they'd been previously adopted into. This has created problems for the organization. While its process of taking in cats from shelters allows Cat's Cradle to control its intake, Rhodenizer said, the increase in returns makes doing so more difficult.

"I think the beauty of our organization is we get to cap ourselves off so we can stop ourselves from becoming overwhelmed," Rhodenizer said. "But, we are always willing to take back our cats if we can, and we've had a lot of returns this season. So, because of a combination of that and having to move cats around because fosters are on vacation, I'd say it's been a little bit overwhelming."

Cat's Cradle offers many services to the community, which, combined with its growing need for fosters, adds to the strain. The business offers a catch and return service, in which it

catches cats that live a relatively free life on property owned by people who don't mind feeding them; then, they spay and neuter the cats and release them back on the property. Cat's Cradle also offers financial assistance to those who can't afford spay and neuter procedures for their cats, as well as assistance to those with cats in need of medical attention or people who just need help getting started with caring for their cats.

The organization also offers supplies like cat food, litter, beds and blankets to their fosters — items it acquires through donations from the community. Another perk the organization offers fosters comes in the form of foster giveaways like "foster of the month" as well as foster competitions.

"For this kitten season [a period starting in spring when female cats are in heat] we have a big board listing each of the fosters and how many cats they're fostering," Rhodenizer said of the competitions, "and we do giveaway prizes for them — like last month we gave away one of those self-cleaning litterboxes."

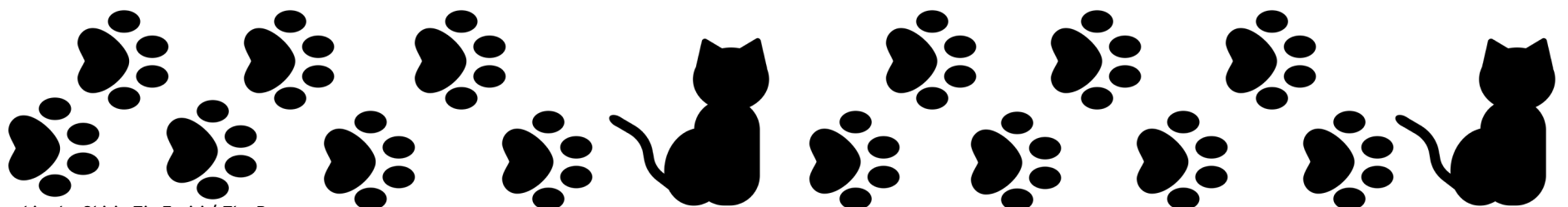
One of the things Cat's Cradle has become

widely known for around the Harrisonburg area is its cat cafes, which the organization hosts occasionally throughout the year, using cats and kittens that are out of quarantine and available for adoption or pre-adoption. During these events, customers pay a \$20 donation to sit in a room and play with kittens while enjoying snacks and treats like coffee. Students like Sidney Roth, a senior communications major at JMU, said they found themselves becoming particularly attached to certain kittens during this event and even ended up adopting one.

"I originally went in for a cat cafe and, I don't know, me and him just kind of connected," Roth said about her kitten, Mocha, whom she adopted from Cat's Cradle. "He wouldn't leave me alone, so I adopted him."

The adoption process seems to be a relatively easy one. Interested customers must fill out the online application. Once it's approved, Cat's Cradle sets up a meet and greet, and once the approved adopter decides they want to adopt a cat from the selection presented to them, they simply sign a contract and pay the \$100 fee. After the process is finished they receive their cat as

Thursday, August 18, 2022



Graphics by Shirin Zia Faqiri / The Breeze



According to Rhodenizer, Cat's Cradle likes its kittens to be adopted in pairs to help them become properly socialized.



Cats Cradle is in need of volunteers in addition to fosters, said Rhodenizer. Photos courtesy of catscradle on Instagram.

well as a PetSmart coupon booklet that can be used to get the supplies they need. The process goes relatively quickly, according to Ziana Johnson, a senior psychology major at JMU who adopted her cat, Ziggy, from Cat's Cradle, and said she expected to wait for weeks but only had to wait one.

"The process went a lot faster than I expected," Johnson said. "I originally wanted a kitten, but after I described the cat I was looking for, they paired me with Ziggy, who was perfect, even though she was older than I had wanted."

Cat's Cradle isn't just looking for fosters but volunteers as well. The nonprofit hosts many weekend adoption events and aims to find help for those, though, according to Rhodenizer, the best way to help the organization is by adopting a cat.

Rhodenizer emphasized that Cat's Cradle really wants its kittens to be adopted in pairs to help make sure they're properly socialized. Rhodenizer also said it's a struggle to get adult cats adopted, like Queen Tortilla, an adult cat that's

struggled to find a good fit because she doesn't do well with many other animals. Queen Tortilla sometimes has "a bit of an attitude" but is still a sweet cat, Rhodenizer said.

The shelter also has a few cats with special needs, like Cupid Shuffle, that Rhodenizer says the staff wants to get adopted. Cupid Shuffle takes medication for a seizure disorder, which has made it harder to get him adopted.

Though the summer has been a slow time for Cat's Cradle, staff members are still working to help the cats of the Harrisonburg area. Through their hard work and dedication, both Johnson and Roth agreed, they're making

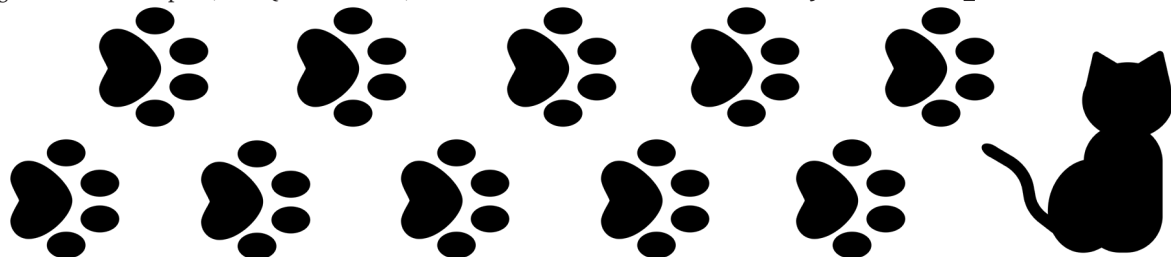
Harrisonburg a little better, one cat at a time.

CONTACT Morgan Blair at blairml@dukes.jmu.edu. For more on the culture, arts and lifestyle of the JMU and Harrisonburg communities, follow the culture desk on Twitter and Instagram @Breeze_Culture.

"I think the beauty of our organization is we get to cap ourselves off so we can stop ourselves from becoming overwhelmed."

Kristin Rhodenizer

Cat's Cradle adoption coordinator



A WEALTH OF HEALTH

How to adjust from summer to school mode

By **HANNAH LIFRIERI**
The Breeze

The beginning of the fall semester is quickly approaching, and while this can be an exciting time for new and returning students, it's common to feel overwhelmed when adjusting to the school year. It took me time to get comfortable in a new atmosphere while juggling classes, having a social life and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. However, taking it day by day with a little help from friends, adjusting couldn't have come easier.

Packing problems

Packing up your room can be a stressful process when deciding what to bring, making sure you're not overpacking and traveling with all of it.

Some things that made moving into a dorm easier for me was creating a list, either on your computer or on paper, that included everything I wanted to bring, including things like toiletries, a mattress topper and other necessities. With this list, I was able to label boxes and bins and effectively organize all my things so I wasn't rummaging through every bin to find what I needed.

Feeling homesick

The nonprofit organization Mental Health America (MHA) recommends a few tips to help with the feeling of homesickness.

- Coping with your feelings and speaking about them rather than forcing yourself to feel better can help relieve homesickness.
- MHA also suggests pre-planning a trip home if you can — having something to look forward to allows excitement to become a distraction.
- Decorate your space with items from home.

A recent study done by Sodexo gathered input from college students and found around 53% of students expressed feelings of loneliness and 47% felt isolated. Students reported ways to break that isolation; one of the biggest outlets was the dining halls: "...87% of current college students say that eating together is the most typical way that they socialize with friends," according to the Sodexo survey.

College is a great time to learn about freedom, time management and responsibility. It can become overwhelming quickly, but it's important to remind yourself that adapting gives you the ability to adjust to new ideas, places and people. The demand for responsibility may seem overwhelming but with time and patience, college can be a positive experience to look back on.

Read the full article at breezejmu.org.

FALL AT FORBES

A special look at the Forbes Center's fall season



By **TAG HILLIARD**
contributing writer

As students and faculty alike arrive back in town for yet another school year, the Forbes Center for the Performing Arts sits patiently awaiting their arrival. After the pandemic halted many performances in the past two years, the theater's lineup boasts a wide variety of events.

Previous favorites such as the three-time Grammy-award-winning Soweto Gospel Choir and top English choir Tenebrae will be returning to Harrisonburg this fall. New acts include the improv comedy show "Whose Live Anyway?" starring the current cast of the hit TV show "Whose Line Is It Anyway?"

Other big names joining the lineup include the Lviv National Philharmonic of Ukraine, the Wailin' Jennys and the family-friendly, extravagant scientist Doktor Kaboom. Another highly anticipated performance, "AND SO WE WALKED," is a solo play written and directed by Cherokee activist DeLanna Studi, who created this critically acclaimed memoir following her 900-mile journey along the Trail of Tears, retracing the steps of her own ancestors.

Regan Byrne, executive director at the Forbes Center, hopes to reach people with a variety of interests.

"I try really hard to incorporate some really strong diversity in the season," Byrne said.

Byrne brings together a multitude of cultures, artistic genres and personalities to Harrisonburg. She said she's optimistic for musicals "Rent" and "Chicago" featuring students from the JMU School of Theatre and Dance and School of Music, hopefully attracting many students and faculty to watch their fellow Dukes.

Rachel Tan, a junior music performance major, encouraged non-music majors to venture out and enjoy a concert at the state-of-the-art facility. Tan said there are certain performances she always looks forward to.

"I always try to see the jazz band and jazz ensemble," Tan said. "They're just really good and great music."

Tan, a member of the JMU Symphony Orchestra, will be performing Oct. 4. While Tan doesn't know much about which pieces the ensemble will be playing at its first concert, she said, the group will play a composition from Adolphus Hailstork, a Black composer based in Virginia Beach, at some point this semester.

Eliza Snipes, a junior theatre major, said students should frequent the Forbes Center.

"Consume this kind of art while you can because it's not as accessible after you graduate," Snipes said.

JMU students are offered several incentives throughout the year to attend a variety of performances, Byrne said, with discounts and

seat availability for students that usually become available a week prior to a show.

The Forbes Center isn't limited to JMU students — it welcomes local schools in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, with the Forbes Center providing up to three free matinees every year. Byrne has scheduled three such shows — "Doktor Kaboom: Look Out! Science Is Coming!," "Meeting Mozart" and "Makin' Cake" — all of which will greet upward of 500 local children in attendance.

The Forbes Center will also be collaborating in partnership with local broadcast radio station WMRA on a live recording of the "Mountain Stage" performance from the center's concert hall Sept. 18, which will later be broadcast on radio stations all over the country. Byrne said this event will "create nice exposure for us, and it puts us on the map in a lot of ways."

With many promising events in store this semester, Byrne and those at the Forbes Center said they look forward to welcoming everyone back to town and encouraging their involvement and attendance to shed their creative and artistic spirit with the community.

CONTACT Tag Hilliard at hilliatm@dukes.jmu.edu. For more on the culture, arts and lifestyle of the JMU and Harrisonburg communities, follow the culture desk on Twitter and Instagram @Breeze_Culture.



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AIVEEN GALLAGHER, VIOLIN**

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why NOT?

Make the most of studying abroad

By **MICHAEL RUSSO**
The Breeze

Imagine this: It's 7 a.m. and you've been traveling for about 20 hours straight with a five-hour time difference. You hop off a bus after an overnight plane ride and are in the middle of a foreign city with your suitcase and a group of people who are nearly strangers to you. A little nerve-racking, right?

This past summer, I had the opportunity to go on the School of Media Arts and Design's Media, Culture and Society program to Ireland for five weeks, visiting Dublin, Derry and Galway. Along the journey, 13 strangers became new friends, I earned six credits and we created countless memories. While I'm sure each person on the trip has their own takeaways, I adopted the mindset of asking myself 'Why not?' throughout the entirety of my travels, and that's a mentality I plan to carry with me as I continue my time at JMU and beyond.

Why not get the steak? Why not go for the sunset walk? Why not go dancing at the silent disco or jump off a diving tower at the beach?

I didn't, and still don't, know when I'll have an opportunity to travel abroad again, so I made it my goal to take advantage of every moment I was in Ireland and each opportunity that came my way to do something fun and different. It also helped that I felt comfortable in my surroundings to try new things, as the people I met in Ireland were very welcoming and kind, and the other students on the trip were similarly seeking to make the most of their time traveling.

Ireland has a rich history, and some of the most monumental eras were within just the past 100 years. After taking an Irish literature class for one of my General Education courses where I read books set during this key period, I looked forward to a walking tour through Dublin where I got to stand in the places I read about. I sent a postcard from the General Post Office (GPO), which was the focal point

of the 1916 Easter Rising, when Irish rebels declared independence from British rule and proclaimed an Irish republic. It was incredible to see the bullet holes in the GPO's exterior from the battles that took place, and it was a full-circle moment to connect back to my English class.

Perhaps one of the things Ireland is best known for is its scenic landscapes across the country. One day, my group stopped at Malin Head, the northernmost point of the island, and just took in the views. The Millennium Falcon was also parked at the tourist spot for a month during the filming of "Star Wars: The Last Jedi." It was windy, cold and felt like it was about to snow — in June, too — but the sound of waves crashing against the cliffs and breathing in the fresh ocean air made any discomfort disappear.

The Aran Islands were equally beautiful, and some of us rented electric bikes for a five-mile ride across the island and hiked up to Dún Aonghasa, a prehistoric stone fort that's over 3,000 years old. I got seasick on the ferry to the island and discovered it's best to take motion sickness medication before going on the boat, but just like the bitter cold at Malin Head, those feelings went away.

While touring the island was a substantial part of our itinerary, our coursework was just as impactful. I took

SMAD 398: Critical Studies in Media Arts and Design, which focused on micro-storytelling through social media, and SOCI 395: Special Topics in Sociology — the class I enrolled in for my role as a writer for our class' final project: Galway at Play. The class split into four groups of three, and we each picked a way the city of Galway exhibits its playful nature. My team focused on cross-cultural cuisine and the international influences on Galways' food scene, and two students worked to compile each group's work — a collection of writing, videos, audio and photos — on a website to display the many aspects of the seaside city.



Malin Head, the northernmost point of Ireland, was home to the Millennium Falcon during the filming of "Star Wars: The Last Jedi." Photos by Michael Russo / The Breeze

Though many travel restrictions have been lifted, COVID-19 is still present, and it reached a few students in the group, myself included. While it was disappointing to have to isolate in the middle of my trip, and I was scared of developing severe illness, my symptoms remained relatively mild. I didn't miss out on too many activities with the rest of the group, and I was still able to enjoy my time in Ireland after recovering.

This highlight reel is all to say that studying abroad was one of the best choices I made at JMU, and the memories I made will stay with me forever. There's nothing like hands-on, experiential learning, especially for a program like SMAD. We had class meetings, of course, but the most impactful moments came from immersing myself in the culture, meeting new people and hearing their stories, which is

simply a dynamic you can't create as effectively in a lecture hall in Harrisonburg.

If you have the chance and means to travel abroad, I absolutely encourage you to do so. There are also many scholarships available through JMU and for external study abroad programs that can help ease the financial burden. College is all about trying new things and seizing opportunities, whether you seek them out or they make their way to you.

Until the next time, sláinte and safe travels!

CONTACT Michael Russo at thebreezeculture@gmail.com. For more on the culture, arts and lifestyle of the JMU and Harrisonburg communities, follow the culture desk on Twitter and Instagram @Breeze_Culture.



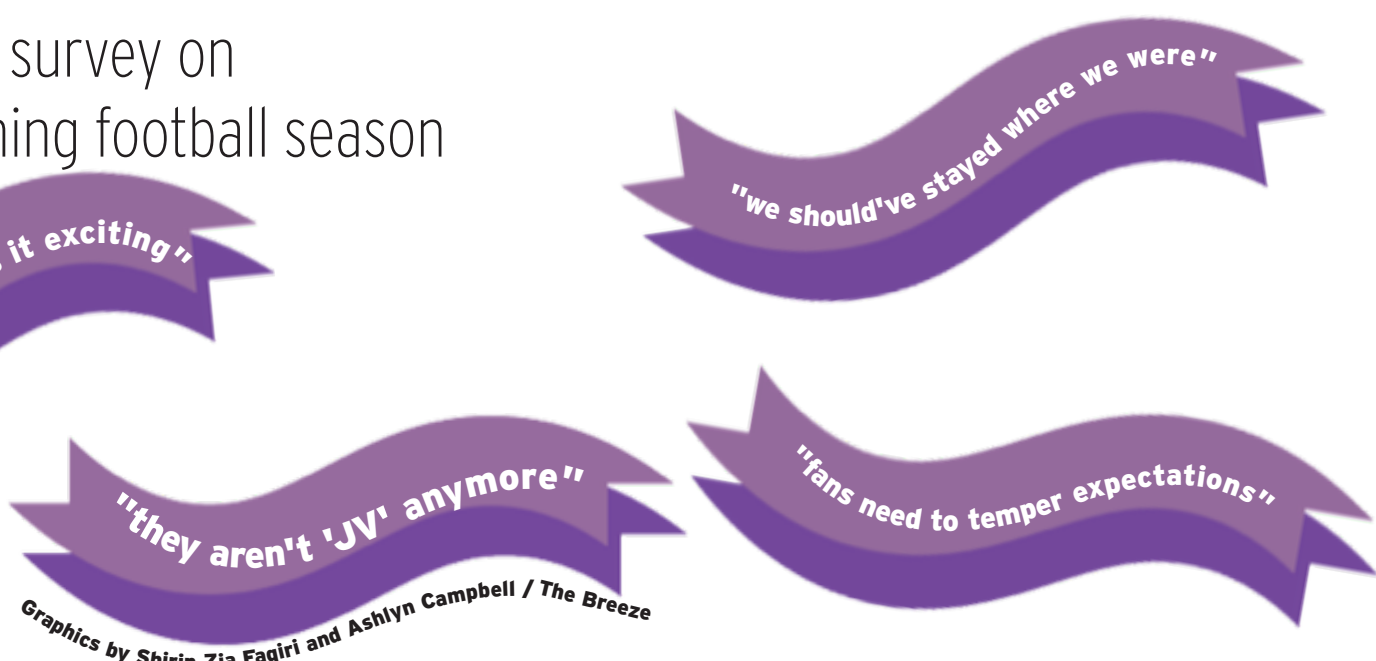
Of the many scenic destinations on the program's itinerary, one of Russo's favorites was visiting the Giant's Causeway.

Big mistake or no-brainer?

JMU fans respond to survey on expectations for coming football season

By WILL MORAN
The Breeze

The Breeze conducted an online survey from Aug. 6-11 to learn the expectations JMU football fans have in its inaugural season in the Sun Belt Conference. The survey received 428 respondents and was disseminated on multiple social media outlets.



Graphics by Shirin Zia Faqiri and Ashlyn Campbell / The Breeze

Where do you expect JMU to finish in the Sun Belt East Division this year?



Fan expectations are higher than those of the Sun Belt's coaches. Preseason polls released July 25 predicted the Dukes will finish next to last in the Sun Belt East division at sixth place, only ahead of Old Dominion, another new member of the conference despite the Monarchs qualifying for a bowl game in 2021.

"Normally I am standing up here [at media days] as one of the favorites to win the [FCS] National Championship and the unanimous favorite to win the conference championship," JMU football head coach Curt Cignetti said. "Today, we are picked next to last in the eastern division."

Cignetti said the only other time he was picked to finish next to last in a division was when he was coaching a former CAA foe of JMU's, Elon, in 2017. That season, the Phoenix defied expectations and were 8-1 after nine games but lost three straight down the stretch.

The fans' expectations for Cignetti's Dukes have a chance to become reality if JMU can pull off a 2017 Elon-esque season, albeit it'll be much more difficult in a conference dubbed the toughest in the Group of 5 and referred to as a "gauntlet" by one respondent.

How many years before JMU plays in a New Year's Six bowl game?



This question may never be answered. The New Year's Six bowl games include the Rose, Sugar, Cotton, Peach, Fiesta and Orange bowls, two of which represent the semifinal games of the College Football Playoff (CFP) on an alternating basis.

The Rose, Sugar and Orange bowls all have conference tie-ins with Power 5 conferences, eliminating JMU from eligibility at this time. This limits JMU to three opportunities at a New Year's Six bowl game, so long as one of these three isn't a CFP semifinal game and JMU is ranked between No. 1-4 in the country.

The highest-ranked conference champion in the Group of Five in the CFP era, Cincinnati at No. 4 in 2021, is the only team to receive a bid to one of the other three bowl games, the Sugar Bowl, in the CFP semifinals. This puts JMU at an extreme disadvantage in the Sun Belt if the Dukes hope to make a New Year's Six bowl in the near future, which usually only sees one representative among 12 teams and is likely why over 80% of respondents said they believe it'll be at least seven years before it happens, if at all.

Would you rather watch JMU compete for an FCS National Championship or potentially a mid-level bowl game?



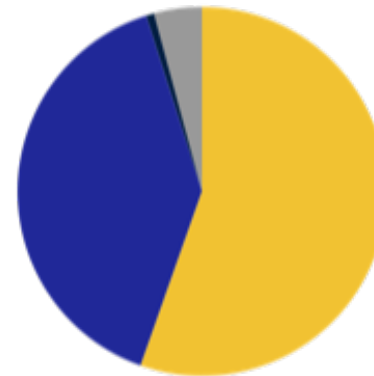
While the prospect of playing for an FCS National Championship seems alluring, respondents seemed to value what comes with a move to the FBS, a bowl game, many saying in the free-response section of the survey that playing FBS teams during the regular season drove the decision to vote for a bowl.

One respondent said it's not as clear cut as a bowl game versus a national championship — it's deeper than that.

"It's having competitive, meaningful games every single week with regional rivals in a conference that if you win the conference title is a meaningful achievement in itself at the highest level of college football divisions," the respondent said, "Vs. check mark, [sic] on to the next blowout wins against overmatched opponents who do not value or invest in their program as much as JMU in order to compete for a national championship."

The ability to compete for a national championship on a yearly basis versus the bid for a mid-major bowl game is quite the trade off to make, one respondent said they're excited for the potential for growth as a result of this move. It seems that fans who responded are excited not just for the prospect of a JMU bowl game but the fruits that come with FBS football.

What past rivalry game are you most looking forward to this season?



JMU and Appalachian State, Old Dominion, Georgia Southern and others share a rich history of competitive games. App State being the top selection is understandable, considering its stretch in the 2000s — JMU lost to Appalachian State in the 2007 FCS playoffs; the following year, the Dukes hosted the Mountaineers and erased a 21-point halftime deficit to win 35-32.

Old Dominion likely gained attention due to the prospect of a budding in-state rivalry. The Dukes and Monarchs have limited history — only two matchups, with ODU winning both. JMU and Georgia Southern have not played since 1992, and in their eight-game history, the Dukes are 1-7.

Marshall and Coastal Carolina also received votes on the survey. JMU has played both programs twice, holding a 0-2 record versus Marshall and a 1-1 record versus Coastal Carolina.

Royalty in office

EMU hires first female AD in school's history



Bert became interim athletic director in May, after Dave King retired following 17 years. Emma Connelly / The Breeze



By **MADISON HRICIK**
The Breeze

Carrie Bert was an elementary education major. She never thought she'd end up working in athletics.

So, when a family pediatrician convinced Bert to apply for an assistant women's volleyball coach position, Bert gave it a try.

"This was not the career path I had in mind," Bert said. "I just keep saying that I feel excited and overwhelmed, and I often use the word 'surprised.'"

Now, roughly 20 years after graduating from Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Bert stepped into a new role as the school's new athletic director (AD).

As of August 5, she's the first female AD in the school's history, and the fifth active AD in the Old Dominion Athletic Conference (ODAC).

"It's started to hit me this week where I'm like, 'Oh, I'm the one,'" Bert said. "It just is crazy, and I feel completely supported with a lot going on right now."

It took a lot of convincing for Bert to believe this was the right decision for her. The AD graduated cum laude from EMU in 1997 with a minor in coaching and music and was a student-athlete on the women's volleyball team, winning the ODAC Championship in 1994. Bert always said she "bleeds blue" and used it to make sure she did the best she could in every position she held at EMU.

After working as the assistant coach for the Royals' women's volleyball team from 2010-14, Bert became the head coach from 2015-19 and coached the team to its first .500 season since 2001 in her final year.

Once she stepped into the administrative side of EMU Athletics, former JMU volleyball assistant coach Casey Steinbrecher stepped in as EMU head coach, and Bert said she felt ready to take on the next challenge ahead.

Bert then worked alongside Dave King as the assistant athletic director and Senior Woman Administrator, a role that let her continue interacting with student-athletes while they continued on their growth on and off the court.

"I think Dave King gave me opportunity after opportunity to explore leadership development programs here with our student-athletes," Bert said, "so he set me up for experiences that along the way, prepared me for this."

While it wasn't necessarily shared with her, it was the expectation that Bert was ready to assume the role of interim director once King decided to retire in May. From there, the EMU Athletics hiring committee wanted to fill the position before the start of the school year.

Ashley Kishorn, the EMU head field hockey coach and compliance coordinator for Royals Athletics, was on the hiring committee and specifically wanted to have a new athletic director who understood the culture and communication needed to manage Division III athletics.

"It definitely played a role in our conversations whenever we were discussing Carrie as the new potential AD," Kishorn said. "And I think it's going to play a huge role as we move forward."

Along with Kishorn, other members of the hiring committee included Mary Jensen, who led the process and is the vice president for enrollment and strategic growth at

EMU. The school made the decision to put together a committee of athletics, academics, student life and advancement representatives considering the position's interaction with those departments while holding an AD title.

"Carrie is an exceptional and inspiring leader with vision, experience and drive to excel in this role," Jensen said in EMU's announcement. "She is a passionate and collaborative leader, grounded in the EMU mission and committed to excellence."

As a woman in sports her entire life, hearing herself being called EMU's first female athletic director is something she's still getting used to. The school's athletics department is fairly new compared to the school's academic history, nearly half the age of the 105-year-old university.

She recalled multiple instances sitting in meetings where her historical significance was brought up and celebrated, and while Bert accepts the honor, it hasn't changed how empowered it made her feel.

"I had several of those women email me, telling me to reach out to them to set up an interview," Bert said. "I mean, anything they could do to be supportive."

Bert has been in communication with other ODAC AD's, many of which immediately congratulated Bert once EMU made the announcement. Bert said it's almost "surreal" sitting on Zoom with so many other women in the highest level of athletic administration at the schools' levels.

Growing up in Ohio, Bert said, she's always noticed the gap between men and women in athletics. She'd often keep a mental note of the number of women present in meetings she attends — it's part of why Bert feels so passionately about the impact her historical mark makes on the growing community of women in sports.

"I was celebrated as a student-athlete growing up in northeast Ohio, but I also dealt with a lot of things that females deal with," Bert said. "There was a lot of stereotyping, a lot of misogyny, a lot of commentary on my body. So, I want our young women to feel honored and valued for the strength and beauty of their body and in athletics."

An estimated 20% of enrolled EMU students participate in Royals' athletics whether in one sport or as a dual- or tri-sport athlete. There are 10 women's sports and eight men's sports, with all but men's

volleyball competing in the ODAC.

The large number of student-athletes within the student population presents Bert's biggest challenge as she begins her tenure as AD — how to aid the university in fundraising.

Bert said she wants to help continue raising money for an updated track and field facility, among other facility updates, and has a personal goal of expanding alumni engagement on multiple fronts, such as communication and awareness to help pass down wisdom to current Royals.

Bert's goal is also to help make all EMU athletic programs a more "consistent culture of success," she said, specifically when describing her desire to see more blue and white play in conference championships. The ODAC is considerably one of the most competitive Division III conferences in the country, but Bert believes the school has the potential to make a bigger name for itself.

The first step of that goal is to help fill in the final administrative and coaching roles that EMU is still missing. The school is still trying to add a performance coach and a men's volleyball coach, and it just hired a new administrative assistant. Bert said she has loved working with the staff as they've helped her get used to the AD role, answering questions and offering advice as needed.

Bert also works with the Bridgewater AD, Curt Kendall, and communicates with him regularly. And while EMU coaches collaborate and work with some JMU coaches, Bert hasn't had the chance to get to know JMU AD Jeff Bourne just yet.

Bert said she hopes to learn and work with JMU Athletics some within NCAA regulations in the future. So, while the two ADs haven't put anything together, Bert said she hopes it's soon.

At the end of the day, Bert is still based strongly in her family and the community she fell in love with in college. She's spent nearly her entire adult life in the heart of Harrisonburg and EMU, making her entrance as an athletic director that much more powerful.

Even if her competitive demeanor is truly the reason she is where she is today.

CONTACT Madison Hricik at breesports@gmail.com. For more sports coverage, follow the sports desk on Twitter @TheBreezeSports.



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Coast to coast

JMU will travel roughly 10,000 miles for games this fall. Breeze file photo

Field hockey embraces challenge of independent season

By ZACH MENDENHALL
The Breeze

In its prior season, the farthest JMU field hockey traveled to face an opponent was Boone, North Carolina. This season the Dukes find themselves across the country in California in two short months, where they'll play three games in four days.

It'll be the farthest a JMU program has ever traveled for a road game. And while the Sun Belt Conference doesn't currently sponsor field hockey, heavy traveling awaits JMU after an offseason spent camping, among other activities, to develop chemistry as an independent program.

"We are almost sure, in fact, that we're joining the Sun Belt next year," senior forward Evelin Zwager said. "We chose an independent season over different conferences and we're just super excited for the challenge this year."

It was only a season ago that JMU triumphed all the way to the CAA championship game, but its run ended in defeat to Delaware — a school that's a regular opponent of the Dukes. Along with Delaware, the Dukes are bidding farewell this season to most schools that fell on their schedule every year as members of the CAA.

Unlike most JMU sports, field hockey won't be seeing the likes of Marshall, Old Dominion, Georgia State and other Sun Belt programs yet. It'll be an independent program in 2022 as it waits for the Sun Belt to sponsor field hockey, a move to be explored by the conference for 2023-24.

The Dukes are a stranger to many of the teams that appear on its schedule. This fall, JMU is set to play Louisville, a team JMU faced only four times over the last decade but now twice in two years; Syracuse, whose only meeting with JMU field hockey was a loss to the Dukes in 1995; and Bellarmine University, which has never seen the Dukes. Other new teams showing up on JMU's schedule include Iowa, Wake Forest, Stanford, UC Davis, UC Berkeley and Rutgers.

With JMU entering its independent schedule, the Dukes recognize it's more important than ever to have each other's backs, Zwager said. Numerous chemistry building activities occurred on a camping trip taken by the team this offseason that would help prepare them for the independent slate.

"We did team-building for a couple days where we camped out," Christy Morgan, JMU field hockey head coach, said. "We rock

climbed, we had a pickleball competition and we all connected as people off the field ... My hope is that that transfers onto the field, and it has already."

Junior defender Sarah Beers said the retreat helped build connections because the incoming crop of players is so big, with the team consisting of 28 players for the first time in team history. JMU has had a 26-player roster for the past two years and 24-25 in the couple of years before that. The trip also helped players "stay super connected to people like upperclassmen," Zwager said.

Entering a new schedule comes with new challenges, but the team said they're prepared to take these on.

Zwager said the connections built made the first practice not feel like one from a chemistry standpoint. She said the team connected from "the moment summer started" following the bonding activities before preseason practices commenced.

"We're just trying to remind each other every time we step on the field that it's OK to make mistakes," Beers said, "and it's OK to trust one another."

JMU won't be able to show off its chemistry at home, with only one-third of its regular season games in Harrisonburg. With games in six different states and traveling around 10,000 miles, it could present an issue, but it doesn't seem to right now, Zwager said.

"We see going to California as a great opportunity and one of the greatest adventures here," Zwager said. The team is also "very excited to travel together," as it provides an opportunity for the already established chemistry to continue growing.

JMU doesn't start out traveling too far, though. It plays Maryland in an exhibition match Aug. 18 and kicks off regular season Aug. 26 against Richmond at home.

Beers said travel fatigue this fall is offset by the Dukes' depth, allowing more rest time when starters get tired. She said it gives the team "flexibility" in that sense.

And, for now, players' expectations are flying sky-high, but not in planes just yet.

"[We're] just being so confident that we're just, we're just gonna win every game," Zwager said. "Just the feeling that we're creating right now and the connections we have, we feel lucky to play."

CONTACT Zach Mendenhall at mendenz1@dukes.jmu.edu. For more field hockey coverage, follow the sports desk on Twitter @TheBreezeSports.

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SWEETS

Sweet Mucci
glazed donut grilled with cheddar cheese, bacon crumbles and a fried egg 6.25

Chocolate Chip Cookies freshly baked 1.75

Sweet N'ziz homemade crispy rice treats 1.75

Old-Fashioned Bread Pudding 2.25
cinnamon & raisin

DAILY SPECIALS

MONDAY Slater-Douglas pepperoni, provolone, sauteed peppers & onions, & tomato slices grilled on a roll and served with a shot of tomato soup 7.95

TUESDAY B-Willy american cheese, taylor ham, & honey bbq chips, grilled with butter on hearty white bread 6.45

WEDNESDAY Hungry Lucas Melt smoked ham, pepperoni, and provolone grilled in a baguette and served with a shot of tomato soup 8.25

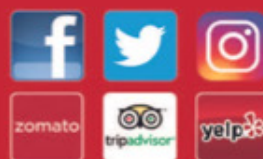
THURSDAY Smokey Chico smoked ham, smoked gouda, lettuce, tomato & honey mustard grilled with butter on multigrain bread 6.95

FRIDAY Trotta-Cade cheddar, avocado, tomato, & grilled mac & cheese tucked into a roll 7.95

SATURDAY Southern Sandra Jane pimento cheddar jalapeno spread & lettuce grilled with butter on multigrain bread 5.95

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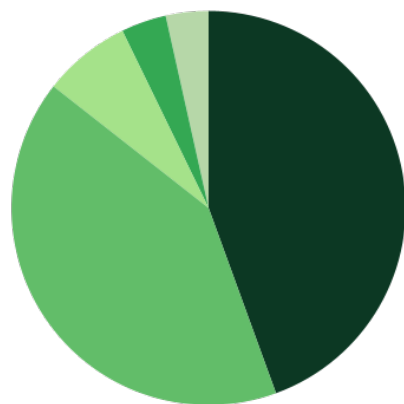


Sunny era, conflicted opinions

Respondents split on future matchup excitement, football Sun Belt title outlook, survey shows

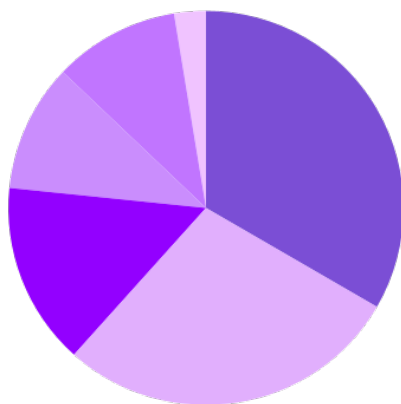


Due to its transition from the FCS to the FBS, JMU is not eligible for the Sun Belt Conference championship this season. How many years before JMU wins the Sun Belt?



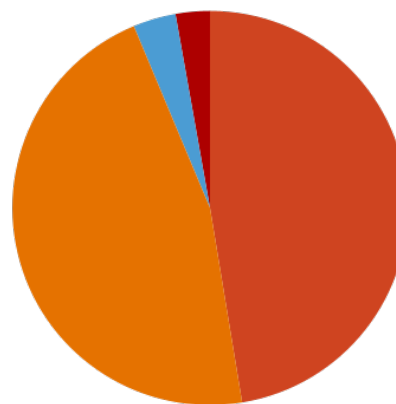
Next year: 3.5%
2-3 years: 41.1%
4-5 years: 44.4%
6-7 years: 7.2%
8+ years: 3.7%

How many JMU sports do you expect to play in a conference championship game this season? (all sports besides football are eligible)



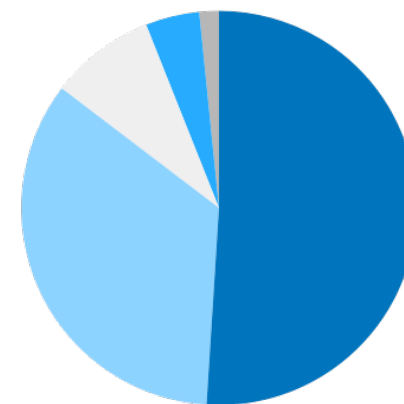
0 sports: 2.6%
1 sport: 10.5%
2 sports: 28.2%
3 sports: 33.4%
4 sports: 15%
5+ sports: 10.3%

What future Power 5 matchup excites you the most?



Louisville, 2022: 2.8%
Virginia, 2023: 46.3%
North Carolina, 2024 & 2028: 3.5%
Virginia Tech, 2025: 47.4%

How many games do you expect JMU football to win this season?



0-3 games: 8.6%
4-5 games: 34.3%
6-7 games: 50.9%
8-9 games: 4.4%
10-11 games: 1.6%

from **JMU FANS**, page 18

"I won't be watching as much," one respondent said, "since we won't be eligible for any bowl or championship."

A handful of respondents felt this way about being held out of the conference championship and bowl games, with one comparing it to the CAA ban from last year. That respondent said the fans went "bananas" about the CAA ban last year, wondering if the "fan base will be as upset this year."

Looking at the responses, this is probably a realistic expectation. The transition from the FCS to the FBS is going to be difficult — Cignetti said it himself.

"We could get away with things at the FCS level and play our C+ game ... and still get the result and still have a great weekend," Cignetti said. "We can't do that anymore because we are going to be playing good teams week in and week out, and we got to play our A game more often."

While the decision for conference realignment was mostly driven by football, all other sports at JMU are transitioning as a result of this jump to the Sun Belt, albeit three JMU sports — lacrosse, field hockey and swim & dive — aren't currently sponsored by the conference.

The majority of respondents said multiple teams will compete for conference championships, with only 2.6% thinking that no team will compete for one. The fans might be onto something — on the podium at Sun Belt media day, JMU graduate running back Percy Agyei-Obese put it simply: "The standard is excellence at JMU."

This is seen outside of football, with multiple teams competing for conference titles each year at JMU, including lacrosse winning a national championship in 2018 and softball reaching the Women's College World Series in 2021.

This is again a case of in-state rivalries gaining more attention, with Virginia Tech and UVa. receiving almost every vote. JMU fans have previously referred back to the 21-16 victory against Virginia Tech in 2010, of course, because that was one of the biggest wins in program history, and also one of only six games in which an FCS team defeated a ranked FBS opponent since 1978.

A meeting with UVa. is scheduled for 2023, another in-state matchup JMU fans shared excitement for. The teams have met three times, with the Dukes winning once.

The Dukes also had a matchup with Liberty University scheduled for 2026. The game, scheduled to be played in Lynchburg, was canceled due to a clause in their contract allowing for a cancellation of the game if either team moved conferences.

A new contract was agreed upon with the two teams meeting in 2033 in Lynchburg and 2034 in Harrisonburg.

The majority of fans think JMU will have a winning record, but one said "it's hard to get excited for only a 5 to 6 win team." [sic]

While this is true, the move to the FBS is a big step, with another respondent bringing up the uncertainty about how JMU will fare in its first season in the FBS.

"This year is really a toss up," the respondent wrote. "We could go 9 and 2 or we could go 2 and 9, I really don't know what's going to happen. This team is rebuilding a little bit after losing so much talent to the transfer portal, but if our new recruits can step up and really do their part then we can have a really great season."

Read the full story at breezejmu.org.

Grant Johnson contributed to this article.

CONTACT Will Moran at moranwp@dukes.edu. For more football coverage, follow the sports desk on Twitter @TheBreezeSports.

FOR RELEASE AUGUST 15, 2022

Los Angeles Times Daily Crossword Puzzle

Edited by Patti Varol and Joyce Lewis

- ACROSS**
- 1 ___ the fat
 - 5 Fill, as a teddy bear
 - 10 Bonneville Salt Flats state
 - 14 Toy block brand with Creator 3-in-1 sets
 - 15 Pitch-fixing pro
 - 16 Indian flatbread
 - 17 Hankering
 - 18 Submit taxes online
 - 19 Severely overcook
 - 20 Awesome event in military history?
 - 22 Desertlike
 - 23 Signs off on
 - 24 Tree in a tray
 - 26 Penne and pappardelle
 - 30 Minor mistake
 - 32 Scrub energetically
 - 33 Awesome side at a barbecue?
 - 38 Comic ___: casual typeface
 - 39 Warty jumpers
 - 40 "That is a fact"
 - 41 Awesome double Dutch accessory?
 - 43 Judy Blume's "Tales of a Fourth ___ Nothing"
 - 44 Softball scores
 - 45 Telephoned
 - 46 Hypothetical scenario
 - 50 Hotmail alternative
 - 51 A pop
 - 52 Awesome tennis racket?
 - 59 Digging
 - 60 Spaghetti Western director Sergio
 - 61 Roof overhang
 - 62 Splits
 - 63 Superexcited
 - 64 Marvel Comics mutants
 - 65 ___-and-seek
 - 66 Trades blows
 - 67 Structure with stakes
- DOWN**
- 1 Sandwich type
 - 2 Sandwich type

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
14				15					16				
17				18					19				
20				21					22				
				23				24	25				
26	27	28	29			30	31						
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46	47	48	49				50						
51					52	53	54			55	56	57	58
59					60					61			
62					63					64			
65					66					67			

By Carly Schuna

8/15/22

- 3 Spaghetti carbonara ingredients
- 4 Misfortunes
- 5 Swordfish servings
- 6 Clumps of fur
- 7 Scoville ___: chili pepper heat measurement
- 8 Succumbed to gravity
- 9 Giveaways for sampling, e.g.
- 10 "Blue Ain't Your Color" country singer Keith
- 11 Travels with the band
- 12 Open courtyards
- 13 Asian language related to Urdu
- 21 Wild pig
- 25 Choose (to)
- 26 Hissed "Hey!"
- 27 Smoothie bowl berry
- 28 Spotify selection
- 29 Booty
- 30 Scoreless Scrabble turns
- 31 News story opening, in journalism jargon
- 33 Shortly

B

STUMPED?

FIND THE ANSWERS ONLINE

WWW.BREEZEJMU.ORG/SITE/CROSSWORD_ANSWERS/

- 34 ___-Alt-Del
- 35 Spoken, not written
- 36 Disrespectful
- 37 "___ a lift?"
- 39 Artisan chocolate treats
- 42 Uni- + bi-
- 43 Huge bash
- 45 Quakes in fear
- 46 Put on a scale
- 47 Vietnam's capital
- 48 Played a role
- 49 "The ones I'm pointing at"
- 50 Ed of "Up"
- 53 Jeté, e.g.
- 54 Lotus pose discipline
- 55 Smartphone message
- 56 Subdue, as wild hair
- 57 Neck and neck
- 58 Tenant's monthly payment

5	2	3	9		8			
4							8	1
	3	1			5			7
	6						3	
7			3			1	6	
8	4						7	5
			5		9	8		2



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Part-Time Job Opportunity - Custodian Senior

Do you want a job with the City that helps project a friendly image to our citizens, employees and others? If so, the Custodian Senior position in the City's Parks and Recreation Department may be the right opportunity for you! Preferred Hiring Range: \$12.03/hr. - \$13.83/hr. EOE.



Career Opportunity - Public Utilities Departments Technician

Do you want to make a direct impact in the local community by utilizing your technical skills in a variety of installation, maintenance, and repair projects? If so, apply to the Public Utilities Department's Technician position! Find out more/apply online: <https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/employment>. EOE..



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Part-Time Home Health Aide needed for myself near JMU campus! I am wheelchair bound due to Parkinson's and need another part time nursing assistant to fill in during the week! Contact me at 540 271 0439 with serious inquiries only!

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Hip-Hop Teacher Position open for qualified applicants for 2022-2023 academic year at established studio. Interview required. Call 540-810-3631 to inquire.

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