

# What unites us and pushes us to evolve

*Embracing JMU traditions, value and change*

**E**ach summer at James Madison University, I am reminded of the confluence of tradition and progress that is our hallmark. A few weeks ago, we welcomed the Class of 2011 as our newest Madison alumni. And, we just welcomed the Class of 2015 as our next class of JMU freshmen.

We are especially adept at striking the right balance of tradition and progress at JMU. This balance is a dynamic one, undergoing constant refinement, never still. What unites us and pushes us to evolve is the Madison Experience, which is founded on certain enduring values.

Foremost among them is our focus on the student. Since our founding and right up to the present, our alumni report that their professors challenged them academically and engaged them personally. This quality is impressive for a university of our scope and size, and one that we consciously and conscientiously nurture. Our professors — serious scholars who are advancing their disciplines with their own research — teach students in the classroom and are willing to continue one-on-one in even deeper discussion. They offer myriad opportunities for meaningful undergraduate research and support student initiative.

Directly connected to our focus on the student is another deep-rooted value — JMU's commitment to the world around us. Taken together, these values spur our innovative spirit. At the most basic level, they underscore that our academic programs have not stood still. Alumni who graduated several decades ago wouldn't recognize the biotechnology lab or materials lab of today. Our academic leaders continually anticipate societal change and transform programs to best prepare our students and to empower them to make life better for themselves and others. Alumni say regularly that they are amazed at the growth and development of campus that occurs in our ongoing endeavor. We are so accustomed to change that change itself is a revered tradition.

As if to emphasize the point, an enlarged Bridgeforth Stadium opens anew this fall increasing our crowd capacity to 25,000 seats. The newly renovated Wayland Hall also opens with a new mission as an arts learning community. Students from the College of Visual and Performing Arts will live, work and learn together in a space designed to deepen their arts education. Wayland is equipped with residence, performance, exhibition and classroom spaces and is our first building to be retrofitted with a highly efficient geothermal heating and cooling system. This legacy bluestone building was designed to be the first Platinum LEED certified residence hall renovation in the country, another symbol of the merger of past and future.

We will manage to uphold our record of having a crane on campus again this year. Construction crews head next to Duke Hall, built in 1967 to house our School of Art, Design and Art History.



**"Embracing both longstanding traditions and a willingness to evolve sets JMU apart," says JMU President Linwood H. Rose.**

Duke will undergo extensive remodeling in the spring. This next phase of our focus on the arts follows a heralded first year of offerings in the Forbes Center for the Performing Arts.

The Commonwealth of Virginia has also approved planning funds for the first phase of renovation of what we're calling the North Campus, which comprises the old Rockingham Memorial Hospital facilities. One of the first tenants of the North Campus will be the Student Success Center, which is already a national model for its proactive focus on helping students get the most out of their Madison Experience. Its new incarnation will allow

us to bring together under one roof our essential student services and activities, from freshman Orientation to the Learning Resource Center to Career and Academic Planning, offering a full lifecycle of student enrichment. Student Success is one of the programs that makes the Madison Experience immediately recognizable to students and alumni.

Our fusion of past and present will be obvious too this fall as we celebrate 100 years of Madison alumni at Homecoming. It has been a century since our first Madison graduate went into the world to make a difference. We have reached the point where three and four generations of families have attended JMU. I am seeing how the Madison connection and our concept of tradition and change transcends generations. I hope to see you at Homecoming Sept. 30–Oct. 2 and celebrate this alumni centennial with you.

It is true that traditions and values endure only insofar as we make them. War. Depression. Social upheaval. During America's most recent economic downturn, the university and donors came together to help students in sudden dire financial straits to continue their JMU educations. As you will read in this issue's Special Report, we are transforming that successful emergency fundraising effort into a permanent program called Madison Forever. Someday, the students you helped will, like their predecessors who gave so generously, play a significant role in the life of Madison.

Finally, as I remind you that this issue of *Madison* is also our student recruitment issue, I hope I have made it clear that you are the most important touchstone in our tradition. Please continue the Madison Experience by passing on your copy of *Madison* to a worthy high-school student. Thank you.

LINWOOD H. ROSE  
*President, James Madison University*