

{Madison Perspectives}

# Madison milestones mark alumni influence

*Alumni help provide stability during times of transition*

BY JAMIE JONES MILLER ('99), president, JMU Alumni Association Board

Someone recently mentioned to me that the last time JMU underwent a presidential transition I was a student. Now here I am, more than 13 years later, serving as the JMU Alumni Association president as we embark on our next transition. It certainly doesn't feel like it has been that long to me, but the importance of stability in the leadership of JMU for more than

a decade — a decade that saw major milestones and extraordinary growth — cannot be understated. It has been an honor to be a part of the JMU community for these milestones, including JMU's Centennial in 2008 and the Alumni Association Centennial in 2011. These achievements prove that JMU does not just manage change. We drive the change. We are the change.

I look back on my senior year and remember the feeling of sadness on campus regarding President Ronald E. Carrier's retirement. Students had a deep respect for his contributions to JMU. At the same time, it felt like the university, and its students in particular, were on the cusp of something extraordinary. You could tell something big was happening. It was a time of personal transition for me, as I was looking toward graduation with a few job prospects in hand and some uncertainty about my first steps post-JMU. I know many of my friends felt the same way. From recent conversations with a few current students, I know our seniors are facing the same questions with graduation right around the corner.

I also recall the optimism and sense of opportunity that Dr. Rose brought to the president's office — the feeling that JMU would be in good hands. And it has been. Consider this: Since taking office, Dr. Rose has conferred more than 56,000 degrees — nearly half of the total degrees awarded by the university. Not only am I in this category as a member of the Class of 1999, my husband Tim ('96) earned his master's degree from JMU in 2000.

Despite the challenges brought on by enrollment growth, JMU was listed in the Princeton Review's "Best Value Colleges" guides

in 2009, 2010 and 2011, and was ranked as the top public, masters-level university in the South for 16 consecutive years by *U.S. News & World Report*. Our optimism proved to have merit. There is no doubt that JMU has been in good hands.

JMU alumni provide stability during times of transition. President-Elect Jonathan Alger articulated this perfectly in his acceptance speech when he said, "Alumni and friends, you are the lifeblood of our institution." JMU truly values our alumni and has an excellent history of recognizing their individual and collective contributions. For example, each year the university hosts the annual Bluestone Society induction ceremony for graduates celebrating their 50th reunion. This year's Bluestone Society inductees — the Class of 1962 — attended Madison College during the tenure of President G. Tyler Miller. Members of the Class of 1962 have seen tremendous growth during their 50 years of the Madison Experience. They watched Dr. Miller and Dr. Carrier build facilities, increase enrollment and make JMU coed. Under Dr. Rose's leadership, they have seen JMU's mission evolve to inspire students, alumni, faculty and staff to Be the Change as part of a community committed to preparing students to be educated and

enlightened citizens who lead productive and meaningful lives.

These themes are reflected upon during the annual Bluestone Reunion candlelighting ceremony, which welcomes the 50th year reunion class to the Bluestone Society. If you ever have a chance to witness this event, take advantage. It is a special Madison tradition.

Recently added to this moving tradition is the Senior Countdown candlelighting ceremony, which welcomes graduation seniors to the JMU Alumni Association and to their new role as alumni. As we light the candles for the Class of 1962 and the Class of 2012 at ceremonies this year, we will honor the past, celebrate the present, and look toward a bright future for JMU.

\* See images from alumni events and traditions at [www.jmu.edu/alumni](http://www.jmu.edu/alumni)



(Above): JMU Alumni Association President Jamie Jones Miller ('99) speaks at a Washington, D.C., alumni event. (Inset): President Linwood Rose and Miller at the dedication of Alumni Association Centennial Park.