



'It is impossible to *truly know* someone simply by face value.'

# Embracing a global community

BY JAN GILLIS ('07)

## *Brian Caperton* ('13)

psychology major | Warrenton, Va.



JMU is where he belongs. Touring campus as a prospective student, “what really drew me in was the overwhelming sense of community,” says Brian Caperton ('13).

His Madison Experience has confirmed that JMU is a special place. “JMU has allowed me a refreshingly different experience,” says Caperton, a psychology major from Warrenton, Va. He adds that one huge appeal is that JMU students often prioritize service and putting others before self — qualities that Caperton tries to emulate.

The May 2013 graduate describes his JMU academic experience as “radical learning — wholly immersing oneself into another person’s experience.” It involves challenging perceptions, assuming civic responsibility and making a difference. “Learning in this fashion often takes place best with a group — the strengths of each individual culminate to ‘fill the gaps.’” One of Caperton’s favorite classes has been Psychology and Culture with professor Matt Lee. “It’s a classroom setting that prioritizes experiential learning and open dialogue.” This type of learning allows JMU students to gain a deeper understanding of the world.

Caperton has applied his classroom learning in an Alternative Spring Break trip working with Jamaica’s Committee for Upliftment of the Mentally Ill. He says the experience allowed him to “cultivate positive change in an unfamiliar context.” Caperton assisted in the Committee for

Upliftment of the Mentally Ill agency’s work in reintegrating mentally disabled and homeless individuals into mainstream society.

In his classroom discussions, Lee emphasizes that students have to work to understand people better. At CUMI, Caperton got to know clients on a one-on-one basis — listening and empathizing to promote healing.

“One individual loved to drum, and when he found out that I love music, he didn’t hesitate to bring an extra pair of drumsticks. One afternoon, we spent hours listening to my iPod and drumming on random objects. Every time I played him a new song, he offered me a music lesson. He was an incredibly gifted, joyful individual,” Caperton says.

His CUMI experience is an indelible reinforcement of the classroom lesson on the importance of discovering another person’s real worth: “It reminded me that it is impossible to truly know someone [simply] by face value.”

Caperton is taking his desire to participate in positive change to the next level. He is pursuing graduate studies in clinical mental health counseling at JMU and has his sights set on working in developing countries in some form of crisis intervention. **ME**