

Day to speak on panels and offer career advice and job tips. Alumni regularly post their career updates on the SMAD website, so students have a wealth of role models and potential contacts.

Advice and guidance are among the key things successful alumni can offer to students and young graduates, and alumni are leading the way in how the university offers this advice. Scholarship donor Dean Leipsner ('87), who screened his own film, *The Bystander Theory*, at SMAD



**Ashley Walkley ('03), director of marketing for Dogeared Jewels and Gifts, attended SMAD Day in April and talked about her career in corporate communications and offered advice to students.**

Day 2013, wanted to connect professors and alumni. He created the Professional Advisory Council to focus on networking with students and establishing scholarships. "People love to help other people from this school," says Leipsner. "It's a really tight bond, and you can't be in the club unless you came here."

Alumni in the sciences are connected too. The departments of chemistry, geology and physics, for instance, bring in alumni to speak, network and show students what kinds of careers await them.

Every JMU program engages alumni a little bit differently, but as President Jonathan R. Alger emphasized throughout his "Why Madison?" Listening Tour this past year, one thing is clear: "Intergenerational learning is crucial to the lives of our students and for the forward progress of JMU toward becoming the national model of the Engaged University."

SMAD alumna Allison Parker ('12) sums up alumni sentiments well: "I will do anything I can to help students." **M**

# Preparing for your future

## Individual attention is key in JMU's Career and Academic Planning and Freshman Advising

BY LEE WARD, *director of JMU Career and Academic Planning*

College is not just about which classes to take; it's about a student's whole life. Your college experience is really about one decision – preparing you for your future. And making decisions in concert with one another, not separately as many other universities require.

That's why JMU's career and academic planning team combines the process of academic advising with the process of career development, job search and alumni networking, a distinct rarity for a school as large as JMU. This integrated model provides students with a coherent set of resources and life skills that can help them succeed.

JMU's freshman advising philosophy is incredibly more powerful than just deciding which classes to take. It's also about the why. Our freshman advisers help students navigate what skills a class may provide them for use in a future career. We show students how to connect interests and skills and student experiences with their futures.

And many alumni help us give detailed career information and advice to our students. Our students learn what kinds of out-of-class experiences best complement their academics – from internships, community service, student organizations, leadership roles and student work experiences. We want students' academic choices and their out-of-class experience decisions to be meaningful and intentional – meaning that they have value and that they lead to something that's important to the student. That could be the Peace Corps as opposed to a high-powered corporation. We teach students to prepare themselves to get to where they want to go.

If you could watch our advisers and alumni work with students, you would see a very different kind of interaction than you see at a lot of universities. Our advising is one-on-one. The National Academic Advising Association has recognized that philosophy by naming one of our freshman advisers, Carroll Ward, as a 2013 Outstanding Adviser.

### NACADA Outstanding Adviser Carroll Ward



**National Academic Advising Association 2013 Outstanding Adviser Carroll Ward is a nursing professor and freshman adviser. She shares more on JMU's approach to freshman advising.**

**Madison:** At JMU, advising is more than helping a student choose a major, it's about helping them plan their future. Explain this philosophy:

**Ward:** JMU is committed to preparing students to be educated and enlightened citizens, who lead productive and meaningful lives. JMU advising consists of a learning-centered approach to assist students in developing an educationally purposeful college plan and to determine the tools and resources to implement that plan. JMU academic advising enables students to translate this learning into making meaningful decisions about the future and to understand

the importance of engaging in their community.

**Madison:** What are the top two pieces of advice that you tell every freshman, no matter their choice in major?

**Ward:** Focus on your role as a student. Academics are a priority and you are responsible for your own academic rigor. Purchase a planner and write down all of your assignments, exams, presentations, meetings and social activities. Also, you are ultimately responsible for your decisions and choices, so think about the consequences.

**\* Read the full Q&A with freshman adviser Carroll Ward at [www.jmu.edu](http://www.jmu.edu).**