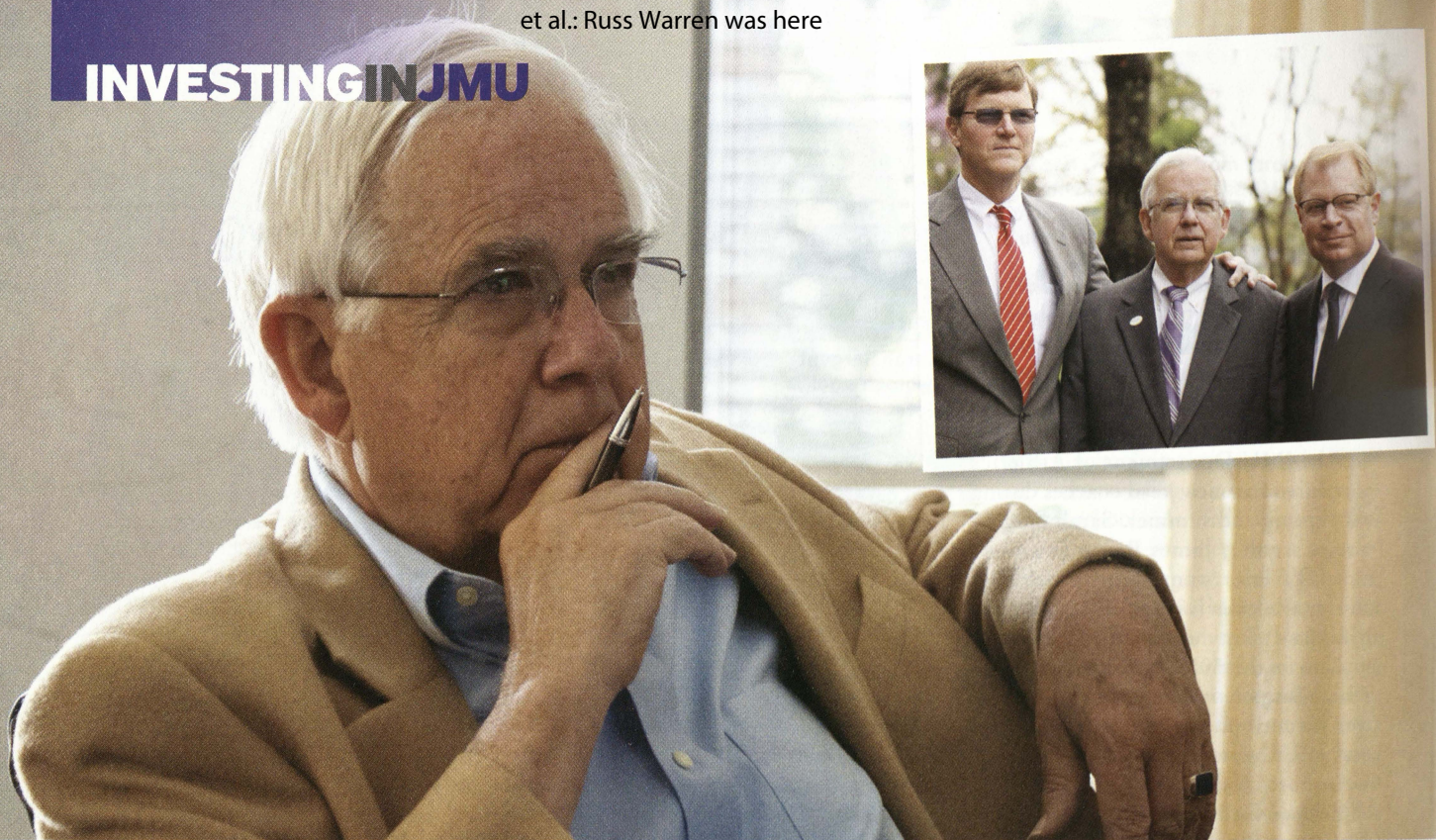


INVESTING IN JMU



Russ Warren was here

Why JMU is the perfect fit for my honors scholarship gift and for my legacy

BY RUSSELL G. WARREN

When you get to be 72 years old, you begin to want people to know you've walked the Earth. So I began looking for ways to leave behind some evidence of my life. It didn't have to have my name on it, but it had to make an impact. So I decided to make a scholarship gift for students of the Honors Program at James Madison University. I will be giving a scholarship annually and also making a bequest that will fund the scholarship after I am gone.

I've worked at many universities, and I could have chosen any one of them for my gift. But I selected JMU. Let me tell you why: James Madison University is a very unusual institution. It is great because at least the last three Madison presidents, including President Alger, understand that true leadership is cultural engineering. In other words, if you create the right environment and the right set of attitudes, good things are going to happen.

I know all three of these presidents. Ron Carrier is the one I worked for directly as vice president for academic affairs. I know Lin Rose very well; he was a colleague of mine when I worked here. Your current president, Jon, is just fantastic. The three of them have upheld two central themes from the beginning.

One: Students are the reason JMU exists.

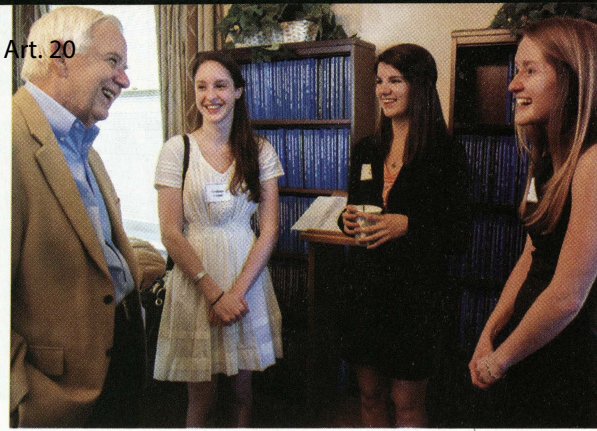
You might say, "Well, of course!" While they will say otherwise, most colleges act as though they exist for the faculty, or the

administration, and rarely both, but not for the students. Back when Ron was trying to get that student-focused mission started here, heaven help a staff or a faculty member if it was proven that they treated a student poorly. Let me say again, it had to be proven. But it didn't take long for our student focus reputation to get around. And the word has been around ever since. Is that focus challenging? Yes. Demanding? Yes. But being student-centered is the only rationale for a university to exist.

Two: JMU has a culture of change.

Now let me let you in on a secret. Those of us in higher education are risk-averse. But students need models who are risk takers. That's characteristic of the world they will live in. Students need an education that's innovative and based in the real world, which is changing exponentially. The culture here at Madison models that culture of change. This JMU faculty — if shown the wisdom of a new idea — will implement it. This might not sound earth-shaking, but the majority of college campuses are not like that. Nationally, many — if not most — faculties hope that tomorrow and yesterday are very much the same.

As someone wanting others to know that I have walked this Earth, I decided I wanted to invest in a place where students are central and change is constant. I decided my investment should go to the JMU Honors Program, where it can help shape



Honors scholarship donor Russ Warren helps judge the annual Hillcrest Scholarship competition, in which honors students make presentations about the transformational impact of the study they hope to undertake.

“These students are fantastic. All of them deserve a scholarship. They are worth investing in.”

the academic culture of the entire university. I like several things about this honors program, but the thing I like the most is that it's not elitist. When

I was here as vice president, I had the honor of hiring the first Honors Program director, Joanne Gabbin. She's a fireball, and I love her. I gave her only one instruction: "I want our honors students to have all kinds of self-confidence and opportunity, but not a sense that they are superior to others."

What am I doing with my gift?

I'm investing in an honors student a year through my scholarship for the Hillcrest Scholarship program. The applications for these scholarships show me they will make something transformational from it. These students are fantastic. All of them deserve a scholarship. They are worth investing in.

So then we get to the naming of this thing. I think the "Russell G. Warren Honors Scholarship" sounds pretentious, I mean, really. So let me tell you about two of my former students. They taught me as much as I taught them. I want my scholarship gift, the Hinshaw-Daniel Scholarship Fund, to carry on the name of my two dear friends because they have had a profound effect on the quality of my life.

John Daniel, UR graduate

As a precocious 16-year-old undergraduate, John sat in on my Economics course at the University of Richmond instead of attending the economics course he was already enrolled in. He aced that course just by taking the tests. I made one mistake with him. I said, "John, I'll let you in this class on one condition, and that is that you have to ask good questions just like every student." And he hasn't stopped asking questions since. I think he's probably the best internal medicine practitioner in Virginia today. John and his wife, Princess, have two children. He has been my good friend since he was 16.

John Hinshaw ('92), JMU graduate

John and I met in a classroom in Harrison Hall in my Principles of Economics class. When he was a freshman back in 1988,

we old folks were having a rough time trying to figure out how to use computers. I walked into Ron Carrier's office and there were two

big Mac boxes in his office. He said, "You and I have got to learn how to use these blankety-blank computers. But we're not going to sit in the faculty labs and make idiots out of ourselves." John offered to teach computing to me and my executive assistant, Donna Burch. I taught him economics. He taught me computers. Thus, despite our age difference, we were peers, which made it easy to strike up a friendship.

Some time later John told me he could graduate in three years, which was an important consideration from his modest financial background. Instead I advised him to study abroad and helped him find the resources to do so. John entered an internship program with the U.S. Travel and Tourist Association in London as a junior. They liked him so much that they hired him as a GS 12 — high up in the government hierarchy. He traveled Europe setting up computers in all the Traveling and Tourism agencies. The bigger story is that — as talented as he was before — he came back a transformed person. That's why the last criterion of the Hinshaw-Daniel Scholarship Fund is to see that the honors experiences of the recipients are transformational. Today, John and his wife, Julia, have three children. He lives in Silicon Valley and is executive vice president of Hewlett Packard, responsible for 50,000 employees, with 30,000 working directly for him and another 20,000 under contract.

You've got stories like his throughout JMU's outstanding Honors Program, indeed throughout campus. I've met today's students and been privy to their plans to make a difference in this world. That's why JMU is the perfect fit for my gift and the way I wish to be remembered as having walked this Earth. ✻

About the Author: From 1984 to 1990, Russell G. Warren served variously as provost, vice president for academic affairs and acting president for JMU. Among his posts elsewhere in higher education, Warren served as provost of Florida Southern College, executive vice president and provost of Mercer University, and president of Truman State University. Today he is principal consultant for Higher Education Leadership Inc. and lives in Kiawah Island, S.C.