

News & Notes



An opportunity to assist in the development of a new nation

JMU signs memorandum of understanding to work with academic institutions in Kosovo

James Madison University has entered into an agreement with the Republic of Kosovo that will result in cooperation and collaboration among faculty, staff and students from JMU and academic institutions in the newly recognized European state.

JMU President Jonathan Alger and Arsim Bajrami, Kosovo's minister of education, science and technology, signed the memorandum of understanding during a ceremony Sept. 15 at Madison.

The agreement covers six general areas: developing faculty expertise; teaching JMU students about Kosovo; opening the door for students in Kosovo to study at JMU; sharing JMU's expertise in the areas of academic program review, student assessment and accreditation; pursuing projects of mutual interest; and exploring public



After a long struggle for sovereignty that included U.S. military support in the 1990s, the Republic of Kosovo officially declared its independence from Serbia in February 2008.

and private funding sources to continue an ongoing exchange.

The collaboration stems from the relationship JMU has built with Ahmet Shala, the first finance minister of Kosovo, a former Kosovar ambassador to Japan and currently a visiting professor at JMU.

During a workshop in October sponsored by the Center for Faculty Innovation, Shala stressed that improving higher education in Kosovo is key to breaking the cycle of war in the Balkans region of southeastern Europe. Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia in February 2008.

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Kosovo is particularly interested in partnering with high-impact graduate programs in the U.S., and JMU's size, reputation and expertise was attractive, Shala said. The country has received 30 million euros in USAID scholarships for Kosovar students to enroll in Ph.D. and master's programs in areas such as information technology, public administration, education and the environment.

For JMU, the agreement offers "an opportunity to play an important role in the civic development, community development and higher educational system of a new nation," said Michael Stolloff, interim associate dean of The Graduate School.

More than a dozen projects involving JMU faculty members and students are already underway, ranging from class initiatives on Kosovar environmental issues to the deployment of an assessment and accreditation team that will consult with Kosovar universities.

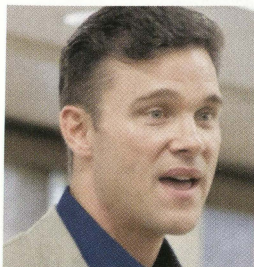
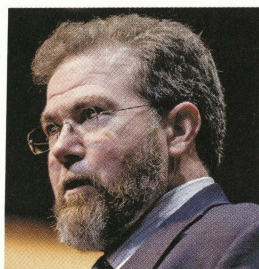
These and other innovative projects are engaging faculty and students in cross-cultural collaborations that have both short-term and long-term impact potential.

'[This is] an opportunity to play an important role in the civic development, community development and higher educational system of a new nation.'

— MICHAEL STOLLOFF, *interim associate dean of The Graduate School*



(L-R): Stolloff; Ken Rutherford, director of JMU's Center for International Stabilization and Recovery; and political science professor John Scherpereel at the signing ceremony.



Madison Vision Series speakers (clockwise, from top right) Stewart Harris, George Kuh, Russ Reeder ('94) and Danielle S. Allen.

A focus on citizenship

Madison Vision Series brings scholars to campus to engage in a discussion of contemporary issues

"I consider the Madison Vision Series to be a vital tool in achieving JMU's vision to be the model for the engaged university," says President Jonathan R. Alger. "By hosting this series of lectures, we bring great minds to campus that will help us to achieve that goal. These guests inspire us and spark conversations that continue long after their visits."

The 2015 Madison Vision Series began on Sept. 17 with a lecture on Madisonian ethics by Stewart Harris, professor of constitutional law at Appalachian School of Law and host of National Public Radio's *Your Weekly Constitutional*. "James Madison was ... extraordinary and remarkable, but he wasn't perfect," said Harris. "None of

MADISON
VISION SERIES
Contemporary issues in an engaged society

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SGA's Humphries helps secure JMU voting precinct

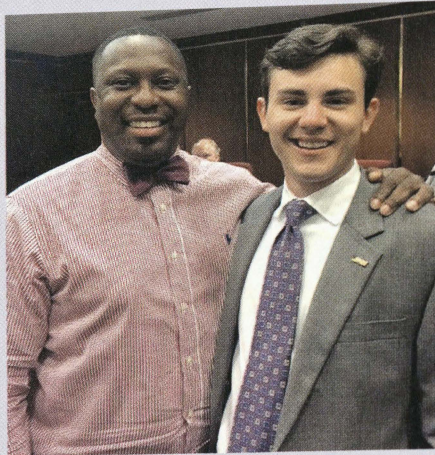
BY KAITY KIRWIN ('16)

Beginning with next year's presidential election, voting will be more convenient for JMU students living on campus.

This past summer Harrisonburg City Council approved a new voting precinct at the JMU Convocation Center. The request was submitted to the city's Electoral Board in March by Josh Humphries, a senior political science major and chairman of the Student Government Association's Legislative Action Committee.

The idea for a polling place at JMU came to Humphries in 2013 when he volunteered with the Get Out The Vote effort on campus. "It seemed logical to me that instead of taking students to the voting precincts, why not bring one to them?" he said. "But also, how can [SGA] get more people voting in every election, not just the presidential [election]."

After extensive research and data collection, Humphries concluded that other Virginia universities with voting precincts closer



Josh Humphries ('16), chairman of the SGA's Legislative Action Committee, with Harrisonburg Mayor Christopher B. Jones.

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— JOSH HUMPHRIES ('16)

to campus, such as Virginia Tech, George Mason University and the University of Virginia, see considerably larger voter turnout.

The proposal was not without opposition. "The arguments against the precinct really boiled down to partisanship and negative connotations associated with the JMU student population," Humphries said. "Other, less convincing opposing arguments questioned whether the projected increase in voter turnout was worth the cost and that we were creating a solution for a non-existent problem."

Despite such views, the new precinct was approved, helping solidify Humphries' status as a model for civic engagement at JMU. In addition to being an influential member of SGA, Humphries holds a leadership role in

DukesVote, a student-led nonpartisan initiative to inform JMU students about candidates, register them to vote and get students to the polls. He is also a member of the Marching Royal Dukes.

Citizenship FROM PAGE 9

the Founding Fathers were." While opposing the more ardent supporters of slavery, Madison remained a slave owner throughout his life, "a stand inconsistent with our form of government," said Harris. On the other hand, Harris noted that Madison's crafting of the Bill of Rights, "what many people call the heart of the Constitution," evinces great ethical reasoning.

On Oct. 8 George Kuh, director of the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, presented "An Education For Our Times." Kuh shed light on the idea of lifelong integrative learning that stretches

beyond the classroom. According to Kuh, employers are looking for college graduates who can perform beyond what they think they can do, and service-learning is one of the ways to achieve that ability. "Students need to reflect, integrate and apply what [they've] learned ... and make connections between everything," he said.

JMU alum Russ Reeder ('94), CEO of iCitizen, returned to campus on Oct. 22 to encourage students to redefine what civic engagement means in America. In his lecture, "Apathy Only Harms Civic Responsibility," Reeder stressed the importance of each citizen being able to make a difference in their community. "Each of us

sincerely counts. Our voices deserve to be heard," he said.

Danielle S. Allen, director of Harvard's Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics and a professor in Harvard's Government Department and Graduate School of Education, presented "Participatory Readiness: On the Liberal Arts and Ethics of Citizenship" on Nov. 19. "The Declaration of Independence is telling us we need our liberal arts education in order to do our job as democratic citizens," she said.

The Madison Vision Series honors James Madison's conviction that cultivating an informed and educated citizenry is essential to the health of our republican democracy.