

Alumni News

Big shoes to fill

BY ERIC BOWLIN ('02), *JMU Alumni Association president*

Like so many JMU students, I was very involved on campus during my time as an undergraduate. But like many others, I wasn't as involved as I should have been, or hoped to have been, after graduation. Sure, I came back for Homecoming and attended the JMU Alumni Association Crabfest, but I wasn't really pulling my weight as an alumnus. Four or five years after graduation, my wife, Stephanie ('01), and I were politely challenged to ask ourselves, "Why *aren't* we giving back?" There was no good excuse, so we got our butts in gear and started making a small monthly donation. At first, all we could manage was \$10 a month. But every year we were able to increase that gift and started spreading it across several different funds that we were passionate about. Even though those initial gifts were small, it put us on the path to regular giving.

My alumni journey continued in 2013 with a nomination to serve on the JMU Alumni Association's Board of Directors. What an incredible group to be a part of! I've never felt so much Purple Pride in one room. Every time I'm on campus for a meeting, I leave feeling energized and inspired to make an impact within our JMU community. I served as treasurer of the JMU Alumni Association for 2014-16, president-elect for 2016-18 and am now kicking off my two-year term as president. The alumni who have served in that position before me—Heather Hedrick ('00), Larry Caudle ('82), Jamie Jones Miller ('99) and others—have left me with big shoes to fill, but I'm excited about the challenge and the opportunity to serve our university and our alumni.

The beginning of my term as president coincides with the launch of the JMU Alumni Association's new strategic plan, and I'm incredibly excited about the platform we have created. The JMU Alumni Association periodically revisits



its strategic plan to ensure it is aligned with overall university goals; addresses the diverse and changing needs of students, alumni and the greater JMU community; and is forward-looking to best position the JMU Alumni Association to deliver on its mission and vision.


The strategic plan has been developed in concert with the broader goals of JMU and includes input from senior university leadership, the 2017 alumni survey and the JMUA Board of Directors/staff. The plan provides four areas of strategic priorities: engaging our alumni, investing in our students, strengthening our university and partnering for success.

I'm hoping you'll take a few minutes to review our new strategic plan at alumni.jmu.edu/strategicplan. But more importantly,

(Above): During a visit to campus, Eric Bowlin ('02) stands at the James Madison statue with his wife, Stephanie ('01), and their two children, Ainsley and Parker.

I'm hoping this plan will inspire you to find your passion and engage with JMU. There are so many ways to get involved!

- The colleges and majors on campus are always looking for mentors, speakers or alumni to serve on their advisory councils.
- Get involved with your local chapter! The JMU Alumni Association has more than 30 chapters around the U.S. and in London!
- Passionate about sports? Join the Duke Club! Or better yet, join the Duke Club AND get back to campus for a game.

I look forward to meeting you soon at a local chapter event or a JMU sporting event. Go Dukes! 

Eric Bowlin graduated in 2002 with a bachelor of business administration in accounting. As a student, he was involved with the Marching Royal Dukes, Kappa Kappa Psi and Student Ambassadors. He currently lives in Midlothian, Virginia, and is a senior manager at Deloitte in the Risk and Finance Advisory practice. Bowlin met his JMU sweetheart, Stephanie ('01), through his involvement in the Marching Royal Dukes. Together, they have two future Dukes, Ainsley and Parker. On home football game days, you can find Bowlin and his family in F lot (formerly Godwin Field) tailgating with the "Richmond Row" crew. Bowlin became president of the JMU Alumni Association on July 1.