

A commitment to the environment

Presidential Commission to study ways to make JMU a greener campus

Time and again, our alumni and students tell us that one of the things that drew them to JMU was the natural beauty of the Shenandoah Valley with the campus skyline set against the backdrop of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The surrounding area offers many recreational opportunities that are a key part of the Madison Experience for our students: hiking Reddish Knob, skiing at Massanutten or exploring the Shenandoah National Forest, to name a few. Particularly at this time of year, when the trees are sporting newly born leaves, and the flowers are in full bloom, we appreciate just how fortunate we are to learn and work in such an idyllic setting.

The recent surge of public and political interest in the environment — everything from Al Gore's Oscar-winning *An Inconvenient Truth* to the increased marketing of hybrid vehicles to the political platforms of 2008 presidential hopefuls — reminds us just how precious these natural resources are. As educated and enlightened citizens we have a responsibility to be good stewards of the Earth and to preserve and sustain the natural beauty that surrounds us, both in Harrisonburg and beyond.

We don't have to look any further than our own campus to find examples of socially responsible individuals who are working to protect these natural resources. The feature story on Page 44 of this issue of *Madison* expounds on the research of JMU professors and students at Smith Creek. Not only is this a powerful example of professors using their expertise to address a critical environmental issue, but it is an excellent model of collaboration — not only across academic disciplines — but also between the university and local citizens. This is also an invaluable experience for our students, who are working alongside professors and witnessing firsthand the relationship between the university laboratory and practical solutions for real life problems.

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In addition to the actions we take as individuals, it is also imperative that we make a commitment to the environment at the institutional level. As we look ahead to Madison's second century, we must ensure

that our present day actions do not adversely affect the availability of resources for future generations.

Like many other campuses across the nation, we have already put a number of environmentally friendly practices in place and implemented many sustainable efforts through our facilities management team. Currently, all university gasoline powered vehicles run on an ethanol-blended fuel, and JMU buses use a biodiesel blend. Low flush toilets and urinals are used in all facilities and water flow restrictors have been installed in all showers and faucets. Lighting has been upgraded in 13 residence halls from incandescent to fluorescent lighting, and 350 outside light fixtures have been upgraded to more energy efficient lights. In partnership with the City of Harrisonburg, JMU burns trash to create steam energy.

These are just a few examples of what is already being done in our day-to-day operations to make JMU a greener campus. Even with these practices in place, however, we recognize that more needs to be done.

With that in mind, I have appointed a new Presidential Commission to study Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability on the JMU campus. The commission includes professors, staff members and students as well as representatives from the City of Harrisonburg.

The commission's primary charge is to examine various areas of the campus and make recommendations about what JMU can do to make our campus more environmentally friendly. Specifically, the commission will look at new building construction and renovations; energy usage; procurement, purchasing, waste management and recycling; dining services; transportation; and water, sewage and runoff. The commission also will elevate awareness and bring focus to initiatives that are already under way.

Striving both individually and collectively to make JMU a greener campus is yet one more way we are using the power of knowledge to make our world a better place.

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