

Motion to Allow Faculty Parking Passes for a subset of JMU Graduate Students required to function in specific professional roles

Whereas a subset of JMU graduate students face a unique hardship in fulfilling their assigned teaching or clinical duties because student parking on campus fills quickly and remains full for much of the day;

Whereas approval of faculty/staff parking permits for the approximately 40 graduate students per semester who would be eligible will not create a significant change in available faculty/staff parking spaces, in part because the total number is small relative to capacity, and in part because these students will only need the spaces on select times and days; and

Whereas current parking regulations forbid student access to faculty/staff permits regardless of context of role at the university (“Use of faculty/staff or visitor permits by students currently enrolled at James Madison University is strictly prohibited.” p. 17, parking regulations posted here: <https://www.jmu.edu/parking/files/parking-regulations.pdf>)

Be it therefore resolved that a subset of JMU graduate students who meet specific, role-based criteria be allowed to acquire faculty/staff parking permits on a semester-by-semester basis. One of the following criteria (as verified by program directors) must be met to be eligible (1) A graduate student who has primary teaching responsibilities as the instructor of record for a JMU course, (2) A graduate student who holds official off-campus clinical duties which require her/him to leave and return to campus throughout the day.

The following, related issues are of note:

Regarding graduate students who are teaching JMU courses:

Polling of graduate programs by TGS shows that the number of students in role as primary instructor of record in any given semester is about 6.

When graduate students teach for JMU, they have status at HR as JMU employees. However, parking policy is written and implemented so that their student role trumps access to faculty/staff passes. Meanwhile, graduate students from other institutions (e.g., UVA) are allowed faculty parking when they are primary instructors of record. We thus appear to be singling out our JMU graduate students for reduced support of their teaching roles

Survey by The Graduate School (TGS) shows that students who teach for JMU are enrolled in doctoral programs and already hold masters degrees. These roles are framed by their programs as valuable opportunities for professional enhancement at the doctoral level of training and are scaffolded by teaching practica/supervision. Many of these roles support the JMU’s mission university-wide with undergraduates. For example, Psychology 101 satisfies general education requirement in cluster 5, sociocultural domain. When instructors

do not have reliable access it impacts their ability to arrive prepared and ready to teach.

Regarding graduate students with clinical duties requiring transit on/off campus:

Survey by TGS suggests that across JMU, in any given semester, there are 18 such students in doctoral level training (and include the 6 who also have roles as instructors). An additional 22 at the masters level brings the number of affected students to 40. This represents about 2% of graduate students.

External placements are a central part of multiple graduate training programs. They are also key elements of our role as an engaged university at the level of local communities. Supervision and coursework for many of these roles takes place on campus. In order to engage well, students must transit from their off-campus placements to JMU for required supervision and coursework.

When students are unable to park, they often arrive late, flustered and/or unprepared for their duties. When these duties involve sensitive clinical roles (e.g., counseling community members with behavioral and mental health issues including suicidality), restricted access of clinicians to their on-campus supervisors creates a risk on multiple levels.

Addressing potential overall concerns

Fears of inconvenience to faculty: Nearly all students who fit these criteria would be accessing the Mason Street Parking Deck, which appears to have sufficient capacity to meet the need, even at peak hours, on the top level. In addition, the parking spaces would not be occupied all day, as the need is very in-and-out-again at mid-day. Thus, the motion does not “cost” full-time campus faculty much at all in terms of competition for parking.

Fears of a “slippery slope”: The fear here is that at some future point it will be argued that since some graduate students have faculty parking access, that all therefore should have the same. Guarding against this is a clear set of, role-specific criteria and rationale, as well as requirement that program directors confirm the student role. Any future requests for additional graduate student parking would need to have a similarly compelling rationale, set of criteria, and due attention to both need and capacity.

Two separate requests?: It can be argued that there are two separate requests here. One for graduate students who are primary instructor of record, a second for those who have clinical duties requiring on/off campus transit. The current motion combines the two for the sake of efficiency (and also relates to fact that those who fall in the first camp currently also fall in the second camp). The two categories/rationales could just as easily be considered separately.