

Motion to Review JMU's AUH Leadership Model and Transition to a Department Chair Model of Leadership

WHEREAS Recommendation #5 on the COACHE survey suggests that JMU faculty must have shared meaning and ownership of the work of the university, driving conversations that shape the institutional identity and future;

WHEREAS a department operates most effectively when department heads can serve and represent the department faculty;

WHEREAS the quality of teaching and scholarship is best assured when department heads – who have the requisite disciplinary training and vantage points needed to assess program quality and identify areas needing change – can make decisions that best advocate for the department faculty;

WHEREAS the Academic Unit Head (AUH) currently serves at the pleasure of the dean (Academic Affairs Policy #2 Point, 5.2: Term of appointment) with a renewable one-year contract and no term limit, a model which does not reflect a value for shared governance, transparency, and accountability;

WHEREAS the AUH is disadvantaged in its role as faculty advocate through its unilateral accountability to leadership;

WHEREAS the current AUH policy has not been reviewed since 2004 (Academic Policy # 2);

WHEREAS a department chair model of leadership has term limits and requires the faculty to actively elect the unit head and participate in their annual evaluations;

WHEREAS reviewing the current AUH structure is a multifaceted, complex task that must include the voices of all stakeholders. Therefore, the following aspects of the AUH structure need a thoughtful review and update:

- a) AUH election process,
- b) term limit,
- c) readiness and preparation for the leadership role,
- d) clear checks and balances associated with the department chair position,
- d) affordances and constraints of the role of advocating for department faculty,
- f) performance review,

- g) ways to empower department faculty with tools to recommend a change in leadership through collective actions such as no confidence votes, and
- h) fit with JMU's R2 status;

WHEREAS one of the values of Ethical Reasoning in Action, a hallmark of JMU, is “challenging unexamined thought patterns and behaviors to evaluate complex issues and diverse perspectives,” reviewing the AUH structure at JMU will help us act on this value and deepen our practice of the Eight Key Questions (Fairness, Authority, Empathy, Responsibilities, Character, Liberty, Rights, and Outcomes) that are JMU's guiding principles.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that

- I. JMU, in collaboration with the Faculty Senate, form a task force to study the possibility of a transition from the current Academic Unit Head model to a Department Chair Model that a) includes term limits; b) reflects principles of shared governance, and c) includes clear checks and balances in the powers associated with the Department Chair position.
- II. The task force returns recommendations to the faculty senate for further discussion for endorsement or rejection.
- III. The administration work with the Senate to impanel a transition-and-implementation task force that is at least half faculty (appointed by the Senate), a body with the charge to work out all transition and logistical issues including but not limited to:
 - 1. Reviewing current faculty governance structures at the departmental and college levels, emphasizing shared governance.
 - 2. Assessing the existing AUH model in terms of shared governance, collegiality, and collaboration among key stakeholders at the departmental and college levels.
 - 3. Recommending actionable pathways towards shared governance that include the perspectives of all stakeholders.
 - 4. Recommending structural changes to make leadership positions at the department level a desirable and sustainable model that will attract faculty to the post.
 - 5. Providing data to help structure department-level leadership that reflects shared governance principles and focuses on building a research-intensive university.
 - 6. Reviewing the history of faculty governance structures at the departmental and college levels, with a specific focus on how JMU's AUH model has developed over time.
 - 7. Evaluating the effectiveness of JMU's departmental and college governance structures compared to those implemented at other R2 universities.
- IV. Faculty in departments will have an anonymous vote as to whether they choose to transition from AUH to Chair, or to retain the AUH model.