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JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

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December 14, 2017

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Building a civic-minded society





SUMMARY:

The new James Madison Center for Civic Engagement is designed to give students the tools they will need to engage in the democratic process and create positive change in their communities.

from the December 2017 digital issue of
Madison

By Danica Feuz

Abe Goldberg, executive director of the new James Madison Center for Civic Engagement, aims to make JMU a place where civic participation and enlightenment are embedded in the undergraduate experience.

The center will develop, articulate and expand upon the initiatives already underway at Madison. “It’s not just the role of one entity to be in charge of civic learning on a college campus,” Goldberg says. “It really needs to be

institutional.”

At JMU, “we talk about being educated and enlightened citizens,” he says. “So it’s not just participation, it’s that your participation is informed by what you’re learning while earning your degree.”

By teaching students how to create meaningful discussions and find common ground with people of differing opinions and perspectives, you’re giving them the necessary tools to participate in the democratic process and create positive change in their communities, Goldberg says. “Decisions get made in democratic societies by working together with other people, even when you don’t always agree with one another.”

'Decisions get made in democratic societies by working together with other people, even when you don't always agree with one another.'

— Abe Goldberg

Jennifer Domagal-Goldman, national manager of the American Democracy Project, which recently recognized JMU for its efforts in civic and community engagement, adds that such skills are exactly what today’s employers are looking for.

“We’re preparing the leaders for today and tomorrow,” she says. “We’re preparing global citizens. We’re preparing the change makers. This is what the work of civic and community engagement is all about.”

Madison

THE MAGAZINE OF **JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY.**

James Madison University

Wilson Hall

951 Madison Drive
Harrisonburg, Virginia
22807

Email Us

(540) 568-6211



Published: Thursday, December 14, 2017

Last Updated: Monday, May 24, 2021

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