

Virginia's James Madison University Approves Its Biggest Budget Yet

By Amit Agarwal

The board of visitors at James Madison University (JMU) in Harrisonburg, Virginia, has recently approved the college's biggest budget ever. The \$363.1 million budget for 2007-2008 reflects a 9% increase; it is \$29.9 million larger than last year.

Charles King, vice president of administration and finance at JMU, presented the numbers at the board's executive meeting. According to King, the institution's budget generally rises due to increased student intake, which accounts for additional tuition and student fees and more funding from the commonwealth.

The increased funding for the 2007-2008 budget comes from increased tuition and fee rates as well as additional money from the General Assembly.

According to Brandon Eickel, president of the student body association, JMU's fees are on par with those of other schools in the state, but the latest tuition increase of 6% is too steep for students.

Campus officials have justified the increase by contending that it will pay for faculty and staff salary raises, a 5% increase in the cost of health insurance, and new facilities, operations, and auxiliary services. The 2007-2008 budget also allocates \$7.9 million for financial aid, an increase of \$1 million compared to last year.

Apart from the budget, JMU's board of visitors approved the purchase of two private properties in Harrisonburg. The university has acquired a house costing \$110,000 near Memorial Hall that it plans to level to create a new entrance to the complex.

JMU will also purchase a house near the eastern border of its main campus. According to King, the university does not have any long-term plans for the asset.