

ALUMNI BOARD

James Madison University Political Science Alumni Board

Annual Report 2023-2024

President's Message



Greg Bahou

BS, Public Policy & Admin '15

President 2023 – 2024

Welcome to the annual report for the JMU Political Science Alumni Board. I am ecstatic to report another successful year! I could not have done it without the support of my Executive Committee; Ronny Lau (Vice President), Donna Harris-Aikens (Student Outreach Committee Chair), Jasmine Rountree (Alumni Engagement Committee Chair), Taylor Barrett (Fundraising Committee Chair), Gianluca Grignoli (Communications Director), Austin Adams (Executive Member-at-Large), and Caitlin Havron (Past President). These members spent countless hours executing events for students and alumni, fundraising events that all supported JMU. I would also like to thank the rest of the Board Members who planned and supported events. Most importantly, I would like to thank the entire board for entrusting me to lead them and for supporting me throughout my tenure. I have been a part of the board for almost six years, and my time has been filled supporting the board, helping students, networking with alumni, and fundraising. I look forward to continuing to support the board in the future.



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Fundraising Committee

(Chair: Taylor Barrett)

The Political Science Department fund was featured in the Year-end Challenge for 2023. A total of \$4,924 was contributed from 27 donors (that included 12 current board members and 5 past board members). For Giving Day 2024, the Political Science Department was not a featured fund for the first time in several years. However, through internal promotion via personal networks and social media, 35 donations were received and a total of \$8,625 was raised for the Washington Semester Program fund.

For the 2023-2024 academic year, 13 of the 17 advisory board members made contributions to the Political Science Department for a 76% participation rate.



TOTAL
RAISED
\$13,549

Alumni Committee

(Chair: Jasmine Rountree)

JMU Political Science Alumni Board Presents:

Early Career Speed Networking Event

Are you in the early stages of your career? If so, join us!



October 12, 2023
6 p.m.
JMU Washington Center
1400 16th St, NW
Suite 320
Washington, DC 20036

Registration Required

On October 12, 2023, the Board held its annual Early Career Speed Networking event, a networking program for early-career JMU graduates seeking advice on the next phase of careers in politics, policy, government, non-profits, and related fields.



The event consisted of five tables, each assigned to focus on a specific topic such as “Thriving in difficult work environments” and “Acing your job interview.” Each table was led by 1 to 2 established alums who offered advice and shared their personal knowledge with their specific topic. Participants rotated among all the tables so that they connected with all the table leaders and discussed all the topics.



Speakers included: Bryan Jacobs (Class of 2014), Sara Dolinger (Class of 2012), Caitlin Van Sant (Class of 2009), Josh (Christian) Meyers (Class of 2015), David Seletyn (Class of 1995), Michael Garcia (Class of 2014), and Matthew Beck.

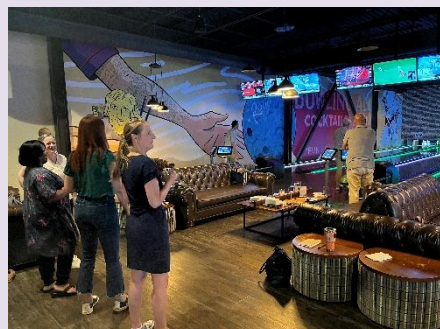
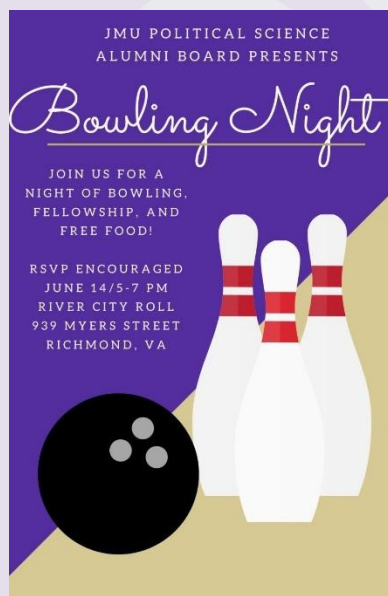


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Though this event did not receive the level of participation that it has in the past, early-career participants expressed pleasure in being able to make meaningful connections with established and experienced alumni. Our table leaders enjoyed being able to share their life and work experiences with fellow alums starting their careers. There was great interest from all participants in having more alumni events.



Finally, the Alumni Committee held a Bowling Night after our June board meeting. Board Members and alumni in the Richmond area enjoyed networking, bowling, and socializing over food and drinks.



Student Outreach Committee

(Chair: Donna Harris-Aikens)

The Board held our flagship Annual Alumni Day event on campus on November 10, 2023, drawing more than 50 students for a brief networking tips session conducted by POSC board alumni and a packed student-alumni networking reception. Students received hard copies of a few networking tips for reference during and after the event (see below) and were able to make connections with alumni whose backgrounds encompass international relations, government relations, law, government contracting, and policy.

5 NETWORKING TIPS

1. **Do your research:** Review bios, if they are available, and prepare potential questions
2. **Introduce yourself:** Be prepared to practice ‘your pitch’ and add a memorable fact
3. **Be yourself!**
4. **Be present:** Listen actively and participate in the conversation
5. **Follow up:** Say thank you and keep in touch

Ahead of the networking session, alumni also visited two classes to promote the networking opportunity and to share their expertise and experiences with students who are seeking internships, jobs, and career exploration.

In addition, POSC board alumni served as panelists for the College of Arts and Letters (CAL) Career Readiness Conference for students February 22-23, 2024. POSC alumni speakers visited classes to talk about their experiences post-graduation, and participated in conference panels titled:

- Balancing Acts
- Careers in Doing Good
- You Did What with Your Major?
- Insights from Employers
- Job Search Strategies for Finding an internship or Job
- Navigating Gender and Identity in the Workplace
- Career Paths of Alumni who Majored in International Affairs, Political Science, and Public Administration

At CAL’s invitation, four POSC alumni board members (Greg Bahou, Donna Harris-Aikens, Caitlin Havron, and Patrick Shea) also served as virtual mentors for students in the CAL pilot mentoring program during Spring 2024. CAL piloted the TERN mentoring program that has



been used successfully in other JMU colleges and is designed to connect students and alumni for a finite period of time to discuss a variety of career readiness tips and accelerate professional development with a series of suggested conversation starters for both the mentor and student.

Finally, the Board hosted a career workshop on April 19, 2024 for students called “Landing a Job in Political Science, Public Administration, or International Affairs,” which featured JMU students and alumni speaking during a panel discussion as well as speed networking breakout sessions.

After Dr. David Jones kicked off the workshop, the panel moderator was Valeria Postigo, Democracy Fellow, and Public Policy student at JMU.

Panelists/Breakout Session Leaders included:

- Lauren Gilbert, Government Relations Associate, Advantus Strategies
- Jessica Killeen, Deputy for State and Local Government Relations, Deloitte
- Zachary LeMaster, Government Affairs Director, Gentry Locke Consulting (current Board member)
- Jamie Lockhart, Executive Director, Planned Parenthood of Virginia (former Board member)
- Jason Mann, Senior MERL Associate, Plan International USA
- Paula Melester, Regional Planner, Shenandoah Planning District
- Taylor Naufflett, International Affairs Major, JMU student
- Katie Pillis, Casework Operations Coordinator, U.S. Senator Mark Warner





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Other updates

The board was added to the School & College Listings website which will increase our presence ([direct link](#))



Board Members

2023 - 2024

Executive Committee

Greg Bahou, President
Ronny Lau, Vice President

Jasmine Rountree, Alumni Engagement Chair
Donna Harris-Aikens, Student Outreach Chair
Taylor Barrett, Fundraising Chair
Gianluca Grignoli, Communications Director
Austin Adams, Executive Member-at-Large
Caitlin Havron, Past President

Members

Kirsten Kazlauskas
Tommy Keefe
Chris Bast
Zach LeMaster
Ricardo Piñeres
Michael Comer
Owen Wilson
Patrick Shea
Braden Lawes
Jacqlyn Schneider