

JMU Adult Degree Program

Placement Description

Outreach & Engagement is seeking a junior or senior student majoring in psychology to intern for the Adult Degree Program (ADP) This position will work 10 hours each week with the Director & Academic Unit Head of the Bachelor of Individualized Studies/Adult Degree Program in the Ice House at 127 Bruce Street. The schedule will be determined by the applicant's availability.

Intern or Field Placement Responsibilities/Opportunities

1. Learn about the role and responsibilities of academic programming for non-traditional students in higher education.
2. Assist the Student Success Coordinator with creating a model of best practices for academic advising and student retention.
3. Create program plans of study for each track as an example for students to follow.
4. Assist the Director & Academic Unit Head with redesigning the pre-requisite orientation module for online delivery through Canvas.
5. Assist students with creating an individual plan for success and development of an academic program plan.
6. Provide educational support and skill development to assist students in becoming independent and intentional learners.
7. Initiate academic intervention for students in academic difficulty or students identified as at-risk.
8. Assist the Student Success Coordinator with student records.
9. Compile student demographic and enrollment data reports.

Qualifications

- 10 hours of availability throughout the week, hours flexible
- Willingness to learn, comfortable with ambiguity, and excited about the possibility of being creative
- Strong initiative and work ethic with attention to detail and accuracy
- Ability to work independently as well as on a small team
- Desire to work on meaningful projects
- Knowledge of Microsoft applications and Canvas

Conditions of Internship

Students must be degree-seeking students in Psychology enrolled on at least a half-time basis (6 credits for undergraduate and 5 credits for graduate).

Contact Information

- Contact Person: Dr. Windi Turner
- Address: 127 Bruce St., Harrisonburg, VA
- Telephone: 540/568-4253
- E-Mail: outreach@jmu.edu
- Website: <http://www.jmu.edu/outreach/programs/all/adultdegree/index.shtml>

Read about students' experiences at this site below:

Spring 2019 – Emma de Leon

Over the course of my field placement semester I spent my time working in JMU's Office of Outreach & Engagement with the Adult Degree Program (ADP). The mission of the Office of Outreach & Engagement is, "To provide access to anyone seeking opportunities for education or personal growth." They accomplish this mission by supporting different programs such as the Lifelong Learning Institute, Professional Development, Youth Programs, and the Adult Degree Program. Specifically the mission of the Adult Degree Program is to provide a personalized education and meet the needs of adult learners by providing them the opportunity to pursue an undergraduate degree that meets individual educational and professional goals. To be able to access the services provided by ADP students must meet three general criteria for admission: be at least 22 years old, have at least 30 transferable college credits, and have a minimum 2.0 GPA. Once admitted into the program students are given the opportunity to pursue a Bachelors of Individualized Studies, either B.S. or B.A., and can choose from various program tracks that allow for a better personalization of their degree. When students are completing their degree they have the opportunity to complete their courses in person, online, or a mixture of both. The students in ADP are characteristically full time workers and take their classes part time, so for many of the students it can take them many years to complete their degree.

During the semester I worked on various different tasks, projects, and research benefiting efforts made by my supervisor, Dr. Windi Turner, to enhance ADP. Over the semester I completed a variety of tasks including updating new program tracks, combing through data regarding the classes students would take, and creating marketing materials. Toward the end of the semester I also helped in planning and preparing for both the ADP Symposium and graduation reception. As I helped with this task I contacted local businesses for prize donations, brainstormed ideas, and helped create pamphlets / itineraries for the events. One of the most interesting tasks I had was identifying and comparing different institutions that offered undergraduate programs for adult learners. In this process I found many different institutions across the country that had different approaches and offered many different resources that could greatly improve ADP at James Madison. Taking all of this information and presenting it to Dr. Turner and Lindsey was an awesome opportunity to provide them with different enhancements that could be made to the program. The projects I worked on such as strategies for student retention and better advising stemmed from the different research I was prompted to do by Dr. Turner. These projects allowed me to connect various different things identified from research and my undergraduates studies to be creative and problem - solve the main issues faced by ADP.

Reflecting back on my time at the Adult Degree Program I truly enjoyed my time, but there is room for improvement. Coming into this field placement I knew there would likely be various limitations and disadvantages because Juli and I were the first psychology field placement students to work at this site. One of the limitations to being one of the first students to work at this site was having to be able to adapt and adjust our intended tasks. An intended task that we were unable to fully achieve and required an adjustment was being able to aid and advise students in the program. Originally we were supposed to directly advise students in the program when needed, but I only had one opportunity to sit in on an advising meeting with a student. We did adjust this task to troubleshooting ways to identify students at risk and providing the Student Success Coordinator with ideas for a more comprehensive approach to helping the students. Though it was disappointing to not fully be able to advise the students of ADP, I do not believe I would have been confident enough to effectively advise students before now, at the end of the semester. I only would have felt confident enough to speak on all the different aspects of ADP after around week 10 of my field placement.

This field placement site has proven to have great advantages as well. Of the important tasks and projects I worked on conducting research on non-traditional students, student retention strategies, and student advising models. This task helped me improve my research capabilities such as the process of searching, identifying, and articulating important information. After conducting this research I was able to transform this information and provide creative solutions to the various problems identified by Dr. Turner. During this time I have had the great experience of adding to my knowledge of what like to work in a real office setting and how dependent of the organization, business, and industry it can look entirely different. The working environment in the Office of Outreach & Engagement is more of a community feel and everyone is working toward a common goal or mission to help others and improve the various programs. A structure such as this has provided the chance for me to improve my creativity and feel as if I was making a true impact during my time. Also, this opportunity to work in a portion of the university has allowed me the chance to see how institutions of higher education function preparing me for the role I will assume as a Graduate Assistant while I pursue my masters.

Before beginning my field placement starting Spring 2019 I had found a passion for diversity and inclusion in organizations. This passion stemmed from learning that there was a way to channel my passion for people, psychology, and business all in one. Diversity and inclusion initiatives work to make any organization a safe, accepting place representing and supporting every individual no matter who they are. Though I had this strong passion for diversity and inclusion before my field placement, I had a fixed idea that I could only make this impact in organizations like large businesses and corporations. After being at the Adult Degree Program I realized that there are opportunities to make a difference in the setting of higher education as well. In the realm of higher education there are many different student populations outside of the nontraditional undergraduates that are marginalized and could benefit from better support. Moving forward with my career goals I still have the same underlying passion for wanting to implement and improve diversity and inclusion initiatives but I have a new perspective that I can do it outside of corporate America.

I truly value every experience I had at my field placement within the Office of Outreach & Engagement with the Adult Degree Program. I gained great skills and was supported by a great team of individuals who provided a great environment to learn and grow, while supporting us every step of the way.

Spring 2019 – Juli Ciesla

I had the opportunity to do my Field Placement at the Adult Degree Program (ADP). The Adult Degree Program is a part of JMU's Office of Outreach and Engagement. The mission for the Adult Degree Program is to address the needs of adult learners through an innovative, personalized program plan of study. ADP provides students the opportunity to develop an undergraduate degree that meets the individual, educational, and professional goals. The student population is non-traditional students who are undergraduates. Their admissions requirements are that they have to be undergraduate students who are 22 years or older, have minimum of 30 hours of transferable college credits, and a minimum of a 2.0 GPA. Non-traditional students are characteristically full time workers, take classes part time, and have dependents. The Adult Degree Program gives the opportunity for non-traditional students to design their own degree by choosing two or more tracks like Professional Workplace Communication and Healthcare Leadership. The students work with ADP staff, advisors, and faculty to develop a personalized Academic Program Plan that focuses on their skills, interests, and goals. The degree options they have are Bachelor of Individualized Studies, Bachelor of Arts in Individualized Studies, and Bachelor of Science in Individualized Studies. To complete their degree they must complete IS 200, which is an introductory course designed to prepare these students for the transition into higher education programs. Since it is online, it also makes them practice using technology and get a feel for CANVAS. They also have another course called ADP Strategies for Success, which is also on CANVAS. ADP Strategies for Success helps students learn ways on how to be successful when being in this program. They have assignments that include online learning, time management, and practice using JMU's library site. Students must also complete general education, electives, and a senior research project. Bachelor of Arts in Individualized Studies must also complete a philosophy course and a foreign language. Bachelor of Science in Individualized Studies must also complete a natural science and a math course. Students can also integrate other college-level learning like professional or military experiences into the completion of their degree. The program offers several non-traditional ways to earn credit toward their degree which include portfolios of prior learning experience, College Board Examination Program, transfer credit, independent study, and sponsored learning. Since JMU recognizes that learning takes place throughout life and not just in the classroom, staff evaluate any experiential learning portfolios to see if any of their past experience is equivalent to that offered in the classrooms. The College Board Examination Program offers students' credit by computer based examination. These students also have access to all JMU resources like learning centers, office of disability services, registrar, university business office, counseling center, career and academic planning, and so on.

I had a great experience here at the Adult Degree Program and was able to do a wide range of things. In the beginning, my supervisors had me do research on advising and the retention rates of non-traditional students. I never liked doing research, but I actually enjoyed learning about non-traditional students and other similar programs, which made the research enjoyable. I then presented what I found to my supervisors who really want to make a difference in the program, so it was very nice to see how much they appreciated my findings and that I could help them. I also recreated the program plans and tracks to make them easier to follow for the students. I designed a scholarship flyer for ADP, which gave me experience with CANVA and I was able to hang it around downtown. I created senior and alumni surveys, observed

student advising, and planned and organized the ADP Research Symposium and their graduation reception. I collected donations from businesses downtown for ADP's graduation reception, which allowed other people to know what the ADP is as well.

It was very convenient that the Adult Degree Program was located downtown in the Ice House, directly across from Food Bar Food. I did not have to drive more than 10 minutes to get here and sometimes I would walk from Memorial Hall if it was nice out. At first they only had one computer for an intern, which would have been fine but there was another student with me at this placement. They quickly got us our own space though and we each had two computer monitors, which is especially convenient when doing research. I felt so comfortable working at this site because the staff was always so kind and helpful. My supervisors were always understanding and allowed us to have a flexible schedule. We had weekly meetings where they would check up on us, tell us the weekly goals, and fill us in on whatever was going on in the program. I did not dislike anything when working at this site. I enjoyed my time here and learned so much. I also created great relationships with the staff here and they made coming here very pleasant and comforting.

Working here enhanced many skills of mine. Since I had to work independently most of the time, I had to make sure I was doing the tasks right and that they were done when they needed to be, although my supervisors were very flexible and allowed more time if needed on a project. When making the flyer, I had to use the site CANVA which I never used before. I was nervous at first, but I played around with the site and was very impressed with the flyer I made, which gave me have a lot more confidence in myself when taking on a new task that I have never done before. Also, I believe that my research and presentation skills have improved. I used to never like doing research and I became very nervous when I found out that I had to present it. All the nerves went away though when seeing how thrilled my supervisors were with my presentations and this made me really enjoy doing the research. My supervisors were so thrilled to see the work I had done and it made me feel really assured in conducting research and presenting. I was unsure of what I wanted to do when I graduated but being here showed me that I would definitely like to work in the communications field, whether that be Human Resources or Public Relations. I really enjoyed creating things and promoting them around downtown, and also liked working on the program development tasks like creating new program plans and tracks.

I would recommend this site to anyone who would like to get a feel of what this program at JMU does and if you are interested in anything I listed previously. I am going to miss my time here so much and everyone that works here. They included me in everything as if I worked here full-time and made me really feel at home. I never had a bad experience here and am really grateful for all the knowledge and skills I have gained from this site.