

## Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, VA)

October 13, 2011

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# College Growth Spurt

## Two Schools Report Record Enrollment

EMILY SHARRER, Daily News-Record

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HARRISONBURG - This year's freshman classes at Eastern Mennonite and James Madison universities are among the largest either school has recorded.

Luke Hartman, EMU's vice president for enrollment, said this year's 234-member freshman class is the largest the private school has had in at least a decade. Since 2008, the number of first-year students has grown by nearly 50, while total enrollment has increased by 166.

EMU's total enrollment for fall 2011 is 1,605, compared to 1,589 last year.

Hartman attributes the growth to an increase in the number of scholarships the university is awarding to new students.

Of EMU's freshman class, 188 students were awarded scholarships ranging from \$8,000 to full tuition, which is \$26,260.

"We looked at our financial aid very carefully and we made a point to be competitive," Hartman said.

Hartman said the university also is making a point to draw in a more diverse student population. Marketing EMU's study-abroad opportunities and unique fields of study also have contributed to the influx of students, most of whom hail from Virginia, he added.

At JMU, a gradual increase in the number of slots the school has open for new students led to a 4,100-member freshman class for 2011 - the largest on record for the university, according to Don Egle, JMU spokesman. Last year's freshman class had about 4,000 students.

Bill Wyatt, in JMU's Office of Public Relations, said the official enrollment count won't be complete until the end of the month. The university, however, is expecting total enrollment to come in at about 19,600 students.

If JMU does reach that number, it would mark an increase of nearly 170 students compared to last fall. In the 2010-11 academic year, 30 percent of the university's undergraduates received some kind of scholarship.

Not every area college saw increases, however.

Blue Ridge Community College and Bridgewater College saw decreases in enrollment this year.

This fall's enrollment at BRCC is 4,811, compared to 5,019 students in fall 2010. That's still up compared to fall 2009, when enrollment at the Weyers Cave school was at 4,800.

"We had several years of increases, even double digit increases, over the past 10 years," said BRCC spokeswoman Bridget Baylor. "We knew we weren't going to sustain that kind of growth."

Baylor said general education courses took an enrollment hit, but that classes in occupational and technical areas maintained their numbers. The college has nearly 80 student scholarships available.

Though Bridgewater College's total enrollment decreased by 35 students, Reggie Webb, vice president for enrollment management, said the college still has its eye on reaching its 1,760-student capacity within two years.

The fall 2011 enrollment for Bridgewater is 1,637, which includes 41 new transfer students and a 471-member freshman class. Since 2008, BC's enrollment has grown by about 9.4 percent.

The private school also awards freshmen scholarships ranging from \$10,500 up to full tuition, which on average is \$26,600.

Since his inauguration in October 2010, Bridgewater President George Cornelius has vowed to diversify the college's predominantly white, in-state student population.

Webb said a quarter of this year's freshman class is made up of out-of-state students, whereas that number usually hovers around 20 percent.

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