

# The Breeze

Serving James Madison University Since 1922

Light snow ■ 37°/23°  
chance of precipitation: 80%

Vol. 86, No. 37  
Monday, February 15, 2010



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## VIRGINIA TECH

### Student Paper's Online Policy Under Fire

#### Funds Will Not Be Taken

An issue with online comments had threatened funding for Virginia Tech's student newspaper, but a school official said Friday that would not happen.

The controversy began after a Tech advisory group objected to the Collegiate Times' anonymous comment policy for its Web site.

The Commission on Student Affairs, comprised of students, faculty and staff, said the comments could be homophobic, racist or otherwise offensive and it asked the paper to change its policy.

Advocacy groups, including the Virginia chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union and the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, supported the CT by Friday afternoon.

The commission's chair, Michelle McLeese, wrote a letter Monday to Kelly Wolff, the general manager of Educational Media Company at Virginia Tech, the parent company of CT. In it, McLeese wrote that the commission would recommend the university end funding for EMCVT and ban student organizations to advertise in the paper with university funds.

EMCTV also operates the student yearbook, literary magazine, and campus radio and television stations.

A university spokesman said it was not in the administration's position to pull the funding.

"This is the right decision, and we appreciate that the administration has voiced it so quickly," Wolff wrote in an e-mail to *The Roanoke Times*. "It is completely consistent with Virginia Tech's previous history of support for the right of students to control editorial content in student media which has been laudable among universities."

The comments on collegiatetimes.com are moderated by the community without being edited before posted. If readers "flag" comments, the paper's public editor can choose to hide a comment; it's not deleted, but readers have to click a link to view it.

The debate was sparked by comments on a story about an annual diversity summit in January. The summit focused on the Asian community and drew several inappropriate comments referring to the Virginia Tech massacre (by a South Korean native) and the beheading of a Chinese student by another Chinese native. Editors removed several comments, but two were left on the Web site.

Such policies on articles vary among publications. *The Breeze* has no distinct commenting policy. In the comment section on stories at breezejmu.org, there are fields for readers to submit their names and e-mail addresses, but those cannot be verified. An editor must approve the comment before it is publicly posted.

— staff reports

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# [ ASSESSMENT ]

## JMU's Award-Winning Process Gauges Efficacy of GenEd Programs (and Itself)

By **JEFF HARRIS**  
contributing writer

While most of JMU will enjoy a day off Tuesday, more than 3,300 students will use the day for another purpose: their academic assessments.

Incoming freshmen take the test during 1787 Orientation week in August. Students must then retake the assessment when they accumulate between 45 and 70 credit hours. Seniors also take assessments within their majors.

Since 1986, the Center for Assessment and Research Studies has analyzed the results of the assessment. The center uses its tests to see if higher grades equal higher assessment scores or to determine whether a student's score changes in a given area.

"These committees, often with the input from the faculty, review the findings, interpret the results and decide what changes need to be made," said Robin Anderson, the center's associate director. "Changes could include restructuring cluster requirements, modifying, adding, or abolishing certain classes or modifying the assessment itself."

The tests ask questions on topics

commonly covered in general education classes, such as critical thinking and history. The purpose is to evaluate the effectiveness of these programs.

Assessment results have reached such heights that the program has received national recognition. In 2009, JMU received awards for the work of its assessment office and improved testing for Cluster 3 material. The General Education Cluster 3 10-credit hour requirements include sciences and mathematics that relate to the natural world.

Virginia mandates that all state universities perform an assessment of some kind. These vary by institution; some universities have programs similar to JMU's, while others require students to keep a portfolio and write self-reflective essays throughout their time in college.

JMU says it designs courses that try to strengthen knowledge and provide students with the tools to show adequate progress between assessments.

"Bio 114 really helped me," junior Melissa Cummings said. "It gave me basic science skills similar to what was required on

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## SOME NUMBERS

**1,163**

Students who took a Cluster 3 assessment in 2007

**65**

Questions on a normal Cluster 3 assessment

**54**

Minutes, on average, to complete the 2005 Cluster 5 assessment

**69%**

Average score on the socioculture section of the 2005 Cluster 5 assessment

**40%**

Percentage of people who correctly identified the statement "The best time to stretch is before exercise" as a myth on the 2005 Cluster 5 assessment



NATE CARDEN / THE BREEZE

## Victory!

Sophomore guard Julius Wells, with the help of freshman forward Trevon Flores, fights for a lay-up in an upset over VCU. **PAGE 9**

## CITY CODES

# Shoveled Your Sidewalk Yet?

City Has Been Lenient But Will Issue Citations

By **STEVEN BUTLER**  
contributing writer

Harrisonburg will start issuing citations for unshoveled sidewalks beginning today.

A pre-existing ordinance has not been enforced recently due to the frequency and intensity of the winter snowstorms. The ordinance states that sidewalks must be clear three hours after snowfall or by 10 a.m. the next day for overnight snow.

"People have had far longer than the ordinance allows to get this done," said Miriam Dickler, Harrisonburg spokeswoman.

If a resident fails to comply, police will issue a warrant of violation and "a fine would be determined by a judge," Dickler said. For this type of violation, the fine would not exceed \$250.

"Most of our residents are familiar with the ordinance," Dickler said.

Patrick Reiser, a senior ISAT major, lives along an unshoveled portion of South Main Street and was not aware of this ordinance Sunday afternoon.

"I'd be pretty upset if I came back to my house and saw a citation on my door," Reiser said. "That's absurd."

He noted that much of the snow seems to come from plow trucks pushing snow onto the sidewalks.

Crysal Tolson, a Harrisonburg resident of more than 50 years, said she was forced to hire three men to clear the walk in front of her South Main Street home.

"Why should I clean the city's property?" Tolson said. In order to build the sidewalk, Tolson said the city purchased the land at the front of her property.

"I'm not pleased with the way the city is handling the snow at all. Should I fine them for piling snow up my sidewalk?" Tolson said. "That's what I pay my taxes for."

Dickler maintains that taxes would



SETH BINSTED / THE BREEZE

## Public advisory

"Beginning Monday, February 15, 2010 the City of Harrisonburg will start issuing citations for unshoveled sidewalks in the city.

Under city code section 6-1-15, sidewalks are to be clear within three hours of the end of snowfall or by ten in the morning if the snow has fallen overnight. Due to the significant snowfall accumulation and the frequency of storms, the city has allowed more leeway than usual in this matter."

— HARRISONBURG PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

need to be raised if the city cleared all of the sidewalks.

"We don't have that kind of money or manpower," she said.

For those living in apartment or townhouse complexes, Dickler advises property owners or tenants to check lease agreements to determine who is responsible for clearing the sidewalks.