Center for Faculty Innovation
Academic Program Review
External Team Report

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External Review Team

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Executive Summary

The Center for Faculty Innovation (CFI) is an innovative and integral part of the operational and cultural fabric of James Madison University. It has matured since its founding in 2001 to a center that offers faculty the opportunity to join in conversation with their colleagues and investigate new ways of thinking about teaching, scholarship, service and leadership.

The Academic Program Review (APR) required by the Division of Academic Affairs at JMU asks that each unit complete a self-study and have it reviewed by an External Review Team (ERT). This team consists of individuals from JMU, knowledgeable of the University and its operations, as well as other professionals from higher education with familiarity and experience with similar centers of teaching and learning.

In its self-study the Center for Faculty Innovation identified three key challenges along with a series of secondary issues. The External Review Team reviewed the report, made a site visit to CFI, interviewed stakeholders and constituents, and provided a preliminary exit report. This written report from the ERT serves as our full recommendation to CFI, the Dean of Libraries and Educational Technologies, and the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs.

The key concerns of CFI identified in the self-study are:
1. Replace the Horizon data management system with a more effective system.
2. Develop a more robust assessment program.
3. Identify best practices for CFI operations.

The External Team responds to these key concerns as well as offering recommendations in other areas of staffing, programming and operations. While the ERT recognizes that some of the recommendations make take time to occur, others, such as data management system and developing an assessment protocol should be addressed sooner than later. The Team has made a total of fifteen recommendations in the areas of Mission, Programming, Administration and Staff, and Assessment. We encourage the staff of CFI to work with their Dean and the Provost to consider these recommendations as the Center moves into its next phase of development.
History and Mission

The Center for Faculty Innovation recently passed its 10th year of service at JMU during which time it has evolved from a nearly one-person operation with specific focus on issues related to teaching and learning to a fully staffed organization with a wide variety of programming. At its founding in 2001, CFI was meant to meet the needs for professional development of faculty at JMU. Prof. Karen Santos, under the aegis of Provost Doug Brown and President Linwood Rose, spent time identifying the best practices in faculty development as they existed a decade ago and adapting them to the particular needs of JMU. One of the earliest challenges of the nascent CFI was redesigning the orientation experience for new faculty to make it not just informational but also formational. Working alongside Dr. Carol Hurney, Dr. Santos was able to successful transform this program clarifying the value of faculty development for this new generation of faculty.

As with most new programs, initial success led to an expansion of programs. In fact, most of the first decade of the life of CFI has been marked by the continual addition of programs to their menu of offerings. Starting from the new faculty, these programs grew to include more established faculty and eventually part-time and adjunct faculty through programs such as the Teaching Analysis Poll (TAP) and the Faculty Workshop Series. Tripling their offerings in merely three years, the CFI added programs such as the Madison Teaching Fellows, Faculty Book Discussions, and Take Your Professor to Lunch. They also expanded their reach to include academic unit heads in a special set of programs. All of this was done with limited staffing and very limited if any specifically assigned space.

The CFI moved firmly into adolescence with their first change of leadership and the move to the new East Campus Library Building in 2008. This was also an era of growth in staffing as more two more positions were assigned to CFI (for a total of three including the director) as well as 6 part-time Faculty Associates (FA). The CFI now has a team that can attack a large number of programmatic offerings which have been expanded to include the full range of instructors at JMU from graduate teaching assistants to tenured full professors in the later stages of their careers. The growth of this organization in a ten-year period is a testament to the faculty involved and the support that has been given by the university.

As anyone who has witnessed the growth of a child to adulthood knows, there come times when decisions must be made that may seem to close some doors behind them in order to more widely open those in front. A pre-schooler or elementary school child may be involved in music, dance, soccer, swimming, and numerous other enriching and valuable activities. A middle schooler will need to choose between some of these because of increasing pressures on their time. The high school student must select even more carefully, and as college faculty we are all too aware of what happens to a student who tries to hard to do everything they want to do. It does not matter that they have been successful at all these endeavors in their past. They must choose to focus lest they lose themselves in the rapid swirl of college life.

This is much like where the staff and participants in CFI currently find themselves. They have been enormously successful at most every activity they have attempted for over a decade. A step toward defining some focus was made in 2010 with the drafting of the current mission statement:

"The Center for Faculty Innovation strives to enhance academic culture through professional development experiences designed to encourage innovations and excellence in teaching, scholarship, service, and leadership for all members of the JMU academic community."
The CFI also listed 11 goals, up from 7 in the earlier plan. All of these goals and the mission statement fit well into the overall mission of JMU and are well-mapped to the "defining characteristics" as listed by the university in its planning. There can be no doubt that CFI in its current configuration is meeting a need, in fact many needs of the overall University community.

**Mission Recommendations**

1. **Review the mission of the CFI and clearly define what the program should strive to accomplish and what it should restrict.**

One concern that arose among the review team was the expansiveness of this mission. A mission statement is valuable not only for what it says you can do, but also for the boundaries it establishes. The widely acknowledged success of CFI means that it is quite likely to be seen as an effective conduit between the administration and faculty in the future and therefore may be asked to provide both leadership and support for institution-based efforts due to their success record, expertise, and broad reach that penetrates the institution at many levels. We recommend that the CFI and administration consider in advance what the limits of CFI initiatives should be. This may mean making that difficult choice of cutting loose some programs to run independently or removing them entirely. However, this is a natural part of the maturation process and is critical for the future sustainability of CFI. This does not necessarily mean that the mission statement be rewritten, but it is important that everyone has a shared vision of the center that allows it to back away from activities that are beyond its scope. To effectively do this, there needs to be a thorough analysis and assessment of the broad impacts and intended outcomes of CFI programs and their benefit to JMU. We will address issues related to assessment in other parts of this report, but concentrating on success means fully recognizing what success looks like for CFI programming by making assessment a key step in moving forward with implementing CFI mission and goals.

**Academic Program Goals and Objectives**

As discussed in the history section, CFI has matured over the past decade and is now a highly visible unit that is successfully achieving a multi-dimensional mission. In providing the programs and resources to achieve this mission, the CFI currently aims to impact all levels of the academic community, individual to departments and the broader institutional community. This vision for the CFI has led to a rich array of programs and activities.

**Programming Highlights**

The CFI has created a highly responsive holistic model that embraces faculty innovation as the cornerstone for programs in teaching, scholarship, leadership, and service. Faculty innovation serves as the lightning rod for sparking and harnessing faculty interest, involvement, and passion. As a result, its hallmarks of flexibility and collaboration are widely known. Based on current assessment data, the CFI staff is able to identify which programs are growing and successful through attendance and participant satisfaction. The clearly successful programs include, but are not limited to: May Symposium, TAPs, JMUDesign, New Faculty Orientation, Scholarly Writers Network and SCHEV Outstanding Faculty Awards, and mentoring.

**CFI Culture**

The CFI has created a uniquely creative and innovative culture that sparks creativity and positivity. Staff at all levels consistently echoed similar perceptions of the CFI as a supportive place that is open to their
ideas. New programs are always emerging and the notion of being “faculty-driven” is deeply embedded in the Center’s approach to enacting its mission.

**Expertise**
The broad base of expertise and skill among the CFI staff is increasingly sought for activities and institutional initiatives, expanding the level of impact well beyond its original success at the individual faculty member level. This organizational role is key to its success and visibility and has secured the Center as an important component in the JMU organization. Campus participants view the Director as a highly competent leader who can be called upon to provide her unique expertise to broader campus conversations on teaching, evaluation and assessment. *More specifics on Expertise are offered in the Administration, Faculty and Students section of this report.*

**Facilities**
The CFI is located on the 5th floor of the newly designed East Campus Library. This excellent and well-appointed space offers ideal work areas for student staff, support staff, Faculty Associates, and the CFI leadership team. It is a very welcoming and modern space, easy to access via elevator, and affords confidential as well as public meeting spaces.

**Program Impact**
At this juncture, the impact of the CFI on students and faculty is unevenly reported. As a result, it is difficult at this time to determine if the entire program or each individual activity is making the intended impact on the JMU community as outlined in its mission and goals. However, numerous comments and anecdotal feedback provide rich evidence of the transformative nature of the Center on participants’ teaching and professional lives. The CFI is clearly making an impact and will be able to identify its impact more precisely after identifying clear outcomes to assess for each activity and modifying its follow up evaluation and assessment questions. *More specifics on assessment processes are offered in the Assessment section of this report.*

**Program Support:** At all levels of the institution, from Provost to graduate students, the CFI has earned a high degree of support. This is evidenced by the comments received during the review interviews, Center Annual Reports, and the assessment data gathered by the CFI. Most telling, perhaps, is the presence of the CFI director at the table of a number of key planning groups, including the Academic Council and A-Team. Embedding the CFI into these academic leadership groups and strategic planning bodies situates the department in the mainstream of academic affairs and academic planning, and enables the CFI to accomplish its broad spectrum mission. The allocation of prime space in the new library, the sizeable and stable budget, and secure staffing lines indicate a high level of support and confidence in the program.

**Program Recommendations**

1. *The Center should align its programming and goals to the key dimensions defined in its mission and develop a process of programmatic decision making that maintains the responsive and flexible nature of the CFI while responding to assessment data and trends in the discipline.*

   Typically, as new centers strive to establish visibility and partnerships, a wide-range of programs are commonly and eagerly embraced. Based on the review of its mission recommended in the History and Mission section of this report, the CFI should highlight the four dimensions of its mission more visibly. In future programming, communication, website content, and materials, including hiring, training, and assessment processes, there should be a greater understanding of what the Center aims to achieve. Being able to articulate how wide ranging efforts fit under the CFI mission will help the staff to identify which requests or expectations do not advance the mission of teaching, scholarship, service and leadership.
Reformulating this process of evaluation and selection to be consistent with the mission will provide a basis for greater coherence in the operations of the Center.

Create a system for making programming decisions on a regular basis so that CFI continues to achieve its mission through high quality and impactful activities. The CFI needs to develop and refine the internal processes and structures that will allow it to go to the next level - protecting and safe-guarding its strengths and making visible its weaknesses. As identified in the Assessment section of this report, rich assessment data and a well-directed advisory board could assist the Center in establishing a strategic plan and programming process.

2. Identify clear outcomes related to the CFI mission for each program. CFI programming staff should be trained in writing clear and measurable programming outcomes.

The CFI leadership team should revisit existing outcomes and review emerging programs for outcome overlap and redundancy. Although the assistance of a graduate intern can offer consultation, the professional staff responsible for programs needs to be competent in designing clear outcomes for each activity or event. Many of the outcomes simply state what will take place versus articulating outcomes in terms of the mission statement and CFI goals and objectives. For example, the very successful May Symposium and FIGs include the following outcomes:

- Provide opportunities to support teaching, scholarship, service and leadership
- Interaction with JMU colleagues from varied units and colleges
- Met participant expectations
- Enhance exposure to new ideas and strategies
- Allow time to develop and reflect on new ideas and strategies
- Foster professional environment
- Explore trends in higher education (invited plenary speaker)
- The goals of FIGs are to provide JMU faculty with opportunities for networking and forming cross-disciplinary connections related to a topic(s) of mutual interest.

These statements outline what will occur during the event rather than what the participants will be able to demonstrate, and are not measurable. As written, these statements do not help the CFI staff assess if the event helps meet the mission of the CFI. Every CFI event could claim to accomplish these statements.

The CFI should establish a regular follow-up process for the instructional innovation activities in order to collect examples of how the faculty have applied the knowledge and skills they have acquired from each program or activity-TAPS, workshops, consultations, FIGs, etc. to their teaching.

More specifics on assessment processes are offered in the Assessment section of this report.

3. CFI should to develop a long range plan that shifts day to day program details from the hands of the Director to empower faculty leadership in departments and groups.

As faculty across the institution develop their expertise in instruction, leadership and scholarship through CFI activities, the CFI should offer grants or partnerships that spark “hubs” of innovation within departments and schools, led by these empowered faculty. The expectation of the CFI role in those programs may then be able to function as a liaison and develop more pockets of innovation within departments with less responsibility for each (i.e., Arboretum Collaboration or Flashpoint Series). The departments could become faculty-driven in their quest to innovate and develop, supported by CFI but not wholly done by CFI and its staff (see Georgetown University CNDLS). Perhaps an Associate Director or Faculty Associate Coordinator roles could be reconstituted in order to free up the Director for broader institutional involvement.
4. **Continue to map the necessary protocols for ongoing CFI programs and activities in order to assure continuity in meeting program objectives and staff assignments.**

   In a sense, none of the CFI staff are full-time in the Center for 40 hours per week, given their commitments to teaching and research in their home departments. Apart from classified staff, no one person is there every day, all day. In addition, although the Faculty Associates have somewhat long terms of stay, their schedules change by semester as well, making the CFI a constant flux of schedules and bodies as well as programs! Furthermore, the FAs appear to spend less than the quarter-time equivalent in the Center. Given this highly changing staffing pattern, it can be very stressful and challenging to coordinate the activities of the individuals within the Center. The expertise available for the oversight of a particular program changes perhaps just when the CFI staff can delegate with full confidence. It’s a wonder they are doing as well as they are in quantity and quality! There are indications that some have maxed out, as evidenced by the classified staff needing to move tables, the cancellation of programs, and the complaints of inundation with the CFI emails. These recommended programmatic changes may be highly invisible to the JMU community, but likely will be felt first by the CFI staff and have a ripple effect on the CFI participants and partnerships.

5. **The Dean should initiate the best possible collaboration between the CFI and CIT.**

   There are many structural configurations between centers of teaching and learning and centers for instructional technology. Given future trends in online learning, centers of teaching and learning and centers for instructional technology need to forge mutually beneficial partnerships to better serve faculty. CFI’s reporting line and physical proximity to CIT create opportunity to maximize each of the units’ strengths and tap into unique areas of expertise. Each has a lot to learn from the other, provided structures and incentives for exchange are developed. Given the expertise of the Dean and his supervision of both the CFI and CIT, the Dean needs to engage these units in developing a plan that will build a stronger relationship. To begin with, both staffs can identify their common and unique expertise and begin to tap this knowledge through professional development efforts. This includes establishing regular contact between the units to learn about each unit’s expertise and offerings, better serve as advocates for one another, and identify areas of existing overlap. Although some confusion about the unit distinctions is inevitable among faculty, faculty should be comfortable moving between the units and staff of both areas should be able to freely refer to one another and be knowledgeable of their unique expertise and services. A number of models exist for this collaboration, including establishing a rotating liaison from each unit that attends the other units’ staff meetings and reports back to their unit.

6. **The CFI needs to develop a routine and efficient process for disseminating CFI program announcements.**

   Although providing individual email announcements for each CFI program may have made sense at an earlier point in time, the current CFI offerings and level of campus participation and annoyance indicate it is time to consider a simple weekly email listing of events with embedded links to attractive marketing materials. Additionally, better organization and condensing of program communication may reduce the Program Manager’s time on communication and allow for other tasks to be shifted in that direction. It may be helpful to combine communication efforts with the CIT while making more distinct the program sponsor. For example, a tag line could be inserted, “The CIT invites you to explore technology in learning at the following events” or “The CFI invites you to connect with other faculty through instruction, scholarship, or leadership at the following events,” along with headings that categorize programs according to the dimension of the mission (scholarship, instruction, etc.) If the CFI chooses to maintain a separate schedule of events, the two units would benefit from discussing alternate timing cycles, distinctive color schemes (“they’re both blue!”) and other strategies to reduce confusion and overlap. The program management tool that is selected to replace Horizon may offer an automatic emailing system to help accomplish this plan.
Administration, Faculty and Students

The CFI is comprised of a dedicated and respected full-time professional faculty who continue to teach and conduct research in their respective disciplines. As such, the CFI Professionals function as colleagues to those they support. Carol Hurney, CFI Director, has built on the foundation of the Center with her knowledge of faculty development. Her experience throughout the history of the Center has provided her with direction for its future.

Cara Meixner and Edward Brantmeier serve as CFI Assistant Directors. They were both mentioned during many on-site interviews as being dedicated, knowledgeable, and well respected. Dianne Little and Austin Bingler were also noted as providing solid support as administrative assistants.

In support of the mission of the center, there are also several Faculty Associates. These individuals serve a term of two to three years on a one course release from their respective departments. They work with assistant directors and report directly to the executive director.

The CFI also employs three undergraduate students, each working approximately 10 hours per week. These students report to the executive administrative assistant and provide support in a number of areas, including website maintenance, designing marketing materials, data entry, and general office duties. It appears the students are appropriate in number, providing good support to the CFI, and are well supervised.

The size of faculty development centers at an institution the size of James Madison University vary widely from small centers with a few individuals to large centers of up to 10 full time staff members. Overall, excluding student workers, the CFI staff is approximately 5.25 FTE (executive director, two assistant directors, one full time administrative support, and five faculty members at .25 each). The size of the center is adequate, although given the quality of work currently being accomplished, it would seem adding one or two additional professional staff members would yield a large return on investment.

Administration, Faculty and Student Recommendations

1. CFI directors should work in concert with the Dean to develop an advocacy plan that will carry the mission, strategic plan, and needs of the Center to JMU administration.

The immediate supervisor of the CFI plays a key role in the success of the Center (Schroeder & Associates, 2010). Although many centers are founded by Provosts, and therefore initially positioned within that reporting line, it is not typical for a Center to continue to report directly to the Provost, particularly at larger institutions. However, it is vital that the Center has a clear conduit for receiving information from academic affairs and its leadership team. It is unclear if the recent change in the reporting line is able to provide the knowledge and close ties needed between academic affairs and the Center. We encourage the Dean and Director to cultivate a relationship that will result in improved communication and a clearer overall mission for the Library. It should provide the necessary tools for the Dean to advocate for the Center at all levels of administration, an advocate who is an intentional and frequent conduit of information which in turn will build confidence within the CFI leadership that the mission of the program is in good hands. All of this can be accomplished in a way that preserves the autonomy of CFI within the Library organization while at the same time having it become a recognized and respected fixture within that organizational space.
2. Review the position of Faculty Associate and develop a plan for recruitment and hiring that is clear and consistent.

The faculty associate program is a valuable program and appears to be working very well overall at JMU. Many individuals commented on this particular program and saw a great deal of value for both the individuals involved and the university. There are areas of improvement for this program, as noted through interviews and in consultation with the visiting review team.

a. The process by which one becomes a faculty associate is unclear. We recommend a very clearly stated application process that is designed to function well in advance of the start date for the Associate. This would assist in making the selection process more transparent and perhaps perceived as being more fair to the campus as a whole. An early selection process would also assist departments in securing adjunct faculty to cover courses of the Faculty Associates. The application should clearly outline the expectations and identify areas of expertise of the FA, selection criteria, and require signatures of support from unit head and dean.

b. The expectations of Faculty Associates should be clearly stated. The outcomes expected of individuals who work in this program and the benefits to the home department and the university should be clearly stated. In addition, clearly stating the anticipated number of hours of work expected would help with staffing the center and having Faculty Associates available for other faculty for consultations.

c. The monetary reimbursements to departments appear insufficient at present. Several individuals noted that the amount provided was insufficient for departments to cover adjunct staffing. As needed, additional funds should be provided to departments that cannot hire at the current stipend level. In addition, several Faculty Associates indicated that due to the difficulty in finding adjuncts to cover courses many of them take the funds as overload pay. This creates a situation in which faculty are very busy and may actually impact the time served for this task.

d. The hiring of Faculty Associates should be based on current needs within the multi-dimensional mission and timed in a staggered sequence when possible to allow more experienced FAs to mentor new hires.

3. Develop a plan that will encourage and allow Assistant Directors to flourish in their academic careers and scholarship outside of CFI.

The review team felt it was important that the Assistant Directors be given time to make progress in their academic careers and scholarship by having uninterrupted time in which it is expected that they develop their own research. These individuals hold faculty positions in their respective departments and in keeping with the mission of CFI should be encouraged to succeed within those departments in addition to their service in the Center. Mentoring and support for Assistant Directors should be provided. Support in terms of leadership development through conference participation and other campus opportunities should be identified.

4. To ensure the continued growth and development of CFI and to offer opportunities for current staff to develop their scholarship and faculty achievements, one additional Assistant Director should be hired.

Given the mission of the CFI and the amount the staff is currently accomplishing, we recommend one additional full time Assistant Director. Ideally, having three assistant directors who work collaboratively, but each specialize in instruction, scholarship, and leadership would be a valuable resource for JMU and allow the CFI to assign each AD to a key segment of the CFI mission. One area of consideration for specialization would be course design.
5. **CFI could benefit from forming an Advisory Board to provide an additional viewpoint on the mission and strategic plan of the Center.**

To date the CFI planning has been developed by staff and Faculty Associates with input from upper administration. In faculty support centers it is typically advisable to have an advisory board made up of campus leaders to provide additional input with respect to strategic planning and evaluation of outcomes. We recommend an advisory board be established to contribute to the planning, development and advancement of the Center.

**Program Assessment**

The CFI’s program assessment mirrors the most common practices in the field. The CFI carefully tracks participation in programs using a registration database system (Horizon), and documents participation in clearly designed “activity reports” that list the program’s goals, participation over time, strengths/weaknesses, and notes about assessment of that program. CFI also routinely uses evaluation forms to gather feedback on workshops and other programs, making changes to offerings based on this information about participant satisfaction.

This is an appropriate but limited approach to program assessment that reflects how many comparable centers assess their work. While the activity reports provide a helpful snapshot of participation in and satisfaction with each individual program, they may not focus on the most important questions for program assessment, such as the impact of particular CFI initiatives or the cumulative effects of CFI work with individuals or units at JMU. The CFI’s staff has the expertise necessary to do deeper, outcomes-based assessment, but they have struggled to find the time necessary to do this work.

Additionally, the Horizon database system hampers CFI assessment. In short, Horizon is cumbersome, limited, and inefficient. For example, Horizon requires counting by hand to determine how many times a faculty member participated in CFI programs during a year. Besides wasting time and frustrating staff, the limits of Horizon also make it difficult for the Center to do more sophisticated assessment of the data they already have collected, such as comparing participation by department or college in particular programs.

**Program Assessment Recommendations**

In fall 2012, the CFI will have a new a graduate assistant to focus on assessment, which should help develop CFI’s assessment efforts, but this alone will probably not be significant without additional changes.

1. **CFI should replace the Horizon database program with a more robust and versatile option that will allow for improved program management and assessment.**

CFI should replace Horizon with a more robust database system as soon as is feasible. The new system should not only take the place of Horizon but also extend Horizon’s capabilities by efficiently performing tasks including generating standard reports from existing data, managing event registration, and sending routine emails (pre-event reminder, post-event evaluation, etc.). CFI might decide to use a commercial product such as ABC Signup (which is used by UNC’s faculty center) or might take advantage of a system to be developed by JMU. Since the development of a JMU-specific database likely will take some time, we suggest using a commercial product for at least the next academic year to move quickly away from the clunky Horizon database. We understand that no single database is likely to meet all of CFI’s
event registration and assessment needs; instead of holding out for the ideal database system that handles registration for all different events and seamlessly integrates all possible assessment data, CFI might choose to use a streamlined database to meet the majority of its needs, and to supplement that with specialized resources for more complex registration and assessment tasks.

2. **CFI should address their assessment practices and move from a general participation and satisfaction model to one that is more focused on assessing fewer programs in more detail.**

CFI develop the practice of more deeply assessing a small number of programs/initiatives each year. Good practice in assessment involves balancing broad assessment of all work (through participation and satisfaction measures, for example) with more fine-grained assessment of targeted programs. We recommend that CFI develop a plan to regularly assess the outcomes of a few of its most significant programs. The TAP program, for instance, could be the focus of an outcomes study for one or two years, involving systematic surveys of and/or interviews with all TAP faculty to determine the short- and long-term results of TAPs for individual faculty and for categories of faculty (e.g., early career faculty, faculty in the College of Business, and so on). The results of a comprehensive assessment of TAP outcomes could be used (a) to revise how CFI conducts and markets TAPs, (b) to inform how CFI works with different groups of faculty, (c) to create resources for faculty about common strengths/concerns identified by TAPs, (d) to contribute to the literature on faculty development, and (e) to document CFI’s impact on teaching and learning at JMU. After such a comprehensive study of one program, CFI then could shift its assessment energies to another high priority program or initiative, allowing TAP assessment to be fallow for several years.

3. **CFI should utilize existing data at JMU to add depth to their assessment.**

JMU regularly participates in both NSSE and COACHE, for example. Data from surveys such as these can be partitioned by College to identify strengths and needs, and can be tracked over time to see whether particular initiatives (such as the focus academic culture) have resulted in changing student or faculty attitudes and behaviors. This data alone is not likely to meet all of CFI’s assessment needs, but it could supply a big-picture view of CFI’s impact and the evolving needs of the JMU community.