

The Spotlight

Official Newsletter
for First Year
Students

November 2006

Brought to you by the letters **F, Y, and I**, which stand for **First Year Involvement**

Don't have a car? It doesn't matter.

by Danielle Danko

Remember taking that tour of JMU and asking whether you could have a car? And remember the tour guide uttering those words: "No, freshman can't have cars."? But you're here anyway, possibly still griping about life without your car. However, it's almost halfway through the year and it's time to get over the fact that private transportation in the form of your black Honda Civic is just not an option. In fact, not having a car can be almost better than actually having a car.

How can not having a car actually be better than having a car on campus? First of all, even if freshmen were allowed to bring cars to campus, there are only a few designated parking lots for your vehicles. Parking next to your residence hall might not even be an option. Another liability of having a car on campus is the cost of a parking permit. For a year-round pass, the cost is 172 dollars. Put that money into something more useful, like taking that really hot chick in your GCOM class to dinner somewhere other than Dukes. Along with the issue of money is buying gas. So you spent all of your money taking that girl out to a nice dinner and a movie, and you forgot to fill up your tank.

Even if you had a car on campus, you wouldn't drive to class. Campus isn't that big, student parking lots are not located next to classrooms, and you could probably use a little bit of exercise anyway. Burn a few calories while walking to class and keep off that freshman fifteen. However, walking to the mall or Applebees isn't an option, which is why JMU and Harrisonburg have a great bus system. Bus schedules can be found on the JMU website. So, grab a schedule and hop on a bus.

If public transportation isn't for you, then make friends with upperclassmen who do have cars. Upperclassmen probably won't have a problem giving you a lift every once in a while because at one time, they were freshmen too.

If those options don't convince you that not having a car isn't such a bad thing, then you'll just have to hang in there. May is only six months away.



"Let the Eagle Sore," and other Misadventures of **Spellchecking**

by Dr. Mark E. Thomas

You'll probably need to read this poem aloud to get the joke.

Eye halve a spelling chequer
I have a spelling checker.
It came with my pea sea.
It plane lee marks four my revue
Miss steaks aye can knot sea.

Eye ran this poem threw it,
Your sure reel glad two no.
Its vary polished in it's weigh.
My checker tolled me sew.

A checker is a bless sing,
It freeze yew lodes of thyme.
It helps me right awl stiles two reed,
And aides me when I rime.

Each frays come posed up on my screen
eye trussed too bee a joule.
The checker pours o'er every word
To cheque sum spelling rule.

Bee fore a veiling checker's Hour
spelling mite decline,
And if we're lacks oar have a laps,
We wood bee maid too wine.

Butt now bee cause my spelling
Is checked with such grate flair,
Their are no fault's with in my cite,
Of nun eye am a ware.

Now spelling does knot phase me,
It does knot bring a tier.
My pay purrs awl due glad den
With wrapped word's fare as hear.

To rite with care is quite a feet
Of witch won should be proud,
And wee mussed dew the best wee can,
Sew flaw's are knot aloud.

Sow ewe can sea why aye dew prays,
Such soft wear four pea seas,
And why eye brake in two averse
Buy righting too pleas.
-- Sauce Unknown



As you can see, depending on a spell checker uncritically can actually introduce errors into your writing. Sometimes spell checkers offer a "correction" that replaces one part of speech with another, rendering the sentence ungrammatical and perhaps unintelligible.

For example, when I wrote, "These courses are taught by Writing and Rhetoric faculty, who want peer tutors who perform as facilitators, not rewriters," MS Word's grammar checker recommended the following phrase to replace my sentence: "Writing and Rhetoric faculty, who want peer tutors who perform as facilitators, teaches not rewriters these courses."

The reason for this disconnect, as Sonia Jaffe Robbins points out on the website for her editing workshop at New York University, is that computers' spelling and grammar checkers operate on mathematical principles, but that's not the way we humans understand or use language.

What does all this boil down to? It's okay to use spell checkers, but at some point, employ some human intelligence to ensure that "there" isn't used when you mean to say "their" or "they're."

--For the above material, I am indebted to my JMU colleague Karen McDonnell and to NYU's S. J. Robbins (see <http://www.nyu.edu/classes/copyXediting/spellcheck.html>)

Academic Advising & Career Development: *Ask Chris...*

Chris: When do I get to pick my Spring classes? Impatient, White Hall.

Dear Impatient: The majority of first year students will register for the 2006 spring semester during November 13-17. Individual dates are based according to the number of credit hours earned prior to the 2006 fall semester. Some students will have advance registration at an earlier time due to practice schedules or needed accommodations. Students will be given a 48 hour initial window in which to register. Course adjustments can be made following the registration period from November 20 through December 22 (more than 17 credit hours can be added at this time). E-campus will not be available over the Thanksgiving break. Check e-campus to view your specific registration appointment time.

Chris: Who can help me pick my classes? Ida Noe, Chesapeake Hall

Dear Ida: Your Academic Advisor can assist you with course selection. For those who are undeclared, Academic Advising and Career Development will see students on a walk-in basis during the month of November through the registration period. A sign-in sheet will be located on the reception desk in Wilson 301. If you are declared, contact your major advisor for assistance in your major department.

Chris: Can I register for a course as credit/no credit? Jay Lowe, Shorts Hall

Dear Jay: Students are only eligible to take a course on a credit/no credit basis if they have at least 28 credit hours earned and a 2.25 cumulative GPA. Therefore, most first year students are ineligible. Courses which may NOT be taken as credit/no credit include general education, major, minor, and degree requirements. All required courses must be taken for a grade.

Chris: How do I figure out my GPA? Looking for the Honor Roll, Huffman Hall

Dear Looking: To calculate your GPA, divide the quality points earned by the number of credit hours attempted. Refer to page 29 & 30 in 2006-2007 Undergraduate Catalog for a chart of the JMU grading system and how to calculate your GPA.

Chris: When do I have to take that computer test? M. S. Doss, Chandler Hall

Dear M.S.: The fall semester deadline for completion of Tech Level I tests is Friday, November 17. You may take any of the three sections over if needed for a passing score. The tests can be taken any time during Ashby Lab hours of operation. The Lab is open Mondays and Wednesdays 10-4, Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30-4, and Fridays 9-2.

Chris: What happens if I fail to complete the Tech Level I tests? Need Help, Garber Hall.

Dear Need: A hold will be placed on your record (can't adjust your schedule) if you do not achieve the required score on each of the three Tech Level I components including MS Word, MS PowerPoint, and MS Excel. Tutorials are available to prepare you for these exams at the following website, <http://www.jmu.edu/gened/tutorial.htm>. You can also contact the Technology Coordinator, Catherine Mahoney, at x82508 or mahonect@jmu.edu.

D-Hall Walks

by Sean Branigan



Saved by the Bell fans walk through D-Hall with cell phones the size of caneloupes. Two days a week, they wear tight t-shirts with '70's rock bands ironed on the front, and button-downs the other days. They also enjoy Family Matters and Fraggle Rock. This means they love Grilled Cheese and believe the sandwich line is too long most days. They laugh whenever a tray drops and jump to the sound of the ice machine. Saved by the Bell fans seldom eat the soup. It never tastes like home.

Lost fans walk through D-Hall like meerkats in their desert tunnels. The islands of food options are fascinating to them, yet never totally trusted, and every other month a new station is discovered. "Hey. Where'd you find those Fritos ?!" Lost fans seldom return for seconds alone. They sketch elaborate conspiracies to nab the last Sloppy Joe or Grilled Cheese. They savor steak fries and weird dip mixtures like honey mustard and hot sauce.

Project: Runway fans walk through D-Hall like Sherlock Holmes around a crime scene. They close off three of their five senses seeking what they're really "in the mood for." They believe the tomatoes never taste as sweet as they look. They will only cut in line for Peanut Butter Pie and condiments. While others worry over long lines, Project: Runway fans worry about the booths being free. They might munch on fries over a booth of people with peas left on their plate, waiting for them to finish. They share dieting tips they secretly don't believe and are star-struck by a nice pair of shoes.

Family Guy fans cook waffles into faces of ex-presidents. They have trouble prying the waffle from the iron, which is why the ex-presidents never turn out right. They like to see the roasting chickens spin in the oven like a carousel on Mars. Family Guy fans imagine throwing muffins like snowballs and believe chocolate milk is necessary for photosynthesis to exist. (They are not confused. It just tastes that good.) They swear the soft serve tastes better the taller the tower you are able to squeeze from the machine. Family Guy fans carry out cookies to friends stuck studying in the library stacks.

FYI Writing Center

by Cory Scott

The FYI Writing Center is a peer-run facility, with six different students readily available to help you with your latest assignment. We accept papers from all classes, it doesn't matter if it's for GWRIT, GHTH, or GHIST, and we'll assist you at any stage in the writing process. If you're just having trouble brainstorming an idea, or want someone to look over your rough draft, we'll be happy to help.

The FYI Writing Center is open Sunday through Thursday, from 4-10 PM. Walk-ins are welcome, but it's highly recommended that you make an appointment. Phone number: 540-568-3598

Becoming a Writing Minor at JMU

by Julie Mohlmann

Course sign ups for the 2007 Spring Semester are coming soon. In order to graduate from JMU it is required that students take a certain number of elective credits. A great way to focus those elective credits is to choose a minor, and what better a minor to choose than the writing minor that the JMU writing program offers. Like most minors the writing minor is only 18 credits and is applicable to everyone, regardless of their major. Strong writing skills are a requirement for getting on in the professional world, no matter what field you are employed in. The Writing and Rhetoric Minor extends beyond just your basic Gwrit course to include different genres of writing and topics of interest. Recent special interest topics have included Literary Non-Fiction, Rhetoric and Justice, and Graphic Novels. Check out the writing program's website at www.jmu.edu/writing and consider signing up for a writing class this coming spring.

Pull ^{UP} your grades with 3 simple study tips!

by Josh Hahn

Having completed more than half of a semester at JMU, you may have a decent handle on college exams. However, efficient study habits are not only a function of better academic performance, but also affect how much free time you have to organize unsanctioned Inter-Hall Texas Holdem tournaments, set and reset fantasy football line-ups, or even catch a rerun of Grey's Anatomy. There are a ton of resources available on the web or on campus to help you develop positive study habits. For more extensive information, for example, ask your R.A. or student advisor about Academic Support Instruction seminars held weekly at the F.Y.I Center in Huffman A100. For now, though, take an upperclassman's advice on what he considers to be the three best tips to developing efficient study habits.

Study from Day 1! The best time to start studying is the first day of class. Yeah, I know; you have already heard your professors' tired speeches telling you to show up to class every day prepared to take notes and participate in class. Well, this is good advice to heed. Skipping class, sleeping through lecture, or daydreaming about Dr. Derek Shepherd, even just once or twice, removes the opportunity you have to create a context for the vast amount of information you are expected to internalize. Learning cannot occur from scratch; you must have a foundation from which to build, and consistent, attentive attendance is the footing of this foundation.

Type/Retype Your Notes! At first, you might think that the benefits of typing your notes after class are not worth the time you invest. This may be true, in certain cases. However, if you are willing to test this tip out for two or three weeks, you will probably be shocked at how beneficial it is. After you write your notes by hand in class, sometime that evening (preferably as soon as possible after class) type, or at least re-write, your notes. Try rephrasing concepts into words you would use, especially if the class in question has exams with essays. Retyping your notes helps you to create and solidify your own context of information, which will make both studying and recalling during test-time that much easier. Even more important, if you retype your notes, you are more likely to store that information in your long-term memory than your short-term memory, which will aid you in other classes within your discipline and in your career.

Pay Attention to Your Environment! The time has come to study. By "study," I do not mean "cram." Cramming does little more than rob you of sleep. Naturally, though, you are going to study more for a given class as the test date approaches. Studies show that the environment in which you study has a large impact on how efficient your studying is. For example, you want to study at consistent times in a consistent place. You want this place to be well-lit, well-circulated, and free from distraction. In other words, your residence hall room on Grey's Anatomy night is not the best place. Try studying in the library at one of the dividers or in the stacks. Also, do not forget to take about a ten minute break for every hour you study.

Dating Advice for Freshmen

by Melissa "The Heart-breaker" Alfano

So you dropped that loser you were dating in high school. Now what? Rather than running begging back to "the only girl that will ever, like, get you," take a look at the hotties and people who "probably have a good personality" around you. There is a good chance you'll find a replacement faster than you can say "my ex will end up living in his mother's basement when he is 35, anyway," and once you do, here are some helpful dating tips.

- Court Square is the perfect place for a date. Grab a bite at Calhoun's, catch a cool show at Court Square Theater, and when it is all over with, chill out with some coffee at the Artful Dodger. Since Court Square is only a mile from the quad, the walk there would be a great time to get some awkward conversations going.
- Put some nice warm cocoa in a travel mug and snuggle up as you walk through the arboretum. Catch the last of that fall foliage.
- The night shuttle runs on weekends from 10PM until 3AM, and it stops at Regal Cinemas. Check out the full bus schedule at hdpt.com, because nothing says classy quite like public transportation.
- Pretend like you actually know what the heck experimental theater is and catch a show at Theater II.
- D-hall is NOT a date!

**Make plans
now for
Thanksgiving
Break!**

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