



# One Campus' Journey to Improve Accessibility Across Indoor & Outdoor Spaces

---

AHEAD – July 2025

**DR. RUTH DAVISON & ALEX ECKLUND, M.A.**

Director of Compliance    Director of Disability Resources

University *of*  
Mary Washington

# Welcome

- Tell us who you are and...
- Share one physical accessibility challenge on your campus



# *Objectives for Today*

1. Learn about one approach to improving physical accessibility
2. Better understand the critical need to engage multiple stakeholders in any plan/process to improve campus accessibility
  - Who are your own campus' stakeholders?

# SPEAKERS

## **Dr. Ruth Davison**

- **Director of Compliance**
- **ADA/TIX Coordinator**
- **Since August 2022**
- **My  
Facilities/Construction  
Experience**

## **Alex Ecklund, M.A.**

- **Director of Disability  
Resources**
- **UMW since 2020**

# *A bit about UMW*

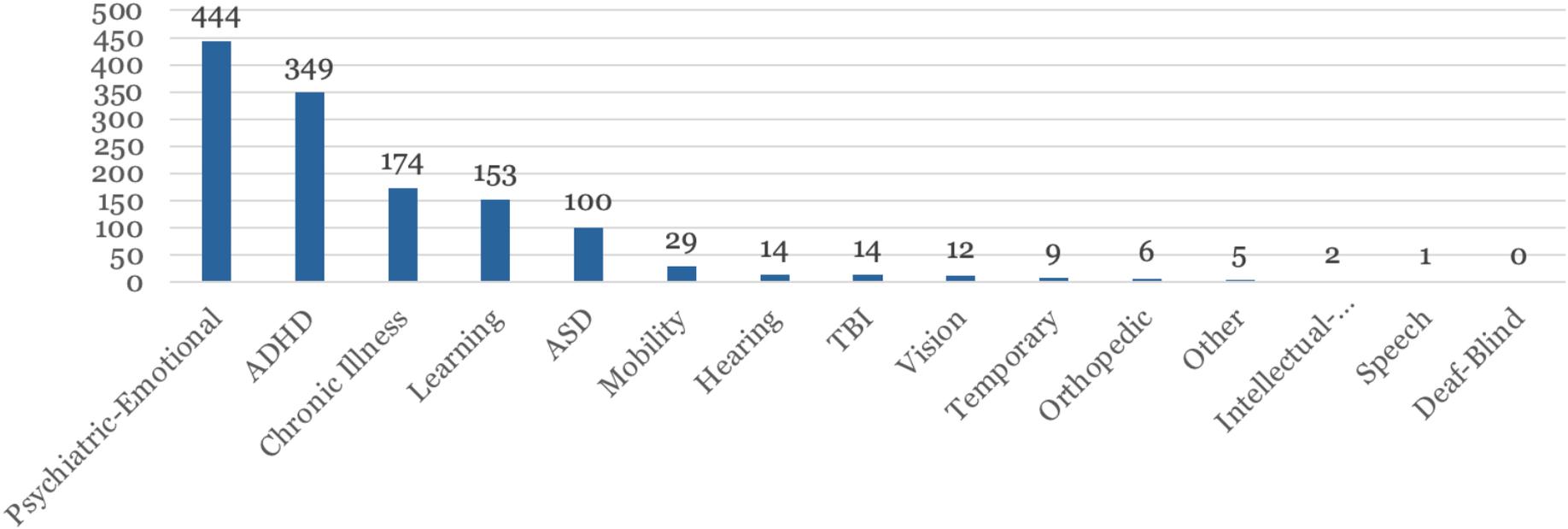


- Founded in 1908
  - State Normal & Industrial School for Women (a teacher's college)
  - Affiliated with UVA in 1944 and became independent in 1972
- Located in Fredericksburg, VA
- Liberal Arts Focused Public 4-year (State Funded)
- Baccalaureate College - Arts & Sciences
- Approx. 3,800 Students
- Highly Residential
- NCAA Division III

# The Office of Disability Resources

- In 2021, expanded to a new office location, added testing as a service and 2 staff positions
- 5 full-time staff
- 782 Registered Students (June 16<sup>th</sup>)

# Students with Disabilities



# Facilities Deficits/Challenges



- **Historic Campus and Buildings**
  - Originally founded in 1908
  - Elevators
  - Access into Buildings (sometimes hidden away)
  - Retrofit of Spaces
  - Need more accessible spaces
  - Lack of Signage
  - Campus Walk

# Many Historical Structures



# *Deficits/Challenges*



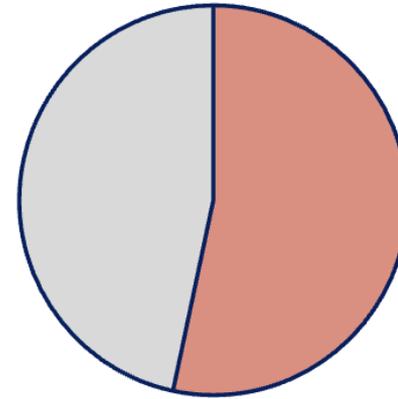
# Assessment of Needs

- 2019 Campus Accessibility Working Group Formed
- Consultant – Jim Bostrom (OCR)
  - Completed an accessibility study of campus
- Campus Wide Focus Groups
- Anecdotal and/or Specific Incidents

# FOCUS GROUPS WHO PARTICIPATED?

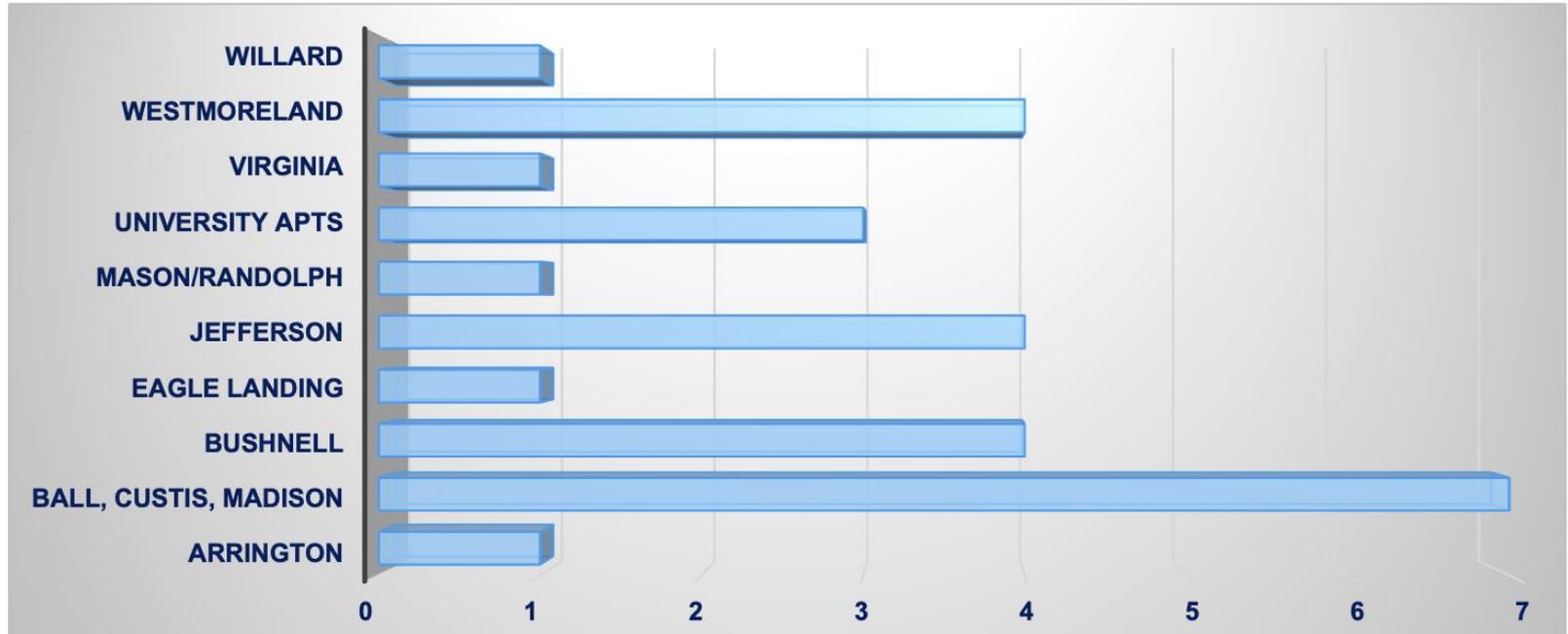


- ***21 Focus Groups***
- ***195 Total Participants***
  - ***43% Faculty/Staff***
  - ***47% Students***



■ Students   ■ Faculty & Staff

# Specific Residence Halls Mentioned



# Funding

- 2022-2024 Biennium Budget Requests were submitted
- Majority of campus buildings were constructed prior to 1970
- A detailed list of deficiencies was provided (across all spaces/buildings)
- Emphasis on Compliance and Universal Design
- Awarded \$11.25M from the Commonwealth

# NEXT STEPS

- RFP for Design Team
- Selection of the team
- Site Visits & Design Charette w/Many Stakeholders

# Stakeholders

- Academic Affairs
  - Including Historic Preservation Faculty Member
- Disability Resources
- Facilities and Capital Outlay
- Residence Life
- Athletics
- Marketing and Communications
- Office of Community Relations and Compliance
- Historic Preservation

*Collectively this became the Accessibility Enhancements Steering Committee*

# Phases of Construction

- Multi Year Delivery (Challenges)
- Whole building accessibility improvements for five residence halls
- Designing and building accessible seating for three classrooms which currently have fixed stadium seating
- Accessibility improvements to the Battleground Athletic Complex
- Exterior site work at James Farmer Hall and the Heslep Amphitheatre
- Additional enhancements focused on ramps, handrails, signage, and Blue Light call boxes.

# SOME CHALLENGES

- State Review Process
  - DEB Division of Engineering & Building
- Timing and Delays
- Budget
  - Tariffs
  - Value Engineering



**CHALLENGE**

# Update

- **Campus Walkway work near completion**
- **Elevator Upgrade Project**
- **Phase One – construction begins Fall 2025**
- **Phases 2 & 3 - DEB review early 2026**
- **Communication is Critical**

# Campus Master Planning

- Most recent cycle in 2023-2024
- 7 subcommittees, including Accessibility
- Accessibility's written report was focused on:
  - Legal Compliance and Universal Design
  - Universal Design = “the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without adaptation or specialized design.”
  - Universal Design considers accessibility and usability for a broader, diverse population regardless of ability or disability.
  - Beyond compliance with Section 504 and the ADA

# Dialogue/Questions

