



**2010 National Alternative Break Awards
Program of the Year
James Madison University**

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Program Background: James Madison University's Alternative Break Program started in 1992 when approximately 50 students and faculty organized a trip to Florida to do relief work after Hurricane Andrew. JMU is currently one of the biggest programs in the country – ranking number two in number of trips being sent (45) and number three in the number of participants being sent (440). In a program that has been a thought leader within the alternative break movement for years, including winning National Alternative Break Program of the Year in 1998 – they have continued to innovate and improve their programming. This year, JMU came back as Program of the Year due to their commitment to Active Citizenship. This is evident in their outreach to other alternative break programs, partnering with offices and departments within their campus, work within the local Harrisonburg community, and practices promoting Active Citizenship as attainable in each participant's life.

Structure: Professional Staff (1), Graduate Assistant dedicated to Assessment (1), Student Coordinators (2), AB Crew, Learning Partners (1/site), Site Leaders (2/site), and Participants.

Program Highlights:

- Designed and implemented a **new trip planning and management database** which allows Site Leaders to spend less time on administrative work and more time on social issue education. The database includes host site information and evaluations, housing information, Site Leader and Participant information.
- All Site Leaders go through a **15 week training** course for two hours per week beginning in September and ending two weeks after they return from break in March. Topics include: Budgeting, Philosophies and Issues Forum, Learning Components, Reflection and Wellness, Emergency Procedures, Cultural Sensitivity, Reorientation, and Assessment.
- Recognizing the importance of **programmatically assessment**, JMU implemented an extensive assessment program in which participants and site leaders take part in pre and post trip evaluations. To aid in the measurement of the effectiveness of Site Leader training, each individual training session is assessed with a “clicker” - enabling immediate data collection.
- Raised \$23,297 through **letter writing initiatives**, which constituted a 26% increase from 2008.
- **Co-sponsored 14 alternative breaks** with campus entities such as Madison International, Campus Ministries, Interfaith Coalition, University Recreation, and various academic departments. Currently, as many as six other campus entities are being considered for 2010-2011 trip collaborations.
- Through a partnership with the Center for Multicultural Student Services, JMU **increased the representation of students of color** on trips, with alternative break trip participation more diverse than the total campus percentage representation.
- Offers **local alternative break trips** in Harrisonburg with the desire to expose students to current issues and needs in the surrounding communities.

- **Hosted an “Issues Forum” training night** with Community Service-Learning Local Service Coordinators, where small groups discussed the issue areas of each alternative break group.
- JMU’s alternative break program is collaborating with Break Away to convene the **first national professional development conference** for staff working directly with alternative break programs.
- All participants in the program were **innovatively engaged in deepening their understanding of the Active Citizen Continuum and the 8 Components**. The program ran a contest where participants were asked to share the Active Citizenship Continuum with their peers (each peer circling their current location on the Continuum) and bring the results to the CS-L office to be counted for a prize. Each group was expected to take pictures of an example of 5 of the 8 Components in action during their alternative break.
- A **Simple Living component** was stressed within the program this year to enhance the understanding of the need for solidarity and resourcefulness within the communities they are serving. All trips adhere to a “poverty-level budget” (\$6 per person daily) and clear limits on luggage and cell phone use.

“Of the collegiate groups we’ve hosted throughout the 2009 – 2010 academic year, the Alternative Break students from James Madison University stand out in passion, kindness and dedication.” Host Site, Project Lazarus – New Orleans.