

2021 SPECIAL SESSION II

ENROLLED

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 710

Commending the James Madison University softball team.

Agreed to by the Senate, August 5, 2021

WHEREAS, in 2021, the James Madison University softball team became the first unseeded team in Women's College World Series history to win its first two games and reach the national semifinals; and

WHEREAS, earlier in the season, the James Madison University (JMU) Dukes captured their sixth Colonial Athletic Association (CAA) championship title, the fourth in the last five seasons; the team outscored league opponents 32-0 in 17 innings and won the clinching game 17-0, with senior Kate Gordon named Most Outstanding Player for hitting six home runs in three games; and

WHEREAS, the JMU Dukes subsequently won the Knoxville NCAA Regional to advance to the Super Regional round for the third time in a span of five tournaments, becoming the only non-Power 5 university among 13 teams to advance and winning the only regional tournament to feature three nationally ranked teams; and

WHEREAS, the JMU Dukes then defeated No. 8 Missouri in a best-of-three series to win the Columbia NCAA Super Regional for the first time in program history and become the first CAA team and the first institution outside the Power 5 conferences to reach the Women's College World Series since 2014; and

WHEREAS, in the Women's College World Series, the JMU Dukes defeated No. 1 Oklahoma by a score of 4-3 in a stunning upset and followed up with a 2-1 victory over No. 5 Oklahoma State; and

WHEREAS, the JMU softball team finished the season 41-4 to achieve the second-best record in the country among nearly 300 NCAA Division I programs and the best winning percentage in JMU softball history; and

WHEREAS, after their postseason campaign, the JMU Dukes were ranked fourth in both the final 2021 *USA Today*/National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) Division I Top 25 Coaches Poll and the ESPN.com/USA Softball Top 25; and

WHEREAS, JMU seniors Kate Gordon and Odicci Alexander were named to the Women's College World Series All-Tournament Team and were each honored as All-America selections; in addition, seven JMU Dukes were honored as NFCA All-Region selections; and

WHEREAS, in 2021, JMU also became the first institution in the Commonwealth to have both its baseball and softball teams advance to the College World Series in the same year; and

WHEREAS, the JMU Dukes have inspired countless students, alumni, and fans by their achievements, and they have been outstanding ambassadors for the university at the national level, delighting fans of other universities through their poise, confidence, toughness, determination, and passion for the game; and

WHEREAS, throughout the Women's College World Series, pitcher Odicci Alexander embodied a selfless and grounded approach to team success, exhibiting heart, determination, and maturity, combined with unmatched skill to capture the attention of fans, opponents, and members of the media across the nation; she finished her college career with a 2.18 ERA, an 81-18 record on the mound, and a .337 batting average; she was selected as Softball Pitcher of the Year by Wilson Sporting Goods and nominated as Female Athlete of the Year at the ESPN ESPY Awards; and

WHEREAS, the JMU softball program has forever left its mark on university history and the Harrisonburg community, and head coach Loren LaPorte, associate head coach Jennifer Herzig, and assistant coach Libby Morris have guided the student-athletes to be model citizens and volunteer their time and leadership in their home communities; and

WHEREAS, the JMU softball program has promoted a culture of diversity where gender and race are not obstacles to equality and the achievement of individual and shared goals; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate of Virginia, That the James Madison University softball team hereby be commended on becoming the first unseeded team to win its first two games and reach the semifinals of the Women's College World Series; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Loren LaPorte, head coach of the James Madison University softball team, as an expression of the Senate of Virginia's admiration for the team's historic accomplishments.

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