

Beyond What We Know

Interview with Dr. Rhonda Zingraff, Associate Dean, JMU College of Health and Behavioral Studies (CHBS)

How did the creation of the film, *Let the Wave Say*, come about?

Within the last 3 years, the Dean of CHBS, Dr. Sharon Lovell, asked the CHBS Diversity Council to explore the best practices for advising, supporting, and accommodating students with disabilities. The goal was to foster a better understanding with our faculty but to also create something that could make a difference across the institution. The film was a collaboration between the Health Education Design Group (HEDG) at IHHS, ODS, and the CHBS Diversity Council, which I chair. The end result is an informative film that can be used broadly across colleges and even outside of JMU. The film can be viewed at the following link: <https://vimeo.com/325726667>

How does the film go beyond opening the doors?

The more I learned about not just the challenges involved, but the inspirational solutions that are within reach, the more I realized that my peers and I, as a whole, were barely scratching the surface in what we understood. I say that as having been a professor for over three decades. I felt pretty confident about how infrequently your average faculty member has time to study the disability landscape. Unless you have a teaching or research concern with it, there is a tendency to stay in your discipline. What that implies is that people won't be opening doors if they are insufficiently aware of what is across the threshold of what there is to know. The faculty member now knows there's a door but doesn't know that they need to go through it, and that represents a missed opportunity.

What do you hope to see over the next 5 years at JMU in terms of infusing culture and curriculum with inclusion of individuals with disabilities?

It stunned me when I started to learn more. Not only was it really informative, but it was distressing for me to realize how much we (the teaching faculty at any institution) do not know about developments, especially since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Our antennae are not sufficiently tuned into this large and growing body of policy and practices.

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*"The film, *Let the Wave Say*, is a step beyond because it is an invitation to think about how you may need to motivate yourself to go beyond opening the doors in your own classroom.*

-Dr. Rhonda Zingraff



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