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# JMU campus inclusivity video project

Meredith Grace Browder  
*James Madison University*

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JMU Campus Inclusivity Video Project

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An Honors College Project Presented to  
the Faculty of the Undergraduate  
College of Education  
James Madison University

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by Meredith Grace Browder

May 2019

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Accepted by the faculty of the College of Education, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors College.

FACULTY COMMITTEE:

HONORS COLLEGE APPROVAL:

---

Project Advisor: Laura Desportes, Ph.D.  
Professor, College of Education

---

Bradley R. Newcomer, Ph.D.,  
Dean, Honors College

---

Reader: Dannette A. Bronaugh, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor, College of Education

---

Reader: Sharon L. Blatz, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor, College of Education

---

Reader: Matthew Chamberlin, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor, Interdisciplinary Liberal Studies

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PUBLIC PRESENTATION

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### **Acknowledgements**

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To the James Madison University Honors College, thank you for giving me a platform to share the voices of those with disabilities on campus and make the JMU campus a more welcoming environment for all students.

And finally, a thank you to my parents, who encouraged me to see past my own disabilities and mindsets in order to reach my full potential. You are the reason I am able to attend James Madison University and continue to work towards a world that is more inclusive to those with disabilities.

**Abstract**

After experiencing a general lack of knowledge at James Madison University (JMU) regarding inclusivity of students with varying abilities, I decided to find the best way to educate the JMU community on how to be more accommodating on campus. I surveyed students served by the Office of Disability Services in order to assess their concerns and needs. My survey data indicated that the students on campus with disabilities have felt isolated at JMU because of multiple factors including both student and faculty ignorance. After researching the significant role played by videos and social media in shaping public opinion, I used the data I collected from the survey and created a video to promote sensitivity and inclusion among the JMU population. This video was created to be effective in both educating and influencing the JMU campus. After sharing this video on multiple social media platforms, my next step is to propose the video to the JMU orientation office in the hope that all incoming freshman will be able to be educated on contributing to a more inclusive and welcoming campus for all students.

## JMU Campus Inclusivity Video Project

This project was started after recognizing the need for a more inclusive environment on the James Madison University campus. The purpose of this project was to survey the students of the Office of Disability Services to determine their needs and current struggles as a person with a disability on campus. The information collected from the survey was then used to create a video intended to educate the JMU community on how to interact with individuals on campus who have disabilities.

### **Background**

#### **Inspiration**

The idea for this project came about after navigating the campus with a friend of mine who is blind. She has given me consent to print all information included about her in this paper. My friend, Jackie, would often tell me that people did not know how to interact with her correctly, but I did not realize what she meant until I saw it first-hand. I witnessed students try to help by grabbing her, without her consent, to move her to where they assumed she wanted to go. They would pull her out of the road when she was very capable of navigating a crosswalk herself. I also noticed that people often tried to interact with her guide dog while she was working, or only speak to Olita (the service dog) instead of Jackie. I was shocked when I saw just how harmful students could be because they were uneducated. They wanted to be kind and helpful, but their actions were dehumanizing.

I also found that I was originally uncomfortable during my first interaction with Jackie. We had agreed to go to the dining hall together, and we met at the front of the building. I felt uncomfortable in the situation, and instead of asking her how I could help, I awkwardly took her arm and tried to help her navigate the dining hall. She very nicely let me know that I could just

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take her elbow, and I felt so bad for not doing the obvious thing when I was uncomfortable – ask her what I should do. Obviously, she would know how she wanted to be helped. I would assume that if I felt uncomfortable (as a student who studies special education and interacts with a similar population regularly), then most people would probably feel uncomfortable and not know how to correctly and politely interact with those with varying disabilities.

As my friendship with Jackie continued to grow, I realized that there was a lot that I did not know when it came to disability etiquette. For example, I once praised her guide dog for getting into my car. Jackie let me know that I should not have done this because she is the only one who should praise her guide dog. When I praised her dog for getting into my car, I was offering positive reinforcement for “passive work,” which could interfere with the animal’s training. Her reasoning made total sense after she explained it to me, but it continued to reinforce the fact that society has a general lack of education on how to interact with individuals with disabilities. Although Jackie has always patiently educated me on the topic, she has admitted that educating people all day becomes very frustrating and tedious. That is why I decided to create this video in order to educate as many people on the JMU campus about this topic as possible. It is very important to me that JMU is an inclusive environment for all people. I definitely want my alma-mater to be a place where everyone of varying abilities feel welcome.

### **Related Research**

Due to technological advancements in assistive technology, legal mandates, and a greater access to educational accommodations, individuals are entering institutions of higher education at greater numbers than ever before (Huger, 2011). Many of the current education policies practiced and teacher/instructor dispositions of students with disabilities at these institutions enforce boundaries of “normalcy” and force those with disabilities to be marginalized (Valle,

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Connor, Broderick, Bejoian, & Baglieri, 2011). With an increase in number of students with disabilities, colleges and universities across the world have been forced to tackle the issue of campus inclusivity and accommodation. Schools have attempted to implement inclusion through many different ways. Some schools are taking an approach that focuses on eliminating physical boundaries in order to make their campuses more accessible, while others are focusing on the training and dispositions of their faculty.

The classic quad created by Thomas Jefferson on the University of Virginia (UVA) Campus is just one of many examples of historic architecture that presents mobility difficulties to students with disabilities across a wide range of campuses. Even at a school like UVA that has the money to make these important accessibility changes on its campus, students and faculty with disabilities are unable to navigate certain areas of the campus years after the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was passed (Biemiller, 2016). This is an important issue because environments that are constructed in a way that allow for accessibility and inclusiveness lead to students with disabilities being more easily integrated into both the academic and social fabric of the institution (Huger, 2011). In an attempt to allow for this and give the UVA community opportunities to take part in important inclusivity conversations, the university has implemented an architecture course where the students are asked to assess the accessibility of the campus for those with varying abilities. This course reiterates the fact that universal accommodation does not include things like back door entryways for those in wheelchairs, but rather a front entrance that everyone can use. Their hope is that this course will aide in their attempts to move from accommodation to inclusivity, which they admitted typically benefits everyone on the campus (Biemiller, 2016).

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Like many colleges, including JMU, UVA struggles to make their campus truly accommodating because of topography issues. Other frequent issues regarding campus accessibility include financial barriers. For example, Wilson College, located in Pennsylvania, doesn't have the financial means to be completely accessible. While they just built an entirely new library with a universal design, their other academic buildings are completely inaccessible to those with mobility disabilities. This leads to dealing with accommodation issues on a case-by-case basis. Other universities that handle accommodation this way include JMU and Trinity Washington University. Trinity Washington University shared that they are currently building an entirely new building with a universal design, because doing this is cheaper than trying to go into their existing buildings and make them more accommodating. However, even with this new building, they will have to move classes around for those with accessibility issues because they cannot access a majority of the campus (Biemiller, 2016). If universities have to move around classrooms and schedules in order to accommodate their students, their campuses are not truly inclusive.

Other institutions, like Illinois State University (ISU) and Indiana University-Bloomington, have taken a more creative approach to campus inclusivity. ISU was aware of how much their high ropes course contributed to team-building and self-confidence among their students, so they decided to build a completely new all-inclusive ropes course that was accessible to students of various disabilities. They decided that they wanted to have an inclusivity mindset from the start instead of making it an after-thought, which is why they decided to build an entirely new course. It is their hope that this will contribute to a more inclusive environment on campus for people of varying abilities (Sobota, 2017).

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Indiana University-Bloomington also wanted to create a space where people with disabilities were give the same opportunities to seek adventure and personal growth as their non-disabled peers. This is why they partnered with the National Center of Accessibility and the American Camping Association to create the Bradford Woods Outdoor Education and Leadership Center. Bradford Woods contains multiple universal courses, quality outdoor programs, and fully accessible trails and facilities. This center was able to contribute to the inclusive culture on the Idiania University-Bloomington campus, and also provide a resource for the community. They are able to host programs like Camp Riley, a camp that serves children with physical and cognitive disabilities, at Bradford Woods (Eavey, 2002). Both of these universities' decisions to create accessible recreation centers on their campuses certainly raise implications for JMU and the accessibility of their own ropes course.

Plymouth University is an institution with one of the highest proportions of students with disabilities (7.4% of those on full-time first-degree courses received the students with disabilities allowance). Plymouth has gone so far as to assess their curriculum in order to make is accessible to all and train their professors in good inclusive practices. They put an emphasis on training the staff to identify students who have dyslexia, in order to make sure that all of their students receive the proper accommodations ("Plymouth's Model of Inclusivity", 2004). Practices like this answer Huger's call for a student-focused mind-set. She says that this is the only way to achieve a truly inclusive institution (2011). As Judith Waterfield, head of Plymouth's Disability Assist Services, said, "good practice for disabled students is also good for students with a whole host of other needs" ("Plymouth's Model of Inclusivity", 2004).

Institutions run into issues with solutions like this, however, when their faculty are not compliant. In a study conducted at a South African university (Van Jaarsveldt & Ndeya-Ndereya,

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2014), it was found that lecturers often distance themselves from the responsibility of providing educational support to students in their class who have disabilities. The researchers found that professors regularly re-allocate their responsibility of providing support to students to other support services on campus. They do not take personal responsibility for their students' learning. Huger found similar results in her study of college professors. She stated that there was lack of communication between professors on the offices of disability services, meaning the professors did not seek their university's resources in teaching students in their class with various disabilities (Huger, 2011).

Van Jaarsveldt & Ndeya-Ndereya (2014) stated that when professors practice these demoting behaviors, they create negative consequences for student motivation and academic performance. This means that universities have a responsibility to create professional development for their faculty that trains them in inclusive practices and include opportunities for reflective discourse. Other ways that faculty can promote inclusion in their classroom include assessing student understanding in a variety of ways, using accessible course readings, including people with disabilities in readings, classroom examples, and as guest speakers, providing opportunities to work in groups that take full advantage of student interaction, and becoming educated on the needs of the students of varying abilities in their classroom. The faculty should also become knowledgeable of appropriate terminology and the administration should ensure that all faculty maintain office space that allows all students to access them during office hours (Huger, 2011). Van Jaarsveldt & Ndeya-Ndereya (2014) said that when an institution is able to instill in its faculty a personal responsibility to teach all learners, they will be able to create an inclusive space, because there is no such thing as an inclusive environment where the faculty members refuse to teach all of their students appropriately.

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There is other research that suggests that higher-learning institutions are unable to create and enact policies that are truly inclusive because of a lack of representation. People who are disabled often have knowledge and experiences that are important in creating solutions for the lack of inclusivity across college campuses, but they are dismissed due to their disability (Valle et al., 2011). This means that acceptance and inclusivity has to start at the source in order to enforce effective practices that create inclusive environments. The people in charge also need to recognize their own privileges and bias they have when researching solutions to inclusion and making decisions about people who are different than them. This research also encouraged those with disabilities to collaborate with other minority groups in order to have the greatest impact. For example, college students with disabilities could work with other marginalized groups like the LGBTQ population to host campus inclusivity panels that appeal to a wider variety of students (Valle et al., 2011). Once these marginalized people groups form alliances, they will be one step closer to making a more inclusive world for all.

### **Video Format Reasoning**

Multiple studies have indicated that video can be an extremely effective educational tool (Brame, 2015). Some studies have been able to use video to not only educate the public, but change opinions and dispositions as well. In 2010, a United States (US) study was able to use video to change public opinion on climate change. Participants ranked belief statements concerning climate change on a Likert scale before and after watching an informational video on the sources of climate change. After watching the video, the participants went from accepting an anthropological cause of climate change to being much more skeptical. The control group, who did not watch the informational video, did not show any change in opinion. This study confirmed

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that informational videos can make statistically significant change on opinions within a short period of time (Bennett, 2010).

Similar research was conducted by the US Department of State in order to determine the effectiveness of video commercials in changing student opinion. This study also used a Likert scale to compare participant opinions before and after the video was viewed. They found that attitudes toward the US government were significantly more positive after the videos were seen, concluding that viewing informational videos can lead to immediate and significant attitude shifts (Kendrick & Fullerton, 2004). Since informational videos have been proven to be successful in both informing and persuading, a video format was selected as the best possible means of educating the JMU public on how they could be more inclusive to those with disabilities.

Studies have also shown that social media sites like YouTube offer new educational possibilities that are under-estimated in value. Informational videos on YouTube are effective because they provide a convenient means of accessing information 24/7. One study noted that professionals need to recognize the importance of videos on these platforms and their impact on public opinion (Knösel, Jung, & Bleckmann, 2011). Because of the importance of social media platforms like YouTube, and its accessible qualities like closed captions on all videos, it was determined that the JMU Campus Inclusivity Video would be shared to multiple social media outlets upon completion.

Simply creating an informational video and uploading it to YouTube is not effective; however, unless the video campaign is evaluated to ensure that the intended message is being effectively conveyed (Thompson, Heley, Oster-Aaland, Stastny, & Crawford, 2013). In order for a video to be truly informational, the creator must consider both the audience's cognitive load

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and the difficulties of student engagement. Since the human brain has a working memory with limited capacity, an effective educational video must find a way to prompt the working memory to accept, process, and send information to where it can be stored in the long-term memory. Some good recommendations for doing this effectively include signaling, segmenting, and weeding (Brame, 2015).

Videos should include signaling, or on-screen text or symbols, in order to highlight the most important information in the video (Brame, 2015). The JMU Campus Inclusivity Video would be able to incorporate signaling by using on screen graphics and corresponding sounds that indicate correct and incorrect practices on campus. By doing this, students will be able to focus on what they should and should not do when interacting with those with disabilities.

Segmenting information is also important, in order to maintain student interest, because it organizes intrinsic load and increases germane load by stressing the structure of the information presented (Brame, 2015). The information included in the JMU Inclusivity Video can be segmented by using many different people to speak on the information instead of one person. It can also be partitioned by scenes of examples and non-examples of correct inclusive practices on campus. These scenes are important because studies have shown that while a mix of auditory and visual information is crucial to maximizing the capacity of the working memory, simply watching a speaker explain information does not effectively convey additional information (Guo, Kim, & Rubin, 2014). Examples of the given information in the form of short scenes would be effective in making the content more memorable and relevant to JMU students.

Weeding out non-vital info is also important when creating effective informational videos (Brame, 2015). This can be done in the JMU Inclusivity Video by only focusing on the most important information gathered from the student surveys and keeping the backgrounds, settings,

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noises, and music as simple as possible. This is vital for the audience to focus on the message of the video and nothing else. By stripping down the video so that the information presented is the only thing the audience has to focus on, the video will be able to prompt the working memory to move the important information to the long-term memory.

Student engagement is another vital element in creating impactful informational videos. One study used data collected from 6.9 million video watching sessions across an education video platform to determine the ideal length of a video to maintain student engagement. They found that students watched videos to 100% completion when they were 0-6 minutes long and to over 90% completion when they were 6-9 minutes long. This completion rate dropped drastically when the video became over 9 minutes long. The median engagement time for videos 9-12 minutes long was 50% and the median engagement time for videos 12-40 minutes long was 20%. They determined that the ideal video length would be no longer than 6 minutes (Guo et al., 2014). Knowing the impact video length has on student engagement, the JMU Inclusivity Video should be around 6 minutes long, and absolutely no more than 12 minutes in order to maximize attention among students.

This study also found that speakers in videos should use a conversational style of speech rather than a formal style when conveying information. They also found that students have better engagement when speakers convey information quickly and enthusiastically (Guo et al., 2014). This is important to implement in the JMU video where many different speakers will be addressing the JMU population.

In a study on the impact of student-driven social marketing campaigns aimed at changing student behaviors, they found that campaign developments should be based around themes with social relevance and messages that resonate with students (Thompson et al., 2013). Since the

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JMU Inclusivity Video is essentially a campaign to educate the campus on how to be more inclusive, it should be sure to include relevant information targeted at the JMU community. Since the survey was given specifically to students served by the Office of Disability Services at JMU, the data collected from it are specific and relevant to the JMU campus. Using other JMU students within the video will also make the content more relevant for its intended audience as well as make the student viewers more likely to identify with them as social learning behavior models (McLeod, 2016).

Finally, creating videos in the environment in which the information will be used is important for student engagement (Guo et al., 2014). This means that it is important to film the JMU Campus Inclusivity Video on the JMU campus. That way, the information is relevant to JMU students and they will be able to understand the information in the context of the JMU campus. Since videos have been proven to be effective in educating and influencing the public, it is important to create them keeping cognitive capacity and student engagement in mind. By doing this with the JMU Inclusivity Video, this project will be able to effectively create a more inclusive environment on campus.

### **Gathering Information**

The information gathered during this project to create both the survey and informational video came from individual interviews of those with disabilities, the directors of the Office of Disability Services at JMU, and the Disability Services Peer Access Advocates. Additional information was also received from attending a JMU Campus Inclusivity Panel hosted by a taskforce with similar goals on campus.

### **Individual Interviews**

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On October 24, 2018, two JMU students who are blind were interviewed. Both students use service dogs to navigate campus and were very open to sharing the barriers that they experience on the JMU campus. Approval was obtained from both students' to print the information they shared during the interview, as well as using that information to create an informational video. Both students shared many experiences where they felt incredibly dehumanized due to the fact that people on campus only interact with their guide dogs. They explained that they can tell when people are taking pictures of them without their consent, and how people will say things like "look at the puppy!" while in public, but never address them as human beings. They also both shared experiences where they could hear other people whispering about them and their dog. They explained that because they are blind, people also categorize them as being unable to hear, so they feel like they can say things without their knowledge. This is obviously a misconception, as people who are blind do not automatically also have impaired hearing.

Both students had frustrations with JMU faculty being unaccommodating with their class work. Even though both had access plans written up by the Office of Disability Services, their professors have refused to make proper accommodations in their classroom because that is not the way their class is run. I was incredibly shocked to hear this information, knowing that not complying with a students' access plan is out of compliance with JMU policy and the law. However, both students told me that this is a common occurrence for students served by the ODS.

When asked what they would like to share with the entire JMU population, Student A wanted to reiterate that their dog does not define them, and that people with disabilities do not exist for others' entertainment. They said that this is especially true of people with medical

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devices such as wheelchairs, canes, or service dogs. They both also said that students and professors should ask how they can help instead of assuming that somebody with a disability automatically needs help.

Sally (psydonym) also reiterated the fact that people need to realize that although they are blind, they are not incapable. She explained that they often experience situations where people feel the need to ask questions or interact with their friend or companion, instead of interacting with them (the person who is blind) directly. For example, a waiter may ask their companion what they want to eat off of the menu, when the person with the disability is very capable of answering that questions themselves. This allowed me to reflect on my own interactions with individuals with disabilities and realize that I have also done things, unknowingly, that belittle those with disabilities. This interview allowed me to see how important it was to include things like guide dog etiquette, inclusive practices for those with visual disabilities, and accommodation importance in my informational video.

### **Office of Disability Services**

On November 26, 2018, I met with the director of the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Valerie Schoolcraft, and the assistant director, Kathryn Rathgeber, to discuss my project. I proposed my idea of creating a video to educate the JMU population on the correct etiquette when interacting with students on campus with visual disabilities. My initial thought was to narrow my video to this population because I assumed that they encountered the greatest amount of ignorant interactions on campus. However, the ODS staff encouraged me to widen my scope to all students served under ODS. They explained that all students with disabilities on campus would benefit from my project, and the information I gathered from them would be very relevant to the JMU community. They brought up negative situations encountered by students with

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“invisible disabilities,” including being isolated during a group project and facing difficult self-disclosure decisions. They also provided online resources and pamphlets that explained some ways students could be more inclusive on campus.

They provided an overview of how the JMU campus has become more accommodating over time. While many of the older buildings on campus are not accessible to all students, all of the newly constructed buildings (ex: the Student Success Center) follow a universal design structure. Universal design is the design of products and surroundings to be usable by all people, to the greatest possible extent, without the need for adaptation or individualized design (Bartlett, 2019). They also gave examples of new offices on campus that were created to continue to make JMU a more inclusive environment. An example would be the Office of Equal Opportunity. The Office of Equal Opportunity provides resources for students to be educated on their rights on campus, report accessibility barriers, and report bias or hate incidents. This is a great resource to combat discrimination at JMU; however, as a JMU student, I had never heard of it. We discussed how one large issue is JMU’s lack of knowledge about its own resources. It was determined that this information would be important to include in the video.

The ODS directors also explained that the struggles experienced by the students that they served can be best defined as a diversity issue. While the topic of diversity usually only covers things like age, gender, religion, or ethnicity, it should also cover a range of individual abilities. Valerie Schoolcraft explained that the most important and relevant message to spread across campus would be one of acceptance, respect, and appreciation. By including disabilities in the overarching theme of diversity, the JMU population should be educated on how to embrace those with disabilities, beyond simple tolerance. After being educated on this issue by the directors of

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the ODS, I realized that explaining the importance of acceptance would be an essential part of my video and its ability to contribute to the message of diversity.

The ODS directors also informed me of the type of censorship I would have to abide by when discussing students with disabilities throughout my project. I explained my initial plan of surveying the entire JMU student body to gain insight of current student dispositions towards students on campus with disabilities. I said that I would use that information along with the information gathered from personal interviews with students with disabilities to come up with my data for my video. I would then put together a focus group of students to watch my video and re-take the survey in order to assess whether or not the video changed their dispositions and comfortability level in interacting with students on campus with disabilities. The ODS directors encouraged me to take the other student input out entirely, and only interview students served under ODS for data collection. They explained that the information gained from the students on campus with disabilities would be the most important for my video considering the video was to serve them and not necessarily the JMU community.

They also told me to take out my proposed focus group. They explained that the ODS follows a “nothing about us without us” policy. This means that an individual should not discuss those with disabilities without their presence. Basically, students with disabilities should always be present to represent and advocate for themselves during those discussions. Because of their feedback, I altered my project so that I could survey all of the students served by ODS. They agreed to send out my survey to their students after I received IRB approval. This would allow me to be able to maintain subject anonymity because I would not be able to see the emails of the students who were being sent my survey.

### **Disability Services Peer Access Advocates**

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On November 26, 2018, I was also able to meet with the Office of Disability Services Peer Access Advocates. I explained my idea to the students, and they confirmed the need for some type of resource to educate the JMU population on ways to make the campus a more inclusive environment. They informed me of Disability Awareness Week at JMU and the ways their goals for that week aligned with the goals of my video. They told me that that week would be a great time to release my video. They also agreed to proof-read my survey before I sent it out to the students served by the ODS. This was important to me because I wanted to model the “nothing about us without us” model and make sure that all of my wording and questioning was clear and sensitive to those with disabilities. I was happy to find out more about the resources they provide to the campus and partner with them in order to make my project impactful and successful.

### **Campus Inclusivity Panel**

On February 26, 2019, I attended a campus inclusivity panel hosted by a JMU task force on inclusion in Madison Union. Since the group’s goals were very similar to my own (i.e. to make JMU a more inclusive environment), I decided that it would be a good idea to attend the discussion and gain even more information I could include in my video. All of the students brought up great points that they allowed to be recorded anonymously in an attempt to gain information on how the JMU campus could be more accommodating to all of its students.

The students continued to reiterate the data that I had previously received from my survey (which was sent out at the beginning of February), and the information I gained from both the ODS directors and individual student interviews. However, there were a couple of new ideas gained from this panel, including the safety hazard brought about by the JMU “steal a quad brick” tradition, the non-consensual physical encounters experienced by those with disabilities,

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being isolated by professors in class because of a disability, and the negative implications of many professors' laptop policies.

I had seen many posters that attempted to discourage students from stealing a quad brick, but I never realized the type of safety risk it posed for those with visual disabilities. Multiple students with visual impairments brought up experiences where they tripped or fell because of a hole made by a missing QUAD brick. I was also made aware of the type of nonconsensual touching that happens every day to those with disabilities. Many students brought up situations where they were pulled one way or another because someone thought they needed help, but never asked if they could touch them. A student also brought up the fact that because of her disability, she feels much more vulnerable to exploitation or sexual/physical assault on campus. I couldn't imagine how it must feel to constantly have people touching you and being unaware of whether they were trying to help or harm you.

Multiple students with disabilities also brought up experiences where they had been isolated by a professor during class because of their disability. Many students said that once a professor realized they had a disability, they would always refer to them for any questions they had about the disabled population. They felt uncomfortable being singled-out in front of their classmates, and also felt uneasy being referred to as the single spokesperson for an entire population. Many of these students also felt like their professors' laptop policies were isolating in the classroom. Their professors would allow them to have a laptop, because it was an accommodation outlined in their access plan, but would continue to reiterate the rule that "you can only have a laptop out if you receive an accommodation because of a disability." Since the students with disabilities had their laptops out in class, they felt like the professor was disclosing their disability to the rest of the class without their consent.

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The issues brought up during this panel were not things I would have ever thought of because I do not know what it is like to live as a person with a disability on the JMU campus. Attending this panel taught me the importance of taking the time to hear the needs of others around me. I thought I knew what I was going to have to include in my video before even researching it, but this panel reiterated the fact that it is important to ask what is needed before you try to help anyone.

### **Method**

This project was initiated in order to assess the needs of the students served under the ODS and spread that information to the public in the best way possible. This was done through analyzing the data received from a mass survey conducted via email. The research conducted for the related research sections of this paper and the video format reasoning are also included below.

### **Related Research Procedures**

The literature used to form the related research for this project came from a search that contained the following criteria: (a) that the article came from a peer reviewed journal; (b) that the article's target population be college students with disabilities; (c) and/or that the subject matter be inclusive practices held by higher education institutions in order to accommodate students with disabilities. Articles were found using keyword searches on the following databases: (a) JMU Library Research Database powered by EBSCO Information Services; (b) Google Scholar. The following keywords were used in the searches for articles used in this review: (a) campus; (b) inclusivity; (c) disability; (d) higher education.

### **Video Format Reasoning Search Procedures**

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The literature used to form the video format reasoning for this project came from a search that contained the following criteria: (a) that the article came from a peer reviewed journal; (b) and/or that the subject matter explores changing public opinion with informational videos.

Articles were found using keyword searches on the following databases: (a) JMU Library Research Database powered by EBSCO Information Services; (b) Google Scholar. The following keywords were used in the searches for articles used in this review: (a) informational video; (b) public opinion; (c) attitudes; (d) perceptions.

### **Survey**

The survey consisted of 11 questions that were formulated in order to get a sense of the students' feelings on the welcoming environment of the campus towards those with disabilities, campus inclusivity, and student interactions. The students were asked to note whether or not they considered their disability a "visible disability" in order to assess the kind of population that was completing the survey. The students were then asked to rank how strongly they agreed/disagreed with four statements concerning campus inclusion. The Likert scale allowed them to choose from the following options: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree. After each statement, the students were given the opportunity to discuss why they chose to rank that specific question a certain way. The entire survey is included in Appendix A.

The open-ended questions at the end of the survey were developed to capture any other concerns the students had or any other ways the JMU community could be more accommodating that were not otherwise mentioned in the other questions and statements. The purpose of this survey was to give a voice to the students served by the office of disability services by allowing them to voice all of the concerns they have as a person with disabilities on the JMU campus.

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They were also given my contact information in the event that they wanted to take part in my informational video that would be formed from the data.

### **IRB Approval**

The IRB protocol was submitted on January 28, 2019 (ID # 19-0748). IRB approval was received on February 1, 2019.

### **Results**

The campus inclusivity survey was sent out to 898 students. Thirty students took part in the survey and their anonymous feedback was recorded. The data received from the survey included many different ways that JMU could make its campus more inclusive.

### **Participants**

The survey concerning campus inclusion for those with disabilities was sent via e-mail to all students served by the Office of Disability Services at James Madison University. Thirty JMU students responded to this survey. Of those 30 students, five considered themselves to have a “visible disability” and 25 said they their disability was invisible. The self-disclosed visible disabilities represented included visual impairments, hearing impairments, and mobility impairments. The self-disclosed invisible disabilities represented included, but were not limited to, auto-immune diseases, Autism Spectrum Disorder, specific learning disabilities, and other health impairments. Three students followed-up via e-mail agreeing to take part in the informational video.

### **Method**

The survey that was sent out to the students served by the office of disability services via e-mail was completely voluntary. The participants were notified that the purpose of this study was to make JMU a more inclusive campus, as well as to aid me in the completion of my honors

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capstone project. The participants were asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to their experience as a student with disabilities on the JMU campus. The survey took about 3-10 minutes to complete, and there were no risks beyond the risks associated with everyday life involved in participating in the survey. The participants were told that the potential benefit to participating was the opportunity to make JMU a more accepting environment.

The cover letter of the survey explained that the results of the research would be presented at a thesis presentation. While individual responses were obtained and recorded anonymously and kept in the strictest confidence, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. No identifiable information was collected from the participant and no identifiable responses will be presented in the final form of this study. All data were stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. At the end of the study, all records were destroyed.

It was reiterated in the cover letter that the student participation was entirely voluntary. They were free to choose not to participate. Once they had chosen to participate, they could withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. However, once their responses had been submitted and anonymously recorded, they would not be able to withdraw from the study.

Contact information for the researcher was included in case any participants had questions, as well as to ask the participants to reach out if they wanted to be included in the informational video. Contact information for both my honors project advisor and the chair of the Institutional Review Board were included as well. The participants had the opportunity to reach out to receive a copy of the final aggregate results.

## **Results**

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At the conclusion of this survey, 30 JMU students from the Office of Disability Services had completed it out of 898 students. The results showed that while some students could agree that JMU was an accommodating environment for all students, others felt isolated. The results for each question are explained below:

Ten students (33.3%) said that they strongly agreed that they feel welcomed on the JMU campus. Ten students (33.3%) agreed with the statement, six students (20%) said they were neutral, three (10%) said that they disagreed, and one (3.3%) said that they strongly disagreed. Twelve students (40%) included responses as to why they have not felt welcomed on campus. All of the following feedback from the students is paraphrased. The feedback included, but was not limited to, the ODS staff not being welcoming, a lack of handicap parking, professors being uneducated on inclusive practices and refusing to comply with a student's written accommodations, a lack of knowledge of the JMU population with certain disabilities, experiencing unaccommodating practices for those with mental illness as a student employee, and JMU students only interacting with an individual's companion. The most common issue that was brought up was the fact that JMU professors have shown resistance to complying with written student accommodations from the ODS.

Eight students (26.7%) said that they strongly agreed that they feel included on the JMU campus. Twelve students (40%) agreed with the statement, five students (16.7%) said they were neutral, five (16.7%) said that they disagreed, and none of the students said that they strongly disagreed. Twelve students (40%) included responses as to why they have not felt included on campus. The feedback included, but was not limited to, unaccommodating videos that were not captioned during class and other JMU events, non-inclusive orientation week activities, lack of dining hall menus for students with visual impairments, blatant disregard for the opinions of

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those with disabilities during class, feeling excluded because of an inability to take part in JMU's party culture, inaccessible buildings on campus, a lack of awareness of ability diversity, and being isolated in class. The most common issue that was brought up was the non-inclusive activities during first-year orientation. The students emphasized the fact that they found it hard to make friends during their first year at JMU when they were "blatantly ostracized" at the very beginning through being unable to take part in orientation activities (Browder, 2019).

Nine students (30%) said that they strongly agreed that the students at JMU interacted with them in a respectable manner at all times. Thirteen students (43.3%) agreed with the statement, four students (13.3%) said they were neutral, 2 (6.7%) said that they disagreed, and two (6.7%) said that they strongly disagreed. Ten students (33.3%) included responses as to why they do not believe that the students at JMU interact with them in a respectable manner. The feedback included, but was not limited to, the fact that students sign-up to be notetakers in their class for the ODS but never turn in notes, rude complaints from students saying that accommodations like an elevator are inefficient, being criticized for being unable to handle a busy schedule, being isolated after self-disclosing a disability, a general lack of acceptance and compassion, faculty members that have blatantly stated their negative opinions on certain mental illnesses and people who have them, and students who ignorantly only interact with a guide dog and not its owner. The most common issue that was mentioned was a general unacceptance of those with disabilities among the students on the JMU campus.

Only 4 students (13.3%) said that they strongly agreed that they have never felt isolated on the JMU campus because of their disability. Five students (16.7%) agreed with the statement, nine students (30%) said they were neutral, seven (23.3%) said that they disagreed, and five (16.7%) said that they strongly disagreed. Sixteen students (53%) included responses as to why

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they have felt isolated on campus. The feedback included, but was not limited to, ignorance of how to enunciate and project when speaking to someone with hearing loss, feeling isolated because of a lack of energy to take part in campus activities due to a disability, the different transportation students with disabilities have to take during orientation week, and not having accessible dining hall menus. Students also mentioned that they have felt discriminated by their peers or not invited to events because of their abnormal behaviors caused by their disability, and have felt isolated after being single-out by professors in the classroom and when students on campus stare at them because of their disability. The most common issues mentioned were feeling isolated by a professor in the classroom and not being accepted by peers because of a disability.

Twenty-one students (70%) included feedback as to what would make them feel more included on the JMU campus (the other nine students either said that they had already answered the question under previous questions, or they believed that the JMU campus was 100% inclusive). This feedback included things like more of a drive for a curriculum based in disabilities, educational events involving students with disabilities, more leaders on campus with disabilities, more effort put into the note-taking program and captioning, a better way to educate JMU professors on inclusive practices, more accessible buildings on campus, more accessible bathrooms, and more reliable disability transit. They also proposed ideas like more handicap parking, and a better education for students and faculty on the difficulties faced by those with invisible disabilities. While all of the ideas listed here for making the JMU campus more inclusive were mentioned multiple times, there was an overwhelming amount of feedback calling for better inclusivity training for JMU professors.

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Eleven students (36.6%) also submitted feedback for the last question that asked if they would like to address anything else with the entire JMU population. The students submitted things that reiterated points made above like the need for more parking spots and better faculty training. Most of the feedback called for a more compassionate and accepting campus environment. Some student quotations taken from this survey question are included below (Browder, 2019):

- “I’m really sick, but I look 100%, keep that in mind at all times.”
- “Be kind to others who do not look like you. Everyone comes from a different background and walks a different path but we all want the same thing, love!”
- “Mental illness is a sickness just like any other, and people who have chronic mental illness go through more than anyone else can imagine. Understanding and kindness is really important.”
- “What meets the eye doesn’t always tell the whole story.”
- “Classroom policies may out students of disabilities and make them feel unwanted in the classroom. It makes me sad because I am sure there are many others who deal with this and don't feel comfortable speaking up.”
- “I would like the JMU population to be aware of all the variety of disabilities and be more inclusive and start friendships with students with disabilities. They should know we are just as intelligent as them, we just sometimes have physical or psychological handicaps that make it more difficult to process the material. They should not look at the accommodations we get as unfair, but as a way to even the playing field so we can succeed at their level.”

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- “Just because we look healthy, doesn't mean we are. Believe us, don't push us, when we say we need accommodations. Don't assume we are or are not capable of something- we'll let you know. Don't stop inviting us places just because we can't always participate. Be patient, and don't give up on us!”
- “People with disabilities are not here for your entertainment, and this is especially true of people with medical devices such as wheelchairs, canes, or service dogs! Also, the service dog is not here for you to pat! If you want to pet a dog, go to a pet store or puppy pride on campus. My dog is here to perform tasks that are necessary for my daily functioning and that could possibly save my life! Thus, please do not talk to, touch, offer the dog food, make kissing sounds, or otherwise distract the dog while we are walking, but especially do not do this while walking in the street!”

### **Discussion**

The data collected by this campus inclusivity survey indicate that JMU could be doing much more as a university in order to make sure that all of its students are included. While many students were able to agree to the statements listed in the survey, the most important data come from the feedback that was listed by many of the students in each response as to how they have not felt included and what JMU could do better. Just one student feeling isolated because of a disability is too many, and the students of the ODS provided a plethora of relevant and powerful ways to combat this issue.

After reading the responses to the survey, I was glad that the directors of the ODS told me to survey all of the students served, and not just those with visible disabilities. The students who considered themselves as having invisible disabilities made up most of my survey and

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described the many ways in which that population was discriminated against on campus. In my experience, there seems to be a tendency to only address the issues facing those with visible impairments (i.e. individuals who are blind or deaf), and not much conversation on the issues that create a barrier for those with invisible disabilities. I was glad that the results of this survey were able to shed a light on issues for all students served by ODS.

As someone who has always thought that JMU was an incredibly welcoming campus, I was surprised to see all of the reasons why those with disabilities thought otherwise. The number of students who mentioned that professors were unwilling to work with their accommodations was alarming. It definitely raises the question of what JMU does to equip its professors to teach their diverse student body. According to the survey data, the isolation brought about by professors who are ignorant about inclusive practices and procedures is the root cause of feelings of isolation in the classroom among those with disabilities.

The data collected also underscore the fact that the issue of disability inclusion is really a diversity issue. Many students just wanted to be accepted by their community and felt that their disability caused them to be marginalized. This showcased the need that JMU has to include those with disabilities in their diversity outreach programs. It also brought to light the responsibility that each individual has to educate themselves on the barriers faced by marginalized populations, and the things that they may unknowingly be doing to contribute to those barriers.

### **Creating the Video Script**

When I first set out to do this survey and create a corresponding video, I assumed that most of my feedback would be about how the students of JMU could better interact with those with disabilities. I planned on creating an informational video that was mainly targeted to JMU

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students and the ways they could be more inclusive. However, after collecting the data, I realized that campus inclusivity issues were not limited to the students. The students noted many other issues with faculty, JMU administration, and other unaccommodating campus policies. The majority of the issues that were brought to light through this survey were actually issues that the students served by the ODS had with JMU faculty.

With a wide variety of topics and issues to tackle in my video, it was hard to narrow my script. I knew I would have to include a direct address of the JMU faculty and administration at the end of my video. I tried to address all concerns brought up by the students by creating many different correct and incorrect examples of interactions on campus. I thought it was important to include non-examples of inclusive practices because it would showcase the many different ways that JMU students do not even realize they are dehumanizing and discriminating against those with disabilities. Based on the feedback from my survey, I centered my video around proper etiquette for interacting with individuals with disabilities, the need for acceptance as a society, and a call for the JMU administration and staff to be more inclusive. The script for the JMU Campus Inclusivity Video can be found in Appendix B.

### **Implications for Campus**

As previously mentioned in the discussion, the survey results bring up important questions for JMU to consider including how they can better equip their teachers to teach diverse learners, and how they can promote and celebrate diverse abilities on campus. The data also suggest that JMU could do a better job of making sure their facilities are accessible to all students. While the ODS staff explained that the administration will move a class to a different building if it is inaccessible to a student, that does not take care of the issues that students have trying to access buildings for things like a professor's office hours or an event.

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Another large take-away from this project is that JMU has many campus inclusivity resources for both its students and faculty with and without disabilities. However, many students and faculty are unaware of these resources. These data indicate that JMU needs to find a better way to inform its population of the resources that are available to them.

### **Future Research**

Since I was unable to survey student dispositions of those with disabilities before creating this video and after it was watched, I was unable to research the actual impact of this video. If future studies were to find a way to do this while still giving those with disabilities proper representation during their research, it would be very beneficial to the future possibility of more inclusivity training videos on college campuses. The research of informational videos on public opinion and knowledge of those with disabilities should also examine the long-term effects on public opinion in order to determine if this format would be successful in changing opinions for a sustained period.

This project also shows that there is a need for similar research to be done in greater numbers across other college campuses. If other college campuses are successfully implementing practices that meet the needs of all of their students of varying ability, their students need to be surveyed and that information needs to be extracted and shared with other institutions across the world. This would allow both college campuses and the rest of society to be much more educated on inclusive practices.

Future inclusivity training videos could also be improved by making them more accessible to individuals with visual impairments. This could be done through providing audio descriptions of the scenes in the video. The transcript and closed captions could also be improved within the video in order to make it more accessible to those with varying abilities.

## Appendix A

### Survey for Students Served by the Office of Disability Services at JMU

- Do *\*you\** consider your disability a “visible disability?” (A visible disability is one which others may notice without disclosure often due to utilization of assistive devices like a wheelchair or cane). Why or why not?
- Please rate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following statements:
  - I feel welcomed on the JMU campus.
    - If there was/were time(s) that you did not feel welcomed, please explain below (in as much detail as you feel comfortable)
  - I feel included on the JMU campus.
    - If there was/were time(s) that you did not feel included, please explain below (in as much detail as you feel comfortable)
  - I feel like the students here at JMU interact with me in a respectable manner at all times.
    - If there was/were time(s) that you did not feel like you were treated respectfully, please explain below (in as much detail as you feel comfortable)
  - I never feel isolated among the students of JMU because of my disability.
    - If there was/were time(s) that you did feel isolated by the students of JMU because of your disability, please explain below (in as much detail as you feel comfortable)
- What would make you feel more included on the JMU campus? If you feel like the JMU campus is 100% inclusive, please type N/A.

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- Please share anything below that you wish you could address with the entire JMU population:

### Appendix B

#### Script for JMU Campus Inclusivity Video

\*names of participants have been removed

- Hey, JMU! I know we all take pride in being a friendly & welcoming campus, but I'm here to talk about what we could be doing better, to be honest, a lot better. This year, I surveyed students who are served by the office of disability services here at JMU. Out of the students that were surveyed, only one-third of them could say that they have never felt isolated because of their disability. It turns out, there's a lot more to being welcoming than just opening the door for others. The students of the office of disabilities shared many different ways that the JMU student body AND faculty can be more inclusive. The following are just a couple of things we can do to be better. Keep in mind that this advice is coming directly from the experiences of your peers here on campus.
- Remember to focus on the person first. This is important in both your language and your actions

Scene:

- This week I was playing soccer with a bunch of disabled kids

**\*WRONG\***

- Actually, you want to put the person before the disability, because they're people first.

**\*RIGHT!\***

- It is also important to interact with a person and not their companion or interpreter

Scene:

- \*looks at person\* ummmm..... \*looks at interpreter\* What's her name?

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**\*WRONG\***

- You can ask him yourself, I'm just here to translate.
- oh! What's your name?
- \*translates\*

**\*RIGHT\***

Scene:

- OMG OLITA!! Look at you! It's so good to see you! You're so cute! Yes you are!
- Ummm... I'm here too.

**\*WRONG\***

- Hey, Jackie! It's Meredith! How's your day going?
- Good!

**\*RIGHT\***

- Speaking of companions, please don't take pictures of me or my dog without my consent, it's not ok. Also, it's important that you don't touch or praise my companion, it could mess with their training. I know she's a good girl, but I'm the only one who should be telling her that.
- Good girl, Olita. You're such a good girl.

**\*WRONG\***

- Your dog is really well behaved.
- Thanks!

**\*RIGHT!\***

- Also, if you want to help someone, ask how you can help. You may think you know how, but the only person who knows how they want to be helped is the person you're asking.

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Scene:

- Could you direct me toward the dining hall?
- Umm sure... \*incorrectly tries to direct\*

\*WRONG\*

- Could you direct me toward the dining hall?
- Yeah! How can I help?
- I can either follow you or take your elbow.

\*RIGHT\*

- When you're talking to someone with an auditory/hearing disability, make sure to speak up and enunciate your words.

Scene:

- \*mouth full of food\* "mumbling"

\*WRONG\*

- CAN YOU HEAR ME???

\*WRONG\*

- enunciates well

\*RIGHT\*

- Keep in mind that the handicapped parking spots are not for able-bodied people, even if you're running late to class

Scene:

- You can't park here, it's a handicapped spot
- I'm sure it will be fine

\*WRONG\*

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- Someone actually needs that spot
- I guess you're right...

**\*RIGHT\***

- Remember that being a note taker for your class is incredibly important. If you sign up to take notes in one of your classes for the Office of Disability services, someone is depending on you. You need to hand in well taken notes, it's not optional.

Scene:

- "ehhh, I don't want to go to class."
- "didn't you sign up to be a notetaker?"
- "yeah, but I'm sure someone else in the class will do it"

**\*WRONG\***

- And the most important thing: NEVER make anyone feel less than because of their disability:

Scene:

- Do we have to take the elevator??? The stairs are so much faster!

**\*WRONG\***

- It takes you so long to study!! Why can't you come out tonight? Don't you receive testing accommodations anyway. Doesn't that like, make things easier for you??

**\*WRONG\***

- Hey! Want to go to a party with me tonight?
- Yeah! But one thing, I get overstimulated pretty easily, is there a place I could go to cool down if I have to?
- ugh no, it's a party??

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### \*WRONG\*

- Keep in mind that some people don't function or learn the same way you do and that's ok. Take the time to get to know people and educate yourself, because in the end, all anyone wants is to be included and understood.
- But wait, there's more.
- JMU faculty, you can be better too.
- Educate yourself on how you can make your classroom an inclusive environment.
- This is easier than you think. You don't need to be an expert on disabilities, JMU already have those people to help you. The Office of Disabilities has lots of resources for you to make your classroom more inclusive to all students.
- Appealing to all learners could be as easy as making sure you caption all of the videos you show, enunciating when you lecture, following the guidelines of someone's written accommodations from the Office of Disability Services, and not isolating a student with disabilities who is in your class.
- Believe it or not, the students surveyed actually said that professors have refused to do these simple things. Some even said that professors have told them that they can't do well in their class because of their disability.
- Make sure you provide any accommodation that is outlined in a student's Access Plan, it's not optional. By providing appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities, you're putting everyone on the same playing field.
- And JMU, while we have your attention, there's a couple things you should know.

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- The students of the office of disability services also mentioned things like dining hall menus for students with visually impairments, more handicapped parking, and a more accessible and inclusive orientation experience.
- I don't know about you, but all of those things sound pretty important to me.
- Imagine what would happen if we all made these changes on campus.
- So this is my challenge to you, JMU, do your part to make this campus more inclusive and inviting. Share this video and start these important conversations with your friends. - That way, JMU can truly be a welcoming university for ALL students, and one we can all be proud of.

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