

Dr. Tim Miller 0:08

Alright, hello everyone this is Dr. Tim Miller, this is the rebound podcast. We're excited to have a current member of the JMU community here with us today. Tim Howley - I'll have him introduce himself. We're excited to have everyone here, learning from stories of others. We believe storytelling is a powerful way to get lessons across. So Tim, thanks for joining us and can you give us maybe quick background on who you are, where you come from and maybe where you work now?

Tim Howley 0:36

Yeah of course. Well, thank you so much for the invitation to be here. And like you said, my name is Tim Howley I teach in health sciences, and I've been teaching here for about 10 years, and before this, I was working actually in student affairs as a health educator with the University Health Center. I did that for about five years, but I was a double Duke before I even started working here, so I got my undergrad in kinesiology. In the (feet?) program. So, and then I got my master's in the five year MA T program, and met my wife at JMU, through our involvement in the Reach peer educators, and we were friends for a while before we started dating. And, but now we're living in Harrisonburg, and raising our family here and, and originally I'm from Long Island, New York, so I didn't really ever think my life would bring me to this point in time, but here I am and very happy that it did.

Tim Miller 1:39

Well I would say from what I hear from students, they're all very happy that it did too.

Tim Howley

Oh, thank thank you

Tim Miller

I hear great things all the time about the work that you do. So let's talk a little bit about, you gave us a sneak peek into sort of how you got here but one of the things that I think is important is that a lot of our students think that, you know you finish high school you go to college you pick a major that becomes your job and that's what you do and I've yet to find that to be true for almost anybody. So, you talk a little bit about your sort of path from sort of what high school then college then what happened after that and did you follow that magical path or were things different for you.

Tim Howley 2:17

And I agree, I hear that story from students all the time and one of the biggest things that I tell them is to ask questions to people that they look up to and role, you know their role models and their mentors, because, ya know, people don't really come to college saying oh I want to be a college professor, you know, and, you know, things happen. So, in high school. I was really fortunate to go to a great high school with great teachers, and I was like I kind of like this teaching thing, it seems like they have like a positive impact on on people in the world and so that's what I thought I wanted to do. I didn't know the subject area until I did a program where we kind of linked with middle school students, and we talked to them in their health classes about like the transition to high school and, and my health teacher kind of like led that and so she became a big mentor to me and I was like, oh, maybe, maybe health education was something that I wanted to do. So then I come to JMU, with health, physical education on my mind, and had great professors in that program and great experiences in that program. And I was on track, I was like yeah this is what I want to do, and then I got involved in the reach peer education program, along with several other things that on campus

but I was like oh well, health education and college students this is, this is pretty good gig and I never really thought like this whole world of Student Affairs existed or.

So, I did that I had an assistantship for my grad year in the health center and I got some more experience in like being more of a professional in the university setting and so I was interested in that I actually applied for a job at UVA doing similar type stuff. After my master's program. I didn't get that job but I also had lined up a teaching job and so I did end up teaching middle school down in Chesapeake Virginia for for a year. While I was down there, I had a first year teaching experience which was, I learned a lot. And that was, that was definitely a very, very challenging year for me but I think in like November I was ready to run away from that job by the springtime, I wasn't. I was like okay with it and I was like, I was ready to go back for the next year but then a job at JMU opened up in the health center. And so I applied for that position and fortunately I got it. And so then I was kind of like a boomerang; I could only stay away from JMU for so long, so. So that's how I ended up back at JMU. I taught, while I was there working as a health educator. I taught, adjunctly for Health Sciences, one semester, a bunch of semesters in kinesiology teaching kinesiology 100 And that's when I kind of really got the itch to, like, teach college students, so I kind of found like, Oh, this is, this is really what I like and so then, yeah, so then after five years of doing that work, I was... I did find myself a full time teaching position in health sciences.

Tim Miller 5:40

Gotcha. So, there's so many questions I have after hearing that they're different from the ones I was given. So, let me go way off track here and could, can you talk about if you could go back to your undergraduate graduation day, and give yourself advice about what's to come knowing what you know now like today you literally jump back in time. Bill and Ted style, and you can say to yourself something on that day, about what's to come. What would you tell yourself?

Tim Howley 6:11

Oh wow, um, in some ways I think I would tell myself like nothing. Because I think, you know I didn't make every right decision, but I think, I don't think I would change anything, right. And you know I think I found meaning in some of the mistakes that I made, I found purpose in some of the, you know, in the journey that I took. So, I think I would just, you know, remind myself to to be present and to you know, you know, don't take everything so seriously like breathe once in a while like take time to care for myself and maybe be a little bit more confident in who I am and what I'm trying to do. But, you know, I mean there's plenty of things that like oh wow, I made a huge mistake there but again, like I think those mistakes happen. And I've learned from them, so.

Tim Miller 7:07

Yeah, well I do think that I mean it's such a great answer, I mean it's not the answer you normally would get but it says a lot about the purpose with which you're living your life that you don't go back and like oh I wish I had turned left here and go over there but that you know the mistakes have power to, and I almost think that's the great advice for the students and whoever else listening this is that the mistakes are part of the journey. I really appreciate that advice. So talk to me about the favorite thing about working with college students.

Tim Howley 7:38

they're awesome. I love them so much. I, I had an incredible time as a JMU student. And, you know, there's just something so powerful about this time in people's lives. They're energetic, they're excited, and they're ready to change the world. And, you know, I get I like feed off of that energy and so I just love work and to work with JMU students in particular is just is, you know, I'm so thankful. Sometimes I was telling, we have a new academic unit head in our department and I was telling her what I meant. I was like, sometimes I have to pinch myself and remind myself like, you know I'm doing what, what I've wanted to do like I get to work. You know with college students with JMU students a place that has given me so much and I feel like I get to give back and and work with students on their journey and, And, and then to be in contact with them when they leave here, and that has been incredibly rewarding for me to, you know, to me the work that I do, it's about the relationships, and when you have positive relationships. It doesn't end when they graduate, and that's the, you know, I mean, what a blessing to have all these people that, that you've been a part of their journey and, and they've been a part of mine and so that's been a fun and rewarding part of the job.

Tim Miller 9:15

So let's, sorry I'm bouncing around a little bit, you're sort of triggering me to go different places.

Tim Howley:
Sure!

Tim Miller:

I want to go back again to the early career stuff. And it's funny, I had a conversation with a student who is going to graduate soon. And they're realizing that maybe they don't want to do what they've been training to do this whole time. Your teaching story was really, really, really important so I'd love to delve into that a little bit more. And can you talk about sort of how you think you're supposed to do this and you realize you don't really you're not, I don't want to put words in your mouth about how you felt about it but can you talk about like, Okay, I'm heading out in the real world, I have this job I have this path, and I'm realizing it's maybe not what I should be doing, can you talk about sort of reckoning with that and then how you sort of manage that because I feel like that happens to so many of our students that I feel like they've done something wrong or they made a mistake or is it okay if you talk a little bit about that.

Tim Howley 10:09

Yeah and I think like one of the things that was, it was really hard for me because, you know, for such a long time I had envisioned that I was going to be this, like, K through 12 Teacher, and, and, you know, I was like, Oh, I want to teach middle school. Because, you know, if I taught high school I didn't have any facial hair at the time, and all the students looked older than me, and two I was like middle school was like such this developmental time when people were making health decisions health behaviors, I was like, and then looking back I think I had some natural strengths at the elementary PE, that I didn't like lean into more and like explore a little bit. But that middle school year that I was teaching. It was really hard. And it wasn't always fulfilling and every day that I went to work, it felt like I was going to work and it was hard and it was challenging every day. And when I was a grad assistant at the University Health Center, I loved going to work. Like it didn't feel like work and I remember saying this to a friend of mine, and they're like well maybe that tells you something,

you know, maybe that's. And I was like yeah but it's, it's, you know, sometimes I felt like oh well that's like not really work it's like it was just too easy. And, and then I just realized, you know, we, we should lean into our strengths and things that we're good at and. And ultimately I was like alright well I'm gonna take advantage of this opportunity I could always go back to teaching, but let me explore this world a little bit more and then I'm really glad that I did.

Tim Miller 11:59

Can you talk about the like family with that when you had to explain you know oh I'm changing, you know, I thought we were going here, I'm not going here, I mean, how was that, I'm not trying to judge the family just wondering you know how do you have that, yeah conversation with them?

Tim Howley 12:14

Yeah, I think, you know, There's a little, I have to say they're pretty. They're really supportive, really. They knew how much I love JMU. They knew that that was a great opportunity for me so I can't say that they were really all that surprised. And I think, You know, I think they had realization that, you know, your degree, like nobody was ever like, oh the degree doesn't mean anything now because I wouldn't been able to do what I was doing if I didn't have any degrees, and you know it was my experiences that actually made me a little bit more versatile in what I could do. So yeah, so I have to say my family was really supportive and, I mean, I wasn't gonna be a millionaire being a teacher wasn't gonna be a millionaire, going to work in Student Affairs either so I didn't have. I know some of our students struggle with that, you know, element of like the financial stability and that sort of stuff so you know it was just like, alright, well, you know, we knew Tim was never gonna like bring in the dollar so they don't, they weren't counting on me for the beach house or anything so

Tim Miller 13:29

they got it. Alright. That part wasn't a disappointment. So that's sort of the professional career side, can you talk about the life adjustment of you know one of the things that we hear from, from a lot of young alums all the time is, you know they're used to, I can call my friends and five minutes later we can get together or you know just that life feels so different when you go from, we all live near each other we can do a lesson now. Oh wait, I haven't seen my friends in a month because we have to make these things called plans. Yeah. Do you mind talking about sort of that life transition sort of post college into college and post college and friends and you know, are you still in touch with people from undergrad and JMU time like, How's that look for them?

Tim Howley 14:09

Yeah, for sure. Well, my, my friends were such a huge support and actually one of my best friends. He was doing a very similar thing that I was in. He was teaching middle school and in the Richmond area and then I was down in in Chesapeake. And so we, we relied on each other a lot, and, and we connected a lot. We came up for JMU football games, every almost every home game. So that was a good way for our friend base to get back together. And yeah, so it definitely did look different and that social support, you know, I always think back that first year out of college was in many ways, like a, like another freshman year, right, of, like, growth and development. And so, kind of just going through a lot, and I lived on my own, and I think I'm glad that I lived on my own though because I, I spent so much emotional energy during the day, so it was nice that I could just decompress, but it was also isolating at the same time so, so it was important to lean in on that friend support, and, and have that. When I came to JMU and started working, balancing, you know, being a professional in

the town that I went to school and it was a little bit different and, you know, so that was, you know, just like kind of learning, you know, professionalism and, and things like that and making sure that when I picked the place to live. I was just, you know, we do set up kind of bubbles within the Harrisonburg community so I kind of was okay in that realm. But yeah I would run into students sometimes, you know like at Walmart and I'm teaching like nutrition, and I'm like oh my god what's in my grocery cart. So don't judge me too much but. But yeah, so, you know like, you know, it's a challenge getting used to that sort of thing but, um, but now that I live in Harrisonburg. It's still and I, I love seeing students off campus and I don't mind. I'm not doing anything that you know I'm worried about them seeing and in a lot of ways I think I can role model some, some good behaviors for them and, you know, some balanced like family, work, balance and that sort of stuff so, and they tend to enjoy seeing me, and the family out off campus as well.

Tim Miller 16:46

Yeah, no it's funny, There are two things you said that really stuck out to me one. Every time I'm at Martins, I'm like, who's gonna see what I have in my cart today. Make sure you get salad and Ben and Jerry's just so it looks like you are living a real adult life. Yeah, even if that salad it's never getting eat. That's the guilt salad is what I call it, yeah. The other thing you said I thought was so true for our students is that it's really their second freshman year, the year after college. And I don't think we talked about it enough that way so I really appreciate you sort of naming it naming it that way because they, they forget that they started over and probably for many of them ninth grade, they started again first year at JMU, but they're also now probably in a different place, different life different everything. So I really appreciate you naming it that way because I, I feel like I've heard that before, but I love hearing from you because it is so true that that's what their life is, is this second freshman year, yeah. And then, I was wondering, can we go. Are you willing to share maybe a challenge or a mistake or something you use sort of as we call like rebounded from sort of post college something you're like, that didn't, I don't think the teaching thing was that it feels like that was a great learning moment but I don't know, can you share sort of a bump in the road or something like that. Do you feel like you've got a sort of a good lesson learned from?

Tim Howley 18:09

yeah for sure. Well, one I made plenty of mistakes that first year of teaching but, but that's, I wouldn't. Yeah, that's not the experience I will share here I think. When I think about my one of my biggest rebounds was probably, so I had been working in student affairs for five years, and I applied for a position. And that was like my supervisor was leaving and then I applied for my supervisor's position. And that was like, in my eyes that's like where my career was going and I was, you know like I was excited about the opportunity and I just, you know, I just thought that this was, You know what I was meant to do. And I applied for the position and, you know, was offered an on campus interview and, and I did not get the position and it was. It broke my heart. I mean, it almost broke my soul really. And, you know, I thought, you know like, you know, I look back as a professional and you know, I thought that I was, you know, that was what I was made to do at the time and. And then, you know, it was really hard that next year because I had to work for somebody that got the job over me was, uh, you know, I had to eat some Humble Pie, for sure. And I was certainly not in a position to leave my job. So I wasn't financially, you know, independent or anything like that so. So yeah, so then I had to work this year, with, with this new supervisor and, and really kind of check myself and, you know, in every day, you know, it was a challenge, I think, You know, eventually what ended up helping me was, was really leaning into like a mentor that I had. And she had written me a

recommendation for the job. And she's just, I mean she was, she was amazing, and actually a lot of people might know her if you ever been to a JMU Commencement Ceremony Dr. Jean Martina McAlister our master of ceremonies. She was a professor of mine and she really helped me that year and she had helped me kind of just ground myself, and, and then kind of make some goals make some professional goals for myself and, you know, kind of just, you know, worked with me and we met I think maybe weekly even that year or maybe every other week I can't remember exactly but um, but she was kind of a sounding board for me. And, and then you know it's it's it seems like a movie, but then, you know, later on in that year, the job that I'm in now actually gets posted, right. And it's a master's level teaching position in the health sciences department, and I couldn't have written a job better. And Jean was a professor in the health sciences department at the time, so she definitely helped me, you know, prepare for that interview process, And so when I thought like that that other job was like what I was meant to do, then this job actually ends up opening up maybe six months later, and I go through that process and here I am, you know, 10 years later still doing this work and now working on my doctorate and moving, you know, moving forward, still in this, this academic career path which I didn't really ever think I would be in. But, um, but I have to tell you I love it, so.

Tim Miller 22:09

yeah, It's so telling you because I think we all have this path for ourselves that we want and then it doesn't happen and then we look back, oh this is terrible, it's not what I wanted and I always tell students, the only time you're ever gonna see your path is when you look behind you. Yeah, because we never we'd never would have picked this path for us. That's so good for you to share because I do think that that first job we don't get that, you know, we assume it's unfair they were this or they were that or whatever and one of my good friends always says everything works out the end if it hasn't worked out it's not the end. Yeah, I've found that I've really enjoyed that as a sort of a way to think about this kind of stuff.

Tim Howley 22:50

And I think we're like really good at, like, making it work, right, because, you know like, he says, You know, sometimes, like people will be like, Oh, everything happens for a reason and sometimes I get a little like well you know I don't know about that but like we, we make meaning of these things and we learn from them, and we grow and that, you know like we, we become better because of it, you know, we come, maybe we get stronger because of it and so I think that's, that's one of the thing and like, yeah, I definitely wanted that job and, but I'm better off that I didn't get it and I wouldn't ever know that, you know, unless, like you said, looking backwards.

Tim Miller 23:40

Well it's funny I mean, I don't want to make your story, my story but I had a job that I wanted as my dream job, applied for it didn't get it went through the like all the stages of grief in a matter of a few hours and like I'm gonna quit I'm gonna leave and all this kind of stuff and I stuck it out and then four months later that person left and then I got it. Oh wow, Yeah, I quit, and left, I never would have gotten that job right. You know so it's that kind of a thing where sometimes you got to stick it out and realize that things are working out, you know, in the long run for a reason.

Tim Howley 24:10

And, you know, I'm glad you brought that up too because my mentor Jean she was really good at helping me, like, see that, and like see that, you know, you're still writing your story. So you had to show up every day to do good work. Otherwise, you wouldn't have been considered for the job four months later, like, you know, cuz you, you could burn it down. And what good is that going to do and so that's why I just think like mentors are so important because they give you that safe space where you can, like, let go a little bit and be honest and but then like, you know when you show up to work then you can still be like a professional and do the work that you need to do and so it's important to find those people in your life and in your professional journey that are going to help you get there, I guess.

Tim Miller 25:05

Yeah, no, I agree the burn it down is usually the first reaction but if you burn it out you can't work there. Yeah, yeah. So Tim, I wanted to just open it up and see if there's anything else you know we're going to focus this on you know current students students that are graduating soon, and any other sort of life lesson or message that you want to send out to folks who are going to hear this and listen to this.

Tim Howley 25:31

Oh wow, that's loaded... life lesson. Um, yeah, I think, you know, you know, right now, I'm just seeing like students, you know, I'm just really interested in student well being. And just remembering to like take care of yourself, remembering to, you know, when people are like, Oh, when I start, you know, a lot of people are in this artificial race. To get started, and, like, I guess I would say like, it started like you're doing it, like this is it like this is life, so that you know, learn to appreciate, you know, the experiences that you're having. Slow down every once in a while. Try to be mindful, Try and take care of yourself and take care of those around you. I think that's the most important thing. And for JMU students, I would say, you know some of my best experiences were through like the Alternative Break programs. So if you get opportunities to do things like that. I would encourage you to get outside of your comfort zone and do something that will help you learn and grow, and enjoy it, enjoy the ride.

Tim Miller 26:52

That's great, that's one of the big takeaways for me from this conversation is when you talked about writing your own story and I think that's such a great lesson to learn. I remember hearing Kerry Washington, the actor give a graduation speech where she talked about everyone is writing their own story and no one gets to write it for you, then I sort of touched on that before and I just think that's such a great highlight for me of what you're saying is, because I do think that so many people don't think they have control over their life and their story and that even when you decide what you thought you were going to do isn't going to be what you do you decided that. So I appreciate your themes here today appreciate you taking the time, everyone, that's all for us today. I want to thank Tim Howley for joining us. I hope you will check us out on Instagram JMU rebound there and stay up to date with our episodes. So until next time, what's your rebound story? Thanks Tim. Take care.