Video Helps Staff Understand Autism Spectrum | CPD

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"Have you ever had a student in your class who came to ask you for information, and immediately you felt like there was some social awkwardness?" a young voice for autism asks his viewers. "Well, I admit it, that is me." The voice--John Robert Johnson--is fictional, but he has research backing him up as he briefly takes his audience through the higher education experience from his point of view. Voiced by Shawn Wright, "John" represents the findings of a team of Utah Regional Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities program researchers. Led by Dr. Gwen Mitchell of the University of Idaho, they come from five different universities, including the Center for Persons with Disabilities at Utah State. Their message is for faculty and staff in higher education. "There is a lot to be done to get faculty and staff in university settings up to speed in knowledge and understanding of the autism spectrum," Dr. Mitchell said. The 10-minute video entitled Autism--University Faculty and Staff: What We Know, What We Do Not Know and What We Need to Know is intended to help bridge that knowledge gap.

The team's video and research will be presented during the Association of University Centers on Disabilities conference in Washington, D.C. in December. The researchers included Mitchell, Howard Fulk and Ashley Kuznia of the University of Idaho; Nelson Atehortua of Utah Valley University; Katie Ahlers of the University of Montana, Ron Bean of Utah State University and Jamie Hammer of Minot State University.