

## Disrupting Ableism and Advancing STEM

Sponsored by the National Science Foundation

### Speaker Biographies

### Creating Disability-Inclusive Workforces and Workplaces

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7, 2023



**Mariah Lynn Arral, BS**  
**Carnegie Mellon University**

Mariah L. Arral is a 5th-year Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Chemical Engineering at Carnegie Mellon University. Her Ph.D. advisor is Dr. Kathryn Whitehead, and her thesis is on mRNA lipid nanoparticle delivery. Before joining Dr. Whitehead's lab, Mariah was one of the first researchers in Dr. Halpern's Lab at the University of New Hampshire. During her undergraduate studies with Dr. Halpern, Mariah developed an interest in studying Neurodiversity and mentorship for which she has two papers. Additionally, Mariah has been invited to give a presentation on the accessibility and inclusion of disabled students. Mariah has received national and international awards for her research and academic work, including the NIH NRSA Fellowship. Mariah is an openly Autistic and dyslexic researcher.



**Christopher Atchison, PhD**  
**National Science Foundation**

Dr. Chris Atchison is a Professor of Geoscience Education in the School of Education and Department of Geology at the University of Cincinnati, and the Founder of the International Association for Geoscience Diversity ([www.TheIAGD.org](http://www.TheIAGD.org)). His research is based on the intentional development of inclusive communities of learning in classroom, laboratory, and field studies and the implementation of universally designed instructional strategies. Atchison advocates for more accessible methods of teaching and learning where students and scientists with disabilities are provided opportunities for active engagement and participation along accessible pathways to the STEM workforce.



**Cathie Axe, MEd**  
**Johns Hopkins University**

Cathie Axe is the Executive Director of Johns Hopkins' Student Disability Services. With over 30 years of higher education experience, and 27 of those years managing disability services at a variety of institutions, she has had the opportunity to actively engage in the evolution of services as well as perspectives around disability. Cathie received her Master's in Education with a focus on Counseling and Development at George Mason University where she also got her start in disability services. She earned her Bachelor's in Economics at Brown University where she served as Associate Dean and Director of Student and Employee Accessibility Services providing accommodations and inclusive services for both employees and students.






**Amy Bower, PhD**  
**Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution**

Dr. Amy Bower is a tenured Senior Scientist at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts. She studies physical oceanography, specifically the pathways of deep ocean currents in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean from the tracks of acoustically tracked drifting buoys released far below the sea surface. Over the course of her career, Amy has experienced decreasing vision due to degenerative retinal disease. Assistive techniques such as video magnifiers, computer software that magnifies and reads computer screen content aloud and access assistants provided by her employer have allowed Amy to thrive in a STEM career.



**Susanne M. Bruyère, PhD, CRC**  
**EARN**

Dr. Bruyère is Professor of Disability Studies and Academic Director of the K. Lisa Yang and Hock E. Tan Institute on Employment and Disability, Cornell University ILR School, Ithaca, NY. Bruyère serves as Institute administrative/strategic lead, and as the PI/Co-PI of research, dissemination, and technical assistance efforts focused on employment disability policy and effective disability workplace practices. She is the PI/Project Director of the National Policy, Research, and Technical Assistance Center on Employment of People with Disabilities funded by the U.S. DOL Office of Disability Employment Policy. She is the author/co-author of five books and over 180 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters on workplace disability inclusion.

	<p><b>David D. Caudel, PhD</b> <b>Vanderbilt University</b></p> <p>Dr. Dave Caudel is the associate director of the Frist Center for Autism and Innovation at Vanderbilt University in Nashville Tennessee. Diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome in 2009, Caudel is a neurodivergence advocate, speaking to a variety of organizations, including the U.N. and autism conferences internationally. He received his Ph.D. in Physics at Vanderbilt University in 2017. He serves on the advisory committee for the Center for Discovery, Innovation, and Development (CDID) at Children's Specialized Hospital in New Jersey, the Clinical Advisory Panel on Intellectual &amp; Developmental Disabilities for BlueCare Tennessee, the Vanderbilt University Diversity Council and the All Access Inclusion Network, and is a founding member of the Vanderbilt Autism and Neurodiversity Alliance.</p>
	<p><b>Meenakshi Das, MS</b> <b>Microsoft</b></p> <p>Meenakshi Das is a software engineer at Microsoft working on building accessible frontend experiences. She is the founder of 'Working with Disabilities' support group for working professionals with disabilities which has over 4000+ members. For her tech inclusion work, she was inducted into the National Susan M. Daniels National Disability Mentoring Hall of Fame, named a DO-IT Trailblazer by the University of Washington for changing the way the world views people with disabilities, and recently awarded the Disability:IN NextGen Leader of the Year. She serves on the Board of Directors of Teach Access - an organization addressing the digital accessibility skills gap among students.</p>
	<p><b>Ernie Dianastasis, MBA</b> <b>The Precisionists, Inc.</b></p> <p>Mr. Dianastasis is the Founder and CEO of The Precisionists, Inc. (TPI), a global administrative services and information technology company focused on employing 10,000 neurodiverse professionals over the next several years. In this role, he is responsible for overseeing all aspects of the company, which is headquartered in Wilmington, Delaware, but is national in its focus. Creating meaningful careers for people with disabilities while at the same time delivering world class service to customers is a passion for Ernie.</p>





**Anupa Iyer Geevarghese, JD**  
**Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)**

As Chief of Staff for the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), Anupa Iyer Geevarghese collaborates closely with ODEP's Assistant Secretary and other U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) leaders to identify and implement strategies for increasing the number and quality of employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Ms. Geevarghese draws on years of legal experience in both the public and nonprofit sectors. She came to DOL from the U.S. Department of Defense, where she served as a subject matter expert and Senior Disability Policy Advisor for diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) initiatives. Prior to that, she worked for seven years at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Office of Federal Operations (OFO), where she was instrumental in implementing updates strengthening Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.



**Logan Gin, PhD**  
**Brown University**

Dr. Logan Gin is the Assistant Director for STEM Education in the Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning at Brown University where he works on initiatives related to STEM graduate student and postdoc teaching professional development. Prior to arriving at Brown, Dr. Gin was an NSF Graduate Research Fellow at Arizona State University and served as the Program Manager for an NSF S-STEM program focused on involving community college transfer students in undergraduate research. Dr. Gin holds a Ph.D. in Biology from Arizona State University where his dissertation work centered around the experiences of STEM students with disabilities in active learning classrooms, online courses, and laboratory and research environments.



**Jasmine Harris, JD**  
**University of Pennsylvania**

Ms. Harris is a Professor of Law at the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School with a secondary appointment at the Penn Graduate School of Education. She is a leading law and inequality scholar with expertise in disability law, antidiscrimination law, and evidence. Harris writes frequently about disability law for popular audiences with by-lines and commentary in such publications and media outlets as the New York Times, San Francisco Chronicle, Ms. Magazine, Washington Post, TIME Magazine, Bloomberg, and National Public Radio. Harris graduated with honors from Dartmouth College and received her JD from Yale Law School.



**Aaron Konopasky, JD, PhD**  
**U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission**

Dr. Konopasky is a Senior Attorney-Advisor in the Office of Legal Counsel at the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) headquarters in Washington, D.C., where he assists the Commission in interpreting and applying the ADA and other federal employment discrimination statutes. Dr. Konopasky has participated in the development of regulations under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA), and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as well as numerous policy documents and other Commission publications. Prior to joining the Commission, Dr. Konopasky earned his J.D. at Stanford Law School, and his Ph.D. at Princeton University.



**Mark H. Leddy, PhD, MS**  
**National Science Foundation**

Dr. Mark H. Leddy is a permanent Lead Program Director in the Division of Equity for Excellence in STEM, in the Directorate for STEM Education, at the National Science Foundation. Dr. Leddy leads the new Workplace Equity for Persons with Disabilities in STEM and STEM Education activity, and he co-leads the Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate program. Before joining NSF in 2006, Dr. Leddy worked at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, and the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. He has a PhD from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and an MS from Columbia University.



**Jordan Rodriguez, MS**  
**Civil Engineer in Training, Phoenix DPG Co-Lead, Stantec**

Jordan Rodriguez is a Civil Engineer-in-Training at Stantec based out of Phoenix, Arizona. He has five years of experience in the design, rehabilitation, and management of water, wastewater, and conveyance infrastructure. His disability experience is shaped by having Leber's Hereditary Optic Neuropathy (LHON) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Outside of project work, he promotes accessibility and disability inclusion through co-leading internal document accessibility trainings, sitting on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee of the Arizona Water Association and the Arizona Chapter of the American Public Works Association, as well as providing STEM career advice to local blind and low vision high school students.



**John Tschida, MPP**  
**Association of American Centers on Disabilities**

Mr. Tschida is the executive director of the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD). He has spent more than 20 years using data and research to drive policy change and service development for individuals with disabilities. Mr. Tschida, who has lived with a spinal cord injury since 1993, serves on several public and private boards designing policy or governance solutions to further the independence of people with disabilities.