



Disrupting Ableism and Advancing STEM

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Speaker Biographies Rooting Out Bias and Barriers

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	<p>L. Miché Aaron, MS Johns Hopkins University</p> <p>Ms. Aaron is an Earth and Planetary Science Ph.D. student at Johns Hopkins University researching sulfates within Martian craters using remote spectroscopy. She received her B.A. in Earth and Environmental Science from Wesleyan University and M.S. in Geographic Information Systems from Sam Houston State University. Ms. Aaron has contributed her efforts to many initiatives, including The Women+ of Color Project, Space Interns, Black in Geoscience, and local astrobiology outreach programs. She also strives to change the face of STEM by addressing ableism in academia and improving disability representation in URM students.</p>
	<p>Emily Ackerman, PhD Harvard Medical School</p> <p>Dr. Emily E. Ackerman is a postdoctoral researcher in the Systems Biology department at Harvard Medical School. Her work uses computational methods to understand p53 signaling dynamics. Her activism centers around the interaction between disability, technology, and education; she has published writings and spoken publicly on her identity as a disabled woman in computational science and the exclusion of disabled voices in STEMM fields. She holds a second HMS appointment as a Disability Advisor and serves on the board of directors of Future of Research, co-leading a project aimed at assessing and improving the labor conditions of academic workers.</p>



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). 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.



Sheri Byrne-Haber, JD, MBA
“This Week In Accessibility” Medium Blog

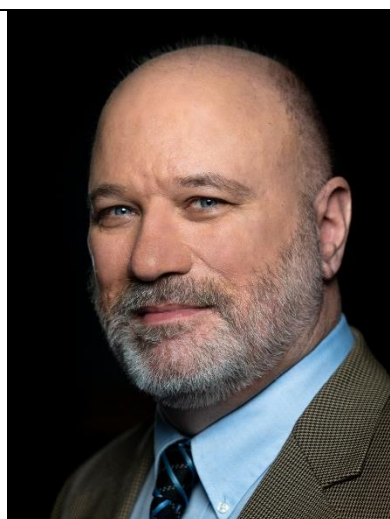
Ms. Byrne-Haber is a prominent global subject matter expert in the fields of disability and accessibility. She is best known for launching digital accessibility programs at McDonald’s, Albertsons, and VMware. With degrees in computer science, law, and business combined with identifying as a disabled person, she has a complete 360-degree view of all the issues impacting disability inclusion and accessibility.

Ms. Byrne-Haber was named a 2022 LinkedIn Top Voice for Social Impact. Her award-winning blog, which has reached over 300,000 readers, summarizes legal cases and issues facing people implementing accessibility programs. She is a frequent panelist and speaker at accessibility, UI/UX, and HR conferences and is an active member of several accessibility committees and non-profits, helping drive and communicate the evolution of accessibility standards. Her book, entitled [“Giving a Damn about Accessibility”](#) is available for free.



**Rory Cooper, PhD, PLY
University of Pittsburgh**

Dr. Cooper is the founder, director, and CEO of the Human Engineering Research Laboratories (HERL), a joint venture of the University of Pittsburgh, the US Department of Veterans Affairs and the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. He also serves as Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research for STEM and Health Sciences Collaboration and FISA/PVA Distinguished Professor in the Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology at the University of Pittsburgh. He is also Professor in the Bioengineering, Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, and Orthopaedic Surgery departments at the University of Pittsburgh, and holds adjunct professorships at the Robotics Institute of Carnegie Mellon University and the Department of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences. Dr. Cooper was awarded an Honorary Professorship at Hong Kong Polytechnic University and an Honorary Doctorate at Xi'an Jiatong University in Xi'an, China. He has dedicated his career to improving mobility, function, and quality of life for people with disabilities through advanced engineering in clinical research and medical rehabilitation.



**Andrew Houtenville, PhD
University of New Hampshire**

Dr. Houtenville identifies as a 56-year-old, white male, with a deeply rooted personal and family connection to disability. He experiences depression, anxiety, and learning disabilities, mitigated with medication and ongoing therapy, and as a child, he was placed in remedial education due to untreated learning disabilities. Dr. Houtenville is an economics professor at the University of New Hampshire (UNH), focusing on applied microeconomics, and is the Principal Investigator of Rehabilitation Research Center on Disability Statistics and Demographics (StatsRRTC), funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR).



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.



Anita Marshall, PhD
University of Florida

Dr. Marshall is a lecturer and researcher in the Department of Geological Sciences at the University of Florida, Gainesville and serves as the Executive Director of the International Association for Geoscience Diversity. Her research focuses on improving access for people with disabilities in the geosciences with ongoing projects including, the GeoSPACE Accessible Planetary Geology field course, a Culture Change project focusing on disabled geoscientists in professional settings, and the ASCEND research coordination network for creating more inclusive cultures in geoscience professional societies. She is actively involved in the DEI community of geosciences, sharing her expertise and personal experience in STEM as a person with disabilities and a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. Dr. Marshall has 17 years of undergraduate teaching experience designing inclusive and accessible courses in community colleges and R1 research institutions in a range of modalities - in-person, hybrid and online. Dr. Marshall received a BS in Earth Science and MS in Geology from the University of Arkansas and a PhD in Geology from the University of South Florida.



Mona Minkara, PhD
Northeastern University

Dr. Mona Minkara is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Bioengineering and an Affiliate Faculty in the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Biology at Northeastern University. She heads the COMBINE (Computational Modeling for BioInterface Engineering) Lab. Dr. Minkara uses computational methods to study biological interfaces at the atomic and molecular scales. Her current research examines pulmonary surfactant, the complex protein-lipid substance lining the alveoli. As a scientist who is blind, Dr. Minkara is committed to making science more accessible and inclusive through designing new tools for blind scientists.

Dr. Minkara received a B.A. from Wellesley College and a Ph.D. in Chemistry from the University of Florida. Before joining the Northeastern University faculty, she held a postdoctoral appointment at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities Chemical Theory Center with a Ford Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship.



Kate Mittendorf, PhD
Vanderbilt University Medical Center

Dr. Mittendorf is an interdisciplinary translational genomic scientist focused on translational genomics and digital health interventions, with particular focus on ensuring that precision medical and digital health approaches close, rather than widen, existing health gaps for medically marginalized populations. They has been a key contributor to a number of large genetics consortia and associated clinical trials, including the NHGRI-funded CSER and ClinGen consortiums as well as the NHGRI-funded eMERGE Network. They have a passion for improving scientific communication with accessible visual aids and associated image description alt-text; their illustrations have appeared on journal covers, in textbooks, in biotechnology curricula, and on scientific knowledge resource websites. They have also designed and developed a number of resources for improving access for disabled scientists and research participants, which are made freely available on their website, www.katemittendorf.com.



Joey Ramp-Adams
Empower Ability Consulting (EAC), Inc.

Joey Ramp-Adams is the Founder and CEO of [Empower Ability Consulting \(EAC\) Inc.](#), a firm that advocates for people with disabilities in STEM, focusing on service dog handler access to equal opportunities in science. With a background in Biocognitive Neuroscience and as a Neuroscience Research Affiliate at the Beckman Institute for Science and Technology, Joey saw a gap in disability access to science education and career opportunities. She is also the Co-founder and Vice President of the non-profit 501(c)(3) organization International Alliance for Ability in Science (IAFAIS). This non-profit organization provides resources, financial aid, and scholarships for student scientists with disabilities.



Jordan Rodriguez, MS
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.



Bonnielin K. Swenor, PhD, MPH
Johns Hopkins Disability Health Research Center

Dr. Bonnielin Swenor is an associate professor at The Johns Hopkins Schools of Nursing, Medicine, and Public Health, and is the founder and director of the Johns Hopkins Disability Health Research Center, which aims to shift the paradigm from 'living with a disability' to 'thriving with a disability'. Motivated by her personal experience with a visual disability, her work takes a data-driven approach to advancing health equity for people with disabilities and promoting disability inclusion in higher education, STEMM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine), public health, and research.



Hoby Wedler, PhD Wedland Group

Dr. Wedler has been completely blind since birth. He is a chemist, an entrepreneur, a sensory expert, and is driven by his passion for innovative, creative, and insightful thinking. He earned his PhD in organic chemistry from the University of California, Davis in 2016. Prior to that, he founded a non-profit organization to lead annual chemistry camps for blind and visually impaired students throughout North America. In the same year, he began opening doors to the world of wine aromas by developing *Tasting in the Dark*, a truly blindfolded wine experience, in collaboration with Francis Ford Coppola. He has since expanded the program to a global market in a variety of industries and special projects. Dr. Wedler uses his highly-trained palate and acute sensory insight of his surroundings in his work as a sensory expert and product development consultant. He now works as a global motivational speaker, scientist, mentor, educator, and entrepreneur.

President Barack Obama recognized Hoby by naming him a Champion of Change for enhancing employment and education opportunities for people with disabilities. Dr. Wedler believes that everyone should pursue their dreams, challenge themselves, and elevate their happiness as they grow and progress through life and their careers. He is committed to making the world more inclusive and accessible for all. Learn more about Dr. Wedler [here](#).