

Less Traveled: Breaking Barriers for Future Scientists with Disabilities

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Individuals with disabilities remain significantly underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. Recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), reports that roughly 20% of all undergraduates within the United States report having one or more disabilities. Among the initial undergraduates that self-reported as having a disability, when tracked 10 years out: only 10% went on to receive undergraduate STEM degrees, 6% went on to earn graduate STEM degrees and 2% went on to earn doctoral STEM degrees. Additionally, the European Disability Forum found that only 30.9% of learners with disabilities went on to tertiary education. This data suggests that STEM education and related fields struggle to recruit and retain disabled students and experts, which leads to a lack of input and innovation from potential disabled scientists. This report explores the roadblocks keeping disabled students from reaching their full potential in STEM related fields and suggests ways in which the global scientific community can improve accessibility and promote the inclusion of disabled scientists to meet both UN Disability Inclusion Strategy initiatives and Sustainable Development Goals.

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Promotional text

Diversifying the STEM landscape brings new ideas to the table. Potential scientists with disabilities continue to face barriers in advancing in STEM-related fields. Their ideas, input, and ingenuity is lost due to this issue. This report outlines ways to mitigate these issues.

Oral preference format

in-person

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