

Faculty Mentoring Students with Disabilities

This guide offers guidance on obtaining mentorship resources and becoming a faculty mentor for students with disabilities. It highlights and discusses the key principles of mentorship of students with disabilities, as well as some relevant resources.

Importance of Mentorship:

- Faculty have important mentorship roles to play for students with disabilities in lab-based science courses or programs.
- Evidence suggests that students with disabilities are more likely to succeed in the sciences if faculty are engaged and take an interest in student achievements.

Students who seek out mentors are generally looking for:

- Faculty members who are open-minded about the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the sciences, and who demonstrate this open-mindedness in their interactions with students;
- Champions or advocates who can help them to navigate the discipline and laboratory settings, as well as interact with the academic environment in ways that disability services staff cannot;
- Faculty members who demonstrate creativity and a willingness to think critically about the interface between disability and the lab-based environment; and
- Faculty members who are relatable, approachable, and responsive to student interactions.

Qualities of a Good Faculty Mentor:

- **Proactive:** Faculty members should reach out to and engage with the student on their own terms, as opposed to waiting for the student to step forward during a crisis.
- **Responsive:** Mentors must respond to student engagement in a timely manner.
- **Open-Minded:** Faculty members should demonstrate an inclusive mindset regarding the involvement of students with disabilities in the sciences and science labs.
- **Creative:** Mentors are more successful when they demonstrate creativity in addressing issues faced by students with disabilities, and when they are willing to think critically about adapting the essential requirements of the program to the student.

Benefits to Becoming a Mentor:

- The opportunity to educate not only your student in the STEM fields but also fellow faculty;
- Increased opportunities to connect with resources and other mentors in the disability community;
- Increased experience and familiarity with disability-specific accommodations in the STEM field; and
- An overall opportunity to share knowledge and skills with a student.

Mentorship Resources:

- The [profiles of young scientists with disabilities](#) contained on the [Science Careers](#) website speak strongly to the importance of the partnership between the student and faculty member at the graduate level.
- The [Success in STEM](#) guide, published by NEADS in 2010, also includes a series of profiles of scientists with disabilities.
- [Resources for and about scientists with disabilities.](#)
- [Mentorship resources are available on the DO-IT website.](#)
- The American Foundation for the Blind's CareerConnect program offers [detailed resources](#) on one-to-one mentorship in an informal and virtual setting.
- The [Biotechnology Initiative](#), which has been committed to connecting and growing professionals in the biotechnology industry since 1989, started its mentorship program in 2009.
- The [Environment Canada Science Youth Internship](#) program offers hands-experience to promising young scientists and postsecondary graduates, through work on environmental projects under the mentorship and coaching of experienced scientists.
- [MentorNet](#) is an email-based mentorship program run by Canada's Association of Information Technology Professionals.