



DIVERSITY – INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY

***NASEM Committee on Research
and Application in Team Science***

Emily E. Ackerman, Ph.D.

April 10, 2024

WHO AM I?



- Postdoctoral researcher, Department of Systems Biology, Harvard Medical School
- Chemical engineer by training
- Lifetime wheelchair user
- Disability rights activist

MY ACCESSIBLE TEAM SCIENCE EXPERIENCES

- Department hired lab “hands” to meet my class requirements
- Team meetings schedule around my immovable bathroom schedule
- Lab social/professional events, conference travel, etc. (often associated with cost increases)
- Working totally remote in my post doc

HYBRID/VIRTUAL OPTION OPENS DOORS FOR MANY

- Old news for the disability community!
 - New for others!
- Disability can be variable day to day
- Requires team trust, more active efforts for team connection
 - Activation barrier to conversation can be daunting
 - Many workarounds exist in the digital world!

GAPS IN CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

- Solutions to accessibility/inclusion issues are often solved on an individual basis
 - Knowledge is lost → reinvent wheel
- Teams often have built-in/operate within power structures:
 - Trainees don't feel empowered to ask for accommodations
 - Pls/Admins are not trained to work through requests/don't take them seriously
- Disability data is sorely lacking
- Solutions sometimes require money

BEST PRACTICES FOR ACCESSIBLE TEAM SCIENCE

- Centralized resources and support at all career levels
 - Protocol for lab accessibility
- Disability representation in DEI trainings/PI trainings
- Virtual option whenever possible
- Funds/protocol for granting accommodations