

# Creating and Preserving a Welcoming Environment



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**Ivan Martinez**  
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Irvine, USA



**Yoldas Yildiz**  
Loyola University  
Chicago, USA

# Today's Speakers



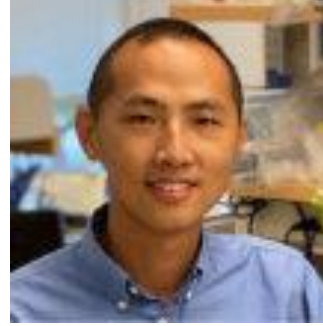
Kehinde Ross



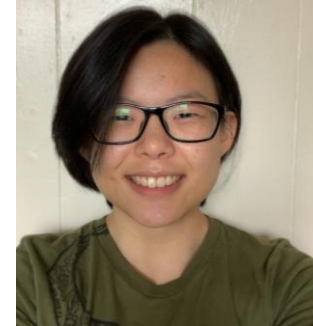
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Jessi Effinger-Morris



Neena Grover

## Two Questions to Facilitate Discussion

- What has made you feel welcome at the RNA Society?
- What questions would you like to ask us?

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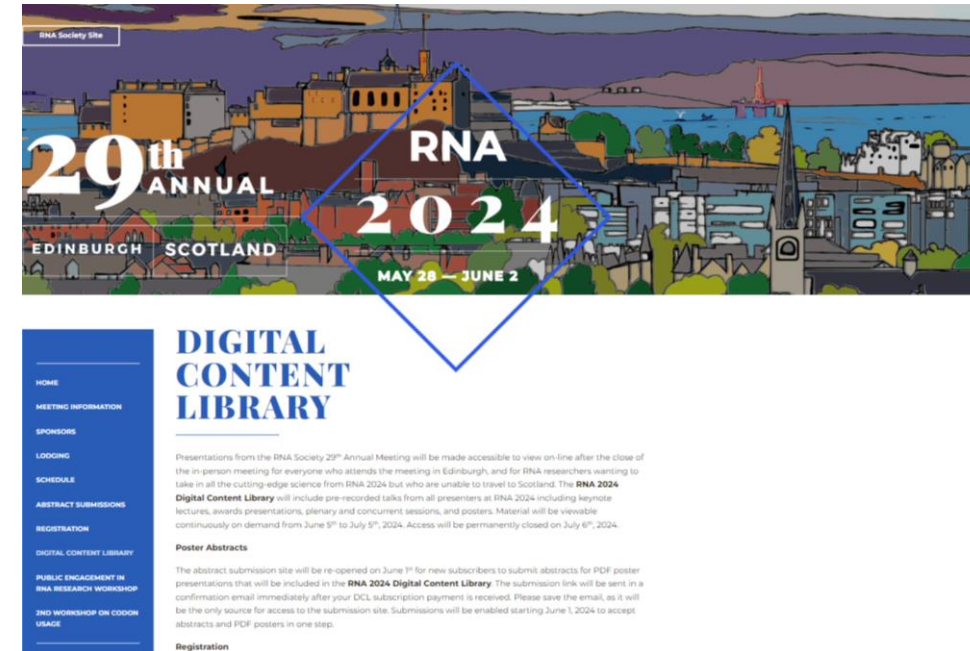
# RNA Society Research Presentation Fellowship

- Launched in 2022
- aims to increase inclusion and participation at the RNA Society Annual Meeting
- provides meeting registration waivers for researchers who would otherwise be unable to attend due to financial considerations.
- Typically covers registration fees for ~75 junior/under-represented members of the RNA Society to attend the Annual Meeting



# Inclusion Initiative

- RNA researchers who might not otherwise have the financial resources to subscribe to the **Digital Content Library (DCL)** are encouraged to check their eligibility for the RNA Society *Inclusion Initiative*.
- waives the subscription fee for scientists who are first-time RNA Society meeting attendees (in-person or on-line) or who affiliate with a broad group of under-represented scientists.
- The DCL will be live from **June 5th to July 5th, 2024**.



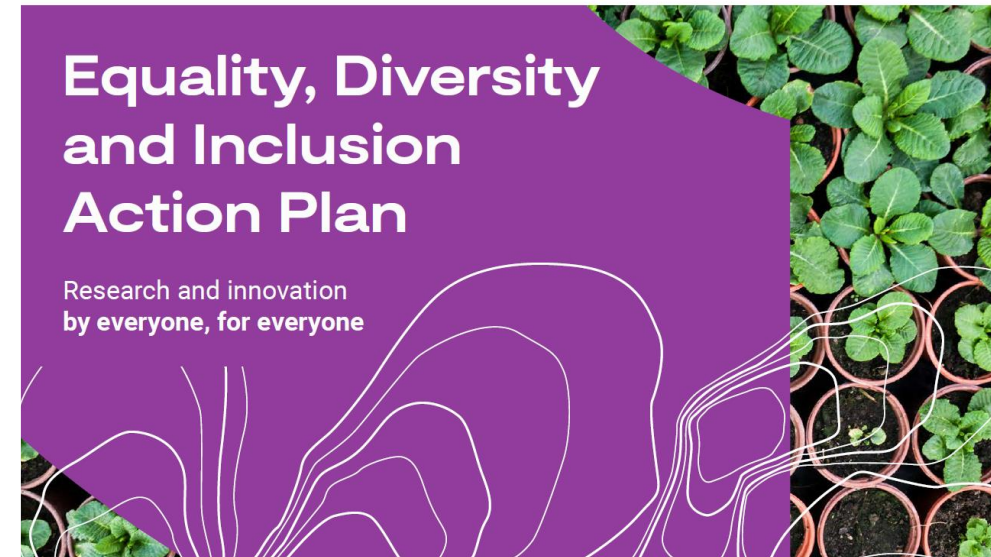
# Biennial RNA Society Membership Survey on DEI

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- Survey every 2 years so we can gather **the evidence** and **respond** to DEI matters aligned to **member interests** and the **broader DEI landscape**.
  - A. Perceptions of the DEI climate within the RNA Society within the last 3 years
  - B. Member Experience in the RNA Society within the last 3 years
  - C. Interest in RNA Society DEI programming
  - D. Suggestions and/or experiences to further DEI in the RNA Society
  - E. Special Needs and Disability
- **Subject to approval** by the RNA Society Board
- High levels of participation needed for the data to be meaningful!

# UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)

“Building on our **evidence base** of under-representation in specific areas, we will address underrepresentation of (i) **black researchers** and (ii) **disabled researchers** in Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council programmes, peer review and policy groups”.

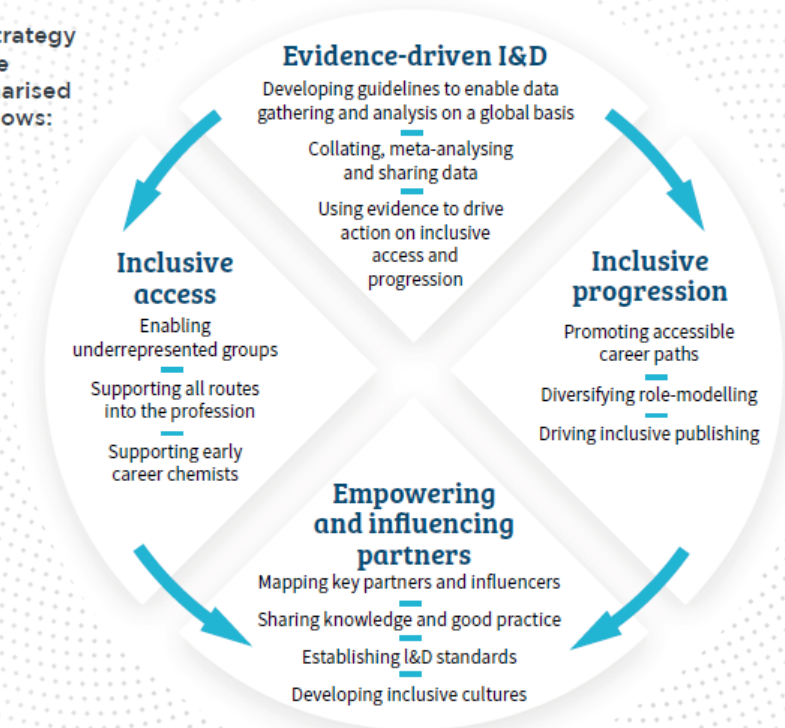


<https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/BBSRC-220323-BBSRCEDIStrategy.pdf>

# Views from the Royal Society of Chemistry

“We have two clear, measurable aims: to increase the representation of underrepresented groups both entering and progressing in chemistry. Our **evidence** shows under-representation in chemistry of women at senior levels, **Black chemists** retained at postgraduate level, people from **deprived socio-economic backgrounds** entering chemistry, LGBT+ people, **disabled people**, and more”.

The strategy can be summarised as follows:



<https://www.rsc.org/policy-evidence-campaigns/inclusion-diversity/strategy/>



# Views from Germany

- *People with disabilities are still underrepresented in the scientific research landscape, especially in science jobs. We want to change that!*
- the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft and Max Planck Society have launched the “**Inclusion Initiative**” to identify development potential and strategic measures to **promote sustainable inclusion** and improve career opportunities and inclusive work environments in science and research **for people with disabilities**



<https://www.fraunhofer.de/en/about-fraunhofer/profile-structure/human-resources-and-corporate-culture/diversity-management/alliance-organizations-initiative-inclusion.html#top.html>

# Views from the USA



## Making STEM More Inclusive of People with Disabilities

Feature Story | July 25, 2023

By Sara Frueh

As she grew up navigating life in a wheelchair, Anjali Forber-Pratt encountered obstacles both in the physical world and in other people's mindsets.

"As a young child going through public schooling and so forth, I was constantly faced not only with physical inaccessibility, in terms of accessing spaces, but also attitudinal inaccessibility," she said.

Forber-Pratt recalled people questioning her decision to take an honors English class because they assumed that she would not be going to college. When she was drawn to an applied technology class that included a wind tunnel, she wasn't allowed to enroll, and was informed that she wasn't interested in science.

- <https://www.nationalacademies.org/news/2023/07/making-stem-more-inclusive-of-people-with-disabilities>

Home Disseminate Blog New Recommendations For Enhancing Disability Inclusion

## New Recommendations for Enhancing Disability Inclusion

December 30, 2022 By Marie A. Bernard



It is my pleasure to start 2023 by reporting on the **Disabilities Subgroup Report** of the Advisory Committee to the Director's (ACD) Working Group on Diversity (WGD) that was first presented at the ACD meeting on December 9, 2022.

<https://diversity.nih.gov/disseminate/blog/2022-12-30-new-recommendations-enhancing-disability-inclusion>

# Views from Japan

- The participation of people with disabilities in higher education in STEM fields in Japan is significantly lower than the proportion of the general population.
  - Shigehiro Namiki
  - <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41570-023-00553-3>



**Fig. 1 | Wheelchair-accessible sink from Yamato Scientific Co., Ltd. and GK Sekkei Inc.** The sink has several accessible features, including an electrically elevated top panel, leg clearance, a touchless faucet (allowing for use with a shorter reach), a rounded front edge of the sink (to avoid arm pain), an easy-to-grip structure on the inside of the sink, and wider and multiple sink units. Reprinted with permission from ref. 5, Yamato Scientific Co., Ltd.

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## Disability inclusion in chemistry

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in chemistry aim to foster a community that better reflects the makeup of society. By empowering researchers with varied backgrounds and experiences, we can provide an environment that encourages new ideas and innovation. The aim of this collection is to highlight an all-too-often overlooked aspect of DEI in chemistry: disability. We hope to be the home of this ongoing conversation to improve the accessibility of chemistry.



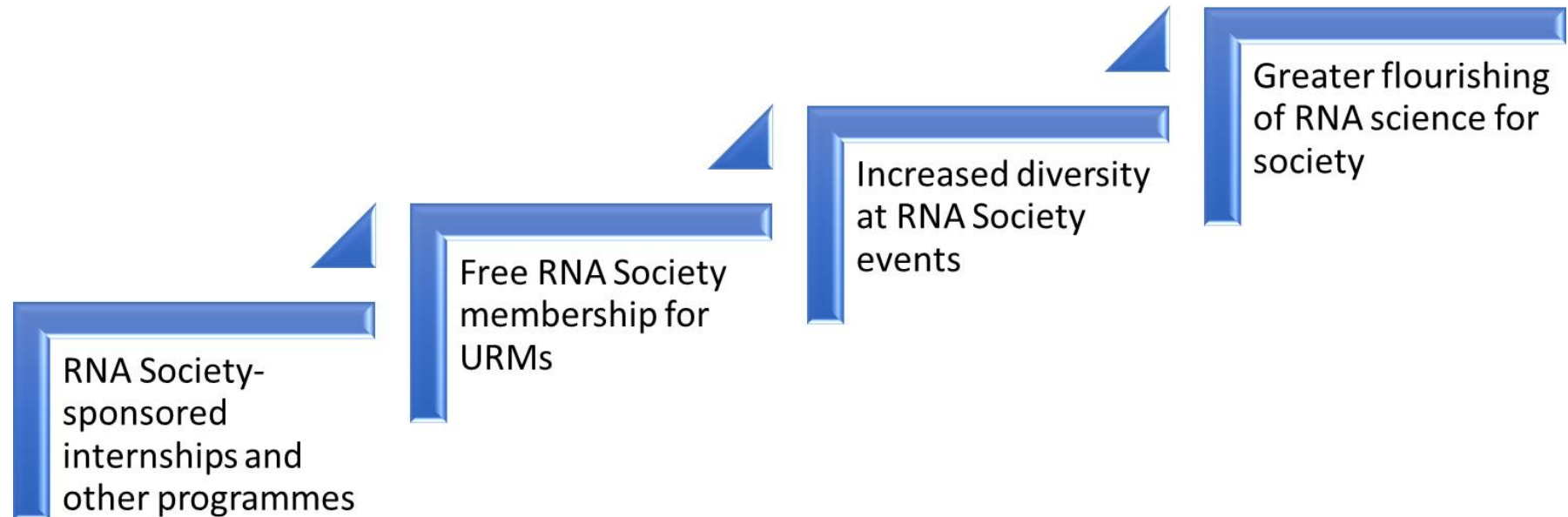
nature reviews chemistry

Volume 7 | December 2023 | 819–820 | 819

<https://www.nature.com/collections/egfbfbjij>

# Summary

- RNA Society is supporting DEI activities
- DEI central to strategies in other learned societies, funding agencies
- Culture change takes time



# Today's Speakers



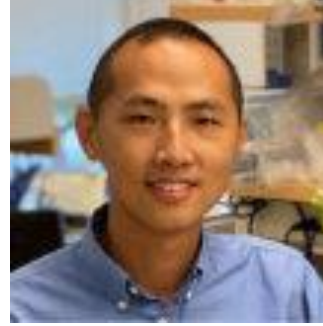
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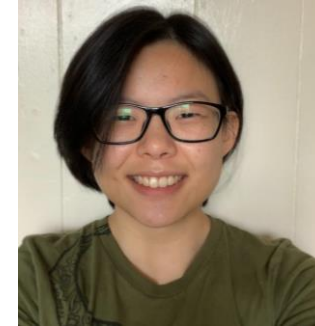
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# What is our role as scientists?

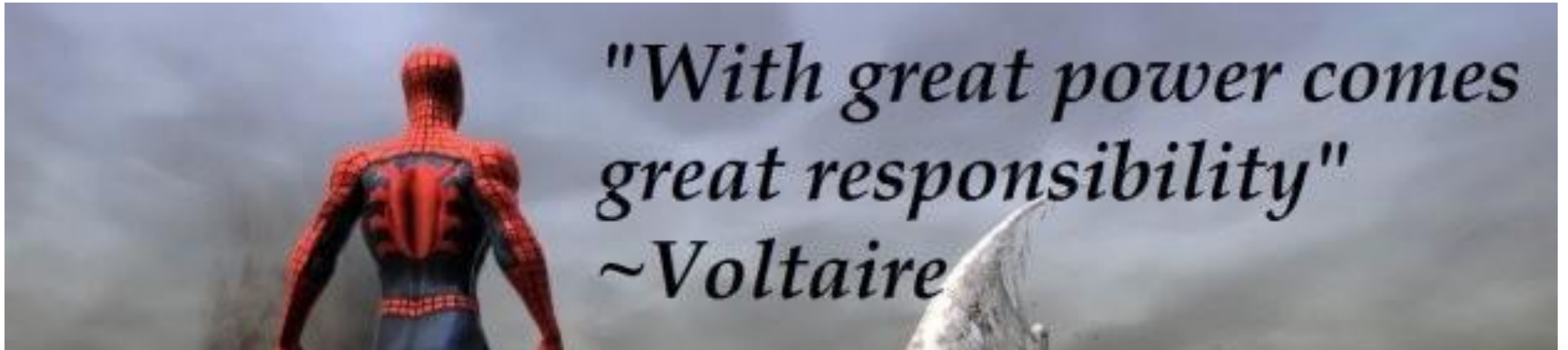
**Suja Jagannathan**

RNA Bioscience Initiative | Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Genetics  
University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

[www.jagannathan-lab.org](http://www.jagannathan-lab.org)

# As scientists...

- We train the next generation of scientists
- We are stewards of our scientific community
- We shape the future of science



# What is our responsibility as scientists?

- To recruit future scientists from the widest swath of talent that our society has to offer

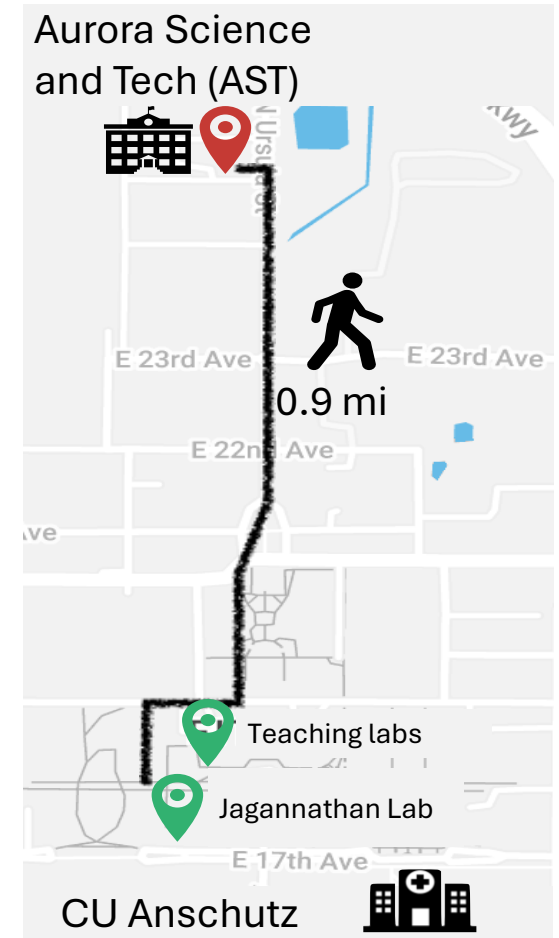
‘Talent is equally  
distributed;  
opportunity is not’

- Provide opportunities to those historically underserved by the scientific enterprise



# Engaging our local communities

- Ideas for engagement
  - Local schools
  - Places of worship
  - Libraries
- Disseminate resources through the RNA society



# What is our responsibility as scientists?

- To cultivate an environment that allows everyone to thrive



## Gatekeeping Vs. Groundskeeping



Montgomery, Beronda L. (2020) "Academic Leadership: Gatekeeping or Groundskeeping?," The Journal of Values-Based Leadership: Vol. 13 : Iss. 2 , Article 16.

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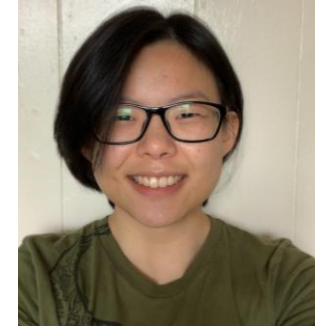
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# My Journey as a Latino

Ivan Martinez, PhD

West Virginia University

 WVU Cancer Institute



# I grew up in Mexico City



# PhD at University of Pittsburgh



# Postdoc at Yale University

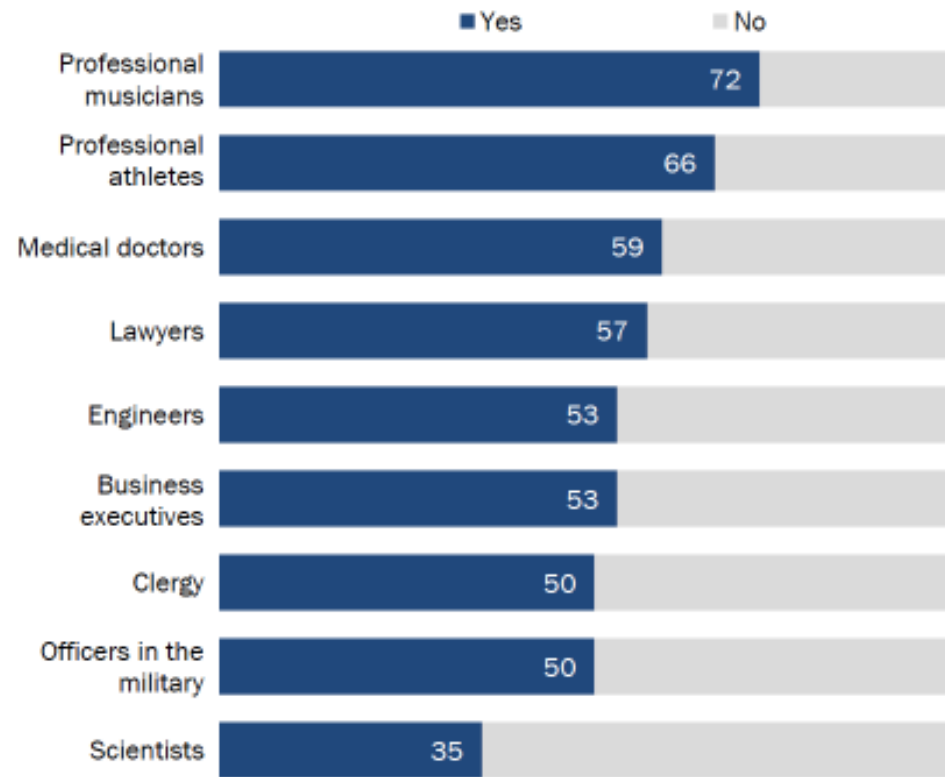


# Associate Professor at West Virginia University



## Hispanic Americans less likely to see Hispanic achievement in science relative to other professions

% of Hispanic adults who say Hispanic people have reached the highest levels of success in the following professional groups



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.

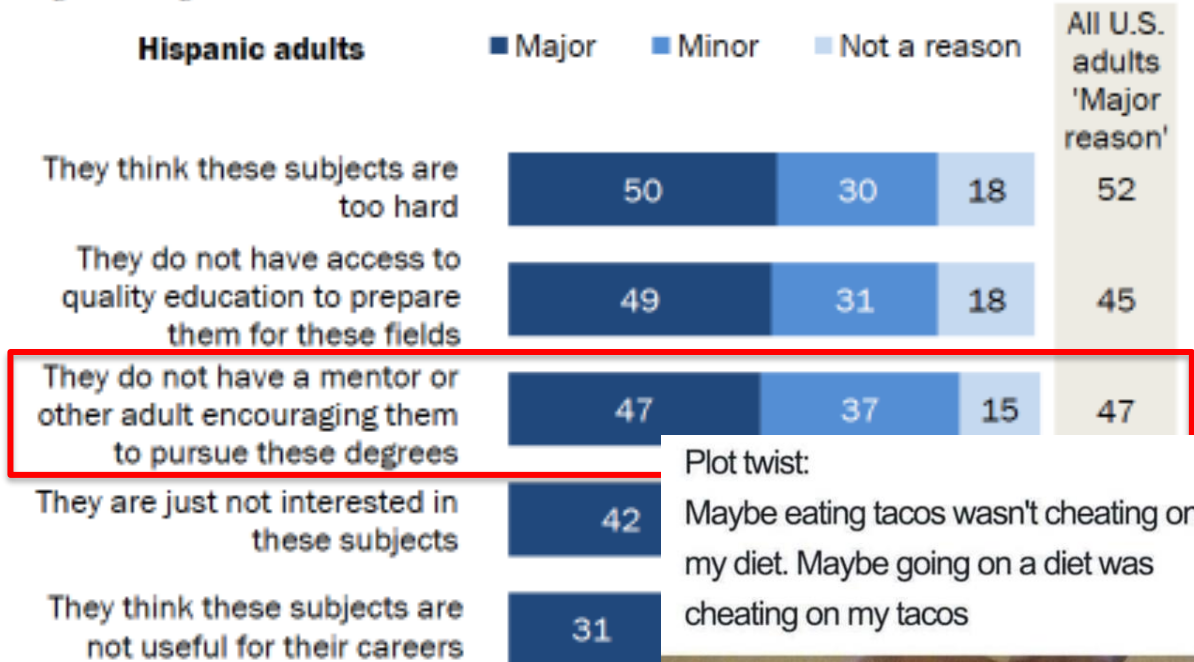
Source: Survey conducted Nov. 30-Dec. 12, 2021.

"Hispanic Americans' Trust in and Engagement With Science"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

## Hispanic Americans see range of reasons that young people don't pursue STEM degrees

% of Hispanic adults who say each of the following is a \_\_\_ reason many young people do not pursue college degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics



Plot twist:

Maybe eating tacos wasn't cheating on my diet. Maybe going on a diet was cheating on my tacos

Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 30-Dec. 12, 2021.

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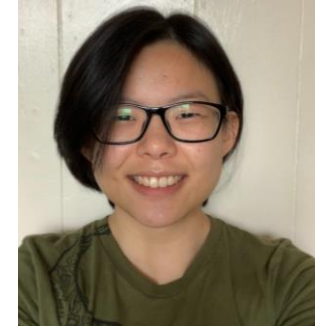
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# STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION PASSES RULE TO PERMANENTLY PROHIBIT DEI IN THE FLORIDA COLLEGE SYSTEM



January 17, 2024



My Perspective  
The Rise and Fall of DEI  
**Jessi Effinger-Morris**

What I liked  
Why I stayed



*What changed?  
Why I feel  
different?*

**BANNED**

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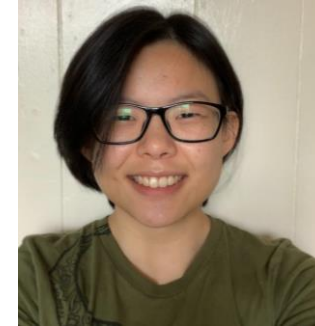
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